

Power and Racialisation: Exploring the Childhood and Educational Experiences of Four Mixed Young People (Who Identify as Having One Black and One White Parent)

Dr Aisha Mclean

Educational Psychologist, Sheffield Educational Psychology Service, Sheffield

Dr Antony Williams

Programme Director, University of Sheffield

This Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis study aims to explore the experiences and understandings of childhood and education of four young people who identify as having a mixed Black and White heritage. The research utilises the theoretical positions of Critical Race Theory and recognises intersectionality. Participants took part in semi-structured interviews, and analysis led to the proposal of a series of “higher-order” superordinate themes across participants. These themes included “The significance of culture/heritage”, “Mixedness as challenging constructions”, “The significance of intersectionality”, “Blackness as problematic”, “Mixedness as an identity”, “Racialised perceptions in the development of self-identity” and “The power of Educational Experience”. Implications for practice are explored through Reflecting on Educational Psychology Practice and considering how educational psychology practice might develop through these accounts with reference to specific cultural and ethnic competencies in the British Psychological Society “Standards for the accreditation of Educational Psychology Training” (British Psychological Society, 2019).

“Race”:

“..neither totally like sexual difference..nor purely symbolical...of purely cultural and historical origin,..but it produces extra-discursive effects” (Sheshadri-Crooks, 2000, p. 4).

“Racialisation”:

“The extension of racial meaning to a previously racially unclassified relationship, social practice, or group” (Omi & Winant, 1986, p. 111).

Introduction

Anon “So where are you from?”

Me “Err ... I’m from Sheffield.”

Anon “No, where are you really from? Like, where are your parents from?”

Me “Well, my dad’s from Nottingham and my mum’s from Milton Keynes, so ... ”

Anon “No, where are your family from?”

Me “Well, most of my family are from various parts of the UK. [pause] But my grandparents on my dad’s side are from Jamaica, if that’s what you mean?”

Anon “Exactly! I love the Caribbean! You can bring some Caribbean spirit to the course!”

The above serves as an account of an encounter which took place on the first day of the Educational Psychology Doctorate. The conversation, although not word for word; taken from memory, took place with a guest tutor on the course; a professional, highly qualified and experienced Educational Psychologist, a senior member of the profession. It was not the first time such an encounter was experienced, and likely will not be the last. However, the context within which this encounter took place served as particularly jarring and put in motion a personal level of reflection and questioning around the relationship between Educational Psychology, Educational Psychologists, “race” and racialisation, which this article aims to explore.

Through an exploration of the experiences of four young people (YP) who self-identified as “mixed Black and White” (see further discussion of terminology in Methodology below), this piece aims to explore experiences in childhood and education, and in so doing, explore the ways in which Educational Psychology and Educational Psychologists relate to and understand issues of race and racialisation in a professional context.

Drawing on Critical Race Theory (CRT) (Crenshaw et al., 1995), the article explores power as a tool for subjugation, and the creation of lived experience of those who are subjugated. Narratives and ideologies of racialisation, particularly in the field of education, are explored through drawing on theories of epistemological oppression, and alternative understandings and identities of the individuals involved in the research are explored in order to question and create alterna-

tive narratives and realities in relation to fixedness and race.

As a framework for reflecting on professional practice, the 'Standards for the Accreditation of Educational Psychology Training in England, Northern Ireland and Wales' (British Psychological Society, 2019) are drawn upon. The Standards provide a set of competencies that all Trainee Educational Psychologists work towards and must show evidence of having proficiency in as part of their training. Using the Standards as a framework for reflecting on the practice of Educational Psychologists in relation to their encounters with CYP who identify as mixed, as well as other ethnic minorities, offers a robust platform for reflection and discussion.

Methodology and Procedure

Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA) was used to explore the content of four semi-structured interviews. A purposive sample was used to recruit four young people aged eighteen and over. It was important to ensure that the selection process allowed for participants to decide whether they fitted into the research category of "mixed Black and White". Calling for individuals who identified as having "one Black and one White parent" as opposed to using language such as "mixed-race" or "dual-heritage" in information about the research aimed to overcome this problem. Whilst this approach is not without its drawbacks, it allowed for individual interpretation by potential participants. Each participant chose their own pseudonym, which they are referred to throughout this text. The details of participants are given in Table 1 below.

Analysis of each individual interview led to the eventual creation of "higher-order themes" (see Table 2) which linked thematically across participants. Through analysis, common themes were brought together across all four participants to highlight areas of importance in relation to experiences of mixedness and racialisation. Individual participant experiences may converge or diverge within the same theme; however, the overarching themes do bring the experiences together in some way.

The text that follows aims to explore the experiences of the participants. Theoretical perspectives are drawn upon to support interpretation of experiences from a psychological perspective and highlight areas where further reflection may support sensitive practice in regard to fixedness and racialisation.

Analysis

The Significance of Culture/Heritage

Sativa: "Because, you know, you get to choose your own culture in London" (873)

"I was building up an idea of myself as a person, not as a culture" (804)

Table 1

Key Details of the Participants

<i>Sativa</i>	<i>Aged 20 at the time of interview. Sativa was from, and living in, North West London, and worked full time having studied for a short time at college after leaving school.</i>
<i>Henry</i>	<i>Aged 22 at the time of interview and living at his family home in Nottingham following recent graduation from university.</i>
<i>Emmy</i>	<i>Aged 23 at the time of interview, living in her family home in Derbyshire. Emmy had returned home having completed two years of her three-year undergraduate degree and was not planning to return to university.</i>
<i>Tunde</i>	<i>Aged 22 at the time of interview, living in a house share in Manchester. Tunde had graduated from university the previous year and was working in a bar.</i>

Table 2

Higher-Order Themes

Higher-order themes

The Significance of Culture/Heritage.
 Mixedness as Challenging Constructions.
 The Significance of Intersectionality.
 Blackness as Problematic.
 Mixedness as an Identity.
 Racialised Perceptions in the Development of Self-identity.
 The power of Educational Experience.

Tunde: "I feel like, understanding where you come from, is a big thing. In order to like, understand yourself and like, progress in life." (471–473)

Henry: "We know about culture and we know who we are." (121–122)

The theme of culture and/or heritage presented as significant for all participants in a variety of ways. Often, culture or heritage served as an "object" (e.g., Laplanche & Pontalis, 1980) which participants used to define themselves against. At times, for example with Henry, culture served as the embodiment of his sense of self. At others, for example with

Sativa, culture and heritage served as something to reject in light of an independent sense of self. Interestingly, racialised elements of culture and heritage were commonplace regardless of identification or dis-identification. Regardless of the pattern of dis- or identification, the significance of culture and heritage appears to be formative of a sense of self for many.

Moss (2006) uses the idea of “racial object maps” to define the unconscious schema that individuals hold in relation to what “being” a certain race means. The author argues that whilst experience creates nuance in individual racial object maps, given the nature of many common experiences within society, culture, and history (Gaztambide, 2014); often there is a recognisable “constellation” of characteristics which create levels of closeness and distance along the lines of culture, race, and ethnicity. This “racial object mapping” could be seen as psychological mechanisms associated with the creations of Whiteness and Blackness.

Participants can be seen to be using their own “racial object maps”, shaped by their experiences, as a means of placing themselves and others at some point within the constellation of what it means to be Black, White, or other (for example, in this case, mixed). Simultaneously, placing themselves and others along these lines draws on and reinforces participants’ racialised ideologies of Blackness, Whiteness, and non-Whiteness. Interestingly, whilst there seems to be some interrelationship between the constellations of Black and Blackness, mixed (in this case at least, although this could also relate to other “others”, such as Asian etc.) and non-Whiteness and multicultural, there is no such interlinking with Whiteness; it is always talked about as the “other” by participants, even as they try to distance themselves from Blackness, as Sativa does (illustrated in Figure 1 below).

Figure 1 represents a racial object mapping whereby both being White, and Whiteness in and of itself are stand-alone. From a Fanonian and CRT perspective, this could relate to the structures of society which have built, and continue to build, a representation of Whiteness and White people as something “pure” in the face of all other non-White “races” (Fanon, 1961/1963, 1952/1967; Gillborn, 2008; Leonardo, 2011). Thus, the participants’ racial object mapping reflects this “special othering” of Whiteness, which places it not only as outside of, but also above, participants’ “non-White” racial object maps.

Mixedness as Challenging Constructions

Sativa: “Then you start to question, well why do I feel like I should act this way, in front of my White family and act this way in front of my Black family.” (552–554)

“It annoys me that I wouldn’t call myself White, but I would call myself Black [pause] because

[pause] that means I’m defining Black more than I’m defining White.” (627–629)

Tunde: “A lot of people have just, they don’t really understand about what mixed-race is.” (52–53)

Emmy: “But I don’t like it, when you’re, on the tick forms, and it asks you to put your ethnicity, and you have to put, White and Black British.” (404–406)

Mixedness was a prominent feature of many of the participants’ understandings of race and culture. They talked about it in varying degrees throughout their interviews. Participants moved from expressing positive and day-to-day experiences and understandings of mixedness, to talking about the phenomena as challenging to live with and make sense of. Zadie Smith (Smith, 2008; Walters, 2008) talks about this paradox between the day-to-day normality, and the remarkable difficulty of mixedness — as a phenomenon with which our monoracial constructions of race cannot make sense of or fully comprehend — in her lecture and subsequent essay “Speaking in Tongues”. It is this paradox that stands at the forefront of the theme “mixedness” as challenging constructions.

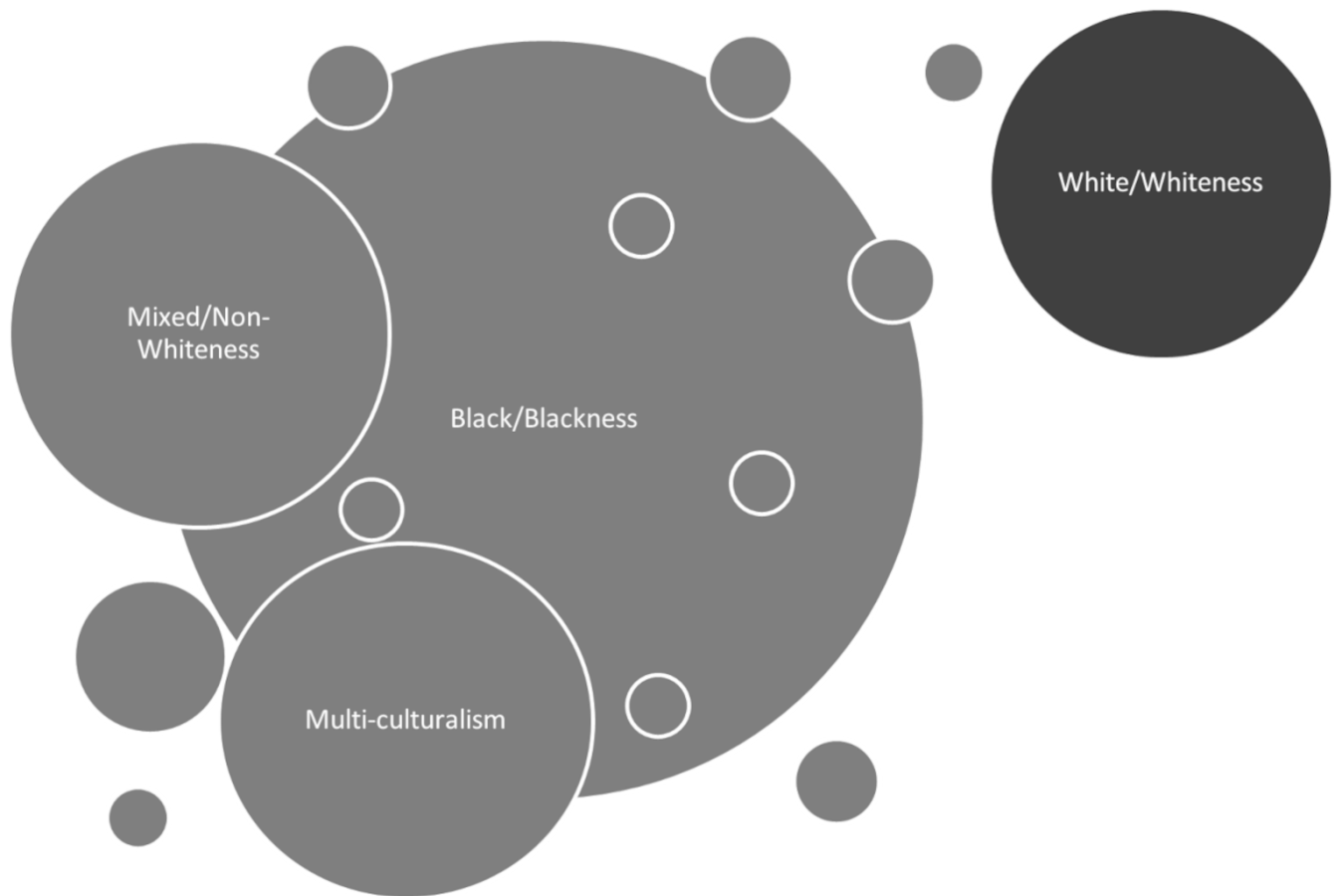
Sativa presents mixedness as a construction and as problematic for her at times; presenting her with an obstacle of thought which she cannot move beyond. For others, the obstacle of understanding mixedness relates to the understandings of others, experienced by participants through the recreation of such understandings in the lived, day-to-day experiences of being mixed.

Rousseau Anderson (2014) discusses this through the idea of “structural determinism”; “the idea that our system, by reason of its structure and vocabulary, cannot redress certain types of wrong” (p. 26). The author’s model suggests that structural determinism creates a framework through which the thought processes and understandings of individuals are filtered. In this case, mixedness presents a problem due to the constructions of race as discrete, Black and White, and either-or, based on historical social processes such as colonialism (Fanon, 1961/1963, 1952/1967; Rousseau Anderson, 2014).

Mixedness presents such a level of problem because its existence disturbs the structural determinism not only of society but also of the inner worlds of the participants and those they interact with. To reflect back on Smith’s (Smith, 2008; Walters, 2008) paradox, whilst participants’ existence as mixed is simply “normal” in the lived sense, their very mixedness can also be incompatible with their inner racialised world, where individuals exist as Black or White.

Figure 1

The Constellation of Black/Blackness, Mixed/Non-Whiteness, Multiculturalism in Relation to White/Whiteness



The Significance of Intersectionality

Sativa: “Mixed-race things as well, these two Black girls, three Black girls, but it was like they, they would say things like about my hair and they would just kind of leave me out and stuff.” (383–385)

Tunde: “The way that the Black and mixed-race guys are with women there [pause] erm, like, I don’t necessarily see it like ah like, they, they’re doing it right.” (791–793)

“I almost felt like with some of the girls once they knew I was mixed-race they were like, kind of like, trying it a bit more [laughter] it’s weird.” (829–831)

“being mixed-race it was like, you kind of, knew that you could get girls, again, again that weird sort of [pause] using.” (892–893)

Emmy: “The boys that I went to school with

they just didn’t find me, pretty, and I don’t know whether it’s because, whether race does play a part in that, because, I was one of the only, Black girls in school [pause] or I, I don’t know. Because, I guess, every teenage girl just wants a boyfriend, but, no, I didn’t have one.” (267–272)

Intersectionality refers to the intersection between various states of being or experiences (Crenshaw et al., 1995). In the case of the participants’ experiences, much of their talk gives an insight into the intersections between racialised experiences and gendered experiences. Oftentimes, the participants expressed their experiences of race and gender through reflections of masculinity and femininity. This frequently related to sexualised relationships or representations of themselves and of others.

Femininity is both fetishised and called into question through the experiences of female participants Sativa and Emmy. Neither participants’ experience seems to have led to a positive sense of femininity. Indeed, both female partic-

ipants' femininity appears to be either called into question or fetishised as a direct comparison to monoracial female peers across both Black and White groups. Tate (2007) argues that when Black beauty standards include both Black and mixed females, mixedness can be viewed as an "inauthenticity" of female Blackness; mixedness and its potential appearance become an outward signal of a rejection of Blackness and its meanings.

Tate (2007) argues that this problem with elements of beauty in mixedness stems from the "lost and ungrievable Black origin" (Bell, 1999) which mixedness and its appearance embody. If interpreted from a Fanonian perspective, this unthinkable-ness may also relate to mixedness as an outward symbol of colonialism and the violent subjugation of Black people.

Whilst Tate (2007) relates this experience directly to the mixed-Black relationships of gender and beauty, a similar pattern of exchange and understandings of the nature of mixedness could arguably be seen in mixed-White relationships of femininity and beauty. Emmy, for example, discusses aspects of her femininity in relation to her White peers. Whilst the mourning of Black beauty may not be an appropriate way to frame the nature of the relationship, elements of the "unthinkable" of mixedness relate to both Black and White groups from a historical and political position (Fanon, 1961/1963, 1952/1967; Gillborn, 2008; Hall, 2007; Leonardo, 2011). In relation to her White female peers, and from a colonial perspective, Emmy's mixed femininity and the potential beauty in it seem unthinkable.

T. Sewell (1997) argues that Black masculinities become separate and distinct from White and other racialised gendered identities through the differing positionalities that boys take. T. Sewell (1997) suggests that Black masculinities are positioned in a "phallogocentric framework"; superior to White and Asian masculinities through increased levels of sexual attractiveness, style and "hardness".

Whilst this may offer some level of insight into the constructions that are leading to the formation of Black identities, it has been criticised for the narrow characterisation of Black male identity (Howard et al., 2012). Howard et al. (2012) suggest that Black male identities may often be seen in this way by others as a result of the need to maintain an image of Black maleness for the benefit of Whiteness. In this sense, the construction of black maleness becomes a form of epistemological oppression (A. Sewell, 2016). Related to this, the relationship between mixedness and masculinity cannot be answered alone through constructions of Black maleness. The experiences of Tunde and Henry give some insight into the complex layers of mixed masculinity and the internal and external mechanisms which play into this.

Tunde discusses the formation of masculinity from an interesting position. He places himself as outside of the male-female interactions of Black and mixed boys in a way

that he does not during other parts of his interview. This could be seen as an element of Fanon's (1952/1967) and Du Bois' (1903/1994) theory of being "doubled" or "double consciousness", whereby an individual is placed within two places at once; Tunde sees that he is recognised as part of the behaviours of other Black boys, and so in some ways responds accordingly, but he personally places himself as outside of this group for this behaviour. This highlights some of the complexities of racialised masculinities, whereby racialised ideas of masculinity can become a constrictive performance.

In other talk Tunde turns both away and towards the perceptions of his mixedness he encounters when he turns to it he uses it through his performance of mixed masculinity, embracing the doubling. Howard et al. (2012) argue that this embracing of a racialised masculinity relates to the disempowerment felt by minoritised males, and an attempt to reclaim some power over the constructions of maleness that have been created for them. This disempowerment is further created through Tunde's embracing of his perception, as a means by which currently dominant ideologies of Blackness are maintained through his performance, and thus acceptance, of the meaning of Blackness. This could be seen as relating to Fanon's assertion of "Black skin, White masks", whereby power remains wholly within dominant White ideology by non-White minorities through practice. Abdi (2015) summarises this eloquently when she states:

"The White masks they wear are not representative of the performance of Whiteness in order to be 'accepted' but rather the performance of Blackness, in order to reflect back what Whiteness expects to see." (p. 63)

Here, mixed masculinity reflects Blackness in the sense that it is non-White. Thus mixed masculinity becomes a hegemonic representation of Black masculinity which Tunde is both party to and the object of.

Blackness as Problematic

Sativa: "They'll always talk about kind of [different voice] Black men, like Caribbean men and like their, whatever their issues are." (290–292)

"Black male generation sometimes feel like they've been demonised. And they have been, but they can really cling on to it." (302–303)

Henry: "they see a team and it's just full of Black lads they think ah, the, people just instantly think like ah we're going to, create a fight and cause trouble." (337–339)

In the fourth theme, participants speak about Blackness in ways which draw on stereotypical notions of what "being"

Black means, thus demonstrating dominant ideologies which exist in relation to Blackness.

In Sativa's discussion of Black maleness, her recognition of the demonisation of Black men, coupled with her assertion that they "cling on to it" (line 303), demonstrates a position whereby she recognises and becomes a part of the continued construction of Blackness as problematic. Sativa's interpretation of Blackness could be seen as exemplifying power relationships and the effect on the internal psyche of individuals, thus recreating and maintaining ideologies, as discussed by Butler (1997), Fanon (1952/1967) and Althusser (1971).

Henry's position could be seen as the opposite of Sativa's, thus exemplifying the potentially unique position of mixedness; able to experience the identification with, and categorisation as a part of, the otherwise largely binary constructions of race which currently exist. Unlike Sativa, Henry positions himself and identifies as within Blackness; for example, his use of the language "*we're going to, create a fight ...*" [italics added].

In this case, Henry perceives the constructions of Blackness imposed upon his Black peers with which he identifies. This differs from Sativa in his positioning as a part of Blackness. Furthermore, Henry appears to go against this ideology of Blackness, again in opposition to Sativa's positionality. Perhaps part of the difference in Henry's response to the constructions he perceives come from his identification with Blackness. However, from a Fanonian perspective, this could lead to the position where Henry maintains the dominant ideology through his performance of it. In Fanon's (1952/1967) model, racial ideologies are internalised and maintained through "performance" by those who are placed within the categorisations. In this case, Henry's refuting of the ideology suggests that this is not the case. A possible mechanism for making sense of Henry's position comes from Harding's (1991) Standpoint Theory. Standpoint Theory posits that those in lesser positions of power may be in a better position to take an alternative epistemological position. Henry's positioning as a mixed person, who experiences categorisation within both White and Black groups, and who identifies as Black, may be uniquely well placed to allow him to avoid the acts of power that Fanon (1952/1967) describes.

Mixedness as an Identity

Emmy: "mixed-race people do have their own history" (766)

"I'm so proud now that I am mixed, I think it's great" (761–763)

Henry: "we hovered towards [laughter] the ethnic sort of group but I don't know we just always used to feel comfortable with each other." (633–635)

Gaztambide (2014) argues for a Lacanian model whereby the act of recognising the "unthinkable-ness" of mixedness brings into focus the real nature of race, as an imaginary and shifting object. Through the joint recognition of this between mixed persons, the mixed identity creates emotional containment for the emotions experienced as part of the "unthinkable"; fostering the positive sense of the mixed identity. Gaztambide (2014) argues that such experience "paves the way for a unique kind of freedom" (p. 95) from the constructions of Whiteness and Blackness. Thus, mixed experience and identity become an emotionally containing and identity-freeing experience for those who place themselves as within it.

Fisher et al. (2014) have suggested that a lack of affirmation to Blackness or Whiteness can lead to negative experiences in mixed individuals. In the authors' model, a lack of affirmation within a group contributes to difficulties in forming a sense of identity, in particular a positive sense of identity (Fisher et al., 2014).

However, the authors' theory is created from only the perspective of monoraciality; mixedness is a problem because mixed people cannot affirm to being "purely" "Black" or "White". However, the participants' experiences above suggest that affirmation is not constricted to Blackness and Whiteness; it can move beyond this in varying ways, if given the opportunity and, potentially, the right contextual environment. Consequently, the potential role for Fisher et al.'s model of affirmation is clear, but the epistemological constraints they place on constructions of Blackness and Whiteness limit the strength of the theory in exploring the ever more varied experiences of mixed individuals.

Racialised Perceptions in the Development of Self-identity

Tunde: "using like, like the 'n' word. And like I remember my Black friends saying like you can say it. And I was thinking my dad just always used to say you should never say that word." (76–79)

"My dad always said like make sure, like you always, you always know that you're mixed-race." (38–40)

I know what I'm talking about because I'm a part of it' (305)

"I felt at one point, that, like, ah these people, well they think that I'm attempting to be something I'm not." (61–63)

Emmy: "when I went to school because I was only, me and my sister and then there was a couple of others." (77–78)

"That is your life you know it's normal, but then, going to school and hearing people say, making

out that you're different, calling you a, a monkey and, you do realise that, you're not the same as everyone else." (374–376)

Henry: [discussing football team] "I was light, but they didn't acknowledge that they were like yo Henry's like us man it's, like they acknowledged it but I felt accepted, I felt a part of it and that was a massive like confidence boost for me like feeling part of something, growing up." (780–784)

Participants demonstrated various racialised perceptions of themselves by others, across their development from childhood through to young adulthood. Often, whether participants are perceived and positioned as Black, White or mixed appears to be dependent on obvious phenotypical features (for example, hair texture and skin tone) in relation to that of whom they are being perceived and positioned by. Arguably, this places participants' mixed self-identity formation across childhood as something uniquely flexible across otherwise relatively fixed racialised categories; participants experience themselves as continually "othered" by monoracial groups.

This experience reflects the notion of "doubling", first introduced by DuBois in 1903 (Du Bois, 1903/1994), and later expanded upon by Fanon (1952/1967) "in which an individual sees himself through the eyes of others and as such behaves the way others expect" (Abdi, 2015, p. 63). Du Bois (1903/1994) and Fanon (1952/1967) use this idea specifically in relation to power relations in which the self-understanding of Black people is limited through their performance of the negative ideology of Blackness.

Gaztambide (2014) argues that these experiences of varied positioning relate to assertions of power and ownership over the individual being positioned. The author states:

Depending on the context and content of the discussion, all that does not fit neatly into a very specific category of what is "White" or what is "Black" is simply exchanged and lumped together on the other side (Gaztambide, 2014, p. 93).

Thus, the current participants can be viewed as in a state of exchange between dominant racialised groups, as a means of defining what is and is not Black and White, based on context. Gaztambide (2014) maintains that experiences of such positioning can create in those who experience it a fractured sense of racial identity, whereby an individual experiences limited affirmation of their sense of racialised self. This can be seen in Tunde's discussion, where he talks about feeling perceived as "pretending" to be Black or mixed when he is perceived and positioned as White¹.

However, Gaztambide (2014) reasons that such experiences may not always be negative. He argues that this position, which gives rise to a fractured sense of racial identity, is actually a state that others with less racial ambiguity take time to understand, or never do. The author contends that ambiguous, or, in this case, mixed experiences of racialised perception and positioning can be seen as contributing towards a more flexible sense of racial identity. This in itself allows for a greater appreciation of the self without the confines of racialisation, and the contextual nature of the process of racialisation (Gaztambide, 2014).

Thus, from Gaztambide's perspective, the childhood experiences of the participants may well have served to develop within them a fractured sense of racialised identity. Importantly, however, such a racialised identity should not be viewed negatively. Instead, according to Gaztambide (2014), this reflects race as a wholly idealistic construction created based on the needs of society, as opposed to an epistemological truth which should hold true meaning as to who a person is. Participants could be seen as in a position of greater individual freedom through their development of a non-binary racialised identity, which has been, rather ironically, shaped through the highly racialised ideologies which they have been party to.

The power of Educational Experience

Sativa: "I would always s- I always say mixed, and I always say, it's like if I'm talking to friends sometimes I'll call myself Black, but I never call myself White like I think I only call myself Black when I know that other people see me, or know like, I think somebody sees me as Black." (614–618)

Emmy: "my mum, she used to not know how to do Black hair so she used to brush out my hair, and then it, so it was like a frizzy thing at the back of my head, and like, kids at school used to put pencils in it."

Henry: "a girl came up to me and was like you ain't, you ain't Black, you ain't Black you ain't mixed-race, like *I'm* mixed-race. And I was like what just because you're a little bit darker than me, and it was just like I don't know that made me feel like, what the hell like [pause] you should understand." (666–669)

Tunde: "Instantly I felt like, I proper struggled to fit in. And I had I had that problem throughout all of University." (210–212)

¹Due to his light skin, Tunde explained that he was often perceived and assumed to be White, when meeting people for the first time.

Emmy: “so I guess in a way, when I went to University, it was like being back [pause] during, that period of time at school.” (610–612)

Henry: “primary school was brilliant, fantastic, erm, loved it, I won an award. It was for someone who’s like caring, thoughtful erm [pause] just genuinely really nice person. . . and I felt really privileged to get that award.” (96–101)

Educational experiences were a common topic of discussion for a majority of the participants. For most, “fitting in” and feeling happy featured prominently in discussions relating to education. Thus, education appeared to relate to the formation of a positive or negative sense of whom each participant was. Oftentimes, education also appeared to relate to participants’ experiences of being the “other”.

Education appeared to act as a means through which participants’ feelings of being “other” could be normalised and celebrated, or otherwise. Worth commenting on is the fact that, throughout and across the educational experiences of the participants, they were often being “othered”. At no point did participants seem to have experiences which were not “other” or different from a “norm”. In this instance then, education seems to play a role in forming a sense of non-Whiteness in participants.

Fanon (1952/1967) posits that education as an institution acts as a form of colonialism, whereby the dominant position of Whiteness is reinforced as a “truth”, much like Althusser’s (1971) argument that power, and thus educational institutions, need to find ways of reproducing in people a submission to the rules of the established order. The participants’ experiences from a mixed perspective seem interesting in regard to this. The participants are exposed to as much of this colonisation as any other “non-White” group. It seems that in the case of the educational institution, a distinction is made in terms of Blackness and Whiteness, as opposed to Black and White. Thus, as outside of Whiteness, participants are subject to powerful messages and positions whereby achieving success within education appears to relate to the adoption of a homogenous version of “the university student”.

The colonised is elevated above its jungle status in proportion to his adoption of the mother country’s cultural standards (Fanon, 1952/1967, p. 18).

The power of this message is demonstrated through Tunde and Henry’s experiences of trying to adapt to university (lines 535–536 and 259–261), and the negative feelings that Tunde, Emmy, and Henry discuss feeling towards themselves and their university experience. Each participant demonstrates an internalisation of Whiteness and an internalisation of themselves as lesser to Whiteness demonstrated through the difficulties, they face in trying to adopt the outward signs of it.

Participants’ university experiences also demonstrate the power of the university institution in maintaining epistemological oppression. Each participant showcases experiences whereby the homogeneity of the university student is presumed, adopted, or forcibly pressed upon them.

Each participant seems disabled from contributing fully to the university systems which they are in, meaning that their contribution to constructing the knowledge and experience of university is denied. Such experiences lead participants to feel alienated and powerless to the individuals who embody this system and the system itself. Frighteningly, the power of such oppression leads to the disengagement of many of the participants. The experiences of the participants here could provide a useful point for reflection in regard to the phenomena documented by the HEFCE, which demonstrates lower levels of attainment, and higher levels of non-continuation in BAME student populations (Higher Education Funding Council for England, 2013, 2015).

However, education is also presented as important from a positive perspective by Henry. Interestingly, Henry is the only participant who presents a positive picture of an educational experience. This also relates to a primary school, as opposed to a secondary school or university experience. Interestingly, Henry discusses ways in which he felt valued as an individual, and a mixed individual, in his discussion of positive primary school experiences. This seems in direct contrast to his own and other participants’ comments about university, where homogeneity of a particular ideological construction of “the university student” appears to be the most powerful driving force. Perhaps this level of individuality which appears to be fostered through Henry’s primary experiences relates to the significant differences presented between university and primary experiences for the participants.

Reflecting on Educational Psychology Practice

Standards for Educational Psychology Training’ (British Psychological Society, 2019) “diversity and cultural difference” standard competencies offer a guide for shaping a brief exploration of the current research on Educational Psychology practice.

Standard 3.1: “Demonstrate appreciation of diversity in society and the experiences and contributions of different ethnic, socio-cultural and faith groups.”

In an increasingly “mixed” world, it is likely that EPs will have greater opportunities to work with both mixed CYP and their families, directly and indirectly. It is hoped that some of the issues presented by participants, and through interpretative phenomenological analysis, will open up a dialogue around understandings and constructions of diversity within

the field, with a particular focus on the meanings and understandings of Blackness and Whiteness that professionals hold, and the impact this might have on individuals who place themselves both within and outside of these narrow constructions.

An area for consideration which practising EPs may find useful is the continued construction of the participants within this study as Black or mixed. This highlights the lack of consideration for the part of them that *is* White — they all have a White parent. This highlights an issue of diversity in which Whiteness is excluded from it. EPs may wish to consider that an element of mixed CYPs diversity may feature Whiteness, and that this is a reflection of their lived experiences.

In this way, the current study opens up a potential dialogue on the role of epistemological oppression in the practice of Educational Psychology. Readers of this paper are given an opportunity to explore potentially differing epistemological positions to their own, and explore first-hand accounts which shed light on the level of power that epistemological oppression holds on the lived experiences of mixed people, who at times at least have experienced race and culture, and childhood and education, outside of dominant epistemological constructions of race.

Part of the role of EPs should be to co-construct meaning to a given phenomenon with those they are working with (Billington, 2000). EPs are well placed to work alongside CYP, their families and professionals to co-construct new meanings and understandings of diversity which reflect the ever more varied experiences of British communities. It is hoped that some insight into ways in which a lack of understanding of diversity beyond the “Black” and “White” can serve as limiting to CYP who identify outside of these categories, and a means by which to begin thinking about ways to move beyond these constructions for all CYP.

The role of language in shaping constructions of how we see the world is also key. Billington (2000) notes the role that EPs play in constructing narratives of individual CYP through their use of both oral and written language and communication. Consideration of language used when working with mixed CYP is of particular importance. Practising EPs should consider their own professional role in shaping the language used when working with CYP in order to develop new ways to construct their identities in ways which reflect their experiences, rather than only the racial ideologies in which we currently exist.

Standard 3.3: “Take appropriate professional action to redress power imbalances and to embed principles of anti-discriminatory and anti-oppressive practice in all professional actions.”

Issues of power are explored in detail and implicit throughout is the continued power of Whiteness in producing and maintaining racialised ideologies, and the potentially

constricting nature of these ideologies is highlighted through the experiences of the young people that took part in this study. Insight is offered into how the participants’ experiences of mixedness have been shaped through dominant ideologies. By demonstrating this process in action through the experiences of the participants, and using psychological theory to further potential understandings of this in action, it is hoped that the still very real power of Whiteness is made clear to practising Educational Psychologists. In so doing, it is hoped that those within the field will feel more able and willing to see, explore and confront these potential power imbalances in day-to-day practice.

From the position of mixedness, in particular, the demonstration of how the current participants’ experiences have been pushed and pulled on individual and institutional levels as a means of maintaining the current positions of power gives practising EPs the chance to reflect on their own experiences and practice, and what role they could and should play in disrupting similar experiences for CYP who may find themselves in the middle of this phenomenon in the future.

Of particular importance is the role of educational institutions in shaping CYP’s experiences. Participants’ experiences have demonstrated the potentially subjugating role that educational institutions may have on individuals. EPs are well placed in schools, colleges and universities to explore power imbalances and embedded oppressive practices within institutions (A. Sewell, 2016). Frehill and Dunsmuir (2015) suggest that increasing feelings of belonging to school settings can be important in supporting school engagement for ethnic minority pupils. Through practice which highlights the role of listening to and valuing alternative voices across educational institutions, EPs could contribute to the development of educational communities which foster a sense of belonging across varying CYP; in the process supporting the redress of power imbalances (Frehill & Dunsmuir, 2015).

It is also hoped that, through hearing the voices of current participants, practitioners will be able to reflect more deeply on the potential role they as individuals play in maintaining current power imbalances within educational institutions. For example, it may be useful to reflect on practitioner’s own Racialised ideologies, and the impact they have on the formation of racialised assumptions, or assumptive curiosity, when interacting with CYP along racial lines. Such radicalised assumptions may further subjugate the lived experiences of CYP, and thus should be considered more closely.

Standard 3.5: “Demonstrate knowledge and understanding of different cultural, faith and ethnic groups, and how to work with individuals from these backgrounds in professional practice.”

This standard is important for practice on two points, which converge and diverge. The experiences of the current

participants create a picture whereby mixedness moves beyond its racialised constructions based on colonial and subjugating narratives of Blackness and Whiteness. Instead, we see that the lived experience reflects normal, individual experiences of everyday life.

At the same time, however, the fact that society is so racialised also means that participants have a number of common experiences of being the subject of society's racialisation of Whiteness and Blackness. Thus, in another way, the phenomena of mixedness for these participants also presents many shared experiences which come to have a common meaning for mixedness. This is reflective of the paradox discussed by Smith (Smith, 2008; Walters, 2008) earlier in this paper.

This position is important for the practice of Educational Psychology, and related to this standard in particular, in that it demonstrates that having "knowledge and understanding of different cultural, faith and ethnic groups" is in and of itself a paradoxical position, as "knowing" how to work with a racial or cultural group is only as good as "knowing" how to work with an individual.

The current research has highlighted that what may be more important for this "knowing" to take place, is for professionals to spend time and explore the ways in which the world around individuals from different cultural, ethnic, or other backgrounds they live in, is shaping their lived experience within this culture/faith/ethnicity etc.

By coming from this perspective, "knowns" become related to history, society, politics and context, and the individual, as opposed to features of the group. Hopefully, by using such a technique, practising EPs will be able to gain a sense of what mixedness (or another form of identity) means to each individual, rather than uncritically imposing ideological constructions of mixedness (or other) onto an individual. In so doing, EPs may also begin to reflect a part of the system around CYPs whereby their radicalised identity is no longer problematised, shied away from, or over-emphasised. Such an approach could then give rise to the recognition and subsequent emotional containment of mixed experiences for individuals who identify in this way, giving their ethnic and cultural identity value and acceptance, and a place of its own, within social constructions.

Standard 3.6:

"Demonstrate knowledge and understanding of gender and sexuality and the impact of stigmatising beliefs." (3.6)

The current research has demonstrated how experiences of racialisation and gender have intersected to create unique experiences for the participants. The participants present experiences which have been interpreted as unique to the mixed experience but also relate specifically to constructions of Blackness and Whiteness. The importance of stigmatising

beliefs may also be a topic for consideration for practising EPs. One of the most noticeable points throughout the current study is the continued construction of the participants as mixed or Black. What is rarely touched upon is the participants' connection and belongingness to Whiteness — one of their parents is White.

In regard to the role of gender, sexuality, and stigmatising beliefs, it is important to recognise that many gendered constructions of the participants, which have led to negative constructions of the participants (and thus demonstrate stigmatising beliefs), come from the disavowal of their White-ness in favour of their non-Whiteness. Their non-White gendered identities are racially ideologised into often problematising and stigmatising constructions of what it means to be a non-White male or female.

An understanding and appreciation of this facet of mixedness are likely to be important for EPs when considering gender in regard to the racialisations of mixed CYP. In particular, consideration of society's ability and capacity for thinking about mixed gender from varying racial positions, reflective of the individual and the experiences and understandings they have formed, on top of an ability to consider the ways in which dominant radicalised ideologies may be impacting upon CYP and professionals (including ourselves as EPs), is important. An initial starting point for EPs may be simply to keep in mind that mixed CYP have both Black and White parentage, but that this can be limited by the ideologies within which we exist.

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