

‘Forming Gendered ‘Mixed Race’ Identities in Educational and Familial Contexts’

by

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Abstract

This thesis explores the meanings of 'race' and racism in the identity work of young, 'mixed-race' children aged between 8 and 11 years old. Using feminist ethnographic methods, it interrogates the ways in which children in three schools are negotiating discourses of 'race', nation, family and home in order to form multiply positioned flexible identifications. The children, parents and teachers interviewed all show the failings of existing theories of 'race' and ethnicity for understanding what it means to occupy multi-locational positionalities. In addition, it reveals the gap between current academic discourses and everyday use of language in contemporary contexts. Terms such as 'ethnicity' and 'culture' are not replacing 'race'; multiculturalism is often seen as issues of representation; and 'racism' in its crudest form is commonplace to the children in this study. In order to operationalise spaces for themselves in their daily cultural practices, children are using readings of popular culture and discourses of family to insert themselves into more ambiguous and flexible matrices of identity. Collective use of popular culture and narratives of self and home are deployed in creative and unique ways by the heterogenous groups of children who took part in the project. The findings show that the children of this age are becoming aware of a politics of 'race' being one of 'singularity', and are happy to subvert it. It also reveals that one of the most important factors to negotiating a politics of 'race' and culture, is 'class'. The ways in which ethnicity interacts with classed positions forms the basis for the interrogation into the production of the normative sexualised gender identifications of the children in the study.

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Chapter 1: Introduction

1.1 Introducing Themes of 'Mixed-Race' Identifications.

'I'm not racist but two cultures shouldn't mix. Some of those black people are all right, but the half-castes, well they're a breed apart'.

Peggy (64 year old white, working class Londoner)

A black woman was refused donor insemination from a London hospital as they only had white donors available. The reason given was for the 'sake of the children'¹.

These incidents took place in England during 1998. What they reveal with greater or lesser explicitness is that in late-modern English society there is still an intolerance or even fear of interracial relationships. Moreover, there is concern that children of these relationships will be disadvantaged in life at best and totally inhuman at worst. These are discourses that are 'out there' in common everyday usage; they construct and are constructed by a modern multiracial, multiethnic society that still believes in some notion of white supremacy and fear of 'racial Others', and the contamination that they may bring through 'blood mixing'. These are views that have changed little since the days of slavery and colonialism, yet still carry sufficient power to result in frequent abuse, and occasionally, even serious physical violence and death being inflicted upon those who transgress.

This thesis will explore what it means to be a young 'mixed-race' child in England at this time. In order to do so it will need to consider some of the contemporary debates about 'race' and racism in Britain, and how they inform the ways in which a child begins to manipulate discourses of racialised identity². The kinds of concerns that are revealed by

¹ This incident was widely reported in the national newspapers but I have been unable to find the exact date.

² I am using the word 'race' in quotation marks. By the time I had finished writing I realised that if I am concerned with its constructedness, I should also put 'class', 'gender' and so on into quotation marks. I have not done so, nor have I removed them from 'race' as, for the purposes of this thesis, it is one of the central terms of analysis. In future work I will reassess this position, as I will the use of the term 'mixed-race' ('gender' and 'class'). For now, I have chosen to continue to use the terms 'black' and 'white' and 'mixed-race' despite misgivings that they will serve to perpetuate old biologist notions of 'race'. The main reason for

the two incidents above are central to this work. The language of 'Otherness' is now not only 'racial' but also uses terms such as 'cultural', 'national', ethnic, and 'religious'. Peggy uses culture instead of 'race' showing just how often this terms finds its way into use in place of 'race'. She is also using the term 'half-caste', an outdated term which is not used by those in academia other than for historical analysis.

The extract comes from a conversation that I had with Peggy in the summer of 1998. I asked her how her son was and she said that he was not living with her and had moved in with a black woman. Her greatest fear was that they would have children, and if that were the case she would disown him completely. Peggy had known me for about three years and my brother for longer. She had been present at the time his son had been born to his white partner. She knew that we were at least 'not-white', had met and spoken to, our (white English) mother on more than one occasion³. In previous conversations, Peggy had alluded to community difficulties living in an area of London that has one of the highest ethnic diversities amongst the population. In particular, she talked about the difference between the 'blacks' or 'West Indians' and herself as a 'white' person. We agreed to disagree; when I challenged her she often said that she was not racist. When she talked of her son on this occasion I was wounded to the core. I knew the kinds of beliefs that she held, but being 'half-caste' myself felt she was undoubtedly referring to me. On this occasion I did not re-identify myself, but simply closed the conversation as swiftly as possible and left.

What this incident highlights are several of the key themes of this work. The personal relationship between Peggy and myself was based on a perceived 'class' and 'race' difference as she conceptualised herself as white, working class, and positioned me as 'coloured' and middle-class. This undoubtedly informed the way that she interacted with me. However, regardless of that, she chose particular words and phrases. Those chosen show that although language or terms in common usage may change, meanings may well not. Whether Peggy talks of 'race' or culture she is expressing a 'racist' fear of the 'Other' and of the black woman with her rampant sexuality trapping her son. This succinctly illustrates how discourses of 'race' are also hetero/sexualised and gendered.

this is that children, teachers and parents all used these terms. Debates about meaning and terminology are explored in depth in chapters 2 and 3 as they are central to this thesis.

³ My mother is white, English and my father Caribbean Indian

It also shows how a person of 'mixed-race' may indeed pass as white, or in some way become an 'honorary white' if the rest of their social credentials fit in with that of the hegemonic discourses of cultural acceptability. I have in the past been mistakenly identified as Chinese, Japanese, Italian, Greek and Spanish and once, when my hair was bleached blonde, Swedish. People have difficulty in placing 'mixed-race' individuals and will often rely on visual signs to guide them. If one 'passes' for white one may then be privy to the racist beliefs that are held by those in whose company one finds oneself. Either Peggy forgot I was 'mixed-race' or she simply thought I was white enough to make those comments⁴. Whatever the reasons, her basis for racial inclusion or exclusion, to being like or not like, is based at least in part upon physical appearance as well as cultural markers such as clothes and accents. I imagine that the cultural differences between Peggy's son and a young black British woman who grew up on the same estate are small, but that her blackness is a sign, a marker of something much deeper for Peggy.

The incident also served to remind me of the bite of racist insults. I felt that with her comments Peggy had judged not only myself but also my whole family, including my beloved mother, a sin above all others. The emotions it aroused were acute and keenly felt - overwhelming anger at the injustice of comments, and desperation and sadness that this was a belief that could be freely expressed to me.

The incident with the black woman seeking donor insemination points to another set of issues: the roles public institutions and structures such as medicine have in perpetuating and legitimating racist discourse. This problematisation of 'mixed-race' children implicitly labels them as deficient or particularly at risk. This kind of discourse alludes to a popularist psycho-social discourse that originated in the early part of the century with the formulation of the 'Marginal Man' who would constantly battle against not belonging (Stonequist 1937). This view has persisted into the 1990s, despite being countered by increasing amounts of research and writing by people of 'mixed-heritage' (see Chapter 2). In particular concerns have developed about the way in which a child, or more often adolescent, may experience forms of 'identity crisis'. The ideal way to guard against this

⁴ I do not believe that Peggy wanted to insult me personally at that moment, if she had wanted to I think she would have been more open, or simply not talked to me in the first place. My impression is that she did not think of me as black, but as 'coloured' in some way.

supposed 'marginality' would be inclusion in a solid, heterosexual nuclear family with two parents. These ideas feed into debates about transracial adoption and the way in which a 'racial' identity is formed within families. There are high levels of failure in interracial relationships and there are particular tensions that arise which may not be overcome by 'love knowing no colour' (Benson 1982; Gearson and Smith 1995; Alibai Brown 1992; Breger and Hill 1998). Indeed there are a disproportionately high number children of 'mixed-race' in care and awaiting adoption who may have been categorised as 'black' in the past (Boushel 1996). The two factors may not be unrelated and the particularities of living in a racist society undoubtedly compound the 'normal' stresses on modern intimate adult relationships. The ways in which discourses of 'family' and belonging are instrumental in forming 'mixed-race' identities is of central importance to this research.

1.2 Identifying: My Family as 'Others'.

My own experience of growing up in a white town, with my white mother and an absent black father, have informed my interest in how it is that notions of family and home are central to constructions of identities in specific emotional and cultural contexts. The absence of my father, and any connection with his home and cultural heritage, has played a significant part in my adult desire to explore my own cultural, ethnic and to put it crudely, 'racial identity' a search for my 'roots'. Despite a strong identification with my mother's white, English family, there was a need for me to find out more of my father's history⁵. It is in the familial context that bonds of 'blood and bone' are either forged or broken and it is often at the level of unresolved, 'irrational' emotions that conflicting discursive positions may be held which lead us to seek a form of psychic resolution.

In 1995 I completed an MA at the Institute of Education which was an attempt at intellectual resolution of some of my own questions. I used auto/biographical methodologies that have become so popular in the 1990s in Cultural Studies and Sociology. By exploring the views of my younger sister, older brother and mother it became clear that experiences at school and stories of families played a significant part

⁵ This project was thwarted by the fact that as a teenager and young adult I had been estranged from my father. When I finally wrote to him, I had a letter back from his partner saying that he had died five weeks earlier.

in how we developed a sense of ourselves as gendered, 'racialised' beings. It was also clear through using 'memory work' with family photographs, that each of us had slightly different understandings of what these stories meant, and that these views changed over time. We had all been shaped by our father's absence, by our experience as brown children in a white town, by racism at school and college, and by emergence into adult work environments. Nothing surprising there. What was significant was that these experiences were not the same for all of us, that we had all changed our view of our 'racial' selves, they were still developing, and that we were always filtering these facets of ourselves through our development as gendered and sexualised beings.

Nick (my brother), Lisa (my sister) and I, by my mother's admission, received a 'white upbringing', something that she says she now regrets. My father had in his brief time with the family, shown a desire for Westernisation and British-ness, and he and my mother discussed such issues before agreeing that as we lived in England, we should be as English as possible in order to avoid discrimination. However, as a result of the absence of my father and his 'cultural heritage', my sister and brother showed very complicated understandings of their own positions as raced, classed and gendered beings.

Lisa said that a lack of understanding about her 'other' family (on our father's side) and more importantly what they represent, is a

part of me I've missed out on, and I don't hold anyone responsible for that. I never really thought about it before - we lived with Mum, I viewed myself as white English

(Lisa: Interview, March 1995)

She went on to explain that she had felt extremely confused about her identity before reaching her present understanding. This may seem to bear out the concerns for the 'mixed-race' child as mentioned above, but in fact neither she nor I felt that it had been an insurmountable problem, something that overrode other difficulties in life, for example being female. Nick said that he had thought about his identity in terms of race but had not felt it:

N in a concentrated sort of angst sort of fashion, but it's something as I said before about ... discovering yourself and trying a different uniform or different clothes - clothes metaphorically... How you look I consider part of your identity...
- I think people prefer attractive people, sad but true.

Nick's sense of himself as someone who can use discourses of 'race' in a physical performance and his realisation that being 'exotic' could work in his favour was also something that my sister mentioned. It is one of the concerns of this thesis.

Our sense of ourselves then was not fixed and varied according to interaction with external factors; it was and is 'fractured' - but not separate and inchoate. All of us had at times been able to 'pass' as white, but had not *chosen* to 'pass' through some conscious desire to join the privileged group, nor as 'an avoidance response to the conflicts of dual racial membership' (Bradshaw 1992:79). We did not think that we were actively 'subverting the comportment line between the dominant and subordinate, and the arbitrary line between white and black' (Daniel 1992:92). Rather, we found ourselves negotiating identities around multiple influences. All three of us expressed concerns about 'authenticity', without necessarily using that word, and feelings of 'disloyalty or incongruity' (again implied) to our racial and cultural heritages, especially as we had all at times when younger, seen ourselves as 'white' (Bradshaw 1992:82).

In thinking through the meaning of 'identity' we all expressed frustration at the inadequacy of terms available to us, and an inability to position ourselves satisfactorily. We all also wanted feel free to deal with our racial identities in the manner of our own choosing. This need for self-definition and individuation is echoed by many people who are part of late modern societies. Giddens suggests that it is a feature of late-modern societies that identities are 'explored and constructed as part of a reflexive process of connecting personal and social change' (Giddens 1993: 304). It is the connection of the personal, to the political/social that is the purpose of this research.

I believe that as yet, we have no way to understand ourselves at the everyday level of social relations in non-raced ways (Brah 1992: 141). However, all aspects of social relations continue to have a major effect on us, and our sense of 'race' is not a prioritised

and constant factor. It is impossible to untangle family and 'race' from these subject positions and the effects of wider social change. These influences do not act upon us while we absorb them in a passive way, it involves agency and thought on our part; language is crucial as we struggle to find '... those necessary words that will represent both ourselves and others [which] are not quite within our grasp' (Rutherford 1990:13).

We continue to try to develop new language and discourses as forms of empowerment, with a recognition that:

power is not always wielded through coercion, but often through discursive practices which people, as active agents within these practices, either consent to or resist

(Epstein 1993:13).

Whilst I actively resist the constraints of binary modes of thought around 'race' and gender, I recognise that this is still often the way we conceptualise things. My own family occupy/ied 'positions of relative power and relative powerlessness' (ibid.). In order to dismantle the power of hetero/sexist racism we need to shift the boundaries of our understanding of 'race' as an 'organising principle', forming new coalitions and alliances that allow for effective political action against hetero-patriarchal hegemony.

My family all understood the effects of gendered discourses on ourselves and others, and the need for change and possibilities beyond such positions. The discussions we had during the research process provoked useful ideas around our identities and have prompted us all to reassess the past as it is constructed in the present. Whether this will actually be empowering in any meaningful way is another matter. The anger I felt about racism and colourism was somewhat legitimated by listening to their accounts and reading those of unknown others.

My mother at times showed so-called 'difference avoidance', but she gave me a role model that I was lucky to have - that of a very strong independent woman, surviving without the emotional support of a man, and showing her children constant love and support. She encouraged us to form our own identities, independent of her own ideas.

Despite strong familial influence in some areas we have all developed the ability to analyse our own situations and develop differing (political) opinions of them. We all have strong opinions about ourselves and our identities and these show commonality with other 'mixed-race' individuals whilst revealing the impact of particular family circumstances. Our lives do not transpose neatly onto others but there are surprising intersections with them.

This has led to my desire to develop work in the area of 'mixed-race' identities, a highly complex and theoretically difficult area of study which needs to be developed as part of an intellectual, and I believe, political project of great importance. What I already know is that there are no simple answers and that the limitations of current terminologies are real and frustrating. Black, white and 'mixed-race' identities are false categories, but we are a long way from offering real alternatives. I am not wholly convinced that as 'mixed-race' individuals either my siblings or I occupy a 'third-space' or embody a 'new ethnicity' (Bhabha 1992; Hall 1992): Until we conceptualise our situation like that for ourselves it will not be our reality and this is a central theoretical problem for my research.

1.3 The Research Questions.

At the time I searched for understandings of my own gendered, 'racial' position in academic work and found it almost entirely absent. 'Race' was being deconstructed, but when it was spoken of it was as if it were about people who had a sense of themselves as racially unitary beings⁶. There appeared to be a lack of language to even talk about 'mixed-race' and that is still the case today. The main British texts that I found about 'mixed-race' identities were by Tizard and Phoenix (1993), Wilson (1987) and Benson (1981). In each case the extraordinary complexity in this subject meant that although they are valuable, they are of course partial accounts of small numbers of individuals, and raise as many questions as they answer.

⁶ My academic reading of 'race' began in 1991. The texts that were most influential to me raising questions about multiplicity were those from the early 1990s.

Since then there have been increasing numbers of texts appearing and they will be considered in more detail in Chapter 2. What becomes clear is that there is at this time no work with children between the ages of 8 and 11 in this field. There has been a reluctance to consider young children as responsible respondents for research, and I felt that this was a particularly interesting age at which children begin to understand social processes of negotiating selves, and are, on the whole, less politicised than their adolescent counterparts. It was these factors that influenced the choice of age group in the study.

From my own work with my family and through numerous conversations with other people who identify as mixed-race there are several themes that have already been outlined above;

- Mixed-race identities are always formed in part by and limited by current discourses of 'race'.
- Discourses of race articulate with a number of other constituent and constituting discourses; notably gender, hetero/sexuality, dis/ability, and class.
- Current understandings of identities suggest that they are partial and dynamic and operate through and with understandings of power, and in the case of 'mixed-race' identities these processes are often conscious and strategic.
- Familial and educational contexts provide a large part of the discursive register through which children begin to develop understandings of themselves as gendered, sexualised and racialised beings.
- Popular Culture is a major area for the representation and translation of hegemonic discourses into a 'visual politics' (Bell 1999).
- Current academic work has failed to find a way adequately to theorise multiple ethnic/racial identifications.

The absence of my father in the family home undoubtedly played a large part in the development of my own and my siblings' familial and 'racialised' identities. My subsequent experiences in Higher Education also shaped the way in which I developed more sophisticated understandings of my own multiplicitous positionings. Early socialisation processes (single mothers) and education are also highly visible and

contested areas of the public political domain and they also informed the research rationale and the formulation of questions of my thesis:

1. How do individual children of 'mixed parentage'; that is, who have multi-ethnic/racial backgrounds, make sense of the discourses of 'family and home' and the ways in which racial/ethnic identities are in/formed by familial structures?
2. In what ways are these ideas represented to children in schools that are working on 'race' and anti-racism in 'multicultural' and 'equal opportunities' contexts?
3. Are deconstructive post-structuralist theories having an impact upon classrooms and families? How are academic discourses being understood in the everyday of children's lives?
4. How do children read 'racialisation' in images from popular culture and mass media? How are these images read as gendered, sexualised, dis/abled and classed, if they are, by children? How do children use these readings in constructing selves?
5. How do children (and their parents and teachers) understand the terms 'race', ethnicity and culture?
6. Are children of 'mixed-race' resisting and subverting dominant discourses and creating new ethnic and cultural spaces for themselves?

There is no one question for this work, it is an exploratory piece intended to ask questions of theory, to challenge the ways in which 'racialised' societies operate and to allow children to speak (for) themselves in order that we may learn from them.

1.4 Outline of the Chapters.

Positions of and theories about 'mixed-race' individuals are all but absent from the majority of the mainstream literature. Moreover, the first problem arises in defining 'race' and related terms, and understanding the ways in which previous authors have attempted to locate discussions about 'race', ethnicity and culture. I will contextualise the research by looking at a necessarily limited amount of the writing on 'race' and 'ethnicity' in Chapter 2. The history of 'race' theorising is long and varied and terms associated with it vary across historical and geographical context. As my own readings

of feminist writing have been crucial to my experiences as a student and researcher, I will focus mostly on the work of feminists from the 1960s to the present day during the so-called 'Second Wave'. I will also consider the ways in which writers in Cultural Studies have provided work on identities and ethnicity that are useful to this thesis.

In Chapter 3, the theoretical, political and ethical underpinnings of the research will be outlined. The particular difficulties of working from a feminist methodological perspective with young children in such a sensitive area are just some of the features of this chapter, but they are also issues that will come up throughout the work. How we understand what the children mean and whether it conflicts with our own ideas take on a particular significance when working with young children who have a more limited vocabulary and narrative and discursive repertoire. This is also precisely what makes the data more interesting. These and other methodological issues will be dealt with in detail in Chapter 3.

In order to investigate this complex area I used similar methods to those used for my Masters Dissertation. I wanted the children's voices to be heard above all else, and as writers such as Stanley have suggested, 'Auto/biographya term I use to encompass all [these] ways of writing a life and also the ontological and epistemological links between them, is a particularly suitable ground for a feminist political analysis to be built on' (Stanley 1993: 3). The children in the study were not asked to write their lives however, but were asked to 'speak' them. They were also encouraged to use domestic photography in order to 'visually' narrate them. The three schools that were chosen for the study and the similarities and differences in their locations and pupil profiles will also be detailed in this chapter as well as the methods of data collection and some of its pitfalls.

The body of the findings of the research is to be found in Chapters 4-8. The themes that have already been identified will be explored in detail.

Using theoretical positions in the academic field of Cultural Studies, this research explores the realm of the social as it is constituted through everyday cultural processes and practices. These include those commonplace activities that take place within the

home and at school; the use of artefacts, music and cuisine to name but a few. Paul Gilroy suggests that 'culture' is '... a field articulating the life world of subjects (albeit de-centred) and the structures created by human activity' (cited by Frankenberg 1993: 194). Stuart Hall's definition includes '... the actual grounded terrain of practices, representations, languages and customs of any specific historical society' (cited *ibid.*). This broad range of everyday experience of culture is used throughout this research. Johnson suggests that:

All social practices can be looked at from a cultural point of view, for the work they do subjectively

(Johnson, 1983: 581),

and that:

reservoirs of discourses and meanings ... are indeed among the specifically cultural *conditions* of production

(*ibid.* 583)

The focus of this research is the *production of*, and *conditions of production* of culture as lived by the children. As a way 'into' these areas of study, the children were invited to talk about the way they read popular culture, about their patterns of consumption and their likes and dislikes. It proved to be a rich and interesting vein of the data and will be detailed in Chapters 4 and 5.

Firstly, I was interested whether children of 'mixed-race' are represented in popular culture and if they are not how are they understanding representations of 'race' in their everyday encounters with the popular? How are we to understand the ways in which children choose to talk about 'racial' identity in popular representations? Children talked animatedly about their consumption and how this in part informed their constructions of self through collective readings and friendship groups. In Chapter 4, the first interviews with groups of children reveal some of these processes at work, and show how children used these readings in order to discuss 'forbidden topics' such as sex/uality.

In Chapter 5 the more personal and individualised readings and imaginings of the children of 'mixed-race' are developed. In this chapter, the importance of bodies and

'visual politics' are interrogated. Through reading and performance practices children are developing identifications by how they present themselves in relation to others including family. Visual readings of parents and families are extended in Chapter 6 and use the data collected from families.

The interviews with the parents (mostly mothers) in Chapter 6 serve to position the children within their particular familial trajectories. Parents have invested time in helping maintain family histories, and see them as important ways for children to develop 'racialised' and ethnicised familial identifications. This chapter details daily cultural practices that take place in the home, and tells some of the family stories. In all cases the ways in which 'family practices' are dynamic and productive is a central to the analysis.

In the chapter on the meaning of 'home' (Chapter 7), the ways in which 'home' is conceptualised by the children reveal the importance of generational and geographical/social changes within the families to understanding multiply identified selves. The research findings suggest that children are consciously exploring the implications of discourses of home and belonging for 'mixed-race' identities.

As meanings of 'race' have changed so too have those of 'racism' and this forms the basis for children's learning in schools. In Chapter 8, I will explore the use of terminology and its importance to children's understandings of how differences between them include and exclude them from group/social identities. The meanings of 'multiculturalism' and 'anti-racism' as perceived by children and teachers show such terms to be problematic for children working with modern multiethnic identities.

In Chapter 9 I will re-visit some of the writing which I began to critique in Chapter 2. In doing so I will look at the implications of the research for the existing writing on ethnicity and culture, and areas for future research. The children are often aware of the inadequacies of trying to categorise themselves with existing language, and of the importance of using known family histories to make partial sense of 'racial' selves. All of the children, teachers and parents showed reluctance to make use of existing terminologies that are commonplace in academia. The research shows how fluid the

perceptions of selves are and how the 'racial' and ethnic categorisations children face are untenable. It suggests that the ways in which children work within proscribed discursive registers are creative but necessarily reinforcing existing categorisations. The only way to move beyond racialised constraints is to begin a process of deconstruction that is often charged with being a-political.

One of the key aspects of this thesis is to challenge the tenacity of 'singularity' within the hegemonic 'political' positioning of 'race' rhetoric. I will begin to question the meaning of 'the politics of race' for children, and to a lesser extent, parents and teachers, and whether this is indeed a politics of singularity. Like Paul Gilroy (1999), I believe we need 'to free ourselves from the bonds of raciology and compulsory raciality' but remain cautious as to how that may be achieved. This thesis will attempt to begin such a process.

Chapter 2: Accounts of 'Race', Racism and Ethnicity.

An autobiography has both humanistic and post-structuralist elements. As a site of interplay between the humanistic vision of autonomous egos and postmodernist decentred selves, actual autobiographies stand at the intersection of individual and the social, of agency and culture

(Usher 1998:21)

2.1 Introduction

In this chapter, I will situate the research and the ways in which it has been informed by my own auto/biographical project. I will show how the feminist and other literatures on 'race' and ethnicity failed to provide adequate theorisations of my own position as a woman of 'mixed-race'. Firstly, I will look at how historical developments in the USA and Britain have informed contemporary academic theorisations of 'race', ethnicity and identity¹. I will look in particular at the work of feminists in this area, and how the importance of recognising gendered, classed and sexualised understandings of 'race' are essential for the investigation of the children's 'mixed-race' identities.

One of the biggest developments in the last few years has been change in the terms used by academics and others in institutions to describe and de/construct people who are not 'Caucasian'. The move away from using 'race' and to using ethnicity or culture is one aspect of contemporary writing that is of immense significance to this work. I will consider how writing on 'racism' is a way in which we may understand theories of 'race' as sexualised and how this informs fears of interracial sex. Next, I will discuss the ways in which the existing writing on (cultural) hybridity and 'mixed-race' have challenged the earlier binaried positions of 'black' and 'white'. I believe that these writings force us to reconsider the meanings of 'race', ethnicity and culture, and are the main terms under

¹ The field of 'race' theory is immense. Due to limitations of space I am limiting the literature to that of some of the key texts from feminists and cultural theorists in USA and Britain whose work is particularly relevant to gendered, 'mixed-race' identities. There is also a growing body of work by indigenous and migrant peoples in Australia and New Zealand that will develop into work on a more global perspective of 'racial mixing' (Ihimaera 1998; Hartley (ed.) 1995) European perspectives on multiethnic positions are different again in their developing theories on 'racial' and cultural identities (e.g. Allund and Granquist 1995).

consideration throughout the thesis; specifically their (gendered) meaning for children, parents and teachers.

Finally, I will explore some of the contemporary writing on identities. I will argue that post-structuralist theories of multifaceted identities and identifications provide a useful tool for dismantling normative discourses of racialisation. Using some of the recent debates about families, I will show how much of this writing reveals the need for further, more nuanced investigation into the development of gendered and raced identities.

In order to make any sense of the term 'mixed-race' identity, we need to break down the parts and look at the way 'race' is constituted through identifications. What is meant by 'racial identity' in contemporary writing? Why is it so rarely spoken of in gendered terms, unless by feminists? Would we be better asking questions of ethnicity, as many theorists are? Are 'racial' identities ever separate from gender, sexuality, dis/ability and so on? In tackling some of these questions, we may move closer to understanding the particular positionalities of those who choose to work with 'mixed-race' identities.

2.2 Histories of Writings on 'Race'.

Writings that have informed the 'Western' theorists on 'race' in the 20th century have been born out of a history of colonialism, Imperialism and genocide by the civilised peoples of the North over the uncultured and 'savage' peoples of the South. Scientific racism sought to justify the oppression of certain peoples by others by appealing to rationality, logic and the disciplined study of biology. The five races that were identified were recognisable because of certain phenotypical characteristics. The links between 'race' and racism were clearly established in those early writings and have only been challenged comparatively recently.

At the turn of the century the concern to keep the 'races' separate was one of the main reasons for racially categorising difference. Many writers have documented attitudes to interracial relationships and marriage and how responses to fears of miscegenation have varied in different temporal and geographic locations (Martinez-Alier 1974; Ballahatchet

1980; Tizard and Phoenix 1993; Breger and Hill 1998). The history of struggle for those who were forcibly enslaved and displaced in the 1700s and particularly 1800s was that against ignorance and cruelty supported by 'scientific' discourses. There are many studies that detail these historical developments in 'science' and 'race', and the way that they maintain a certain credibility; myths are transformed into everyday narratives of 'common sense' racism' (see e.g. Cohen 1988 and Chapter 1 in Tizard and Phoenix 1993). The positioning of 'Negroes' as closer to apes, and the use of craniology and phrenology were ways in which Victorian British scientists and their North American counterparts sought to maintain distance between and control over the African slaves who had been forced to enter the 'motherland'. Cultural and psychological differences that were borderline pathological were used to separate colonised 'natives' in places such as India from the ruling visitors (Ware 1992; Hall, C. 1992; Balahatchet 1980; Opitz *et al* 1992). In Britain, mixed marriages took place as early as 1578, and fears of 'racial mixing' were often disguised by a stated concern for the sad products of this unnatural coupling. However, histories of migration do not always detail this (e.g. Fryer 1984). 'Marginal Man' (sic) would be forever displaced, not belonging to either white or black (as was mostly the concern) and thus condemned to suffer psychological problems with 'identity and community' and feel rejected all his/her life (Tizard and Phoenix 1993: 6). In Britain the opposition to 'racial mixing' through interracial mixed-marriage was very similar to that of the USA, without the legislation.

The ways in which these types of controls have been manifest is of course not static, but always dynamic and contingent. So what is happening in Britain today is not the same as it was in the fifties, and is different again from the way 'racism' is conceptualised in, for example, Germany today. In many countries concerns about 'race mixing' are being revisited by both dominant and marginal groups who believe that the only hope for racial harmony is a politics of singularity through which one remains within one's own 'racial grouping'. One thing that runs throughout these sets of discourses on 'race' and racial purity are concerns not just with the physicality of human beings, but about sexuality and gender, and how these relate to the maintenance of national and ethnic boundaries and therefore collective 'identities'.

Histories of 'race' are as many and varied as there are people to relate them and locations for them to develop. 'Race' is a dynamic and changing concept that has lost much of its intellectual credibility over the last decade. Nevertheless, writing on 'race' continues to develop and in this section I will consider the ways in which theories of 'race' have been linked to the social and political projects of 'anti-racism' and feminism in the last thirty years.

North American forced and voluntary immigration patterns (especially those of slavery) have led to a unique form of 'racial' stratification that has been written about by a wide range of scholars. With the development of mass media, the Black Power movement of the 1960s, became a highly visible fight for rights for black North American citizens. The reclamation of the term 'Black', which replaced 'Negro', was a conscious and sustained campaign for 'Black Pride' - 'Black is Beautiful' was a subversion of negative connotations of blackness. However, the civil rights movement was dominated by men, and some women have since criticised the sexism from some of the male members of the movement (Davis 1981; hooks 1984). The concerns of black women were not always acknowledged by their male counterparts in North America or Britain, nor by a predominantly white feminist elite. Black feminists emphasised the articulation of 'race', class and (hetero)sexism in their analyses of society.

Black sexualities were (and are) tightly controlled by ruling white élites, and these sexually oppressive discourses were often classed as well as raced. From the earliest days of black women being raped by slave owning Southern 'gentlemen', black women's bodies have been the site of racialised struggles (Davis 1984; Hill Collins 1990). At the same time, the myth about predatory and bestial black males helped to ensure that white women remained in fear of 'the black rapist'. The uncontrollable libidousness of black women combined with white supremacist 'right' was used to explain away the behaviour of the white men in power who fathered bastard 'mulattos'. (Davis 1982, 1990; Hill Collins 1990) However, 'mulattos' were not seen to be particularly privileged, as the 'one drop' rule ensured that no-one who had even 'one drop of Negro blood' in them could 'become white' and therefore a full citizen of the USA and South America (Spickard 1992: 16).

Fears of 'tainted blood' were fed by discourses of 'difference' that were presented as inferiorities, characteristics that must be 'kept out' of 'pure' white American blood for 'the sake of the nation'. This simultaneously presented a way of controlling white North American women's sexuality. The duty of all 'good women' at the end of the nineteenth century was to stop organising about women's 'rights' to education and work, and to have children and raise them the correct and all American way (Ehrenreich and English 1979).

African American feminists have shown how their fight for rights was often in contradistinction to that claimed to represent 'Women' who were in fact white and middle class. For example, reproductive rights for black women were not abortion on demand, but protection from *enforced* sterilisation and abortion. The increasing need to recognise diversity continued through the 1970s into the 1980s. The development of a politics of inclusion and specificity for women in the 1980s resulted in the development of a collective term, 'women of colour'. This nominal change facilitated inclusion of Central American and Latina women who were living in North America, and both Pacific Asian and South Asian settlers to name but a few².

Current feminist writing from the USA increasingly deals with the specificities of being both American and of another national heritage. The use of 'American' in conjunction with another national identity is widespread. Terms such as Asian-American and Italian-American have been in use since the early 1980s. In this the USA is somewhat different to Britain, where naming oneself black British is still new and holds many difficulties even for those who are second or third generation British (Back 1996: 142 – 155)

In Britain, through the middle part of the 1980s, so-called 'identity politics' became increasingly, and controversially, important. In New Left Metropolitan projects, 'Black' became a political category around which to organise, and up to the mid 1980s being 'Black' meant being 'non-white' and/or disadvantaged by, and in relation to, the dominant white English ethnicity. For a short time Irish and Cypriot people were included as 'Black' in London. OWAAD (Organisation of Women of African and Asian Descent), tried with some success to organise a hugely diverse group of women to find common ground and

² See collections such as Hull *et al* (1982) and Moraga and Anzaldúa (1981)

fight against racism, sexism and other forms of oppression and inequality (Bryan *et al* 1985).

The group had much disagreement (especially around the issue of sexuality) and eventually folded in 1982 (Mason-John 1995). In addition, many South Asians objected to being included in the term 'Black' and chose for themselves the separate appellation 'Asian'. Underlying such debates were questions of 'authenticity', and a rather crude notion of hierarchies of oppression.

Prathiba Parmar criticised:

... political practice which employs the language of 'authentic subjective experience' [which] has given rise to the self-righteous assertion that if one inhabits a certain identity this gives one the legitimate and moral right to guilt-trip others into particular ways of behaving.... There has been an emphasis [in the women's movement] on accumulating a collection of oppressed identities in turn, which has given rise to a hierarchy of oppression.

(Parmar 1990: 6)

This she claimed led women into leading 'ghettoised lives' and embracing a lifestyle politics '... unable to move beyond personal and individual experience'. Hazel Carby (1982) notably criticised much white feminist work for actually perpetuating and worsening racism. Yet to write all inclusively about black women as if they were one homogeneous group was also inadequate. Further, it has been shown that not only are 'black' and South Asian identities unlikely to be equivalent, they are also heterogeneous within themselves (Parmar 1982; Modood 1988; Patel 1999)

What these women highlighted was the way in which slogan politics that try to simplify the complexities of lived experience, are detrimental to both the politics and the theory of 'racialised' lives. The need to develop theory that arises from experience is part of the feminist political project. However, Gray argues that we need to recognise '... experience as a non-unified category in a number of ways, for different purposes and

with different epistemological outcomes' (Gray 1997: 99). There are clearly potential tensions between these two positions in some of these theorisations of 'racial identities'.

The nineties have seen enormous shifts in forms of political organisation, and especially in whether and how the issue of 'race' is mobilised. In order to move beyond identity politics, it has been suggested that we must recognise difference and diversity, and organise around *issues*. For example, 'transversal politics' requires a focus on 'the message not the messenger' (Yuval-Davis 1996:194). Feminist political projects, intellectual or otherwise, are informing and recognising the increasingly complicated ways in which individuals form subject positions.

Issues of culture, of nationality and of ethnicity become central to these debates. The relevance of 'identity' has shifted away from being about who may belong '*of right*' to a particular group or collectivity. My own concern with 'mixed-raceness' questions not only how one is positioned by others, but one's own preferred position/s, and the potential conflicts between the two. It is not simply '*racial*' identities that are at stake within a constantly evolving multiracial and multiethnic country. Who comprises a citizen, and what rights and responsibilities are conferred upon them now rightly include more sophisticated analyses of ethnic and cultural allegiances. This will be discussed in the next section.

2.3 Cultural Ethnicities.

Contemporary discussions about inequalities in society have, as mentioned above, shifted from, though not entirely abandoned, discussions of 'race' based on physical type or colour, to recognition of multiple possibilities for 'racial', cultural, national and ethnic identifications. Central to many of these debates are questions about *culture*, whether in terms of cultural identity, cultural authenticity, or a need to protect traditional cultural practices. As Britain has become a so-called multicultural nation so the shift in emphasis over fears of outsiders has been based increasingly in terms of the cultural. In addition, if we choose to see culture as grounded in everyday practices, representations and language as Hall suggests (cited by Frankenberg 1993), then class formations may also

be seen as forms of cultural production. As helpful as this may be, this all-embracing definition of culture constructs another set of problems for us to consider. How does the term 'ethnicity' interrelate to this? These categories seem to collapse into each other and are often used interchangeably in academia.

Stuart Hall (1992) developed the idea of 'new ethnicities'. He suggested that we no longer see a unified, simple 'black Subject [...] stabilised by Nature or by some other essential guarantee' (Hall 1992: 257). He goes on:

it must be the case that they [black Subjects] are constructed historically, culturally, politically - the concept that this refers to is ethnicity
(ibid.)

Hall attempts to move the debates on, but my impression is that he is speaking to an audience who will still know themselves to be specifically 'black British'. This is in spite of his attempts to reposition black Britishness as born out of a kind of cultural plurality that constantly creates new and dynamic forms. These forms are often self-referential, but are equally open to assimilation by dominant cultures (See Hewitt 1986; Young 1988; Back 1996; Ali and Hillman with Davis 1998).

There are in fact several different concepts at work in Hall's idea of a 'black British' subject produced by and producing culture that gives rise to 'new ethnicities'. I believe that one can identify important problems with this phrase by looking at what each part means. While the recognition of cultural translation is useful, I still do not recognise my 'mixed-raceness' in these 'new ethnicities'.

'Black' implies an old recognisable 'racial' category and while not supporting it, interpellates an identification with a skin colour. 'British' tells us that this is a citizen of a country who claims a national identity, however this subverts not only the hegemonic discourses of nationality as conjoined with 'whiteness', but also that whiteness in conjunction with Britishness implies 'racial superiority' (Anthias and Yuval Davis 1992:41). 'Culture' in this case is seen as constructing both identity and ethnicity, yet ethnicities that are formed through cultural practices must surely have some claim on

being 'cultural identities'. Moreover, in a great deal of work on cultural practices in relation to the term 'new ethnicities' there is an implicit gendering at work that is not made clear. In terms of youth, this is almost always male (Hewitt 1986, Gilroy 1987; Young 1988; Back 1996) Finally, I believe that in order for this suggestion to work a 'knowing self' must surely 'choose' and recognise this position over others.

Anthias and Yuval-Davis have also interrogated these terms in their work on *Racialised Boundaries* (Anthias and Yuval-Davis 1992). They would also criticise a notion of ethnicity, which they say, comes from the 'ethnic studies' schools which flourished alongside the 'race relations industry'. This position sees ethnicity as no more than a question of ethnic identity (Anthias and Yuval Davis 1992:9). Ethnicity is a far more complicated concept; it may even be constructed by those *outside* the group who face material constraints or social representations by other groups or by the state (ibid.).

Ethnicity at its most general level means belonging to a particular group and sharing its conditions of existence. This will include not only being regarded as having the right credentials for membership, but also being able to muster ethnic resources which can be used for struggle negotiation and the pursuit of political projects both at the level of individuals making their way, but also for the group as whole in relation to other groups. Ethnic resources can be economic, territorial, cultural, and linguistic amongst others.

Anthias and Yuval - Davis :8)

One of the most important things for them is the way collectivities are constrained by boundaries that 'are continuously being re-drawn to serve processes and interests that form part of a diverse number of political projects, including economic ones' (ibid:20). It is these, the group constructions of belonging and not-belonging, of being included and excluded, that are most relevant to the analysis of inter-ethnic, 'mixed-race', international identities, not because they facilitate ethnic belonging, but precisely because they are problematic in their centralisation of boundaries.

My own position shows that there is no such ethnic group into which I may fit, although I may aspire to achieve such belonging. I do not see this as problematic exclusion, rather

as a unique opportunity to challenge and reformulate such conceptions at the level of both individual (subject) and group and their dialectical relationship. It is another area in which multi -ethnic/racialised positionalities pose challenges for theory.

People of 'mixed-race' are transgressors of boundaries, who disrupt and subvert neatly drawn lines, forcing reassessment of positions and often leading to reactionary forms of reductive retaliation based on such things as skin colour. Moreover:

In the construction of *national* identities 'foreigners' must be kept outside, whether literally or figuratively. The ways in which this is achieved will be based on ideological and legal discourse on boundaries ... interrelationships ... and the way they relate to different sorts of *racialised* exclusions in the construction of national collectivity.

(ibid:42) (emphasis added)

The notion of nationality is often central to that of self-identity and will be returned to throughout the thesis. What is of use here is the emphasis on the material constraints on individuals and groups as well as the concern for political projects and how collectivities are hierarchically placed in the social order. They may be subject to differing and yet overlapping forms of racism. This is crucial when thinking about the ways that young people and children learn to negotiate and articulate the discourses that tell them 'who they are' and perhaps who they may be, at home and at school, and through images in popular culture.

I believe that the concept of 'racialisation' is useful here. Racialisation is a way of recognising that the 'race' of an individual is formed through an active process:

Racialisation is: 'a dialectical process by which meaning is attributed to particular biological features of human beings as a result of which individuals may be assigned to a general category of persons which reproduces itself biologically'.

(Miles1989: 76 cited by Ifekwunigwe 2000: 12)

Racialisation is used throughout this thesis as a way of reinforcing the psychosocially dynamic problems arising from 'racial positioning', and is often used in shorthand by talking about the way in which for example, discourses are 'raced' and often how this takes the form of 'racism'. From a similar position, some writers have also suggested that we should consider whiteness as 'a race' to be investigated.

Helen (Charles) (1992), for example, has argued that white women are 'raced' as much as black women. In fact, if we are attempting *deconstructions* of 'race' we need to be cautious about such an approach. It is true that the ways in which whitenesses have been constructed are as gendered and sexualised as blacknesses. British femininities have historically been classed, and founded upon the imperialist and colonialist project that simultaneously sought to construct whiteness in opposition to '...present and future images of the Orient and the Orientalist woman' (Liddle and Rai 1994: 16).

Since the early nineties, white femininities have been explored by feminists in both Britain and the USA (see Frankenberg 1993; Hall 1993; Ware 1993). Newer writings continue with this work, adding more detailed examinations of gender (both femininities and masculinities) and class (Nayak 1993, 1999 Hewitt 1996; Fine *et al* 1997). For example, Roediger (1994) shows how on arrival in the USA, Irish and Polish immigrants were deemed to be 'not-yet-white' and only achieved or acquired this status through a process of 'Americanisation'. He argues that 'whiteness' is a destructive, divisive and ultimately meaningless term that serves to subordinate working class white people, as well as black people. Although these are interesting ideas, and Roediger provides a thorough account of male working class migration, he fails to consider gender and so his analysis is incomplete. However, his work does show how (gendered) discourses of nationality and nationalism become intertwined with 'race', particularly when talking about responses to racism.

Using 'whiteness' as an area for analysis may help to understand some kinds of 'mixed-raceness'. Luke suggests that:

'White women with partners of color and biracial children embody not only gender/sexuality on which gendered social and identity politics are mapped, but they are marked with 'race' and, in fact, experience unique forms of racism by association to persons of color.'

(Luke 1994: 4).

In her work Luke is interrogating whiteness in similar ways to that which blackness has been in the past. Her analysis (above) may indeed be true, but the basic fact of white privilege, even when actively disrupted, cannot be avoided. As Audre Lorde commented to Mary Daly, 'The white women with hoods on in Ohio handing out KKK literature may not like what you have to say, but they will shoot me on sight' (Lorde 1984: 70). This reveals the problem with deconstructing categories but leaving *social meanings* intact.

The addition of whiteness to the work on hybridity and ethnicity moves the debate on and erases the assumption that ethnic = not-white. This helps us consider the articulation of 'race', ethnicity and culture in gendered and classed individuals and their families, with reference to those who have claims on both 'whiteness' and 'not-whiteness'. However, we must be cautious about simply 'reversing the coin', looking at whiteness as an equal and opposite position to blackness, and attempt equal and opposite analyses. Racism based on colourism and 'difference' still operates in oppressive ways and its various forms will be considered in the next section.

2.4 Meanings of Racism.

Running through all of the work so far is an as yet uncritical use of the word 'racism'. However, this too needs to be deconstructed, as the conceptual frameworks 'race' and racism operate in relation to each other. In this section I will look at some of the ways in which racism has been theorised, and the implications and usefulness of them to this

thesis. There are again many works in this area, too many to go into detail. This section will focus work that has particularly informed this thesis.³

2.4.1 'New Racism', Nationalism or Cultural Imperialism?

In recent years, the ways in which 'racism' has been reconfigured to include the changes in attitudes to 'race' have also been written about by scholars engaged in dismantling hierarchical social divisions. As Britain has become a 'multicultural' society, so have discourses of prejudice moved to encompass notions of cultural and national purity and superiority.

'Nationalism, like racism, is not an homogenous ideology in Britain. Differences of class, place of birth, ethnic origin, religion, political beliefs, gender and other factors radically affect the specific kind of ideologies different segments of the British population hold and the way they construct their boundaries'

(Anthias and Yuval - Davis 1993: 41- 42)

Roediger describes the movement of Polish and Irish settlers from their position as non-white foreigners to white North Americans, albeit inferior ones, and shows the importance of 'nationality' to the potential relaxation of a certain type of 'racism'. It is possible for these men to have become Americans, but not so for other 'racial' types who remain 'hyphenated' Americans (e.g. Asian-Americans). Prominent black men in Britain have achieved acceptability in sport and entertainment based upon their British identity, despite being of a 'different' race - Lenny Henry the comedian, Frank Bruno the boxer and entertainer are just two examples. Bruno even advertises HP sauce, which is a quintessentially English product (see Gilroy on Bruno 1993d). Thus there are ways of taking on national identities and with them acceptance, whilst retaining distinct 'raced' identities.

³ There are many theorists whose work is absent from this section. I have consulted a variety of writings from the vast work of the following: Miles (1994), Sivanandan (1990), Solomos (1993) Cohen (1992), Cohen and Bains (1988) and Cohen (1987). There are aspects of these authors' work which have indirectly informed my own through their use in other people's writing. However, most of their work has been (until recently in the case of Cohen) ungendered and therefore incomplete and inadequate for the task here. I prefer to focus on the work mentioned in this section.

To this end, Anthias and Yuval-Davis (1992) argue that an analysis of racism is incomplete if it rests solely on the colour 'black'. They return to the concept of ethnicity as the way to challenge the fact that Jews, Gypsies, Irish and other minority ethnic white groups suffer from both personal and structural prejudice and discrimination within discourses of nationality. These groups may on the face of things avoid some of the more obvious visual markers of 'difference', although I would argue that the things that Anthias and Yuval-Davis mention, such as dress and clothing are often the key to triggering everyday attacks.

The impact of globalisation, changing forms of nation-states, and citizenship based upon processes of inclusion and exclusion, are also relevant to this thesis ⁴. Avtar Brah has shown how '... women are central to the construction and reconstruction of nationalist ideologies' (Brah 1993:16). Her work urges us to rethink how articulating axes of socially constructed discourses on ethnicity, sexuality and gender are imbued with oppressive power (see also Brah 1996). Structures and institutions are not, as already noted, *static* or *essential*, they are however potential means of controlling and ordering societies and often categories of (racialised) difference are re-invoked in quotidian ways.

The liberal model of a more tolerant Britain reflects a shift in racist discourses that mirrors those in North America. Firstly, difference, then diversity, and finally 'difference radically redefined' (Frankenberg 1993: 14). The third move is a shift toward 'colour evasiveness/power evasiveness... that we are all the same under the skin and that culturally we are converging...' (ibid.). This latter view sees any racism in society as the fault of people of colour themselves, because of their own desire for difference (ibid.). Frankenberg's analysis centralises 'race' and colour (and thus is problematic), but it does reflect changes that have also been seen in the UK.

Máirtín Mac an Ghaill highlights the increasing 'Americanisation' of British Race Relations, which is in part due to the 'special relationship' which developed between the two countries (Mac an Ghaill: 1999). However, he also places debates about racism

⁴ Máirtín Mac an Ghaill's excellent *Contemporary Racisms and Ethnicities: Social and Cultural Transformations* (1999) has a chapter which summarises an array of literature on globalisation and theorisations of nation-states. See also Yuval-Davis and Anthias (1989)

within their particular socio/historical locations in order to argue that rather dismissing earlier versions, we can see that they have been strategic responses to social contexts. Citing Phillips, he shows how Americanised theories of West Indian migrants to Britain (ibid.: 66) would not provide a useful analysis. Mac an Ghaill suggests that the 'reclaiming of culture by differentialist theorists has [also] resulted in the suggestion of the need to move beyond the idea of a single monolithic racism' (ibid.: 73). This is particularly evident when it is located in the discourses of multiculturalism that are found in education. As children were accessed within the educational context, such discourses bear closer scrutiny.

2.4.2 Racism and Education.

The changes in the types of language used and methods of combating discrimination and prejudice in education cannot hide the 'unpalatable truth' that Homi Bhabha describes as follows:

[C]ultural diversity becomes a bedrock of multicultural education policy in [England]. There are two problems with it; one is the very obvious one, that although there is always entertainment and encouragement of cultural diversity, there is also a corresponding containment of it. ... which says that 'these other cultures are fine, but we must be able to locate them in our own grid'. ... The second problem is, ... that in some societies where multiculturalism is encouraged racism is still rampant in various forms.

(Bhabha 1990: 28)

Rattansi argues that there have been two main strands to educational, teaching and activist approaches to 'race' in Britain throughout the 1980s and into the 1990s. He conceptualises them both as essentialist.

Firstly, he identifies 'Multiculturalism' which is an 'additive model'. From this position one can see that there are many cultures within society and one should learn about them and respect them all. The focus here is on 'culture' not 'race' which he calls a form of

ethnic essentialism (Rattansi 1992: 39) Secondly, he cites 'anti-racist' approaches which disallow heterogeneity amongst groups and try to maintain a 'black community' struggle, a 'reification of community'. This latter position tends to marginalise groups that do not fit into such a category easily; he mentions Greeks, Turks, Jews and Irish positions (ibid.: 40). Rattansi does not mention those who are inter-ethnic or 'mixed-race'; he also chooses to focus on known 'groups'.

Rattansi identifies the need to separate racism from 'racial discrimination'; racism is used to define groups who are allocated as such on the basis of some kind of biological signifier. He continues to include nationalism which may be based upon 'racialised' discourse, and ethnocentrism which, he suggests, is unavoidable at the level of the individual who centralises ones language and cultural practices of origin. Rattansi is one of the few writers who not only mentions class and gender but argues for the need to centralise sexuality (albeit in a rather simplistic way), and he does so by using psychoanalytic theory in his work.

Schools have in the past, Rattansi goes on, tended to fall into one of two positions. What is needed is a much more subtle approach that does not focus on difference. He suggests a recognition that there are many ambiguities and contradictions in the process of 'Othering'. This may not *necessarily* be something that is *only* a white phenomenon. I believe that discussions of 'mixed-race' identities may, in some cases, highlight these kinds of social and psychic contradictions and show the pragmatic ways they may be handled. They often contain elements of the ambiguities of the kind Rattansi is suggesting. In this sense, Rattansi's work is useful to this thesis.

Anthias and Yuval Davis (1992) have suggested that concerns about Muslim fundamentalism, and how they are played out in schools, reflect the 'new racism' that cites *cultural* difference as the basis for conflict. In particular, they analyse the 'racialisation' of the Muslim category, and note that one of the main areas of cultural conflict in schools is religion (Anthias and Yuval-Davis 1993: 154). Islamophobia is a term that has been developed to name this phenomenon (Mac an Ghaill 1999). But many of the incidents that inform such debates include highly gendered facets. Mac an Ghaill reports on the fact that schools are in the process of conducting 'hierarchies of

masculinities' in which Muslim boys are constructed as 'folk devils' (ibid.). One can only assume that these will complement the stereotypical femininities that already constrain Muslim girls. Of course, in order for discourses to be gendered, they are inevitably sexualised.

2.4.3. Connecting 'Race', Racism and (Hetero)sexuality.

Anthias and Yuval-Davis (1992) refer to 'ethnocentrism' in schools and elsewhere, and see it as a form of prejudice that can be far more complicated than that based on 'race' and the visual signifier skin colour. They show how gender is a key factor in ethnic prejudices. Rattansi (as above) focuses on the centrality of *sexuality* in his analysis of 'racism'. This one of the reasons why he is concerned with 'the operations of the unconscious and the dynamics of psychic reality' (Rattansi 1992: 37). These include the sexual, the processes of pleasure and desire. He suggests that one way to view the significance of psychoanalytic theories is to conceptualise the unconscious as productive of:

irrationalities and resistances that simultaneously organise and subvert the operations of conscious subjectivity
(Craib cited by Rattansi 1992: 38)

Lola Young's work integrates both cultural and psychoanalytic features to explore discourses of 'race' and racism', as they articulate with discourses of sexuality as represented in films about 'race' in British cinema from 1965 to 1985. Young argues that popular culture helps to construct, as it is constructed by, stereotypical (racist) beliefs. Interestingly, she gives over considerable space to consider the role of interracial sex in constructing sexualised discourses of 'race', and she has a whole chapter entitled 'Miscegenation and Passing'.

Young argues that fear of the 'Other' is the most powerful factor in white, male directors' representations of black women. Intrinsic to all her analyses is the power of men, and in particular of white men, to control 'the gaze'; to look at women and expose them to an objectifying process. Popular images in these films hold white women within the Madonna/whore paradigm, and black women as animal and sexually voracious; both

resonate with dominant discourses of female sexuality in need of regulation (Jackson 1994; Jackson and Scott 1996; Wilson and Kitzinger 1993). Yet for Young the importance of the white (male) writing of *blackness* is that it is the way that *whiteness* is, by default, constructed. She suggests:

Being dependent or 'parasitic' on the notion of Otherness is problematic for both self and Other. The recognition of the self in the Other remains at root an alienated identity, an 'identity-in-Otherness'. Self-determination is a precondition for self-recognition or self-conscious identity. This assertion of self-determination may be thought to require the Other - literally the Other's otherness - be negated or cancelled. Where this 'identity-in-the-Other' is racially predicated or defined by racialised discourses, the drive to self-consciousness may result in the negation or the reduction of the racial Other, the Other's exclusion'

(Young 1996: 182)

In psychic terms, Young is exploring the same kind of boundary keeping and exclusions that Anthias and Yuval-Davis talk about with their social model of ethnic collectivities. Whilst I can see the validity of much of what Young is saying I feel uneasy about her re-invoking the binary conceptualisation of white/black and ask yet again what is available for someone of 'mixed-race'? A simultaneous understanding of 'being and nothingness' or something more fluid and meaningful? It would appear from Young's analysis that the only possibility is, after all, psychosis.

The individualised/universalised formations of the acquisition of racialised identity contained within such psychoanalytic theorising are problematic, yet I recognise that we need to acknowledge individual psychologies and cognitive processes and how they interact with the social at a much deeper level. I believe that psychoanalytic frameworks may in future be useful for Cultural Studies, but at present, need development. The connections between 'race', ethnicity, culture and sex that present hegemonic whiteness uncritically in (popular) culture and mass media will be discussed further in Chapters 4 and 5. There is no simple correlation between racism and sexuality as the two are linked through complex psychic and social specificities that can only be understood *in part* through reading meta-narratives of desire and fear. Multiply placed individuals again

require and make more flexible readings of such cultural positionings, as will be discussed in the next section.

2.5 'Mixed Race' and Hybridity.

The ideas outlined so far show that the following:

- In order to theorise movement and contingency, as well specificity, 'race' should be tackled 'on the axis of ethnicity' (Anthias and Yuval- Davis (1992)
- The construction of ethnicity coincides with both cultural production and reproduction and;
- nationalist discourses are based upon the gendered discourses of both.

Those who have correctly determined that the old basis for the 'biology' of racial types is invalid often see the term 'mixed-race' as problematic. There is indeed more overlap *between* 'racial' phenotypes than there is *within* each, and radical and feminist scientists have been saying so for many years (Sayers 1982, Rose *et al* 1984). This section will detail some of the ways in which cultural theorists are attempting deconstructive practices, and to use different forms of language. It will further interrogate theories of multiply constructed or hybrid forms of 'culture' and 'ethnicity' and how they move such practices on. The second section will look at the ways in which empirical research has engaged with these paradigm shifts.

2.5.1 Theorising Multiplicities

As I have shown, Cultural Studies are a particularly interesting source of writing on new ways of conceptualising 'race', culture and ethnicity. Gilroy (1993) looks at the way in which the global black diaspora feeds into itself to provide new and ever-changing "black folk cultures' producing distinctive public political characteristics and urban social movements' (Gilroy 1993: 35); so too does Back (1996). These writings have encompassed a range of cultural forms, many of them 'popular'. New ethnicities and

new cultures are not simply additions to existing forms, they are evolved and metamorphosed into 'hybrids', another biological term.

However, Bhabha suggests that cultural hybridity develops not from

two original moments from which the third emerges, rather hybridity is ... the 'third space' which enables the other positions to emerge.

(Bhabha 1990: 11)

This then is not a dialectical process, rather something that seems to occupy a 'parallel universe'! However, Bhabha believes that:

[If] the act of cultural translation (both as representation and as reproduction) denies the essentialism of a prior given or original culture, then we can see all forms of culture are continually in a process of hybridity.

(ibid.: 210)

This aspect of his work offers great potential for deconstructing multiethnic positions in society. Other North American theorists have been working on the meaning of translation and boundaries to racialised identities, and Gloria Anzaldúa (1987) shows how language is essential to the Latinas of the 'borderlands'. In her work she uses the multiple possibilities of her various languages for 'boundary crossing'. She describes herself as 'mestiza', one who survives through strength and malleability. In this research the children showed that the language of official versions of 'race' and ethnicity also failed them, and they too began to explore other languages, some of them visual. Anzaldúa offers a more poetic vision of the possibilities of hybridization than Bhabha.

British feminist post-colonial writing has also interrogated the meaning of hybridity, and considered how hybrid positions are mediated through bodies as texts. In her work on 'passing', Sarah Ahmed (1999) shows how this is possible through the dynamic relational positionings social interactions (antagonisms) create. Her work reveals that:

The contradictions of passing through hybrid space suggest the impossibility of placing passing on one side or the other of identity politics.

(Ahmed 1999: 98)

She uses auto/biography to explore how:

The traversing of distinct identities materialises itself through the discontinuities of the subject's biography.

(ibid.)

Ahmed centralises the importance of the subjective reading of auto/biographical moments and how they facilitate racial translations. Her work attempts a post-structuralist analysis of skin colour and bodies as they are deployed in the re/presentation of 'mixed-raceness' and the way it is read. One possible reading of her work is that it is also engaged with understanding embodied racialised boundaries and how they are crossed and re-crossed, and so connects her with the social and psychic borders as explored above. Her writing is challenging and interesting and will be explored further in later chapters. However, she uses the language of the performative, of mimesis and materialisations in ways that remain inaccessible to the majority of 'mixed-race' people.

Some of these newer theorisations are interesting and seductive, and often quite inspiring. But where would one place a 'mixed-race' child with a single, white mother raising her/him, and having no particular connection to a minority ethnic culture? Perhaps to all intents and purposes the 'coconut' label would truly fit some, black on the outside, white on the inside. To quote Denise Riley out of context (she was talking of the changing category of 'Women'), 'Am I that Name?' (Riley 1988). But it is by no means certain such de-raced or 'exclusively white English maternal culture' would lead to such cultural 'malnourishment' as to prompt suicide attempts. (Ifekwunigwe 2000:175). In fact, 'white English' culture is fulfilling the requirements of Bhabha's version of 'hybridity'; there is no more one cohesive 'white culture' or ethnicity in England or Britain than there is black.

Our desire for clarity seems only to lead into more obscurity. This post-structuralist way of looking at some aspects of our social identities is both liberating and yet entirely partial unless considered along with a rigorous interrogation of the power dynamics that are involved. *It is essential that empirical research interrogate the ways in which these discourses are lived through, and constructed by, relations of power in the social world.*

What are the implications of deconstructive tendencies in academia and what do they mean for non-academics? How does focussing on cultural (or bodily) hybridity move us forward in the fight against racism? How meaningful is it for young people and children who claim 'mixed-race' identities? These questions should be asked in conjunction with questions that dissect the ways in which political processes (at micro and macro levels) imbue terms with power and thus maintain or subvert the status quo. We need to interrogate the ways in which such theorisations help explore social inequities and thus provide tools for dismantling them. In the next section I will look at some of the empirical work on 'mixed-race' identities, and whether such work has engaged with these issues.

2.5.2 Empirical Studies into 'Hybridity'

In many daily contexts 'race' remains a common-sense categorisation that works *some of the time*. In the USA Omi and Winant (1986) and Spickard (1992) have written about the so-called 'blending of races'. The terms maintain a sense of categorisation that everyone can understand. The USA, unlike Britain, has consistently legislated in order to keep the 'superior whites' from interbreeding with the 'inferior black', and miscegenation laws were only repealed in 1967 in some southern states. Miscegenation is still an issue that divides people of all nationalities and races. The rise of the Black Muslim movement 'The Nation of Islam' in the USA has shown that it is not just those in dominant groups who continue to believe in racial segregation.

Maria P. P. Root has edited two collection of papers about and by people (in the USA) who are variously referred to as 'biracial', and 'multiracial', with reference also made to 'monoracial' types (Root 1992, Root 1996). These terms not only have distinct biological, essentialist overtones, but also raise the question of who amongst us is truly

monoracial? The papers are for the most part positive accounts of individuals who are comfortable with the trying to construct a 'multiracial' identity. The authors offer a direct response to the persistence of the idea that people who are multiracial will suffer more than those who are 'pure' in forging identities, and challenge those ideas (Cauce *et al* 1992; Jacobs 1992). It is, they stress, most often racism that is to blame for difficulties individuals have, rather than 'psychopathology' or 'dysfunctional families' (ibid.). These collections include innovative work by individuals who claim heritage from Pacific Rim Countries, South Asia, South America, Eastern Europe to name but a few.

In Britain, Tizard and Phoenix (1993) interviewed young mixed-race individuals about their self-identifications and their experiences of racism. The vast majority had a positive self-identity. Less than half thought of themselves as black, '[M]ost of the rest had a 'mixed' or brown' identity, a small number classified themselves as more white than black' (ibid.:64). Several were happy to use terms that others may associate with racism such as 'half-caste'. Some of the young people changed their terminology according to their location, something that most people do to greater or lesser extent. Tizard and Phoenix also noted that the class and location of the families seemed to have some effect on whether the young people had positive or negative views of blackness, as did the number of black people in their lives and local environment - their 'social geography' (Frankenberg 1992). I believe this to be a crucial and somewhat underdeveloped area of the work done by Tizard and Phoenix.

Tizard and Phoenix (1993) found that the 'fact of blackness' in a mother did not guarantee the politicisation of her beliefs, and that she would not *automatically* encourage her children to claim a black identity. Children did not identify as 'more black' if their mother was black, yet social geographies remained highly significant. The striking thing about their research and that of Anne Wilson (1987), is the fact that many of these children are growing up in single parent households with a white mother. I believe that this requires further interrogation and analysis, and is a central concern of this thesis.

Anne Wilson (1987) studied young children of 6-7 years old using social/psychological methods that included showing children images of 'racially' diverse children and asking them to choose which ones with which they identified. She too found that the children

could identify themselves as 'brown' or 'mixed-race' and had quite complex self-perceptions. Yet whilst the particularity of the fact that many of the children had a single, white mother was touched upon it was not fully explored.

One of the major concerns of my own work is the role of gendered parenting in constructions of 'raced' and gendered children. The vast literature on failing boys has been enriched and enhanced by the work of Cecile Wright and others who have shown that many of these boys will be black (Wright *et al* 2000; Epstein *et al* 1998b). What is less clear is how many of these problem or 'bad' black boys have white mothers and are, in fact, 'mixed-race' (Connolly 1996).

Ilan Katz, (a white, South African - Jewish male living in England), started a study of infant observation with two families who had 'mixed-race' babies (1996). As the study progressed he realised that the methods he was using were simply not effective, and he chose to move towards what he calls a more 'post-modern approach' to his work. He set about using the narratives as presented to him by a range of interracial families, and to use their own stories to try to see how the life story of family affected the development of the children. This is an approach with which I sympathise. The ways in which the adults if the families talk about 'race' (and implicitly, gender) provide a picture of an important and insidious part of the discursive material that will shape the way in which children will come to think about their own identity.

Katz's work offers a rich picture of the way in which interracial families affect the learning processes of the children, yet it fails ultimately to reach the voices of the children themselves. His work is also lacking in gendered analysis of the relations between family members. In particular, I suspect the earlier work suffers from the sex of the researcher himself. Although he is sensitive to this possibility, he fails to find way around the problem. He provides the reader with a great deal of detail, but ultimately I feel that his work is lacking in analysis. He does, however, draw some important conclusions that concur with those of Wilson (1987) and Phoenix and Tizard (1993). Namely that:

There is little evidence that that these [inter-racial] families show marked pathology or marginality. Inter-racial families sometimes face particular problems,

especially hostilities from both communities and a lack of role models in the media with which to identify. Nevertheless there is no interracial family 'type' and the families are more diverse than similar. Class background and nationhood are the main forces which seem to determine how the families see themselves and cope with their lives.

(Katz 1996: 202)

The media is increasingly offering images of inter-racial relationships although they may often be problematic, and children's readings of 'race' in media will be discussed further in Chapters 5 and 6. What is important is Katz's debunking of the idea of 'Cognitive Ebonisation' in families (ibid. 192). He concludes that:

' ... all the theorists including Benson and Tizzard and Phoenix, who see the inter-racial family as the microcosm of race relations are only seeing one aspect of a multi-faceted phenomenon. Race and ethnicity are not monolithic features of society which are reproduced in families, and racism is not irreducible within families ...'

(Katz 1996: 194 – 195)

Jayne O. Ifekwunigwe's recent study of black African/white *metis/se* adults eloquently shows the importance narratives of kinship to the formations of identities (see Ifekwunigwe 1997: 2000). Her work is both innovative and unique in her focus on the mother/daughter relationship and how it informs the *metisse* position. One of her concerns is with terminologies and taxonomies of 'race'. Through her own experience and reading the research of others she suggests that:

Mixed-race people themselves as well as parents, carers, practitioners, educators, policy makers, academics and curious lay people are all hungry for a uniform but not essentialist term that creates a space for the naming of their specific experiences without necessarily re-inscribing and reifying "race".

(Ifekwunigwe 2000: 17)

I concur with her and would also attest to numerous conversations with others who agree that, as yet, this is impossible. She suggests that:

[W]hat is needed is a term which does not glorify 'race' yet acknowledges the existence of racialism while also centring on the lived manifestations of the sociocultural markers of ethnicity, class, gender and generation.

(Ifekwunigwe 1997:130)

Ifekwunigwe continues in her call to free people of 'mixed-race' from language such as 'hybridity' with biologist and raced overtones by saying:

[Nevertheless] I am now convinced of the importance of trying to formulate an analytical scheme that can address multiracialised, biracialised and generational hierarchies of differences within the marginalised spaces of "mixed-race".

(ibid. 18)

To this end, she goes on to detail a multi-layered approach to developing a terminology based around the terms *metis(se)* and *metissage* (ibid.)⁵. She also describes her respondents throughout as '*faux griot(te)s*', a term that updates the role of the traditional story-teller in African society.

Ifekwunigwe also shares concerns with recent debates demonising black masculinities and calls for the urgent need for studies of black boys with white mothers. She suggests that:

future research on *metis(se)* individuals and their families should focus on the differential agency of "majority" and "minority" parents, i.e. White mothers and fathers and black mothers and fathers

(ibid: 192)

I agree most strongly with her desire to challenge black/white binaries and simplistic categories in the academy. I also agree with her call for more nuanced interrogations

⁵ Ifekwunigwe gives detailed accounts of the differences between 'proximate' and 'mediate' *metis(se)* and multiracialised and biracialised *metis(se)* which are generally included under the umbrella term '*metissage*' (Ifekwunigwe 2000: 20)

into parenting practices and their meaning for 'mixed-raceness'. However, what we must not do is assume that we *know* that 'black boys' and white mothers exist as such, and end up homogenising groups by 'race' when they undoubtedly are not really *groups* at all.

Despite a number of problems with these attempts at categorisation (returned to in Chapter 9), I find Ifekwunigwe's work stimulating, emotional and beautifully written. In a desert of academic sterility on the subject of hybridity, this book is a long cool drink of water. It does centralise the voices of women who articulate some of the issues of *metisness* in ways that are powerful, moving and extremely thought provoking.

What these studies and my own research have in common is that we have all, through different paths, come to the same places, each unaware until after a great deal of work had been done that we would meet at a crossroads. Unbeknownst to each other at the time of embarking on our work, we have all recognised the failures of existing theories and believed that we can only try to access understandings through qualitative methods (narratives), and that there are as many positionalities as there are individuals to narrate them. We are also focussing our work on aspects of identities that involve the interrogation of 'families' in one form or another, recognising the importance of the interplay of gender, ethnicity and culture in parent/child relations. We all have different maps for our journeys to the crossroads. There are many paths that we may take in order to continue our journey and we will continue to make differing choices. But our research has shown that the ways in which 'mixed-race' children and adults think of themselves challenge finite categorisations, and more particularly the idea that there is *de facto*, more of a problem with this form of identification (mixed) than any other.

As Root (1992) says:

[multi/biracial/ised identity] provides us with a vehicle for examining ideologies surrounding race, race relations and the role of the social sciences in the deconstruction of race [...] the answers are not to be found in a new system of classification, but in deconstruction, synthesis and evolution.

(Root 1992: 10 -11)

With such complexities in terminologies and their applications, in theories and their implications, it becomes almost impossible to find ways of talking about 'mixed-race', inter-ethnic or inter-national subject positions and their attendant dynamic identifications in ways that are acceptable to all. The continued focus of this thesis is developing further understanding of their productions.

2.6 Identity, Identities or Identification(s)?

In the recent expansion in the post-structuralist academic paradigm, social interpretations of the worlds in which we live are multiple, multilayered, multiplicitous ... there is virtually no area of the social sciences that does not show this shift. In recent sociological writing there is an increasing concern that theories about the private/social self should more accurately be theories that reflect the multiple selves to which we have access. The modernist project of the constant and knowing self has been refigured as the site of dynamic and shifting discursive processes. This is something that particularly interests me with regard to multiracial/multiethnic identities as it was something that I had a very crude and uninformed awareness of many years ago: the possibility of being white, non-white/black/of colour and 'mixed-race' (and female) all at the same time; but only being aware of this at different times and in different situations. Perhaps it would be more accurate to say that one is not *always* aware of these selves *simultaneously*; rather that one may be more aware of any one of them under different circumstances. So at school I could be, to all intents and purposes white. Until it came time for arguments or fights when I became a 'nigger'. I would also recognise my non-whiteness in other situations, such as being on the receiving end of racist abuse in an overwhelmingly white town. Or feel more white than black when in the company of dark(er) skinned people from 'monoracialised' backgrounds. Or feel 'of colour' when positioned as 'exotic'. This has been an 'ordinary' experience for me, shifting between these identities and dis/identifications. I would argue that this is somehow unique to those with 'multi-ed' backgrounds or those who inhabit the subordinate 'racial' positions in society who have also experienced some form of dislocation⁶. It is not likely that a 'white' person will

⁶ A colleague of mine who is a black woman who was adopted by a white family has reported remarkably similar dynamics.

actually ever *feel* themselves to be black in the same way - or is it? I have never heard of such a thing. Despite those who suggest that they would like to be black, from the famous (Madonna) to those less so (Wayne in Buckingham and Sefton-Green 1994), this is not the same as *feeling* 'black'.

If these multiple and unstable, or should I say, *dynamic* aspects that go to make up a sense of 'self' are contingent, contested, incomplete and positioned through and by discourse, then 'identification' may indeed be a better word to use when exploring them. However, Hall reminds us that:

Identification turns out to be one of the least well-understood concepts – almost as tricky as, though preferable to identity itself: and certainly no guarantee against the conceptual difficulties that have beset the latter.

(Hall 1996:2)

Notwithstanding this apposite caution, the term particularly lends itself to an analysis of a social being interacting with a cultural sphere of existence. In his excellent Introduction to his book with Paul du Gay (1996), Stuart Hall leads the reader through the dense fields of sociology, cultural studies and psychoanalytic theory to explore the ways in which subjects are formed, and in particular the ways in which the knowing and conscious interact with the unconscious and the 'interior landscape' of 'the self' (ibid.:13). Ultimately, I believe that in these readings there are useful aspects to be incorporated into a discussion on ('mixed')racial, ethnic or cultural identities. Hall shows that Foucault's recognition that subjective formation requires us to understand 'a genealogy of the technologies of the self' (ibid:14), and he uses Judith Butler's work as it develops the notion of the materialization of sexual and racial constructs (ibid.). What both of these theorists have developed, he shows, are ways of approaching theorisations of the articulation of the psychic, discursive and importantly, corporeal. Skin colour and other visual signifiers on the body still have immense power in contemporary racisms, as will be shown in subsequent chapters. To paraphrase Butler, bodies still matter (Butler 1993). And bodies matter to children who recognise their sameness and difference within the familial, educational and social spaces and to how they make sense of these differences.

There is a huge amount of writing on the sociology of families and about the ways in which family relationships play a role in the acquisition of gendered identities. Much of the popular writing on the subject in the last fifteen years has been fuelled by the concerns of the Conservative government with a 'Back to Basics' agenda which included a return to traditional family values. Following on from that, 'New Labour' based much of its campaigning around being the party with 'family friendly employment policies' which signalled a concern with lone parents and working mothers in particular.

This kind of slogan based politics reflected concerns with the 'breakdown of the family' and the fact that this served as a threat to the (moral) fabric of society. The 1980s and late 1990s saw the demonisation of single mothers, especially those who were young and, of course, those who were black. In particular these debates signalled the rise in concern with masculinities, as boys without fathers were seen to be suffering from inadequate parenting and lacking role models which led to them underachieving at school and developing into antisocial beings, quite simply a menace to society⁷. There is a great deal of research that counters such propaganda, and feminist writings have long repudiated the notion of single mothering as *intrinsically* harmful and challenged the heterosexist bias of research (Steel 1990; Weston 1997). The rallying call 'Families Need Fathers' coincided with the beginnings of research into fathers and with it a recognition that 'families' constituted 'parents' who as mothers and fathers had very different power and influence (e.g. Lewis and O'Brien 1987; Lamb (ed.) 1987; McKee and O'Brien 1982).

Increasingly, research implicated 'the family' as one of the major sites for the reproduction of gender inequalities and violence against women and children⁸. Reay found that:

⁷ The Institute of Economic Affairs published many such attacks that were widely publicised in the media as scholarly writings Dennis and Erdos (1992), Dennis (1994). More recently attacks on working mothers have been in the headlines again.

⁸ See for example Ferri (1976); Driver and Droisen (1989); Phoenix *et al* (1991); Elliot (1996); Jagger and Wright (1999)

Lone mothers' accounts of the breakdown of their heterosexual relationships stands in contradistinction to the elevation of fathers as an unmitigated good in both right and left political discourses

(Reay 1998: 157)

Families as a site of conflict, and lone mothers as a source of concern, both contain 'hidden' discourses of 'race' and/or class. There have been angry responses to the implicit racism. Black women, are more likely to head households in Britain than women from other ethnic groups, but the implication of 'state scrounging' is refuted by figures showing African Caribbean women working and supporting families (Elliot 1996: 42-48). The writing on ethnicity and families has often been linked to an antiracist project which positions 'the family' as *support* in racist society. North American feminists suggested that:

Woman scholars of color have mounted the most serious challenges to universalistic theory. They have documented the historical experiences of communities of color, and therefore the differing cultural contexts and material conditions under which mothering has been carried out.

(Glenn 1994: 5)

This kind of specificity in the United States means considering the diverse experiences of African-American, South, Mexican-American women, Japanese-American women, Latina and Asian-American (ibid.). There has yet to be such a concerted effort in such areas in Britain, even though there is some writing on ethnicity⁹. Patricia Hill Collins believes that mothering in racist societies is about nothing less than survival:

Emphasizing the quest for self-definition is mediated by membership in different racial and social class work groups reveals how the issues of identity are crucial to all motherwork

(Hill Collins 1994: 62)

⁹ Again there is a history of responses to the inadequacy of theorising families from white, middle class research data. For many families of minority ethnic status families are also a source of strength in a racist society, even though the same kinds of micro-political problems occur. See e.g. Lawrence (1982); Bryan et al (1985); Phoenix (1989); Joseph (1981)

This position centralises the role of mothers in the formation of racialised identities. In conjunction with a view of a singular recognisable ethnic 'community' (as above) such arguments begin to imply that the production of 'racial' and ethnic identities within families as some kind of cognitive processing that can only be achieved with black parents of black children. Such arguments have been central to debates about transracial adoption.

Throughout the 1980s at the same time that 'identity politics' were being worked through in academia and political equality projects, the effects of such arguments were being played out in a much more urgent and, some would say, damaging way. The debates about transracial adoption hit right at the crux of the unanswered questions about how we acquire identity, and in particular 'racial' identity. The acquisition of *correct* 'racial identity' was positioned as central for the development of mental health in the discourse of 'race mixing', and of course these concerns hold true for the placement of children 'outside' of their racial groups (Owen and Gill 1983; Gaber and Aldridge 1995).

These familiar concerns were coming from the subordinate groups rather than the dominant. The areas of public health and welfare and social policy were where most discussions took place (British Association for Adoption and Fostering 1987). Up until that early 1980s it had been acceptable to place black children with white families if there were no suitable black families for them. This policy was challenged on the basis that young children were not being brought up to 'be black'. Specifically, they often had no knowledge of a black cultural heritage and it was thought that this could lead to problems in later life. Olumide suggests that criticisms of these placements reinforce 'scientific racism' of the early part of the century, centring as they do on failure and 'pathological bonding' of different 'racial types' (Small cited by Olumide 1996: 360). However, her research shows that:

It appears that [families containing people considered to be racially different] do not so much damage one another as receive damaging attacks and affronts to their social legitimacy

(Olumide 1996: 355)



Children of transracial placements suffer from naming - 'Bounty Bar' and 'coconut' were and still are pejorative terms to describe black people raised by white middle class families who took on those families' values. (The term Oreo operates in the same way in the USA). These individuals faced hostility from both white racist society and the black communities who felt betrayed by them.

What seems to me to be of great significance in these arguments is the meaning of 'blackness'. Is blackness only *authenticated* through culture? A person may take on 'white' middle-class culture and it is that aspect that can cause rejection on the basis of authenticity from black communities. Simultaneously, they may still suffer racism from whites, which cannot be based on cultural difference, but is about the colour of their skin. There is a very basic fear/aggression towards those who are very clearly *visually* Other. I would be loath to identify myself with those who are accused by Clive Harris of 'ocularcentrism' (1996); nor do I think that we can throw the baby out with the bath water, minimising the power of the visual in motivations for everyday acts of racism.

Transracial adoption is often bound up with concerns about 'national' and 'ethnic' identifications as it implies that black people must automatically have a *different* (boundaried) culture that came from different 'roots' than those of white Britons, and that this cultural knowledge is passed on through the 'family'. As feminists have pointed out however, this is more likely to be the role of the mother. I have already indicated that this is a central part of this thesis as it interrogates ways in which mothers deploy gendered cultural practices to inform children's (gendered/raced/classed) identifications.

2. 7 Conclusions

From the selective look at the writing that has informed this research, it is clear that a very flexible theoretical framework needs to be used in order to explore how theoretical concepts from these different, overlapping and vast literatures can be used to investigate

multi-racial/ethnic positions. Some writers, such as Hall, will be mentioned again in the next chapter about methodology. More often theories and research will be referred to throughout the body of the rest of the thesis, as they are too diffuse to be contained within this one section. The research findings will show that the ways in which children and adults are choosing to position themselves are informed by the dominant discourses that influence their daily social interactions and readings of media, linking the macro to the micro-political. In the next chapter, I will outline how my own political/personal trajectory influenced my reading and thus guided the research processes and methodologies, and also how the limitations of time and resources informed the pragmatic choices in research methods.

Chapter 3: Methodology and Methods.

[T]he question, and the theorisation of identity is a matter of considerable political significance, and it is only likely to be advanced when both the necessity and the 'impossibility' of identities, and the suturing of the psychic and the discursive in their constitution, are fully and unambiguously acknowledged.

(Hall 1996: 15)

3.1 Introduction

Hall's observation is extraordinarily challenging and a full exploration of it beyond the scope of this piece of research. It is the interrogation of *social identifications* that forms the main body of this thesis. The focus is on the external landscapes; the discursive register producing and produced by material, structural and social relations. This register is in constant negotiation with the psychic and is at all times a political project. How can one hope to begin to investigate the way in which young children are working through these processes? In the next sections I will trace my reasoning in making methodological decisions, and detail the way in which the research developed.

The theoretical underpinnings of the research were guided by the texts discussed in the previous chapter. I was interested to know how children understood the concepts described above (Chapter 2) and how they used them, if they did at all. I will use this chapter to show how the intention to explore these areas informed my choice of methods. One of the most critical aspects of the research process was my own position within it and how it informed what I did. This and a sense of my own representational power over the children (and parents and teachers) were the main aspects of what I would loosely term ethical dilemmas. These dilemmas are explored in more detail below and in Chapter 6.

In the next section I will argue that the use of feminist methodologies was most appropriate for this research. Secondly, I will consider how the key terms 'discourse',

narrative and 'speech genres' will be used throughout the thesis. The ways in which I used both visual and verbal narratives forms the basis for the third section. Accessing the schools, obtaining data through interview and informal interaction will be described below, along with the methods of analysis. The research reflects a complex process that involved visiting three primary schools. In each school, I spent two longer periods, an additional week at a later date, and numerous odd days, throughout 1998. I carried out the fieldwork in two main stages, interviewing groups of children and some teachers in the first, and the remaining teachers, individual children and parents in the second. At all stages of the research process I was aware of the need for critical reflexivity as the issue of ethics and politics in sensitive research was never far from my mind. The processes reflect the ways in which I thought I could best try to access the ways in which children understood the discourses of 'race', ethnicity and culture as they negotiated them with and through their gendered, classed identifications.

3.2 Defining Feminist Methodologies.

My interest in politicising lives arose from my returning to Higher Education in 1989. In my quest for self-respect, I believed education could be a key. If I could go to college I could become 'someone' (Wexler 1992). I had attended school at the age of three. I stayed on at what was called a 'Boys Preparatory School'; I was the first girl to attend, until the age of ten. I left my Girls Grammar school after scraping through my 'A' Levels at the age of 17. I knew without doubt that I did not want to stay in the education system. Against all advice to go to University first and think about myself later, I decided to take a year off. That year turned into ten years, after which I found myself doing a 'sensible course' (H.N.D Business and Finance) not only because of my low self esteem, but because I thought it was practical and that was what was needed for the jobs market.

Ten years later I find myself studying and teaching in areas that were beyond my imaginings when I started. My commitment to feminist epistemologies and methodologies is based upon my own experience as a student and the potentially transformatory power of feminist pedagogies and anti-oppressive political research.

In order to explore meanings of 'identity' in young children, I knew that without doubt I had to allow them to speak for themselves. In order to do *that* I needed to develop a level of trust that facilitated open dialogue, yet I had a limited amount of time because of my funding. My experience as a child and growing concern with the role of education in discursive constructions led to my interest in the school context. These historical, political, ethical and practical imperatives guided the whole process.

Feminist concerns with epistemology and ontology and their application to research have a long and varied history. From critiquing androcentric 'science as usual' to working within feminist postmodernist frameworks the dynamic nature of feminist writing has positioned it as one of the most important developments in critical thinking in the last thirty years¹. The 'veracity' of data is the basis for some of the most fundamental debates about epistemology and methodology, and even what is deemed a 'legitimate' area of study (see Oakley 1974). Feminists and others who are concerned with 'emancipatory research' have criticised the idea of a neutral and observable truth that is simply there to be discovered. In particular, they have challenged the limits of simplistic positivist research and the *exclusive* use of quantitative data in social science research projects². This they suggest does little to explain social phenomena and may in fact be used in ways that are oppressive for those who are researched. Although there is little agreement as to what 'feminist research' *per se* may be, there would seem to be agreement that there can be a 'feminist mode of enquiry' (Maynard 1994: 10). Maynard suggests that there are:

[T]hree major related concerns confronting feminists engaged in empirical social research. These are to do with the role of experience, the importance of 'race' and other forms of diversity, and the question of objectivity.

(ibid: 23)

These are also true of this research. It is the lived experience of the children that is important, and how that is understood and filtered through the subject position occupied by the researcher is of critical importance. In an attempt to explore an area

¹ Obviously the texts that cover these developments are too numerous to list. My own reading has been guided through collections in Women's Studies courses such as James and Busia (1993); Humm (1993); Richardson and Robinson (1993); Tong (1992); Mirza (1997); Nicolson (1997)

² This is not a simplistic rejection of 'quantitative' methods which have their place in all research, and have been used successfully in feminist work such as Kelly, Reagan and Burton (1992)

that challenges current thinking about a range of epistemological and ontological concerns, feminist praxis is most appropriate to this research. Despite concerns over what may or may not be considered valid in my own responses to the children, the only way for me to access their perceptions and understandings was to use predominantly qualitative research methods. In order to access the data I required to explore the questions outlined, I used a feminist ethnographic framework. 'Whilst ethnography is a theory of the research process, ethnography itself is defined by its relationship to theoretical positions, hence feminist ethnography' (Skeggs 1994).

Ethnographic research often employs a variety of qualitative and quantitative methods and in this instance most of the data collected and the ensuing analysis is qualitative. Feminist standpoint theory argues that the particular position one occupies gives rise to unique insights into the social world. Patricia Hill Collins has suggested that black women who are often 'outsiders within' hegemonic white cultures and societies and as such offer unique perspectives on dominant paradigms and discourses, and that '... self-defined standpoints can stimulate resistances' (Hill Collins 1990: 28). Other developments about the difficulties with theorising from one position have been argued about at length elsewhere (see Harding 1991; Stanley 1990; Stanley and Wise 1993). Writing on identity and identification clearly indicates that we all have access to more than one 'standpoint' at different moments. But I believe that these are in struggle with determining an 'I' throughout which also has access to those other positions which continue to inform the current 'standpoint'. I am using 'ethnography' in order to explore the work of Cultural theorists and as Hammersley suggests:

'... ethnography is not limited to the phase of theory development. It can also be used to test theory'

(Hammersley and Atkinson 1983).

Ethnography was used in this research in order to facilitate enquiry into the 'situated knowledges' of the children (Haraway 1988), and thus to test the theories outlined in the previous chapter.

It is particularly appropriate to the lives of those of 'mixed-race' to try to access their understandings of their positions by using biographical data or to be more precise their personal verbal narratives and life histories. Children may be added to Swindells' list of

those who 'because of their political position, are not placed to conceal the tensions between their consciousness and the social world' when speaking themselves (Swindells 1995: 4). The research considered how children chose to represent their lives through a variety of means including discussions about images from popular culture, stories, conversations and domestic photography as it represented their homes, their school life, and their relationships. Stories will not be the same at all times in all contexts but we can see 'narrations as social acts, points of public negotiation between self and 'others' which offer insights into the way we negotiate conflicting or complementary subject positions' (Nayak 1993: 127). We may be at a point at which 'we are all of us now living and writing under the autobiographical injunction', but this need not be viewed as inherently problematic when it is imbued with feminist political commitment (Steedman 1997).

The use of auto/biography raises many questions about 'truth' or 'realism' about the way that the subjective experience of events is continually mediated through memory and over time. Feminists and others interested in such methods are continuing to articulate some of these concerns and to work with them (Ribbens 1993; Rosie 1993). All events are remembered and therefore re-constructed over time, and as a result there will always be an element of fiction in the way that life stories are told and re-told and are constantly re-worked through the additional experiences of the narrator. It is possible to say that all responses are 'constructed'. The audience and the motives of the narrator, such as the desire to please or obscure, are always factors in the possible responses given. Common-sense knowledge was until recently based on the idea that women and children could not be counted on as being reliable witnesses in a legal and social setting, particularly with reference to their experiences with violence and abuse (Kelly 1988, Hanmer and Maynard 1987). In the case of children in particular, what they said must be taken 'with a pinch of salt'. Whilst feminists have argued that women and children must be believed as a starting point, the use of narratives and life stories allows for there to be some kind of 'fictional' telling of self.

Autobiography has been conceptualised as a very specific kind of literary genre. Yet since its increasing 'democratisation' it may more usefully be seen as 'transcending' rather than transgressing categories, generic and cultural' (Marcus 1991: 14). In this research the children spoke of themselves in autobiographical terms, as did their

parents, yet it was not a coherent, chronological description but was indeed transcendent of such constraints. The use of the word 'narrative' can have a wide variety of meanings in qualitative research (Polkinghorne 1995; Reissmann 1993; Lieblich *et al* 1997 offer extensive overviews of the usage of the term). Narrative can denote any prosaic discourse, that is, any text that consists of complete sentences linked to a coherent and integrated statement (Polkinghorne 1995:6). I do not intend to use the term this loosely, nor do I wish to use the term 'discourse' in this way. In this thesis, I will use the Foucauldian notion of discourse as texts that create and construct the fields and institutions they seek to explicate and serve:

Indeed it is in discourse that power and knowledge are joined together. And for this very reason, we must conceive discourse as a series of discontinuous segments whose tactical function is neither uniform nor stable. To be more precise, we must not imagine a world of discourse divided between accepted discourse and excluded discourse, or between dominant discourse and the dominated one; but as a multiplicity of discursive elements that can come into play in various strategies.

(Foucault 1978: 100)

Discursive matrices are not monolithic impenetrable structures, but allow agency, subversion and transgression. In conjunction with the term 'narrative' they provide a way of understanding the power of social structures and knowledges and the ways in which they may be deployed by children. I will use the concept of '*narrative stories*':

Stories express a kind of knowledge that uniquely describes human experience and actions and happenings contribute positively and negatively to attaining goals and fulfilling purposes. The knowledge carried by stories differs from that which has been promoted by Western Scientific tradition.

(Polkinghorne 1995: 9)

In this research the children construct knowledge through 'both paradigmatic and narrative cognition (ibid.)³. Both the connections (discourses) inherent within stories

³ Polkinghorne offers a thorough analysis of the development of paradigmatic and narrative forms of cognition drawing on the work of Bruner (1985) and Ricoeur (1983/1984). He continues to suggest that There are two main forms of narrative analysis as 'paradigmatic analysis of narrative' and 'narrative analysis of eventful data'. The latter was used in relation to Ifekwunigwe's work in the previous chapter.

told, and the use of scraps and snippets of data may inform a less coherent narrative of self on the surface, but construct stories in co/representation between myself and the respondents. In many cases the collection of data followed the form of *dialogic process* which will be discussed below.

Bakhtin's theoretical work has very important implications for the ways in which we try to understand the narratives the children use in particular locations. Both in form and content the interviews can be seen as a kind of 'speech genre' (Bakhtin 1986). These genres are noted for their 'extreme *heterogeneity*' (original emphasis) and certainly the conversations with the children reflected this fact as they were not set in a particular form, and in differing locations became different genres (ibid:60). There was a more formal interview genre in which children talked of 'racism' to me in way that showed they understood both the rhetoric that was expected, and the power relation that positioned me as adult/teacher. However, our relationships in the playground, where the relational boundaries blurred, provided different kinds of responses. The term 'heteroglossia' is most helpful as a way of understanding how children come to 'speak' themselves into complex subject positions (Bakhtin 1981). The term reveals how each dialogue, speech act, or utterance is imbued with meaning from other previous encounters. There are multiple meanings encoded in the language and these are called into play by the dialogic processes of the interview, or informal talk or game and so on. For Bakhtin, we 'assimilate' genres just as we learn language, and many people who may be eloquent in one sphere are less so in another where they do not have a practical command (Bakhtin 1986:78). I believe this is a useful way to consider the varying forms and styles of response I got from the children in different settings.

The term 'genre' has also been developed in educational contexts where generic interactions are recognised as social processes. They are also a form of discourse. The strict linguistic structural beginnings were moved on by the work of Bakhtin and others into a debate about teaching children writing, and how they need to understand the generic form expected of them (Threadgold 1988). The implications for using genre in more diverse spheres of social enquiry are used to consider the

my own work will use occasionally use aspects of both, but more usefully, Norman K. Denzin's later work (1997) which takes these two concepts and develops them into the storied, performative approach to narrative that will be used in Chapter 7. Some of the more structural approaches to narrative analysis

way children talk about issues such as 'race' and racism in schools. Kress goes as far as to suggest that:

Genre is the term that describes that aspect of the form of texts which is due to their production in particular social occasions

(Kress 1987:36)

We can see that the generic forms of production of the children's 'texts' about themselves in relation to discourses about 'race' endorse Kress's view that:

[Consequently], in that individual's participation in the production of texts a large number of discourses, several of them all bearing on a particular subject-matter and its formulation, are available to her or him. Where institutional constraints are strong only the legitimated discourses will appear; where the constraints are weaker, several discourses may make their simultaneous appearance. So texts are the site of the emergence of discourses, most usually several at once; they may be complementary in their meanings and tendencies, or they may be quite contradictory.

(Kress 1987: 37)

The multiple meanings, discursive and imagined, their histories and their futures are all embedded within the choices of language used in the narratives the children tell, in particular about their families. They may appear to contain contradictory discourses, but the children did not perceive them as doing so, as will be shown throughout the thesis.

In some instances the voices of the children were indeed uniquely unsettling of dominant meanings. All of these interactions (interviews, lunches, games etc.) and the production of all texts (verbal and visual data) are dialogic (Bakhtin 1986), and they are all a site of contestation and struggle for meaning given the available material. In some cases the children showed that they resolved their struggles for expression by completely subverting given outcomes, and utilising seemingly unrelated information as the extract below shows:

are, I believe, unhelpful, totalising and proscriptive (c.f. Reissman 1993 on 'how to do' narrative analysis)

S: If I asked you to describe yourself [in terms of 'colour'] what would you say?

T: I love yo-yos.

S: You'd say that you loved yo-yos?

T: That's the only way I can describe myself.

Tito was a boy in Year 5 of a multiethnic Primary school in London (Barnlea School is described below). He was positioned as black by the school, having a white, English Mother and a black Jamaican father whom he saw on an irregular basis, as his father no longer lived with the family. Tito had a twin sister, Talia, in the school who was a hard working thoughtful and intelligent girl. When I talked to Tito outside of the interview setting in more informal ways in class, the playground, and with other people present he was happy and loquacious. As can be seen from the extract above, when it came to talking of himself in the terms of my choosing he simply could not and would not do it.

On another occasion he and his sister were trying to describe to me one of Talia's classmates.

Ti ... and she always got these Hi Tec trainers

Ta ... she's got Hi Tec..

[both talking]

Ta ... she sits she sits ah.. near uh ..

Ti ... Talia, she's Talia's colour, black and white ..

In this context he was happy to and able to refer to someone in terms of skin colour. Speech genres are ostensibly about difference, furthermore:

'... single speaker and writer texts are no less constituted in difference and constructed around its resolution than are dialogues. Indeed the task of the author/writer is precisely this: to attempt to construct a text in which discrepancies, contradictions, and disjunctions are bridged, covered over, eliminated'

(Kress 1989: 15)

I believe this is a very helpful way of understanding how children try to talk about 'mixed-race' identities and offers a more constructive way of understanding the struggle Tito is having in talking to me. It would be tempting to suggest that he just won't talk to me, or that he does not have the language to deal with this concept in relation to himself. Perhaps a combination of the two is more likely. The one-on-one interview causes him sufficient difficulty to result in him switching from talking about himself in the context of 'colour' to talking about himself as someone that he knows he is, and I believe, likes. He obviously felt that he was required by the power relations to give some kind of answer and yet he did not feel that he had the language to do so in the terms I wanted. So he resolved his struggles by describing himself in relation to his love of yo-yos, something he had already mentioned and an area of achievement in which he shone. Later in a more comfortable environment he was able to show he has some language for 'colour' but that it is quite limited.

Tito still tried first to describe Talia's classmate as someone who has the right kind of trainers, a common form of cultural currency among the children. Recognising the generic and discursive constraints upon Tito allows for a much more nuanced understanding of what is at stake in his statement rather than just dismissing it as uninformed. He has, in resolving this difficulty, carried out a political act, and thus we may see in it ways that it challenges the hegemonic political positions available to him (Kress 1989).

From my conversations with Tito, his sister and later his mother I know how important his family is to him. His mother's view about her children is that they are 'mixed-race' and not black and they should be 'proud of who they are'. Tito is showing that he *is* proud of who he is: lover of yo-yos, best yo-yo player in the class, recogniser of style and trends, identifier of good trainers and so on. He had also said earlier in his school career to his mother who is white English that she should go to the club for black mothers at his school. She said that she thought that was funny, but added, 'he knows I'm white'. Tito is obviously trying to subvert the meaning of 'black' and 'white' for his own gains in this context, and not recognising the discursive limits upon doing so. This tension between what the children desire in terms of positionality and what is available to them runs throughout the data.

3.3 Using Images

In the process of this research it became clear that the verbal resources at the disposal of the children failed to deliver the kinds of detail they wanted to express about themselves, their lives, or others connected to them. This section outlines the reasons for using non-verbal, visual forms of communication. By using popular images of mass media stars the children were able to show how these representations impacted upon their understanding and discursive manipulations in producing subject positions. The images that were used in the research were not simply tools for research although that was a major reason for their use; the family photographs held their own (varied) narratives. Through allowing children control in creating and reading and re-reading such images I was able to access those aspects of their sense of home and family that may have been harder to verbalise, or not chosen through verbal means. In short, the visual representations of 'mixed-race' positions illuminated different ways of seeing the positions of the children *vis à vis* hegemonic discourses of 'race'.

3.3.1 Popular Culture.

Mass media are an everyday occurrence in the lives of the children in this study, as they are for the majority of children in over-developed countries, and increasingly so for those in developing countries. In particular visual media, television and film have been of increasing interest and concern to social and cultural theorists. The way in which the children read these media and in particular the ways in which these readings and the discourses they identified played a part in their understandings of themselves show that the relationship that the children have with the texts is dynamic, and they are not confined to the 'preferred' readings of the texts. Stuart Hall has described how readers are presented with polysemous texts which contain preferred readings:

'... There can never be only one single univocal and determined meaning for [such] a lexical item; but depending on how its integration within the code has been accomplished, its possible meanings will be organised within a scale which runs from *dominant* to *subordinate*.

(Hall 1993: 30)

Multiple readings of the same text allow for oppositional and counter-hegemonic readings and as a result '... connotative and contextual 'misunderstandings' are, or can be of the highest structural significance' (ibid; 34). This form of reading and re-reading is part of a 'circuit of culture' in which individuals and groups are in constant relationship with the production and consumption of culture. They are interpellated into positions which they also seek to disrupt and in doing so reposition themselves (Hall (ed.) 1997: 1 and chapter 1). Van Zoonen (1994) takes up Hall's work as a framework for feminist media theory and research:

In institutionalised processes of media production media is 'encoded' in discursive forms that do not constitute a closed ideological system but in which the contradictions of the production process are enclosed. The thus encoded structure of meaning serves in another 'moment' of meaning production, the decoding of practices of the audiences. Encoding and decoding need not be symmetrical'

Van Zoonen (1994:8)

(See Figure 1 overleaf)

Such processes are some of the most interesting ways that the children appear to be actively involved in constructing gender, 'race' and sexual identifications; through their readings of popular culture. Certainly, during the research process this was often a way in which children manipulated the situation in order to raise issues about what bodies mean, how they understand the ways in which not only 'race' but also culture and ethnicity are written upon bodies and how these are sexualised.

The desires and dislikes of the children in this arena provided ways for them to talk about the 'forbidden' that is hetero and homosexuality, and also to play with the newer narratives available to them of relationships and dating and marriage as they sought to stabilise gendered positions. In addition it was clear that using the image of Scary Spice as representative of someone of 'mixed-race' helped with understanding the way the term may be lived. In a sense it did interpellate the children of 'mixed-race' to claim that identity. The description of the processes involved in talking to children about this and the way in which they 'perform' these

identities will be explored in detail in Chapters 4 and 5. The use of images from popular culture was supplemented in the next stage of the research by children using domestic photography.

DIAGRAM REDACTED DUE TO THIRD PARTY RIGHTS OR OTHER LEGAL ISSUES



Figure 1 *Hall's encoding/decoding model (in Van Zoonen 1994)*

3.3.2 Domestic Photography.

As was mentioned above the children produced their own images of 'family' and 'home' as well as choosing to bring in favourite images that already existed. The reading of family photographs provides us with another prompt for memory work that also forges very strong links with the rest of the social world. Family photographs follow extremely strict conventional codes; they take a generic form. It is both true that '...[T]he personal histories they record belong to narratives on a wider scale, those public narratives of community, religion, ethnicity and nation which make private identity possible' (Holland 1991: 3), and paradoxically the collection held within families be it in albums, envelopes or cardboard boxes remains a '...personal treasure, while so much of it was part of a shared flow of common socially

determined events' (Seabrook 1991:178). It is this combination of the distinct personal narrative and its intersection with the wider social history that will be explored. Stanley concludes that a photograph is not 'simply a frozen 'slice of time', but also a tool to travel both into the past and future and construct multiple, flexible meanings' (ibid.: 27). In this way the images do not simply 'amplify biographies' but become ways of facilitating memory work (Seabrook 1991:172). I am using the term fairly loosely, as will be seen from the interview questions (See Appendix A).

In the original formation of the term 'memory work', a group collective writing and analysis is worked upon from memories triggered by a suggested theme (Haug *et al* 1987). My own work has more in common with that of Annette Kuhn (1995). I did not require the respondents to really *work* on the photographs unless they wanted to. The photographs, the images themselves may be read, the narratives, narrators and narratees may also all be implicated in the process in fluid and instinctive ways that result in 'memory production'. Memory is a process that constantly invokes and reinvents past events through the lens of the present and the imagined future. The social and the self are linked in a continuous co-productive venture. Parents and children were invited to look at the photographs and talk about them in a number of ways. From their comments and observations other questions would arise in a more spontaneous fashion than from rigid pre-formed questions. This spontaneity was also a way to reduce the rigidity of the interviewer/interviewee positions, and for the interview to take a more informal generic form.

Within the research process the confidentiality of the data was of great importance to the children and families who took part. The photograph collection that I now have represents a rich source of data that is only partially represented in the thesis due to issues of confidentiality. The analysis of the photographs is limited to a written description of the ways in which children and mothers talked about them, not of the photographs themselves. I hope at a later date to gain permission from some of the participants to reproduce some of the images as they are a most powerful medium which convey a depth and complexity which eludes us in written language. However, the issue of representation was only one part of the ethical dilemmas I faced.

3.4 Ethics and Politics.

The feminist ethics that inspire some of the theoretical approaches outlined above also foreground the need to minimise traditional power imbalances between the researcher and the researched. When asking children to talk about intensely personal issues this plays a major part in the need to try to develop a relationship within which the problem of deliberately misleading data can be minimised. Such ethical issues have been discussed at length elsewhere, and they were ever present in my thoughts throughout the process (Mayall 1994; Alderson 1995; Alldred 1998; Maybin 1993; Mauthner 1997; Epstein 1998).

Ethics came to the fore in the very early stages of the work as the following extract from the field notes written for my supervisors shows:

I have tried contacted primary schools to arrange times convenient to pilot material. I contacted ***** school through my personal contact with the deputy head, Julie. She suggested that I send a letter to her explaining what the project was about and that she would speak to the head teacher. I asked if I could video tape any kind of end of school performance that may have been taking place, and if I could pilot some questions before the end of the Christmas term and then possibly carry out some fieldwork at the school in the Spring term. The head asked to see the questions, which were faxed to her. When I finally spoke to her some few days later, she refused to let me into the school because she said it was too close to the end of term but mainly that the questions were inappropriate. In fact she said, 'You can't ask children questions like that'.

Her objections were that the questions were too personal, that families would object, that I would not know whether the children were telling me what I wanted to hear, that it may be disruptive for them and so on. I asked if I could at least come to video the end of school play and she said 'Oh well we haven't really got one as such, we'll probably just put something together at the last minute'. I took that as a definite 'no'. Later, I spoke to a mutual friend who asked a few things about my work and said why didn't I ask this Head about going into school blah blah. I said that I already had and that she didn't

want me in the school and my friend said 'I don't think it was you, I think it was the questions', as though if I just would change my questions it would be alright. I think that changing my questions means changing my PhD.

My own fears about the ethical position with children nearly halted my work before it began and will be discussed later in this chapter, but finally the field-work got under way.

3.5 The Research Processes.

I had decided I wanted to access children through the school context rather than the familial and that decision was purely pragmatic. It would have been a more diffuse project had I approached them through a random social selection process. The limitations on resources and the need to build trust suggested that the work would be in limited locations, in more in-depth forms, and so would be a case study. In the end I chose to work with three schools, two in London, a multiethnic location; and undoubtedly guided in part by my own history, one in Kent in an almost entirely white area. Not only my first but also my second contact with a school resulted in failure, so I had been very relieved when the project started.

I had shown the Head-teacher of each school my sample questions and they had all agreed that they could be asked. I had stressed sensitivity to both staff and children and the fact that I wanted to be as helpful as I could whilst still carrying out some research. I went to each school with the understanding that I would visit three classes, one in each of years 4-6, and spend at least the first week acting mainly as classroom helper in order to get to know both children and staff. I told the Head-teachers that I did not want the children to know that I was specifically interested in 'mixed-race' at first, just identity more generally. In this way I hoped not to influence the children who may choose to identify as 'mixed-race'. In each school I also spoke to the Head, Deputy Head, SENCo, Home School Liaison and various class teachers who seemed interested or held positions of special interest. In each school the Head-teacher allocated the classes which is detailed in the next chapter.

3.5.1 The Schools.

Christie School (all schools have been given pseudonyms) in London was the first school to which I gained access, and the first from which data was collected. It is situated in a borough of London that has high levels of poverty, and not coincidentally a highly diverse ethnic population. The school is on a small road in an area of mixed affluence and is very close to both a large number of African-Caribbean residents, as well as significant numbers of people of South Asian decent. It is on the edge of a Jewish community, many of whom live and work in the street in which the school stands.

The school has been in a state of crisis for two years since the old Head-teacher resigned, no new Head was in place at the time of the research, and the school had severe financial difficulties. The Acting Head (who had previously been a classroom teacher in the school) was being supported by a member of the LEA, and she was also heavily involved in the day-to-day management of the school as well as recruitment of the new Head and long term policy development.

The school is in an old two story building which houses all the classrooms and halls and incorporates the kitchen and dining area which looks to have been added later. Outside, the play area consists of tarmac playground with a separate section fenced off in front of the staff room for the Infants. The main entrance is protected by an entry phone system. The building appears to be rather run down. All of the classrooms and corridors are well decorated with children's work, which provide the light and colour. Posted at various points around the school in the corridors are 'The Golden Rules', which provide guidelines for the behaviour expected of the children. These were produced with the full involvement of the children working together with staff and were also sent out to parents.

The school is medium sized compared to many in the area, with approximately four hundred and fifty pupils from Nursery age through to Year 6. The pupil population was approximately one third African-Caribbean, one third being South Asian with the remaining one third being predominantly white ESIW and Turkish, with some Pacific Asian pupils.

My initial contact was filming the 'Christmas Play' at which the Acting Head introduced himself to me. The play, called 'The Late Wise Man', was a less than conventional Christian nativity play with some general humanist morals running throughout which were heavily emphasised. The majority of the performers were black and South Asian and Turkish, with only one or two white children taking part. The choir was made up of a cross section of children and a member of staff playing the piano provided the music. It was held in the school Hall and the performance I recorded was well attended by friends and families. It gave me an opportunity to do some rather less participant observation.

Barnlea School is in the same borough of London as Christie, and therefore shares some of the features in terms of pupil profiles. It is a large old Victorian school standing in a playground in the middle of a residential area, which has a wide racial and ethnic mix. As with most areas of London, there are streets containing quite expensive housing very near to those with council owned properties and high-rise estates. The school reflects this variety in as much that it has some pupils from 'middle class', higher income families, unlike Christie, where the vast majority of pupils are from more working class, and low-income families.

The school is large, with over 600 pupils. At the time of the research they had recent intakes of Eastern European refugee children including some Roma children. They also had several Monserratians newly arrived to the country. Like Christie, the building is old and therefore some of the classrooms and facilities are quite dark, and like Christie every square inch of wall is decorated with beautiful coloured pieces of children's work. There are three floors and several different doors to the building which are kept locked apart for break times. The gate to the playground is unlocked and again there is an entry-phone system in operation, although when I was there, the main door, which is overlooked by the reception desk, was often left open. The playground is divided into two areas for Infants and Juniors, but with no fencing or gate.

The school concert held at the end of the winter term made no reference to Christmas and was a celebration of 'Light'. Every single member of every single class took part and the sheer scale meant that there were two slightly different performances. The classes all presented some kind of music, dance, song or poetry,

with some members taking a more active role than others did. The children under the direction of the music teacher provided the choir and music. The whole show had material that came from all over the world and was 'highly multicultural'. It will be seen in the next chapter (and Chapter 8) that in many ways the school had the most successful record and approach to 'racism' and 'race'.

Fairsham School is in Woodvale, a small village near a commuter town in South East England, outside London. The school sits on the corner of the road that runs to the town, and a residential road. It is a modern single storey building with several prefabricated huts also acting as classrooms. It has off-road parking for staff and is surrounded by a high hedge. It has both hard playgrounds and lawns surrounding it, as well as a small school garden with a pond. There is also a small covered swimming pool. The Head has been there for several years but is still seen as quite new and 'progressive'. He repealed the rule banning female members of staff from wearing trousers two years before the research took place. The staff members are all white and the majority of the children are white and middle class. There are several white children who have one parent from other European or Northern hemisphere countries and are therefore 'international', and a handful of children of minority ethnic background. There are two Japanese and two Chinese students, one of East African Asian descent and four who identified as being 'mixed-race'.

I attended the school Nativity Play which was held in the local church and was called 'Christmas Throughout The Ages'. It involved about thirty of the children, with more in the chorus and a staff member playing the piano. The whole performance was very traditional, with the more accomplished members of the cast acting as 'poor Cockneys' and 'Arabs' as well as 'normal English people'. On the first morning I arrived at the school, as I walked through the playground I could hear a cockerel crowing from a nearby garden which served to emphasise the semi-rural location.

3.5.2 Methods of Data Collection

These brief descriptions of the schools and their locations may give an idea of how different the experience of research was in each place, yet the processes were the same. Each school followed the same processes- Stages 1 and 2 were carried out during my first visit to each which followed sequentially, Christie then Barnlea then

Fairsham. The second visit to each school continued the Stage 2 process and I also began the interviews with parents. These processes are detailed below.

Stage 1.

After having got to know the children a little through helping in class, I began a process of group interviewing. This involved all of the children in each of the 'target' classes I had been in. It was at this point that I used the images from 'teen magazines' in order to access the subject of 'race' in a non-threatening way. In particular, I used the images of the Scary Spice to open conversations about 'mixed-race'⁴.

The numbers of children in the groups varied between 4 and 6. In some classes, teachers allowed children to select friendship groups, other teachers preferred to put children into groups that included co-workers rather than best friends. All the class teachers were given a guide to the content of the focus groups, and it was impressed upon them that the children needed to be reasonably comfortable with the idea of talking in front of all the group members. It was interesting to note that both children and teachers chose a mixture of same and mixed sex groups.

All interviews were video recorded. The children were asked to introduce themselves and tell the group a little about themselves and their family backgrounds if they felt comfortable with that. Then they were handed the materials to look at, and after a few minutes they were asked to comment individually on whether they recognised many of the people, and who were their favourites, if any. It often felt as if the groups took over this part of the session for their own pleasure and the interviews were often described as 'fun', although this is not surprising if the choice was the group interviews or lessons! After going through the sheets the children were also asked about their consumption of other forms of popular culture. Once the conversation was started the questions were directed to the Spice Girls and in particular to 'Scary Spice'. In these group settings it was often hard to control the direction of the conversation and to keep the children on track. Their enthusiasm for the popular meant that they would have happily talked about that throughout the entire sessions. Although there are many ways in which continuing the discussions about popular

⁴ The interview questions for staff, children and parents are found in Appendix A. Findings from these early interview make up Chapters 4 and 5.

culture would have led to the discovery of more details of their understandings of the concepts I wanted to know about, there was not enough time for me to obtain the data in that way. I had started working with the groups with a rather lackadaisical approach to time-keeping, which swiftly gave way to an awareness that the overall time that I had in the schools was comparatively limited, and that this phase was one of several that needed to be completed before I left. So I began to guide the conversations earlier in the sessions.

By the time I had reached the second school, Barnlea, I had a much better understanding of how to go about the preliminary stages of research. Still the problem of time remained. I compromised by spending all my time with the children and in arranging to go back to each school for a second visit in order to continue the individual interviews and generally develop the research relationships. Such compromises are not unique to this research (see Gillborn 1995), however, I maintained the hope that I could gain some depth and insight even if it came from a shorter, more intensive period of contact. By the time I had reached Fairsham School in Kent I was much better organised.

Stage 2.

After the first round of group interviews I began the second stage of the data collection in each school, which involved the children of 'mixed-race' both individually and in friendship groups. These interviews took place in locations as diverse as equipment cupboards to empty staff rooms. In Barnlea, I used a room that contained props and costumes, which the children said was haunted! I hadn't realised this when I set up my tape-recorder in there and I cannot tell how it affected their experience of the interviews⁵.

The children involved in the second stage were given disposable cameras and asked to take pictures of anything that meant 'family' and 'home' to them. I hoped to involve them in the research process and allow them a further level of control of the area

⁵ The number of children who took part in this second stage of interviewing is detailed in Appendix B. At Fairsham, as there were only four children of 'mixed-race' I interviewed a further three who had inter-ethnic backgrounds, and one who was from a minority monoethnic group.

data collection. The children were very happy about this and set about the task with enthusiasm⁶.

By this stage I was beginning to get to know the children, and the numbers of children involved grew as word got round about the research. My tape recorder and the cameras became magnets for children, and in a note I made to myself I observed that it was almost impossible to record or note 'overheard' conversations. The children became conscious of my presence very quickly, and would always modify their speech and behaviour in one way or another when I was nearby. Many of them did not understand why they were not given cameras, and others began to 'claim' 'mixed-race' positions. For example, it was common for the children to suggest that they were 'mixed' when they had parents who were both black but came from two different Caribbean islands. In fact, this distinction was often made when children told histories of themselves and showed once more how obliterating the term African-Caribbean or even Caribbean can be of the important aspects of an ethnic identity, that is in this case both national and cultural, but not necessarily 'racial'.

I worked with the themes that came up in the first series of interviews and developed supplementary questions for the children on my second visit to the schools. These questions were based upon their desires and aspirations and also about their physicality and their experience of themselves as corporeal beings. I developed this theme in relation to their perception of self and 'other', either friend, 'star' or member of family. In some ways they were the most revealing of the way children related to themselves and other members of their families. I asked them who they most looked like in their family and also whom they thought they would *like* to look like. These proved to be very interesting conversations and are developed in Chapter 6. Of course, it forced them to think in limited terms of categorisation but was interesting nonetheless or perhaps *because* of that. The relationship between skin colour, attractiveness and so-called 'hierarchies of colour' and their representation has been discussed by black feminists in detail (e.g. hooks 1992; Weekes 1997). The discourse of white supremacy encompasses standards of beauty requiring that we recognise the palest as the most beautiful (Hill Collins 1993:78; Mama 1989). African

⁶ Not all of the children took pictures of people, some took them of their rooms, their houses, their cars and their pets. There were also cases where they had not used the camera with enough light or not wound on the film. These findings are discussed in Chapters 6 and 7.

American women have written a great deal about how this serves to control black women:

Blue-eyed blond, thin white women could not be considered beautiful without the Other - black women with classical African features of dark skin, broad noses, full lips and kinky hair.

(Hill Collins 1993:79).

This privileging leads to what has been described as internalised racism and 'colorism', where 'same-race' people use these destructive standards for themselves (Featherston 1994). The bitter feelings caused by the need for 'authenticity' from women of colour who may be 'mixed-race' is rarely expressed. A woman who is Chinese, Mexican Spanish and French asks if that makes her 'of color', and challenges the reader with some anger:

But should someone see my white skin and question my credentials, how would I prove my qualifications?

(Soto 1994: 5)

In asking children about their sense of 'beauty' I hoped to access their ideas about such standards, and need for 'credentials' and if they are pertinent to them. They have been relevant to me in my life and Weekes (1997) confirms that my experience has not been unique. I believe that these discourses are acutely gendered and sexualised. The issue of colorism and authenticity runs into the popular in many different forms and is considered in detail in Chapters 4 and 5.

My conversations with the children in this study show that they too experience hostility on the basis of colour and implied sexuality, as well as gender and class. Juliette Hearne, a woman who describes herself as a 'philosopher and Woman of Colour' of mixed racial heritage, 'Jamaican by birth, British by education and American by association' writes:

It's that blacker-than-thou mentality you have to face, that's the reality of a Woman of Colour.

(quoted in Mason-John and Khambatta 1993: 34)

The additional questions that the children were asked were meant to discover whether they had encountered both the 'blacker-than-thou mentality', and the 'blonde is beautiful and best' discourse and whether it affected their choice of identifications.

Interestingly, children knew both discourses but did not seem unduly constrained by them. Another factor was how the 'exotic' was played out with children who had parents of Pacific Asian and Polynesian heritage. They inevitably found themselves nearer to the white ideal, and being female in all cases, I believe it alleviated some potential racial hostilities. In the event children and parents talked to me with remarkable candour about these sometimes painful processes which I believe was in part facilitated by a sense of trust and exchange within in the research process which was regulated by the power relations of the relationships.

3.5.3 Developing Research Relationships

My interaction with the children in the schools was extensive. I attended maths clubs, dance clubs, football clubs, sang with the choirs, ate lunch with the children, rode the Vampire train at Thorpe Park, went to the beach and even went on a week long residential trip to the country with children from Christie. In short, I had a great time. I believe I got to know something of them and their relationships in school and at home. I felt that we had developed mutual trust and I had come to genuinely like and respect them. I am not sure whether the children always positioned me as researcher. They may have originally intended to, but our sessions took on a form of their own that was a mixture of interview, informal chat or personal confessional to name but a few. I believe that this fuzziness was in part due to my own failure to 'control' the context, and partly the young age of the children involved, as they showed a very high level of trust once they had understood that the research would be confidential. Despite this I was never just 'one of the girls' (Hey 1997). I also had to struggle to remember that it is 'important to regard the normal as unfamiliar' (May 1993: 119). I often felt a conflict between being a 'researcher' and being 'me', which intensified when I spoke with the parents.

In the final stages of the research I began accessing parents, who were often suspicious of a researcher coming 'from the school'. However, if I presented myself as independent, this appeared to be even less of a personal recommendation and therefore potentially unsafe. There was a fine balance between school affiliations and independent status that was effective in arranging meetings, and in most cases where direct personal contact could be made, parents agreed to be interviewed. I took to 'hanging out' with children by the entrance to each school at arrival and leaving times and managed to engineer many informal meetings. A few times, teachers who knew that I was working with particular children would point out parents for me or introduce me. In three cases at Fairsham I had to 'cold call' and make telephone arrangements to meet. It should be noted that 'parents' in the overwhelming majority of cases turned out to be mothers. It was mothers who mostly came to the schools and therefore presented opportunities for contact (see Reay 1998). Some of the mothers also arranged for fathers to be present for interviews who then may not have been able to take part for one reason or another. If the fathers were absent from a great deal of the day to day interaction with the children they were also unlikely to present themselves as available to be interviewed. In the cases represented below two mothers were interviewed and no parents of the third child. They were interviewed in their own homes in a relaxed and informal style, and were fully briefed as to the nature of the project. Parents were asked about concepts of family and home, about family traditions and about the way they thought about and discussed, if at all, the terms 'race', ethnicity and culture. I had the disappointment of having several parents at each of the schools agree to be interviewed at first and then change their minds, so the final number of parents who were interviewed was only twelve.

By going into the homes of the children I moved from one of their cultural spheres to another and it was at times very disconcerting. I had been privy to some of their secrets and parents often wanted to know what children had said and it was an uncomfortable situation to have to tell them that I could not reveal anything. I also felt like a 'snoop'. I went in to talk to these people and in many cases developed a 'research-friendship' with them, and yet I was simultaneously 'observing' them and taking notes that I recorded afterward about their house and clothes and furnishings and so on. Although this was all legitimate data, I could not resolve this feeling of 'betrayal' when I later began to transcribe their words, and my descriptions. I felt that

I embodied the fragmented self – ‘me the researcher’ striving to eradicate power-imbalances, and ‘me the “mixed-race” person’ who just wanted to talk to these people and share experiences with them.

The issue of reciprocity was I believe, central to this dilemma. With the children, I wanted to give something back. I told them their words would be used to try and make things better in the school, that they would have some effect on their school. On a more immediate level I got into the habit of helping them with their work, ‘lending’ (read ‘giving’) them little bits of money, bringing in sweets and biscuits, and mediating in fights. I recognise my own behaviour from other feminists’ work (Skeggs 1994; Hey 1997). It was not meant to patronise, nor was it an intentional manipulation of their emotions, yet it undoubtedly had an effect. I did not spend a great deal of time ‘counselling’ them, but when I left one school a child said ‘Who am I going to talk to now?’ and asked for my home telephone number. Despite my best intentions, this is a power imbalance in operation. Quite simply, I had the power to shift to being ‘researcher’ and walk out and leave them. How would I negotiate ‘friendship’ in a social situation from having met them in this context? What about accusations of favouritism? These kinds of dilemmas also presented with adults. My reciprocity in this case was also felt at an emotional level. With the parents I bargained with myself; with my own life story which I offered up to them in the interviews. I could literally be ‘like them’ in some cases as there were two mothers in their mid-thirties of ‘mixed-race’. We exchanged stories, and I hoped by giving them some of my history they would trust me and see that this research was not about ‘Othering’, it was about trying to ‘know’ how things are and what they really mean to real people – like *us*. This kind of personal reciprocity had personal costs as it encouraged questions about my own life and at one interview when talking about my father’s death I nearly broke down. I know that the researcher and I are one, which has informed my choice of research, the methods I have used the analysis, I know all that intellectually. I do not believe it makes it any easier to deal with these things when you are actually ‘out there doing it’.

3.6 Mediating Textual Ambiguities: Methods of Analysis

Feminist research ethics and politics are not easy things to deal with. I have been relating events from relationships in the fieldwork, but the process of analysis and

writing sets up the next set of ethical 'tripwires'. These tripwires may be represented as a set of questions:

- How can one take the words of these children, and in some cases their siblings, friends and parents, and transform them into data that remains true to their intended meanings?
- Further, what interpretation may we place upon their intended meanings?
- How will this interpretation actively 'empower' them and others?

These questions may be seen as a matrix of concerns that guide an heuristic process. They are, of course unanswerable as there are no guarantees in this kind of research. The ambiguities are the sites of most interest and potential; both positive and negative. The fieldwork generated huge amounts of data in a variety of forms. I centralised the interviews and conversations and interactions with the children for the reasons explained in the first chapters. I transcribed the interviews with the children myself and listened to them more than once in order to refresh myself of the verbal nuances in the speeches⁷. I read through all the transcripts once and identified the main themes which were then coded. But with further listening and reading the coding was refined and expanded:

Working with narrative requires dialogical listening (Bakhtin 1981) to three voices (at least): the voice of the narrator, as represented by the tape or the text; the theoretical framework, which provides the concepts and tools for interpretation; and a reflexive monitoring of the act of reading and interpretation, that is self-awareness of the decision process of drawing conclusions from the material. In the process of such a study, the listener or reader of a life story enters and interactive process with the narrative and becomes sensitive to the narrators voice and meanings. Hypotheses and theories are thus generated while reading and analysing the narratives, and - in a circular motion as proposed by Glaser and Strauss's (1967) concept of

⁷ I transcribed the group interviews that were conducted on video-tape myself, as I did with all of the children's materials and those of the parents. Some of the teachers' interviews were transcribed for me, and I listened to them again after I received the transcriptions reading them through and checking them against the spoken word. All transcripts were also cross-checked against my notes taken at the interviews, and taped de-briefs after.

'grounded theory' – can enrich further reading, which refines theoretical statements and so on in an ever growing circle of understanding.

(Lieblich et al 1998: 10)

In doing this kind of formal analysis I felt that I had to guard against imposing structures of meaning, fixing the stories and narratives that I was engaged with:

... traditional, empiricist narrative methods represent an approach to storytelling that must be avoided. They turn the story told into a story analysed.

(Denzin 1997:249)

The desire for intellectual rigour can lead to an over simplification of the processes of narrative analysis. I believe that my own connection to the stories of the children meant that some of my decisions in questioning and response were intuitive and emotional, based upon the integration of the theorising of my own 'mixed-raceness'.

These dilemmas are best illustrated by looking at an extract from one of the interviews I held in a gym at Barnlea school one day near the end of my fieldwork there.

John had taken part in some of the earlier general discussions and had not offered a great deal about himself, other than he was from Nigeria, and not long in England. A friend of his suggested he should be interviewed because he was 'half-caste' and had a white dad. John agreed to be interviewed, and after some reluctance based on shyness, began to talk more freely. At first it was hard to follow what John was saying as I had made assumptions about his family, and it took a great deal of discussion to understand the situation. John had a father in Nigeria whom he saw occasionally, and a man also called his father who had been with his mother for several years and lived with them as a family. In the extract I echo back what he has said to me, in part to clarify that I have understood, and also for the practical reason that he spoke quite quietly and I wanted to be sure his answers were clear:

Suki Have people ever talked to you about racism and stuff like that?

John Yeah

Suki What have they said to you?

John they said "Oh no, look at that boy, his Dad is white!"

Suki Have they?

John Yeah ... and .. and some people cuss me because my Dad is white

Suki Do they?

John Yeah

Suki That's nasty, isn't it.

John Yeah

Suki What kind of things do they say?

John Like .. um.. Like look at this half-caste boy, he doesn't look like a half caste he looks like a Yoruba, and stuff like that, and they cuss me and say f-words to me .../

Suki Oh no that' s awful!//

John /... And all those things

Suki Yeah. And how would you describe yourself though?

John Ummm .. I would describe myself like.... I , I don't mind what they're saying, but .. but it's quite nasty.

[...]

Suki Do you mind being called half-caste?

John Um no

Suki You don't mind?

John No

Suki So you think that's right, would you call yourself that?

John Yes

Suki You would?

John Yeah

Suki Umm, do you know what it means?

John Yeah, like your Dad is white and your mum is black and that would make you in the middle and that is what half-caste means

Suki And do you think that is what you are?

John Yeah, 'cos my Dad is white and my Mum is black

Suki Right

Later when asked about his family in Nigeria he said:

John That would make me Yoruba
Suki Yoruba
John 'Cos my Mum's boyfriend was Yoruba
Suki Uh huh, and do you think you are Yoruba?
John Yeah, but I like people calling me half-caste

He explained that this was because his new Dad treated his mum well:

Suki ...You want to be with this Dad and you like being called half-caste then?
John Yeah I would like to be called half-caste
Suki Yeah

John talked about his mother, and Nigeria as his home, and described his favourite foods as Nigerian; he had strong familial and cultural links to Nigeria that affected his 'cultural' identity. He had a strong sense of 'family' and although he missed his family in Nigeria, simultaneously developed the tie to his step-father that led to him choosing to incorporate his father's whiteness into his own ('racial') Identity. The children rarely knew that the term 'half-caste' was considered, as another child said, 'rude'. John had used it with such frequency that his friend knew that he would not mind being interviewed for the research. With such a complicated history, it is no wonder that John chose to hold two clear 'racial' identities - that of Yoruba and implicitly black African, and of half-caste, that is 'mixed-race'. His logic was impeccable - his new father is indeed white. Discourses of 'family' that are increasingly available to young children allowed him to play with his own familial complexities. As his new father is *family*, then he is undoubtedly half-caste. Further if race is untenable, and biology and skin colour erroneous choices for categorical positions, why should John not choose to be 'mixed-race'? One might argue that this would be a question of politics, the politics of identity, but maybe more importantly the politics of 'race' in a society which perceives 'white' as the norm and desirable⁸.

⁸ This analysis has been developed from its original form in Ali (2000)

I believe it unlikely that John's family would be unaware of his desire to re-assess emphases on 'blood' in his family history and thus his identity, although perhaps they do not know the exact language he is using, such as 'half caste'. The way the family perceives the 'politics of race' is hard to gauge, but the family structure and interrelations themselves, with the attendant movement and relocation have obviously been the major factors for John. Is he attempting to 'pass' as 'mixed-race' with its attendant connotations or is his decision based upon his narrative dexterity? Is John showing some psychic rupture with his social world? Is this 'irrationality' that needs to be explained away by psychoanalytic theory of introjection of the dominant views on whiteness? I don't think so. I believe he shows a desire to organise his social world to maximise his sense of belonging to his current emotional, social and spatial geography. He shows this generic and discursive 'closure' by the ability to manipulate the discourses of family to resolve the questions of difference presented by racist attacks.

In this case I cannot and would not attempt to 'solve' the riddles of John's claims. I have had to simply 'suspect' what the intentions of this choice of naming were. Researching children's identifications requires a respect for the ways in which they are both '... fictional and "real"...' (Katz 1996).

In all their dealings with the research process, the children remained enthusiastic and engaged with talking about themselves and their lives. The children are not only creating meaning through the talk they have with their friends, but also building upon that in their re-telling within the research process. They often showed the way in which '... person-hood is constructed ... through the reporting [of dialogue] and taking on of other people's voices' (Maybin 1998: 148). This way of talking seems to me to show that John is both of and not of a time and place. I believe that his identifications are 'fragmented' but coherent and cohesive in narrative form, neither diffuse nor destabilising. There is an important locationally driven naming process at work which will be explored in later chapters with other children (see Ang-Lyngate 1995; Simmonds 1996). John shows a form of 'ethnic identification' which is 'operationally situational'; therefore flexible and malleable even at this age. (Okaura cited by Ifekwunigwe 1997: 129)

3.7 Conclusions

The methodological decisions that have been outlined in this chapter continued to be negotiated throughout the research. Using ethnographic methods and theories of narratives, life history, discourse and speech genre proved successful in accessing and analysing the responses of children and parents. Using popular culture and family photographs also helped to construct the narratives of selves which revealed the kinds of uses of available discourses made by children such as John and Tito. Not all of the children show the same levels of dexterity as John, but many have an awareness of the ways in which they have to solve some disjunctures in their positions. Tito represents the other end of the spectrum. In his own way, he showed resilience to my probing and then a strategic response to a difficult question. Others I spoke to have, at this stage in their lives, no such struggles with speaking themselves, having claimed (for the moment) non-problematic positions. As the two transcript extracts have shown, there were inevitably some children for whom talking about such matters was easier and others for whom it was a struggle. A *partial* perspective of this complexity is evident in the following chapters.

The analyses that follow are not representative in an *equal* fashion of *all* the children and parents with whom I spoke. During the research process three children whom I had interviewed changed schools, and not all parents who were originally contacted took part. In order to develop an analysis I have picked up on the themes raised in dialogues and interviews, such as John's and Tito's, and used them as ways that illuminate and advance the theoretical concerns of the research. This process and its representation is of course limited by constraints of the space and form of the thesis.

In the next chapter I will analyse how the themes of gender, sexuality and appearance articulated with the development of 'mixed-race' identities. I will show that there are a range of discourses from which the children learned, but that they also manipulated for their own purposes, in their collective and individual use of popular culture. This proved to be a most powerful form of cultural capital and was one of the criteria for including or excluding children from friendship groups. The types of cultural material available to the children were heavily influenced by both their immediate environment (school and home), and their connections to other social (ethnic) groups. I will consider the ways in which the children of black/white interracial

relationships were offered membership to black British culture, and how they used this to 'choose' a 'racialised' identification. But I will also begin to analyse the ways in which black popular culture has become most influential for *all* of children in the multiethnic primary schools, regardless of racial, ethnic or cultural identifications.

Chapter 4: Popular Culture and Reading 'Race'.

'The experience of pop music is the experience of identity'.

(Frith 1996:121)

4.1 Introduction.

This chapter will consider the ways in which the reading of popular culture by groups and individuals helped facilitate discussions of 'race' and 'racism' within the school context. After outlining the ways in which polysemous readings of texts provide us with indications of the hegemonic discourses of gender and sexuality, I will show the ways in which children's readings are both similar and different across geographic location, gender, class and age. The popularity of Will Smith (an African American actor and singer) is used to explore the ways in which children use images to explore their heterosexualised gender identities, and how important 'reading race' is.

I will show that children use their collective re/readings to develop understandings of and in some cases, *disrupt* hegemonic (racialised) forms of beauty and attractiveness and their articulation with moral character. In doing so, they form and reform friendships and peer group allegiances. Children in the predominantly white school and town actively used media to inform their ideas about 'race' and 'racism', and mediated their understandings of these terms through their positionings of me as a 'coffee coloured' person.

The findings in this chapter show that the children are actively exploring their gendered, heterosexualised racialisations through popular culture and that they do so in ways which are complex and personally meaningful. The data is analysed to show that the children are reading images which disrupt the hegemonic in ways that are unpredictable. Children are *actively exploring and constructing racial identifications through visual media*. The readings of the children of 'mixed-race' will be explored further in the next chapter.

4.2 Using Polysemous Texts in Researching 'Mixed-race'.

There is no doubt that most children in the Western world have access to an enormous range of media. In recent years there has been increasing interest in the way that children behave as audiences and in the kinds of influence various media

may have on them, particularly visual media such as television, video and computer games. Berry (1993:1) suggested that television plays a role in '... helping developing children (and adults) learn about themselves and an array of people, [and] places...' yet they also note that '...events are not fully understood.' This ambiguity about the ways in which children manipulate media is central to many debates about the educative, negative or even negligible effects media have on children. Is violence in films, television and certain kinds of music encouraging similar behaviour in children or are 'mindless' television programmes sapping children's ability to play creatively and are turning them into passive recipients of trash culture? Buckingham and Sefton-Greene (1994) criticise these dichotomous approaches as do others (Willis 1990), who suggest that children and young people are often using popular culture to 'learn' about discourses of 'race', ethnicity and gender. Children do this not through passive acceptance of what they see, but through collective critical rereading of texts in their own social circles. This is part of a '... broader process of constructing social relationships and thereby defining individual and group identities' (Buckingham and Sefton-Green 1994:24).

The idea behind my using popular culture was that by showing children images of celebrities with whom they may be familiar, the discussion could be led into the area of 'race' and 'racial' identity and facilitate the children's active critical individual and group re-readings in these areas. The images were taken of pop music and television and film actors, all of whom had very high profile at that time. Using this type of material was to serve several purposes:

- to allow children to talk freely about things that they would have some interest thereby encouraging confidence in the research process
- to identify social groups/friendship groups
- to allow children to self-define their own 'racial' and ethnic positions
- if possible, to look at the influence of media readings on the formation of identities in children who described themselves as 'mixed-race'

Some of the early research that has specifically considered 'race', gender and class in popular culture looked at the role models children see in their everyday readings. Many argued that images of women as mothers and housewives, or black people as criminals perpetuated (racial) stereotypes¹ (Dines and Humez 1995). However,

¹ Dines and Humez (1995) have edited a reader which considers the developments of such debates with regard to gender, race and class in the media. The texts contain arguments which illustrate both positions. For example, Kilbourne (1989) on gender in advertising; Lowry (1983) on the romance novel

despite the preferred reading being such there is always the possibility for subverting texts and for counter hegemonic readings. Writing about Madonna offers a pertinent example for this thesis.

bell hooks has written about the ways in which Madonna has used her power as a successful white woman in a male dominated industry to build up a 'family' of performers and artists around her. The documentary film 'Truth or Dare' leaves hooks furious - it was she suggests:

' ... not a display of feminist power, this was the same old phallic nonsense with white pussy at the centre. And many of us watching were not simply unmoved - we were outraged'.

(hooks 1992:163-164)

However, Madonna's work has been a constant source of debate. Is she a feminist icon, a strong woman, or simply another woman using sex and her body to sell? Is she a sensationalist or star or maybe a combination of them all? Despite hooks' outrage, other critics have re-read Madonna's work in a more positive light. Ronald B. Scott's detailed reading of one of Madonna's video's centralises the very issues of race, sexuality and religion which hooks finds so problematic (Scott 1993). Scott sees a way to re-claim Madonna's work as a sympathetic tribute to the complexities and difficulties faced by African Americans.

In another piece of research, Brown and Schulze (1990) found that a surprising number of young African Americans, both male and female, enjoyed Madonna's music and videos. However, they had different readings of what they considered to be the most important factors in the stories of her music videos than the young white Americans surveyed. Brown and Schultze also noted a difference in the way the female fans read the overt sexuality expressed in Madonna's videos and rejected it, and chose to focus, for example, on her dancing with which they could identify (ibid. 514-515). These complex positions and identifications with the people in the videos mean that the collective readings are no doubt a crucial part of re-working of texts.

I hoped that some of these issues would be raised by the children in the interviews. I was particularly interested in whether 'racial' identity was significant to the way the

and Hooks (1992) on race and sexuality in Madonna's work. It is this latter artist who will be used in further discussion in this chapter.

children read the texts or reworked them. I considered both the 'racial' identities of the performer and of the audiences, as well as how useful this method was in accessing a 'sensitive subject' like racism and how it is imbricated with gender, sexuality and class. I used images of the Spice Girls as I believe there are many similarities in the way that the 'Girl Power' of the Spices and the original 'Material Girl', Madonna, can be read. Both have had phenomenal success despite the fact that they are constantly criticised. The Spices, like Madonna, signify the 'low-Other of popular culture' (Schultze, Barton White and Brown 1993). The fact that one of the members of the band is 'mixed-race' was a bonus for opportunities to discuss terms.

The focus of this method was not simply to look at 'representation' or 'children as audiences', it was to use the popular as a tool for talking about the unspoken and unspeakable. It also facilitated the analysis of data from the perspective that the popular is both constructed by and constituent of social identities. This proved to be successful to a point but had limitations that I discuss below.

At the time of data collection there was a 'craze' among the children for collecting 'stickers'. Children would talk to each other about what stickers they had and offer to swap them with each other in order to expand their collections. *Smash Hits* magazine provided two sheets of 'headshots' of stars in sticker form. The magazine is supposedly aimed at early teens, but as with most of the magazines aimed at teenagers that I used to show to the children, they were also read by much younger age groups. The stickers were borrowed from a child in Year 5 in Christie. I had seen several children poring over them in the playground after school and asked if I could borrow them overnight. The sheets were colour photocopied and enlarged to four sheets of A3 and then laminated. In addition I bought several magazines that covered a spectrum of interests such as football (*Shoot*), black women's fashion and beauty (*Essence*) and pop music and television news and gossip (*Smash Hits* and *TV Hits*). There was also a magazine called *Black Beat* which specialised in British and American pop stars both male and female. There appeared to be no equivalent specialist magazine for South Asian mainstream stars (of whom there are few) in newsagents. The children in the schools confirmed this and told me that most of the popular (South Asian and Turkish) magazines were about film stars. As the interviewing progressed it became clear that another major source of entertainment for children was playing computer games. There are many specialised magazines aimed at a wide range of ages, and it would have been useful to have used these in discussions. However, for the most part the materials used did what they were intended to do: they 'broke the ice' amongst the groups and facilitated discussion.

The main reason to talk to the children was to encourage them to discuss issues of 'race' and racism in both direct and indirect ways. Using famous people allowed the children to speak freely because even though the people were 'real' and not characters, they were protected by distance and a sense of both familiarity and closeness and yet of separateness. Christine Geraghty has described one of the pleasures of viewing soaps as the ability to remove oneself from the characters yet at the same time to maintain a sense of closeness, what she has called the '... oscillation between involvement and distance' (cited by Buckingham and Sefton-Greene 1994: 14). The children often talked about the most intimate details of the lives of the stars which they had gleaned from magazines and television programmes and took to be the truth in an uncritical fashion. Despite the project being about children of 'mixed-race' this first part of the project involved all of the children in the target classes. This provided a fuller picture of the educational context in which the further work with the children of 'mixed-race' was to be set. After discussion about the meanings of terms connected to ethnicity, including 'mixed-race', any children who self identified as such were invited to take part in the second, more detailed one-on-one interviews.

Using images of 'Scary Spice' to talk about 'race' proved especially successful. Mel B as she was also known had been featured in a special edition of the BBC television programme 'Black Britain' in which she revealed that her mother was white, British and her father black, Jamaican, and that she was 'mixed-race', but identified with black people as a black woman. The Spice Girls, complete with Geri Halliwell, were all very well known and usually prompted some kind of comment from children even if it were negative. This was especially true of Mel B². The fact that she had called herself 'mixed-race' introduced the term to the proceedings. The children were asked about their comprehension of the term and also about the importance and desirability of having such a 'racialised identity'. This led on into general discussions about the importance of 'race' and racism, both in meaning and in everyday experience and practice. Further, these discussions showed the way the children gained pleasure from their objects of desire and fantasy, and offered some insight into how 'race' and ethnicity are interconnected with sexuality and status in the processes of identity formation. It should be noted at this stage that the vast majority of existing research into television, film and especially music is based on work with slightly older groups of children, often teenagers and young adults. Walkerdine suggested that 'Cultural

Studies has had almost nothing to say about young children' (Walkerdine 1996: 324). This may be stating the case too forcefully but it is true that there is still very little on the young child as compared to the teenager. This thesis attempts to begin to rectify the imbalance and offers unique insights into the ways in which young children use the popular. It reveals that they do so in ways that are quite different those in the older age groups, showing less concern about 'authenticity' in 'race' and more concern about 'morality'.

The findings from these group meetings were interesting and complex, and by no means conclusive. They showed that children from all backgrounds have some kind of pleasurable relationship to popular culture, if they are allowed access to it. For some access was limited because of issues of religion or homework, or the fact that parents simply thought it was 'bad' for children to use it 'too much'. Although the schools were located in inner city London and rural Kent at first glance the findings look to be very similar. On closer investigation, regional differences become clearer. It will be shown that it is not merely spatial geography but social geography that impact upon the way children relate to 'racial' sameness or difference, and on the way that they deal with concepts such as 'racism'.

Firstly, I will summarise the general likes and dislikes of the children, provide an overview of the most popular forms of entertainment, and look at the reasons that the few children who fell outside the majority gave for their lack of engagement with the materials. There was no clear correlation between the sex and 'race' of the child and their enjoyment of particular stars. Secondly, I will use children's readings of individual stars to show more detailed responses to the media. The Spice Girls provided some interesting divisions of opinion that crossed stereotypical gendered lines, with both girls and boys expressing love/loathe discourses. In their readings of Will Smith children gave a variety of reasons for their fandom. For some of the children he was an object of desire, for others a kind of role model, and in other cases he was simply a good actor or singer. Will Smith's marriage was just one example of the most popular area for debate: the heterosexual relations between stars and their alleged sexual orientation. I will show that (hetero)sexuality was of major importance to the way the children chose their favourites and attacked others. Finally, I will consider how in forming allegiances within friendship groups, there were gendered differences between girls and boys. The readings of the popular show that

² Mel B was later married and changed her name to Mel G. She has separated from her husband but is still known as Mel G. I have used 'Scary' throughout as that is what the children called her.

the central themes outlined in chapters 2 and 3, about racialisation being understood through hetero/sexed discourse, were in use throughout this part of the research.

4.3 Initial Reactions.

The most striking thing about the use of popular culture as a tool for facilitating dialogue with children was the fact that it was, on the whole, overwhelmingly successful in all three schools. The children in all of the locations responded positively and enthusiastically to the visual materials and at first glance there were few differences in the likes and dislikes held about pop stars and actors, and in the kinds of programmes watched on television, hobbies, magazines read and so on.

All the children were familiar with at least some of the faces that were presented to them on the headsheets. There were three children from the entire group who were not able to put names to faces but they at least *recognised* famous faces. All these children came from homes in which their consumption of the popular was heavily controlled. One child watched Turkish television through cable TV almost exclusively, another Bengali child was not allowed to listen to a great deal of pop music, and the third Bangladeshi child also had his television, radio and computer game usage limited because of 'religion'. In the first week of the project I acquired two more sheets of stickers which also had pictures of cartoon and Disney characters on them. Even those who were not so familiar with music and soaps seemed to recognise some of these characters, such as Mickey Mouse and Donald Duck, as well as the more contemporary Cruella De Ville portrayed by the actor Glenn Close in the Disney film version of One Hundred and One Dalmatians.

The physical reaction of the children to the initial sight of the material (none of them had significant visual impairment) was unanimously energetic and noisy. They all leant forward to the materials and picked them up, looking at each other's sheets and suggesting swaps. They often exclaimed 'cool!' and 'wicked!' or similar phrases, or mentioned the names of their favourites or listed the people they could see and recognise, all without any prompting. Many of them asked whether the headshots were stickers and if so where had I got them from. The children were happy to talk amongst themselves about the celebrities and were only slightly more reluctant when questioned about their individual habits. Once they realised that this was not some kind of test with kudos attached to naming the greatest number they all relaxed. If

they appeared to find it hard to name anyone they were offered other sheets or asked to talk about their own preferred leisure habits.

After the headsheets were handed out and had been discussed a little, the magazines were passed around and these elicited a more reserved response in some cases. In Fairsham, four groups of children said that they did not recognise any of the magazines I showed them. In the majority of groups, the children were familiar with the mainstream pop and television magazines. Black British children, both girls and boys, were the most likely to be familiar with the black music magazines. There were also fairly obvious gendered divides concerning familiarity with football magazines. Not all children who were familiar with the magazines actually bought them, but they may have had access to them if other children had them at school or at home. Girls expressed interest in the football magazine and boys in the pop magazines, even if they did not actually buy them.

4.2.1 Similarities across Geographical Differences.

As mentioned above, initial responses to the materials were similar across locations. And on a superficial level the likes and dislikes of the children were also similar in all of the schools. The Spice Girls were guaranteed to provoke responses in the children even if they were negative. Indeed they were often extremely strong attacks on every aspect of their public personae: it was the 'love/hate' response that was typically expressed in the analyses of Madonna's music as mentioned above (Brown and Schulze 1990). This will be explored in greater detail in the following chapter.

A typical interaction about the Spice Girls in Fairsham, a primary school in a predominantly white middle class semi-rural area in Kent, with only a handful of pupils with some kind of minority ethnic background follows. The virulence of these boys shows the possible level of dislike of the Spice Girls. The boys were all in Year 5; Jack a white English boy; Larry a white boy with one Swedish and one British parent; Adrian, white English and Lance also white English:

Suki Do you like the Spice Girls?

Jack I like their music but don't like them

Adrian 'Cos they have taken over the world now

Larry I want to go to one of their concerts with a bomb and blow them up

This group were extremely critical of their clothing and appearance and there seemed to be an awareness that this was to do with them having no 'taste' and also no 'class', although they did not use this word themselves. The strength of their responses prompted me to ask:

Suki Do you think they are horrible people or not?

Jack Their personalities are all right.

Jack's comments, which separate the idea of the personality of the girls from their music, and even perhaps their public image, is one of the more sophisticated readings of the group. Larry's desire to 'blow them up', on the other hand, is in keeping with alternative analyses of them as 'ugly' both literally and in terms of being unpleasant, loud, noisy, and talentless, and of concern about their over-exposure in the media.

It was not just the female artists whose appearance was questioned by all the children. In particular, Peter Andre provoked strong responses in terms of being loved or loathed. After a general talk of people showing off their 'pecs' (pectoral muscles) too much, Clive a black Jamaican boy in Year 5 at Christie (London) told me that Peter Andre had had a lot of plastic surgery and had had 'meat taken from his buttocks and put into his pecs', and that this was disgusting! Three young white British girls in Fairsham made unanimous decisions of:

Rebecca Urrghh, naked men!

Val Urrgh, They've got their pants showing!

Suki Isn't that supposed to be trendy?

Rebecca Yes it is, but it *isn't* though [they point the photograph of the three young black men in the group Damage at the camera]

However, this same picture produced squeals of delight from other girls in some of the other classes, and also in other schools.

The supposedly intimate knowledge of the celebrities' personal lives, such as who has had plastic surgery, was also a repeated theme. It will be returned to below when looking at the relevance of sexuality and sexual orientation to the desirability of the stars.

Clearly there are many factors in play when the children are choosing whom they like and do not like, and the actual music that they play is but one element. In all of the groups the general sentiments of the love them or loath them type were repeated across all ages and locations, and regardless of gender and race and class. For some children liking of the Spice Girls had to be kept a secret, against considerable opposition and ridicule from others (see Section 4.7 below).

What is clear is that music is very important to the children as a way of negotiating friendship groups, as it is with older children and teenagers (Back 1996; Buckingham and Sefton-Greene 1994; Willis *et al* 1990). It is also evident that the children are not split along stereotypical lines in their preferences. Across all age groups and across gender, 'race' and class divisions the Spice girls were both vilified and loved. The children in London schools in particular enjoyed performing for the camera at the end of the group interviews and many of them chose a song by the Spice Girls. Likewise the children in Fairsham who did perform, chose the Spice Girls first. It was notable how *few* of the children in Fairsham *did* perform. They were on the whole much more shy compared to children in London, where I often had a struggle to stop the performances!

4.4 Understanding 'Race': 'A Race is Something You Run In' (Larry, Year 6, Fairsham).

I often began to lead the questions into the area of racialised identity by asking if any of the interview group knew anything about Scary Spice. Responses usually started with things that described her appearance or her character, such as 'she's got a tongue ring'; 'she's got her tongue pierced' or 'she's got bushy hair' or 'frizzy hair', and 'she's very loud'; 'she's weird'; 'she's wild', and of course, 'she's scary' - which also describes her appearance. When asked 'Do you know how she describes herself?' the same responses would be given.

The question was not be explicit enough for the children to equate this with the earlier contextualising that had explained that the session was to be about 'race' and 'racism'. The children also forgot or did not see the significance of the fact that they had also given short descriptions of themselves in terms of self, family, place of birth, languages spoken etc. at the beginning of the sessions. So they chose to talk about the things that *they* thought were the best descriptions of her. Further prompts were required, such as 'Do you know anything about her family?'. Answers ranged from

'she's got a sister' to 'she comes from Leeds'. When this did not lead to discussions the area of 'race', I had to explain that Scary had described herself as 'mixed-race' and then asked if they understood the term. There was a mix across the schools as to who had heard of this term and who had not, and in the London schools they were more familiar with the term half-caste.

For example, Daw, Raiz (South Asian) and Arle (Zairean), three Year 6 boys discussed her in the following terms:

Daw She's kind of Scary and she's got her tongue pierced and everything

Suki Do you know anything about her background could you describe it?

Raiz She's black

Daw She's kinda weird

[someone unidentified says 'crazy']

Suki Could you describe her family?

Arle Her Mum's white and I think her Dad's white too

Suki So you think both her parents are white?

Arle Yes

Suki So how is she black then?

Raiz 'Cos her Mum is white and her Dad is black

Suki Have you heard of the expression 'mixed-race'?

Daw Yeah, I knew she was 'mixed-race' 'cos of her skin colour

Suki Because of her skin colour is that how you can tell if someone is 'mixed-race'?

Raiz and Ar together No

Suki So its quite confusing as to how you would tell?

(Barnlea. Interview: February 1998)

Raiz has picked up on 'race' quite early in the discussion but it still needed to be led further in that direction. Arle seems to want to follow that theme and from his hesitancy he clearly knows that at least one of her parents is white but does not make sense of the fact that if they both were it would be fairly unusual, though not impossible, for her to be black. Daw shows a very typical response to my question about the term 'mixed-race'. He says that not only did he already know the expression, but that the visual sign of skin colour is the main way of telling if someone is 'mixed-race'. He wants to present himself as knowledgeable and aware of the issues. The other two boys try to show that the subject is not that simple. This

may be a sophisticated understanding of the fact that I queried Daw's assertion and that this implied that I thought his analysis might be wrong. All three go through in turn in an attempt to give what they hope are satisfactory answers to questions that cannot really be worked out in a satisfactory way from the information available.

I also asked children if they knew where certain celebrities 'came from'. In many cases this was answered by a straightforward knowledge of the person in question. In cases where they were unsure, they would resort to the same sorts of processing to work things out or just guess.

For example:

Suki Do you know where her [Scary's] father comes from?
Rebecca Tasmania
Val No I think it's somewhere like Africa where she went to dance...
Rebecca Oh is it J...J..J..
Val Jamaica
Rebecca No, I think its somewhere Muslims are
Val Japan
Rebecca No

Children often guessed that Will Smith was African, Jamaican and in one case, South American although the child was not sure about that. Coolio, another African American singer, was guessed as being Jamaican. In one instance, I was told that the fact that he had dreadlocks meant that even if he were white he would be Jamaican because of his hairstyle, but this was an exception that resulted from a specific prompt about 'hair'³. For the most part, it would appear that many of the children were primarily assessing the performers' origins on the grounds of skin colour. The interesting thing about this was that it seemed children from *all* the schools made this association, except when one white British girl from Fairsham suggested that most black people were American! After clarification, she explained that she meant that this was true in the context of the research materials that she had seen, and that most of the bigger pop stars were African American and not British.

With the pop group Aqua who are all white, there were similar problems but a wider choice of possible countries was suggested:

³ I will discuss the meaning of hairstyles in some detail in the next chapter

Daw, Raiz and Arle went through a range of possibilities:

Ar England

Daw Somewhere else in Europe

Raiz Sweden? Iceland?

Ar Russia!

SA I think it might be Belgium

Daw I think I heard them on 'Live and Kicking' (a Saturday morning children's television show) say Yugoslavia or something

In this dialogue we hear the children going through their repertoire of "European" countries. The definitive answer comes of course from the television, a programme on which the group members themselves have told the audience where they come from. At the time of the interviews Yugoslavia no longer existed as a country and so it seems highly unlikely that they would be claiming it as a homeland. However, this satisfied the rest of the children as it had the unmistakable stamp of authority, even though Daw is actually very cautious, and qualifies his remarks with 'I think' and 'or something'. For the others who had no better information, it was good enough.

This method of processing diverse pieces of information about stars could also be used in other locations. Children would often try to fix people into categories which they understood, or provided analyses that meant that they could pass on and negotiate information within frames of reference that others could understand. One group of children at Barnlea tried to describe a boy (Zane) who came from Somalia:

Gery its [He comes from] that kind of Indian country, kind of ...

Meli He looks like he's got kind of part black inside of him, kind of, but he doesn't know ... kind of... he looks Asian

In this example, where the children have a wider understanding of the range of ethnicities present in the school they struggle to place the child using nation and 'race' in terms of appearance. So Gery's 'kind of Indian country' gets taken up by Meli and developed into a notion of Asian-ness. Interestingly she also uses the term 'black' and this is the way that the adults in the school would loosely categorise children, so that those with genealogies that originate from the Indian sub-continent would be deemed 'Asian' even if they were African Asian or British Asian. Likewise all children who may lay claim to African heritage, i.e. have black skins, may be subsumed, at times, under the heading black, regardless of nationality. Meli, who is

highly aware of the politics of race, struggles with these generalisations when trying to describe Zane purely by appearance. Interestingly, this boy was also frequently cited in discussions about racism because he often 'cussed people's religion', particularly Christianity.

In order for children to make the move from the 'unreal' or distant personalities such as Scary Spice to the everyday relations with friends, the children would sometimes use my own 'racial' identity as some kind of a stepping stone from one area to the other. I was quite closely scrutinised during these discussions:

Jack Where do you come from?

Suki I'm English

Jack Do you have any relatives who are African or....

Suki Yes ... my father came from Trinidad and my mother comes from England

Larry Where's that?

Adrian Is that South America or somewhere?

Jack Trinidad and Tobago

[After a discussion about the meaning of 'mixed-race']

Jack I couldn't describe myself as mixed-race

Adrian Its like

Jack (exclaims, smiling) Coffee coloured! Coffee Coloured!

Larry (to SA) Well that's the same as you!

Suki Er ..yes...

(Interview: Fairsham, June 1998)

Jack had lived in France for several years and liked the idea that he could claim an international background, even if he could not claim the label 'mixed-race'. However, when it came to talking to me about my own background he is clearly interested in trying to locate me in relation to the current discussion on 'race' and its meaning and relevance to his own life. I have had similar questions asked to me so many times that I responded to the first question in a way that I knew would obstruct him from finding out what he *really* wanted to know. The fact that I respond in the affirmative to the question of whether I have any African relations is revealing. I know that Jack wants to know why I have brown skin. That is why he mentions Africa, which is where he thinks black people come from. I know that this is what he wants to find out and so

I say 'yes' despite the fact that my father's family is mostly Caribbean Asian. Finally, Jack manages to make sense of me by making the connection to the phrase 'coffee coloured', something he believes to be safe, aesthetically pleasing and apolitical. I have indeed been told how lucky I am to have 'coffee coloured' skin on many occasions. Luckier than the sister and brother whose film, 'Coffee Coloured Children' (1988), shows the misery of being the only two black children, living with a white mother growing up in a village in the north of England in the 1960s. Jack's use of this phrase shows his delight in finding a happy resolution to the 'problem' of talking about 'mixed-race'.

The way the children think that they may be able to tell where people come from breaks down when there are no 'obvious' visual pointers. In the case of Zane and myself, the children struggled with a mixture of ideas about 'race', nationality and ethnicity. These are imbued with a notion of embodiment, of physicality and racial phenotypes: Meli talking of Zane having 'black in him'. But they are also about histories and genealogies, the way that we tell the stories of our families is what gives credence and truth to our own versions of race. In the absence of such information the children could not and (I believe, to their credit), *would* not try to fix people.

In all of the pop magazines the way that the lighting and reproduction were used often made skin colours fall within a range of golden browns that made black people look paler and white people look darker. During the course of the interviews we often talked about this, and that if you really looked at people in these pictures it became harder to ascribe 'racial' type on skin colour alone. In new boy bands such as '5ive', there are often members who fall outside the simple black/white divide. The make-up of the groups reflects the demographic changes in Britain. They show young men in particular who are Mediterranean (Greek and Turkish) though there are still very few South Asian. In the case of the girl bands they are still more likely to rely on the black/ white dynamics, with the variety being shown in choosing blonde, red, brunette and a black girl like the Spice Girls.

The media tendency to 'white out' the black stars and 'exoticise' the white stars proved too difficult for the children to read, and so they resorted to guesswork or a refusal to engage with a patently impossible and wholly undesirable task. It was explained that we were talking in this way about appearance only in order to consider the ways we categorise people or how we feel about those categories and that they are indeed often inadequate or 'wrong'. In the case of 'ambiguity' the way in which

children responded was directly influenced by their environment, which meant that those in Fairsham were lacking a *language* with which to talk about these things as well as an understanding of the issues.

4.5 Learning from the Media Indirectly and Directly.

The distance that the majority of children in Fairsham felt from the questions asked them coincided with the lack of experience most of them had with dealing with people from 'minority' ethnic groups, who were in the majority in the schools in London. As a result, the Kent children relied heavily upon information given by the school, the media and their families. The majority of children suggested that the teachers rarely talked about these (see Chapter 8). What was striking was that in years 5 and 6, the few children who knew about racism had in the majority of cases taken it from the television - not from any kind of children's programme, but from the news. Several mentioned that it was coming to the anniversary of the death of Stephen Lawrence and that they had heard about that on the news and about the then on-going enquiry into his death. This again appeared as racism in a realm far removed from what they believed to be anything to do with them.

In one group, a boy related that he had 'seen racism' on 'Father Ted', an adult comedy programme on Channel 4. The programme features a group of Irish priests who live together, one of whom is an alcoholic, another extremely stupid and the third who has been accused of all sorts of minor misdemeanours, including theft of money. Because of these stereotypical representations of alcohol abuse, stupidity and dishonesty, the programme writers (who were all Irish themselves), had been accused of 'racism' by members of the Irish community in England. James reported that the priests had been racist about a 'Chinaman'. It was very unclear as to how this had been represented, but the impression he gave was that the priests had been censured for their behaviour. While he repeated the story, however, the other children laughed at the part that was racist. In another incident, a boy recounted how he called one of the Japanese pupils in the school 'foo foo' and 'begola' which were, he claimed, 'Chinese food'. He knew this because he had heard it on 'Scooby Doo'.

These children 'learn' from entertainment programmes about 'race' and racism, when they had clearly stated to me that they had not heard of these terms at school or from their families. These are small and very obvious examples of the way in which the children use television and then manipulate what they hear for their own use in

school. They are taking material out of fictional lives and using them in the everyday. This is a phenomenon that has been reported elsewhere and is hardly sinister in most contexts. It shows the amount of discernment required to make 'preferred' readings of texts as seemingly 'innocuous' as a Hanna Barbera cartoon⁴.

Another finding that crossed all locations, was the influence of the American and how it represents all things 'cool'. In 1994 Buckingham and Sefton-Greene wrote that the young people with whom they were working did not represent a homogenous group who watched exactly the same kinds of programmes. They found that many more black British teenagers were watching programmes such as 'The Cosby Show' and 'The Fresh Prince of Bel Air' than white, and that of them the girls were more likely to say that they 'always' watched (Buckingham and Sefton-Greene 1994: 21). By the time the data for this project was collected 'The Fresh Prince of Bel Air' had moved from being a specialist programme to being watched almost universally by the children. They were also fond of 'Sister, Sister', 'Moesha' and 'Keenan and Kel' which are also all comedies featuring young African Americans. During the course of conversation children repeatedly named American artists as their favourites, and when asked directly, agreed that they were better but could not say why. Les Back noted that:

'... urban black American speech is also being incorporated into the linguistic repertoire of black South Londoners, This development is closely related to the emergence and popularity of black American youth culture'.

(Back 1996: 145).

It appears that it is *all* children in this study who are enamoured of the same sorts of black culture. They also watched a great many imported comedy programmes such as 'Friends' and 'Third Rock from the Sun', that were originally on television after the nine o'clock watershed. These were supposedly adult programmes but were watched by boys and girls from all schools who were in years 5 and 6. They were less likely to be watched by children in Year 4. They claimed this to be because they did not like them, not because they were not allowed to watch them. Older siblings or adults with whom the programme could be discussed afterwards often supervised those who did watch.

⁴ Another child also showed how influential these cartoons could be as she picked her favourite 'people' exclusively from cartoon characters (see Chapter 5)

4.6 We All Love Will Smith

The most universally popular artist at the time was undoubtedly Will Smith. The film 'Men In Black' had raised him to Hollywood superstar status. He had had several hit records including the theme tune to the film, and his sit-com, 'The Fresh Prince of Bel Air' imported from the USA which was also running on television in the early evening young teenage slot. His appearances in all media had obviously been highly saturated (as had the Spice Girls) but he was seen as a good all round performer. Those who may not have seen him on TV may have seen the film, or if not seen the film may have heard his records, and so on. Children would often spontaneously break into song when his name was mentioned. He was seen as a good singer, stylish, and funny - a good comic actor.

It seemed that one of the factors that allowed for his universal popularity was the fact that he was such a well-rounded performer and therefore appealed to a wide variety of children. Some of the girls thought of him as 'good-looking' and attractive. Hilary (Year 5 Fairsham, white middle class) said 'Will Smith looks gorgeous without his moustache'. The forbidden inter-racial element of this sexual attraction was clearly not a problem and may even have been an enticement. A few girls mentioned that he was married and had a son who he loved, which they knew because he had released a song about him. This also raised his credibility with them as he was seen as a good father and faithful husband, which made him a 'nice person' - specifically 'in real life'⁵. The boys liked the fact that he was funny. The fact that he is a black man is, in some ways, the most remarkable thing about his popularity. He showed the ability to transcend most of the limitations placed upon black performers to achieve this phenomenal level of success. He was sexy, but not too sexy, funny and smart and a good mainstream singer and actor. In all, he was *non-threatening* to the children regardless of their own personal location.

Despite Will Smith gaining immense success and being firmly stationed in the mainstream of pop, he maintained his credibility with the black students, whilst appealing to all other ethnic groups. The children did not discuss Will Smith or other artists with the level of critical distinction about the politics of 'race' and the incorporation of the artist into the mass production of the popular in the way that teenagers do (see below). There was a vague and barely articulated understanding

⁵ See also Chapter 5 for a discussion on sexuality and morality

of the notion of artists 'selling out'. Clive (black Caribbean, Christie Year 5) was surprised at the fact that Shabba Ranks was, to his mind, endorsing homosexuality and therefore had lost some credibility⁶. Buckingham and Sefton-Greene report that the young black people in their study used to distinguish between 'hardcore' and 'commercial' rap (Buckingham and Sefton - Greene 1994: 65). Hardcore was seen to be authentic and higher status, it was often more underground and only available from specialist shops. Commercial was seen to be 'a cop out' and much less valued by true fans who could acquire status by showing specialist knowledge (ibid.). When talking about Shabba Ranks, Clive showed a greater critical knowledge of black music. Through questioning his hetero/sexuality/masculinity, he is implying that Shabba Ranks has in some way 'sold out'. Clive knows that 'hyper-masculinity' and homophobic lyrics are the required credentials of 'real' hardcore rappers. In rejecting those ideals Shabba Ranks must be moving towards acceptability in mainstream music. The children had been impressed with Clive's knowledge and he was seen as something of an expert in the area of rap music. The fact that Will Smith was non-threatening aesthetically, in terms of his style, music and acting, made him more popular, and rendered him a-racial/non-racial in the children eyes; neither was he deemed to have sold out.

Will Smith is not a controversial figure. His music and lyrics affirm a new form of black *middle-class* masculinity that is at complete odds with the more 'hardcore' rappers who are often criticised for their espousal of separatist politics, violent and misogynist lyrics. Many have discussed the inherent fear of the black male that critics of rap have invoked (Back 1996; Buckingham and Sefton-Greene 1994; Gilroy 1993a). Rose (1995) suggests that the particularly negative responses to rap concerts represent a similar fear of African Americans, teenagers in particular, to the fear of slaves who threatened to revolt if allowed to organise into large groups. Whilst cultural investigations into teenagers show an understanding of the implications of these debates on the development of black identities, the children in this study did not express any concern at this level.

The black children in London schools had, on the whole, greater 'specialist' knowledge of black music and a greater interest in the less mainstream R and B, rap and soul groups. Likewise although many of the South Asian children listened to more traditional and modern music that was grounded in their own ethnic heritage with only one of the black Caribbean children in Barnlea claiming to listen to 'Indian'

⁶ The meaning of 'gayness' is discussed below in 4.7. 'Sex and the Stars'.

music. The only children who listened to 'classical' music or jazz were white children from Fairsham, one of whom was North American. This rough guide to the pattern of listening is broken down upon fairly predictable if not quite stereotypical lines, whilst mainstream pop was listened to by all. Will Smith formed the acceptable face of pop, despite and because of having a black face, and in this way was remarkable. In the next section I will show how children presented their knowledge in the area of the popular.

4.7 Sex and the Stars

Despite their age, the children had extensive knowledge of the stars going in and out of fashion and how quickly this could change. They delighted in showing their expertise and in telling me when I was wrong about who was 'in'. There did not seem to be a pattern to this though, as was evident from the variations on the love/loathe Spice Girls, and the fact that children would justify their own liking of someone who was 'not in' if they were a true fan.

The children at all the schools seemed to know a great deal about the personal lives of their favourite and least favourite celebrities. The capacity for gossip amongst both girls and boys was huge, and the more shocking the gossip the better. The most scandalous and therefore interesting topic of all was SEX. It was also not always easy to talk about directly but could be talked around, using language that was in common usage, hence 'I don't say s-e-x but I say the f-word though' (Jamal, 'mixed-race' boy, Year 4, Barnlea). Sex often had to be spelt out despite the fact that 'lesbian' and 'poof' could be said freely. They counted as 'swear words' or insults, rather than as something to do with sex. The common concerns were with whom was going out with whom, who was a lesbian and who was gay. The sexuality of stars was a source of conflict amongst friends, as much as who someone liked. Indeed the two were inextricably linked. It would be impossible to like someone who was lesbian or gay, as reporting these alleged sexual deviances was done in order to de-value the star in question.

When talking about the Spice Girls, a group of Year 4 children from Barnlea, both girls and boys and from a variety of ethnic backgrounds, became quite heated:

Alan She's a ... they're all lesbians, Miss
Ad and Mb together Shut up!

Cain Don't talk about Emma like that
 Jam Yeah I told you not to talk about Baby Spice like that
 Cain Don't talk about Baby Spice like that
 [All talk at once]
 Suki Where did you hear that?
 Alan I saw it in .../
 Cain ... cos everyone's saying it innit?/
 Becky Victoria's getting married isn't she?
 Cain Yeah! So is Scary Spice!
 Suki And Scary ?
 Alan And then on 'Tricky' I saw Baby Spice and Posh kissing on the lips
 [Cain hits Alan on the arm]
 Suni Shut up, don't say such rude things about girls
 Cain But Baby Spice got a boyfriend, innit?
 Suni Innit!
 Suki Does kissing mean anything much?
 Jam No, my mum kisses...
 ALL No !
 Cain But they was ... mmmmm ...[mimes a big snog]
 They all laugh a bit and someone says 'Shut up' again.

(Interview, Barnlea, February 1998. Alan (black British), Cain (Anglo/Turkish), Jamal (Kenyan Asian/ black African), Sunita (South Asian), Becky (white British) Year 4)

At Fairsham some of the girls in Year 5 had also seen an interview with Ruby Wax the Spice Girls had given. They said:

Hilary Mel B and Geri kissed right on the lips
 Lena Disgusting!
 Suki They 'snogged'?
 Hilary Basically it was a really embarrassing situation which I'm not going to tell you ...

Presumably it was too 'disgusting' to repeat. It was also a way that Hilary took control of the interview and avoided having to say anything that may have been embarrassing. Being lesbian was a terrible insult to the Spices, as was being gay for the men. One particularly worldly boy Year 6 at Christie told me that Versace was killed because he was gay and his family had found out that he was going out with

Giorgio Armani! The whole group erupted at this piece of information and wanted to know all the details and where they had come from.

Peter Andre was described as 'gay' because of his style in his clothes and hair. The appearance and style of Peter Andre is crucial to his success. He is famous for revealing his torso on stage and having in fact a very 'masculine' muscle bound body. His macho display is a mirror image of the kind of 'hyper-femininity' used by the Spice Girls. He was therefore open to the same kind of attack as they were. This group also bemoaned the fact that 'there are a lot of people turning to gay', 'even Shabba Ranks is turning to gay' (Clive, see above).

Within the school context the term 'gay' had many meanings and acted as a way of regulating heterosexual masculinities (see Nayak and Kehily 1997, Epstein and Johnson 1994; 1998). The multiple meanings can be seen in the comments about the men but not so clearly in the label 'lesbian' for the women. The way in which the children perceive these sexual orientations, and their sexualisation of stars is developed in the next chapter. The discussion above reveals that the children are using sexuality as a form of regulation in normative gender acquisition, and that they are linking this to attractiveness and character in a person. Therefore, you cannot be 'nice' and 'pretty' and 'a lesbian'. These value judgements are imbued with issues of style and identification for the children. For boys, you can be too good-looking and that makes you 'gay' and therefore 'nasty'. All of these processes are formed with and through a recognition of *racialisation*, but only *within particular textual contexts*. These contexts were often negotiated through friendships and collective re/readings of popular images.

4. 8 Friendship and Fandom

The way the children negotiated their friendships was often linked to their likes and dislikes of particular artists. For Frith, despite the fact that musical taste is guided by something outside of oneself (social conditioning, history and so on), the experience of music is something which is itself performance, and as such creates social identities.

'What I want to suggest [...] is not that social groups agree on values which are then expressed in their cultural activities [...] but that they only get to know themselves *as groups* (as a particular organisation of individual and social

interests, of sameness and difference) *through* cultural activity, through aesthetic judgement.

(Frith 1996: 111)

The friendship groups of the children were often formed through the processes of musical affiliations. Through collective readings of music in particular, and the more extreme pleasures of fandom, the girls in particular moved in and out of groups with a fluidity policed by an agreement of what taste they shared, particularly in music.

Pop stars were still the dominant 'pin-ups' with television actors and film stars coming a close second. With the expansion of the electronic media, the experience of music is no longer exclusively aural supplemented with static images from magazines. It is now more often experienced through video, music programmes and music channels on satellite and cable television.

The girls at Fairsham in Year 6 mentioned above (Hilary, Lena and Angela), were led by Hilary, who was a very dominant character. Hilary was particularly 'in love' with Ronan Keating⁷. When Lena had the audacity to suggest that he was not very good looking, Hilary said, 'Yes he is! We *all* like Ronan, don't we, Lena?' in a mock threatening manner. In her introduction to the discussion, Hilary often used the collective voice to speak for her friends in the group, as if their musical taste were identical.

These girls showed that fandom was certainly not pathological, rather was simply a heightened form of appreciation for stars. Yet 'fans' were always female as girls were the only groups to use the term and they were also all white. Other girls in Year 6 in Fairsham, banded together in the face of considerable opposition and ridicule from other groups to enjoy the Spice Girls. They claimed that this was a secret, yet if it was it was a fairly 'open' secret. The image of the fan as excessive, hysterical and dangerous with some kind of psychological dysfunction is one that is well known (Jenson 1992). Yet both groups of girls used the term in a more positive way; and their pleasure in the term and its attendant practices was similar to that one would expect to see in older fans.

I noted in my field diary that some of the girls at Fairsham, who formed two 'gangs', were constantly writing talking and singing about their favourites, even if it had to

⁷ Ronan Keating is lead singer with a (then) popular white Irish 'boy band', Boyzone

take the form of a 'secret'. Being a fan involved a considerable investment in time and energy. The superior knowledge of the objects of desire was a form of cultural capital that resulted in status within the groups (see Fiske 1992). Within this age group in the microenvironment of this school, liking the Spice Girls was, if not quite 'counter-hegemonic', certainly an oppositional reading to the majority in their class and year group. The Spices were universally ridiculed in the school amongst the older age groups who were keen to show a somewhat jaded attitude to the world of pop. Knowledge was key to status and most certainly provided cultural capital. The 'anti-Spice Girls' girls talked as though they had superior knowledge about the fact that the Spice Girls were over-exposed, rather than saying that they simply didn't like them. This was not true of the boys.

The way the boys in Fairsham used their knowledge and pleasure was markedly different. The girls were very open about stars they saw as attractive, described them 'romantic' ways, as 'gorgeous' and 'good-looking'. This parallels McRobbie's work (1991), but it was not true across all locations as will be discussed later. The boys barely talked about the physical appearance of female artists, other than to comment if they were 'pretty'. (The exceptions were a group of boys who made up a set of names for the Spice Girls based around the fact that they were 'ugly and fat'.) Instead, boys often formed allegiances around the fact that they *disliked* particular things, discussing at length how 'bad' people were.

Even if boys' allegiances were not initially formed around such things, they were the basis for debate and negotiation. This was less true for the girls in the school who were more likely to debate and argue about what they *did* like. The use of cultural capital was equally in evidence with boys, but was more likely to be tied in with football stars and computer games. Here, status was accrued by the number of games they had, and how up-to-date they were, as well as how skilled they were at playing.

The way that the boys and girls in the *London* schools spoke about the strength of their feeling for particular artists were similar but a great deal more explicit. The girls in Year 6 in both schools talked about who they thought was attractive in a much more overtly sexual manner, so too did the boys. It would be hard to generalise about the particular ethnicity of the children, as there were always some individuals who would, of course, buck the trend. But it would be true to say that the African-Caribbean children were, on the whole, more at ease vocalising their pleasure in particular stars appearances. Their groups consisted of articulate and vivacious

children, who came into the interviews with an energy that was directed towards achieving the most fun out of the sessions, as well as 'taking part in research'. Some of the boys in the first group in the first school, Christie, actually started enhancing a photograph of Spice Girls showing some cleavage with a pen. But the girls also talked about the fact that many of the stars they liked were 'fine', and they would pore over the images in the magazines, touching the photographs and begging me if they could have certain pictures for themselves.

This again was a communal activity. The talking and touching took place in the group setting, and the shared aspect of the reading with contemporaries undoubtedly enhanced the levels of enjoyment gained from the materials. The fact that these were peers or indeed friends was crucial to the experience. It would have been significantly different in a one-to-one setting with me as research-friend. There were many reasons for this. The children stated that they enjoyed talking to me, but this was about the research and general school gossip. I did not have the necessary expertise to talk to them about the music that they liked, and with the age difference between us the problems were more marked. It was even harder to imagine having any kind of free talk with the boys about these things, as the issue of expressing sexual desire for the stars and their attractiveness was hampered by the fact of my being female. The way that they sometimes objectified the female stars made me feel uncomfortable and doubtless this showed in some way, despite my best efforts to disguise it. They were often doing this to shock and they sometimes succeeded. The relationship I had with the older girls in the schools in contrast did resemble the research-friend as I got to know them better, and resulted in greater freedom in their speech.

4.8 Conclusions

The use of popular culture to investigate issues of 'race' and ethnicity proved to be successful. Its main function was getting children to feel relaxed and involved in the process of research. Popular culture, and popular music in particular, were areas where most of the children felt that they had some expertise, and this gave them some status and power in the research process as they often knew more than me. The similarities in the way the children read the media were striking, and the discourses of love/loathe about particular stars spread across class, age, gender and ethnicity. However, on closer inspection it became clear that there were very different understandings of 'race' and ethnicity that were not being expressed in conversation

about the celebrities. The use of popular culture alone was not adequate to uncover these more subtle distinctions about understandings in the immediate social environment. Fairsham was outstanding in this way. The way that the children in the schools understood the terms had to be obtained by explicit guidance of the conversation into particular areas, and by asking direct questions.

It is clear that one of the ways the children conceived of 'race', even when talking about people they know, was by visual signifiers. Skin colour, facial features and hair type were most often invoked. In the discussions about media stars, the idea of 'race' seemed at first to be abstract and removed from reality. The way the children moved from the distant to the involved at Christie and Barnlea was quite smooth. In Fairsham, this conceptual shift required more negotiation, and often utilised my presence as researcher and co-discussant to bring the concepts into some kind of concrete reality in an everyday form. This is where the social geography of the children and the demographics of the area had the most impact. For most of these white children there were no minority ethnic children in their immediate sphere of peers, and the few that there were, were located entirely within the school context. These few individuals were singled out for particular kinds of name calling, as mentioned above (Section 4.5), that were often meant to be 'jokes'.

Clive was the only child in the sample who expressed a preference for being 'mono-racial' during these discussions. Generally, the groups were well versed in the idea that it made no difference to Scary's dancing or singing if she was black and/or 'mixed-race'. It made her no better and no worse; it's just who she is and 'how' she is. The children used to say that 'it doesn't matter where you come from we're all the same' - under the skin. They used to respond to questions about the hierarchies of 'races' in a very predictable way, quite blatantly repeating the mantra of 'equality despite difference' that had been presented to them by schools. Those who had a more sophisticated understanding were those who had had additional information from outside the school context. This shows that the discourses of multiculturalism were inadequate to children (see chapter 8).

The children were less likely to talk about 'race' than they were sex and sexuality. The research gave them the opportunity to discuss with an adult the way they perceived (hetero)sexual relations. Using media and talking about people at some distance from their own lives provided them with a safe environment in which to do so. The children expressed individual personal tastes and views, but it appeared that the groups of black children with Caribbean heritage were more vociferous in their

inquisitiveness and playfulness about sexuality. There were, however, variations between and within ethnic groups. It is important to note that these conversations were often tempered with discussions about what was *morally* acceptable to the children, and they were often conservative in tone. The black children did *not* reveal evidence of greater sexual awareness, simply a greater confidence in talking about the issues in my presence.

In Fairsham the issue of 'race' had to be approached in very direct ways and did not appear to be a major factor in children's media analysis. However, despite a certain amount of gendered appreciation that revealed an active development of heterosexual identity, the discussions showed that 'race' remained 'unreal' to most of these children. It would be hardly surprising that they would continue to talk about this as something forbidden, just as they talked about sex as something forbidden. The children in the multiracial schools had immediate and endless experience of racism in their lives and although they were happy to talk about it, it was not as exciting as talking about the other forbidden topic; sex. For them 'race' took precisely the opposite meaning as it did for the majority of children at Fairsham. It *was/is* part their everyday experience.

Van Zoonan suggests that:

Obviously all media are central sites at which discursive negotiation of gender takes place.

(Van Zoonan 1994: 41).

The same is true of sexuality, 'race' and class and dis/ability. However, the level at which children read texts shows that they do not *always* engage in critical analysis with these additional and constituent aspects of gender and identity. Although gender is constructed through and with coterminous discourses, the main focus of reading for the children who took part in this research, was the way that gender and heterosexuality constitute parts of identity formation.

In the following chapter, the responses of the 'mixed-race' children to popular culture, and the influence of style and appearance will be developed. It will be shown that the children are engaged in identification processes that are self-reflexive and use concepts of morality with attractiveness. The ways in which children read images as racialised will be interrogated, and how they see themselves in relation to others in

terms of their 'race' explored. It was in this area that children began to talk about their homes and 'looking like' family members showing awareness of themselves as embodied agents who could deploy 'images' of themselves, the popular and others, such as family members, in multiple ways in forming racialised identifications.

Chapter 5: Ambiguous Images: Popular Versions of 'Mixed-Race' Selves

5.1 Introduction

What emerged from the last chapter is that 'race' is not always a *consciously* salient factor in the way that children read popular culture. However, it is certainly responsible for a sense of the Black Atlantic diaspora that involves the black British children in a strong cultural identification with black artists from the USA, and the reading of the specialist black Music magazines. There were exceptions to the rules in all cases and generalisations were hard to make, but unlike teenage responses, the children in this setting did not claim to be concerned about 'authenticity'. Older children can be hostile to those who are 'trying to be black', who listen to black music and take on black styles of talk (Back 1996; Buckingham and Sefton-Greene 1994). All children who took part in this research showed an appreciation of all things 'African American', unlike those in Buckingham and Sefton-Greene's earlier study, and a common use of black British-speak crosses all ethnic groups. This does not happen in all contexts, and the question of authenticity is most certainly evident when the children use racist abuse during arguments, particularly towards 'mixed-race' children. With the privileging of cultures of style and sex, the children of 'mixed-race' had to negotiate hostilities and identifications in a variety of ways.

In this chapter, readings of the accounts given by children of 'mixed-race' show how they articulate with ideas of sexual desirability, and the importance of their own embodiment to acceptability. The children show an acute but only partially articulated concern about 'attractiveness', that is about style and that also incorporated notions of class, as well as sexuality, but not explicitly 'race'. Children in Fairsham in Kent were the most likely to make racially discriminatory remarks when linking people's appearance to attractiveness. The children in London schools showed a much greater acceptance and incorporation of diversity in physical and style issues.

In the following sections, I will introduce some of the ways in which the children who identified as 'mixed-race' took up the reading of popular materials and used them to form part of their identifications. I will argue that children do this when available discourses of 'race', ethnicity and culture are not allowing 'accurate' readings of

themselves; when language fails them, they utilise readings and performances of visual signs that allow them positional flexibility.

The children show that their awareness of their embodied positionality has value judgements attached to it which play a part in where they 'fit' in their social networks at school and outside. Paul Willis's notion of 'symbolic creativity' is especially appropriate in understanding how children are engaged in making sense of their world in the everyday through what he calls 'symbolic work' (Willis 1990). Symbolic work involves language, body and drama and the creative use of these resources. He states:

It's also a cultural sense of what symbolic forms – languages, images, music, haircuts, styles, clothes – 'work' most economically and creatively for the self'.
(Willis 1993: 209)

In fact, he agrees with the post-structuralist view of there being many 'selves', but it is his interest in the creative process of the cultural which is relevant to the representations of the children in this chapter.

Sarah Ahmed (1997;1999) also looks at the 'creative' (though constrained) physicality of selves. She interrogates the mutability of physicality and skin colour. She discusses the ways in which 'passing' may be seen as a technique available to a range of individuals through 'social antagonisms' (1999: 92) and in doing so problematises the pre-given positioning of both 'whiteness' and 'blackness'. The acquisition of 'racial identity' can, she suggests, be achieved through 'animated borders' of style, speech and food. Her analysis of her own position as a woman of 'mixed-race' allows us to consider the possibilities of *both* blackness and whiteness as being available to some people through such techniques, a framework which is very useful in analysing the data from children.

Children were concerned with the 'morality' of popular artists (see previous chapter), how it was linked to their perceived sexual orientation, and that was read from their appearance. In the first section, I show that these 'moral' responses, representations followed no obvious patterns relating to gender or age or location. Individuals were guided by their own 'grounded aesthetics' which I can only assume were informed, in part, by their home environment, as well as the hegemonic 'popular' within their friendship networks and in the 'particularness' of their own dynamic locations (Willis op.cit: 211).

In the second section, the way in which children perceive themselves, their appearance and attractiveness will be explored in some detail. It is clear that for many of these children the established hierarchies of colour in beauty are not relevant to their readings of what is beautiful and attractive in self and others. There is an acknowledgement that claiming blackness is desirable and desired. How they are positioned by others indicates that these assessments still operate at a subliminal level, as popularity seems to be based on an 'attractiveness' which is in part physical, even if it is not based on 'whiteness'.

Finally, I will show the ways in which family identifications form a strong part children's understanding of their physicality, and how this is often gendered, and mediated by distance and closeness to other family members. I conclude that the way in which children understand their bodies as both gendered and raced may be read as a form of 'drama' or 'performativity' (Willis 1990; Butler 1990; 1993) in which they are exploring subjectivities which are both constrained, yet liberating and dynamic.

5.2 Morality and Appearance.

The sexualisation of stars through reading style was introduced In the previous chapter. It has been shown that this has implications for their popularity and is also informed by, and informs children's perceptions of their character. The children often made decisions about who looked 'nice, 'good' or 'stylish' based upon some perceived notion of 'decency'. Being pretty or handsome or (reasonably) good-looking was equated with being a 'nice' person. They rarely talked about one without the other even if their comments about the person were critical. People could have quite flamboyant style and be perceived as attractive by some children and 'disgusting' by others. These kinds of polysemous readings of bodies-as-texts pervaded the interaction within and across children's friendships.

5.2.1. Reading Sexual Desirability: Too Spicy

The ubiquitous Spice Girls, as we heard in the previous chapter, were especially open to this kind of interpretation. Many of the attacks centred on the notion of 'style' and how that expressed a type of character that was somehow very decadent and

very sexual. Meli from Barnlea (London) thought that the Spice Girls did not look 'decent'. She repeated at a later interview that she thought that Lauryn Hill had really good style and that she looked pretty and 'nice' and 'decent'.

Scary Spice was one of those most likely to provoke strong feelings.

Jamal (Barnlea, Indian/African year 4) said that the Scary wore 'too many see through clothes'. In a later interview with him and his friend Cain (Year 4, Anglo/Turkish) he got quite enthusiastic about this theme which took on surprisingly racialised tones:

- J She's ugly and she's got curly hair and a big earring stuck in her lip and she got one in her belly button and it so nasty. I can't stand her bush hair! [...]
- S I like big bushy hair
- C uuurgh if you had it I wouldn't sit next to you!
- J She got spider hair!

As the conversation continued, Jamal told a story about a 'crazy' man who lived near him who went out wearing dreadlocks, a skirt and lipstick. The man had, so local myth went, 'killed his wife' and if you went near him he would 'rape you'. I believed that he was talking about a black man, as he had told this in response to my asking if he liked dreadlocks. He began to describe the man, and said he was 'kind of tall' pointing at me:

- Suki Tall like me? But I'm not scary though!
- Cain When you talk in that voice you are!
- Jamal And you look a bit scary with that earrings running down ..
- Suki Did you think I was scary when you first saw me?
- Jamal I thought that when you get upset you shout

This conversation shows yet again the dominant discursive positions that are on offer to and being explored by the children. We can see Jamal reveals his concerns with sexuality and 'race' and gender, and how he connects these to respectability and attractiveness.

Firstly, Scary Spice is seen as too flamboyant in a very sexual way and that makes her 'nasty'. Part of this nastiness is her hair and her clothes. Her hair was (at that

time) in a large 'Afro' style, which Jamal who is from Somalia sees as 'bushy' and horrible. This is a raced position but it is mediated through a particular cultural/ethnic location that interprets hair in that style as unkempt. He similarly rejects dreadlocks which are most commonly embraced by black Caribbean men rather than women¹. As an African/ African Asian Muslim these are not desirable or attractive styles for him. This sets him to thinking about a 'crazy man' who sports dreadlocks. We can tell he is crazy because he wears a skirt and lipstick. This equation with normative gender representation and madness is common, hence the loud un-sexy Scary is masculine and 'crazy' too. More explicitly Jamal mentions the fact that this man is a 'rapist' and a murderer.

In returning the conversation to our present location the children used my own physicality to further explore the nasty/scary/crazy matrix. I was perceived as scary in part because of my physical size. I had extremely short hair at the time and came into the school wearing trouser suits, but with 'earrings' in my face. These gave out mixed messages about my gender to the children, one of whom asked me 'Miss, are you a man?'. For Cain and Jamal I was potentially threatening as I was not presenting myself as typically 'feminine', and this was a transgression they found difficult to position in their own desire to develop successful masculinities. These are fragile and partial positions as will be shown below.

Both of these boys thought that Baby Spice, Emma Bunton was very 'pretty' and chose her as their favourite person, as well as their most attractive female. They clearly read her style in a wholly unproblematic way. Baby wore short 'feminine' low cut dresses, a lot of pale pink and frequently had her hair long blonde hair in two bunches to make her look young; hence 'Baby'. For these boys she was 'nice' and 'sweet' as well, despite the fact that she wore clothes that were equally revealing as those of Scary. Her style is in fact, a form of 'hyper-femininity' which distorts and exaggerates the fetishes of young female sexuality through a middle aged white male gaze. It is clear that for these boys the readings were multi-layered and informed by normative sexualised gender aspirations which read Baby as cute, unproblematically feminine, infantilised and sexy and Scary as scary 'masculine' and therefore of necessity independent and assertive - un-sexy.

Not all the children read the Spice Girls this way and for some she was the 'prettiest' along with sporty Spice. Miranda (Year 6, Christie, white English/Jamaican), said that

¹ Hair is another main form of display which will be considered further in the next sections.

she was one of the prettiest women in the media. There was nothing remarkable in this except that Miranda is a Jehovah's Witness who had quite strong views on sex, relationships and gender. She was quiet, studious and very intelligent. Her best friends were based around a group of black girls, and she joined in with their group readings of the popular in the school playground. When I asked about her favourite playground conversations, she said 'music, groups, people, songs'.

Miranda's reading of Scary was that she was a good singer and dancer and very pretty. She also chose Shola Ama another black soul/R and B artist who is mainstream and non-threatening. It is clear that the children of mixed-race are sharing as many diverse readings of the popular as any other children. The love/loathe factor in relation to Scary traversed to Fairsham where Ella, a girl in Year 4, also loved the Spices, in particular Scary who she thought was the best in the group. Ella raised the issue of 'reality' or 'authenticity', as she did not like people who were 'plastic', yet she did not read the Spice Girls as 'fake' and liked the idea of their Girl Power.

5. 2. 2 Show Offs and Fakes.

Meli: I don't like Mel B [Scary] cos she shows off

Being 'nice' and being decent were tied to the notion of being 'yourself' and being 'natural'. One of the most censured behaviours was the use of plastic surgery. Ella had an extensive though rather confused knowledge of such matters:

Ella Michael Jackson, he looks like a girl, not that girls don't look good, but he's like ... and plastic surgery and I don't like Pam.. Pam .. Pamela Anderson either.

Suki Same reason 'cos she looks too plastic?

Ella Mm

Suki Have you seen her in lots of things?

Ella I've seen her in some magazines, but my friend my best friend liked her and he said that she had had plastic surgery on her nipples and his then his dad walked in and said ' He means he that she blew them up in the car .. in the umm .. car what's it called, where you put oil in your car? Where is it?'

Suki Garage

Ella Yeah that's it - garage [laughs]

- Suki Her nipples or all of her breasts?
 Ella Her nipples and her stomach
 Suki So you don't like people who do that kind of thing?
 Ella I like people for what they are not for what they want to look like

These words introduce the idea that what we look like is not simply about style and character as such it is about *choice and aspirations*. Despite the knowledge on the part of some of the children that the Spice Girls had been manufactured, Ella liked them so much that her best job in the world would be being a Spice Girl. Yet with Michael Jackson, again his 'gender bending' is seen as problematic. Although Ella did not mention it, others had talked about the fact that Michael Jackson had reportedly tried to bleach his skin. This was unanimously perceived as being a bad thing by the children.

Attractive appearance was tied to ideas of 'naturalness'. Despite the fact that children clearly recognised that stars were given to quite radically altering their style, there was a notion that there was some underlying 'self' who was either acceptable/nice or not acceptable/nasty.

- M Zöe Ball, she gets on my nerves
 S Zöe Ball?! Really! (laughs) What don't you like about Zöe Ball?
 M She's too much of a show-off.

Despite Zöe Ball being very popular with older fans, Miranda, who really loved Scary Spice, would not accept her. I wonder if in this case there was something about Zöe Ball's 'white' sub-cultural image based in the dance and club music of predominantly white youth, which alienated Miranda. Her tastes were guided by black music, yet also included reading white, middle class school-girl stories. Her positionings are complex, and she is mentioned again in the next section.

In a few cases the children could recognise that good style did *not* equal 'nice person'. One of the more sophisticated responses to these questions came from Lola at Barnlea (Yr 6 Chinese/ white English)

- Suki Who do you think is good-looking?
 Lola Michael Owen. Yeah Michael Owen except he's a bit eeuughh [mimes sticking her fingers down her throat] Sickening!

Suki In what way – a bit full of himself?

Lola Yeah, / think so

Lola's emphasis on the word 'I' shows that she is aware that she is in the minority when expressing this opinion. But both she and Sima (boy, Year 6, white English/black Jamaican) were adamant that looking good and being good were placed in relation to each other.

When talking about being good humoured, Scary came up again:

Sima That's who I was thinking of, 'cos she seems like a really good person to know and she's not like all in love with herself

Lola Yeah, she helps people. Like Diana she helped people but unfortunatley she died, boo hoo

Sima in particular is very concerned with people being 'nice to know' and here Lola elevates Scary to the role of the pseudo-saint on the same level as Princess Diana, whom they both decided was a 'really nice person'. Being vain or arrogant, 'in love with yourself' is undoubtedly a bad thing, yet many of the children expressed views that showed that they were at least content to be/look like they did.

For example, Lola said

Lola I'd look like, I like Denise, but I don't think I would like being her

Suki You would? Denise who?

Lola Denise Van Outen

Suki So you think she looks good but don't want to be like her

Lola I she's pretty but I wouldn't like to be her.

Suki Why not?

Lola Umm

Suki You just want to be yourself?

Lola Yeah

Again, Lola shows that she can separate the person from the image and the lifestyle and in doing so asserts the idea that there is a 'self' that she would currently rather be than someone famous. There were occasions when children suggested that they would like to be someone that they knew who was a friend from school or home. This was always girls, except for one boy who chose a classmate who was always

smiling. In this sense the responses were likely to be gendered, and the girls were more likely to be able to articulate aesthetic pleasure from looking at other girls than boys were from looking at boys. This ties in with the normative power of the heterosexual masculinities for boys. It made it impossible for them to reveal a 'male gaze' being turned upon another male. It was more dangerous for boys to talk about men as attractive than it was for girls to talk about women, as girls could be expected to enjoy looking at women within the generic popular productions of fashion and beauty on television and in magazines. Boys often claimed to want to be like footballers or musicians that they admired for their talent rather than their looks. Boys could talk about appearance through style, which was constructed through musical style, or by using the voices of girls who had positioned men as popular.

5.3 Gendered Readings.

There were some differences in the emphasis on readings which boys and girls made that crossed location and class. The ways in which men and women 'read' visual texts it has been suggested, are in part determined by the scopophilic position which is gendered. In her influential text, Laura Mulvey suggested that 'the gaze' is male: that the power to look at belongs to men, and the that the ability to be looked at is held by women (Mulvey 1975). Van Zoonen notes that Mulvey's article was a particular project aimed at destroying the gendered pleasures of mainstream Hollywood cinema (Van Zoonen 1994: 90). The idea of a voyeuristic, fetishising male gaze has been taken up in the mainstream of media analysis as a way of understanding the positioning of women as objects to be looked at. This psychoanalytic perspective suggest that women and girls are only allowed problematic identifications and that they are denied pleasures of looking (at). However, women and girls, as seen in the previous chapter, *are* enjoying the pleasures of spectatorship as feminist writers have found (Winship, 1987; Gamman and Marshment (1988); McRobbie 1991). In this section, I will show that the ways in which the boys and girls chose to talk about their readings, and how they used these to construct gendered identifications, are slightly different from each other.

5.3.1 Boys and Masculinities

Thomas is a boy of white English and Jamaican parents in Year 6 at Christie school. He lives with his mother who is white and sees his father rarely. He has a reputation

for being naughty and difficult and was in the past labelled as having 'emotional and behavioural difficulties'. He is by his own admission a 'pretty boy', a term he used with knowing irony, and he admitted or boasted that he was 'vain'. Miranda, who is also 'mixed-race' told me that she did not like him because he was 'always talking about sexual relationships'. It is true that he was more than happy to talk about his girlfriend with me in the interview context. When he was in conversation with his best friend Omer, he told me that his favourite all time character was Jackie Chan. He and Omer spoke animatedly about Jackie Chan movies and managed to draw Chan back into the conversation at every opportunity:

- S So who do you think is a great person?
O Jackie Chan
T Jackie Chan
S Would you like to look like that though
O No
T Yes
O No
T You'd rather be a film star and showing off too much
O Actually, No I'd be Jackie Chan
S So what's so good about him?
O Jackie Chan does his own stuff, and every time when he breaks his leg he still does his own stuff, 'cos in this film 'Lost in the Bronx' and he jumps from roof.
S So you like him physically, how he is ...
O Yeah
S Do you actually think he is good looking then?
O Yeah
T He gets all the girls in the films, all of his films.

This identification required some negotiation on the part of the boys, and Jackie Chan certainly was an unusual choice. They went on to talk about physical strength, which was another thing they admired in Jackie Chan and wished for themselves. The text reveals how surprised I was at their choice, and the fact they would like to look like Jackie Chan who, as an Asian man, is outside the hegemonic boundaries of acceptable good-looks. Omer also had to change his position after being led by Thomas. Jackie Chan was deemed to be good-looking on the basis that he got all the girls in the films, therefore he had to be good-looking, and so they would be him and also get all the girls. This is another clever piece of manipulation of some difficult

areas on their part. By using the utterances of others, or rather, the actions and visual texts of others, they are able to negotiate the dangerous ground of homo-erotic fandom into which they had strayed.

Thomas was also keen to represent himself as expert in the area of martial-arts films, and also claimed to watch a lot of Japanese 'manga' films. His expertise in this area is again gendered as he claims it as status and reflects the status Clive gained (Section 4.6 and 4.7 in the previous chapter) when he talked about his knowledge of Shabba Ranks, and how that fitted in with dominant readings of hardcore rap. This is different from the rather more 'feminine' form of fandom that is characterised by the image of hysterical teenage girls, and which is not imbued with the same status as 'expertise' within peer groups. Thomas is able to form a purely heterosexual story out of his same sex reading, and in doing so maintained a *sexualised* reading.

5.3.2 Wearing Hair

For girls the reading of attractiveness and whether it was 'raced' or not was often articulated through hairstyles. This is a theme which Weekes (1997) interrogated in her research. She found that women of mixed-parentage were stigmatised by being linked to whiteness. She suggests that whilst:

At one extreme there is a rejection of European ideas of womanhood and at the other an assumption that these qualities are desired. However, what these issues highlight is the underlying influence of Whiteness as yardstick for beauty.

(Weekes 1997: 123)

Many of the girls in this research did not use whiteness as a yardstick for beauty. In fact, I believe that Miranda's reading of her mother with her 'gingery' hair was a rejection of whiteness as a preferred standard of beauty:

- S What does she look like your Mum, tell me a little bit about her
- M Mm well, she's got gingerish - brown hair and she's white (mmm) and
 I sometimes say that she looks a little bit like Ginger Spice
- S Does she?[Miranda nods] Is she really pretty?
- M Mm

- S Do other people say that as well, that she looks a bit like Ginger Spice?
- M No
- S No? Just you think that?
- M No, I'm just teasing her really
- S Oh does she not like to be like Ginger Spice?
- M Not really no.

Miranda describes herself as 'mixed-race' and can see herself as different from her mother, who is 'white'. She also positions herself as a discerning reader of the popular in that she teases her mother about looking like Ginger Spice, whilst preferring Scary herself. She acknowledges gender in the way that she also claims that her sister looks more like her Mum, but when pressed about who she would like to look like herself, in common with many of the girls, chose a black woman, 'Tamara' in 'Sister, Sister'. She has turned the beauty standards Weekes describes on their head.

Kallie and Hannah, (both white English/black Caribbean, Year 5, Christie) also chose a black girl as their ideal person; one who was in their class at school. They said that they thought that she was really pretty but also that she was funny and a good dancer, linking her abilities and talents with her looks, her character and her popularity in much the same way as Omer and Thomas did with Jackie Chan. But they chose to see such popularity in a non-sexual way. This choice had more to do with the gendered aesthetics of beauty and popularity. Kallie also experimented with many different hairstyles. When I was at the school and she too chose plaited styles over 'straight' and 'inauthentic' styles.

Dinease (Christie, Year 5) was another of the girls who had naturally curly, not Afro, yet chose to wear it in 'black' styles.

- S So you didn't have long, the style it is now, you had it in extensions before didn't you?
- D Yeah
- S When did you change it?
- D I don't know .
- S Do you like a change?
- D Cos my mum thought it was getting a bit tatty and so she took it out.
- S Your mum does it

D Yeah

Dinease's mother is black, originally from Monserrat. As a black woman and a mother, she has the ultimate say in the acceptability of Dinease's hair. She has also passed on some of her expertise with hair to her daughters:

Dinease: Yeah sometimes we mess around with G's hair [her baby sister] and like plait it and cane row it and put in Chiny bumps. Yeah you can like plait it, or you can plait it and then twist it round and tuck it under or you can just get the hair itself straighten it out and then just do the same thing....

Despite this identification with blackness, Dinease calls herself 'mixed-race' as does her mother. But the importance of good hair is not lost on her. A friend of mine used to talk about being at school and being able to tell the children who had white mothers because they were 'the one bunch kids', the ones whose mothers could not do their hair. Liesbeth de Block, aware of her position as a white mother of a 'mixed-race' daughter, is determined that this should not happen to her child:

As I have had to learn about the complications and intricacies of caring for black hair I have met astonishment and denial from black and white that I have cane rowed or plaited Daniella's hair. Meanwhile Daniella's father is especially concerned about the appearance of her hair when she goes out with him because he does not want to be accused by black women of not caring for her properly.

(Block 1997: 14)

Hair is not just appearance it is values, caring, kinship and culture. I asked Talia about her new plaits:

S Did you get your hair done before you went on holiday?

Ta Mm hm

S And your neighbour did it?

Ta Yeah

S Do you do Talia's hair?[to Mrs. Farmer]

Mrs.F I can do all this. Once its parted I can pick it out and .. Its a necessity I think when you have 'mixed-race' children to be able to care... There are too many English women have mixed-race children and you see their hair all ..

[Tito and Talia giggle] No it's not funny.

So not only are the parents aware of this need for a statement in hair, so are the children. For the children who are 'racially' ambiguous, this is a powerful statement of allegiance to their blackness. It also shows the way in which they begin to write their identities upon their bodies, and perform their blackness.

Boys could of course use the same kinds of processes of identification through hair, but were not as heavily invested in their appearances at this stage of their lives. They had to negotiate the fine line between being good-looking without being vain, which as Thomas revealed was aligned with gayness. Mrs Farmer (Margaret) also told me about an incident involving Tito when he was subject to racist abuse when they were in Yorkshire, because he had the 'Addidas' symbol shaved into his hair. This is a strongly 'black' sign, as are dreadlocks. 'Curls' are not. Yet Lesley told me how disappointed she was when her son Jacob cut his hair short and greased it down because he 'looked like a white boy, he lost his curls'. In fact, short, shaved hair is a dominant form of black British hair for men (and to a lesser extent, women). Lesley did not read it as such, and was disappointed because she thought that Jacob was aspiring to whiteness.

This performance of 'race' and 'ethnicity' was not taken up by other children who did not have such an obviously powerful sign of a racial/cultural marker as 'blackness' and black 'Afro' hair. The children of Chinese and Polynesian and Indian heritage could not achieve the same ends through hair-styles². Just as Weekes (1997) criticises the use of hair and skin as markers of racial authenticity, so too girls subvert simplistic images by both accessing and rewriting simple equations between beauty and 'race' in order to claim a unique space for themselves.

For others such as Meli, her cultural affiliations to her Grandmother's blackness took the form of identification with *black Britishness* as well as to her Polynesian heritage. At her house her mother had hung traditional clothes and accessories that Meli could name for me. She also used to quite literally perform her traditions and genealogies as her mother was a dancer who had worked with a traditional Polynesian dance troupe, and Meli often performed with them. She negotiates her positionality in fluid

² There are ways in which these children could choose more 'traditional' styles over more 'Western' styles, but in this sample the children were using the kinds of styles that were common to all ethnic groups.

and dynamic ways which are ethnicized and cultured and to an extent 'raced', and are of her own making within the limitations of the discursive registers offered to her.

What the girls show is that their readings of popular images of race and gender are not governed by the same kinds of fears as the boys. They manage their readings of other girls and women in non-sexualised ways that also help to construct their ideas of beauty, but they do not fear the stigma of homosexuality enough to problematise these identifications. For girls, they are part of the enjoyment of same sex reading and are acceptable positions to occupy. This kind of identification is developed in the next section.

5.4 Being Myself.

The children often had a very well developed sense of pride in themselves which showed that if there was any kind of conflict in their positions, they could often rationalise it within this particular form of conversation/interview. Although children could often identify things about themselves that they did not like, they would still say that they would rather be themselves either in appearance or character or a combination of the two. These children showed that despite the unstable aspects of identifications, they are using 'narratives of selves' to create their own positions in their daily social relations. In doing so, they asserted confidence in being 'happy with who they are'. This is one of the discourses that I came to hear as having a basis in the liberal humanist principles of the schools. Just as we are 'all the same under the skin', so we need to learn to be 'happy with who we are'.

Both Meli and Jacob who were friends said immediately that they would not be someone else:

S So if you could be anyone who would you be

J Me. Me, its stupid to want to be someone else

M Me. You are lucky to be alive and have a face that is not burned or scarred or something

Meli linked herself to beauty and physicality, and was the only person to mention the fact that she was healthy and able bodied. The possibility of disability was seen as a legitimate reason for wishing to be someone else, and reveals how the discourses of desirability, whether in white or black terms, were always predicated on physical 'perfection'; though not too perfect as that is 'fake'. Both these children at Barnlea

were able to articulate the position of self-contentment in a direct way, whereas for others, such as Jamal the need for self-pride was tied in with the ways in which others positioned him in positive and negative ways:

J Yeah, like M has said 'How comes your mum's white how come your dad's black and how come your'e brown and how come your brother's brown? There's lots of pink and black pigs in your house and you don't know which one is your mum and your dad and which ones your little brother!'

[...]

J I think its disgusting to say things like that. I'm a Muslim and I'm not supposed to say 'pigs' and all of that stuff and I just ignore them.

S So how would *you* describe yourself or your skin colour?

J I'm brown, I'm pretty. And my little brother's cute and he's brown like me and my mum is white and she's a Muslim too and my mum is sweet, and she's kind and she buys me lots of clothes and my dad is good to me and he buys me pets and guess how many pets I got?/

S How many?/

J Four. 'Cos I got a dog, a puppy I mean, I got a little toad, I got a tadpole and I got a bird and next I might get ... what they called? Gerbils. Holly's (teacher) got them and she's got baby ones too, they had about 7 babies.

S Wow, that is a lot. It would be lovely to have one of the babies. Um. Have people talked about racism in school?

J Yeah, just that boy M.

S Have people ever said nice things too, like you're lucky?

J My best friends, and my friends they say 'You're so sweet, you look nice', and when I'm like sad they say like, 'What's wrong?' and if like something bad has happened they go to the teacher and they tell.

What is shown here are the contradictions and complexities that are lived and resolved for children of 'mixed-parentage' every day. Jamal has a series of 'voices' in play at any one time, some oppositional and some conciliatory. He uses them to perform a song of his identity, which he suddenly disrupts with his desire to share his

list of pets with me, showing how much he is valued by his parents, and gaining 'status' from his ownership of them which adds to my sense of his identity³.

Jamal is a very 'sweet' boy. He is physically quite small, and very good-looking with a beautiful ready smile. He always came to school wearing co-ordinated casual clothes, the generic sportswear of the boys of that age. His clothes however were copies which he got from the market, I assume because of there was not lot of money in the family. He was a popular child with a lot of friends. He had been confused by my earlier question about religion, and said he had none, until he later explained that he did not celebrate Christmas because he was Muslim. In this extract he begins to talk about himself as he was defined by another boy, M, who was being 'racist'. Jamal is not so worried by the slur against his family as about the fact that it challenges his position as a Muslim. This was not perceived as 'cussing his colour' but 'cussing his religion'. The boy who insulted him is black British, of Caribbean heritage, noted for being something of a bully.

Jamal claims to ignore people who are trouble, but in another conversation he admitted that he sometimes lost his temper. He did go on to talk about himself in terms that his mother uses, as she tells him that he is 'pretty'. This seems to be an odd choice of words for the super-macho boy who laughs at the mad man who wears a skirt (see above pp 116). It also reveals how his self esteem is negotiated through the language of beauty, and that is articulated with popularity, being sweet and brown and in the case of his brother, 'cute'. He is almost infantilised by his peers who also perceive him as 'sweet', and will come to his defense if he is picked upon. I believe his physicality has a great deal to do with this, but also that Jamal himself helps to construct himself in this way as it gains him benefits.

Although there is a view which positions South Asian boys as holding 'invisible' masculinities, or as quiet and 'feminised' (Gillborn 1990; Mac an Ghaill 1988; Connolly 1998). I am not convinced that this is an analysis that fits with Jamal. He is concurrently actively constructing heterosexual masculinity in other contexts, but neither is he 'demonised' in class (Mac an Ghaill 1999). He is at present able to utilise discourses that sound feminised in an unselfconscious fashion, in ways that seem to be directly related to his age. At secondary school level, young men are much more consciously engaged in 'expelling femininity and homosexuality from within themselves' (Mac and Ghaill 1994: 90). Jamal does this, but it does not take

³ A fuller discussion of ownership of pets takes place in Chapter 6.

the form of the totalising regulation of self that it does for older boys (see also Connell 1995)

Jamal also utilises his whole family in order to describe himself. His mother is Kenyan Asian, and by most peoples' reckoning would be seen as brown or 'black' in the political sense, yet M sees her as 'pink', and Jamal endorses that by saying that she is 'white'. He then qualifies her acceptability by saying that she too is 'sweet' and a Muslim, which makes her like him. Of course, most importantly she is 'good to him' she cares for him, as does his father.

In the section of the conversation in which he talked of his family, Jamal was speaking in a very lyrical fashion, listing these people in a stylised way, which was completely stylistically disrupted by him switching into 'himself' and talking about his pets. When I tried to steer the conversation back, he misunderstood thinking that I was asking whether people had talked to him about *dealing with* racism, and he repeated that the boy M was racist to him. This was balanced out by the fact that his friends like him to be sweet and 'look nice', which is clearly what his family have said to him as well. This is not the only version of Jamal on offer, but it is a very powerful one. I know that he was often quite cheeky and naughty and was quite happy to tell me that he used 'the 'f' word' (pp 105). Jamal said he would like to look like Will Smith, yet he knew that ultimately he could still take pride in being himself. However, he did say that the best thing he could imagine was to be a king so he would have lots of money and do what he wanted! I am not surprised a small child from an impoverished home would aspire to a position of such power and wealth. But in his daily encounters he manages to operationalise his assets so as to maximise his power over and through his friends.

What is apparent from the interviews is that being happy with who you are also requires one to know which or what kind of 'who' the 'you' might be. The way in which children often operationalised this knowledge was by telling genealogies of selves. This they did this either directly or through reporting on the words of others, as shown above. This was particularly relevant to the way children placed immediate and extended family into their discussions.

5.5 Looking Like my Family.

A major insight of my earlier work, confirmed by this field experience, was that children often had to negotiate themselves through telling stories and histories of their families. Focussing on this provided a crude method of assessing the ways in which they identified both in terms of race and gender with parents and other older family members⁴. Just as the question 'where do you come from?' is posed by others who need to fix one in a recognisable social position, the questions about looking like a family member encourage children to try and answer unanswerable questions. In many cases they had to resort to going back generations:

Lola: I don't really look like any of them [her family].. like my Nan a little bit, she's my dad's mum, so I think I look like my dad a little bit, I don't look that much Chinese, like my mum, all my brother's and sisters do though , and my little brother though .. he looks very English he's doesn't look Chinese at all.

I did not ask Lola directly about whether she perceived her appearance as Chinese, she placed that as central for herself. As she does not look Chinese, in her opinion, it ruled out her mother and her mother's side of the family completely, obliterating the usual visual gender identification. She began by making the gendered connection to her white Scottish Grandmother, and from there worked hesitantly back to her father, 'I think' and 'a little bit' revealing her uncertainty at this cross gendered identification of looks. Sima explained the conundrum perfectly:

Sima: Both. Yeah, 'cos, its strange really, 'cos I'm a boy and that's my dad, and I'm black and that's my mum. So I sort of like I look like my dad even though I look like my mum. But it's just 'cos, my dad... I have my mum's legs definitely, because my dad's got big calves, and I've got ... and little thighs, and I've got big thighs and little calves, and my mum's got little calves and big thighs. So I think I look a bit like, a lot like my mum.

Sima in this case finds the ties to his mother more powerful than to those of his father, and it is interesting to note that he identifies as black, not as 'mixed-race'. His

⁴ The importance and meaning of family to the children will be explored fully in the next two chapters. This is an attempt to look at the same processes from a different angle that of the importance of 'looking' and belonging.

mother is a black woman who, in her interview, made it clear that the 'politics of race' do not allow for any negotiation on this question. Sima has taken that as a primary source of identification, but he also sees *gender* as a more logical and perhaps necessary, form of identification. He is a boy, therefore he is/will become his father. He does not specify that his father is white, that is unnecessary, as the most important aspect is that they are both male. Again the hegemonic discourses of gender acquisition are interrogated and manipulated by the children. He does go on to work out quite conclusively that there are also other ways in which he is 'physically' his mother.

The negotiation of body parts and blood and genetics is a complicated matter for the children and they resolve the difficulties in many ways. When asked directly about looking like her family Meli said:

Meli: I look like my sister and my Mum mostly

These were her immediate family who she lived with although she did see her father on an irregular basis. She did not have to make a choice as it was her mother's mother who was black and with whom she most identified. She simplified the whole process into a form in which all problems were resolved. Meli had told me a different version of her looks in an earlier interview when we were talking about her experiences at school.

Meli: When someone's angry with me and they're not my friend, they'll go behind my back and they'll go, um, "oh, she's white!" and they'll like say 'oh the white b-i-t-c-h' something like that.

[...]

Yeah, um sometimes when someone would ask me my colour and then they'll see my Mum and they won't believe me. And they'll go, "she doesn't look it though". And sometimes when I say that I'm that colour [Black], something like that and then like I'll go up to them and say something like "Excuse me! You don't know my family and [...] you haven't seen my Grandma, you haven't seen like my Grandfather, you don't know nothing about my family, my background or nothing!

This shows the emotional perils of not looking right. Meli's presentation of herself as black, her attempt to 'pass' as black has failed when she cannot offer the correct credentials – that is a black parent. Meli's grandmother is black and it is that 'fact'

which gives Meli a stake in blackness. More importantly it is her mother's communication about her ethnic and 'racial' heritage which allows her to claim and perform blackness which she did through use of clothes, make-up, hair, music and dance. Her gender identification with her mother means that she also reads her as black, when her mother, Mala, describes herself, at times as 'ethnic', 'mixed' and 'black'. Narratives of family and belonging helped to construct differing versions of her self-image as the focus of the interviews changed.

Jacob had a more complicated way in which he achieved some kind of reconciliation between body and family:

J I can't say anything; people say I look like my brothers and sisters and my dad but ...

[..]

S So do you think you look like your Dad, what do you think?

J I don't know. I can't exactly compare myself with my Dad

S Why?

J Well, 'cos his face is bigger than mine, I've got the same colour eyes as my Dad I think, um part or one of my eyes is lighter than the other and you can really only see it if there's light, and um my nose is the same as my Dad's but otherwise ... and my mum says that I'm built like my Dad .. and my mum, my mum just thinks I'm more like my Dad than her, but too, the good thing is that I might come taller, 'cos my mum's got long legs and my Dad's got a long body!

Jacob lived on his own with his white mother, and the brothers and sisters he mentioned were half siblings, many of whom he had not ever seen. He also explained later in the conversation that he had not seen his father for nearly three years. He first chose to report back the ways in which others saw a resemblance to his father. When I said I thought he looked like his mother he was surprised and then said, 'Well you haven't seen my father though'. Again his 'required' gender identification with his absent father was stronger than his immediate relationship with his mother. He used *her* description of his father's body shape to make a real and physical connection with him in spite of his absence. He managed to include his mother in the happy probability that he would 'inherit' her long legs (he was at the time one of the smallest boys in his class)! His father's blackness and his shape were the things that kept him close and immediate in Jacob's life. However, his mother,

politicised in issues of 'race', was the most influential figure in Jacob's developing understanding of his racial identity:

- J I'd just say I'm black. Really can't believe... You can only be black or white.
- S Has anyone your mum or dad ever talked about that?
- J Yeah. My mum, she says really you can only be black or white and only one colour and that's black.

I find this quote rather moving. It seems to me a rather no win situation for the white mother of a black son. My own memories of struggling with a black identity were that I *could not* deny my mother. She was there, *in me*. It is as though Lesley, Jacob's mother, has had to sacrifice her stake in him as her child to the politics of a racist society that will position her son as black. She is not alone in her assessment of how society will position her son (Jordan 1983) and offers to eradicate her very physicality from him. As Ifekwunigwe acknowledges:

The well intentioned political mandate encouraging *métis/se* people to identify as solely black renders their white parent invisible, but not forgotten
(Ifekwunigwe 1997:140)

I believe that the interplay of 'race' and gender may operate in far more complex ways than might first be imagined. What is at stake is a recognition of a politics of 'race' (and gender of course) that is based on boundaries, purity and exclusion and the need to come from out of the borderlands into a place of certainty. There are no such certainties that do not involve loss and erasure for the children in this study, despite the exciting potential for dynamic bodily performances and re/presentations.

5.6 Conclusions

Children claiming positions of multiplicity use popular images to help them interrogate racialised discourses of beauty, attractiveness and thus acceptance. In the face of unacceptable 'racial' simplifications they use strategies in presentation of themselves that allow for the fluidity of their positionality to be expressed in their bodies, clothes and hair. The children are engaged in producing embodied accounts of themselves that can accommodate their own familial identifications, their need to refine gendered positions that are conceived in relation to Others, and the collective popular. They

recognise their own ambiguous positions and the potential limitations of fixity. The need to acquire the correct heterosexualised identifications appears to require boys in particular to begin very careful gendered and gendering readings of the popular at young ages. They are given less opportunity to talk about themselves as sexual beings in relation to other men than girls are in relation to women. Girls are required to make the same kinds of choices, but their aspirations are much more likely to be mediated through same sex readings in popular culture as the female gaze is acceptable to and accepting of readings/representations of femininities. Paul Connolly (1998) has suggested that attractiveness was part of the gendered relationships of the *girls* in his study. I believe that this research shows that the same kinds of discourses are beginning to have salience to boys, moreover this is particularly true for boys of 'mixed-race' who face shifting positionings in their 'raced' relationships.

The boys and the girls are quite heavily invested in the presentation of themselves as attractive physically and in their characters, and this is reflected in their readings of popular culture. The ways in which bodily texts are read are however complex, and more likely to be mediated through the hegemonic cultural positions in the school. In Christie School in London, the girls and boys (who were all from Anglo/African-Caribbean mixtures) were invested in presenting themselves as black ('passing' as black as Ahmed (1999) would suggest). In Barnlea, the girls were less likely to do so. At Fairsham, none of the children actively interpellated 'raced' readings based on hair, style and music. For children such as Lola and Meli, there were undoubtedly choices in the way in which they chose to represent themselves in narratives and in their embodiment. For Meli this was to claim a black identity despite a strong 'coloured' Polynesian identity. Lola did not have a strong enough resemblance to her Chinese mother to allow her to 'look like her'. Lola's family were also middle class and her mother, Chok, talked to me about how hard it had been to come to England as an outsider from such 'foreign' culture. I believe she was quite happy for her children to claim a multiracial identity that was based upon acceptance. Jane Ayers Chiong (1998) also recorded the fact that her 'Anglo/Asian' (white Anglo/Korean/Chinese) children were treated differently at school according to which of them looked more Asian. Her younger child who looked white was never interrogated in the same way as her older daughter. This particular kind of 'mixed' physiognomy sits comfortably within the 'exotic' paradigm, and Lola has gained credibility as a model by appearing in magazine and television adverts for several international companies.

The processes of reading the popular are supported by children invoking their inheritance of physical similarity to parents. In order for children to acquire gender identities that are based on identifications with parents (including those who are absent), they subordinate aspects of developing 'racial identities', but do not occlude them completely. The children also showed how they rely on being told the ways in which they favour other family members who they do not know very well or who are absent from the immediate family (such as Jacob). Children do not always choose to take up all the parts of their cultural identities that are offered to them and read them through the lens of the dominant cultural positions.

The children reveal very complex and dynamic subject positions and it is hard to see a pattern in them, but I believe that social geography and class play a crucial role. The middle class families seem to be making choices based upon both cultural acceptance and politics. The working class families were all positioning the children as 'mixed'. Walkerdine suggests that:

Being looked at still presents one of the only ways in which working-class girls can escape from the routines of domestic drudgery or poorly paid work into the dubious glamour industries

(Walkerdine 1997: 143)

She does not include 'race' in her analysis but the children show that the readings of the 'mixed-race' girls were also aspirational by the way in which they valorised the women of 'mixed-race' who were counted as 'dubious' by others. I also believe that 'being looked at' within 'glamour industries' is becoming more acceptable for boys, but only when tied to some form of talent or agency. Footballers and actors were two of the preferred professions for boys, both of which now require glamour and image consciousness.

There were only three children who talked in an unequivocal way about having a black identity, and they were all based in London. These were two boys with politicised mothers (Sima and Jacob), and Meli who would describe herself as 'mixed-race' and also claim that she was black. Meli saw no conflict in having both these identifications in play at the same time whereas the two boys were aware of some loss in the position.

What these children show is that there can be no easy discussion of 'racial' performativity. That we may aspire to 'pass' as a racial type is partially true, as the whole area of mixed-raceness is often about desiring and holding *multiple* texts of belonging and mis/re/presentation. Children in this study reject hegemonic whiteness, the possibility of joining an 'invisible and privileged community' (Ahmed 1999: 94). They equally reject 'passing' as Asian, South Asian or Turkish. Whilst such an analysis is useful in that it looks at the ways in which bodies, effects and affects, are mobilised to situate selves in particular collectivities, the children negotiate positions of much greater flexibility, *as they conceive of them in their own terms*. The ways in which we may choose to interpret their actions might challenge this, but I believe it is essential that we respect their own choices of positioning whilst remembering:

[to] question any assumption that hybridity constitutes *in itself* a basis from which to theorize resistance and transformation. The traversing of racial distinctions [...] can easily be recuperated into the identificatory practices of the master discourse. The danger of the hybrid – the loss of clearly demarcated identities – may be read, in the terms of the master discourse, as constituting the necessity for new forms of policing and surveillance.

(Ahmed 1999: 96) (emphasis added)

In theorising the ways in which children are dealing with their own embodiment we must at all times remember the temporal specificity of the research. As children learn more about current 'politics of race' they will undoubtedly shift their ideas and behaviours as they will also do upon reaching a more sexually mature embodiment. The way in which they choose to identify themselves will undoubtedly change motivated by many different factors. In conversation a colleague working in 'the new' South Africa's Higher Education system has talked about how she covers her hair so that people cannot easily position her when they meet her⁵. Her masking of her 'roots' is the opposite form of strategising from that of others who embrace the visual for their politics.

⁵ Personal communication with Gail Smith, 1998.

As Jayne O. Ifekwunigwe notes:

In fact, those who have known me over the years can trace the emergence, the lapses and the resurgence of my political consciousness by the particular hairstyles I have sported: relaxed, curly perm, short and natural, braids with extensions and the ultimate – almost bald.

(Ifekwunigwe 2000: 37)

This revealing section shows the intentionality of politically and socially informed style, with some kind of arbitrary yet powerful policing process of what is allowed. These styles she suggest show some kind of fixed notion of politics and representation that may be read off by all. Her own Anglo/American middle classness betrays her radical performances by her use of the phrase 'the ultimate' to describe a close cropped head. Nonetheless the extract reveals the authors struggles are dynamic and uncertain in her desire to belong to a politically aware community of blackness. In the next chapters the importance of such imagined belongings will be discussed further.

Chapter 6: Creating Families

6.1 Introduction

In an attempt to research into the formations of children's identities the use of both visual and verbal narrative played a central role. In the previous chapter I introduced the links children made between themselves and their families in their visual re/presentations. In this chapter I will develop the ways in which both verbal and visual narratives, and cultural practices help construct families. Children tell and re-tell stories of themselves in slightly differing ways in varying locations. They tell stories of what families are to those in schools, and to researchers who ask, and in doing so construct more or less coherent histories that attempt to contextualize their current positionalities. How the children do this is not always easy to follow to those unfamiliar with their situations.

In this chapter I will show how children use narratives that were provided by families in order to develop a sense of 'self' which has the beginnings of genealogical trajectory. Again, this arises from the failure of the current discourses of 'race' and ethnicity, which operate through collectivities that share the same 'racial' and cultural markers. The parents who took part in the research showed a more highly developed sense of the diachronic in creating families, and they incorporated 'home' as a concept and a place was into narratives of translocation. Children were more inclined to think about the synchronic meanings of 'family' in the first instance, and had to be prompted to develop trans-temporal perspectives.

The findings show that parents and children are engaged in the construction of family histories, but that the ways in which they do this change over time. The concept of 'family traditions' is passed on, but its meaning is flexible and evolving. Families also use secrets to create the desired family unit. The 'family practices' (Morgan 1996) which form the relationships within families show how gendered patterns of parenting still mean that mothers have overwhelming responsibility within the domestic sphere, and fathers take a peripheral yet powerful role, whether present or absent from the family home. The family narratives reveal the ways in which constructions of 'class' are deployed by mothers in particular, and the way these are imbricated with ideas of 'race' and ethnicity become increasingly important.

6.2 Talking to Families.

In order to build a partial picture of the 'home life' and family of the children, I sought interviews with other family members. Of all the children that took part in the research, only twelve sets of parents agreed to be interviewed, and of those, only two sets were conducted with both the father and the mother present. In all the other cases the mother was either the only parent living in the home, or the father was away working or too busy to attend the interviews. In Chapter 3, I discussed the difficulty with making contact with parents when one is seen as an outsider with no connection to the school or to others who are in authority. However when I did get to see parents it had advantages, as it allowed the mothers and two fathers¹ to speak more freely knowing that I would not be reporting back to the school or Educational Authority.

In all cases, once the project had been explained, the mothers were not just agreeable, they were interested and enthusiastic about the idea and wanted to know more about what I was doing. I believe that my own 'mixed-race' background was a key factor in this. Being obviously sympathetic to the children and their families and having a very personal interest in the work overrode initial concerns about what I may do with the often very private information that they gave me. In fact, one of the most striking things about talking to mothers was the open and generous way they invited me into their homes and told me about the intimate details of their lives. These were often obviously very painful to talk about and may have only been recently discovered. In one case, a woman's husband had committed suicide; in another the man who had been referred to as a 'father' was finally revealed to be in fact, a step-father; and in a third, a mother had been raised in children's homes until her teens and had barely known her own family. Feminists such as Finch (1984) have noted that interviewing women can be difficult in the way that boundaries become unclear during the process. To be precise, sensitive information does not make an easy transformation into data (Mauthner 1998), and the issue of family secrets will be dealt with below.

The ways in which the children and mothers narrated their ideas of families using domestic photography and 'well worn stories' form the basis of this chapter (Kehily 1995)². In all cases, the questions about the relevance or not of the problematic terms

¹From now on I will refer to 'mothers' rather than 'parents' as their accounts make up the bulk of the data and will make specific reference to the two fathers who took part where appropriate.

² Kehily uses this term in conjunction with stories of 'self' in the process of 'self narration'. I am using it to refer to stories of 'families' and how they are also ways of narrating selves.

to this work: 'race', culture and ethnicity will be considered in relation to the narratives the families told, and the discursive register they re/produce and to subvert. It is by no means clear with multiethnic histories, and multi-locational, generational changes, quite how important these terms are to the way that family is constructed. It is often not an overt factor in forming collective familial identities or creating a 'family-like structure' for want of a better term³.

I will show that kinship systems are often known, constructed and maintained despite hardship such as family breakdown, though the specifics of changing geographical locations were not always chosen by the respondents. Resulting geographical distance often put additional strain on relationships to kin and to cultural stability as it was constituted through traditional practices – language and food. Dove would suggest these are cultural 'ways of thinking' and 'moral systems' (Dove 1998: 7). To facilitate further understanding, I used a more oblique approach, exploring the everyday 'family practices' of children and parents. I will show that whether or not one sees disparate cultural systems as clashing and in need of resolution, cultural reproduction has cognitive, emotional, philosophical and material dimensions.

One of the major reasons for talking to parents was not simply to link 'home' as a 'separate', potentially conflicting or complementary sphere to education. It was also to see whether parents and children had shared understandings of the children's developing identifications. I will argue that the interviews with parents offered an insight into the places in which children and adults, through everyday cultural practices, helped to construct a sense of ethnicised family⁴. In some cases, the mothers were overtly politicised, and as mentioned before, this was often passed on to the children (e.g. Jacob and Sima pp131-134). In other cases, the parents had a common-sense approach to their politics of 'race' and they talked in much more general terms about 'racial' identity. This was often in response to 'racism' and was about having a sense of 'pride' *in spite of* having a minority 'racial' identity.

An interesting finding was the number of parents who displayed a very limited form of 'political' awareness about issues of race and who in some cases expressed views that may well be considered 'racist' by some. This may be seen to be the equivalent of the

³ Adkins and Leonard (1996) use the term 'a sense of family' which I also use later. Using family-like status I hope implies that it is created and structured so that it is recognised both within and outside the families

⁴ I am using 'ethnicised' here to denote the non-biologically grounded basis for 'othering' that ethnicity covers, the material practices that construct groups.

kind of internalised racism of white people that black writers such as Fanon (1970) and Young (1996) have analysed; parents have not externalised this onto their children, but onto other 'Others'. This kind of 'denial' of the 'racial' position of the children is something that I experienced from my own Grandmother who would express a racist view and then when challenged about my own position she would say, 'But you're lovely darling'. The parents in the study who expressed such views seemed to be privileging 'blood' over skin - kinship and family over all else. So whilst they may appear to be 'colour blind', they do not deny connection to their 'racialised' children and can still characterise them as such. Mr. G (father of Lola, Barnlea), called his children 'Chinglish', but talked about the 'refugees' bringing down the level of schooling. I believe it is a variant of 'some of my best friends are ..' syndrome, where personal knowledge (and love) of individuals refutes universal racism. It echoes the colour/power evasiveness of the white mothers who had 'mixed-race' children in Ruth Frankenberg's study (1993), and the way in which they privileged being the same under the skin. This is more forcibly illustrated when the 'Other' is one's own child.

6.3 Pictures of Families

The way that both parents and children were encouraged to begin to talk about families and homes was through using images that represented either of these two ideas to them in photographic form. In the case of the children who were given disposable cameras to take home with them, this was often representations of the buildings and domestic spaces that they occupied which will be discussed in more detail in the next chapter. But both adults and also children used images of people to represent their families, with the exception of one mother called Pares who was an artist. Pares chose to talk about a picture that represented both 'home' and by implication 'family' that was of herself alone within a landscape of Cyprus, where she was born, dominating the picture. The use of colour and texture in the landscape as verbally described during the interview was most evocative of the differences between the two countries: Cyprus and England.

Pares: Another of my favourite places .. umm collecting some thistle flowers ... and.. I wore this green dress, and everything else apart from my green dress because of the season is actually yellow. So that there's this thing, people called it an 'Out of Africa' photograph, you could just see tons of landscape behind me and I was right in the foreground, and then.. this just.. I don't know, there's just

something about it. And I always go on about yellow, I used to when I did my art in the beginning, I've gone a bit conservative, but .. every time I started everything it would have to be yellow. And it was really funny and I didn't even know why and somebody saw that picture like years afterwards and said 'I know why you talk about yellow or why yellow is in your work because, you know, look at the landscape where you come from'.

This extract also indicates how family and home are intertwined in the consciousness of the families and individuals that have experienced some form of relocation in their lives. It is particularly striking that Pares refers to the film 'Out of Africa' which is about a white woman writer who spent her adult life in Africa. Although the film is about displacement, its central character embodies the archetypal colonial representation of white womanhood as feminine. Pares is a Turkish Cypriot, but also a black woman, who does not see her diasporic roots (at the time of the interview) as being 'out of Africa'. Such complicated cultural vocabulary is typical of the interviews, but many women wanted to simplify the processes. This was done by controlling the choice of photographs and whether they presented them visually.

In all cases mothers and children already knew which ones were their favourite photographs even when they could not find them to show me. Two families had only recently moved and the photographs were packed away, and another two could not find the pictures that they wanted to show me. What they could all do in these circumstances was talk about the story of the picture as well as describe them. I remain unsure in two cases as to whether the photographs were actually unavailable or whether they had been made unavailable to me other than as spoken texts. In these settings the spoken texts were revealing in different ways as they told stories of people as well as places through images of bodies rather than landscapes.

6.3.1 Holidays and other Special Occasions

Very few children or parents chose formal family portraits as set up in photographic studios. However, the kinds of portraits of children taken at school were the ones that were most prominently displayed in homes. Several images of the same child showing their development over time as they progressed through the school were on show in the houses in London and in Kent. Although there is still a tradition of having children's

portraits taken by professionals, the use of studio portraits has decreased with the number of people owning their own cameras and the frequency with which they are used. I would suggest that in place of these professional portraits which portray an especially precise, formalised image of 'immediate family' groups, we now see 'special occasion' semi-formal images holding the same special meaning in the construction of the family groups. These are often partial or incomplete as they may have been taken by a member of the family. This is usually a male such as father or older brother who are keepers of the technology (Seabrook 1991). This is still the case even though there is often more than one camera owned by family members. The photographs that will represent the family group will be taken by the father and it is as though they are not needed in the photographs, just as they are often absent for much of the time in the lives of the children. In this way 'family' comes to be represented by mother and children whilst 'father' retains a distinct identity, and external and active subject position. In many cases these semi-formal portraits are taken at special occasions such as parties, religious celebrations, school functions and so on. In these the family members are typically in their 'best clothes' - they will be dressed for the occasion; they will also be lined up either standing or sitting (by height order), to show the group to their best advantage.

Holiday photographs were another favourite way to show families and in particular, children. The images in the holiday shots showed both similarities to and contrasts with the semi-formal poses described above. They were often of children in swimwear or colourful casual clothing, near or in water, such as the sea or swimming pools. They were still in that sense 'special' clothes; things that would not be worn on a day to day basis in England. It was most usual for the people in the shots to be captured in relaxed and spontaneous positions 'caught' behaving naturally, and this is in stark contrast with the often very stiff, awkward looking posed images of the special occasion.

It is not surprising that these two types of photographs were seen as the most popular as they reinforce and document the 'ordinary' (family), but in extraordinary circumstances:

1 They will often show the majority of family together, including those who live at some distance from the immediate family group. In these cases they are showing something close to the concept of who 'makes up family' in the wider sense, they are 'documentary'.

2 Holidays may be one of the few times that the immediate family spend any length of time together, with father (if present), mother and children for a period of days or weeks rather than just hours. Again, this warrants special notice.

3 They show people in their best physical and most attractive form. Special clothes, hair, make-up and so on showing another ideal. In the case of holidays, the locations may be unusual, spectacular or beautiful. The people within the pictures may be particularly healthy looking being more rested and 'tanned' and relaxed and happy. In this sense they are also out of the 'ordinary', certainly not showing the mundane of the everyday lives of those who used photography. These are the more perfect or idealised images of the physical selves who are valued by those who do the choosing.

4 These are all appropriate times to have taken photographs, and thus make them easy for those choosing. None of those who took part wanted pictures shown of them at inappropriate moments, in inappropriate locations or not looking their best.

6.3.2. Pets Mean Families

At a recent seminar about 'Postmodern Kinship' which focused on 'Changing Childhood', two of the presenters noted that children who drew 'maps' representing 'family', often chose to include their pets (Wade 1999; Brannen 1999). This was also true of the children within this research. In a way, what the children chose to show, was who they loved and who they thought loved *them*. So pets, in particular cuddly and furry pets, were often shown to be very important to a sense of home and family. This supports the notion of 'kinship' and 'family' changing from a clearly defined notion of blood ties to known and unknown relatives, into a set of relationships of care (Brannen 1999).

Children showed an enormous amount of pride in their pets and were very articulate in describing the way that the pets behaved, favourite foods, programmes of care and so on. Obviously the caring for animals as pets has many different cultural manifestations in locations around the world, but the choice of cats, dogs, rabbits and guinea pigs were most common within this project. It would seem that there could be some fairly obvious reasons for choosing these particular animals

- Cost – these are animals that can be bought and kept fairly cheaply

- Space – these animals require little space or looking after
- Availability – they can be bought from pet shops, friends or even given free of charge through rescue and charity organisations or word of mouth

How different would it be if the children were in other locations? In other locations there is little tolerance for animals that do not work. A truism suggests that average Britains and North Americans have a cultural tradition of being more caring of their animals and pets than they are of other human beings. This is supported by the strength of the Animal Rights movements in these two countries. To accurately gauge how much children are responding to animals in the home based on cultural values passed through the family, through experience of diverse cultural attitudes or based on the hegemonic views about pets in Britain, would be impossible. However, conversations with the children again revealed the kinds of discourses about animals they were drawing upon, and from which cultural positions they had been informed. Marita was quite clear about the different ideas her parents had to her having pets:

- M Yeah. This is a picture of my cat on my bed, having a sleep.
- Sa Does it sleep on your bed often?
- M Yeah sleeps on my bed every night, by my pillow (laughs)
- S Does it ... aaaah!
- M Yeah, my dad doesn't like it he says it will suffocate me, 'cos you know the Trinidadian people they think that animals are so .. mm .. he doesn't like animals because, he thinks they've got diseases in England. And some do, but our cat's very clean.

I am not sure why it is that animals are more diseased in England as it is not an opinion that I have heard expressed before, and Marita was rushing onto the next photograph of her cat. She also had a fish pond and kept fish, so despite her father's disapproval, the British cultural attitude of treating pets as 'part of the family' won out.

One particular story told by Denzu (Anglo/Indian boy Year 6, Barnlea) also shows that location, and the dominant values within it, are crucial to the way the children view animals. Denzu told me the following story early in his interview when he had just told me that he had been on two trips to India:

- S Did you enjoy yourself?
- D Yes, its fun and it's hot and we killed a dog

- S You what?
- D We killed a dog
- S You killed a dog?
- D Yes the one that eats .. you see chicken?
- S Yes
- D You see people's chicken, they go hrrrruumm eat it. So that's why we killed it.
- S How did you kill it?
- D We got these massive sticks and all a bit hard and some heavy. And I got my binoculars and looked through this little hole yeah? We saw it, we saw the dog sleeping, and drinking some water yeah? Then after that we quickly quietly went yeah then we saw it and the dog it just looked at us. Then after my friend went woompph in its face, and blood came out and we tied it round its neck, and then we pulled it all the way and then after we tied it up again and then we took it very, very far to a big big when it rains there's a big puddle and you see that puddle? .. There's hole and before school ... and first we untied the rope and it tried to run away and we hit it, then we tied it up again, then we throw it down then we got down, we started hitting it each in turns.

It is of course true that certain religious groups in India value animal lives and spirits so highly that they are exclusively vegetarian, and many other Indian subjects might view the actions of these eleven year old boys as any British pet lover – with some revulsion at the vivid picture. At the time he recounted this story, my own interest was as much centred around Denzu's interpretation of his actions, as in my own horrified reaction to the story and the desire to hide that from him. He said that he did not know whether the dog had suffered but that it had cried. He had not looked at it so it's crying did not bother him. I believe that Denzu's telling of this tale is a classic form of heroic, 'Boys' Own' adventure story. He is constructing himself as masculine, brave, heroic and a good citizen in saving his neighbours' chicken. The tale is also very specific to the geography in which it occurred. In Kent, rogue dogs would be the province of farmers and dog catchers, and they would be shot. In this sense it is culturally specific and shows that Denzu is asserting a very strong identification to his Indian heritage. He said that if people asked him where he came from he would say he was 'half Indian and half English' and was more closely identified with his Indian

father than his white mother. This narrative told in its generic adventure story form complete with sound affects supports and creates such a position.

The more middle-class children in all locations were most likely to have more than one pet. I would suggest that this is due to class values and inferred status, and on a more practical note, due to the cost of pet care, especially feeding and vets bills. Socio-economic status and location (size of home and/or garden, access to green space etc.) often mitigate against keeping more than one pet and against larger pets such as ponies. Children often noted that they had to care for their pets themselves—that this was one of the conditions for them having the animal. Pets were often a source of sustained joy and pleasure for the children not simply a compartmentalised hobby, bounded by interactions in specific times, but they were also a source of great emotional pain. The loss of a pet was felt keenly by the children. In this way the life and death of the pet was linked to training children to cope with everyday life as a social being and offered a taste of the responsibility needed to succeed in the world. The death of pets is often seen as a more gentle preparation to the concept of human mortality, especially the death of loved ones. The children are accorded a considerable amount of power over small pets, literally life and death. Caring for pets was an opportunity for children to practice using self-discipline and to make a commitment that would need to be upheld over considerable time.

It was noticeable that girls were more likely than boys to talk in the most effusive tones about the relationships they had with their animals. This is in keeping with typically gendered stereotypes about girls and care and about their fondness for the 'softer', more relational aspects of life. This type of behaviour could be seen to combine three discourses about gender:

1 that girls like the 'softer' sciences and have more interest in subjects like biology and their connection to living things - that they like all things fluffy and pretty. Boys, however, are more interested in the 'harder' subjects and likewise in playing with machines and guns, and so would choose 'harder' pets like lizards;

2 that girls will be more likely to learn to perform gendered patterns of caring even at an early age. 'Caring *for*' pets teaches about responsibility, whilst 'caring *about*' pets begins the training for 'emotional work' that women are expected to do in families and households. Pets are preparation for boys and girls giving love and the ability to 'fall in love', which is still seen as gendered and heterosexualised. Men and women are

both required to love, but are expected to do so differently (see Jackson, S 1993; Duncombe and Marsden 1993; Craib 1993; Delphy and Leonard 1992);

3 that boys cannot speak easily about their emotions. Even when they do, in this case fondness for their pets, they are less likely to express them. In particular, they often find it harder to express loving feelings.

I believe that the most useful way of understanding this phenomenon is looking at the third point, and the more straightforward aspects of communication. Boys showed an equal likelihood to bring in photographs of pets and to be proud of them. It was not that they did not have considerable emotional investment with their pets, they simply did not express it as openly as did the girls⁵. Girls often talked about pets as if they were almost 'romantically' in love with them, they adored them in an all-forgiving 'irrational', 'unconditional' way. Boys showed a far greater disconnectedness in the way they talked about them, even if that was a *method* in showing a particular version of themselves they wished to present; it still showed an *awareness* of 'correct' (normative) gendered behaviour. Boys were also less likely to deal with the messy day-to-day cleaning of pets. For example, Kyle had split the responsibility of caring for his cats with his mother so that he did the feeding and she cleaned out the cat litter trays. This was a typical division of labour when boys could manipulate it. The way in which domestic work, and other family practices were gendered will be considered in more detail below.

6.4 Family Practices

What children and mothers do within families, how they are using cultural practices was another area under consideration in this research. David Morgan (1996) has suggested we should be using the term 'family practices' as a way to convey both 'what it is' and 'how it is' we wish to analyse in families. His use of 'family practices' is based upon these main propositions:

1. this term allows for a lack of congruence between what is understood between the 'observer' and 'observed'
2. the term implies 'the active' rather than the more static 'family structures'.

⁵ See Mac an Ghaill (1994: 90-102) for the ways in which heterosexual masculinities are constructed through sex-talk, but concomitantly with an absence of talk about feelings.

3. the term 'practices' implies the everyday. They are '..often little fragments of daily life which are part of the normal taken-for-granted existence of the practitioners'.

He goes on:

- 'Practices' implies not only regularity but also repetition and rehearsal.
- A 'practice' also 'conveys a sense of fluidity'. Not only may they be repetitious, they imply open-endedness. He gives the example of 'feeding the children' which may be seen as 'family practices', 'gendered practices', 'consumption practices', 'ethnic practices', and so on, or may be several of these at once.
- Practices are known to provide us with major links between history and biography.

(Morgan 1996:189 – 191)

Morgan argues that we must be aware that social actors may have differing views about whether 'family practices' applies to them or their circumstances, but that they are:

'.. to do with those relationships and activities that are constructed as being to do with family matters'

(ibid. 192)

Morgan's emphasis on *relationships* is of particular use in this research. Children made clear the special relationships they had with people were the most important way to identify family. This corresponds with Morgan's notion that the factors outlined above must be *significant* in an emotional, personal or moral dimension (ibid.). He is not clear how economic relationships fit within this framework. However, this framework would seem to be useful to the analysis of what children and parents say they do with their families.

In this research, family practices are imbricated with gendered, ethnicised and classed processes. The fact that they are also inter-generational is also critical to this analysis, as gendered, inter-generational relationships are particularly important in interethnic families, with specific meanings attached to how these interracial relationships, over time-space shifts, affect change in ethnic identifications. For example, a mother who describes herself as white and is working class, has a son who shares her class position, but is interpellated as a black boy by his school. His

mother calls him 'mixed-race', and his white Grandfather called him black (Mrs. Farmer and her son Tito). The significance of the gender of the parent and the grandparent, and how they articulate with the self-identification of the child, across temporal and geographic changes is complex. The gendered positions are also 'raced'. In order to understand something of Tito's identifications, and how they differ from Talia's (his sister), we cannot miss out one part of the analysis.

We can see that families are constructed through and by relationships and behaviours, as well as by structures. This is a useful way of understanding what is important to the children and parents in this study. In some cases the children had stronger relationships with step-parents than they did with biological parents, and so they supplanted these people in their affections (see e.g. John in Section 3.6). Yet as will be shown, life-histories were often guided by relationships of blood, no matter how distant they may have become (Jacob, Section 5. 5). Despite the usefulness of investigating the material everyday practices of families, the concept of 'blood ties' in their stories remained strong, and will be returned to later.

During the interviewing children were asked specifically about the kind of day-to-day activities/practices they carried out in the home. They were also about the ways in which they interacted with others in the home; with whom they spent the most time, with whom they got on best and so on. It was hoped that these often mundane daily activities would show ways in which both cultural and familial work construct each other, through and with constructions of gender⁶.

6.4.1 Mothers and Mundane Cultural Work

Mothers were overwhelmingly still involved in the day-to-day running of the home and were wholly responsible for the mundane domestic tasks that are required in order to maintain the household and those within it. It is these more 'mundane' tasks that may also be seen as form of cultural production. Although these remain gendered practices in as much as it is overwhelmingly the mothers who are performing them, the children sought to imply that for the next generation there are less strictly gendered lines of division between tasks.

⁶ I am using the model of kinship/family work that Lisa Adkins and Diana Leonard (1996) developed in their study of children's family work and its effects on educational choices, which utilised aspects of research by di Leonardo (1987)

Boys reported regularly cleaning and cooking and shopping either with their mothers or on their own. It should be noted however, that for some of the boys there was an element of exaggeration in their accounts that did not withstand more direct questioning about the actual tasks performed and the frequency with which they carried them out! It is notable that rather than attempt to hide the fact that they were doing housework, which may hold connotations of 'sissiness', the boys claimed that they 'helped out' and had specific responsibilities in ways that suggested that this would elevate their status during the interview. This may have been simply a technique of gaining favour with a (female) interviewer, or a shrewd recognition of the discourses of more thoughtful and helpful masculinities, of the 'New Man'⁷. It could also be that they are unaware of the extent to which female members of the family are dealing with day to day domestic tasks.

I believe it is more likely that it simply reflects the fact that the mothers in the sample were raising their sons to be more responsible in the domestic sphere, no matter in how limited a form it may take. For many it was a case of having tasks that are associated with males, such as taking out the rubbish, tidying their own rooms or going to the shops for items that had been forgotten in the major shop of the week. This is not to say that no men have ever participated in household chores, rather it suggests that these behaviours are crossing the cultural and class boundaries of the sample in this research. Traditionally, middle class children have been afforded greater amounts of play-time, and their economic and cultural status has facilitated that (Adkins and Leonard 1996). In this sample of children, the boys responded in remarkably similar ways, with the exception of a few of the Muslim boys who seemed be exempt from the majority of domestic work.

Anthias and Yuval-Davis suggest that women play a vital and unique role in the re/production of ethnic collectivities:

- as biological reproducers of members of ethnic collectivities;
- as reproducers of the boundaries of ethnic or national groups;
- as participating centrally in the ideological reproduction of the collectivity and as transmitters of its culture;

⁷ Richard Collier (1999: 52) suggests that masculinity and fatherhood are produced relationally and discursively in the rhetoric of the 'New Man'.

- as signifiers of ethnic or national differences, as a focus and symbol of ideological discourses used in the construction of ethnic or national categories;
- as participants in national, economic, political and military struggles

(Anthias and Yuval-Davis 1992: 115)

The role that the mothers take within families of inter-ethnic backgrounds is particularly crucial to the development of the cultural/racial/ethnic identities of the children; even more so if fathers are absent from the home. The everyday cultural practices within the house may be overlooked in the desire to note the more obvious markers of cultural and ethnic identity and how they interact with national and racial identities. This is true of the work of Anthias and Yuval-Davis who focus instead on paid employment rather than domestic work. Like other work on women, ethnicity and families (e.g. Bryan et al 1985), they foreground families as a source of strength in hostile cultural environments. This kind of approach emphasises that:

The locus of conflict lies outside of the household, as women and their families engage in a collective effort to create and maintain a family life in the face of forces that undermine family integrity

(Hill Collins 1994: 47)

Any analysis of family relations must take account of these exogenous conflicts, but not at the expense of internal cultural analyses. Whilst I asked all the children about their religious affiliations and about the food they eat, both usually connected to ethnic and cultural identity; I also asked about the cooking, cleaning, shopping and how they thought about these jobs. Traditional foods may be cooked and enjoyed on a regular basis within the home, but the children routinely chose 'Western'/North American fast foods as their favourites. Chips, burgers and pizzas were the top choices. These foods represent the most the obvious aspects of the neo-colonial cultural globalisation processes at work on a worldwide scale. It is not unlikely that these foods would come out top of the list for the majority of children, regardless of background, in Britain. There were a few notable exceptions of children who chose more 'traditional' dishes or some kind of mixture of contemporary foods⁸. However, in

⁸ Most children claimed pizzas as favourites. Some were proud of 'traditional' food which they said I would not understand. In a few cases, with children who were both genders but middle-class, they chose pasta dishes.

this example (food), reveals the ways that 'culture' is neither static nor enclosed, but is in constant development and change.

The majority of mothers were responsible for the everyday cooking whereas fathers were linked to cooking for a change to 'help out', and perhaps washing up after a meal. In the cases where the fathers are from minority ethnic groups and the mothers are white British, the fathers were responsible for cooking food that has strong cultural and national connections. In a few cases the mothers learned to cook these dishes, and the fathers reverted to occasional helping out. The same is true in reverse. So for example, Mrs G, Chok, cooked 'special' Chinese food for the family as a 'treat' and as a 'connection to their Chinese culture' (mother of Lola at Barnlea).

There was a special role for the fathers of minority ethnic status in families of inter-ethnic backgrounds, as 'authentic' cook of 'authentic' cultural foods. This circumvented the more usual gendered divisions of food production. The role of the father in these cases was also to provide the special and 'traditional' link to the 'other' culture and it was this specialness that facilitated cooking by someone who did not usually do it. This is true of families who are not 'interracial' but had particular significance in these instances (see Luke 1994).

I found that mothers are also responsible for the emotional work within families and as such it is they who are the ones who will maintain family links on behalf of the whole family (see Delphy and Leonard 1992 on emotional work). In my own sample, this role takes on an added significance as it is these kinds of family links that children cited as ways to develop their family histories, and claim a 'mixed-race' identity. Indeed, as has been mentioned before this was often the only significant way the children have 'describing' what their mixed-race status means to them (see Meli). Mothers themselves described being the ones who would make the effort to keep in touch with distant relatives, would remember birthdays and make sure invitations were issued to important family members for get-togethers and so on. This supports findings by Adkins and Leonard (1996) about children's family work commitments, and the gendered forms these took.

My own research shows that where the mother and father of the children had separated, the mother often made a particular effort to maintain cordial relations with the father's family 'for the sake of the children'. In 'inter-racial' families, this was seen as a way of providing essential information about 'cultural heritage'. It is important to

note that at this point in an interview white mothers with black (ex) partners would talk about the importance of the child spending time with black people generally. Clearly, family relations were not simply categorised as kin who are important to the child in a purely emotional sense, they also provide a familial identification that is 'raced' or ethnicised in some way.

Even absent fathers provided an important source of 'racial' identification for the children. My findings would suggest that the children perceived their racial identifications as predominantly gendered, and that their emotional identifications were closely tied to the parent who cared for them. This will be explored further in the following section.

6.4.2 Fathers and Leisure time

Children routinely described fathers as being especially devoted to leisure time with them. Whether this is true or whether it is just the perception and desire of the child is hard to tell, but it would be supported by other empirical research about fathers' involvement with children, and is of course especially true for fathers who are not living with the child. 'Leisure' may include the everyday practice of watching television as a family or with gendered watching patterns; that is, boys with brothers and fathers; or generational, that is, children watching one television with children and adults watching with adults on another set or later.

Fathers were as likely as mothers to be following stereotypically gendered patterns of interaction with their children. They were more likely to be the parent who took the children to play sport, particularly football for boys, or swimming for both girls and boys. Going to the park to walk and play was a popular weekend activity, but even when families went out together on trips to the park it was less usual for the mothers to engage in playing sport with children. Fathers initiated sporting activities. It was common for the whole family to go to the supermarket at the weekend for a large 'food shop', but the responsibility for choosing and buying clothes was the job of the mother, with some of the children being allowed to help choose their own clothes.

These 'gendered' patterns of family work were the same across racialised and classed families, and irrespective of whether there was one or both parents at home. It was particularly noticeable that the children who saw their fathers rarely were

aware themselves that they would have more 'treats' with them and do more of the enjoyable leisure activities than they would with their mothers. But even children who were living in the same house as fathers would claim a different kind of relationship with them:

- S Is that what you said? Did you say that she spoils you [your mum]? No you said that you like going with your dad [to the shopping centre]
- M Yeah, he .. he buys me loads of stuff 'cos he's a softie
- S Is he?
- M Yeah. .. but my mum doesn't .. if I said "mum, please may I have a lolly pop?" and then my dad might say "no, I'm not buying you anything!" and then I say "pleeeeeease" and then he'll do it, but my mum's not like that , if she says 'no' she means 'no'! (laughs)

Marita enjoyed the performance of this little vignette with her speaking the roles of stern mother and soft father, satirising her own knowing role as persuasive little girl which she re-constructed complete with fluttering eyelashes. There is obviously a particular gendered, sexualised 'daddy's girl' at work here in a very overt way (Walkerdine 1997).

Boys too were engaged in constructing the 'specialness' of time with fathers, as opposed to that with mothers which was 'ordinary':

- S [...] You told me that your father lives in London, do you see him often?
- K Um quite often, my mother says I see him more than some kids, than some children do where their dad lives with them. Because before they get up 'cos when they get up they're at work and when they come in and when they go to bed, that's when they get in

(Kyle: Fairsham Yr 5)

There is a construction of parents as separate, and having separate roles, which follows a gendered pattern for the majority of children. In a few cases I did hear rather vague references to *both* parents being out at work, rather than fathers, and also that both the mother or father worked nights. This kind of work pattern, which was only told to me by the more economically impoverished black and South Asian

'mixed-race' children, placed a particular strain on family relations. It was also the reason given for me not to interview parents.

Where there was only one parent in the family, the mother in all cases, they were responsible for trying to engage with practices that the children themselves already see as gendered:

Jacob: My mum don't really like sports. Well she would play if she.. well she doesn't like sports but she'd play sport. We go to the park and we go swimming. Sometimes if I am lucky enough I get her to play football with me .. but

Even in quite special leisure time with what were understood as special occasions, there were divisions of gendered labour and responsibility. These were mostly big festivals and holidays, and birthdays in particular. On these occasions it was likely that both parents came together with more extended family members and as such will be occasions for defining who is and is not going to be included as 'family'. This is in most cases, as discussed above, the duty of the mother.

6.5 Family Traditions – the Culture of Families?

The ways in which families are constructed are both *through* cultural practices, and through the *telling of stories* about cultural practices. In this section I will look at the ways in which the two processes are inter-linked in predominantly gendered ways.

6.5.1 Talking of Traditions: Christmas

Fathers and other family members who are often absent from the day-to-day household and family activities, will still be invited to attend special family occasions, such as celebrations - weddings, birthdays and so on. These occasions seem to provide opportunity for the development of unique family cultures and traditions which exemplify the hybridity of cultural processes, showing as they do, the evolutionary progress that comes from the synthesis of the new with the traditional; the broadly shared and the specific organisations of celebrations.

Many of the inter-ethnic⁹ families choose to identify Christmas in particular as a time for asserting unique family traditions. Both children and mothers talked of Christmas as being a time for the family, and how celebrating Christmas as a public holiday even if holding non-Christian religious beliefs, was an important part of family culture and defining family status for the members.

These traditions are reinforced by 'telling' - so Sheila told me about the 'fantastic' gatherings she had at her mother's house (mother of Dinease, Christie). With each telling the story becomes stronger and the memories of specifics that may be vague become strengthened (see Kehily 1995) The story telling is a form of 'Russian doll' with stories within stories as narrators perform the voices of others who were present. When I asked Sheila if she kept any particular family 'traditions', she said at first that there were none. Later when she started talking about her mother and how often she had seen her before her death, she talked about the huge get-togethers at her mother's house at Christmas time. The memories and the narration of them developed together:

Sheila : I think we used to be more like that before we had our kids,m because we all used to congregate at our Mum's at Christmas, 'cos that's where the food is that's where you go [both laugh], Yeah we used to have some brilliant.. and that's where we did get stories like that, 'cos your aunties were down there, your mum was down there and this one or that would drop in. And we used to have some *wicked* Christmases . Or just us kids when we always, 'oh mum you remember when we did that?' 'NOOO!' [she puts on great exaggerated story telling voices and I am laughing and it sounds so warm]. Yes you used to get them kind of, I mean we've had some *brilliant* Christmases like that where, like you'll be saying like, 'you remember when I got beaten for these and you got beaten for that and dadadada and you ran off and dadada?'. Yeah, we used to do that quite a lot.

⁹ I am using the differing terms 'inter-racial', and 'inter-ethnic' families to denote a difference in the area under particular scrutiny at the time. For example, issues of appearance which for children are often about colour would be referred to as 'inter-racial'. When talking about different cultural, religious and national traditions held within families, where 'race' is secondary, 'inter-ethnic' will be used. In some cases, 'inter-cultural', or 'international' may be more appropriate. The use of different terms is not denoting an elision of one with the other or that they are being used interchangeably, on the contrary they are being used to denote different emphases of focus. The same may be said of referring to 'mixed-race' children at one moment and multiheritage, multiethnic or inter-cultural at another.

This piece of narrative reveals many of the common themes to the establishment of the family culture. Sheila's mother is Monserration and she herself was born there, they came to England when she was very young. She did not remember telling any particular family stories to her children, but as adults she and her siblings reinforced their identities within the family by reminiscing about their childhood in Monserrat. Simultaneously, they kept alive a national and ethnic identity. In a sense they were working within a particular genre when they discussed these things amongst themselves. We can understand this manner of recounting the tales to each other as a form of dialogue in which each person has a role in negotiating the production:

Any understanding of live speech, a live utterance, is inherently responsive, although the degree of this activity varies extremely. Any understanding is imbued with response and necessarily elicits it in one form or another: the listener becomes the speaker.

(Bakhtin 1986: 68)

In this case the responses are almost ritualised in the production of the narrative from shared memories. However, it is not just the generic form of these exchanges that is of interest, it is also the way in which the discursive contents and their meanings are being used by Sheila in her production of 'family'.

The fact that food also plays a part in the story is extremely relevant to both familial and gendered cultural identity, as it is the mother, taking on the role of head of the family, who prepares the food. In this case, the absence of her father meant that her mother took sole responsibility for this 'special occasion food production' and presentation. The adult children who were living away from home returned for the symbolic nurturing in their mother's home, yet construct it as being common sense and not emotional or traditional - it is simply 'that's where the food is'. Even if that comment was meant to be humorous, it is also the case in real terms. This shows that the discourses of women as providers and nurturers remains salient in the cultural environment. The tradition is interrupted by the arrival of the next generation of children, at which point the provision of food falls to the adult child who has become a parent, in this case Sheila with her own children:

Sheila: But as I said, I suppose when you get a family of your own, like I basically stopped going to those so much when, and I think most of us did that had our kids because we simply ... its a case of "well I want my *family*

this Christmas". I mean we spend like Christmas day at my mums and Boxing Day at D's [her husband] or something like. And next year it would be round the other way or something. And then we started drifting away from that 'cos our kids were like growing up a bit, and its a case of you know "why don't I cook my own Christmas dinner, if you wanna come down feel free, but I wanna have it in my house with my kids", you know. So it has.. and now, as I say, my mum's died anyway, it has gone a bit like that. I mean over the last few Christmases it was a case of all the single ones who didn't have any kids would be down at my Mum's. They sort of kept that up. But we'd like come round after dinner or something like that .. um...

This exchange shows how the family form shifts as the new generation of children 'dictates' the need for change. This is most noticeable with the celebration of Christmas, which has in more recent times lost its specifically religious overtones and become more a time for families to come together and give and receive presents without relating this to the original Christian story. The myth of Father Christmas coming to give toys to the well behaved children also serves to reinforce this time of year as being 'for the children'. This is why Sheila opted to take on the role her mother had taken on for her own children, and to start to reinforce the traditions in her own home. Later she talked about the fact that some of her family now came to her, and how she cooked the same food as her mother had done. This is one of the clearest examples of the reproduction of culture through family practices.

Christmas is also a way of embracing a British/European identity, when it is taken up for the first time within a family. Celie's mother is Chinese, and her father white Irish (Jack's mother, Kent). She described going '... completely over the top with Christmas', whilst her British Indian husband took no part in the preparation yet tacitly approved of her enthusiasm and joined in the celebrations. In one sense this simply fits again with the role of mothers in taking on the mundane preparation for the celebration, whilst the father merely lends his presence to the big day in order to make it 'special'. Another more interesting feature is the way that Celie circumvents an overtly religious upbringing for her children until they are " ... old enough to choose", yet incorporates Christmas into the family calendar, and some teaching about the " stories of Jesus" with their generally moral guidelines for living. This was also true for many of the children interviewed, without particular reference to Jesus. It illustrates the way in which Christmas has lost a fundamentally religious base and has become something associated with being *British* rather than Christian for these

families. Whilst many British families may celebrate Christmas from a secular position, it would seem that for those who hold religious and cultural beliefs that form part of a different ethnic and national identity, claiming a part of Christmas is more about a cultural affiliation to England and a commonality and a partially British/European identity.

There is a large and growing body of writing that suggests that a Britishness is constructed as whiteness and this is linked with the form of Christianity which underpins the legal and constitutional laws of the land (see 2.4.1 above and Dyer 1997: 15-18). In this sense the respondents claim part of what they know to be a partially 'white' identity. Of course there are many groups of migrant and settler families who take on aspects of the culture within which they find themselves who would claim that taking part in certain cultural practices did not infer that this meant that they were claiming part of the dominant cultural *identity*. There seems to be more at stake with those who may *already* lay claim to a partially white heritage if they chose too. For them, there is a sense in which taking up these cultural practices is about re/asserting a part of an already existent 'ethnic' identity. In Celie's case, this comes from her father's Irish national identity and the fact that she spent most of her childhood in England in Convent boarding schools. Sheila did talk about her mother having an interest in the church, which she maintains. The importance that she ascribes Christmas is not remarkable, yet she still focuses on it as being an opportunity for a family get-together rather than a religious festival.

6.5.2 Family Favourites

The opportunity for family holidays is another type of 'special occasion' that has a particular importance for families to be together. Darcy (Fairsham, mother of Ella and Kieran) chose pictures of her children on holiday as being some of her favourites and talked of the way that these times brought the family together. Similarly Sheila chose pictures of the family in Spain, and when I asked whether they went every year she laughed, and explained that they could rarely afford to go anywhere and had only been there once. This still constituted an important opportunity for family bonding. Kilde (Barnlea, Year 5) showed me photographs of her family in front of a cottage that they had recently rented for a week at small Sussex town. She had taken her camera with her on the holiday and many of her photographs were based around that occasion. Interestingly she chose to take most of the photographs with various

members of the family lined up outside the house. The fact that she, her mother, her male 'guardian' and her 'guardian auntie' had all gone together was of particular importance to her (see also 'Naming' below).

The other opportunities for family occasions tended to be created around the family themselves, that is, they were specifically *family events* rather than festivals or public holidays. The number of weddings and birthdays that were mentioned were consistent with the notion that these are seen to be opportunities to 'make an effort' for extended members to come together - particularly significant birthdays, such as 40th and so on. As a result of the semi-formality of these occasions they were often spoken of with mixed feelings as they tended to put family relations under stress.

6.6 Myths and Memories

One of the ways in which the families told their stories was by using specific tales of heroic deeds and humorous events involving family members. These stories often gain an almost mythical status as they become common currency among the family and are repeated over and over and passed down from generation to generation. When first asked, many of the mothers said that they were not aware of any such tales, but during the interview it often emerged that they did, in fact have, stories that had been passed down. Often the Grandparents would tell tales of the parent to the child about what they had been like as a child. Kyle spoke about his father telling him stories of his Grandmother and the pony she had as a child. His grandmother also told him the same tales. This was corroborated by his parents when they were interviewed:

N well there again they are just sort of stories that would involve my mother really

S like

N well I can't think of any off hand. Like mother running around in her night-dress.. *her* mother running around in her night-dress. Its not that there are particular stories ... /

P Queen [Kyle's great grandmother] you mean?/

N ... and the talk of the horse getting on the bus, and not moving and things like that.

P And what about me and my [indistinct] with the garlic?

N There are lots of things like that aren't really fam ... , they will become those sort of stories as they get passed down . But there are sort of new generation ones that add to that..

S Are you creating your own do you think?

N Yeah, which are ... yeah...

S It's something that you remember?

N Yeah it's fairly early memories though

S Would you tell them as stories though, or are they part of a picture, that makes up your childhood?

N You might recount them at that time because certain events trigger those memories probably.

S Would you tell them to Kyle?

N Yeah yeah ...

S You tell other stories to Kyle

P Yeah not that one ...

Kyle was also present at the parental interview and although he was playing on a computer game across the room, he got drawn into the conversation and came over in order for the family to negotiate between their own individual memories and ideas of who was telling the stories. They did this to find agreement about how important stories were and who said what about whom:

K Which one told you to go one day ... [indistinct]?

P No that's not my story, that's Grandma's, she needs to tell you that one/

N But Grandma tells you stories as well doesn't she? Which are ...[trails off]

[...]

S [...] Can you tell me a story that you have heard from your Grandma maybe or your Mum

K Um um there are too many to remember.

S Too many?

K There are quite a few

[...]

S [to Kyle] Who tells them the most do you think?

K They both tell about equal amounts.

S And do they tell them about them as babies or you as a baby or ../

K Well me.

S And what about .. your Grandma you said tells a story..?

K Yeah

S About?

K Her and her mum and Grandad.

S When she was little?

K Yeah.

S Oh right, ok so you get hundreds of stories! [joking]

K Yes pretty much!

I have quoted this section of the transcript at length because it raises many of the points that were common to the other families, but shows in more detail how the family dynamic works to strengthen the storytelling, and how by sharing the stories, they become more important. In this case, Kyle was clear that the telling of tales is a way that both his mother and father give him a sense of his family history and of course give him information about his cultural heritage in the broadest sense of the term. From the humorous story of his Grandmother who had a pony that sat on a bus, we can deduce that she had a relatively privileged and semi-rural childhood, and the good humour that is chosen to be a representative story indicates fond memories of childhood at that particular age.

It is also clear that his father was consciously using the story-telling to give his son a sense of his childhood as well as Kyle's, with a clear intention of forming strong and lasting impressions through use of his own memories. The stories in this case cross four generations and maintain their salience and meaning for each. However, in Kyle's assessment, each of his parents tell him stories equally. On his mother's side of the family the stories often revolve around his English father meeting his German mother and of their return to England after the Second World War, and of the prejudice they and the children faced living in the North of England. The stories of courtship would function on two levels. One is by introducing interracial relationships and the concept of racism, another is the reinforcement of ethnic identification, in this case, of Kyle's grandparents on his mother's side. On his father's side of the family, the stories revolve around his white English grandmother rather than his Caribbean Asian grandfather who was not present for much of his father's childhood. This lack of storytelling magnifies the absence of his grandfather and his family from his life and his father's.

Just as the status of individuals and their position in the cultural heritage of the children may be diminished by the lack of storytelling about them, so they may be built up by the repetition of favourite tales of positive events and actions. In the case of Penny's parents it was related to their courage and determination in the face of opposition to their marriage which was on the basis of national hostilities. In the case of Darcy, and her child Ella, (Fairsham, Year 4) it was an opportunity for her to talk about some of his exploits from when he was a child. In the extract below, Ella is still in the process of 'learning' the story and looks to her mother to fill in the parts she is not sure about. The memories and the stories come from her grandmother but they become common property by being appropriated by Ella:

- E er Mimi
- D [to Suki] Mimi, they call my mum Mimi, Mimi and Grandee - we ran out of names because there were so many left alive.
- D And she told me told me a story about Somal who is my uncle he always gets, he always hurts himself and once he climbed up the gutter, and ...
- D He climbed onto the gutter or something to try and get into the house.
- E And um and .. he went up to the top and he nearly fell through the glass 'cos they had a glass/
- D Conservatory/
- E Conservatory and he nearly fell through that.
- D But what happened to the gutter?
- E The gutter fell down and Mimi and Grandee were angry and Somal/
- D What happened?/
- E What happened was he said um the wind blew it off.
- D My brother was the most accident prone child ever, if it was going to break it would break near him. He was so accident prone that he'd constantly be up at the hospital they used to walk in and they'd say 'hello Somal'!
- E And they used to say 'what is it now? Er, stitches...'/
- D It was normally stitches/[to Suki]
- E '...er stitches or plaster'
- S Stitches or plaster.

The style and the structure of the interaction is very revealing here. The two take turns with the narrative and gradually tell the story. At the end Darcy prompts her

daughter to finish off the story and asks her what happened almost like it is a test of whether she is remembering correctly and 'getting it right'. When Ella says 'and they used to say, 'what is it now?', it is as if the memories were her own, first hand, that she was actually there and experienced this for herself. In this case, the 'dialogic overtones' are in place:

Therefore, the utterance appears to be furrowed with distant and barely audible echoes of changes of speech subjects and dialogic overtones, greatly weakened utterance boundaries that are completely permeable to the author's expression.

(Bakhtin 1986: 93)

The telling of this story is almost ritualised and they take turns filling in the blanks and then repeating the sentences in a verbal dance. These kinds of stories are forms of oral history in as much as they have to be 'learnt'. There is no room for interpretation and development that would alter the meaning of the story, they have to be 'accurate' in order to be passed on. In learning the role of listener as speaker, Ella is obscuring the utterances of others as she claims and 'assimilates' them.

Later when we were talking about something completely different, Ella interrupted as she remembered something else about her favourite uncle. Yet again the two then repeat the words over and over:

- E I remember when you had to [indistinct]
D She'd been around a ..
E Bull
D Bull
[S looks surprised and questioning]
E A Bull/
D A Bull
E And she was [indistinct]
D When was what?
E Wearing red, and Somal said ...
D Somal said to Sushila that if you ... that bulls would chase you if you wearing red, and she was in a field all in red when she was little, and he said, 'there's bulls behind you!'. And she ran all the way through stinging nettles and everything, and she was stung from head to toe.

The story and its telling serves multiple purposes. It reinforces the character of the favourite uncle as 'naughty boy' which seems to have continued through to adulthood. It is his rather dashing and roguish character that remains appealing to both mother and daughter. It was also a way of constructing a family history and shared identification between grandmother and granddaughter. In addition it illustrates the role of story-telling as an inter-generational practice which had to be learned. Not only is the story passed down and 'taught' from one generation through to another, but in this particular family the practice is clearly gendered.

The sons in the family take no part in the storytelling, other than being the characters about whom the tale is told. The grandmother has relinquished the major burden, and Darcy now takes on the role of teacher of the family stories. The exchanges above were carried out with a sense of shared comfort and ease, both mother and child slipping into familiar roles and patterns of speech. The fact that these could be shared with a stranger as a way of illustrating family practices lends support to the notion that they are quite crucial to the formation of cultural history in the family and thus a strong sense of familial identity through transference of memories as stories. They are also so strongly ritualised in format as to conform to generic style and in this case the learning of the stories quite *literally* position the listener as speaker (ibid.).

6.7 Family Secrets.

The secrets in families construct them as much as the openly told stories. Scandals, shame and the like which are alluded to without being spoken of publicly, truths that are half known, lies that are half told are all ways in which families are formed. In the context of the 'confessional' imperative of late modern societies they are also capable of de-forming families or rendering them dysfunctional in the language of 'family therapy'.

The way that the children told the stories of their families was often more guarded and careful than might be expected given their age. They were often quite discrete about things that mothers had thought that they would have already told me. So Andrea assumed that Sima had told me that she had been raised in Barnado's children's homes (see also next chapter). In other cases the mothers told me quite confidential details about themselves. One of the mothers had been talking to me in a

very open way about the children and her family reactions to her being in an inter-racial relationship, and I kept on referring to the child's father. Firstly she explained that her current partner was the father of her youngest child, her son, but that the father of her three daughters who were all older, had been her husband and that he had died. Later in the interview she told me that he had killed himself. This openness was unexpected and unasked for and she was very affected by telling me. The secret was still very powerful and not talked about amongst her family. I did not tell her that when interviewing her child, she had not once mentioned that this current partner was not her father and that I had no idea about this family tragedy. Her current circumstances, the way that she and the children were relating to her partner, were obviously shaped by this event, but also by the silence surrounding it. At the end of this interview the mother became quite anxious about how much she had revealed and asked me to erase the tape recording of the interview. She was very concerned that no-one at her daughter's school should be told anything about her circumstances.

The most interesting thing about the secrets were the way in which the children showed a high level of discretion about the things that were subsequently revealed by adults. In the case of Sima and his mother, she assumed that Sima would have told me about her having been raised in residential homes all her life, but he had told me nothing of that. When I talked to him about 'family' he did not mention the fact that his mother was estranged from the bulk of her family. Indeed, Andrea made it clear that she did not want to talk to me about her relationship with her mother, and that she could not even discuss the subject with Sima as it was too painful. She does not discuss this with the majority of people and only gradually told me a little of her story as the interview progressed. Due to the level of confidentiality that I had told the children would be maintained I could not respond at all in order to give her an indication of what Sima may or may not have said. But he had clearly avoided a very large and important part of his family relations because he felt it was at least extremely private, if not quite secret/ive.

None of the parents or children I spoke to made any mention of anything other than heterosexual relationships within the families, and I have to assume that this was also an area in which secrets were to be maintained.

6.8 Naming Families

One of the ways in which secrets in families are well kept is by the names or titles that are bestowed upon family members. In more than one case the children that I spoke to named their closest family members in conventional terms only to reveal at a later stage, or for their parents to reveal, that the naming had obscured a more complicated relationship than the chosen name suggested. Most commonly the term 'father' was used where in quotidian terms term, 'step-father' would be more usual, or where there was no conventionally recognised 'blood tie' or legal tie to denote 'legitimate' family status. It is not uncommon for close adult family friends to be called 'auntie' or 'uncle', and in recent years with the numbers of second families increasing, a new partner to a parent may be called 'father' or 'mother' when they are a 'step-parent'. In most cases the terms 'new' father would be used to show that there was a 'blood' or 'natural' or 'real' father elsewhere or deceased, and that the 'new' father was now related by marriage. If a parent's partner was referred to by name, it generally inferred that there had as yet been no marriage or formal tie to the child's parent.

Boris is a small, quiet boy from year 4 in Christie School in London. He told me that he lived at home with his Mum and Dad, and that they were his family. When I asked him about going to church with his mum, he said:

B Sometimes I stay at home if Geoff's ...

S Who's Geoff?

B [Very quietly] My Dad

At the time, I did not prompt him about this relationship any further. When talking about going home to Guyana he said:

B Sometimes [my family] have a chat and we talk about going over to Guyana sometimes....cos I stay, we stay separately. I stay at my God Dad's ...

Boris had by now identified at least two 'fathers' in his life, and when he talked about his 'racial' identity it was tied up with painful emotions about racist name calling and his own father's identity. As with Tito (pp 60) he simply could not or would not speak about this. He told me that he had been called 'half-caste' and when I asked him why he told me:

B 'Cos, I'm from Guyana/
 S mm/
 B And my mum is black. When I was born .. and I was half-caste when I was born/
 S I see/
 B 'Cos I've got a white Dad.
 S 'Cos you've got a white Dad?
 B Mmm
 S Right. And oh sorry is that the same Dad as you've still got in your house now?
 B I don't think I can tell you that.

In response to Boris completely closing off the conversation and clearly feeling uncomfortable, I spent the next couple of minutes reassuring him that he did not have to tell me anything that he didn't want to; that there were many different ways of thinking about family, and if Geoff was important to him 'like a Dad' that was fine. He responded with a correction that Geoff was his step-dad. On the tape I sound desperate to reassure him that I do not want to pry or drag up any difficult issues for him.

Boris chose to name his variously positioned male adult influences in his life as some kind of father figure. He did this strategically to both protect his privacy and to throw me off the trail. When I discovered that there were variations in his use of the term 'Dad', he simply shut down. He could not (or would not) talk about something that seemed to be both secret and shameful in some way. It could simply be that the difficulty lay with the fact that he was being positioned as 'half-caste', or it may have been connected to other deeper family concerns about his natural father and his relationship with Boris's mother. From other things that were said I would suspect the latter. Calling Geoff his Dad for much of the interview was also, more simply, reflection of the important role he was taking in Boris's life and the fact that Boris clearly had strong emotional ties to him.

By contrast, other children chose to reveal rather than conceal their relationships by using very particular language to name people they thought of as family. Kilde (Barnlea, Year 4) came to be interviewed with her photographs of 'home' which showed her with her mother, her Guardian and her Guardian Auntie. I had never heard any of the other children use this term in the school but she was very confident

in using it. When I questioned it she told me that she was not her 'real' auntie, but was her guardian's sister. The phrase Guardian Auntie seemed a bit cumbersome to her but she persevered for some time. I then asked her what her Guardian's name was, and she told me both his names and his sister's, and it sounded almost formal and certainly quite cold and distant. Suddenly she described a picture that included her Guardian, referring to him as her 'Dad'. I did not question this at the time and waited to see if she would return to the theme of explaining their relationship when I asked about whom she thought of as family. I did ask her directly what she called her Guardian Auntie when they were together, and she said she just called her 'Sandra'. From then on that is how she referred to her in the interview.

The importance of generic forms of utterances is revealed by Kilde's speech acts here. The first is guided by the generic form of the interview context. She came prepared with this title in order to facilitate my understanding of the formal role this man played in her life, privileging that over the emotional and 'incorrect' title of Dad. She believed that she was making my task easier by using this specially prepared name, because it made the legal relationship clear, and I as interviewer/researcher was after information about her 'family'.

The second generic context produces different kinds naming processes - what she actually calls these people when she is with them. At home she calls her Guradian 'Pete' and 'Dad'. She is also in touch with the person she called her 'real' Dad, another commonly used phrase. Her 'real' Dad was revealed to me in the interview when the form of our interaction became more relaxed and informal and we were beginning to communicate as research-friends. The confusions of having two Dads became easier to manage, as I had a more complete picture of her relationships. This again shows the ways in which generic forms are not discreet and are learnt. Kilde had 'practised' or 'rehearsed' for the interview, with myself as the imagined dialogic partner/listener. It also confirms further Morgan's idea (1996) that families are practices and relationships, as Kilde's new Dad is someone who performs the role of father.

6.9 Conclusions

Several more important insights can be gained from these investigations into the way in which children and mothers (and two fathers) talk about families. It would seem

that the visual representations of family follow generic codes which both children and adults know and operationalise. The generic form facilitates memory re/production which provide the impetus for the lengthy verbal responses that help construct families. The visual images powerfully circumvent the inadequacies of language as pictures of faces and places tell the story of multi-locational selves. Through remembering and the telling of stories of families, new aspects are constructed diachronically and then become as important as the actual experience of events. Ella appropriated stories for her own sense of family history, and Kyle did the same in a style more in keeping with stereotypical masculine verbal reticence.

The ways in which children talked about their families showed a great investment in keeping secrets, thus excluding me, whereas adults were more open. I believe the children often tried to protect their parents. In another way, through the naming processes, Kilde was trying to make things easier for me. In naming her Guardian and Guardian Auntie she was not only helping me with my understanding of her family but was being creative. This seems to be constructed in opposition to 'keeping a secret' because Pares (her mother) said that she had *never* heard call Pete her guardian, or Sandra her guardian auntie: she was actually facilitating dialogue.

I would like to conclude this chapter by asking some rhetorical questions:

- What is the meaning of this kind of naming process for a child with two sets of 'parents' who have differing racial identities?
- Is it more or less important if the child identifies with the old or new parent?
- What if the new parent is not of the same racial identity as the old one, do they have to hold on to these names in order to keep these strands of their identity separate?
- How does this fit with John, who has 'become half-caste' because of his new Dad? (see section 3.6)
- How does Geoff identify 'racially'?

I suspected that Geoff was also 'white' at first, but the way that Boris refers to being half-caste *at birth* makes me feel that he is now with a black Dad. I think that Boris was trying to become/stay black. His 'origins' were a secret, so how is it that people

call him 'half-caste' as he is a dark skinned boy without any of the phenotypical signs that 'usually' connote half-caste.

These questions are a few that are unanswerable at the present time. Others are a little more straightforward. I would suggest that children were much more comfortable and flexible in the way they manipulated discourses of 'race' in the public domain. There is a paradox evident in the way in which this occurs in 'home'. They seem both constrained and liberated by discourses of family. They are being creative (Boris, John, Kilde), and as will be shown in Chapter 8, this provides them with a way to make discourses of 'race' in educational contexts at least partially meaningful. But they are also being constrained by the idea of continuity, so that families must be 'spoken' into being and visually represented in traditional and generic ways. In the next chapter the ways in which 'home' constituted and was constituted by 'family' will be detailed.

Chapter 7: Moving Homes.

7.1 Introduction

in the previous chapter I began to show how the concept of home was closely intertwined with that of family within the familial context. Families are usually found within a place called 'home', but they may also be dispersed throughout many different locations. It is possible for families to be created by, and to create the domestic space that is known as home. The relationship between the two is dynamic and flows both ways. The families of the children in this study had all had some experience of migration at some time in their history either on the mothers' or fathers' side, or both. There were a range of reasons for this, and it may even have been that the current generation of children had personally experienced some form of national or regional relocation. For this reason the overwhelming majority of respondents had simultaneously multi-locational notions of 'home' as both a place and as an emotional centre to their 'racial' or national identity. 'Homes' are constructed through a matrix of psychic and geographic spaces - they are conceived of as both real and imagined, and are lived through domestic and the national locations. It is these complex ties between home, nationality and family, and how they help to inform the central area of enquiry, negotiation of 'mixed-race' identity, which will be developed in this chapter.

I will show that the diachronic readings of 'home' made by parents are mediated through a sense of belonging and dis/placement. They are not necessarily imbued with a 'homing desire' even when they add meaning and value to the sense of national and ethnic identifications parents make. For children, the synchronic understanding of home as the place where they currently live is held in parallel with notions of 'where they come from' as discourses of space and place; articulated with discourses of nationality and ethnicity. The families in this study were engaged in constructing their own understandings of nations through narrative processes in ways that were in keeping with those suggested by Bhabha (1992). In addition mothers were undertaking family practices of cultural production and domestic work which created 'safe homes' for children (see Morgan 1996). The necessity to 'belong' is one that informs the ways in which both children and parents are making sense of multiethnic positionalities.

7.2 Homes and Diasporas

The concept of diaspora is one that has been usefully employed in writing about migrant and translocated peoples. Historically it has been used by those who have been forcibly exiled from countries of origin. Avtar Brah uses the concept of diaspora in connection with 'home' but simultaneously critiques the notion of fixed origins (Brah 1996: 193). In the case of multi-ethnic/national positionings across family and individual identities, notions of diaspora retain salience in the ways in which 'home' is spoken about, but may not have the same meaning for those with (seemingly) 'mono-racial' and multi-cultural histories, and may not always be incorporated in a *consciously strategic* way into family narratives. It was not a phrase that was used in the everyday language of those who were interviewed. This may be because for the majority their relocation was through 'choice', that is either for economic reasons such as the search for labour or familial responsibilities. Elaine Unterhalter (2000), argues that the concept of diaspora should retain its political origins by being used by those who belong to groups who have been forced into exile and retain a sense of denied return, and in this formulation the term would be inappropriate to those who were interviewed. The choices that fuelled the movements of the families in the project were certainly informed by the Western post/colonial relations, but were not always forced in the sense of war or some other oppressive and genocidal project on the part of another ethnic group living in the 'homeland'.

I would agree that the de-politicising of 'diaspora' is problematic; neither is it necessarily an appropriate term for those of multiethnic heritage, unless they retain connections with, for example, 'the' African diaspora. It is a term that needs to be used with sensitivity. However, there are other aspects to Brah's work that are relevant to the respondents in this study, even if we do not agree with her choice of terminology or its origins. One of these aspects is the theoretical framework she calls 'diaspora space'. I believe that the use of 'diaspora' with the word 'space' substantively alters the emphasis, and that the sum of the two words has a different meaning than the parts. For Brah, the concept of diaspora space is:

'... the intersectionality of diaspora, border, and dis/location as a point of confluence of economic, political, cultural, and psychic processes.[...] The concept of diaspora space references the global condition of 'culture as a site of

travel' Clifford (1992) which seriously problematises the subject position of the 'native'.

(Brah 1996:208)

This space is inhabited by both those who have moved and those who are considered to be indigenous, as both of their genealogies are entwined. This multi-locational positionality is relevant to those who are from multiethnic/racial families. The most useful part of such a theoretical framework is the way it allows for complex subject positions to be interrogated from the perspective of transbordered narratives which are historically specific, politically informed and mediated through hegemonic discourses in everyday social relations. But it also suggests that the hegemonic cultural processes need not totally overwhelm those of the minority.

There is traffic within cultural formations of the subordinated groups, and [...] these journeys are not *always* mediated through the dominant culture(s)

(ibid. 209).

This plurality in cultural constructions at the level of the group and the individual is essential when looking at the stories of those of mixed-race and the way they talk of 'home'. Brah is looking to debunk the notion of a 'pure' indigenous 'native', and to suggest a potent way to reduce the power of the (ethnic) dominant over the dominated, a binary which she eschews. This is to be commended in a multiethnic, multicultural society that continues to reify notions of 'race' and nation. What she does not consider (in any depth) is how the 'psychic' axis to which she refers, is mediated by family narratives, and stories of 'blood and bone'; those to whom we belong in a familial sense. Individuals' social circumstances, their social geographies, as well as histories will work through individual psycho-subjective positions, but will have their resonances in the body in very immediate ways (see chapters 4 and 5). The physicality of the children is the site of border crossings of the 'racial'; and the physical body mediates the psychic meanings of the children's emotional responses to family narratives (see chapter 5).

Many of the stories of family construct notions of home that are more conventionally connected to the discourse of diaspora. Further, the domestic space of the home, at the level of the household, is the site for the contestation of global vs. local understandings of histories. In order to understand the way that the children frame 'home' within their identifications, we must consider the crucial impact family

narratives as well as family structures have on these ideas. As was shown in the previous chapter, it is often these narratives that mediate the disjunctures of time and space in national and 'racial' histories for the children.

One of the interesting findings was how clearly children understood parents' views about home, and how these ideas differed with the new generation's understandings of the local and the global. At this stage of their lives children often talked of their families and homes in synchronic fashions, whereas for adults, the diachronic themes ran through the narratives and constituted current understandings.

In this chapter I will explore some of the meanings of 'home' as expressed by both parents and children. The way that mothers (and through them, other family members) expressed the 'homing desire' played a strong part in how the children understood their own diaspora connections. Home is social, spatial and spiritual and is constructed through family practices, stories and imaginings. It is a complex and important part of the *identifications* that the children made, and was just one aspect of their sense of multilocal being. Again, the influence of personal biographies, and different movements and settlements among respondents produced different responses to a globalised sense of belonging.

7 .3 Places in the Heart - Geographic Locations.

Penny: Home.. the concept of home is important, but I've never been too bothered about my surroundings. But I think that that will change when we get into a house of our own.

Parents – mothers – often made a conceptual separation of concept and place before that had been asked of them, as Penny's comment shows. Many of the children over time revealed a feeling of (be)longing to another place, a 'concept' and space. For Meli, it was New Zealand; Boris - Guyana and so on. But they only made sense of this distant belonging through the discourses of heritage and family. For most of the children however, home was always first thought of as the place in which they currently live.

7.3.1 Show Homes.

The children in the study were asked about what they thought about 'home' before the mothers were contacted. I had hoped that the photographs the children had taken would represent things that they thought meant 'home' or 'family'; things that were important to them in constructing these concepts. As noted on page 64, there was a very interesting gendered divide in the way the children did this. With one notable exception, it was boys who chose to represent their homes in terms of the building itself, often from the outside¹. Zendu only took pictures of his front door with its number, and of the various rooms in his house, although when I talked to him, he offered to bring in some other family photos which showed some of his relatives. There were girls who took pictures of their rooms which contained their favourite dolls collections, but they always included pictures of people and of course pets! Several of the boys took pictures of their rooms and their computers and football trophies. They were more likely to do this without other people in the pictures, apart from in just one or two of the images. There were many possible reasons for this one of which was a fairly obvious one of terminology.

Children overwhelmingly thought of 'home' as a geographic location that was easily represented as the place in which they lived with their (immediate) families. They had a less sophisticated way of thinking about the idea of home as a concept, rather than at the level of the immediate. They could relate easily to the idea of family as being people who were important and 'blood relations', but could also readily relocate family to other places. Many of them spontaneously offered to bring in pictures of family in other locations and in other 'homes'. But they referred to these as family photographs. The children not only thought of their homes as the places they lived, but could separate that out from another place which was where they 'come from', which may not have been the same as their birth place. This links national/familial identities and shows how as Gilroy (1993) suggests, concepts of diaspora are inscribed with and through roots and routes.

¹The girl in this case was a young Japanese girl who was in Year 4 at Fairsham school. She had not been at the school long and was extremely shy and nervous and repeatedly picked on by the other children. She gave me pictures of the outside of her house, her car and her empty garden. Her family were completely absent from the images.

7.3.3 Going Home.

The children all talked of the place they currently lived as home. However, many could identify the fact that their *parents* had *different* ideas about this. When first asked in a literal way about what their parents talked of as 'home', the children chose the current household or domestic space. But if they were asked specifically if their parents ever talked about 'Going home' (to another place where they had been born or still had family), they understood the question better, and could relate it to conversations within the family. The children could also identify with the question 'where do you come from?' in a way that they could not for 'what is home?'. They could reformulate where they came from to include another more distant 'home', such as in John's case, Nigeria, or in Jacob and Tito's case, Jamaica. The idea that their racial and national identifications were intertwined with multilocational 'homes' will be explored later in this chapter.

Many of the parents in the study were originally from other areas of Britain or from other countries. The parents who were interviewed were also asked about where they thought of as home. Although, like the children, many responded that their current location was their home, it often emerged soon after, through the dialogic process of the interview, that they simultaneously felt that other places were home as well. This supports Denzin's analysis:

Any specific representation is part of a larger process that dialectically builds upon itself and elaborates itself as it unfolds over time. [...] This historical, narrative logic must be unravelled and connected to specific textual representations.

(Denzin 1997: 248)

The need for continued discussion about the meanings of such multi-layered constructions such as 'home' is essential. Again, using narratives, mothers created positionings that could encompass multifaceted and nuanced concepts of home.

When Sheila talks of home she is clearly maintaining two geographic locations at once:

Sheila: So really as far as I'm concerned this [London] is my home. This is where I live. I, you know, I contribute, I give out and I take back and whatever else, but that's [Montserrat] where my parents are from, my Gran ...

For Sheila, Monserrat is still important as a place with meaning for both herself and her children who have an Irish father. When news of the volcanic eruption on the island came through the television media in 1998 she was very shocked and upset:

Sheila: and it like really like made me sad 'cos I thought 'Oh my kids will never see that'. And its a nice little .. its only a little island but its nice you know. I remember it .. what I can remember it was a lovely place and stuff like that ...

This is not just about a home at the level of concept, it is about a physical place and how it differs from the current family location which is a flat in London. Sheila's memories of the place are strong enough to inform some of the family stories that are passed down, such as her running away from school one day and hiding in the mango trees at the end of the garden.

Not all of the parents had such a different location to inform their stories of home. Those who were born and raised in Britain were more concerned with the construction of the current family home, and only refer to other family homes peripherally, even if their family histories were linked to international locations. This may be because of having their own children confers greater importance on their current surroundings, or may be because they have not had the emotional upheaval that comes with national relocation.

Darcy has a very rich family history. Her mother is English, with one of her great-grandparents Italian Jewish. Her father's family is 'Ceylonese' Tamil², but he was born in Singapore. He still has siblings in Singapore, but now lives in England. Despite this Darcy has a very uncomplicated view of home:

S So where do you think of as home?

D I suppose I think of Brighton as my home

This is where she was born and raised until she went to college. She maintains strong ties with friends in Brighton and still goes to see friends and family there regularly. In Darcy's case her personal history, her own birthplace and subsequent schooling and social networks in England overrode links to her father's place of birth.

² Darcy did not use the name 'Sri Lanka' in her interview and continued to talk about 'Ceylon', the preferred name of her father. For this reason I have continued to use it throughout the text.

In his case however, she reported that although he had been born in Singapore his links with Ceylon were extremely strong and that he still thought of it as 'home'. He wanted to return to Ceylon and was following the civil unrest with great anxiety. Although this affected Darcy as well it was at a distance mediated across space and generation. It also points to a complex notion of cultural and ethnic history, which seems to have even less salience with her children. Her partner, the children's father, is white ethnic English.

Other mothers reported much more complex ideas about home, which have changed over time:

Celie: Home. Now home is a bit more of a problem because .. home for me was always Singapore if I had to look to a geographical place. I was there from the age of 5 until I went away to boarding school, but then my parents didn't leave Singapore until I was 19, and I would go out, when my parents could afford the fare I'd go out and that kind of stuff ...

The area in which she lived in Singapore has changed enormously over time, and the house where she was born had been pulled down. She continued :

Celie ... Home now is really, I very strongly feel it is this small little plot. It has to be this because the other thing is actually gone, and my parents home has all kinds of has all sorts of mixed feelings about that particular place. I don't feel it to be my home, funnily enough I've never felt that house that they bought 20 years ago to be my home at all. Its *their* home.

In this case, the parents' home, which was, coincidentally, Singapore, was by her own choice of words, a geographical place. When the physical place of her birth disappeared (her old house) she lost the connection to the country, despite the fact that her parents continued to live there. It seems that it was, as with Darcy, the 'Britishness' of her life that then overtook the original emotional and geographic ties to Singapore, she then looked to creating her own home. She talked again of the physical space by describing 'this small little plot' as her present home. These discussions about places are always linked with emotions and are merely being separated in order to analyse them. These concepts will be shown to be inextricable from each other in the way the respondents themselves talked of them.

7.4 Places in the Heart - Emotional Locatedness.

As mentioned above, the emotions associated with the concepts of home were often profound and were by no means constant throughout the lives of the parents in the study. For some the responses were about a sense of belonging that transcended the 'rational'. In others, the feeling of security and safety within a home was of paramount importance. It is also true to say that children were less able to express their emotions about their homes in such direct ways as their parents, and their emotional responses were often hidden within what they reported. In many cases the ways in which home was multilocational even surprised the respondents themselves.

Despite the fact that she had had a very difficult teenage which resulted in her running away from home, Margaret (Mrs Farmer) still had emotional connections to the place she was born:

M Funnily enough it always felt like going back to where I grew up as a child. Um then when I came to London, [it was like] 'I'm going back home'. Because I've lived away for such a long time ... and the way people live down there [Yorkshire], and in comparison to here ... I often feel like a fish out of water.

Even though she still had mixed feelings about her visits to Yorkshire over the years and she feels very uncomfortable there, she holds the emotional connection to her birthplace, but simultaneously feels 'at home' in London.

7.4.1 Spiritual Homes.

Talk about 'spiritual homes', and the use of that phrase, was unexpected. Emotional connectedness to place was important and was expressed in many ways. I believe that this phrase was used to indicate something that was not 'real' although it was *felt*. It was, however, a 'real' link with a 'real' place, so it was often spoken of at the same time as geography.

One of the mothers interviewed spontaneously used the term 'spiritual home' in a very early stage of the interview. Andrea was one of the most openly politically informed parents, and she is the mother and the primary carer of her child, a boy of 10 years old,

Sima. She presented in the interviews as very articulate, and was thoughtful and reflexive throughout the whole process. Andrea describes herself as black and is also emphatic that her son is black too. She told me she was born and raised in Britain, but home meant more than one place:

S So actually one of my questions is about how important home is to you.

A Home. Ah! Yeah! Jamaica's home. I mean its home in a spiritual sense, I couldn't live there, but I could certainly go there and spend long periods ...

Interestingly this response came to the question of how *important* home was, not *where* it was. The answer is unequivocal at the level of the meta-physical. This idea of a spiritual home is very powerful to her, and is not simply a sentimental and romantic yearning for a place beyond reach. She has no illusions about the impact of the material upon her position in relation to her kin on the island, nor about differing lifestyles and levels of economic power:

A But the difficulty about going home its that people want things from you, and umm. You know that there's an expectation that you'll take things over there and that people do ask you for money. I think the assumption is that you must be reasonably well off to be able to travel to Jamaica ...

Andrea managed to maintain a closeness with her spiritual home despite the sometimes painful distancing effects of location, culture and material wealth. She spent her childhood in a Barnado's Children's Home and has a very painful relationship with her family other than her sister and those with whom she has made contact in Jamaica over the last ten years. It is no wonder that the spiritual is evoked by her. This endorses the position that:

The homing desire is not the same as a desire for a homeland. Contrary to general belief, not all diasporas sustain an ideology of return

(Brah 1996:197)

Others talked of similar feelings without using the word 'spiritual', and this was also related to the concept of roots, genealogies and of one's ancestry or heritage. Sheila had already talked of Monserrat as a place - an island with warm weather and white houses, but she also explained the important emotional tie in an almost physical way.

When asked directly if there was an emotional connection with Monserrat as an important part of her history, she said that it was, but that she thought that it also helped to shape her children's identities:

Sheila: That's where I was *born*, and that's where I'd like my kids to see it one day if possible.

[...]

Sheila: Er um oh important? Mmmm ... [musing pause] I think its important that they know that that's where I'm *from*. Because I mean they *know*. You know Dinease especially; 'My mum's from Monserrat!' [in a proud voice] you know?

Dinease did indeed know of her mother's heritage and it played a part in her identity as she chose to describe herself in her own words. She had accepted the fact that her mother used the term 'mixed-race', but was herself very strongly identified with black culture. Her friendship networks were mostly with black girls both in school and outside. She shared her mother's view that she was English, and that her home was where she lived in the flat in London with her family. She did not identify herself as 'half Monserration' as some of the other children might have, but did identify her *mother* as being 'from Monserrat'. Again the ways in which geography and nationality form emotional strands that run through the discourses of 'identity' and 'history' is clear, as is the way that it is only partially transmitted across generations who do not share the immediate closeness to the locations.

7.4.2 Safe Houses

The way in which new locations took on the true title of home was by acquiring a degree of permanency that allowed for a sense of security to develop. This was expressed at the level of the household, the city and the nation.

For one of the single white mothers, Margaret, the subject of home came up spontaneously when she was talking about her family and the death of her father the previous year. She said :

M Its still a little bit sore actually, I won't got into it too much. I think I want the children to .. and my family live in Yorkshire, I've got 5 brothers and one sister. But I've lived in London now 25 years, so this is home to me.

She had moved to London from a troubled family life at the age of 16. The distance from her family still bothered her, but it seemed that this concept of home was in part acquired purely through the length of time that she had spent in London. It was also related to the fact that it was a place that she had created independently, thus acquiring stability for herself and subsequently her family.

Family practices played an important part in Margaret's narratives of home and family. The processes of cultural production and caring for her family in Yorkshire and then her children in London formed a major part of in her identification of herself as a mother. Her own mother had died when she was 14 years old, and as the eldest daughter a great many family responsibilities had fallen to her. These included all of the domestic work in the home, caring for herself, her father and her brothers. She had been in and out of reform schools and children's homes before she had run away to London. Obviously safety and security for her children were of paramount importance to her, and she admitted to being overprotective of them. She did not really talk much about the flat that she lived in other than to say that it was a great improvement on their previous home, and to talk with a sense of pride of the decor. The place that was home for her, was a city where she was allowed to be herself, where she fitted in and felt comfortable, where she had been accepted by people and where she could be 'who she was' with no sense of shame. This included her 'multicultural' approach to life and the desire to be free to associate with whom she wanted. *Cultural environment* was the major consideration after the family home, as was the case with Celie.

When Celie was talking about her changing sense of home she referred to the need to create a home when she felt that she had none, in order to create a safe space for herself and her family. Her husband's job had required a move to Bahrain where she had stayed for ten years and where her three children were born, but it was never 'home'. She explained it in the following way:

C Um its really odd, so this is really my home now and its obviously to do with Jack and the children ..

S So you've created your own ?

C Yes I felt I had to, I really strongly felt that I have had to.

S So that the concept is important and finding kind of a root../

C Yes/

S for it?

C Yes it was very, very important and in fact a big bone of contention between us, coming back. Because for me I always felt that I had created this home, because I always felt like I was living in a borrowed home in Bahrain, um [...] and um .. So coming here I knew we were coming, for Jack it was coming, for Jack it was coming home for Jack. I mean its not India at all. I mean he wanted to, 'cos he grew up and spent all his life in north London ...

In this revealing piece of text the underlying anxieties of having children in a place that felt unsafe are obvious, as is the fact that her husband did not necessarily share that view. It is also implied that Celie had considered living in Singapore again, whereas for her English-born Indian husband there was no place other than England, and more specifically, his own home town of London, that was home. Celie described the fact that he was completely Anglicised as his parents (who still live in London) had wished. Their eldest son, Josh, who was at Fairsham school in year Five, also showed none of the anxieties of his mother and remembered Bahrain fondly as a place with brilliant weather and unlimited access to a swimming pool! He said he would still rather live there because of those things.

These divergent views are all held within the same family group and it is interesting that the mother feels the need to 'create' the place of safety, a word she used twice, in an emotional sense. Her links with her Singaporean 'roots' are also more important to her than her husband's roots, and she is the prime mover in talking to her children about their 'racial'/ethnic/cultural roots, despite the fact that she herself has found a compromise Eurasian identity that developed at boarding school, and continued to be useful into University and beyond.

One of the two fathers who were interviewed introduced a dimension to home that was touched upon by the mothers, though not as early in response to the question and not so directly:

N Um its not been important in the past, but it sort of is now but I suppose it's a concept of security

S Do you mean financial or emotional?

N Both really, yeah it is more important than it was in the past [...] Trappings are fairly important to me as well.

S Trappings?

N The trappings of a home

S Things? Home comforts that sort of thing?

Here Nigel is putting emotion and material acquisitions on an equal level of importance. He shared care of his son (Kyle) with his ex-partner who lived in Woodvale. Some of the mothers made reference to 'comforts' and wanting to make homes comfortable for families, but they did not usually mention that as part of what home actually *meant*, and none talked overtly about financial security as being crucial, even though financial difficulty may have been alluded to. This seems to be a rather stereotypically gendered view, although in this case the child's mother was also working, so the 'breadwinner' role or 'head of household' was not applicable to Nigel. One way of looking at Nigel's response is to consider that security can be expressed in many different ways and that the material is merely one of them that he still felt to be important. He mentioned having been aware of financial difficulties when he was a child, and it could be that this informs his own ideas about parenting and providing security in a way that defies gendered interpretations.

7.3.3. Two Home Families.

A few of the children talked of having two homes when their parents were separated and they had regular access to time with both parents. These were the exception however, with the majority, who all lived with their mothers, talking about their fathers having 'another house' which they went to even if they had new families in these homes. The children seemed to prioritise one place over another even if they spent a lot of time at both. One of the exceptions was Kyle who said:

Kyle: Well I've got two homes actually one in Woodvale and one in London.

He said this with a smile and was quick to point out that this was because his father (Nigel, mentioned in the previous section) lived in London and that he often went to see him. When Kyle later brought in his photographs he began by showing his mother drawing up to school in her car to collect him, and the images followed through their evening together. With Kyle narrating this chronology with snippets of information about their life together. However suddenly the location changed:

K And here we have my dad at another house, his big old car garage house.

He began to then show his father's house and tell his stories of all the objects in the house. He explained how he had saved some of the exposures on his camera until the weekend so that he could take pictures of his father and his home in London. Clearly, despite the rather odd terminology of 'another house', rather than 'his house', he felt that these two homes were of equal importance for the representation of his life 'at home'.

This was a very rare occurrence. Even though many of the children interviewed talked of having good relationships with the parents who were absent, overwhelmingly fathers. There is a way in which Kyle has similar ways of narrating home to the parents, using diachronic and multilocational versions of home because he also related that he used to live in London before he moved to Woodvale. In this sense 'home' was also connected to his birthplace. This would seem to be the main reason why the children have more simple ideas of home. Most of the children of mixed-parentage had lived the majority of their short lives in one place. They were at this time less likely to be connected to a place of birth unless it was another country, their identifications were much more immediate even if their heritage indicated affiliations to other places. They could say that they 'came from' for example, Nigeria, but talk of home as being England or more likely the place, literally the house or flat in which they currently lived.

7.5 Collectivities: Homes away from Home.

The children in this research had many ways of utilising the concept of 'home' for themselves, not all of them coherent to the researcher at the time of the research. One of the ways in which the concept was interrogated at the analytical level was in questioning the links between concepts of 'home', diaspora and belonging. In the preceding sections the links have been made directly by children and parents themselves. In this section I will look at both the spoken and unspoken ways belonging to collectivities plays a role in understanding 'homes' and how that informs the processes of identifications. In a sense, 'families' are micro-collectivities that take on additional (ethnic) significance to those of 'mixed-race'. Also, as outlined in chapters 2 and 3, for sociologists, the concept of ethnicity rests heavily upon a notion of a collective process and belonging to a group. For the children of 'mixed-race' the family was one such group, and idea of a nation-state to which they could claim allegiance was another. Paul Gilroy has suggested that:

In the Americocentric alternative [to cultural integrity], a postnationalist essence of blackness has been constructed through the dubious appeal to the family as the connective tissue of black experience and history. Family has come to stand for community, for race and for nation. It is a short-cut to solidarity. The discourse of family and the discourse of nation are very closely connected.

(Gilroy 1993c: 203)

In this research I do not see respondents engaged in a 'post-nationalist' project, rather they are mediating narratives of selves through nation, family, home and belonging. I am not suggesting that 'trope of the family' is here being:

... wheeled out to do the job of re-centring things every time the debates [in this conference] on black popular culture have promised to threaten spurious integrity of ideal, essential racial cultures.

(ibid: 194)

On the contrary; I am suggesting that it is the very partiality and constructedness of 'black' or 'raced' positions that must be interrogated within families. Inter-racial and multiethnic families in particular imbue this particular deconstructive process with even more urgency.

7.5.1 National Identities.

From the extracts in the preceding sections, we can see that parents and children often use a nation or country as a way to talk about a part of their identity and that this usually connected with a family history that has its origins in that country. The national identity of the children can often be entwined with very complicated identifications with 'race', culture and ethnicity. The use of a framework of diaspora was not invoked by the respondents in this research.

When asked to describe themselves in the first instance during the group work with the videos, the majority of children included some notion of a 'national' heritage, which was often contradictory to the rest of their identifications. These contradictions are more easily exposed within children who claim a mono-racial (sic) identity. For example:

Sita: I'm Sita and I come from England. My mother is Indian and she was born in Bolton, and my father is Indian and he was born in London.

Girl, Sita, Year 4 Barnlea School

The child is holding several national identities; child of parents who are both British in terms of birthplace, but Indian here is being used not only to describe a familial heritage but, I believe, her ethnic and 'racial' identity. For Sita, in this context, 'Indian' was used to explain that she was brown-skinned and had particular language, dress, food and religious affiliations that were connected to a national identity. Here, Sita claims a link to an 'imagined community' which is both a 'national collectivity' and 'ethnic collectivity' (Anthias and Yuval-Davis 1993). This is an active resistance to a simple identification with Englishness, and shows the way in which affiliations to the 'myth of common origin' continue to be transmitted across generations through ethnic markers (ibid). I suggest that although Anthias and Yuval-Davis are right to question the desirability of the racialisation of nation, ethnicity and culture – that is often, in very simple terms, what the children do. For example, I was told that one child 'looked Somali', and when I asked about that, it was his physicality that had earned him this description.

The children were extremely revealing of the way in which nation, ethnicity, culture and race are linked in everyday discourses of identity, and in the constructions of categories for self and others. The following extract comes from an interview with Kyle, (Year 5 at Fairsham), and shows the ways in which these processes are both present and yet invisible to the children:

S Do people ever say to you Kyle where do you come from?

K Yes! A Lot!

S Can you tell me.. , what kind of people, when ..?/

K Well only when well well friends tend to, or when I'm moving to a new school I normally get that question

S And what would you say?

K I'd say England

S Why do you think they ask you?

K Because of my skin colour

S Ok. Do they ever speak to you about your skin colour?

K No

S Why do you think it is about your skin colour?

- K What do you mean 'why do you think it is about your skin colour?'?
- S Well you said 'I think they ask me because of my skin colour'...
- K [interrupting] Because its dark

I think that Kyle knew all along where this conversation was going and was trying to avoid it because it made him feel uncomfortable. He clearly knew that when people ask him about his genealogies they ask because he is 'dark' in a mainly white area and school. The dialogic interview continues with Kyle's evasiveness being rather heartlessly ignored because of my own prior knowledge of his 'mixed-race' heritage:

- [...]
- S Ok , I'd like to know how you'd describe yourself as in skin colour?
- K I don't know er.. its not black and its not white, so I'd .. brown I'd call it
- S Have you ever heard the expression mixed-race?
- K Yes
- S Who's used it?
- K I don't know. I've just heard it before, not to me, I just think I have heard other people saying it
- S Do you know what it means?
- K Yes its from when like somebody's half English, half German something like that
- S Umm. Now when I spoke to you said that your parents are both from England and that's how you would describe yourself, your parents are both from England
- K Well my mother's half German, or quarter German
- S Ah and what about your Dad?
- K I think he might be, be quarter Ind..half Indian or quarter Indian
- S Your Dad?
- K I think he is, is he? You know..
- S I do actually
- K What is he?
- S He's half Indian but you could say 'Indian' but his parents from there they were from the Caribbean, they were Caribbean Indian
- K Lucky! Caribbean
- S Yeah? Why's that lucky?

In this section of the transcript, I, as interviewer make the connection between skin colour and 'race' and then 'mixed-race'. Again, at first, Kyle de-raced it, in hegemonic terms³. He used 'German' and it then transpires that his mother is white and 'half German'. This slippage shows the ways in which he evades dealing with the issues, but they are present in his utterances.

He knew that I knew his father's heritage, and he was happy with my explanation. Being brought up in the Caribbean would be a good thing because, I believe, Kyle sees himself in terms of the 'brown' person, privileged and materially wealthy, living one extended holiday in the Caribbean. This imaginary life is completely based within his localised understandings of the global, and filtered through a 'white middle class' lens. He does not deny he is brown, but he is *English brown*. However, he uses national identities to describe *why* he is brown, moving from 'raced' to 'de-raced' understandings of nation and 'home'. He said that he had never encountered racism from the other children, and that his family and the school had never talked about such things because they had never come up. In fact, his mother Penny told me that they had specifically talked about him being 'mixed-race' and that had been when a child at school had said that his skin was the colour of 'dog poo'.⁴

This extract highlights the ways in which nations become 'homes', but that they are not experienced by the children in the same way as the adults. The children used 'nations' in more complex and strategic ways than the adults did. I do not believe that the children or parents are essentialising their 'race' by doing this as Gilroy suggests. This would only be (potentially) true for a family which claimed a monoracial identification, which none of the families in this research did. Rather children and adults are trying to operationalise discourses that constrain them, in ways that help to explain some of their lived multiplicities.

The ability to inhabit multiple positions is particularly useful in a school context that is multiethnic, but is not so visible in the mainly white school. The white children in

³ In this example I believe that Kyle chooses two 'same race' positions as he understands them as both 'white', and in this sense to him, non-racial. The rest of the transcript would support this.

⁴ It is interesting that another of the boys at Fairsham, Jake said that he had not encountered racism, and his mother, Celie told me that he had. It seemed to be a gendered response of some stoicism in a

Farisham were very keen to claim international heritages, which I believe they did from the position of security in which they were interpellated as white. For those who were not, the need to be neutral, brown or beige, overrode pride in multi-national family. However differences could be subsumed in the need for a collective school identity at particular moments.

7.5.2 School as 'Home away from Home'

Being involved in a group or community is often referred to as being a member of another fabricated 'family'. In all of the schools visited, the development of a collective 'school identity' was something that both staff and pupils promoted as an active process. In the case of Barnlea, the new school song, written by the children and the music teacher, was sung on every possible occasion (See appendix C). This repetitive refrain was simply a way of fostering a sense of belonging and pride amongst the pupils, and it seemed to work on the occasions that I saw it being used. At Fairsham, it was the school concert, sports teams, charity events and academic achievement that were constantly reinforced as an inspiration for individuals to achieve for the school as a whole. The pupils were encouraged to think of themselves as belonging to a school that had an outstanding record. In Christie, as in Barnlea to a lesser extent, the emphasis was on the children themselves being proud of themselves for their various achievements and the school identity came second to that. In this way the identity of the school was formed through the individualised students. Two specific cultural events at Christie showed how that separateness and lack of a collective school pride could be overcome when a shared collective 'school identity' could be utilised. The first of these was a disco competition, and the second was a group viewing of a football World Cup match.

Christie, as mentioned in Chapter 3 and further in Chapter 8, had been suffering from financial difficulties for some time and was just beginning to enter a period of stability and growth. It could be that this was the main reason for the emphasis on what the children themselves could do for the school. There were few resources, both in time and available materials, to be spent on the types of after-school clubs that were popular in both the other schools. There were a couple of sports clubs and that was all. There were some lunchtime activities which included a dance club that was

place in which reporting it would reinscribe and verify it to the detriment of the children's 'neutral' identifications.

attended exclusively by girls. They had a say in the way it was run and the kind of things that they did. They were often encouraged to create their own choreography and enjoyed this so much that they were continuing to do this in their own time in the playground. The girls from the school had won a national dance competition the year before and so were encouraged in their endeavours.

During the time I was researching there, a competition was held to find which groups and individuals would be representing the school in the competition that year. Three outside judges came and the main hall was used for the competition. The majority of Years 3, 4, 5 and 6 attended to cheer on the competitors. There were a small number of Muslim children who said they were not allowed to attend. Some tried to sneak in anyway, but most accepted the fact that they would not be attending. The girls who had been working in their groups were all taking part, and there were no surprises about who the main competition would be between. What was a surprise was the late entry by a group of boys who had spent about half an hour in their lunch-break rehearsing what they were going to do!

The most impressive thing about the whole event was the way in which the children put their rivalries behind them in order to both support those who were competing and those who were eventually chosen. There were of course mutterings about the results at first, but the general tone, the comments made to me as I moved amongst them, were of a real sense of pride that 'we' had won the competition the year before. The competitors and the winners were all black, apart from one white girl who represented the 'Rock'n'Roll' section with her black female partner. The male competitors were also all black. Not only were they all black but they were black British and Caribbean, rather than black African, South Asian or Turkish, the other dominant minority ethnic groups in the school.

It is hard to make comment on this without reinforcing the stereotype of the black people being good at dance and black boys good at sport⁵. Yet the strength of support for these children overcame a conscious recognition of difference or sameness. The group identity of being from the same school was the source of pleasure and pride.

At the time of the second round of data collection in Christie Primary School the World Cup was the most important cultural event in the lives of the boys in school. It dominated playground and classroom chat. Norman Tebbitt had famously suggested

⁵ This was a view that was openly expressed by Larry at Fairsham and he could name several black male sporting stars such as the African American sprinter, Maurice Green

that one could only ascertain whether a black person was truly British by asking what cricket team they would support. In the World Cup, England had survived to play against another European country and all of years 4,5, and 6 were allowed to take the afternoon off to watch the match in the Hall.

The first and most obvious observation to be made was the level of excitement that was generated by this treat. Both girls and boys were thrilled by the prospect of being let off lessons in order to watch. It appeared that usual divisions paled into insignificance in the face of the need to unite against a more clearly defined national 'Other'. Although the boys and girls sat in their friendship groups that were dominated by gendered divisions, there was a high level of good humoured interaction. Suddenly, the children spontaneously burst into chanting 'England! England!'. What can we make of this?

On a daily basis rival affiliations are explored in the playground, and children often admired teams and players who are not British. On this occasion, the girls got involved in the match as much as the boys. Although in other locations they *are* interested in football, for the majority, it is only in a limited sense. Although they talk about being refused the opportunity to play football with the boys in the playground, they have less enthusiasm for the sport as spectators. Yet on this occasion they were vociferous in their support. It looked as if they were united in a collective identity that operated at many different levels simultaneously: firstly, with the boys; secondly, with the rest of the school who were also allowed the special privilege of having time off to watch the match and finally, at a national level, the development of a particular type of 'national pride' which is most visible in this particular kind of sporting arena.

This event allowed a certain commonality for the children to their peers whereby they can share a location or national identity, but it was most noticeable that migrant children who were not always uncritically included in other forms of cultural practice were easily absorbed into this communal experience. It also overcame the usual gender segregation in leisure times at this school, where boys dominated the space of the playground (Thorne 1992). On this occasion, the processes of inclusion took the same form as other collective readings of popular culture and provided a 'shared space' for children across class, age and ethnicity as well as gender (Block 2000). The World Cup showed that what united the children watching that match was the fact that they all supported England. The only ones who were excluded from that cultural event were those who were not allowed to watch the match because of punishment or because of parental refusal.

7.6 Conclusions

Home is central to identity. Being at home, feeling at home, knowing 'where you come from' and where your spiritual roots are all crucial for (mixed-race) identities. In this chapter I have shown how home has multiple meanings and locations, which may at times, be in conflict for those who have multiple positions. However, through speech acts, narratives of 'home' and 'belonging' are reconciled, even though there is a level of ambivalence for most who took part in the study.

Narratives of nation, belonging, home and identity have been shown to be used in the absence of any other meaningful way of talking about self, and also as a positive assertion of identification with family members. Bhabha sees the margins of modern nation-states as productive and useful in de-stabilising the post-imperialist national imperative:

The marginal or 'minority' is not the space of a celebratory, or utopian, self-marginalisation. It is a much more substantial intervention into those justifications of modernity – progress, homogeneity, cultural organismism, the deep nation, the long past - that rationalise the authoritarian normalising tendencies within cultures in the name of the national interest or ethnic prerogative. In this sense, then, the ambivalent, antagonistic perspective of nation as narration will establish the cultural boundaries of the nation so that they may be acknowledged as 'containing' thresholds of meaning that must be crossed, erased, and translated in the process of cultural production.

(Bhaba 1990b: 4)

It is also clear that children in particular can be extremely fluid about their identifications with communities and collectivities. These shifts are directly linked to context, so that in the case of the football, all the usual divisions fell away as the children assumed that they would all support England. In other contexts, the children showed their differing readings of nations, such as Sita's choice of positioning of herself as English and her parents as Indian. They did this as they all now lived in England and so it was now home for them. This supported the way the majority of children spoke of home as the place in which they currently lived whereas parents had greater connections to places lived in the past, and places of birth.

These conversations actively subvert the notion of Englishness as whiteness. For many of these children, Englishness (and in some cases, Britishness) is now defined by those who *claim to be* English. Being English is determined by what they do, and how they take part in communal and common popular cultural activities. This finding reinforces the rather romantic 'melting pot' image of a New Britain under New Labour, in which we are all judged by what we do and how we behave as citizens. We may have a variety of cultural heritages but in reality we share a common ideal of what it is to be English if not 'British'. There is a shared sense of belonging amongst the children in the educational contexts at least.

I suspect that this will not remain so for the children as they get older, even as they reach secondary school. As the experience of racism grows, as political understanding grows, it is likely that children will increasingly feel a need to explore their 'roots' also. That is not to say that they will lose a sense of their Britishness or Englishness even if they remain in this country. Sheila, Celie and Darcy all show this; despite being born in different locations, their English upbringing remains a major influence in the way they identify. Yet in this research, these allegiances are mediated by the level of acceptance the respondents have felt that they have had in Britain (I believe that this is also linked to their appearance as a great deal of 'racism' is still linked to skin colour).

For now, the children were content to embrace a form of belonging to both school and nation in a strategic and pragmatic fashion. I have talked about children who come from a variety of heritages as one in this last section, but I believe the children of 'mixed-race' show this pragmatic ability from a much more emotional base. Those who feel tied by 'blood' to particular countries of parents' origin can argue for their inclusion of this part of their hyphenated identity. Yet they may shift this to become British when 'needed' or indeed wanted. Recent migrants, and mono-racial children who are second or third generation settlers also show this ability, and in many ways it is more marked with them, as illustrated by the description Sita gave above – being English but Indian. Her use of nationality gives a very clear example of the need for detailed stories of heritage when directly questioned, and yet these are discarded in the realms of collective national sporting identity.

Brah has called for an analysis of 'how and why originary absolutes are imagined' (ibid: 197). I believe that those of 'mixed-race' in common with many migrant and translocated individuals do so because they *have to trace* and *imagine* absolutes in many cases in order to speak themselves into place, and they have the *desire* to do so in most cases.

In Chapter 8 I will interrogate the ways in which the discourses of families and home are utilised in schools and the ways in which the children and teachers develop and implement their ideas of what race and 'anti-racism' mean. The understandings that children have of 'nation' and belonging, and of 'race' and 'racism' are supplemented by their own narratives and genealogies when the discourses available in schools are unworkable or inadequate to their own positionings. It will be shown that the ways in which children do this are actively creating spaces for them to explore their own multiethnic positions even though they have limited understandings of these processes. It also reveals the failings of the existing policies and practices as they are currently being implemented at the three schools in the study.

Chapter 8: Discourses of Race and Racism in the Schools

8.1 Introduction

In the previous four chapters I have shown the complex ways in which children are reading popular culture and genealogies in order to negotiate dynamic identifications. In this chapter I will show how the schools also provided discourses of 'race' and racism which impact on children's racialisation processes. The schools will be taken in turn and described in brief and indications of policy and practice outlined. The interviews with teachers reveal how they interpret the policy and practice of anti-racist education. The second section will analyse the commonalities and differences between school/teacher approaches to discourses of anti-racism and multiculturalism. Finally, I will introduce the perceptions the children had of the discourses the teachers were using¹.

My own observations and discussions with both staff and pupils showed that in all cases there was little consensus as to what the current approaches were, whether they were effective and how they might best be improved. The second most striking thing was the lack of faith that the children had in the school system to deal with bullying in general, and racism in particular. That is not to say that there was complete chaos with regard to these issues, neither was there any evidence of apathy. What there was, however, was a lack of *coherence* in the attitudes of the staff, and thus in the place they found for such matters in their classrooms and in their responses to incidents in their respective schools. The third finding of the research in schools shows that the complexities of readings of mothers and children about issues of 'race', ethnicity, culture, nationality and 'home' are not being addressed by current 'multicultural' education.

Children interviewed show that they *are* aware of a respect for 'difference' as an 'anti-racist' ideal, but while some of the children in London were familiar with the terms such as racism, those in Kent were not. The children were not able to express ideas about nationalism, ethnicity or culture in meaningful ways and so they resorted to the creative use of their own biographical details to make sense of these terms. More importantly the findings show that whilst the academy is increasingly concerned with

¹ Interviews with teachers and the school policy documents, general school information, attendance at after school clubs and so on were meant primarily to show the ways in which the school intended to approach 'race' and racism, and multiculturalism. These provided a *context* for the voices of the children. This research is not meant as an exhaustive piece of research into the schools themselves.

re-instating class into agendas of educational research, and introducing critical approaches to whiteness and masculinity, teachers in these classrooms were not as yet confident in doing so. To this end the teachers I spoke to were also drawing upon autobiographical data to deal with the ways in which multi-positionalities challenge existing discourses.

8.2 Discussing 'Race' with Teachers.

As the teachers knew about the purpose of the research project they seemed to assume that they did not have to talk about the position and experiences of staff themselves, or about how policies were applied to issues such as staff development and promotion. In both London schools the Heads made reference to the difficulty in staffing generally, and recruiting staff from minority ethnic groups. In particular, several (white) teachers refuted the idea that black teachers automatically helped as role models for pupils or that simply by being black they would automatically be politicised. Indeed, black teachers were acutely aware of the limiting role models for students, but were equally sure they could not be 'representatives' of the heterogeneity of blackness, or themselves 'tied to a narrow definition of blackness' (Osler 1997: 83-84). Members of staff in the London schools appeared to segregate along racial lines in the staff room, something that was only referred to by three women teachers. I believe there was an underlying racial tension amongst staff in the London schools that was absent from the interviews but I cannot speculate on how that played out in their interactions or in school policy and practice.

In all of the schools there were different ways of relating to the terms that I introduced in the questions and that will be explored below. Both teachers and children used 'racism' to cover a range of interracial conflicts, but also to describe prejudice and abuse based on language, ethnicity or culture. When talking about interaction amongst children Troyna and Hatcher suggest that in line with the Swann Report, there are different ways of understanding whether incidents are 'racist', 'racialised' or 'inter-racial' (Troyna and Hatcher 1992:15). They believe that it is the society wide belief in the superiority of 'whiteness' available to children that confers upon white children the power to impose racial 'Other' status upon children from minority ethnic groups within schools. However, they go on to suggest that in mainly-white primary schools:

The concept of contradictory common-sense is central to our understanding of what race means in the cultures of children.

(ibid:46)

In this research, that would also appear to be the case. Children often held views about 'racial egalitarianism' yet would make racist remarks, as was detailed in chapters 4 and 5. Some of these ideas are returned to below, and similarities and differences explored between views held in the mainly-white and multiethnic primary schools.

8.3 The Schools

Christie School in London.

I returned to Christie school in the January of 1998 to begin the data collection. The first thing that strikes one about the school is the busy and bustling atmosphere. No child is allowed in the corridors during lesson times, yet with diverse activities taking place at the same time and doors open onto corridors mean that there is a continual hum of noise and a great deal of activity visible. On my first meeting with the Acting Head (Robin), we were interrupted by a request for support from a teacher which took the form of red wooden brick being presented - a red 'traffic light' which indicated a serious problem. After dealing with the incident he explained to me that there was quite a lot of crisis management needed as the children had suffered a lot of disruption, change and lack of continuity over the last year. This was due to the financial and staffing crisis, and that there were a high percentage of supply teachers in the school who had differing approaches to classroom management and discipline issues. There were also significant numbers of young teachers, all of whom were white and several of whom Australian and South African. Robin had been involved in twenty-three appointments that year alone. The classes that I was put into to observe were allocated to me by the Robin who made his decision based on numbers of potentially 'mixed-race' children in them and the staff who were most likely to be supportive of the project.

It emerged that all of the staff members in whose classes I was researching were very supportive of me being there and talking to the children. Acting as a classroom helper was seen as useful to them in tangible and immediate ways and they were happy to allow children to leave the class for short lengths of time to take part in

interviews. I also interviewed children from some of the other classes and these timings had to be negotiated much more carefully. I was introduced to all the staff in the morning of the first day that I was there which made the whole process easier.

The overall picture that members of staff presented was a candid recognition that the school had 'serious weaknesses', tempered with a cautious optimism that things were changing for the better. All were acutely aware of the need for a Head to be appointed to provide some kind of stability and vision for the future of the school. Who this should be, and how successful the Acting Head had been were of course matters for debate. The whole curriculum was under revision as were most of the policies:

Robin: I was aware of the fact that that there were so few working policies on anything. If we had an anti-racist policy it's so out of date, it needs to be developed by the teachers we have now. A bit of paper doesn't mean anything to anyone.

The old Head was not strong on these areas and one staff member told me that she had faced allegations of racism from parents, but there had been so many pressing problems to deal with since she had left that I was told '.... And I know it sounds terrible to say this, there are things that actually had to take precedence' (Robin). He was emphatic that it was very hard to prioritise things, and that the issues under discussion should be integral in all areas of the school curriculum, materials, pedagogy and so on.

The school did not have its own anti-racist or multicultural policy, but it had the LEA 'Code Of Conduct' which made specific reference to these issues. The staff were in the process of working on a number of policy changes, and Robin was clear that 'racism and multiculturalism are major issues [for us]'. He knew that although all the staff 'worked with integrity' there was no 'consistent approach across the school'. He continued, 'There are pockets of really excellent practice and areas I would be concerned with'.

One of the major ways the school used for tackling conflict amongst children was 'Circle Time'. Robin was adamant that the children should be asked about what they thought in these matters and that staff needed to know what it was that children understood by things such as the school's 'Golden Rules' and that they were

involved in positive approaches to problem solving. He gave the example of an incident in a Year 2 class that was to be discussed over the following few weeks in Circle Time, and felt that it was entirely appropriate that the children of this age were dealing with this incident in this manner.

Robin had told me that he was unhappy with the curriculum materials in the school and that this deficit had been mentioned in the recent OFSTED report on the school. Yet in this report the officers noted the high level of 'racial harmony', with which he concurred, whilst noting that the children were very 'clued up' about these matters.

This was not a view shared by all the staff. Of the seven teachers I spoke to in depth, four made explicit reference to the racism within the school. This was defined as being any kind of inter-racial conflict. I was given a note written by a girl in Year 6 of black African origin about the 'Packy (sic) shop'. Another member of staff noted that the children played in groups that were comprised mostly from members of the same racial or ethnic origin. Another told me about anti-Jewish feeling amongst pupils. The fifth member also alluded to disharmony in less explicit ways. Only one member I spoke to said that it was something that he never encountered. Further, he stated that he thought that the policies as they existed were effective.

Both of the teachers who were most aware of and concerned about the anti-racism and multiculturalism in the school were women. One was the Section 11 Teacher Leader, Millie, who knew that the previous policy was seven years old and had been written as draft by the old Head herself and never properly finished. She felt things were improving but that there had been an old 'colour blind' policy that had disadvantaged the children with minority ethnic status, or with English as a second language. The Year 6 woman teacher who was also Home/School Liaison for the upper years was extremely well read on the area and very keen to implement new ways of working with the issues and dealing with them throughout school life generally. For example, she is concerned about the level of anti-Semitic feeling amongst the children and is working to dismantle that and make links with the local community.

It was clear from the majority of views that Robin was correct in his assessment of the differing amounts of concern amongst the staff. There was certainly an awareness that these issues are important, and that they must be dealt with. But the main differences seem to arise over how this should be done and when. So there are

those who see the need for it to be incorporated as a conscious part of the daily school activities those who think that it should be dealt with 'as and when it arises'. The same was true of the other two schools and this will be explored in more detail below.

Barnlea School.

My first phase of data collection at the school in the spring of 1998 revealed a thriving and progressive environment for a wide range of children from diverse backgrounds. The current Head (Gina) had been in place since the Infants and Juniors had been joined into one larger Primary School four years previously. At the time that I was there, there was a major campaign in progress to stop bullying after a fatal accident involving a child in the playground. Again in my initial meeting with her, she was very open and happy to talk candidly about racism in the school that she felt was an ongoing problem. The Head arranged for the SENCo to be my liaison as she knew the years in which I would be working better, and interestingly, she had two 'mixed-race' daughters one of whom was at the school. The SENCo chose the classes on the basis of which teachers would be most helpful and where she thought the children of 'mixed-race' were located. I later discovered that they seemed odd choices as there were many more children in other classes.

The school was having many internal problems with changes in management methods and there was a lot of political wrangling between staff at middle and senior management levels. When I arrived many members of staff treated me with distrust, even overt hostility in the case of one woman in whose class I was to be working. I discovered that this was because there was a lack of understanding as to my position, and that I was seen as a possible spy for the senior management. I was not introduced to any other staff, and had to make my own contact with them in the staff room, so not surprisingly it took some time to persuade them that the research was completely independent.

Again, once I had made contact the majority of the staff were friendly, helpful and interested in what I was doing. I interviewed the staff in whose classes I worked and some others who offered to help. The school had an anti-racist policy which the Head and majority of staff felt was inadequate. At the time of the research, the policy was being re-worked by the Equal Opportunities Officer who was also a Year 5 teacher (a black West African man) in whose class I did some additional research. There were larger numbers of black and Asian teachers in the school, mostly women and all of

Caribbean descent. One of the first things that I noticed in the staff room was the fact that the black teachers sat together and very rarely interacted with the white. One of these women later confirmed that it was true and that there was a feeling amongst them that the school environment was not supportive of them. For her, racism was not simply an issue of representation in terms of staff numbers, or curriculum materials or policies, it was also about her own experiences and prospects within the school and the inter-personal relationships amongst the staff. She felt a lack of understanding that bordered on hostility at times, yet interestingly she felt that there was very little racism amongst the children. This was not a view that was widely held amongst the staff.

The Head presented as very knowledgeable and very concerned about 'racism' in all forms, yet the perceptions of a lot of the ordinary members of staff were that there was not enough actually happening. Again, in all the staff interviews, the need to take matters seriously was at the forefront. There was one notable exception who was a white, male teacher who was very close to retirement who claimed that he felt that current policies were successful and that they needed no further discussion. He also felt that on the whole the children were not racist.

Fairsham Junior School.

I arrived in time for assembly first thing on Monday morning, and the difference from the London schools in noise levels and behaviour were extremely striking. The children, who have rigid uniform codes, all sat in total silence throughout, and on into the hymn practice which lasted for a further twenty minutes. I was introduced to the whole school and children in the assembly that morning. I had been allocated classrooms on the basis of where I would be most likely to be accepted by the class teacher. It turned out that as the children who presented with some kind of 'racial difference' were so few that I had to arrange to see them with their teachers. The school was very disciplined about work, but for the most part I was lucky again with the generosity with which staff and pupils behaved. There was one notable exception with a class teacher who refused to be interviewed as she was always 'too busy'.

Despite the differences in locations and populations, there were some commonalities between this school and the ones in London. However, they were not so apparent at the outset. For example, the majority of the staff knew that the school had no specific anti-racist or multicultural policies, although both the Head and Deputy Head felt that they were important aspects of school life. The overwhelming view was that there

was a perfectly adequate Equal Opportunities policy and that that was sufficient in furthering the whole school ethos of 'everybody is equal and should be treated accordingly'.

The Head (Perry) said that he was:

'very concerned that children are treated the same, so whatever culture, race, creed they aren't differentiated against, in any way. [...] And erm although we don't have many different ethnic groups in the school, I think we just treat them all as children, we're all, they're all part of the school and they all have valuable contributions to make'.

He believes that although there have been incidents in the past he feels that the situation is, 'on the surface', sorted out. The Deputy Head and one of the Year 6 class teachers, both white men in their early thirties, were the only two staff members who expressed concern at the opinions and behaviour of the children and the fact that the school needed to be dealing with these issues in a more proactive fashion. The Year 6 teacher, Jim S. had come from a small Northern town and said that he felt that the children often expressed views which they had obviously got from their parents. He implied that they were dated and conservative, but continued that they were 'basically good kids who need educating'. He drew my attention to the project on 'Discrimination' that had been held in his class.

One of the exhibits on the wall came from a boy, who he said 'usually does very good work, contributes in class and is very thoughtful'. He produced a piece of work that I found shocking. I had been meaning to ask Jim S. why he had put it on the wall. It was called 'Blacks In England: Racism'. In it the child described how black people, in which he included Indians and Pakistanis, came to England because of good job opportunities here, and how they had the same 'problems but worse' in America as they were 'surrounded by thousands of blacks'. The essay also recounted what good footballers and Basketball players black men were and listed them. The problems were that 'they are coming in their thousands' and that people think that they are taking their jobs. But the boy concludes that 'they should be allowed to stay in England ... if they were sent back they would probably die of starvation'.

Jim S. did not condone the thinking of this boy but decided that rather than refusing to put the work up, that the class had to discuss it. He explained that it 'obviously came straight from the home', and 'I felt that it would not be right to punish the boy, and hide it away, we had to talk about it out in the open ... it had to be challenged.' Which is what he did. I was not clear how challenging the children found the discussion, but Jim S. certainly questioned the stereotypes as well as the overt xenophobia and racism.

Likewise, the Year 4 classroom of Jim D. the Deputy Head, was covered with stereotypical images of India, only of women and children in rural settings. When I looked at them more closely I could see that they had all been provided by the same charity. Jim D was aware of this, and informed me that his wife was Indian, so that he felt he had to tread carefully in the way he approached change within the school. Not only was he new but he felt that people would take his personal circumstances and use them to discredit his ideas as being personally motivated and inappropriate for the school. Both he and the Head thought that I would be most likely to encounter opposition from older members of staff, and in fact I had been allocated to work with younger staff members, himself, Jim S. and Pat D. a young white woman in her late twenties. However, Pat was one of the people who felt that discussions of racism were inappropriate to children of Primary School age (see Section 4.2.1 below)

8.4 Behaviour and Practice - Teachers' Approaches to Racism.

From the brief introduction to the schools outlined above we can see that there are some very clear similarities:

- All of the school Heads and Deputy Heads had an awareness of and commitment to development of good 'anti-racist' and multicultural practice within their schools, utilising a whole school approach;
- within the schools there were differing opinions amongst members of staff as to whether the current policies were effective or not
- all of the staff members had differing ideas about what 'good practice' might include and how to go about achieving it
- within each school there were perceived to be 'pockets of good practice' and 'areas for concern'

- Teachers felt that children understood what racism was, and that they knew it was not acceptable

The way in which these points were discussed seemed to centre upon two factors:

1. The behaviour and opinions of the children and how to deal with them
2. The curriculum, resources and materials, and pedagogic practices.

For reasons of simplicity they will be referred to as the personal sphere and the pedagogic sphere. This is not intended to suggest that the two areas are mutually exclusive, rather that these two areas are perceived as requiring different if not separate methods for integrating 'racial awareness' issues. The personal sphere is seen as the relationships that the children have with each other within the school environment, especially in the informal space of the playground. The school policies and teachers' inputs may not *directly* inform it at those moments of interaction. It also refers to the attitudes and beliefs children hold and express in informal ways in the classroom. The pedagogic refers to the educational environment of the classroom, assembly, school clubs and so on where formal education is delivered. It highlights the way in which it is delivered, how and with what tools and skills, and the policies that inform its delivery. Obviously there is personal interaction involved in this sphere, but for analysis this will refer mostly to teacher/pupil interaction.

From these points it is clear that developing a whole school awareness and implementing practice and policy are on-going and complicated negotiations between differing levels of staff and management. It is also clear that, with one or two notable exceptions, there is some confusion amongst the teaching staff themselves as to the best ways of doing this, as well as an awareness that despite their own good intentions they may not be doing things the way they feel they ought to or would like to. There is a clear shift in discursive language between the two spheres highlighted above. The behaviour and language of children is still discussed in terms of 'anti-racism', even when there may be elements of ethnic or cultural superiority, in the kinds of incidents reported. The pedagogic however, is now being talked about in terms of 'multiculturalism'. This is in line with the kind of 'deracialization' within school policy that Gillborn describes (Gillborn1995). He cites Troyna when he suggests that 'notions of history, culture, religion, nationality /nationhood, language and 'way of life' have come to act as 'proxy concepts' allowing policies to adopt a superficially deracialised format while directly addressing issues of relevance to existing and

future racial inequalities (Gillborn 1995). So whilst there is an effort to talk about 'other people and other countries/religions etc'. it may be kept within very specific areas of the curriculum. It was also clear that there is little or no discussion of complex ethnic positions within the schools. Neither is there any *systematic* interrogation of 'whiteness' or nationality in terms of Britishness, when the subject of race and racism come up, although a small minority of women teachers did include this. It is these issues that will be discussed in greater detail below.

1 Avoidance

At Fairsham school in Kent, one of the young women teachers whom I interviewed was quite clear that anti-racism did not need to be 'pressed' in a predominantly white school.

Pat: I have a few children in my class who are overweight, now we could put an issue in the school policy on tackling *that*, but I don't think that we *need* to take every aspect, every sort of thing that could be picked on and put a different policy. It all comes under one umbrella policy of respect for them really.

She did think that there should be some kind of multicultural policy and for her that meant that 'other cultures' were included in schemes of work in Geography and History. She noted, however, that the children found it very difficult to understand that people may live differently from the way that they did now 'even in History' and that kind of discussion would be better suited to Secondary school. Religion provided another opportunity to discuss 'difference' but she found it became a 'paper pushing exercise':

Pat: I have touched on a few of them [religions] with the children and it just throws them... then when you start talking about Judaism and you get the idea that some people are Jews as well as their religion as Jews.. and its just way above them.

She feels that when issues come up 'naturally', such as 'race' or 'mixed-race', they are dealt with. She also felt that the materials in the school were adequate yet often stereotypical, and that the children reflected stereotypical ideas about cultures.

In her interview, Pat shows some of the contradictory positions that were prevalent in some of the staff in this school such as an awareness that some of the children held views that may be perceived as racist, but a reluctance to tackle them through discussion. She thought that it would require changes to schemes of work to fully implement multiculturalism within the curriculum, which she dismissed as a ridiculous idea. Her main reservations were the ability of the children to deal with issues as 'complicated' as these at an early age. However, we may also read Pat's concern with multiple changes as anxiety about her own role as an educator and the limitations placed upon her in terms of time and resources. Teachers have to manage such factors [resources, time, policy etc.] to best advantage (Woods and Grugeon 1990: 123). Implicit in Pat's statement is the increasing bureaucratic pressure teachers find themselves under. Hatcher has described the 'reality of the OSI [discourse of Official School Improvement] as it is experienced by most teachers is of increased regulation of their work by the imposition of the curriculum, targets and now teaching methods as well, embedded in a discourse of 'relentless pressure' (Hatcher 1998:284). Despite or perhaps because the school is a high achiever these pressures may be multiplied further. Pat implies a sense of isolation in trying to deal with such conundrums, which may not be the way other teachers in the school perceive it.

In fact, the Head at Fairsham had stated that it was *more* important for them to talk about race and culture, yet he still felt that there was 'no problem here', that there may have been in the past but that it had been ironed out (Gaine 1987; 1995). He was not 'one hundred percent' convinced about the materials the school was using but said that the materials had been improving steadily and that older books should still be used until new ones were in place. How this fits in with other schools is evident from similar conversations about seeing pupils as individuals and also only dealing with things as they come up. These positions tended to go along with the idea that the materials were adequate.

Dave A. at Christie school in London also felt that it was 'sometimes made too much of an issue really'. He saw the need for a good anti-racist policy, and for curriculum and pedagogy to provide equality of opportunity for children but was clear that the best way to deal with it was wait until issues came up and to make sure that he treated the children equally. In saying this he talked about treating the children the same, just as the Head teacher in the mainly-white Fairsham school, as well as the more 'conservative' white, male, Fred, at Barnlea. He called this being 'colour blind'.

In both of the London schools, as well as Fairsham, many of the teachers showed similar ideas about respecting individuals regardless of their 'racial' and 'ethnic origin' rather than embracing that as a part of a positive part of the identity individual. This is consistent with findings in other research such as Ghazala Bhatti's ethnographic work with 'Asian' children. She says that 'The immediate response, the most common one, about children's ethnicity was that the school did not differentiate between people because of their ethnic backgrounds' (Bhatti 1995:70). The difference I found was that this was *school* policy at Fairsham, but not so in the two London schools. Nonetheless it was a view held at least partially, by some London teachers.

In Christie both the Year 4 (Mohamed) and Year 5 (Dave A.) class teachers, both male, in their forties and both with multi-ethnic origins had a view that things were dealt with on a day to day basis when they arose as particular incidents of bad behaviour. Dave A, the Year 5 teacher said that he thought that he treated all the children equally and that they all knew that he felt it important to teach children without thinking of their race, focusing on their ability. He went on to say that he also chose materials on the basis of whether they were good teaching aids not if they had a pictures of minority ethnic people in them.

Dave A: I think people just teach. I don't think that people are too aware when they are planning lessons for instance, 'How can I make sure that the Asian girls get the same attention as whatever. I think that people tend to take the class as individuals as if someone's quiet you draw more out of them. But certainly for me, I don't sit here and think 'I'll have to make sure that the black boys or the black girls get equal treatment to the white kids'. It's very much an individual thing, so you take everyone as an individual. So I suppose it's a sort of colour blind policy, well as I apply it.

In this extract it is clear that there are two levels of awareness of the existence and meaning of 'race', that of the group and the individual and that is what the teacher is separating in his understanding of classroom relations. He rejected the idea that an anti-racist teaching style should treat all black children as the same and in need of the same kinds of 'special' or 'preferential' treatment. This is clearly not what an anti-racism policy is likely to have suggested, yet he used that interpretation as a means

of dismissing it. He was concerned that the whole class was treated as individuals and in order to do this he eradicated 'race' from the equation, becoming 'colour blind'. As a result he inadvertently reinforced the original problems identified with not being aware of specific difficulties that may arise from the 'race' of the child.

This is similar to a view held by Gwen, the SENCo at Fairsham when she stated that '...we always treat everybody differently anyway' and because of that there was no need for an anti-racist or multicultural policy within the school.

Later in the interview she said:

Gwen: I wouldn't think it was part of my remit at all really, I have taught in Birmingham and there I mean you've got much more of a balance where you have to redress... everybody here.. to be honest I wouldn't notice anybody being different here, at all, I would never sort of, it would be the last thing that you would notice, sort of consider .. sort of .. what children look like, and there has never been a need to redress it, address it.

Again she simultaneously called for both treating the children the same way, and treating them all differently: as individuals, and for her this meant de-racialising them. It is clear that this is particularly true as the school is mainly-white and therefore there was no need to 'redress' any balances because there were no issues that needed dealing with. As with the example of Dave A she saw anti-racism as something remedial.

In Barnlea, the Deputy Head, Elena, said that she was aware that she sometimes slipped into seeing the children 'for what they present, rather than their ethnic background. And maybe I should be more aware, you know, that there is a hell of a lot of other stuff from home, you know their cultures and their traditions.' She was concerned that she should perhaps be 'doing something else'. Her view neatly encapsulates the difficulties with situating 'race' or ethnicity within the complexity presented by individual children. She reveals anxieties about the way in which we are forced to identify and categorise children in a multitude of ways that include not only a 'racial' identity, but also gender, dis/ability, behaviour, personality, friendship groups and so on. But Elena chose culture and tradition as the most likely sources of potential 'difference' and therefore, source of problems.

2 Action.

Elena's dilemma with how to deal with individuals and whether or not she always deals with the 'whole child' and not just the 'problem' or performance they present to her in school is common. It is this kind of uncertainty that underlies the differing beliefs in the best ways to deal with anti-racism and multiculturalism. Across the three schools there were a surprising number of commonalties, with the most popular ideas for addressing the two areas mentioned above in quite distinct ways. In short, teachers seemed to be disposed to being either proactive or reactive depending on how seriously they were concerned that these issues were central to school life.

A very common approach to dealing with the concept of 'racism' within the schools was to be reactive and to deal with incidents as they arose. Many of the teachers felt that this was the most appropriate way to deal with children of this age, and that there were more important things to think about when teaching the children. In some cases this was an extension to the feeling that the subject should not be made a priority, that in a sense drawing attention to it would make things worse. Pat (Fairsham, Dave A. (Christie) and Fred (Barnlea) all showed this reactive behaviour. They saw no need to do anything other than deal with single incidents. For Fred this sometimes meant that 'it might sound on the surface like racism, but when you get to the bottom of it, it isn't'. This was another theme running through the more 'conservative' members of staff at all the schools, the question of whether children use racist language as a form of abuse without intending to 'be racist', and further consideration will be given to this dilemma below.

For many teachers 'firefighting' was recognised as an inadequate form of crisis management. They talked in much more proactive ways about needing to take strong action against incidents but seeing them as part of a more organised approach to eradicating any problems within the school.

Gina, the Head of Barnlea was very clear that she dealt with all incidents very severely, that all incidents of bullying, sexism, and racism were recorded in a book and every child involved would have to see her personally after the playground supervisor or teacher had dealt with them. But she was also aware that this was just the tip of the iceberg:

Gina: I think dealing with the overt racism is fairly effective, ... because as soon as it is overt we can deal with it. My main concern is the covert racism.

One of the most important ways to tackle this was to create an environment in which children felt able to talk about things and to try to minimise the fear of placing their trust the teachers, and avoiding retribution from their peers. She felt that the school needed 'systems and structures' in place to deal with the subjects of antiracism and multiculturalism within the school.

This theme of communication was also important to those with positive and proactive views in both of the other schools. For them, 'firefighting' was best done by dealing very harshly with incidents as they arose, but also allowing children to talk about such issues with understanding and respect for other views involved. Both Barnlea and Christie had developed the use of 'Circle Time' as the most appropriate time to deal with such issues.

Robin, the Acting Head at Christie, was particularly positive about this as a way to develop good communication between the children. He described an incident that happened in a Year 2 class:

Robin: Basically there were some children being invited to a party, and um, one girl who was white wasn't invited and she said to the girl whose party it was " Well, I don't want to go to your black party anyway". Um, other children heard and became very upset um, and there were accusations of racism on both sides. Number one, um that the black girls had organised this party and not asked white children, and on the other side you know, the white girl saying 'I don't want to come to your black party', and sort of labelling it that rather than them seeing themselves as students and things, um all together. Um so those are the issues that I particularly want to deal with for Year 2 children at that level.

He felt that this had to be dealt with in an open and direct fashion:

Robin: I've actually suggested a series of Circle Times which actually start with on Friday and they are going to carry on to the end of term, to deal with issues of race specifically, but with the children talking together not about a specific incident .. but with maybe some role-play and things like that.

At Barnlea, the time set aside for Personal, Health and Social Education was used to discuss a broad range of issues with those in Year 6 which included racism, whilst in the lower years the subjects were sometimes decided on a more *ad hoc* basis and would be a more spontaneous way of dealing with incidents as they arose.

Another area that was important for those who had a more proactive view about racism was to develop the relations with parents. This was seen as crucial all the Head teachers who mentioned parents spontaneously at various times. One of the perceived difficulties at the time in all the schools was about reaching parents and making sure that they were involved in the processes of eradicating racism and were understanding and supportive of such projects. In most cases this involved opening dialogue with parents and setting up parent groups for consultation about policy making in these areas. Teachers did not speak extensively in this area as these initiatives were quite new in the schools.

3. Representation

The most popular response to questions about multiculturalism was to implicate teaching materials as being crucial to multicultural awareness. In particular, the need for greater representation of minority ethnic groups across the range of materials was seen as being the main way in which the apparent deficiencies of previous years could be remedied. Again there were differing levels of criticism of current positions on resources across all three schools. Some teachers were less concerned about images rather than as Dave A. at Christie put it, 'how good the teaching material is, and how good a teaching aid it's going to be'. He went on to say that he would look for this above all else including 'does it represent all the different races so that kid does not feel alienated by them when they do it. I don't think they do personally, unless the book is really dreadful'.

It is interesting that he is able to separate out whether the book will be a good teaching aid from whether it conforms to his idea of what multiculturalism is about. Elizabeth Grugeon writes poignantly of an 8-year old South Asian boy 'struggling with a story where understanding of the narrative depended on the reader knowing about canals'. She concludes that 'At 8 he was rapidly becoming a non-reader. The idea that reading might be for pleasure had not occurred to him' (Grugeon and Woods 1990: 63). Dave A. knew that there are concerns about 'alienation' from texts, but did not seem to be willing to link that to even greater conceptual and cognitive difficulties

in the way some children may be able to approach the work in the book. His reluctance to do this was coupled with his concern for individualism (as mentioned above), and that the idea that saying these images may be 'representative' is universalising and therefore stereotypical. However, he was typical in immediately suggesting representation in materials to be one of the first considerations in bringing multiculturalism into the school.

Kara, a Year 6 teacher and Home/School Liaison at Barnlea in London had a more sophisticated view that was shared by the more proactive members of staff in all the schools. She believed that resources needed monitoring and she explained that the newly created Equal Opportunities Officer would be responsible for this:

Kara: For example, we have actually been looking at our resources and chucking things. There's actually been a debate on for example, geography. Do we keep some stereotype pictures to actually explore stereotypes or do we chuck them?

She acknowledged that there was not just a problem with the absence of certain groups of people, but that where there were some kinds of representations they were negative, and needed challenging.

The problem of negative images in books was also raised at Fairsham :

Perry (Head): I think obviously when you are looking at teaching materials you're looking for what you think is the best you can get. [...] We have looked at stuff as its come in and said, 'Look this really isn't suitable', or 'This is somewhat sexist or racist or whatever'. Obviously there are books in the school which have been here for a number of years which obviously don't .. don't cater for that, and I think you know, we can't wholesale throw everything out.

What was common to the teachers in these schools was some recognition that representation has an effect on the child's learning, and also seeing that as the first consideration of multicultural education. This was not what was originally expected from asking about multicultural policies. The question was intended to prompt a much more general answer about the way in which multicultural life in Britain was central to the whole curriculum, as well as to ask whether the school acknowledged a need to

discuss and learn about a variety of cultural and ethnic positions globally and which recognises the post-colonial, information technology age in which we live.

A few members of staff did this. Evi at Christie said that you could not talk about the Second World War without including discussions on fascism, which meant that 'whiteness' and national and racial superiority were also tackled. Another Section 11 teacher at Barnlea also said that she talked to the children about whiteness, 'white South African-ness', in discussion with individuals or small groups about racism, and in comparative terms with the education system in this country. At Fairsham only the Head-teacher made direct reference to multiracial/multicultural Britain and how it made it more important for a mainly-white primary school to be aware of the fact that this was outside the children's experience and thus needed more work within the school environment.

The second most frequently talked about methods to introduce multiculturalism were through three subjects, religion, and history and geography. Most discussions I had with teachers mentioned all three, but centred on religion. In London schools the children were used to being introduced to various different festivals and to talking about the religions from which they came. This was seen as standard practice in schools that have such a large ethnic mixture. In both of the schools there was a separate assembly for the Muslim children, and at Christie there had been discussions with parents about not having a member of staff take the assembly, but having a community religious leader coming in. At Barnlea, Gina, the Head-teacher said that the assemblies she held once a week contained 'about fifty one percent Christian ethos and then I would deal with other religions and so on'. Her assemblies were always themed and always 'linked with value and respecting cultural diversity'.

Pat had made it clear that this level of 'religious tolerance' was not found at Fairsham. The Head-teacher did recall an occasion when an attempt to diversify had provoked an angry response from parents. From his description it sounded like it was the same occasion which Pat herself had described as a failure.

Perry (Head): We had a group last year who were dealing with one aspect of religious education, I can't remember what it was now. I think it was one of the Jewish festivals or whatever, and they came in and talked to the children about it, and I had a letter from one of the parents saying they didn't feel it was appropriate, and this was a Christian family who wrote in saying 'Children

shouldn't be taught this at school'. And I said 'Well, actually it is part of the national curriculum, and it's a religious festival which is upon us now, and we felt it was important the children, other children hear about it in the news, they see it on the television, its important that they have experience of what its about. And erm .. we deal with Christian festivals, and we deal with other festivals as well, and its just part of what goes on in schools now'.

Perry was very open to the idea that this was something that children had to 'experience' because it was not something that came up in their lives usually. He had two letters about it, and he felt surprised by this. Despite this he intended to continue to develop this aspect of the curriculum. His comments also make it clear that the parents and wider community need to be central to developments of anti-racist practice and policy.

8.4 Summary: Meaning and Terminology

From the discussions with teachers and children it became clear that there is as much juxtaposition of terms and their meanings in the everyday school environment as there is in the academic environment. The way the teachers responded to my questions as reported above shows this extremely clearly.

'Anti-racism' and racism are most often used to describe the verbal exchanges between children; or to describe negative or stereotypical images in books; or behaviour of teachers that are perceived as prejudiced. However, when incidents are described in detail it may reveal an exchange in which a child has, for example, ridiculed another's appearance, such as wearing a turban. In interaction with teachers and children, and between children, it may be their gender, and nationality or religion that are perceived as 'racial' markers and are then described as incidents of 'racism'.

For example, Dave A. talked about stereotyping the 'Asian girls', and Mohamed mentioned that the children said to him, 'Oh, you were picking on the Muslims for a certain thing'². In that context it was the children themselves who chose membership to a religious group as a way of identifying a group of children who they felt were

² Mohamed was himself 'mixed-race' and was born in the North of England. He told me something of his history but did not mention whether he was a practising Muslim. It is hard to know whether the children

being 'racially discriminated' against, and Mohamed reported it as alleged 'racism'. He was one of the few teachers who commented on needing to pay close attention to the way he spoke about 'race' because children may not understand the terms and what he was trying to discuss. He said they were likely to report inaccurately to their parents and it would result in 'all sorts of problems'. He did not do this from the position that they were too young to understand, rather that it was his responsibility to lead discussions in such a way as to avoid confusion.

The images in school books may be limited, but not one of the teachers described them as ethnocentric, Eurocentric or monocultural. Only two women teachers in the London schools took an active part in deconstructing 'whiteness' and nationalism in the classroom. This may be part of the fear of difficulty with the terms that both Pat at Fairsham and Mohamed at Christie have talked about (above) and how it places them as teachers in vulnerable positions with parents. It will be shown in the next section that the wariness over terms is as salient in discussion with children and the caution on the part of some teachers to tackle issues head on, is seen as complacency by the children.

8.5 Children's Perceptions of School Policy and Practice: 'The Teachers Don't Do Anything'.

From what the teachers said, I was expecting the children to have very clear ideas about what racism was and how the school dealt with it. I also thought that they would be able to discuss what they thought the terms meant to them. In practice, of course, things were a little more complicated! The children had numerous ways of bringing in other subjects and subsuming them under the subject of racism. They also tended to shift their positions slightly as the interviews progressed and they began to trust me and allow themselves to talk more freely. They did this in particular when talking about the way the school dealt with these issues.

8.5.1 Racism or Bullying?

There was a wide variation in the levels of understanding that children had about the term 'race'. In fact, this was often completely separated conceptually from the term

'read' him as ethnicised in any way, but I believe that he is showing here a de-raced position as a

'racism'. When I first asked the children whether they knew about 'race' and what it meant they often didn't know or like Larry, at Fairsham (section 4.4), thought it was something to do with running. Yet if I asked them about 'racism', children in multiethnic schools knew that they had heard of the term, and had some idea of how it was applied. It was commonly described it as someone 'cussing you ' about your 'colour' or your country or your religion. But they would often digress straight away into talking about more general bullying and name-calling and it would be very hard to tell if they felt that there was a difference or whether it was in fact because they considered it to be a part of the same problem.

Troyna and Hatcher (1992) did some work in mainly-white primary schools about the meaning of racist name-calling. They found that there were occasions when children claimed to use the names as means of wounding that were not necessarily intended to be racist. In my own research, I asked the children about the name-calling and found that they often did it when they lost their temper, and that it was something that they knew would hurt. These 'hot situations' were when the children used the names in both what the authors would call 'strategic fashion' (ibid. chapter 5), knowing it would hurt a child, and 'non-strategic fashion' when they may regret the fact that it just 'slipped out' in anger (ibid.) However, I would question why it was that the children chose these forms of abuse over others.

Just as the authors above found in their study, all children would also use other forms of name calling like 'skinny b-i-t-c-h'. However, in nearly all cases, the white children did not suffer from as much 'racist' name calling as children from minority ethnic groups with dark skin. More importantly, black, South Asian and Pacific Asian children who may have worn glasses or had weight 'problems' were never solely identified by these aspects of their appearance; it was always to do with skin colour, or culture or ethnicity as represented by clothing or speech etc. The black, South Asian and Pacific Asian children were also able to situate themselves in their wider communities by talking about racism that they and/or family members had experienced. There was never any confusion as to whether *this* was racism; it was always accurately and horribly relayed to me. The white children never relayed similar stories, which is not to suggest that they had never noted interracial conflict out of school time, but they certainly did not feel that it was important enough to tell me about it with in these discussions.

Mohamed (Year 4 teacher) at Christie school in London noted that the ways in which children swore at each other were not constant but changed over time. One of the most common forms of abuse at that time was to 'cuss your mum'. One child told me they say, 'You've got so many dogs in your house you don't know which one is your mother'. Another became embroiled in trying to explain a particularly 'naughty' form of abuse without saying anything 'bad' and managed, 'Your colour is so dumb that you get into bed with a girl and you do horrid thing with your mum'. These kinds of insults often got abbreviated to being simply 'Your Mum'. Many other insults were specifically gendered, such as the use of 'bitch' or 'tart'. In conjunction with a racial element these insults were the most likely to result in incidents turning into physical conflicts.

Another disturbing and unexpected finding was the level of inter-racial abuse. Beatrice, a white girl in Year 4 in Christie, said that 'coloured people called white people rubbish'. Later, others in her group identified a black boy who would call the Turkish children 'Turkish delight', and said that black, white and Turkish children would use the term 'Paki' to describe anyone of South Asian descent, and that some children are 'mean to Muslims'. One white boy in Year 4 of a London school told me he got called names about his name. When I asked whether that was racism he said, 'no'. Another white boy also in Year 4 (Barnlea) said a South Asian boy was name-calling:

- Suki He calls you racist things?
Jay Yeah, he says that my Mum is a bitch and all that
Suki Is that racism?
Jay He cusses the colour of my skin and all that
Suki Does he?
Jay He says that whites are idiots and poofs

There are a number of possible separate and interconnected reasons for these behaviours, and I would argue that one of them is the need for the children who are perceived to be 'racially other' to try and respond to conflict in the language of the playground. In this way they assert their own identities as non-white, but do it by devaluing 'whiteness'. This extract above also reveals the way in which white masculinities were more likely to be positioned as homosexual than any other 'racialised' group (see Thomas in Chapter 5).

The conversation below took place between a group of Year 4 children in Barnlea, the most racially and ethnically diverse school in the study. The group contained James (white boy), Dumesh (Bengali boy), Judd (white boy) Dasta (black African girl) and Aron (black African/Caribbean boy):

Suki	Have you heard of racism?
James	Yes
Suki	What does it mean?
James	When people cuss your family or your blood
Suki	Your blood?
James	Yeah or your skin colour [points to his cheek]
Aron	Long time ago people got racism to the blacks and they called them rude name, but I forgot
Dumesh	I know, 'nigger'

[They talk about the nursery rhyme that contains the line 'catch a nigger by his toe']

Dumesh	And sometimes because I'm a Muslim they think...
Judd	They call you a Paki/
Dumesh	They call me a Paki
Dasta	What are Pakis?
Dumesh	People who come from Pakistan, I'm Bengali
Aron	They think it's a funny name
Dumesh	[wrinkles up his nose in disgust] Pakis... uuggghhh!

This shows the same kind of need to assert 'racial' and national and ethnic clarity in one's identity as Meli explained (see 5.6). James pointed to the fact that it is to do with family and 'blood', as Meli did, and also Dumesh who was born in England. Dumesh also placed a premium upon being Bengali as opposed to the ultimate insult – being 'Paki'. It is clear that the children in this study did understand that racial abuse was significantly more wounding than any other type. The white children may not have held generally racist beliefs, but in choosing this kind of abuse over any other possible, I believe they were repeating and understanding the hegemonic discourses of racial superiority as Troyna and Hatcher (op.cit) suggested. They did so by asserting the centrality of whiteness as a 'racial' identity from which some children were excluded.

8.5.2 Appearance and Acceptability

Some of the main themes of the research came to the forefront very early on in these discussions and can be seen in the extracts in the previous section with reference to family, homosexuality, skin colour, religion and nationality and what are appropriate heterosexual relationships. As the previous chapters have shown these form the basis of the discursive register children use to speak themselves.

The children in this study:

- intersperse their talk about 'race' with that of 'culture' and 'religion' and nationality
- use these discourses to both construct themselves and others within their school relationships
- are acutely aware of themselves as gendered beings
- are beginning to manipulate discourses about gender and how that is sexualised
- Suggest that much of their understanding of 'race' is about appearance and it is upon that basis that they make discriminatory choices.

Making derogatory remarks about appearance was one of the main things that children used in name-calling. Even if the name was not directly about appearance it would have been connected to it, as in the example given above. Being called a 'Paki' is a derogatory remark that is applied to anyone of an indeterminate 'racial type'. Therefore the young boy with brown skin was called a 'Paki', regardless of whether that was accurate or not. It is a generic term of racial abuse for someone who is 'non-white'. For children of 'mixed-race' it is often used in the absence of being able to place them in to a singular 'correct' racial category. In most cases children were ascribed membership to a recognised group, that was referred to in a derogatory fashion. In the case of the black and South Asian children referring to the white children as 'paper' and 'ghosts', the tables cannot be neatly turned.

As Troyna and Hatcher (1992) found, the white children did not feel as badly about those comments as did the black children. The use of that kind of abuse served only to show that these were acknowledged and everyday ways of 'cussing out'. It also showed a greater degree of 'racial' pride on the part of the black children who are also asserting a collective social identity through the use of exclusive forms of colour coding. Turkish and Roma children were usually identified by name or language, and

religion in the case of those who were Muslim. In order for insults to be levelled at them the abusers required knowledge of their background and could not solely rely on appearance. In most cases the abuse did contain an element of 'racism' as the children understood it, although it was in fact often a form of xenophobia, that is it was a fear or disapproval of another national identity, or 'foreigner'. On these occasions it was *not* appearance that guided the choices of insults

8.5.3 Telling Tales.

The children all started by saying that the school did nothing about racism, with the exception of Barnlea which had a concerted campaign against bullying going on at the time I was there. Even so the first port of call when reporting incidents were the playground supervisors who were often content to separate children. The children in that school did confirm that the Head-teacher, Gina, talked to them about racism in assemblies and some of the children recalled one or two class teachers, one a black Caribbean woman, the other a Greek Cypriot woman talking in class.

In Christie, the children were on the whole convinced that the teachers did not really 'care' about bullying yet they too knew that the subject of 'racism' came up in assemblies. They seemed to be able to separate the two areas, which at other times they could not. I have many examples of interviews in which children start by talking about 'cussing your skin' and move on to include other non-racialised forms of abuse. They were also aware across the Years that the Year 6 teacher, Evi, would be tough on the subject, as would the Head, but they thought things would have to be really bad to go through to them. Again they could name the playground attendants who they thought were the least likely to deal with incidents which the children may have thought were quite serious.

At Fairsham, there was a similar story; key individuals amongst members of staff who the children felt they could trust to take both sides of a story and look into incidents and take them further. The children at this school said that when they reported incidents they were often told to 'stop telling tales' or 'just stop playing together' until they could 'be nice to each other'. I thought that this showed a shocking disregard for the concerns of the children until I caught myself telling two children in one of the groups I was interviewing to stop talking to each other if all they were going to do was argue!

However, the criticism of the telling of tales and the separation of quarrelling children were reported in all of the schools. On this basis the children felt that they could not go to teachers for help, with the exception of the named one or two in each school. They felt particularly aggrieved by this when the incidents involved repeat offenders. They could all name particular culprits in their respective schools.

The differences between the schools arose from location. At Fairsham, the children did not seem to ever report racism directly to staff. Children could recall racist name-calling, but claimed it had never been reported. It seemed that as the children who were picked on were in such a minority they did not take the matters further. One child at Fairsham, who was a boy in Year 5 of mixed-race (Josh; mother Celie), had a classmate inform staff who then informed his parents when he was being racially abused. Most of the children talked about particular individuals being picked on because of what I would describe as class differences. They may also have been white and British, but they came from lower class families than the majority of the children and had less money, poorer housing and clothes, and in one case had a mother who 'looked nasty' and 'talked loudly and not very nicely'.

Most of the children wanted to be able to report incidents and talk about them. They had some faith in the individual members of staff but on the whole felt that the school was lacking in support for their concerns. The race of the member of staff who they perceived as supportive did not matter, but did feature in accounts of teacher racism (see also Mirza 1995:125)

8.5.4 'Mixed-Race' Positions in Schools.

During the first discussions and group interviews with children they began to reveal their own ideas about their racial identities. I was also observing children in the classroom and playground. These interviews were explored in detail in Chapter 5. In this section I will outline my observation of the interplay between the different groups of children, some of whom had already been identified by the teachers as being of 'mixed-race'. It was also true that as the teachers had suggested, general discussions on the meanings of 'race' and racism allowed children to informally bring up their own family and personal circumstances where they had multiethnic backgrounds.

In this extract from an interview with Marita (Year 4, Barnlea, white English/black Trinidadian), her own reading of the racial abuse that she has received is that it is 'incorrect' that she cannot be insulted by the name 'nigger' as it does not fit with her own positioning:

- S They've called you horrible names? Like what?
M Nigger.
S Where do they call you that?
M Called me out in the playground
S At school?
M Mmhm
S What do you say to that?
M I just walk away
S Umm what do you think when they say that?
M That they don't know anything.
S Yeah?
M Firstly, I'm not fully black, and there's nothing, there's no reason to be racist, 'cos we're all the same, but we've just got different colour skin
S And how **would** you describe yourself, you say you're not fully black so how would you describe yourself?
M Mixed-race

Marita knew what racism was, and that she should 'ignore it' despite the fact that she said it made her really angry. She managed to diffuse her anger by making the racism 'wrong' for two interconnected reasons. Firstly, 'niggers' are black, and she is not 'fully black'. Secondly, we're all the same under the skin – blackness doesn't mean anything anyway. This second position is one I heard many times from teachers and parents who passed it on to children. What it does, of course, is leave in tact the notion of (authentic) 'blackness'.

I never heard the children use racism in any of their informal talk. I did observe at Christie, that as Mohamed the Year 4 teacher, and Dave A., the Year 5 teacher had said, the children tended to play within their own 'racial and ethnic groupings'. The children who were 'mixed-race' clearly had to make their friendship choices based up on a variety of things that included the need to make an alliance to a group which

would have a predominance of one ethnic type. Both the boys and the girls in Years 5 and 6 chose to identify with the black children, with one exception. Hannah was of white British/black Caribbean heritage and she was always on the edge of the friendship groups. She had a best friend called Marina who was Portuguese and the two of them tended to be off on their own. Thomas was called 'gay' because he was 'vain'. But this particular form of abuse was usually reserved for 'white' people. He was however characterised as black by the majority of the school including the teachers. At Christie as with Fairsham, children were overwhelmingly separated by gender in their choice of friends to play with in the playground.

It was reported to me at later stages of the research that the 'mixed-race' children would bear the brunt of the same kinds of insults that were levelled at the other black children. However, they were also likely to be discriminated against by the black children and South Asian children. So Jenny was often called 'Yellow face' because her ancestry was black Caribbean, Indian and Chinese. Dinease's mother told me that her daughter had had an argument with some of her friends who would not let her be a member of the gang which they were setting up because she was too white.

At Barnlea similar stories were reported. Just as Meli had been called a 'white b-i-t-c-h' by her black peers, so her white peers had at times, shunned her. Meli was part of a group of black girls who were a loosely formed network that was often re-aligning. Yet her *best* friend was a white girl called Maisie. At Barnlea, in the lower years, the friendship groups were more likely to be formed by mixtures of children, both in terms of gender and 'racial' identity. Yet the same type of insults were used during arguments. Kilde (Year 4 Barnlea) was both black *and* Turkish Delight³. What characterises these forms of racialised abuse is their basis in skin colour.

The children's acceptance into certain friendship groups is based upon shared cultural currency, yet their exclusion was often based upon their appearance. So the girls such as Dinease and Jenny (Christie) were part of the group of African–Caribbean girls who organised the dance group and talked about their relationships and Thomas (Christie) was a member of the most powerful gang of 'bad boys' who were mostly black (Connolly 1998).

³ Although the latter is often based upon nationality it is also Kilde suggested alluding to what she called her 'olive skin'

At Fairsham the children from minority ethnic groups were so few that they had no choice but to join in with the dominant cultural and ethnic group who were white and middle class. Those children who had suffered racist abuse were loath to tell me, yet they all had. It was their friends and classmates who told me about the name-calling, which again was based on appearance: Facial features, skin colour and so on.

In each of the schools, the racist name calling appeared to be coupled with an attempt to exclude a child from a particular social group, sometimes friendship groups and at other times from the hegemonic cultural group, white or black. The basis for doing this is to assert difference and gain social status and power over the child. In doing so children are forging particular identities, and the children of 'mixed-race' are most likely to be subtly shifting position in relation to the groups they are attached to and in opposition or relation to.

8. 6 Conclusions.

The schools in the study could be seen to be very different in terms of their location and the 'racial' and ethnic make-up of the children attending. The differences in locations did not however reflect a neat split in ideas and policies held by staff within the schools. There were both similarities and differences in the ways in which teachers talked about their feelings about dealing with anti-racist and multicultural issues in the school. Despite differing levels of engagement with the subject, in all cases there was recognition of its importance and the need for a 'whole school approach'. Teachers seemed to favour either reactive or more proactive methods of dealing with 'race' and in talking about this used different terms for different spheres of school experience. The terms 'racism' and 'anti-racism' are used to describe interaction within interpersonal relationships between children and to a lesser extent children and teachers. 'Multiculturalism' was more usually used to refer to a more abstract concept of social harmony that is aspired to and that is reflected in schemes of work and curriculum materials, representation and ideas.

The London schools had such a large variety of students that as Millie the Section 11 Teacher Leader suggested 'the white children are the minority really'. Nonetheless, they are aware that in the broader social context they are the majority, and understand the social power dynamics of that privilege within the school context. Children were aware of 'racism' as a concept at the level of 'cussing out' each other

and some of the white children felt that they had also been the recipients of 'racist' abuse. Troyna and Hatcher (1995) differentiate between 'racist' and 'racial' abuse and I believe this may be a useful way of characterising some interactions, whilst being cautious about how they may reinforce or obscure power relationships.

The children of Fairsham School were in a mainly-white demographic context and had access to a slightly different set of discourses about the meaning of racism. It was the only school in which the discourse of 'sending them back to their own country' came up. In the London schools the children had a much more sophisticated awareness of potential for multiple identifications to home and country. Such a phrase was not mentioned as a form of abuse. In all of the schools, racist abuse was seen as being the thing that hurt the most. During interviews the children who admitted to using racist language were *aware of its power*, and racist or inter-racial name-calling would often lead to fighting amongst the boys. This would support the notion of 'strategic' use of these terms (Troyna and Hatcher 1995); children are aware that using 'racism' causes pain and results in fights. The fact that children chose this form of name-calling over others implies that there is indeed a special awareness of 'race' as a major factor in day to day life, although not *all* relationships are based around this, and it does not exclude other types of arguing and abuse.

Children *are* learning about 'race' in school, but multiple positionalities such as 'mixed-race' are missing from common discourses of 'race', ethnicity and culture in school policies, curricula, activities and practices. The subject of 'mixed-race' arises in classes in an informal way if it is spoken of at all. Interethnic/intercultural and international positions are usually discussed as a method of understanding abstract concepts about 'race', or possibly religion. They are also used when religious, historical and geographical materials fail to recognise multiplicity. Personal histories are ways of making the ideas more relevant or real. Several of the staff (mostly women) had either volunteered or had been asked to reveal personal biographical details, and children then began talking about themselves and their families. Children are being given *informal* information about how to talk about these positions, and it takes the usual form of listing one's national affiliations. Again this shows the lack of available language and the importance of using family histories when trying to form partial identifications.

In the next chapter, I will summarise the findings of these research processes and show the ways in which they support or challenge some of the existing theoretical

positions and empirical studies that were first outlined in Chapter 2 and Chapter 3. The failing school policy in the area of multiculturalism in the schools visited, is only one such area of concern. I believe that this research has implications for family studies, 'race', ethnicity and cultural studies as well as ongoing concerns within feminism about the continued hegemony of the acquisition of normative gendered positions.

Chapter 9: Conclusions

I'd say, if anyone asked me about me or my ancestors - if they said, 'write it down', I'd say 'My mum's ancestors were "whities", my dad's ancestors were African slaves, and my Gran's ancestors were Jewish.'

Thomas (Christie)

9.1 Introduction

In this chapter I will review the findings of the empirical research and re-visit the theoretical issues that were outlined in the first three chapters. In order to investigate gendered, 'mixed-race' identities, I interrogated the ways in which current academic and political terms and accounts of 'race' and racism were being understood by children. I also explored how such discourses were being mediated through school and familial contexts; I was particularly interested in the ways in which discourses of 'home' and 'family' were being used in identifications, and how children were reading 'race' in images in popular culture.

This thesis, utilising a feminist theoretical framework, was conceived as a critical project, if not quite an emancipatory piece of research. These are rather grand labels for a very small piece of work, nonetheless, I believe that in some ways they are appropriate. In using auto/biographical accounts of children's own identifications I have shown that the children are often quite consciously engaged in such liberatory projects for themselves. The children's critical reading of 'race' within popular culture, and the verbal and visual narratives provided by children and adults in families and schools has provided some unique insights into the ways in which the children in this study are beginning to construct their *own* versions of politicised selves. In this descriptive form the thesis shows the ways in which children are actively negotiating their complex, incomplete and dynamic subjective positions in educational and familial locations. At an analytical level, it reinforces a commitment to critical empirical research in this area.

The research findings will be used to critique the existing writings on ethnicity, and 'mixed-race' and to offer suggestions for future work on the formation of gendered, 'mixed-race' identities. In the first section, I will show that the terms and phrases that were interrogated (as above) have little if any meaning or use for the 'ordinary' lived experiences of those who took part in the research. Using popular culture with

children provided a way to explore such meanings, and revealed the confusions surrounding the terms and their appropriateness to their situations. In the second section, I will review the ways in which using popular culture revealed another significant and unexpected finding; children were reading and re-reading (in peer groups), classed, 'raced' and hetero/sexualised positions in popular culture. They did this in ways that are, for the most part, free of an adult 'visual politics'. They are working with images to produce meanings that reconcile conflict and difference within their lives.

The research with families showed that patterns of parenting and child-care continue to be the gendered responsibility of mothers, but that there is no clear indication that the gender and 'race' of the mother has *specific meaning* for the racialisation of the child in any *inevitable* fashion. More importantly, the *classed identifications* of the family seem to have a major impact on the way in which culture and racialisation are perceived within families, and are thus represented to children.

As shown in chapter 8, teachers in schools are showing commitment to discourses of multiculturalism and anti-racism, but such discourses are currently inadequate for the task of including the complex subject positions held by pupils. Much of what the children understand from their teachers is limited to static and confining notions of mono-cultural and ethnic positions. The fourth section of this chapter contains a consideration of how the anti-racist project in the schools should progress.

In the final section I will draw to a conclusion and suggest some of the ways in which imagined futures of children and families may help us in our attempts to dismantle hegemonic discourses of racialisation and a 'racial' politics of singularity in societies.

9.2 Meanings of 'Race', Ethnicity and Culture: Spaces for Hybridity?

One of the intentions of this research was to explore the ways in which the terminologies of the academy were being received in the schools and homes of those of 'mixed-race'. I particularly wanted to explore the ways in which children and parents were making sense of the three main terms that describe 'racial difference': 'race', ethnicity and culture. This aspect of the research provided common findings across locations.

The first and most obvious has been mentioned above (chapter 8); whatever the rhetoric of inclusive education (although that is mostly aimed at 'special needs'), is it is not being translated into school practice and policy. Teachers were not happy using language that incorporated critiques of hegemonic whiteness, nor that which challenged the Euro- and ethnocentric materials they had in schools. Understanding of multiculturalism was still imbued with a very simplistic ideal of 'tolerance' of 'other' cultures, which inadvertently reinforced very static and hierarchical notions of what culture meant. None of the staff at the schools were using the term 'intercultural education', not even in Barnlea where the staff were more aware of changing practices and policies. The term ethnicity was used with some hesitation by a few teachers, and for many of parents it had negative connotations because of its connection with the term 'minority', and therefore with subordinate status. The one parent (Mala) who was happy to use ethnicity, replaced the word 'race' with 'ethnic', and did so with considered qualifications of what she meant by doing this.

What this shows is that there is a gap between the ways in which academics are attempting to push theories forward and the ways in which new language and its meanings are being used in schools and homes. This is most graphically shown in the way that children still routinely use the words 'half-caste', and that they are not always aware of the pejorative nature of the term. The language of the academy is often bound by finite notions of 'groups', or it moves in to the realms of the abstract, and becomes meaningless to many. We need to find a way to move through this double bind. At a paper Ann Phoenix (1996) gave about her work with Barbara Tizard, I vividly remember an angry woman asking why she had to give up the term 'mixed-race' and use 'mixed-parentage', 'just because academics said so'. This was of course an interpretation of the work presented that was not shared by all present, but nonetheless it was a powerful exchange.

I am reminded of this incident when I see syncretism, creolisation, hybridity, *metis/se*, *griot/te* and so on used in texts and think of how children are speaking in playgrounds, and writing and performing their own bodily texts. How can such terms be useful analytically or theoretically when they are so culturally specific, and the realities to which they refer, infinitely diverse? Children have often resorted to visual signs that are contained within their speech acts, that is the 'image' of others that they are interested in and talk about. This happens when the language they need is absent, or simply does not exist *for them*.

Children negotiate complexity with images and bodies in ways that circumvent the need for specialist language. As I said in Chapter 2, all these (racialised) terms are problematic from a theoretical perspective. Children revealed the gaps in the *concepts* that are needed to inform language production, and also the failure of the *language* to inform the concepts. The children negotiate and live with these un-livable positions, whilst exploring the discursive limits placed upon them. My respondents, informal contacts and those of Katz (1996) all share the concern with naming, but will use 'mixed' *because* of its vagueness. Many of the concerns I had with terminologies in Ifekwunigwe's (2000) work (2.5.2), still hold true after considering the findings of my own research.

Firstly, I am not convinced that the reclamation of *metis/se*, *metissage* and *griot/te*, or the appropriation of them from the Senegalese contexts she details, are relevant or appropriate to the bustle of the inner city primary school (Ifekwunigwe: 18). Ifekwunigwe speaks from a particular classed, intellectual/theoretical position which I do not think would be recognisable to the majority of respondents in my own work. I believe that for different racial/ethnic groupings the phrases would sit less easily. Her terms are again founded in the sure knowledge of a connection to an African diaspora, which some in my research simply do not feel. I do not believe such terms can be opened out to include *all* individuals with some kind of 'mixed' heritage.

Secondly, I do not share her concern that 'hierarchies' (pp 43) within 'mixed-race' require the appellations she gives them. Whilst I agree that an umbrella term 'mixed-race' *could* result in a 'tripartite system' within a Black/White paradigm (ibid:180), there are so many other variations of multiplicity that challenge these ideas in differing temporal and spatial locations. I believe that we should be attempting further deconstruction of 'mixed-race' *alongside, through and by* deconstruction of existing (binaried) racialisations, to begin to move away from talking 'race' and to interrogate the specifics of inequities. To begin to develop categories of 'hierarchies of difference' within 'mixed-race' is to repeat the mistakes of the past - and to miss the point.

Ifekwunigwe's work is based on the belief that the 'one drop rule' is of equal validity and importance to the UK and the USA, a position with which I strongly disagree. The social, economic and legislative differences between the two countries are so great as to have resulted in very different notions of 'blackness' and nationality. The representation of interracial relationships in mass media reflects the differing levels of

'tolerance' for such liaisons, with few examples in the USA until the last five years. The positions of 'mixed-race' and 'half-caste' have been deployed successfully for many years in Britain in ways in which it is not possible in the USA. As I have shown, many children and adults (teachers and parents) claimed 'mixed' positions.

For Ifekwunigwe, who worked with white mothers and 'black daughters' (as she believed they are forced to become through the one drop rule), the process of realising that one is black rather than white is what she calls 'Additive Blackness'. Women who once thought that they were white, learn that they are black, a fact from which they cannot escape. These are stories told which follow archetypal narrative forms. Indeed, Ifekwunigwe's work is classically that of the case study approach as outlined by Polkinghorne 1995: 20–21). In particular, the instant of life changing recognition of blackness is a typical 'epiphanic moment'. An epiphany as reworked from Denzin (1989) is:

'... a major transactional moment that disrupts the flow of ordinary life and makes problematic the usual definitions given to the facets of one's world'

(Barone 1995: 71)

'Becoming black' or *negriscence* is 'coming to terms with ones blackness' (ibid: 186), a process which is dependent on a starting point that is not just not-blackness, but is whiteness. Although the parents I interviewed have noted changes in children's perceptions they did not claim 'epiphanic moments' of recognition. Neither have any of the adults that I have spoken too. There *were* other moments that were similar, and involve racialisation, but they were not conceptualised as a '*moment of recognition*'.

Ifekwunigwe is suggesting that Additive Blackness is the result of compulsory blackness, or the 'forces of bi-racialization' at work in society. However, I believe that her work implies that there *is* a process of Cognitive Ebonisation. Ifekwunigwe claims many of her respondents with white mothers needed "Other-mothers", black cultural surrogate sisters, and male/African daughters' (ibid 174). What this implies is that blackness is cultural and learnt. The argument about deconstructing 'race', refuting colourism, and developing differing levels of 'mixed-raceness' is now destabilised through recognition of a *learnt identification* with black culture that can *only be taught* by a 'black' person. This is essentialising, simplistic and teleological. I believe that this account does not consider the changes in multiethnic environments

and cultural translation in urban spaces where there is cultural plurality. It is a partial account that seems to reinforce the theorising she seeks to challenge and has been further challenged by my findings as will be detailed below.

My current research has confirmed the findings of my earlier research; that 'mixed-race' individuals do not inhabit spaces of in-between-ness as suggested by Bhabha (1990b). I believe we occupy multi-layered positionalities at the same time. Post-structuralist theories of materialisation of bodies and hybridity provide possibilities for understanding this 'mixedness'.

Despite earlier reservations with her use of specialist language, I believe that the work of Sarah Ahmed (1999) may offer some interesting readings of the behaviour of the children, as they explore the presentation of themselves as racialised and gendered (see chapter 5). Her reading of skin colour as part of hybrid positions is innovative and has (limited) applicability to analysis of this data. Through positioning 'passing' as a two way process for hybrid bodies, Ahmed suggests that:

Significantly, with the shifts in form of racism towards a fetishising of the cultural rather than biological difference (Balibar 1991: 22), passing for black becomes an increasingly powerful individual and national phantasy. Passing for black is enabled by adopting the elements of black culture, a process of adoption which then fixes and freezes those elements as indicators of what it means to be black

(Ahmed 1999: 100)

This may be 'real' for many of the children; white, Chinese, 'mixed', but it has not touched the lives of many in Fairsham, and I wonder how much of this theorising comes from existing in particular (academic) locations. Ahmed's work currently explores a black/white binary, and the challenge is how it may inform our understanding of other Others. Her work does expand 'the force of mastery as beyond the limitations of the singular face' (ibid 101), but I am left feeling that this face then becomes the Other in opposition to the original singular.

For the children in this study, presenting differing racialised faces and bodies was an on-going and skilled process. It required a form of 'self regulation' that revealed the influence of both agency and constraint. The children are involved in developing the technologies of the self in ways that deploy aspects of racialisation, heterosexuality,

class and gender through discourses of attractiveness, aspirations and ability. Throughout all of this, their use of (popular) culture was central.

9.3 Racialisation, Hetero/sexuality, Popular Culture and Peer Relations

Early in the research process, the importance of peer relations to discourses of racialisation became clear. Using children's readings of images of famous people that they recognised, provided an extremely rich account of their daily interactions and concerns. Children of this age are reading the popular in groups and using images of others to mediate their understandings of sex and sexuality. In both same sex and mixed friendship groups at all three schools in all the years, learning to be a 'girl' and 'boy' and acting appropriately for those labels were the basis upon which other discourses of 'race', class and ability were worked through. Gender could be understood in many different ways, and appropriate and therefore attractive (in both moral and physical terms), gender behaviour could encompass a range of styles in both the personal and technology-mediated national and 'global' spheres.

Through these practices, children confirmed the importance of the work of theorists such as Hall (1974), Johnson (1983) and van Zoonen (1996). Meaning is produced in and by negotiation with an array of psychic and social activities. For the children at this age, 'race' was less salient in their 'reading' of attractiveness and desirability than their perceived ideas about *sexual* attractiveness. This is not to say that 'race' was not operating at some unconscious level, but this was not the way the children *chose* to make sense of their readings.

The methodologies incorporating theories of narrative, genre and discourse provided tools for investigating the lived realities, perceptions and reported experiences of the children in the study. However, it was obvious from the beginning of the research that the children were limited by the discourses they encountered that forced them to think through who they are, where they come from, and importantly 'what they are becoming', in the language of 'race' and 'ethnicity'. Using images, bodies and music helped them to form shared social spaces in which such difficulties could be resolved. The children used verbal and visual dexterity in order to do this, show how they used generic forms of speech to both explore and transgress discursive boundaries.

Bakhtin has suggested:

Our repertoire of oral (and written) genres is rich. We use them confidently and skilfully *in practice*, and it is quite possible for us not to even suspect their existence *in theory*.

(Bakhtin 1986:78)

Children did not express frustration at a lack of expertise in language use, and challenged generic forms of learning using their genealogies in skilled ways. They were often aware of the ways in which they did this. However, it was in their visual 'speech acts' that they did this most unselfconsciously, using visual signs in media to examine 'raced' heterosexuality through discourses of attractiveness.

By utilising shared un-raced, rather than de-raced, readings the children were engaged in developing dynamic forms of cultural production. These retained elements of their own particular cultural heritages, but increasingly, as a way of utilising an omnicultural social space that facilitated acquisition of a new form of social capital in the school. These forms are also undoubtedly filtering back into homes and in negotiation with 'tradition', continue to evolve. Peer relationships were an essential part of these processes with both likes and dislikes – the love/loathe discourse - facilitating dynamic relationships. Children in all the schools rejected hegemonic ideals that privilege whiteness in discourses of beauty and attractiveness. The *fear* of inter-racial liaisons is less evident amongst these children than writers such as Young (1996) suggest is present in adults, and this requires us to rethink the ways in which Othering processes stress both desire *and fear* that *inevitably* result in 'racist' psychologies (Young 1996). Such theories do not allow us room for developing de-racialised, or rather, post-racialised positions, as racist antagonisms are the only possible outcome of 'normal' psychic development. Interracial families who took part in this research showed that they were attempting to circumvent such inevitabilities.

9.4 Families and Identifications: Gender, Ethnicity and Class

Ilan Katz (1996) has suggested that the 'race' of the father is most significant to 'racial identity' in children with 'mixed-parentage'. My own research suggests a far more complex relationship between gender and 'race' in the identification processes

of young children. My findings show that the most important aspects of the day to day care of young children continue to fall to mothers, supporting the bulk of (feminist) sociological analyses (see Delphy and Leonard 1992). In consequence, the everyday cultural practices that produce *dynamic and evolving cultural forms* in (late) modern homes are overwhelmingly the responsibility of the *mother in negotiation with the child*. Creating families through invitations to 'special occasions' which may or may not have a specific ethnic origin, are also the domain of mothers. Fathers are more involved in the pleasurable aspects of child-rearing, the 'treats' and games, and this is reflected in the ways children talk about fathers (Marita pp156)

However, as children are heavily invested in developing *gendered* identities at this age, (visual) gender identifications with parents came to the fore in their conversations. I believe that this plays a part in the development of 'racial' identifications in families, even when for boys, fathers are absent. Mothers making a particular contribution to children's racialisation awareness *can* circumvent this 'lack of a father' (see Ifekwunigwe 2000). Children at this age may *first* think through gendering processes, but they are also aware of the importance of 'racial' identities. In short, there was no simple relationship between proximity to a parent and 'racial' identity. So in Sima's case (pp 131) he was aware of both factors at once. Children imagined themselves to be 'like' a parent of the same gender. But they also read 'race' as 'colour'. If children perceived themselves as visually 'of colour', they could claim to 'look like' the parent they perceived as 'racially Other', regardless of gender. So Lola (pp131) was not 'Chinese looking' enough to make her 'look like' and 'racially identify' with her mother.

Children of both black and white mothers, in all locations and across classes identified as 'mixed-race'. Children of both black and white mothers also identified as black. None of the children from Malaysian, Polynesian, Chinese or Turkish backgrounds identified *solely* with that part of their heritage. All of these factors raise questions for those who have argued against transracial adoption, by simplistically suggesting that if a child 'is' 'mixed-race' they should be referred to as 'black' (see Gaber and Aldridge 1994). What seems to be most important is the way in which parents (mothers) communicate with children about their identities. In this process, location and parental history and parental connections to 'diaspora' or an imagined 'home' play a crucial part for the negotiation of ethnic identification. One of the most

interesting findings, and one that I had not anticipated to see so clearly, was the role that social class played in ethnicised discourses of families¹.

In Fairsham, all the parents interviewed had relatively privileged backgrounds, and were to all intents and purposes 'middle-class'. The form that this took was ostensibly a 'white' English middle-class position, or at least it did not involve a specifically 'non-white' element at the level of the everyday. Special occasions were more likely to be the time for connecting to diverse cultural practices. Three of the four parents at Fairsham were themselves 'mixed-race', but had very Anglicised upbringings which no doubt influenced the way they raised their children. In successful jobs and comfortable houses, it struck me that they had been accepted into the 'white' middle classes and they strove to maintain that for their children. This was seen as strategically necessary for them in a racist society in which they (and in some cases, their parents) had suffered racism. For children of 'mixed-race' in these households, class seems to act as a kind of 'buffer' against racism.

These mothers and one father (at Fairsham) had not completely lost touch with their own particular versions of belonging to a 'diaspora', but for at least three of them it did not play a significant part in their day-to-day negotiations of life as 'ethnicised' beings. For those who had mono-racial, migrant parents there were feelings of conflict over past and future identifications for themselves and for successive generations; a need to keep in touch with 'roots' but look to the future in an adopted homeland. For these families, social and spatial geography continued to work with these processes as the children were brought up in a 'white, middle class' environment.

None of the parents or teachers used the term diaspora, but I believe that what many are describing is something close to Brah's 'diaspora space'. However, I continue to question the politics of using the term. Brah argues that:

the concept of diaspora - as distinct from the trajectory of specific or historical or contemporary diasporas such as African, Jewish or Asian [emphasis added] - should be understood as an ensemble of investigate technologies

¹ Because this aspect became increasingly important as the work progressed, it is an area which would benefit from further analysis at a later stage.

for genealogical analysis of the relationality within and between different diasporic formations

(Brah 1996: 241)

Here she attempts to show the separation of 'concept' from 'history', which I find problematic. However, as a framework for analysis it useful for understanding the parents' narratives. Through the use of an analytical matrix consisting of a *concept* of 'diaspora', 'border', and 'the politics of location' (Brah 1996:242 original emphasis), parents revealed highly individualised 'diasporic formations'. Using the phrase diasporic formations seems a less controversial way of expressing the same kinds of concerns with the multi-faceted nature of identifications, than even that of 'diaspora space'.

For mothers of children in the London schools there were also varying degrees of separation from their own parents and 'homes'. These were negotiated in differing ways depending on life experience. Again it is not possible to generalise. For the working class mothers, the immediate concern for their children was that they were accepted for who they were. Some black, working class mothers, recognised 'mixed blood'. Sheila (black, working class) was one such case. She said that she was a black woman, but her children were mixed. Sheila did not care what 'colour' people were; it did not matter. What mattered was whether they were good people. As colour 'did not matter', her children could be 'mixed-race' because they did not *need* to be black. But for Andrea (black, middle-class) who had suffered a lot of discrimination in her own upbringing, there was no room for her son (Sima) to think of himself as 'mixed', and he did describe himself as black (see 5.6 above).

Mrs. Farmer claimed the same discourse as Sheila from a *white* working class position. She also called upon the discourses of self-improvement, achievement and aspirations for her children. So Tito and Talia also had to be 'proud of who they are' (section 3.2), and she wanted them to 'do well' and 'be happy'. This echoed middle class aspirations of the type expressed by parents in Fairsham (as above). However, middle class, (white) Lesley, who had 'improved' herself from her Scottish working class roots, had through her job as a public sector worker in a multicultural borough of London, received the 'politics of singularity' and taught her son that he should be black (Jacob section 5.5).

The ways in which mothers are invested in their children's futures was guided by interpretations of their own cultural capital and their life histories. Reay suggests:

For most of the middle-class mothers, parental involvement [with schooling] was much more an issue of continuity with the past than disjuncture. It was a question of doing what one's mother did rather than, for most of the working-class mothers, doing something different.

(Reay 1998:58)

In my own research, the ethnic and geographic history meant that the intergenerational change was more profound for the middle-class mothers. Celie, Darcy, Chok G and Andrea did not have a straight-forward connection to a middle-class history. They were the first generation of women to become middle-class in their families and they had done so despite their position as 'racial outsiders' in the educational stakes. They were not all migrants, but even for those born here, racialisation meant that they had 'the wrong cultural capital' (ibid.). They wanted to maintain this newly found and fragile respectability, without losing sight of the fact that the low-status attached to racialisation would make this harder for their children. They invested in cultural practices (see above) which were in fact contrary to this project and balanced 'tradition' with 'respectability' by using cultural plurality in dynamic ways (see 6.4.1; 6.5.1)

The working class mothers (all classified as 'white' or 'black') were invested in bettering and changing their children's possibilities through education. In this way they differed from the mothers in Reay's sample, of whom she said

Most of the middle-class mothers were working with a very different form of maternal intervention [from the working class mothers] which prioritised academic achievement over individual volition

(ibid. 93)

My own work suggests that the working-class mothers were equally invested in academic achievement and saw it as the best way for children to escape working-classness. I believe this is because of the intricacies of lives that had such diverse cultural and ethnic inputs as well as classed positions. Their readings of acceptability are mediated not through allegiance to one particular social or cultural position, e.g. black African diaspora, but through the understanding of their children both belonging *and* not-belonging to a *singular* position. There is personal politics in these accounts that suggest a form of *dis*-identification with working-classness that Skeggs

(1997) reports. Paradoxically these are tied to strong *identifications* with cultural and ethnic positions that are often automatically positioned as working-class, simply by being *outside* of the boundaries of the acceptable face of white middle classness.

The parents have all shown that they place a high premium on educational achievement as a way of their children earning social acceptability and an unspoken classed mobility. In the next section I will consider the ways in which ethnicity and 'racism', as discourses of inclusion and exclusion to social acceptability, were negotiated by teachers and children in the schools.

9. 5 Teaching and Learning 'Race' in Schools

The children were all invested in exploring their racialised positioning within school contexts. Here, children encounter 'official' versions of what it means to be a 'racialised' being. Not all the children were 'racialised' in those discourses however, the ones who were white remained centralised and unspoken - 'unraced', with their whiteness the norm against which 'coloured' others were constructed in opposition and in subordination. In countering these hegemonic texts, the children of colour and minority ethnic status (in multiethnic schools) were actively constructing 'whiteness' in similar ways to their own understandings of blackness and other Othernesses. In conflict, they use terms of abuse which construct themselves and their peers within the same imaginary racialised frameworks. These were attempts to eradicate the hierarchies of 'race' in the schools and simultaneously a way of claiming status. This was not happening in the mainly white school in this study, which would support the argument that 'white superiority' is hegemonic. It forms a discourse that operates at macro- and micro-political levels and is not negotiated in an environment in which it is not challenged by the presence of (enough) disruptive 'Others'. The children of minority status in the mainly-white school were engaged in living out overtly 'de-raced' identities within the school context. It was hard to judge whether this was a strategic decision or whether it was simply a consequence of the dominance of white, middle-class English codes through which the school operated.

Children felt that the schools provided them with a very limited form of understanding of what 'racism' was, and through that, what 'race' meant. However, interestingly, though they may have understood the concept of 'racism', the majority did not know that it came from the word 'race' and that it implied ways of categorising people.

Larry (see section 4.4 above) was just one of many children who struggled with the term. This suggests that teachers were so worried about using direct language about these subjects, and the potential for attempts to do so bringing accusations of racism upon themselves or further confusion (Pat 8.3), that they rarely discussed the origins of terms in ways that were meaningful for the children. Both teachers and children recognised that children routinely used a variety of different ethnic and cultural differences as forms of abuse. Teachers remained engaged with eradicating 'racism' in the schools from a variety of positions and Barnlea appeared to be the most successful at tackling it across the whole school.

These comments about the teachers and schools are, as I stated at the beginning of Chapter 8, not intended to provide an analysis of the *schools* as such. They do, however, provide us with an idea of how teachers received ideas about multiculturalism and passed them on to the children. Across all the schools the ways in which discussions of 'race' and racism went hand in hand served to limit the ways in which children could explore such issues, by reinvoking static and singular views of ethnicity and culture. Teachers were also aware that there are failings with these sanctioned views of a multicultural Shangri-La. The reality of the pressures under which the teachers teach compelled them to look somewhat superficially at the ways in which multiculturalism was experienced by those in their classes. Despite these constraints, in all cases children with multiethnic backgrounds would disrupt the available discursive spaces and create opportunities for multiplicity and fluidity in expression. The way they did this was by incorporating their own biographical details and narratives of 'home' and 'family' into the educational contexts.

I cannot make a detailed comment upon the policies in the schools but suggest that many of the findings support the excellent contribution to this area made by David Gillborn (1995). The London schools show how the demographic profile of pupils is important but not the main factor in dealing with issues of 'race'. What is more important is the 'sensitive management' of issues that involve 'core groups' of staff 'working on' and 'working in' other staff members to facilitate change (ibid.180). The Head at Barnlea was not positioned as 'sensitive' by the staff, but she had successfully begun the process of whole school change by mobilising groups of staff who were beginning to work with parents and children on the issues. For reasons of managerial instability, such a move had been slower to happen at Christie, but seemed to be beginning. Fairsham teachers showed a different dynamic in action, with some pockets of active resistance to any concept of change which used 'anti-

racism' rather than the discourse of 'equal opportunities'. I would suggest that this school would need a great deal of preliminary work introducing anti-racist teaching principles, before it could be effectively worked through policies and practices.

My work has shown the urgent need for anti-racist teaching to involve recognition of multiplicity. Not multiple, singular models of 'race' and ethnicity, but perhaps, (and I use the term with reluctance) some notion of 'hybridity'. By deconstructing whiteness as well as minority racialised positions we may begin to dismantle the hierarchies of 'race'. It is hard to imagine how this may be achieved without *beginning* the 'racialisation' of whiteness which I believe would simply reinforce the same erroneous values. In attempts to tackle 'racism', Gillborn details the way in which involving 'white' students helps to allay their fears that anti-racism is automatically biased against them as a 'racial group' (ibid. 167-175). However, he also reminds us that intra-racial and racialised forms abuse need to be included in this process. In order to be effective, these processes need to centralise the links between micro and macro-political processes.

Black children in this study were using hybrid forms of modern culture to claim cultural superiority over white, Turkish, Cypriot and South Asian children. They used 'racial' insults against those groups as a way of using the power relations they know to be in existence, and a partial understanding of racism, for their own ends, and to assert a cultural and racialised identity that accrued status. The cultural hegemony in multiethnic primary schools is black British, and it is fed by African American, global and local influences. Such complexities in cultural forms coupled with the children's cultural expertise in readings and performances in these areas will require skilled navigation on the part of teachers.

9.6 Concluding Comments: Imagined Futures.

The rhetoric of 'racism' has moved into the realms of the ethnic and the cultural, and these terms whilst not in common use with children, remain potent at a most fundamental level. 'Ethnic cleansing' is nothing short of genocide; 'tradition' and 'cultural integrity' linked to fundamentalism, nationalism and a form of 'cultural imperialism'. Despite these developments, there have still been few attempts at untangling what it means to be a person who occupies a multi-ethnic/multiracial

position. As I have shown above, the sheer complexity of post-structuralist analyses of ethnicity, 'race' and culture as they are constituted within and by discourses of family, nation, gender, generation, class, dis/ability and sexuality makes it an extremely daunting task.

The children who took part in this research are at a point of change in their lives. They are in the process of recognising the meaning of the 'politics of race' as a discourse to which they have access. In some cases they are deploying this discourse to construct positionalities with which they are happy. In other cases they are operationalising discourses of 'family' and 'home' to form connections with the spiritual or spatial; with kin and with places. These are also political practices that challenge the constraints to their own identities imposed by hegemonic whiteness. The children all managed to work with the fact that their identities were in process and contextualising and contingent. In conversation with me, they all revealed that racism had played a part in their lives and had to some extent constructed their understanding of their own positions. This is not to imply that the children were simply reactive. They deployed any number of re/sources in order to develop satisfactory positions. In doing so they explored genealogies of belonging.

The ways in which children may retain or relinquish some of the positions they currently hold can only be imagined. If other social perspectives on identity developments apply, they will be under a new new set of stresses when they move to secondary school and then again as they reach a more mature adolescence. These and many other possible and probable life changes will undoubtedly have profound effects on all aspects of their lives. These major changes are more likely to include generic narratives of change of the epiphanic type. As Denzin suggests:

[epiphanies] leave their marks on people's lives ... alters and shapes the meanings persons give to themselves and their life projects. Having had these experiences, the person is never quite the same

(Denzin 1989: 15)

At the time of the interviews children still seemed resistant to the dominant discourses of 'race' that forced them to choose singular positions. For those who develop an increasing awareness of the need for political organising, they may feel obligated to move into a position of singularity, at least for 'political' purposes. Until

we broaden our language and conceptualisations I can see no way in which they can avoid this, and in doing so the circuit of production will continue.

Racialisation is an active process that at the moment rests in the hands of the most powerful in society, and the 'naturalness' of whiteness would appear to be hegemonic. But I also believe that the naturalness of 'blackness' is hidden within many academic texts and policies which purport to talk about 'culture'. I started this research with a recognition of the power of the politics of 'race' and the need for 'strategic essentialism' on occasion. I am ending (this stage of) it with a much more unsteady grasp on the reason for this. Like Paul Gilroy (1999: 34) who talks of the fear of 'being 'out' about [his] own radically racial deconstructive aspirations', I too wonder how such moves will be received, but I feel myself moving inexorably closer to that position. This research has shown that for many young children 'race' is not always the most salient factor in their lives. It has shown that there are multiple meanings to the word 'racism' and what they really are concerned about is 'colourism', culturism and nationalism. How children look matters, how they talk, dress, pray, eat and make music matters, and 'where they come from' matters. Most importantly sex/gender matters. Developing appropriate heterosexualised behaviours runs through all of the above. In the future the children will 'learn' the 'correct' ways of being social beings and use 'race' more often. They will be/come increasingly racialised. At this stage of the research process I would like to change the title to this thesis. It might read something like 'Forming coloured, ethnicized, classed, heterosexed gendered identities through narratives of belonging'. It is not very snappy but much nearer to what I believe is beginning to emerge from this project.

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Appendix A

Group Interviews

Children were invited to sit in a circle. They knew they were being videotaped.

Opening with myself to make them feel at ease, they went round identifying themselves and a little about their family histories.

General Questions from Images in Popular Culture.

Do you recognise anyone? Who are they? Who do you like? Why do you like them? Where do they come from? Can you tell where they come from by looking at them?

About Mixed-race, 'Race' and Racism

Do you know anything about Scary Spice? Do you know where she comes from or how she describes herself? Have you heard of mixed-race? What does it mean? Have you heard of racism? Where, how from, whom? Do you know of it in the school? Is it a problem? Is it dealt with? And so on.

Questions for Children in Individual Interviews.

To facilitate the discussion with individual children, further discussion tools were prepared as extracts from books which touch upon the subject of families - especially multi-ethnic families or those separated by geographic location, or belief or prejudice but they were not used.

1 Who lives in your house? Do you think of them as your family?	This is ascertain who are likely to be the main sources of information to children in the home, and a recognition that these may not be traditional Western 'nuclear family' structures
2 Who do you spend most time with ? What kinds of things do you do all together in the house/ outside of the house? What do you talk about?	<p>This question is used to find out what cultural processes are important to the development of identities?</p> <p>Are they gendered?</p> <p>i.e. chores - cooking cleaning, shopping for food</p> <p>leisure - park, sport, watching TV, going to cinema, going on holiday</p> <p>religious - going to place for worship</p> <p>cultural - special occasions, birthdays, feast days etc.</p>
3 Do you get on especially well with anyone in your family?	This follows to ascertain how much of the above are actually seen a 'duties'.
4 Where do the rest of your family live? Do you see them? What does your family think about 'home'?	This is particularly relevant to children of minority ethnic groups who still have family living overseas who the other family members talk about as being central to who is family. E.g. talking about going home to the Caribbean to retire.
5 Do people ever ask you 'where do you come from'? If so what do you say?	<p>Classic question for children of ambiguous appearance, but also those with markers of 'difference' such as accent or clothing.</p> <p>Forces children to decide on an identity for that particular response.</p>

6 Have people ever talked to you about your colour? If so what did they say, both good and bad things.	More specifically about 'race' and 'racial ambiguity'. Also often used by children to categorise, but also as racism. e.g. colour of 'dog shit'
7 Have people ever made comments about racism? In school? What do the teachers say? At home? What do your family say?	What are children actually being taught about 'race' when they are being asked to deal with racism?
8 What do you think about these discussions of 'racism'?	How do the children make sense of these lessons and utilise them in their everyday life?

Questions for Class Teachers and Headteachers.

1. Do you have an anti-racist policy in the school? How effective do you think it is at the moment? How much attention are you able to give to that issue? Are there things that you think are particularly important about it?
2. Do you have a policy on 'multi-culturalism'?
3. In what ways are these policies applied to your everyday practice?
4. Is this a sensitive area? Do parents or governors/parents/unions want to give it a lot of attention?

5. Do you ever talk about 'mixed-race' or inter-ethnic positions?

6. Do the children talk about these terms and their differences?

7. Do you talk about whiteness? As a 'racial' identity? or National identity?

Questions for Home/ School Liaison Officer

Is the school anti-racist policy part of your remit?

Do you have any comments about 'race' in relation to your job?

Do you have contact with 'mixed-race' families and if so do you feel that they are a special case in this community?

Questions for SENCOs

As above.

Questions for Families.

1. Why choose this photograph?

Who is in it? What are the events surrounding it? What kind of memories does it evoke.

Any disagreements between family members present will be explored in greater detail.

2. How important is 'home' to you? As a place? As a concept?

3. How important is 'family' to you?

4. Do you have any special 'family traditions' or 'family stories'.

5. What do the terms 'race', culture and ethnicity mean to you?
6. Do you discuss them as a family? Do you discuss them with certain members of the family?

General information was asked about the histories of the families and the interviews were not heavily structured.

Supplementary Questions for Children.

Who do you think looks good or has good style? Male/female?

Who do you think has a nice personality? Male/Female?

Who would you like to look like?

Who do you look like most in your family?

What would you like to do/be if free to choose?

What would you least like to do/be?

Appendix B - Interview Schedule.

CHRISTIE SCHOOL	No. of Groups	No. of Children	Individual Interviews m-r inter-ethnic	
YEAR 6	6	25	4	1
YEAR 5	5	20	3	
YEAR 4	5	21	3	
Mixed/Yr 3	3	8	1	
TOTAL	19	74	11	1

BARNLEA SCHOOL	No. of Groups	No. of Children	Individual Interviews m-r multi-eth	
YEAR 6	5	24	2	1
YEAR 5	5	27	6	3
YEAR 4	5	26	4	
Mixed/Other	1(yr4) 1(yr5)	8	3	
TOTAL	16	85	15	4

FAIRSHAM SCHOOL	No. of Groups	No. of Children	Individual Interviews	
			m-r	multi-eth
YEAR 6	7	29	1	
YEAR 5	7 +1	31	3	6
YEAR 4	8	31	2	2
Mixed/Other	2 (yr5)	13		
TOTAL	26	104	6	8

Total 'Mixed-race' children (m-r) = 33

Total 'multi-ethnic' (inter-eth) = 13

Parents of children interviewed

Christie – Sheila (mother of Dinease) Katy (mother of Hannah), Mrs.O (mother of Kallie) (short informal) I

Barnlea- Parse (mother of Dile), Lena (mother of Alice), Lesley (mother of Jacob), Mr and Mrs. G (parents of Lola) MD (in her role as SENCo mother of Marita), Andrea (mother of Sima, Mrs.Farmer (Margaret – mother of Tito and Talia), Mala (mother of Meli)

Fairsham – Ceile (mother of Jake), Darcy (mother of Ella and Kieran), Penny and Nigel (parents of Kyle)

All mothers apart from Mr. G and Nigel

Total = 12 full interviews with 14 parents, one with parent talking as SENCo and parent, and one short informal chat.

Teachers Interviewed

Christie School in London

Acting Head

SENCo

Section 11 Teacher Leader

Class Teachers x 4

Head of Afterschool Clubs

Total = 8

Barnlea School in London

Head

Deputy

SENCo

Home School Liaison

Equal Opportunities Co-ordinator

Class Teachers – 6

Section 11 support for Years 4 and 5

Total = 12

Fairsham School in Kent

Head

Deputy Head

SENCo

Class Teachers x 4

Total = 7

