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Racism and Misrecognition

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Racism and misrecognition

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Recognition and misrecognition have been theorized as key concepts for social justice. Misrecognition involves being disrespected or labelled in ways which do not accord with a person's self-identify. Racism can be understood as a specific form of misrecognition but little research has explored this form or drawn on notions of misrecognition in the discursive psychological study of racism. Our study addresses this gap by drawing on discursive psychology and conversation analysis to examine reports of racial encounters in public spaces, where misrecognition of the targets' nationality is invoked. We demonstrate that instances of misrecognition are judged as racism through the selection and use of categories and/or category-sensitive predicates that exclude the target of them from (national) category membership to which they claim entitlement. People reporting racialized encounters and those responding to them treat the description and evaluation of such incidents sensitively, orienting to the delicacy of alleging racism. In this article, we enhance theoretical understandings of misrecognition by showing how it is constructed interactionally and demonstrate the value of notions of recognition and misrecognition for the study of racism.

I was lost in Cheltenham and I couldn't figure out where I was going, and I clearly looked lost because this woman, probably in her 40s, she stopped and asked me really slowly whether I was OK and put her thumbs up. I told her the place I was looking for. She looked surprised and told me that I spoke really good English. I was like "I am English" and she was like "Oh, I thought you were foreign because of the scarf on your head." She wasn't rude, but she just assumed I wasn't English because of the hijab.-'Katherine' (Amer, 2020, p. 539).

I think that's quite hurtful because you know, we're all born and bred in this country; we're as British as the person standing at passport control at Heathrow Airport is, you know? And it's, it's unfair, it's a form of institutional racism or discrimination. -Male, 30s, youth worker (Blackwood, Hopkins, & Reicher, 2013b, p. 247).

Recognition relates to a person's sense of who they are, having that identity approved by others, and being treated in terms they recognize. It conveys care and respect. The need, or even demand, for recognition is of great significance in our contemporary transglobal, multicultural world (Honneth, 1996; Taylor, 1992). This is because recognition is related to social justice which, for Honneth (2004, p. 358), is constituted

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by three 'principles of love, of equal treatment in law and of social esteem', and the right of individuals 'to be recognized in their needs, in their legal equality, or finally in their contributions to society'. From this perspective, misrecognition is a form of injustice. It can induce shame and rage and may function as a catalyst for collective resistance (Honneth, 1996). As illustrated in the research interview extracts above, it thwarts identity formation, generates disrespect and humiliation, and communicates that the person does not belong (Honneth, 2004). Similarly, Taylor (1992, p. 25) observes that:

> our identity is partly shaped by recognition or its absence, often by the misrecognition of others, and so a person or group of people can suffer real damage, real distortion, if the people or society around them mirror back to them a confining or demeaning or contemptible picture of themselves. Nonrecognition or misrecognition can inflict harm, can be a form of oppression, imprisoning someone in a false, distorted, and reduced mode of being.

This perspective provides an understanding of the psychological aspects of recognition and misrecognition although it originates in political theory. However, theoretical and conceptual attention has been focused on recognition; *mis*recognition and its relation to injustice and racism has received surprisingly little attention (Martineau, Meer, & Thompson, 2012). Moreover, Honneth (1996) and Taylor (1992) emphasize that recognition and misrecognition occur through interaction and dialogue, but have paid little attention to how this occurs in specific instances. Scant research has explored how instances of misrecognition are treated as racist, such as in 'public' interactions outside research interviews where its dialogical nature might be most apparent. In this paper, we examine the interactional dimensions of misrecognition and show how racism is constituted through the way people are (mis)identified and explore the utility of the concept of misrecognition for understanding racism.

Misrecognition and racism

Previous studies have explored the experience and harmful effects of misrecognition using interviews and other self-report measures. For instance, Blackwood, Hopkins, and Reicher (2013a), Blackwood et al., (2013b), Blackwood, Hopkins, and Reicher (2015) interviewed and conducted focus groups with Scottish Muslims about their interactions with authority. They examined people's experiences of misrecognition in the context of airport surveillance. Participants reported feeling upset at not having their group memberships recognized and other identities such as law-abiding citizens denied, feeling excluded from shared national identity, as well as humiliated, dehumanized, and disrespected (Blackwood et al., 2013a). Blackwood et al., (2015) examined diverse ways of responding to being misrecognized in the airports. Their participants described physical and psychological retreats, such as lowering their profile to pass through unnoticed and withholding information about themselves. Their study stressed the long-term and pernicious impact of being misrecognized, both for the individuals and for society more generally.

These studies report that British Muslims described misrecognition as discrimination as it failed to recognize how their Britishness ought to have positioned them as legitimately belonging in the United Kingdom and as undeserving of such treatment (Blackwood et al., 2013b). Practices of misrecognition limit the target's autonomy in defining the self and acting in terms of that self-definition (i.e., the ability to determine one's own sense of self). Hopkins, Botterill, Sanghera, and Arshad (2017) found that misrecognition as Muslim was

reported in a variety of contexts (school, taxis, public spaces as well as airports) by young people from a diversity of ethnic and religious minorities in Scotland. They observed that respondents often played down the misrecognition as a mistake and reported several strategies for managing such interactions; for example, using humour, clarifying identity, ignoring the comment, or withdrawing from the interaction.

These studies resonate with the observations made by political theorists about the damaging and disrespectful consequences of misrecognition, as well as presenting participants' reports of how they managed situations in which they were misrecognized. They also show that misrecognition is a commonly reported experience. Of particular interest here is the interpretation of misrecognition as racism by the researchers and participants, although it was not the focus of these studies. For example, Hopkins et al. argued that misrecognition excludes people from the national category (i.e., not British) and marks them as 'Other' based on:

> 'a racist reading of the phenotypical features of our participants—such as their skin color, facial features, hair texture, and style—that problematically (and often incorrectly) associated them with specific countries of origin and with the Islamic faith' (p. 939).

They noted that participants reported having to manage both the incorrect attribution of religious affiliation and racist assumptions associated with Islam. In one account in McNamara and Reicher's (2019) study, misrecognition was described as 'kind of racist' by one of the participants but most instances cited did not explicitly characterize misrecognition as racism.

Rawls and Duck (2017), by contrast, made direct connections with racism in their interviewed-based study of accounts of 'nonrecognition' from Black men in professional contexts in the United States. Participants recounted episodes and reoccurring behaviour whereby their professional status was ignored, discounted, or undermined, particularly by White colleagues. The authors highlighted that these behaviours failed to recognize the men's self-identities and that the Black men were not treated as legitimate holders of professional status, which constituted both interactional and structural forms of racism and injustice. They used the term 'fracturing' to describe the distorted reflection of self that comes back to self from the other. They argued that the tacit expectations that inform non-recognition constitute a form of tacit racism. However, their primary interest was in the participants' reports of 'giving up' challenging or correcting the continual non-recognition they had experienced. This 'null-response' was defensive, directed towards addressing the taboo around mentioning race and the possible accusation of 'playing the race card'.

To summarize, despite diverse disciplinary origins, the studies reviewed share several key insights that have potential to further an understanding of misrecognition as racism although to date most work in this area has not included this as a focus. Nonetheless, drawing out the implications of existing studies, we suggest, first, that misrecognition may be reported or judged as racism where it is experienced as relating to someone based on their race or ethnicity rather than their individual qualities, or where it involves exclusion from a category to which the reporter belongs (professional, national) and, second, that it is associated with upset, feeling disrespected and humiliated. We also suggest that since recognition of identity is a public act of mutual affirmation or approval done in interaction with others, misrecognition is similarly a public and interactional phenomenon.

However, research has tended to be concerned with the effects and consequences of misrecognition as social injustice rather than on how it is reported and how it elicits a

response in interaction. Moreover, the empirical studies described above are based on research interviews and other methods of self-report. As highlighted by Potter and Hepburn (2003), such methods have limitations, especially compared with 'naturalistic data' (i.e., interactions that would have occurred without intervention from the researchers). If recognition and misrecognition are to be understood as occurring through dialogue, interaction, and intersubjectively, as Honneth (1996) and Taylor (1992) argue, the analysis of such reports needs to provide insights into how misrecognition is produced in, and as, public discourse. There has been little sustained, interaction-focused study of racial misrecognition being reported and then judged as racism. Our aim is therefore to explore the public recounting of the event and the experience and contribute to this literature through focusing our study of misrecognition on instances that are treated as racist. Our empirical examination of these issues will also draw on and contribute to the discursive psychology literature on racism, and it is to this we now turn to see what it may offer the study of racial misrecognition.

Racism and discourse

There is a substantial body of discursive psychological research that examines racist discourse. This shows how racism is debated, denied, or alleged (e.g., Every & Augoustinos, 2007; Goodman, 2014; Goodman & Burke, 2010; Shrikant, 2020; van Dijk, 1997) and highlights the subtle and delicate character of reporting racism. For example, Stokoe and Edwards (2007) investigated racial insults in complaints made to a mediation service and in police interrogations. These racial insults were not reported as the most complainable thing, instead they were presented later in the complaining sequence or reproduced by the 'suspect' to counter-complain or mitigate the alleged wrongdoings. This is echoed in Stokoe and Whitehead's (2015; Stokoe, 2015; Whitehead, 2015) works on '-ism's. They demonstrated that even though some utterances are recognizably racial, they are produced or designed in ways that are 'withdrawable' (p.433, Stokoe, 2015; see also Whitehead, 2015). Stokoe (2015) thus proposes the term 'possible -ism' to illuminate how descriptions are flexibly designed to allow a range of possible uptakes – affiliation or alignment, challenge or disapproval – hence, the actions that speakers are pursuing there-and-then can be carried on or dismissed.

Other studies of the withdrawable and deniable features of 'possible-ism' have shown how tricky it is for people to launch complaints about others' actions as racism. For instance, Whitehead (2013) examined South African radio phone-in programmes and how speakers adopt racial membership categories to broach a complaint. When discussing the problems he encountered in accessing accommodation, the Black radio host said 'I've begun to let my white friends call' (p.195), which made the account hearable as a complaint of racism without explicitly naming it as such. Similarly, Kirkwood, McKinlay, and McVittie's (2013) interview research with refugees in Scotland found that accounts of potentially racially motivated violence tended to downplay, mitigate or excuse allegations of racism, refer to them indirectly (e.g., referencing the colour of their skin) or present them as reluctant conclusions, which places the interpretation in the hands of the listener. Indeed, accusations of racism may be advanced by people other than the direct target, as illustrated by Rafaely's (2021) case study of a Ugandan climate activist, Ms Vanessa Nakate, who was 'cropped out' of a news photograph of the 2020 World Economic Forum. She showed that it was a journalist who invited Ms Nakate to consider the incident as racially motivated (p. 10). In their study of Black professionals in the United States, Rawls and Duck (2017) noted the risks of non-recognition and counter-accusations for the

professionals that make any such judgements about their White colleagues. These studies identify the reluctance of persons to move from making reports of events that have racialized features, to making a direct accusation of racism. A major problem in making an accusation is that accusers may find themselves being judged as being 'overly sensitive' or even racist themselves (Augoustinos & Every, 2010; Durrheim, Greener, & Whitehead, 2014). The vulnerability of providing the judgement of others' actions as racist helps explain why accusations of racism are either deferred to hearers or managed delicately.

Three key conclusions can be drawn from this work. First, many studies have demonstrated that in reports of events that involve misrecognition, establishing whether a particular statement is or is not racist is often exactly what is at stake (Augoustinos & Every, 2010). The judgement of events, actions, and characters is the original participants' concern and this in turn underlines the problems of external analysts defining and identifying what happened as racist or not. Our concern is with how that judgement is accomplished rather than having the last word on whether something is racism or not. Indeed, Durrheim, Mtose, and Brown (2011) argued that the concept of racism is so problematic that researchers ought rather to direct their attention to 'race trouble'; that is, how people engage with, understand, experience and orient to notions of race, racism, and racialized practices in everyday life. For instance, regarding White South Africans they said:

> It is precisely because they don't see their actions as racist that they keep doing them and it is because they do see them as racist that black interactants respond suspiciously.

Given the ambiguity of what counts as racism, a characteristic of discursive psychological research is that it prioritizes the categories and evaluations of those involved in the interactions, so whether a particular instance is treated as racist is not determined in advance, but rather explored within the context of the interactions. The racist character of racial misrecognition can be treated in the same way, as ambiguous: It may be dismissed as ignorance, unintentional or racist (Hopkins et al., 2017). We need therefore to see whether participants treat it as racism rather than determining this in advance.

Second, 'racist talk' is not a unitary phenomenon; a range of discursive practices have been identified. Given the powerful moral valence of racism, persons' actions that, for example, justify racial inequality tend to take less overt forms, such as focusing on 'culture' rather than race (Hanson-Easey & Augoustinos, 2010), or operating indirectly to remove overt references to race (Goodman & Burke, 2011). Misrecognition is our concern here and its study allows us to focus on how a variety of experiences may be judged as constituting racism.

Third, racist talk is an interactional, situated phenomenon; thus, the force of the talk will depend on its uptake and whether it is challenged, rejected, or affirmed (Condor, 2006). This resonates well with the points made above regarding the dialogical nature of misrecognition.

Drawing together this literature on misrecognition, discourse, and racism, we can understand recognition and misrecognition as occurring through dialogue, and whether an act is constituted as racism becomes an interactional matter, yet producing judgements of racism is sensitive. We therefore seek to build on these initial ideas by taking a discursive approach to examine 'public' accounts of misrecognition in public places and how these are judged as racism. Our intention is to enhance the understanding of both how misrecognition is reported and how it is understood, specifically in the context of public

space, and to explore how what happens comes to be judged as racism (or otherwise). Through doing so, we will contribute to theoretical work on recognition and misrecognition and reflect on the usefulness of these concepts for understanding important social psychological issues such as racism.

Methods

A discursive psychological and conversational analytic approach

We adopt a discursive psychological (DP; Edwards & Potter, 1992) and conversation analytic (CA; Sacks, 1992) approach to examine how people retrospectively account for misrecognition in public domains. Investigating how people report misrecognition sheds light on people's common knowledge of misrecognition, and how this common knowledge is invoked in the service of delivering a credible report of racism. This approach has been used successfully in previous work on racism to 'reveal the discursive practices through which race categories are constructed and exploitation legitimised' (Wetherell & Potter, 1992, p. 102). DP treats discourse as the medium and means through which race and racism are talked into being within the local context of the unfolding interaction. It enables the analysts to examine the social actions being performed and achieved here and now and shows how the details of talk are consequential in the ongoing interaction (Edwards & Potter, 1992; Sally Wiggins, 2017). It follows that a DP approach will also treat misrecognition and racism as matters that interlocutors themselves jointly orient to, make relevant, and thus accomplish in the turn-by-turn sequence of interaction.

Misrecognition makes relevant identities and categories and here, too, we adopt a CA/DP approach which treats identities as actively accomplished by interactants in the local context of interactions (Widdicombe & Wooffitt, 1995). We also draw on Membership Categorisation Analysis (MCA) which investigates membership categories as situated folk taxonomies (Sacks, 1992; Schegloff, 2007; Stokoe, 2012). Instead of identifying categories prima facie, MCA examines people's own ways of invoking membership categories, and the inferences, attributes, entitlements, and relations that are bound to them within the context in which they are made relevant. For example, as shown in the quote from Katherine at the beginning of this article (Amer, 2020), wearing a hijab is worked up as category-bound to being 'foreign'. Through examining membership categories, category-bound predicates and activities, and how they are invoked and worked up in the service of local interactional business, analysts can disentangle how members display and practice their common-sense knowledge of these membership categories, in real-world settings (Sacks, 1992; Schegloff, 2007; Stokoe, 2012; Widdicombe & Wooffitt, 1995). In pursuit of our current research interest, we use MCA to investigate the invocations of racial categories in situ, the category-bound predicates and attributes made relevant directly and inferentially in the service of working up misrecognition as racist.

Data

For the purpose of this article, two extracts will be presented from a corpus of accounts of racism. They are selected from a data corpus originally collected for a doctoral research project, encompassing broadcast interviews and online forums where racial encounters are reported. These materials have been found on the internet using key words such as 'race', 'racial', 'racist', 'racism', and 'report'. As Attenborough (2016, p. 237) contends, media 'has a large audience and, as a result, a crucial role to play in the public

understanding of' whatever is under scrutiny. The growing development of technology and ever-increasing reliance on the Internet also mean that these posts and videos can be archived, redistributed, and revisited for an extended period of time. These reports thus assemble an arena wherein racial misrecognition is accounted for (by the reporters of racism) and interpreted (by the immediate recipients) in situ. Studying how these personal experiences are reported in these public domains can therefore inform us not only how these experiences are valuable at a public level, but also for us analysts, what and how racial common-sense knowledge is invoked and (re)constructed by these interlocutors (Shrikant, 2020; Whitehead, 2011, 2012).

For this paper, we select two extracts from different sources. One of the extracts was sourced from the UK's biggest network for parents, *Mumsnet*. *Mumsnet* is known to be popular and influential with middle class and White women in the United Kingdom, with 95-98% active users being female (Pedersen, 2020). *TALK* is an intranet discussion forum on *Mumsnet*, consisting of hundreds of discussion topics ranging from parenting to housekeeping advice. Our extract is sourced from a discussion topic named 'Multicultural families'. The second is taken from a BBC broadcasted interview clip, which was found on YouTube using key words 'racist' and 'interview'. The turn-by-turn or line-by-line interactions between the speakers in the broadcast interview and the responses to *Mumsnet*'s original post allow us to investigate how the incident of reported misrecognition is worked up as racist and received as such (or not).

These two cases differ in several ways. The medium through which the accounts are produced (spoken versus written) is different, as are the public encounters of the alleged racism. The headlines that accompany these reports differ: The first is formulated as a 'racist comment' and the second as 'racist abuse'. The first is initiated by the poster themselves, whereas the second is an invited report on the BBC News programme. However, in terms of the reporting and discursive features, they have much in common. They both consist of descriptions of an encounter wherein racial membership category and category-bound predicates are invoked in public settings and in such a way that they are excluded from British national identity. Both reports receive responses, synchronously, or asynchronously, which demonstrate how these reports are interpreted and judged as racial (or not) interactionally. Both reports are made about an absent third-party as the perpetrator of racism and appear in public platforms. However, we selected these extracts from our corpus as they provide an opportunity to compare accounts of racialized misrecognition that vary in severity. The parenting website allows people to share and respond to more 'mundane' problems and seek support or advice, whereas national news stories are presented as having interest and importance to a much wider audience.

We transcribed the videos using Jeffersonian transcribing notation (Jefferson, 2004; see Table 1). Given the online posts are in their rawest and most naturalistic form, we preserve the originality of the posts by presenting the grammar, spelling, and punctuation as they appear on *Mumsnet*.

Ethical approval for the collection and use of these materials was sought and granted by the authors' institution. Direct consent was also sought from *Mumsnet*'s correspondent with regard to using its online posts for research purpose. Abiding by what has been agreed with *Mumsnet*'s correspondent and the BPS *Code of Human Research Ethics* (The British Psychological Society, 2014), usernames are masked, indirect identifiable information (such as names of place, time of the posts being created, etcetera) is also redacted. Since the video is a news broadcast, accessible online, and the names of the speakers are given by the publisher, we decided to not anonymize them.

Table 1. Jeffersonian Transcript Notation (adapted from Jefferson, 2004)

Symbol	Indication
[text]	Overlapping speech.
=	Break and subsequent continuation of an interrupted utterance.
(number)	A number in parentheses indicates the time, in seconds, of a pause.
((*text*))	Transcriber's descriptions
(.)	A brief pause, usually less than 0.2 seconds.
↓	Falling pitch.
↑	Rising pitch.
-	An abrupt halt or interruption
>text<	Speech delivered is more rapid than usual for the speaker.
<text>	Speech delivered is slower than usual for the speaker.
°	Whisper or reduced volume.
CAPITALS	Shouted or higher volume.
<u>underline</u>	Emphasized or stressed speech.
:::	Prolongation of an utterance.
hhh	Audible exhalation
.hhh	Audible inhalation

Analysis

Misrecognition, in the cases we will explore, is when parts of the appearance of a person are selected which the person treats as mistaken and / or unwarranted, particularly on the basis of the possibly racially recognizable aspects of their appearance rather than any other possible recognizable public identities (Whitehead, 2009). However, it is not only the misrecognition that makes these encounters reportable; it is the reported feelings that are significant in presenting the harmfulness of the actions and the moral implications that make them legitimate complaints about injury (Edwards, 2005). These subject-side assessments are a second part of what will inform the judgement of the misrecognition by the self and others. We will examine how misrecognitions are reported and how recipients respond to and judge the reported experiences, paying close attention to how or whether the events are judged to constitute racism.

Case 1: Parenting website

We begin the analysis with a thread taken from *Mumsnet*. As shown in the extract below, the original post entails a report of an encounter, which is headlined as 'racist' by the original poster (OP).

Extract 1. Comments on Mumsnet thread entitled 'First openly racist comment directed at my son...'

Original Poster

1. It finally happened. He's 18m old. On holiday in a provincial
2. seaside town and some visitors came up to say "awww, does he
3. speak English?". He IS British! Was so mad, I didn't know
4. what to say. Any smart responses for next time?!!!

Respondent 1

5. Well their nationality or the colour of their skin doesn't

6. dictate the language they speak. It's a very ignorant comment. I
7. guess next time just say "Je ne comprais pa" (Sorry can't spell
8. French.)

Respondent 2

9. "No darling he speaks several languages in fact English is his
10. fifth"

Respondent 3

11. What an odd comment, especially as surely he resembles you or
12. DH and thry were addressing you in English. Honestly I don't
13. Think that level of stupid deserves a response. I'd perfect a
14. withering look and wlak awya

OP first establishes the context in which the incident took place, describing an ordinary situation (being on holiday) in an unexceptional public space (a provincial seaside town). It is a typical encounter for parents of very young children in which another person approaches and makes a positive comment about the child's appearance or behaviour (e.g., 'what a lovely smile'). A key part of the report here then is that these are familiar, routine events and that the reporter was thus not in a place or situation where they might expect to experience racist talk. The OP, then, describes 'visitors coming up' to deliver a comment about the son: '"awww, does he speak English?"' (lines 2-3). The exclamation token 'awww' (line 2), is hearable as a preface to an approving comment such as 'he's cute' or 'adorable'. Here, however, it is juxtaposed with a request for confirmation about the baby's language ability ('does he speak English?'). This question has, built into it, the visitors' assumption that the parent and child are not primarily English speakers. Through the use of directly reported speech, the OP is able to present this comment in an 'objective' and distant way, so that the message can be read as an exact reproduction of what has been said (Buttny, 2004; Potter, 1996). Moreover, as we show below, the identifying feature of the racism is delivered in this comment.

The OP then frames the visitors' comment as a misrecognition of the son's nationality, by directly avowing a membership category, 'He IS British!' (line 3). Through this categorization, OP works up the activity of speaking English as category-bound to the membership category 'British'. Therefore, by expressing an interest in the son's English ability, the visitors are constructed as misrecognizing and excluding the son from being an ordinarily recognizable British person. Hearing the visitors' question as communicating denial of their national membership, the OP's headline and hence judgement of this encounter – 'racist comment' – are warranted. The use of the exclamation mark and the capitalized 'IS' also construct the question over the son's nationality as not well-received by the OP. The experience and stance on what has happened is worked up by reporting feelings: 'Was so mad, I didn't know what to say' (line 3-4). This makes available the negative consequences of being misrecognized, which in turn warrants the OP's request for 'smart responses for next time' (line 4).

In the original post, the OP invokes the membership category of nationality ('British') and its category-bound predicate ('speak English') to portray how the son has been misrecognized openly in public. Note that the OP does not explicitly formulate the racist character of the misrecognition as the reportable item. Instead, the first responder works up and ratifies the relevance of misrecognition in OP's description and does so in an interesting way. The reply begins: 'their nationality or the colour of their skin doesn't

dictate the language they speak' (lines 5-6). This response picks up and transforms two key aspects of OP's report. First, the reference to 'the language they speak' makes more general the reference to 'speak English'. Second, the reference to 'their nationality' extends the prior reference to 'British'. Respondent 1 makes relevant and questions the nationalistic assumption underlying the OP's reported encounter (see Billig, 1995). But an additional element is made relevant in this reply, namely skin colour. This may pick up on the characterization of the 'racist comment' in the title of the post, or draw inferences from the inclusion of the post in the 'multicultural' thread. It is, however, artful in that it treats both skin colour and nationality as not dictating language and it formulates this statement in general terms. In this way, the responder avoids making explicit assumptions about the child's race or skin colour while ratifying OP's complaint by allowing for the possibility that OP's son is misrecognized because of the way he looks. The relevance of public appearance and language-speaking is aligned to by the third responder by expressing sense-making of the original post, 'surely he resembles you or DH [Dear Husband] and thry were addressing you in English' (lines 11-2). Respondent 3's sense-making reflects an acknowledgement of the misrecognition brought about in the original post and that it is problematic.

It is also noteworthy that both responders recategorize and in doing so, judge, OP's formulation of the reported comments, rather than simply repeating the OP's headlining of it (i.e., 'racist comment'). The first responder does so by offering an assessment, 'It's a very ignorant comment' (line 6), and the third responder appraises at the start of the reply, 'What an odd comment' (line 11). The third responder later transforms and upgrades the judgement by formulating the reported action as 'stupid' (line 13). The second responder directly returns the OP's invitation for a witty response (line 4), reflecting an implicit affiliation with and thus ratification of OP's reported encounter. Overall, the responses provide partial and implicit support for the OP's complaint, with some reformulating it in ways that corroborate the reportable nature of the account, while removing or minimizing the charges of racism. Kirkwood, Goodman, McVittie, and McKinlay (2016, p. 139) found that reformulating racism as ignorance plays down the severity of the behaviour, avoids some of the problematic aspects of making accusations of racism, implies scope for education and improvement, and indicates that people targeted by such behaviour have scope to belong. The judgement of ignorance and stupidity predicates actors as unwitting in saying their hearably racist comments. At one level, the OP's indirect way of judging the talk as racist and the respondents' displays of affiliation suggest what is at stake is the possible challenge projected by accusing others as knowingly racist.

To the extent that what happened led to the OP reporting feelings of hurt regarding the child's misrecognition, the responses from the *Mumsnet* posters convey care and affirmation, constituting recognition and communicating inclusion. In the face of the banal racialized nationalism of the visitors' attempt at small talk at the seaside, the online community of *Mumsnet*, which is itself reflecting on, maintaining and transforming shared identities, does then recognize the poster as one of the community (Billig, 1995). At stake in their judgement of the wrongdoers in the OP's report is whether it was a mistake borne of ignorance and so of lesser moral judgement, or racially motivated misrecognition that intends to deny people's membership. The situating of the comment within an ordinary setting and indeed in what seems to be friendly speech leaves the OP and respondents with that possibility. In that sense, it then points towards an unreflective societal racism. Note how the original post begins, 'It finally happened' (line 1), which makes available OP's orientation to what has happened as an expectable and therefore commonly known problem (see Shrikant, 2020). Through this the OP and the child's

membership categories are also made inferable – they are the commonly known targets of 'racist comments' or misrecognition. We now attend to the reporting of a more overt racial encounter.

Case 2: News interview

This case, a segment of a BBC broadcasted interview, is also headlined as a report of racism. The interview was initially broadcasted in 2016, a week after the 'Brexit' referendum on the UK leaving the European Union, a context that was widely understood as legitimizing racism (Virdee & McGeever, 2018).

Extract 2: 'BBC presenter Trish Adudu in tears after racist abuse – BBC News', *BBC News* (2 July 2016), accessed on: https://youtu.be/DSHszDYYWgg

(Transcript covers 00:00-00:45 and 01:20-01:43 of the video).

IE: Interviewee, Trish Adudu.

IR: Interviewer, Nik Gowing.

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 1   IE:   i was getting into my ↑car::: .hhh(.)an:d noticed there was
 2         a-(.)some rea::lly(.)nasty >vile language coming out from
 3         an< individual:(.).hh against: a-(.)what appeared to be a-
 4         a- a student an asian student(.)it's really derogatory: .hh
 5         the use of the pee wor::d  an:d(.)>you know< sort of
 6         shouting about °ha°dn't you seen the ↑vote(.).hhhh i was
 7         ↑just paralysed in fear >°nik°< i mean you know me it's
 8         hard in journalist(.)it takes a lot to(.)rea:lly(.)uhm:
 9         (.).hh >y'know °sort of° upset me< n' then °obv° then
10         he >turned his atten↑tions to ↑me and started< ↑uhm:(.)
11         ↓well basica↑lly(.).t h(h)e: °said >y'know°< 'nigger go
12         ↑ho↓me:'(.).t
13         ((heavy breathing and incessant nodding))
14   IR:   gosh that's::(.)really >strong: stuff< ↑how ↑did you re↑act
15         to ↑tha:t
16   IE:   .T .HHH ↑well he- he just kept shouting lik-(.)
17         ((swallowing)) .T(.)<ni(h)gger n' ni(h)gger n:> .HH y'know
18         [i  suppose to-]
19   IR:   [more than once] [is this-]
20   IE:                   [↑oh gosh] yea::< de[finitely]
21   IR:                                       >[have you] ever had
22         that be[↓fore]<
23   IE:          [ ↓ne ]ver
24         ((lines omitted))
25   IE:   an:d uhm:(.)ee- it- wa- jus- i'v-(.)y'know i've lived in
26         this country(.)i'm [prou::d]
27   IR:                      [>i was ] gonna say you couldn't be
28         more british [could ↓you<]
29   IE:                 [ £.HHH£  ] ↓yea i- i- i don't think
30         coventry is a racist city at all i just think .hhhh(.)this
31         one individual jus-(.)seem so full of ↓hate nik(.)he was:-
32         (.)he was in↓cessant with ra:ge .H(.)BOth at the student n'
33         at me:
34   IR:   =it's really shaking you up [°ain't it°]
35   IE:                               [ ↑yea(h)::] telling us to go
36         ↓h(h)ome n' >i don't like using the n ↓wor(h):d< .H(.)n'
37         haven't hear(h)d it(.)°directly to m(h)e°
```

In this extract, as in the first, the context in which the incident occurred is described before the incident of misrecognition is reported. Trish gives a detailed account of an encounter and establishes its racist character. As part of constructing the report of what has happened to her, Trish starts by establishing an ordinary course of events, 'I was getting into my car', which establishes her presence in a public space, going about her own business. There are, then, similarities with the construction of the report from the OP on *Mumsnet*. There is, however, an immediate contrast in the assessment of a noticeable feature that is overtly negative: 'rea::lly(.)nasty >vile language' (line 2). It is an object-side assessment, which formulates 'the evaluation as a feature of the object' (Edwards & Potter, 2017, p. 511), thus placing its qualities as there for anyone to notice and assess in that way. This direct and negative assessment of the language also allows Trish to make inferable the characteristics of this individual (see Alexander & Stokoe, 2020), although he remains unidentified in other ways. In addition, she presents the language used by the individual as reported speech and thereby indicates its status as (over)heard. This in turn helps address her entitlement to report an incident which did not happen to her directly (see Edwards, 2005).

Trish identifies the target of the 'nasty >vile language' as an Asian student. This category description is delivered with signs of difficulty such as hesitations and hedges (lines 3-4). The identification is also delivered in two parts: first, Trish categorizes this target as 'student' (line 4), invoking the category collection of occupation. Second, the category is elaborated, as Trish makes relevant another category collection, 'asian' (line 4), which ties to race, nation, and ethnicity. The person-reference hence becomes descriptive (see Schegloff, 2007) in the sense that a range of category-bound attributes are made inferential, especially those that are publicly or visually accessible. However, Trish shows both what allowed her to categorize the other person and caution around using the category references ('what appeared to be', line 3). Trish's troubled and delayed way of delivering her categorization of this 'asian student' suggests that identifying someone racially is an accountable and sensitive task (Whitehead, 2009). It is a dilemma that Trish is caught up in – saying what could be see-able or inferable by the way someone appears, while minimizing the possibility of being heard as racially motivated in her identification (see Hester & Eglin, 1997). This sensitive management sheds light on Trish's orientation to the stake and accountability involved in recognizing and potentially misrecognizing someone in racial terms by their looks.

By contrast, Trish reports that the 'individual:' has identified the 'asian student' by 'the use of the pee wor::d' (line 6). The P-word stands for a derogatory term directed at people in the UK who appear to be of South-Asian descent. Of the many ways the student could be identified, this description selects not just a racial term but one that ties it to a culturally shared British history of existing racial abuse (see Hester & Eglin, 1997). By censoring the 'pee wor::d', Trish works up her stance against the use of 'pee wor::d' as it is treated as unsayable by her (see Stokoe & Edwards, 2007). The reported speech, '°ha°dn't you seen the ↑vote' (line 6), uses the prevailing context – the 2016 Brexit referendum – as a perverse 'ticket to talk' or a license to comment on the other's identity (Sacks, 1992). This individual's derogatory and hearably racial identification of another party is placed after Trish's earlier cautious and non-definitive use of the referent 'individual' (lines 3-4), hence making available the comparison for the audience to judge and infer this individual's character and motive.

Trish then reports on how she was subsequently targeted: 'he >turned his atten↑tions to ↑me' (line 10). This marks Trish as the new target while framing the

individual's action of looking for a target as active and deliberate. This is followed by Trish reproducing what the individual has said to her using reported speech (Potter, 1996; Stokoe & Edwards, 2007; Wooffitt, 1992). The reported speech provides credible evidence for how this individual categorizes Trish racially, and it demonstrates that such categorization has been enacted verbally and derogatorily (Hester & Eglin, 1997). The n-word, and its category-bound attributes, are treated by Trish as commonly known by the interviewer and the audience (marked by '>y'know°<'), and hence unambiguously and hearably racist (see Stokoe & Edwards, 2007; Hester & Eglin, 1997). This categorization of Trish is juxtaposed with what Stokoe and Edwards (2007) termed a locative phrase in 'n****r go ↑ho↓me:'. This combination – derogatory racial categorization plus a locative phrase – rejects Trish's identity as a British citizen and attributes not belonging to her race. As Stokoe and Edwards argued, '[t]his kind of racial insult, with its locative phrase, is designed precisely for the practices of power, exclusion and segregation' (p.357).

Trish's report is noticeably embedded in the embodied portrayals of how she feels, both at the scene and as she recounts the experience here and now. After reporting what she has witnessed, Trish explicitly avows her feeling in an embodied description, 'i was ↑just paralysed in <u>fear</u>' (lines 6-7), reproducing the emotional experience that she undergoes there-and-then (Gramner & Wiggins, 2020). This avowal is followed by an account of her reaction: 'it's hard in journalist (.) it takes a lot to (.) really (.) uhm: (.).hhh >y'know °sort of° upset me<' (lines 7-9). The account makes relevant her identity as a journalist and one attribute of this category membership: Journalists are not easily upset. The claim, then, to have been upset is made more significant because it is counter-dispositional (Edwards, 2007). An affiliation is also invited from the interviewer on the basis of their existing comradeship, as Trish directly addresses him by his name ('>°nik°<', line 7) and invokes ('you <u>know</u> me'). In this way, Trish's emotional reaction as a result of the assault is warranted and licensed. In addition, Trish's (re)production of the verbal assaults directed to her is noticeably uttered with difficulty (lines 10-2). This reinforces the difficulty of the emotional experience through its recounting, while warranting the negative consequences of her having encountered the reported incident. These portrayals are aligned with and corroborated by the interviewer in an upshot ('it's really shaking you up', line 34). The emotion ascriptions make hearable the emotional consequences and thereby moral judgement of being excluded as an equal member of the society.

Trish's descriptions construct the individual's insults to the student and her as racist. However, it is the misrecognition of Trish as not belonging to Britain that is treated by both Trish and the interviewer as relevant in appraising and legitimizing the reportability of this incident. As shown in lines 25-6, Trish makes relevant her residential status in Britain ('i've lived in this country'), and juxtaposes it with a display of affect and patriotism ('i'm <u>prou</u>:: d'). The interviewer orients to this inference by aligning with Trish in an overlapping turn ('>i was gonna say you couldn't be more british' lines 27-8). His interruption makes explicit Trish's national membership category and portrays his knowledge as preceding her claim of having lived in 'this country' ('I was gonna say'). The interviewer's ratification of identity works to contrast and differentiate the way that he and the individual recognize and identify Trish. He identifies Trish by her nationality (where her appearance is not the sole reference for membership categorization), collaboratively working up and reinforcing the individual's behaviour as constituting racial misrecognition.

In response to the interviewer's formulation of the experience of the incident ('really shaking you up', line 34), Trish does agreement and recycles two grounds for being shaken up: being told to go home and the use of the n-word. Noticeably, 'telling us to <u>go</u> ↓h (h)ome' is rendered agentless; along with the interviewer's formulation of her

experience, this works to package the locative phrase 'go ↓h(h)ome' per se as objectively and recognizably offensive (Edwards & Potter, 2017). The second assessment, '>i don't like using the n ↓wor(h):d<' (line 36), is in contrast constructed as a matter of preference. This subject-side assessment builds in Trish's orientation to her category-bound entitlement of using the n-word and treats it as a personal preference to avoid using it. This is also evident as Trish only partially reproduced the verbal assault directed at the Asian student ('pee wor::d', line 5) who is not present, and therefore is unable to avow a membership category preference. Throughout the unfolding sequence of this interview, labelling Trish (and the student) with membership categories that are racially derogating and which Trish finds unpleasant, is oriented to by both interlocutors as what makes this incident racist and reportable.

Discussion

In this article, we have used a discursive psychological and conversation analytic approach to racialized misrecognition. Given that key theorists of recognition (e.g., Honneth, 1996; Taylor, 1992) emphasize the dialogical, intersubjective, and interactional nature of recognition and misrecognition, this approach is well suited to examining how reports of recognition and misrecognition are produced and ratified or resisted. We attended to how those reports themselves are co-produced, with speakers and respondents working up the moral implications of a reported incident, creating an opportunity for the interlocutors to reinstate damaged respect and portray the incident as more or less serious. At one end, they can judge what happened as a relatively minor mistake, and at the other, as a more morally reprehensible and damaging act. The reporting becomes a moment of bringing misrecognition into the public sphere.

Our analysis of these incidents of misrecognition extend discursive psychological research on 'race trouble' (Durrheim et al., 2011). Previous research has shown that making accusations of racism is a delicate matter and any analysis needs to pay careful attention to how this is accomplished rather than simply applying the analyst's definition and judgement of whether what happened constitutes racism. Notions of recognition and misrecognition provide concepts to understand how both relatively minor incidents of the application of inclusionary and exclusionary categories through to the use of highly offensive language can be understood along a spectrum of behaviours that constitute misrecognition. In our cases, they are judged as racist to the extent that they communicate a lack of belonging in racialized or nationalistic terms. In addition to definitions of racism as acts that reinforce racial inequality (Wetherell & Potter, 1992), racialized forms of misrecognition function to 'other' certain people and groups. As illustrated in our analysis, to what extent accounts of misrecognition are judged to be 'racist' or immoral in other ways by interlocutors emerges in and through the dialogue. However, even when respondents do not explicitly judge the events as 'racist', they may nevertheless affiliate with the assessment of such experiences as constituting disrespect and reinforcing exclusion. Honneth's (1996) concept of recognition, made up of the aspects of love, equal treatment, and social esteem, provides terms for deepening our understanding of racism to encompass broader dimensions of respect and belonging.

Moreover, in keeping with Honneth (1996) and Taylor's (1992) points about the intersubjective and dialogical nature of recognition, we have shown the importance of the receipt of accounts of racialized misrecognition. The responses in our data affiliated with the accounts as complaints, verifying the problematic nature of what had occurred, and

responding to the misrecognition with recognition by demonstrating care and communicating belonging. However, the responses did not explicitly affirm the evaluation of the incident as racist. In line with much previous research (Augoustinos & Every, 2010; Kirkwood et al., 2013), the analysis shows how both the main speaker and responders orient to the sensitivity of making accusations and evaluations of racism. Regarding misrecognition, this relates to Pilapil's (2012) point that misrecognition is not simply about whether a person has been wrongly categorized as a particular kind (e.g., a mistaken or inaccurate identity category has been applied), but whether the misrecognition implies something about the moral status of the target, morally wronging them as a person (e.g., through applying categories that are derogatory or imply the person does not belong). The respondents in the first extract confirm the instance of misrecognition, but generally treat it as an instance of 'ignorance', whereas the second account was more obviously responded to in terms of its moral harm, both by the item being explicitly titled as an instance of racism, and by the interviewer's receipts, which signalled the severity of what was being reported.

While Hopkins et al., (2017, p. 941) drew on the work of Kolimba (2013, p. 42) to argue that every time a person is treated as 'other' they are 'inevitably experiencing racism', and positioned as unable to belong, our analysis suggests that the constitution of misrecognition as racism is complicated by the interactional demands of the context of its production. This reinforces Durrheim et al.,'s (2011) argument that it is important to examine 'race trouble' rather than assume that racism can be defined and identified in advance, as whether an instance is or is not racist is itself a potential matter of dispute that must be worked up interactionally. As argued by Laitinen (2012), whether or not an act constitutes misrecognition is not inherently obvious, and therefore relies on public rules; analysing how accounts of misrecognition are received in public forums gives some insight into this process. For instance, Burford-Rice and Augoustinos's (2018) research on racist slips of the tongue showed that speakers tried to portray the incidents as unintentional, and the slips as not accurately describing (i.e., misrecognizing) the targets; sometimes the excuses and apologies were accepted, and sometimes they were not, thereby attesting to the way that the 'racist' nature of the talk was up for debate.

Our research adds detail to previous studies on misrecognition and racism. For instance, research on misrecognition in airport security showed that misrecognition was treated as racism to the extent that it functioned in racialized terms (e.g., singling out people by nationality or ethnic appearance) and communicated a lack of belonging (Blackwood et al., 2013b; McNamara & Reicher, 2019). We have illustrated how accounts of such incidents are worked up publicly, managed sensitively, and depend on their reception. Such accounts also tap into ideas of racialized misrecognition that function at an institutional or societal level (Rawls & Duck, 2017). The two cases of reporting racism that we have examined are naturally occurring. In both cases, the reporters neither label the behaviours nor the actors as racist over the course of reporting what has happened. Reports of racism are delivered and responded to not as allegations against one individual, but in descriptive and inferential ways such that the action reported can be heard and recognized as racism (see also Stokoe & Edwards, 2007). This is achieved, or allowed, by making relevant how they (or their 'dear child') are misrecognized as not an equal member of the British nation, and that such actions have taken place in public spaces. In the *Mumsnet*'s post, we can see responses to the story which locate an everyday racism in ignorance and, in the BBC interview, locate it in an individualized racism driven by 'hate'. This way of reporting racism, where misrecognition is made relevant, reflects the way that

reporters and recipients treat direct accusations of racism as accountable (Durrheim, Greener, & Whitehead, 2015).

Reflecting on the wider implications of our study, accounts of racialized misrecognition provide opportunities for others to confirm or deny such experiences as constituting racism, to empathize with treatment that is disrespectful and excluding, and to offer responses that demonstrate care and inclusion. Engaging with notions of recognition offers a way for social psychologists to understand how people's experiences of race and racism connect with broader issues of identity, belonging, and social justice.

Conflict of interest

All authors declare no conflict of interest.

Author contributions

Eric Laurier (Conceptualization; Formal analysis; Supervision; Validation; Writing – original draft; Writing – review & editing) Sue Widdicombe (Conceptualization; Formal analysis; Methodology; Supervision; Validation; Writing – original draft; Writing – review & editing) Yarong Xie (Conceptualization; Data curation; Formal analysis; Investigation; Methodology; Project administration; Validation; Writing – original draft; Writing – review & editing) Steve Michael Kirkwood, PhD (Conceptualization; Formal analysis; Methodology; Validation; Writing – original draft; Writing – review & editing).

Data availability statement

The data that support the findings of this study are available from the first author upon reasonable request.

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