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Who cares about mixed race? Care experiences of young people in an inner city borough

WHO *CARES* ABOUT MIXED RACE? CARE EXPERIENCES OF YOUNG PEOPLE IN AN INNER CITY BOROUGH

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Abstract

Who *Cares* About Mixed Race? Care Experiences of Young People in an Inner City Borough

This thesis is an engagement with the care experiences of mixed young people, to produce knowledge of how care processes, mediated though the private foster family, impact on their lives. It begins with an examination of the relationship between the mixed classification and care, and continues through a discussion of race, race mixing and the family. The study then examines methodologically how the mixed classification operates in social work through a discussion of racialisation and its impact on the care trajectory of young people. Further, it engages with long-standing debates over why young people with a mixed classification are more likely to be significantly represented in care. The empirical chapters are comprised of the narrative accounts and visual representations of the young people and their experiences in care.

A highly participatory research methodology paid critical attention to the narratives of mixed young people in care between the ages of 12-20 years, as research participants, in order to engage and elicit rich detail about their care experiences. An innovative mixed-method approach emerged in part from their specific circumstances and led to new ways to research with and understand young people who live in circumstances of instability often characterised by crisis.

This thesis engages with the care experiences of the participants to reveal how the discursive repertoires of mixedness and their application through care processes impacts on lives. Each empirical chapter is presented as an individual case study that examines the experiences of a single participant in order to interrogate care practices in relation to mixedness. The themes to emerge centre around family, relationality, professional intervention, classification and identification, race and mixedness, sex, gender, class, culture and ethnicity, all within the crisis of the care system. This thesis argues that placing the care experiences of mixed young people in the centre of debates about how to conceptualise mixedness could influence care planning.

Table of Contents

Acknowledgements

Chapter 1: Mixing and Mixedness

'A trouble is a private matter: values cherished by an individual are felt by him to be threatened. An issue often involves a crisis in institutional arrangements'. (Mills, 2000:9)

The care system is in the midst of an institutional crisis and solutions are being sought to improve the troubled experiences of children and young people in care and to re-work the image and function of care. In practice the crisis of the care system means that children and young people remain vulnerable in birth families, as social workers are reluctant to take them into care because of its institutional failings – care is a last resort. The bleak achievements of care leavers reveal a double failure, as they are left with dysfunctional birth families for too long and when they finally do come into care, they can experience instability, transience and abuse. On the basis that the care system can make and sustain proposed improvements and offer a better care experience, children will be taken into care at a younger age. The aim of government approaches to care is to recast it as a positive alternative for struggling families and a safe and suitable place for young people, within a system that works in their best interests.

Currently, children and young people living in a care system that is in crisis bear the burden of its failings, and outcomes based research offers evidence that the achievements of care leavers are far below those of others. For instance, among young people in care: only 13% get 5 A*- C grade GCSEs, compared with 47% of all young people; only six percent go into higher education; 20% of young women between 16-19 become pregnant within a year of leaving care and they are twice as likely to have their own children taken into care. Estimates suggest that 23% of the adult prison population has been in care, and 45% of children in care have a mental health disorder in comparison to ten percent in the wider population (Finlayson, 2009). Leaving children in their birth family homes for too long contributes to their poor outcomes, however, 'There is absolutely no doubt that the care system is failing if you look at the outcomes' [of young people in care]

(Finlayson, 2009). This thesis will illustrate the relationship between the institutional crisis of care and the experiences and outcomes of care leavers through an analysis of the narratives of young people in care in relation to discursive repertoires of mixedness.

'Neither the life of an individual nor the history of a society can be understood without understanding both'. (Mills, (1959) 2000:3)

The lives and stories of individuals offer rich understandings of how social processes and arrangements structure and influence everyday experience. However, as Mills' suggests, the individual life and society constitute an inter-dependent relationship. The sources used in the introduction come from a range of sources form both academic theory, literature, history and popular culture; mixed young people are embedded in all aspects of society and have an interesting and poignant story to share.

Understanding the lives of mixed young people in care entails a consideration of the formal set of regulations and procedures that plan and evaluate their care experiences. These processes are integral to how young people understand their lives and how they are able to make meaning through their circumstances. In centring the lives of young people through narrative accounts, this thesis also centres the impact of these structuring processes. Thus the aim of the thesis is to establish a relationship between the problems of individual young people and the crises of care, through teasing out some of the antagonisms and issues of care processes. The ways in which this thesis engages with lived experience and care processes is through an acknowledgement that the two are inextricably linked and inter-related. To understand the lives of young people in care entails an understanding of the constitutive limits of their experiences.

The troubles that characterise the experiences of young people in care both challenge and shape how they make meaning from their circumstances and how they understand care failings such as (in) stability and issues of personal safety. As these personal troubles undergo transformation they become issues of care rooted in the institutional management and regulation of young lives. Ironically, these institutional arrangements are set up to monitor, evaluate and retain social values, not to challenge them. However, the administration of arrangements can threaten and, in some instances, actively negate wider social values of family, stability and safety. The critique of the care system is addressed through both its neglect of the children and young people who use the service and the staff who actively care for vulnerable young people. In an article in the Guardian newspaper Amelia Gentlemen suggests

> 'The state's inability to provide adequate care for some of the country's neediest children is one of Britain's most acute social injustices… many things remain very wrong with the system: poorly trained workers in frontline positions, high staff turnover and a chronic shortage of foster parents, so that children are not carefully matched with suitable carers but placed wherever is available'. (20/04/2009)

In this sense it is the poor investment and value of professional adult labour that most impacts on how young people experience care. When addressing the failures of institutions and arrangements it is vital to prioritise the roles and responsibilities of those who administer policy and practice. Institutions are benign without the actions of those who invoke regulations and sustain procedures that impact on lived experiences. Such bureaucratic demands often lead to the subordination of practitioners to regulations. Administration processes regulate social relations between young people and professionals, impacting on the quality of their interactions and the relationships they are able to build.

The views of children and young people are sought as a means to make improvements to the system. In 2010 the Children's Commissioner for England, Al Aynsley Green, claimed that during his conversations with young people in care the majority focused on their negative experiences. Such negative childhood and adolescent experiences shape future adult lives, while positive experiences are taken for granted. Hence outcomes-based research offers a window on how care experiences may be understood as failing to offer young people the strategies and tools to lead independent and successful lives. The overwhelming critique of care among both professionals and young people to emerge from consultations and the government report by the House of Commons (McLeod, 2008-09) suggests that care fails to deliver the kind of warmth, stability, security or love that young people deserve and expect. For young people to be taken into care pre-supposes a family crisis or series of crises before admission; to then experience the worst institutional failings of care, such as transience or abuse, fails to honour the sentimentality of childhood.

The crisis of the care system could be understood through an engagement with media and government reports into abuses in residential and foster homes, the shortage of foster carers and the workload and subsequent high burn out rate of social workers in Children and Families' Departments. However, there are additional issues of the quality of care young people receive which are brought about by bureaucratic underpinnings, issues of human labour and a loss of warmth and caring within the care system. Those in care are not offered a childhood or adolescence that could be deemed ordinary, as their everyday lives are structured by public care processes, mediated by their foster homes and foster carers acting in crisis.

The position of children in care is one in which they are at risk of abuse from others, and young people or older adolescents are a risk to others. As Oswell (2002) claims, 'research has looked at childhood as a temporal period which is divided into developmental stages and governed accordingly' (ibid:15). Throughout this research process I have gathered anecdotal evidence to suggest that adolescents occupy the position of rebellious, feral, out of control youths and perpetrators of crime, including theft, drug abuse and child murder. Adolescents in care are reported in the media as failures and potential social misfits, and younger children in care occupy front-page news, mostly when they fail to be protected by effective communication between the key child protection agencies. Children in care have been and are targets for sexual and physical abuse by staff in residential children's homes. They become silent victims because of their age, vulnerability and need for adult protection. This polarised dynamic of risk to and risk from feeds into the larger discourse around the way in which children are positioned more generally.

British legal restrictions on young people designate them as people in their own right, yet simultaneously limits their freedom to exercise choice and increases dependency on adults, through arbitrary age restrictions on everything from drinking alcohol, to curfews, marriage and army conscription. The limitation of choice and lack of freedom to exercise rights renders young people dependent on adults (Christensen & O'Brien, 2003). The boundaries of the adult/young person relationship become challenged when young people are in care; firstly as they are separated from their families and can no longer depend (if they ever have been able to depend) on that adult relationship and secondly, adult professionals such as carers and social workers who take on the role of substitute can potentially be (and often are) undependable due to the pressures, processes and constraints of working in a system in crisis.

Channel 4 television documentary, *Dispatches,* conducted an undercover investigation into the Surrey Children and Families Social Work Department which demonstrated that young people between the ages of 12-16 are letdown, left behind and ignored by an over-stretched care system (2010). Many children in care are there through no fault of their own; they are rejected, neglected, abandoned or simply removed from families and never returned. An anecdotal remark heard from a childcare professional suggested that if a young person admitted to care does not return home within a year, they will remain in care until they are eighteen.

Judgements on parenting to assess their quality of childcare were initially set up to save children from moral, physical and spiritual decline; this has its beginnings in socio-political actions of philanthropists such as Thomas Barnado, Benjamin Waugh and Thomas Coram, who set up the first Victorian children's homes. At the time children were both living and dying on the streets, perhaps cared for by private individuals, but they were also cared for in institutions and living in poor physical condition and under punitive regimes of control. There was no standardised care and early philanthropists set out to remedy this. Much later state intervention asserted that local authorities become responsible for children in their vicinity. The 1908 Children Act had one central aim to protect children from harm by removing them from home when the risks of leaving them were greater. The Children Act amendments of 1948 and 1989 had the same goal of removal, showing deference to an un-tested model of public care, which was responsive to the needs of the times. (2005:1). Ritchie's (2005) consideration of evidence-based research suggests two things; firstly, that at no time was there an assessment of the effectiveness of care through child removal. Secondly, that the outcomes of care leavers point to a system flawed and dogged by institutional failures and professionals lacking adequate training and support in caring for the country's most vulnerable young people.

Corporate parenting, or the care system, is an institutional framework of agencies and professionals with specific responsibilities and a duty of care for children who cannot be looked after in their birth families. The care system is currently undergoing changes and social services will play a central role in ensuring improved outcomes for children and young people in care, through the implementation of the Children Act 2004. An alliance between social services, police and hospitals will promote joined up thinking between the three main child protection referral agencies, which have been criticised for failing children[1]. Social Services will also take the lead on delivering services through children's trusts while taking into account children's views about their care through regular reviews and care planning. The care of children Looked-after by the local authority is currently a concern of big business, government and charities. The 'Care Matters' government white paper, launched in June 2007, aims to deliver improved services, to young people in care. Beverley Hughes, the former Labour government Children's Minister states 'There is a significant gap between the quality of life and future prospects of children in care and those of other children' (Hughes, 2008). To address this gap former Education Secretary, Alan Johnson, secured the financial backing of businesses such as BT, Deutsche Bank, Citi and HSBC, which have promised a range of services such as apprenticeships, guaranteed places on training programmes and money for private educational tuition as well as virtual head-teachers to support the education and future economic well-being of young people in care. These initiatives could increase employment opportunities for care leavers. Estimates from the Department for Children, Schools, and Families suggest that between 2008 and 2012 private industry will contribute £305 million to support government initiatives. The term corporate parenting is replacing the care system or

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[1] The Victoria Climbé Inquiry (2002-03) and Baby P investigation, both highlight a lack of communication between the three referral agencies as a causal factor of a combined failure to protect both children from being killed by their guardians.

Looked-after system and pays homage to private companies, which are discharging a portion of their social responsibility action plans through this scheme.

However, it remains unclear what the incoming coalition will propose for children and young people in care; but Robert Tapsfield, Chief Executive of the Fostering Network, remains hopeful: 'We hope the coalition government of Liberal Democrats and Conservatives will prove to be good news for children in care' (Tapsfield, 2010). There is optimism among leading child and social care organizations that the coalition will make improvements to existing structures of care, and to the quality of life of young people in care and ultimately to their prospects when they leave.

My interest emerged as a response to long-standing debates in social work practice and policy concerned with the over-representation of mixed young people in care. However, research interests, as feminists have noted, are invariably shaped by life experiences (Stanley, 1990; Skeggs, 1995). I came into care after being orphaned and that experience has and continues to structure my life. I began to think through how my care experiences were such a strong and enduring influence on my own life, both positive and negative. Taking up the opportunity to produce knowledge in this area is both a personal and political exercise. Personally, I wanted to return to see if care had changed, how young people were now racialised and whether they were placed as mixed or black. I wondered if children's homes socialising militant young people had been closed down, such as those depicted in the Lennie James' film *Storm Damage*, whereby large numbers of young people living together in children's homes made behaviour management difficult for staff. Politically, I wanted to examine placement practices and how social workers and foster carers made sense of mixedness. To listen to what young people had to say about care and being mixed. To make a contribution to counter dominant stereotypes

surrounding the negative conception of being raised in a care system that is always considered in crisis or a failure. Aside from the retrospective biographies of young people raised in care who have succeeded as adults (against all the odds), such as Lennie James, Samantha Morton and Paolo Hewitt, these negative stereotypes are rarely countered. The care experiences of the young people in this thesis offer a new way to conceptualise how care impacts on lives in the present and demonstrates that young people can share their experiences without censorship and hopefully illuminate the pressures of growing up in care.

When I share the content of the thesis with other professionals or people I meet they usually gawp and suggest that access must have been difficult and that the young people must have been hardened, hopeless or hapless. I reply yes, some of the time they were, but often there was a softness and vulnerability, a need for company and comfort and, moreover, someone to listen to them. This is not to suggest that researchers ought to have experiences close to those which they study, but that the capacity for empathy is a most useful tool in revealing how lived experiences are understood by participants. My own experiences were reflected in their lives and there was no sense that they constituted an 'other' group outside of my experiential knowledge and awareness.

Accounting for mixing and mixedness

There are approximately 60 000 children in long term corporate care, although up to 90 000 move through the care system in any one year, often experiencing short-term foster placements (British Association of Adoption and Fostering (BAAF), 2007). Some, but not all, local authorities undertake ethnic monitoring of children and young people in care; however, recording ethnicity is not always consistent or accurate (Barn, 1993). Due

to these inconsistencies the figure is subject to an approximate fluctuation of 10%[2].

Mixed children and young people are 8% of all children in care. In the borough where

the research was undertaken 16% of all children and young people Looked-after by the

local authority were mixed. These statistics clearly show that mixed children and young

people are over-represented in the care system. Such figures suggest that mixed families

and mixed young people are either inherently problematic or are constituted as a

problem.

The mixed population was officially represented in the UK Census 2001 for the first

time, due to growing pressure and global movements that clamoured for recognition and

social legitimacy. Although ethnic monitoring and classification is an important tool in

the recognition of mixed people, it remains to be seen how the information will be used[3].

Statistics point out that 50% of mixed people are under the age of 16 years old.

Nationally 3% children under 16 years are mixed. The age structure shows that one out

of every five children starting school is mixed. The mixed population is increasing at

such a rate that the Office for National Statistics, which carries out the Census is unable

to predict growth rates beyond the next twenty years[4]. Approximately 677 000 people in

Britain described themselves as being 'mixed' in the 2001 census. Mixed people are the

third largest minority group in England and Wales, behind Indians and then Pakistanis

(Office for National Statistics, 2001). Further, 80% of mixed people were born in Britain

and 90% of mixed respondents described their national identity as British (ONS, 2001).

Mixed people tend to be concentrated in urban areas; London, Birmingham, Manchester

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[2] Ethnic monitoring across social services departments is inconsistent and patchy and often results in inaccurate recordings of ethnicity. This can be due to unknown paternity. Visual appearance can influence how classification is recorded. The debate over who is mixed and how they can be described is discussed more fully in the methodological chapter.
[3] There are issues surrounding the durability of the classification that invites respondents to state ethnic heritage. See Owen (2001) for further discussion.
[4] Peter Aspinall at a meeting held in London in June 2004.

and Liverpool have the highest mixed populations. They are also concentrated in some of the most deprived areas of those cities. Such population growth has serious implications if the over-representation of mixed young people in care remains a current trend.

Currently, mixedness is signified by the over-representation of children and young people in care or the high profile given to instances of hybrid vigour. Gendered constructions of mixedness through the notoriety of male figures in socio-political life and culture have brought mixedness to the fore most notably through Barack Obama, Tiger Woods, Rio Ferdinand and Lewis Hamilton. Such representations pose mixed people as phenomenal humans of courage, tenacity and skill in their chosen fields. Mixed people are considered as able to straddle both races and bring disparate racial and ethnic groups together. Such expectations that mixed people are somehow ambassadors of race politics as they (allegedly) see things from both sides, positions them as mediators. The racial and ethnic boundaries of mixedness rely on a model of classification that re-asserts the salience of a biological understanding of race and undermines the move toward the deconstruction of race thinking and race making. An examination of how mixedness can be conceptualised is a central task through the empirical chapters.

> 'Family likeness has often a deep sadness in it. Nature that great tragic dramatist knits us together by bone and muscle and divides us by the subtler web of our brains; blends yearning and repulsion; and ties us by the heartstrings to the beings that jar us at every moment'. (George Eliot, 1869:21)

There is a clear and enduring relationship between the racial classification mixed and the residential care system. Significant numbers of mixed children and young people have been cared for outside of the family for generations across the world (Olumide, 2002). The interracial mixed family is understood in ways that contest its social legitimacy and

impact upon its durability (ibid). The consistent numbers of care admissions of mixed young people is testimony to that. Mixed young people of African Caribbean and white British heritage are more likely than any other ethnic group to be admitted to care (Barn, 1997). Once in care their experiences are structured by their mixed classification (Thoburn, et al., 2000; 2005). Care processes such as placements, transience or care leaving are part of how mixed young people undergo racialisation within the care system. Much of the existing writing on mixedness tends to veer, firstly, towards mixed as a problematic identity used to explain behavioural problems among young people in care (Olumide, 2002; Okitikpi, 2005); and secondly, toward an emphasis on racial identity without an overt consideration of gender, ethnicity, sexuality, class and geographical location (and such an intersectional approach is more useful to understanding lived experience) (Prevatt-Goldstein, 1999; Small, 1986). These two approaches assert race a priori and place an over-emphasis on 'mixedness' as inherently problematic as both a racial classification and a lived position. Existing research on mixed young people in care focuses on the assumption that mixed 'identity' is problematic both at the point of racial difference and an untenable social position.

Research shows that 'mixed parentage children and adolescents in local authority care exhibit identity confusion and low self esteem' (Robinson, 2005:77). Such an emphasis on racial identity obscures how social processes bring about specific circumstances, such that problems the individual may experience can then be said to be emblematic of mixedness. The assertion of race a priori negates the complexity of the lives of young people in care who often negotiate particularly complex and fraught family circumstances and enter care after what can be traumatic or difficult pre care experiences. Mixed young people in care are caught up in complex processes of racialisation such that the social and

personal problems they experience are said to be a direct consequence of their mixedness.

The care experiences of mixed young people are structured in two main ways. Firstly, it is constructed as an ambivalent sign of racial difference. Such difference is both read off the body through skin, mannerisms, vernacular and relationships and can be ambiguous at the point of misrecognition. Mixedness is often only achievable through invoking an additional identification such as ethnicity or cultural practices which secure its contestable status. This raises the question of whether mixedness can be understood and theorised as an emerging racial and ethnic classification? If so, it should be questioned as to how such boundaries of classification can be drawn. Secondly, young people in care are understood through the emergence of mixed as a viable social category (albeit with issues of definition) yet to be defined and still unable to offer ontological security or social legitimacy. These two positions pose mixedness as both firmly entrenched in race theory through attention to mixing and racial difference, discernable through the body, and beyond race within debates about deconstruction of race, through a third racial classification mixedness, and its unsettling position in debates about racial difference. Such debates are engaged with throughout the thesis, as both positions are at stake in understanding how mixedness is both classified and experienced. The lived experiences of young people in care are thus part of wider socio-political and academic discussions about how mixedness can be conceptualised.

The research questions addressed throughout the thesis are:

- How do young people make meaning from the discursive repertoires of the mixed classification in their care experiences?

- In what ways are care experiences being structured through understandings of mixedness?

I have found throughout my research that young people understand their life in foster care is shaped by their racial classification. How they make meaning from their mixedness includes a consideration of the structures and discourses of care. Their ability to utilise race and ethnicity in relation to care experiences offers new ways to think about the impact of racialisation on young people in the site of the care system. Racial identity is a primary signifier of the type of socialisation a young person receives in care. It shapes their foster placement, the contact they may have with siblings and whether they experience excessive transience. In care the focus on mixedness as a problematic classification creates a series of dilemmas in relation to how social workers manage mixed young people through the care system. The relationship between young people, mixedness and care is at the centre of discussions throughout the thesis and teases out some of the processes that emerge directly through the mixed classification. These processes shape and influence how young people experience their life in care and their wider understandings of their racial classification and its place and role in social life. The thesis argues that when the conceptualisation of mixedness is overly deterministic as a racial classification the care experiences of young people are adversely affected.

The wider socio-political underpinnings of mixedness through race mixing are further constituted by racial and sexual difference routed through ideas of race purity. The secondary problem to be addressed which emerges from an engagement with the research questions then becomes: how does the understanding and subsequent structuring absence of the mixed family become re-played through the care system in

ways that continue to shape the care experiences of mixed young people? And how are mixed families understood through care processes?

Racial mixing across what is conceived of as racial difference raises concerns about culture clashes between two supposedly different 'races'. The legacy of discourses of race mixing is tied to conceptions of gender and class in ways that cannot be easily extracted from discussions of race (mixing) alone. New research points to the social and economic demographic of mixed families (Caballero et al., 2008). There are indications that mixed families outside of contact with social services are predominately middle-class, highly educated and living in some of the most affluent areas in Britain. Among mixed households with dependent children, two parent families comprise 87% while only 65% is the national average (ibid:14). This statistic points to the durability of mixed families who do not live in conditions of poverty.

The beginning of significant attention to race mixing came during the 1940s at the cusp of post war immigration to Britain from the Commonwealth countries. Andrea Levy chronicles this period in her novel 'Small Island' (1995) which was dramatised on television by the BBC in 2010, through the story of Queenie (again the enduring attention to white working class mothers is centred) who is pregnant with Robert's child. He is a Caribbean serviceman fighting for the British Army in World War II. Queenie is his landlady and her husband is missing in action, assumed dead. She prepares for life with a half-caste[5] child and realises that 'it is not within where the enemy lies but out there' (BBC1, 2010). Despite wanting to keep the baby, she gives him up to a black couple who can give him what he needs – a black family. The moral panic surrounding 'dusky' war babies condemned them as a casualty of war. Post war the growth of the

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[5] This terminology half-caste was in widespread use at the time but now is considered derogatory although it is still in use; three quarter-caste is a term used by some young people in my research.

half-caste population became subject to welfare discourses and interventions into poor communities in the cities and ports of England. The Home Office proposed that one possible solution to this problem was to ship the babies of unions between working class white women and black seafaring and army men to America to be adopted and raised in black families. The black British population opposed this (Solomos & Back, 1996:180). Yet political policy and welfare concerns from the post-war era to today have consistently debated the question of what to do with the removed, unwanted or abandoned children of race mixing.

In the popular comedy sketch show, *Harry Enfield and Chums* (1994), 'working class white woman' Waynetta Slob expresses her desire for a brown baby. The value of the brown baby as a symbol of racial harmony bears no relation to the statistics, which present the mixed children of a white mother and a black father as most likely to enter care under the age of one year, both locally and nationally (Selwyn, 2008). However, these comedy sketches do highlight the assumptions about mixed families and their position as part of a wider popular narrative of undesirable race mixing taking place between lower class white women and hypersexual black men (Cabellero, 2008). Quite why white, working class women have chosen relationships with men of colour, despite mainstream objections to mixed relationships, may have its roots in their own class and gender subjugation.

In summary, mixed young people in care are subjects of interest in a number of varied ways and this has been considered through attention to both academic, social work and popular discourse. The issues in the institutional arrangements of care pose specific problems in relation to the quality and consistency of care that young people receive. Young people who leave care are defined through attention to their poor outcomes in

adult life in which the statistics suggest they have been failed by care. The inter-dependency of the individual life and the circumstance of its production demonstrate a relationship between the crisis of care and the outcomes of care leavers. However, the experiences of mixed young people living in care in the present can be sidelined in research and this thesis places their narrative centre. The role of young people is considered as a specific stage of development no longer a child and not yet an adult and such positioning leads to them becoming sidelined through care practices. Care is being reframed to account for its failures through addressing issues it identifies as impacting on the quality of care young people experience. The mixed classification has adverse consequences for care experiences and negative assumptions made about mixed families continue to be a structuring absence in the care planning of young people.

Chapter two, the literature review considers in greater depth some of the issues and problems raised in the introduction. It explores how both mixedness and mixing poses a specifically contentious set of circumstances that collide during welfare intervention. A discussion of the role and position of mixed families situates the mixed young person in care as still part of their families, despite their absence. Further, the mixed family remains a structuring absence, which informs how mixedness is understood and acted upon in the site of care practices. Mixed as a classification and an identification is framed within debates about identity models and within critical mixed race theory in an aim to conceptualise how mixed is worked in the thesis. From the position that personhood is socially constructed mixedness is utilised as both an identification and a lived experience which gives way to specific types of social interactions and relations. The literature situates the debates surrounding how mixed is understood and how it is developed and used within the data.

Chapter three presents an account of the research process through a discussion of the specificity of the circumstances, status and vulnerability of mixed young people in care. Such specificity posed a series of dilemmas during access and recruitment. Processes of racialisation characterised the initial discussions with social workers about referrals to the project and enabled a rich and varied range of participants. This process of recruitment revealed how social workers understood mixedness and how they engaged with processes of race making in situ. A discussion of the multi-method research tools offers new ways to work with young people in care that takes account of how censorship of their physical space and their nostalgia for places anchors the research through attention to space as both data and method. The use of visual methods was a specific engagement with a creative practice to capture imaginations but also to reveal possibly painful experiences stored in their memories. My experiential and intellectual biography is discussed in relation to knowledge production as it informed the themes and trajectory of the research and also set the tone for the research relationships. Participatory action research framed a commitment to an ethical research project bound by emotional investment, confidentiality and trust.

Chapters four, five, six and seven represent the empirical focus of the study by presenting and analysing the data generated during the fieldwork. Each of the chapters examines a specific point of tension present within the care system and the conceptualising of mixedness through experiences of young people in care.

Chapter four examines how race making and racial classification in social services imposes racial and ethnic boundaries of inclusion and exclusion in order to process and manage young people's care admission and care planning. These boundaries and the classifications that emerge from them are problematic when applied to understandings of

mixedness. These debates question who can be mixed and how mixed people who are outside of existing racial and ethnic boundaries of mixedness can find belonging. The processes of care also determine other areas of everyday life such as education, placements and family contact. This particular narrative of care suggests that the regulation and management of lives through care processes push young people's ordinary lives to the periphery.

Chapter five examines the social construction of the mixed family through its visual representation in the family album. An examination of racial mixing through attention to class, race, gender and family life in all its textured detail, reveal the internal narrative beneath the surface of the image of mixed families subject to welfare intervention. Family albums are significant tools to connect with and to reveal relationships, memory and belonging. The dissonance between family members opens a discursive space to understand loyalty to birth family, foster family and relationships with social workers. Practices of long term fostering suggest that an overt focus on mixedness can lead to insecurity as mixed young people are denied permanency and stability due to rigid matching processes.

Chapter six builds upon the previous two chapters and examines how care processes of racial matching for the purposes of fostering can lead to transience through care placements. The use of the camera and image production to examine home and belonging reveals how placements can be spaces of censorship and restriction. Such placement practices and their consequences for notions of belonging to home and family can lead to nostalgia for the past. An examination of home and belonging through notions of family and diaspora was relevant in understanding transience through care. Placement movement is a direct consequence of the mixed classification along with the

inherent discursive constructions of race and ethnicity within the mixed classification in short term fostering.

Chapter seven examines the experience of leaving care to reveal how the strategic use and embodiment of mixedness can build social capital in remarkable ways. Such strategies become lived and experienced through embodied narratives of what mixedness means in relation to gender and sexuality. The intersection of variables is mobilised and acted upon by cultural performance in unregulated public spaces. Such performance suggests that mixedness must always be considered through attention to how the classification interacts with other identifications in situ. Conceptualising mixedness as a lived experience becomes further developed through how it can facilitate the building of social capital.

Chapter eight provides a discussion of the findings presented in the study. It discusses how mixedness is conceptualised in the thesis and makes suggestions as to how it can be worked with by social work professionals in the care planning of mixed young people. It further considers how placement planning, relationality, long and short term fostering and leaving care are processes that have an adverse outcome in relation to mixedness. By examining mixedness as a racial classification raises questions of how its racial and ethnic boundaries may re-invoke race. Yet acknowledgement of the internal diversity and varied experiences of those who are mixed could be one way to assert a shared sense of belonging.

Chapter 2: Situating Mixedness Through Care

> 'To the real question, how does it feel to be a problem? I seldom answer a word. And yet being a problem is a strange experience – peculiar even for one who has never been anything else'. (Du Bois, 1999:3)

This thesis considers how young people feel about being mixed and in care by focussing on how care processes construct a specific type of childhood through what is considered a problematic classification. Mixing is considered a problem when it occurs across racial boundaries and the socio-political classification and identification of mixed people has been considered a problem in societies dominated by race politics. Larger social practices of race making have shaped care processes and further impact on care experiences. Understandings of race through mixing and mixedness have been shaped by social, political and legal discourse and these have had consequences for how mixed families have been understood in wider social life and in welfare discourses aimed at intervention. Mixedness has been understood through an overt focus on racial identity, often at the expense of other variables such as class, gender and sex, and the intersectional and situational nature of these can be more fully considered through a focus on lived experience. Research on mixed young people in care suggests they are adversely impacted by their mixed classification and experience further disadvantage once they leave care. However, what remains unknown is how the care experiences of mixed young people are connected to their mixed classification.

A consideration of existing research suggests that birth families have been the primary site for the socialisation of children into racial identification. For mixed children and young people this process is made complex through notions of racial difference within mixed families. Studies that consider empirical research into how mixed young people in care make meaning from their mixedness and negotiate identification, without the

physical engagement of parenting and socialisation of the birth family, are absent from these debates. As such the problem of mixed young people in care has been dogged by an inattention to separation from the birth family and the impact of the family's absence has not been equally considered. However, despite the fact that there is an over-emphasis on mixed young people in care possessing a problematic identity, there is very little research pertaining to how care actively shapes racial identity in the absence of the birth family.

Mixed Problems and Care Issues

The experiences of mixed young people in the care system have been a long-standing concern and constitute a serious social problem as the mixed population increases. Their position is more precarious than for other children as they are adversely affected by placement practices and policies of foster care which posit race and culture a priori. Mixed young people are currently studied as a group who have specific and distinct issues in relation to care. As such their care needs are recognised as different to that of black and white children (Owusu-Bempah, 2005; Okitikpi, 2005; Barn & Harman, 2006). A series of reviews and studies indicate that mixed children 'present a dilemma for social workers' in terms of appropriate placements (Barn et al., 1997:281). Subsequently, they 'continue to be disadvantaged in the system' (ibid:34) and present with a specific set of concerns during their care experiences. For example, a longitudinal study showed that 18% of mixed race heritage children (as they were referred to) were able to 'retain contact with a birth parent or be placed with a sibling' in contrast to 38% of young people with two same race parents (Thoburn, 2005:118). The findings also suggest that they wait longer in care and stay in unstable or short term care and that 84% of mixed race heritage children were placed with white families compared to 55% of those with two black parents from the same background (ibid:117). 'The majority of children placed

in white families were mixed parentage. These families were not deemed unfit to bring up mixed children' (Barn, 1999:28). The basis of this decision-making suggests it is 'possible that these decisions were made on shades of colour rather than actual needs and concerns' (ibid:61). How mixed children and young people are placed by social workers and how placement decisions are made suggests that appearance and visible difference remain an influence in the social construction of racial categories. Mixed children and young people in care are often dealing with complex birth family experiences and with feelings of loss, rejection, and broken attachments. As they enter care an overt focus on their mixed classification can place those complexities within the classification itself. Simply put, when mixed young people are in care many of the complexities in their lives can become reduced to the assumptions made about mixed as an inherently problematic classification, and such assumptions locate problems they have in their mixed identification.

Family Circumstances of Care Admissions

Research based in 13 social services authorities in England undertook quantitative evaluation of the notes made by social workers about children being admitted into care (Bebbington & Miles, 1987). The findings suggest that the classification of 'mixed race' could be considered an indicator of disadvantage alongside poverty, poor health and poor housing. It was found that all other factors being equal, i.e. living conditions and family type, mixed race children and young people were still two and a half times more likely than white children to be taken into care (ibid). Abuse or neglect is the most cited reason for the admission of mixed children and young people into care: for mixed white and black Caribbean children and young people it is 62% and for mixed white and black African children and young people it is 60%. This figure is in line with the national average for this category of need at 60% (Owen, 2009). Acute distress in families is the

second most cited reason for admission of mixed white and black Caribbean children and young people. The figures show that 'acute distress' accounts for 9.4% in these cases and that for mixed white and black African children and young people it is 9% (ibid). These figures are in line with the national average across all ethnic groups at 10.3% (ibid). The data held on children's admission to care is categorised according to the main reason for admission while contributing family circumstances remain unknown (Barn, 1993, 1997; Bebbington & Miles, 2003). These statistics suggest that neglect and abuse as a reason for admission points to inadequate parenting and that the causal factors for this can be found within how mixed families are both constituted and understood.

The attitude of social workers unable to think about mixed relationships in positive ways has also been cited as a factor in the increased admissions of mixed young people from white lone mother families (Banks, 1995). Research findings suggest that mixed children and young people with lone white mothers were taken into care in 59% of cases. White children and young people with lone white mothers were taken into care in only 49% of all referrals (Barn, 1997). Judgements about the 'ability of lone white mothers being unable to care for mixed children' have been cited as being responsible for the increasing number of mixed race children entering care (Katz, 1996:102). 'Processes of racialisation and race thinking allow issues of entitlement to arise around the mother's right to raise her child' (Olumide, 2002:131). Accusations surrounding the cultural competency of lone white mothers are asserted in relation to their inability to: socialise mixed children with regard to culture; deal with racism or racial abuse; manage hair and skin care; and provide culturally appropriate food. Such cultural practices and mores arise through an engagement with discourses of race mixing as irreconcilable difference. Such mothers were seen as ill prepared to socialise their children. Mixed children and young people admitted to care were more likely to come from lone white mother homes (Barn, 1993).

Research is currently underway to examine the relationship between the care admission of mixed children and young people and the support networks and social isolation of lone white mother families (Barn & Harman, forthcoming)

The link between lone motherhood and poverty is established through 'lone mothers' vulnerability to poverty, not lone motherhood itself' (Gillies, 2007:19). Lone mothers are more likely to experience difficulty with childcare when employed in poorly paid positions or only working during term time with reduced school hours. Long-term poverty is most often a characteristic of particular family forms such as lone parents, unemployed parents, teenage parents, and families with children under five or families with a large number of children (ibid:11). Further longitudinal research by Dearing et al. (2004) concluded that mothers affected by poverty are more likely to become depressed which is likely to adversely affect the quality of parenting.

> 'Individuals, families and groups in the population can be said to be in poverty when they lack the resources to obtain the types of diet, participate in the activities and have the living conditions and amenities which are customary, or at least widely encouraged or approved in the societies to which they belong'. (Townsend, 1979:31)

An analysis of the relationship between social class and depression suggests mothers from a lower social class are more prone to depression; 39% versus 6% for mothers from higher social classes[6] (Brown & Harris, 1978). This could be due to the help that more affluent mothers are able buy-in through nannies, cleaners and au pairs that poorer parents cannot afford. Depressed parents living in impoverished conditions are more likely to become stressed, angry or irritable and this affects parenting style. 'Parenting style and not poverty per se, affects children's outcomes in negative ways' (Katz et al.,

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[6] Although the hypotheses could argue that mothers who are depressed and living in poverty are also more likely to be unemployed and the inverse could be considered a possibility.

2007:18). Further, economically deprived parents from different ethnic groups respond differently to the stresses of poverty (Barnes, 2004; Marsh & Mackay, 1994). Research findings show a correlation between poverty as a cause of stress as well as one cause of child abuse and neglect (Pelton, 1994; Briggs & Hawkins, 1996; Katz, et al., 2007). There were high levels of abuse and neglect in all groups but white and mixed ethnicity children were more likely to be referred for neglect (Selwyn et al., 2008). Mixed children and young people are more likely to enter care due to neglect, which is a reflection of the quality of parenting which has been measured as falling below acceptable levels.

It is estimated that three quarters of children on the child protection register are living in family homes with domestic violence (Department of Health, 2002). Links between domestic violence and child abuse show that in between 30% - 66% of all child abuse cases there is also domestic violence in the home (Hester et al., 2000; Radford & Hester, 2007). Domestic violence is a common feature of care orders. Research by Masson et al. (2008) investigated 400 files of children involved in care proceedings and domestic violence was recorded in over half the files. The leading charity Women's Aid cites that 'Two women each week are killed by violence in the home accounting for 40% of all murders; 68% of women experience post-traumatic stress disorder; 48% have depression and 18% attempt to commit suicide' (ibid:2008). Greater attention is being paid to how domestic violence impacts on the well being of children and young people at home. Amendments to the Children Act 2000 now state that being a witness to violence in the home necessitates child removal. More research with mixed families in receipt of welfare intervention is needed to examine if, why and how mixed families are more likely to experience higher levels of domestic violence.

Mixed Up Terminology

The language to describe mixed people is a source of tension as the evolution of the term is entangled in discussions about the usefulness of 'race' and in debates about racialisation as a pseudo-scientific construct and its subsequent reification through discourse. Therefore using race as part of everyday language is implicated in wider debates about its contemporary relevance. Hence language to describe mixed and mixing is tentative and shifting as the relevance of race as an organising principle becomes abandoned or deconstructed. Class stratification and geographical location also determine which terms of description are applicable. It is often asserted that the middle classes prefer to use the term 'mixed race' while the working classes sometimes use 'half-caste' (Tizard & Phoenix, 1993; Ali, 2001; Dewan, 2008). However, Dewan's research with working class young women of mixed heritage in further education in London, all used the term mixed race, possibly a signifier of social mobility through education. However, some of the teenagers in her research sample also used half-caste, which was a derogatory term in popular use between 1960 to 1980 (ibid:2008). There is current evidence that among young people the term half-caste is being re-claimed and used without its negative connotations (Lincoln, 2008). Class mobility and geography exert an influence on language usage; for example, in my view London has a large mixed population and mixed race, or simply mixed, is a term that I have heard used by the majority of the population, regardless of class.

Social work practitioners and policy makers are divided in how they classify and label mixed identities and are caught in the tension between whether to classify mixed race as black (Banks, 1995; Maximé, 1993), black with a white parent (Prevatt-Goldstein, 1999), black but of mixed parentage, or mixed. There is further debate as to whether they should be called 'mixed race, mixed parentage, mixed origin, dual heritage, or multiple

heritage' (Barn & Harman, 2006:1310). Participants in this thesis commonly favoured the term 'mixed race' and this was often abbreviated by them, and by myself, to mixed, mix and mix race. The 2001 Census used 'mixed' and allowed (a small) space to state all ethnic ancestry – ultimately rendering 'mixed' almost unintelligible in any quantitative sense, as measuring mixedness through ethnicity could lead to several affiliations being claimed thus making it difficult to measure quantitative demographics. There is also the added complication as to how many generations back an individual would have to go to find a black ancestor. Further complications are whether mixed is only used to describe visible difference and whether people with Asian/African heritage are also to be defined as mixed. It is clear that the terminology of mixed remains an unsettled and contested site and mixed young people in care are caught within a complex political dilemma over racial and ethnic classification and subsequent description.

Mixed Experience

My preference throughout this thesis was to use mixed. Despite the primary focus of an examination of mixedness through race mixing and the symbolic differences of black and white, mixed people can also experience mixedness through other perceived differences, such as ethnicity and religion. Mobilising mixed can then be considered through the experiential, and such a consideration can find similarities across race, ethnicity or religion, rendering these variables a specific point of investigation as they intersect with gender, class, culture, etc. This intersection is the lived experience of internal difference, which is acted upon by others. Hence an unpacking of the processes of racialisation in the site of foster care is achievable through the lived experiences of young people.

Self-identification is the primary issue to be addressed and I strive to avoid imposing my definitions on others. I am true to how the participants self identify and this varies across

the chapters as the use of mixed race, mixed, and three quarter caste are employed, but rarely used explicitly, by the participants. Specific attention to how they self identify opens up the conundrum of terminology as well as the differences within mixed as a classification. In this thesis I use the term 'mixing' to describe interracial relationships across visible differences of race and I use the term mixed to describe people of black African Caribbean and white British parentage.

Race as Identity

> 'Racial identity does not imply acceptance of race as real, but acknowledges the social and political reality that people live in societies in which race identities are attributed to them…and these have real consequences for their experiences of life'. (Robinson, 2005:77)

Race is only one aspect of identity, which can override other identifications such as class, sex and gender (Mama, 1995). Race making is a social practice made through processes of racialisation that emerge within populations in which 'race is used to categorise individuals or behaviour' (Miles, 1989:73). Race is made among people to assign others identities that somehow characterise them through a bodily schema and in this way racial identities become fixed and unchanging.

In the USA the historical legislation of the one-drop law, or hypo-descent, is traceable in discussions of race and mixedness and informs current social services practices and policy. The one-drop law designated all mixed people as black through a demonstration of their African ancestry. In 1705 in the state of Virginia a law was passed which classified the child, or grandchildren, of a negro as mulatto. Virginia officials declared all mulattos must be considered black and the bondage of 'blacks' was defined and made universal through legislation and its associated practices (Moran, 2001). The aim of such a system was to obliterate the status and resources attached to the economic, cultural and

political value of whiteness of mixed people which was inherited but erased by the practices of legislation and endeavoured to 'deny them inheritance and privileges based on their white origins' (Owusu-Bempah, 2001:28). Mixedness is remade in the site of social services through these historical understandings of race through the practice of DNA testing to determine the ethnic heritage of mixed children in care who have unknown paternity, which reinstates the underpinnings of the one-drop law.

Race is made by people in and through social practices and is implicit in the way that social meaning is constructed (Knowles, 2003). Deconstruction is useful for the purpose of understanding race-making processes within specific sites and contexts. 'If we move race from the agenda, we cannot at the same time claim that race prejudice, social ascription, marginalisation and discrimination exist, and challenge such inequalities in society' (Dewan, 2008:9). Investigating the experiences of mixed people does not suggest that race exists as a discrete entity but that it is actively made by people and has social consequences for the lived experiences of those who are racialised. Race leaves no enduring identity among people and is not characterised by universal features of human existence. Olmuide (2002) asserts that these processes of racialisation construct the mixed race condition and that mixed people become subjects situated within discursive repertoires of race and race making. The site of social services uses discursive constructions of mixedness to racialise the participants in specific ways through each stage of intervention: care admission, placements, long term and short term fostering placements, sibling and family contact and care leaving.

Critical Mixed Race Theory

Attention to theorising the lived experience of mixed people relies on the 'idea that personhood is socially constructed' (Dewan, 2008:35). Implicit to the idea of personhood

34

is the understanding that we are social beings who form ourselves within social relationships (Root, 2006; Mahtani, 2002; Rockquemore & Brunsma, 2002; Ifekunwigwe, 1999; Parker & Song, 2001). An examination of mixedness requires an engagement with debates about individual identities and about who is and who is not mixed in the context of how social life is organised. It is also about how these boundaries of ethnic difference and racial sameness can be mobilised in non-exclusionary ways (Ali, 2003). However, such an engagement also speaks to discourses, which have placed mixed people as black, marginal or confused (Root, 1996; Ifekunwigwe, 1999). Mixedness has been seen as a truly post-modern identity for being able to bring together different cultures (Mahtani, 2002). In this way mixed people are seen as race pedagogues (Camper, 2004) which 'leaves the race work up to mixed people' (ibid:181). The multiple affiliations of mixedness make it difficult to define as a category (Ali, 2003), and, further, not all individuals experience mixedness in the same way (Dewan, 2008). The development of mixedness beyond individualism is difficult due to existing ways of constructing collectives and groups through ethnic and racial belonging, which rely on boundaries of inclusion and exclusion. Additionally, mixed people often share more affiliations with others across race, cultural practices, ethnicity or religion than within the category mixed itself which, by its very nature, is internally diverse (Lincoln, 2009). The category remains un-chartered beyond individual understandings of mixedness, although British grassroots organisations are beginning to suggest that mixedness can be a way to form belonging (Intermix, People in Harmony, Mix-d). These ideas engage with the notion that mixedness can be a shared experience of ambiguous appearance and mis-recognition, leading to specific practices to secure social legitimacy and belonging; such an engagement is part of a wider discussion in chapter seven.

Post-race theory moves away from an understanding of identity as fixed and it is now widely accepted and recognised that race is fluid and multiple and that differences are constructed by and through discursive practices in the environment (Butler, 1990, 1993). Although essentialism is discounted, race becomes reified through discourse and its circulation mediates and informs practices (Gilroy, 2000). Race in these instances is a sign of visible difference read off the body and meaning often appears to be fixed by a genetic code. So visible differences of skin become signifiers of unseen qualities, such as morality, sexuality or some inner schema of inheritance believed to be embedded in DNA (such an understanding informs how race mixing is understood as irreconcilable difference). These signifiers are relational and linked to variables such as gender, sexuality, location and class. Hence, race can never be the same across all sites; such sliding signifiers cannot be fixed or certain nor can they assign specific characteristics (Cohen, 1994). However, in the care system, the understanding of racial identity as fixed and visible is significant in how young people are positioned through discursive practices that construct their care trajectory and their care experiences.

Models of Mixed Identity Development

Mixedness was first examined through attention to the experience of marginality and came to public interest through the American sociologist Park (1931). He concluded that the mixed blood, Marginal Man was predestined to live in two cultures and two worlds, reflective of the binary of race segregation and anti-miscegenation laws of that time and place. Marginal Man was therefore capable of a more critical and objective insight into social life and thus more 'intelligent, restless, aggressive and ambitious' (ibid:534). Park's colleague, Stonequist (1937), claimed inherent psychological maladjustment was also inevitable to marginality and this would lead to feelings of isolation, alienation and non-belonging. The solution to such a precarious existence was to become embedded in black

cultural and social life, reflecting the rule of hypo-descent or the one-drop law. Tizard and Phoenix (1993) point out that at the time no empirical research was undertaken with mixed people to prove or disprove this hypothesis and the legacy of 'marginality' continues through attention to mixed identity as 'crisis, confusion and problems' (1993:28). The trajectory of understanding mixedness within social work has followed the marginal model and the psychologising of mixedness, as an inherently problematic identity, retains its hold in both policy and practice.

Adolescence is commonly cited, among psychologists, as a time when identity problems or crises occur and this phase of development has been critically used to examine the development of 'racial identity' among young people (Tizard & Phoenix, 1993:29). Models of identity which outline a linear trajectory such as Eriksson's (1980) eight stage model, state that the adolescent becomes so secure in their identity that upon adulthood being reached s/he need never think through identity again. The mature adult identity is understood be so resilient so as not to experience affronts as damaging to self-esteem leading to distress or confusion. Similarly, Cross (1971; 1991) suggests a five-stage model of racial development of 'Nigrescence in Afro-Americans', the stages of which culminate in an 'internalisation of and commitment to negriscence' (cited in Katz, 2005:53). In these two models there is an end point to identity, which is arrived at either by maturity or by accepting blackness. However, the model of negriscence 'does not include the possibility of integrating more than one racial or ethnic group identity into one's sense of self' (Robinson, 2000:20) and cannot be applied to mixedness. Further, Cohen's (1994) critique of the positive black identity model urges a consideration of the reflection of a 'teleological view' of black history as an onward and upward march and, in this context, a sense of unity and coherency in relation to identity, reflect the struggles for black independence (ibid:67-8). Understandings of identity as fluid, multiple and situational

contend with the more orthodox views of identity cited by Eriksson and Cross which have specific trajectories and culminate in specific end points and such models would declare that 'children who display inconsistent identities [are] mixed up'

(Katz, 2005:53-4).

Song (2001) approaches identity as characterised by a cyclical journey in which there is no end point of maturation or commitment to one race, but in which multifaceted and fluid ideas of identity are practised. Root (1996) developed a model specifically with mixed or multiracial people at the forefront that acknowledges the intersectional and situational nature of identity and does not separate race as a phenomenon outside of other variables, such as class, gender, disability and sexual orientation. She also acknowledges identity is formed in the context of individual, family and community relationships (1996). Mixedness is considered through connections to others and how these social relations impact on understandings and development of the self. There is a focus on wholeness and a move away from splitting mixed people into separate races or identifications and she asks 'How exactly does a person be one fourth, one eighth, or one half of something?' (Root, ibid:3) The idea of splitting and separation emerges from earlier views of race as a form of purity and also draws from the one-drop law commonly used for economic exploitation in the US. These positions on identity as cyclical, intersectional and situational are more useful to the data worked with in this thesis as the lived experience of mixedness shifts through specific contexts and identity becomes a performance routed through 'family' and 'community' in the site of care.

Mixed Race Identity Studies

Studies that examine mixedness among young people living with their birth families suggest racial identity is no more problematic for mixed young people than it is for

others (Wilson, 1987; Tizard & Phoenix, 1993; Ali, 2003). Of the mixed children in the Wilson study (1987) 14 % claimed a white identity, 8 % black, 20 % were inconsistent and 59% said they were coloured, half-caste or half and half. Some took a black identity outside of the family and a mixed one within it 'without perceiving a contradiction between the two' (1987:vi). However, Song (2003) claims that the private/public split in this model generates a concern about the meaningfulness of a dual notion of identity 'if it is not recognised or legitimated in social interactions with others' (ibid:60). The importance of identity for the child within the family is the role it plays in belonging. Root (1992) claims that identity anchors the child within the family and states that this base then extends beyond to school and friendships, which would also require different identities. Root (1992) claims that whilst 'race' and ethnicity may be important, they are not necessarily dominant. How choices of racial identification are made is dependent upon the choices available and, as this thesis discovered, such choices are increasingly limited by the perceptions of others and rigid classifications. It is that which constitutes a large part of the discussion in chapter five.

Ali (2003) studied mixed identities using interviews and image production among a group of eight to eleven year old children living in birth families and suggested that ' 'race' is not always the most salient factor in their lives…what they are really concerned about is 'colourism', culturism and nationalism' (ibid:180). It is the practices and lived experiences, within which race is a factor, that give meaning to children through how they choose to look, dress and talk, and it was primarily heterosexual behaviours that were prioritised for this age group. These studies point to the ways that young people living within families actively construct their racial identity.

These studies suggest mixed children and young people do inhabit both black and mixed identities as both Wilson (1987) and Tizard & Phoenix (1993) claim. This racial positioning has been theorised by Anzaldúa (1987) as a border identity between two established social categories incorporating both blackness and whiteness into a unique self-referential hybrid category. Some mixed people stress their 'multiple and fluid identities and membership of various ethnic groups simultaneously' (Song, 2003:66). Counter to fixed models of identity development these studies suggest that a range of strategies are utilised by young people to inform their identification practices within their families and wider community.

The Family and Boundaries of Acceptability

The family can be understood as the site of social reproduction through processes of socialisation (Knowles, 1996). Understanding families in relation to each other and in relation to society is usually accomplished through attention to behaviours seen as acceptable or unacceptable. Families who experience intervention are notably those who exhibit abnormal behaviours regarding child welfare and they are subject to scrutiny from professionals (Gillies, 2007). Judgements about normality rely on professionals who gauge acceptable family norms. Knowles argues that through these discourses and narratives of family life, meaning is generated about what constitutes the family (1996:30). Mixed families can be understood through attention to how power circulates inside the family in relationships and through the understandings of the family from outsiders.

A Foucauldian framework helps to situate how the mixed family is constituted within specific social productions across time and space (Foucault, 1977:102). Firstly, the mixed family is constituted in relation to the power to name it, study it and to intervene in it.

These interventions are aimed at controlling both the reproduction of the mixed family and the appropriate cultural socialisation of children within it. Secondly, (mixed) families are constituted through enduring relationships in which power is invested in specific positions such as 'mother', 'father', 'child' and 'grandparent'. Such positions can be simplistically attached to roles and narratives in which men are seen as 'violent', women as 'passive' and children as 'victims'. Further, the roles within the family - the lone white mother, absent black father and mixed up child or young person - are constituted by discourse and practices aimed at their regulation and organised through paradigms of race and ethnicity. Thirdly, families are 'disciplined, regulated and organised' (ibid:209) through techniques of surveillance, assessment and correction. These techniques are both within the family, through traditions, behaviours and responsibilities given through power invested in specific roles and also outside of the family in more formal structures such as schools, hospitals, social welfare agencies and the law. Familial power thus works to name, to position and subject, and to govern. Mixed families in both social work and wider socio-political discourse are considered 'essentially unacceptable' (Otikitpi, 2005) and have been subjected to discursive practices aimed at both regulating reproduction and controlling the socialisation of mixed children, leading to high instances of child removal from mixed families (Olumide, 2002).

Race Mixing and Mixed Families

Race mixing is considered outside of any notions of normative heterosexual relationships or those between same race individuals. Race mixing is seen as on the margins and akin to homosexuality. Butler's (1993) work on the performativity of race argues this point well and states that racial mixing and homosexuality 'both converge at and as the constitutive outside' being outside of dominant underpinnings of (hetero) sexuality and race (ibid:167). Sexual relationships between populations from white Europe and black

Africa, Asia and the Caribbean are unions that provoke strong emotions (Olumide, 2002; Alibhai-Brown, 2001). Riots between 1950-1960 took place in many UK cities that absorbed immigrant populations. White men protested about immigration through their disgust at relationships between black men and white women. However, despite the widespread opinion that mixed relationships are difficult to understand, they continue. Katz (1996) asks why do people from different racial groups form liaisons which produce children of mixed parentage, given the antagonism between the races? What are the interpersonal dynamics in such relationships? These questions are not posed to suggest that mixed relationships are to be avoided, rather that an awareness of the motivations and pressures on mixed couples can promote understanding. Mixed relationships are not inherently problematic nor do others always misunderstand them. The context of the relationships, the dynamics of the interracial couple/family and social ambivalence toward such relationships are a crucial aspect of understanding mixing and mixedness in welfare intervention and in mixed children's enduring relationship to care. These debates are considered fully by Barn (1993; 1997), Olumide (2002), Alibhai-Brown (2001), Okitikpi (2005) and Barn & Harman (2005).

Okitikpi (2005) points toward a list of seven motivating factors that enable social work practitioners to make sense of mixed relationships. These suppositions range from racial hatred/denial (Fanon 1952), social mobility and cultural inclusion (Wade, 1993), economic mobility (Ferguson, 1982), sexual and colour curiosity (Gill, 1995), revenge for racial oppression (Cleaver, 1968), shortage of same race partners (Kannan, 1973), mutual affection and shared interests (Duck, 1993). 'These assertions often provide the backdrop against which attitudes towards and approaches to working with mixed parentage children and their families are developed by welfare professionals' (Okitikpi,

2005:5). Mixed families are therefore positioned as difficult to understand within welfare intervention and thus interactions are guided by assumptions.

Mixedness and State Intervention

Olumide (2002) states that in societies structured by white supremacy and racial difference, the removal of mixed children from families illustrates how power and status has been contested across the boundaries of race. French-Indo-China and Australia implemented the separation of families through notions of racial difference (ibid:80). Economic resources were made available for the surveillance and correction of such groups for appropriate cultural socialisation (Stoler, 1995). As Olumide's (2002) historical excavation of socio-political attitudes to mixing and mixedness shows, nations have been built upon the eradication or the cultural assimilation of mixed people and such practices have been instrumental in nation building through policing the borders toward the eradication or control of difference. Direct policies concerned with the regulation and control of race mixing impact directly on the perception of mixed families. Olumide (2002) argues 'Present-day discourses of 'cultural heritage' carry in similar ways intimations of race thinking' (ibid:83). Mixed families remain objects of surveillance and control through an emphasis on cultural reproduction and the appropriate socialisation of mixed children. However, intervention aimed to correct mixed families is only ever aimed at families who are poor or powerless, therefore mixedness and mixing operate through race and/or culture and shift according to other variables of difference such as class and poverty.

However, in this thesis, such assumptions made by welfare intervention and government discourses were not made solely through attention to policy but through how the interpretation and implementation of policy by individual social workers was enacted

with mixed families. Such assumptions arise when social workers are positioned within and positioned by multiple intersecting discourses. Much rests on the individuality of the social worker as culture, race, class and expectations all inform how s/he responds to mixing and mixedness. Further research is needed to examine more closely how the assumptions about mixed families become part of social work culture informing how mixed families are treated and how the expectations placed upon them coerce particular types of responses.

Regulating Families

Feminist analyses of the family, and in particular mothering, have neglected research on mixed families (Twine, 1999; Olumide, 2001). Analyses of the mixed family remains within the confines of the socialisation of mixed children (Wilson, 1987; Cabellero et al., 2008), making the family a site solely for social and cultural reproduction. Mixed families have also been studied in relation to care admissions making the lone white mother the subject of research (Barn 1999; Barn & Harman, 2005)[7]. Attention is paid to the experiences of white women in mixed relationships (McKenzie, 2008; Barn & Harman, 2006; Alibhai-Brown, 2001; Olumide, 2002). It is argued that their social isolation and lack of support is said to be a factor in the high care admissions of mixed children (Barn & Harman, 2006). Alibhai-Brown (2001) suggests that dealing with racism for the first time, as a white woman within a mixed relationship or as a mother of a mixed child, without coping strategies or support, can be difficult. Such incidents of racism against white women can lead to what Olumide names as attacks on the 'social legitimacy' of the mixed family whereby mixed couples are seen as not belonging together – the seemingly irreconcilable and visible difference of race (Olumide, 2002:108). Whiteness is

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[7] Little attention is yet to be paid to the absent black father; his naming as absent from family life has already been constructed and critiqued within models of black family life.

understood as a raced discourse discernable through normative and hegemonic practices but one, which is fluid in its expression (Ware & Back, 2001).

> 'At the point of its perceived mixture, whiteness becomes overtly racialised and gendered. It seems reasonable to pay attention to the career of whiteness as it moves between its 'pure' (and often undifferentiated) states, into areas of its mixture where it becomes a compromised privilege'. (Olumide, 2002:31)

McKenzie's (2008) research on the St. Ann's estate in Nottingham offers insights into the coping strategies claimed by working-class white women in mixed families whose successful parenting is dependent on finding value in Jamaican cultural forms and moving away from normative white working class culture (ibid:2008). The dis-identification (Skeggs, 1997) of white mothers from normative white working class values informs a shift in their parenting, appearance and cultural practices that offer alternative value to their marginalised experiences. It would appear that the strategies used by the women on the St. Ann's estate make a contribution to the successful parenting of mixed children and young people and success of the types of mixed families who would usually be targets for welfare intervention.

Research by Cabellero (2008) on mixed families shows they have a middle class dimension and that over half the children have married or cohabiting parents, overturning the image of race mixing being an inner city phenomenon characterised by subsequent lone parenting. Mixed families feel their race, ethnicity, culture and religion are just another part of their lives (ibid). Class impacts on whether families share parenting practices, for example; two families, one working class, the other middle class, both white English and Jamaican are 'not guaranteed to share approaches and experiences' (ibid:3). Attention to the class dimension of families confirms that intervention and regulation of mixed families is aimed at the poor. The scrutiny of

welfare intervention through government services such as assisted nursery places, back to work schemes, Sure Start Centres, health visitors, GPs and the local hospitals' accident and emergency units, all regulate parenting standards. These research findings open new areas of debate in relation of how material inequality enables a more nuanced understanding of experiences in mixed families (ibid:4), especially in relation to the socio-economic positions and class backgrounds of the family.

Care and Class

Further within this power dynamic of race and gender is class stratification, and it is the poor and the disenfranchised who are the most likely to experience removal of their children to a *better* cultural, material, or spiritual experience. The inception of care began as a way to rescue children from moral, physical and spiritual decline, and has its beginnings in the historical and political actions of philanthropists such as Thomas Barnado, Benjamin Waugh, and Thomas Coram who set up the first children's homes. Much later state intervention asserted that local authorities become responsible for children in their vicinity. The 1908 Children Act had one central aim: 'to protect children from harm by removing them from the home when the risk of leaving them there has seemed too great' (Ritchie, 2005:1). The Children Act amendments of 1948 and 1989 had the same goal of removal, showing deference to an un-tested model of public care, which was responsive to the needs at the time. There was no assessment of the effectiveness of child removal or of residential care as being the best strategy to save children, but it remains a part of modern life within family intervention among the poorer sections of society (Ritchie, 2005:1).

> 'The operation of care cannot be separated from the exercise of power. To separate children from families, send them away to regulate them makes the care system a political site where the exercise and distribution of power is contested'. (Frost et al.,1999:25)

Research by Bowlby (1953) post World War II suggested that poor behaviour and the delinquency of children and young people in residential care was due to their maternal deprivation as they lacked a warm one-to-one relationship. Foster care became increasingly popular and attempts to replicate the ecology of the family were ushered in bolstered by the 1948 Curtis Committee and 1948 Children Act for fostering. Both asserted that fostering in families should be privileged over residential care. During the 1980s residential care use began to decline sharply and there was an increasing focus on permanence and strategies to reduce the drift of care leavers. This was in addition to the anti-institutional thinking led by Goffman (1990), which made the economics and ideology of foster care attractive to new social services departments (Stein, 1999). The privatisation of foster care gives primacy to the ecological benefits of families but remains polarised by class stratification as poorer children are usually fostered in better-off families.

Class stratification also informs how the regulation of parenting standards operates through state led initiatives of which social workers are a part (Barn, 2007) and which allow professionals to judge parents against objective criteria of hygiene, supervision and nutrition. 'Concerns of child protection are very specific; they evaluate risk to the child in terms of parenting rather than in terms of poverty' (Ritchie, 2005:2). Gillies concurs that these parenting standards often centre middle class values and whiteness as normative, which can exclude practices specific to working class and ethnic minority parents and marginalise their experience (Gillies, 2007). Gillies further claims that those who are excluded from increasingly normative and legitimate middle class values are subject to

state intervention remedies to address exclusion, 'orientated towards re-attaching the afflicted through the modification of their lifestyle and conduct' (ibid:23). At a conference on 'Mixedness and Mixing'[8] McKenzie pointed out that the white mothers of mixed race children in St. Ann's in Nottingham did not use the local Sure Start Service on the grounds that social workers were likely to pinpoint unacceptable parenting practices (McKenzie, 2008). Middle class families accessing services without fear of judgement or welfare intervention often use these centres placed in areas of relative deprivation. Conversely, families from the communities who are explicitly encouraged to use these centres refuse to visit because of the fear of judgements of welfare professionals and the intimidating presence of middle class families using the facilities (Children's Workforce Development Council (CWDC), 2009). One counter-strategy that was discussed at a CWDC conference to evaluate the effectiveness of the national pilots on 'Remodelling Social Work' was for social workers to accompany families to the centres and this appeared to increase the number of families using the services aimed at their regulation and correction.

The classed discourses of welfare intervention emerged through historical practices and understandings of the family and childhood, which legitimated the adoption of poor children to wealthier families. Such practices were tied to the development of national values based upon middle class social mobility and liberal values of self-improvement. As Cohen confirms, 'Transclass placements, which continue to be the norm, have always been articulated to discourses of 'race' and nation. It is only recently that black people in Britain have become their main focus' (Cohen, 1994:48). Discourses of nation in British welfare intervention have rested upon the articulation of Britishness to whiteness and

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[8] 'Mixedness and Mixing' was a series of four seminars funded by the ESRC and disseminated by South Bank University, 2009-10.

that 'other' cultures were inferior and in need of civilizing.

Modelling Culture in Social Work

The cultural deficit model based on Eurocentric standards judged black and mixed families as lacking in the appropriate skills to raise their children. Up until the 1980s the practices of care admission for large numbers of black British children relied on the cultural deficit model (Barn, 1993). Barn argues that black and mixed families were seen as needing assistance to enable them to attain the superior standards of European culture and English standards of parenting. Caribbean children were removed from families due to assumptions about dysfunctional family forms; in particular matriarchal family structures were misunderstood. The high numbers of black children in residential care brought attention not to *why* they were in care but rather was complicit with the pathologisation of black family life within a cultural deficit model substantiated by high care admission levels. The real causal factors of care admission were never fully investigated. Gilroy notes 'racism itself should be recognised as a factor in increasing household stresses and conflicts about money, status and power, gender and generations' (Gilroy, 1994:p.xi). Reasons behind such large numbers of black and mixed care admissions, rested upon a willingness to accept black pathology as a way to understand all black families (which included the experiences of mixed children who were considered black both in social work and in social life) (Small, 1986; Banks, 1992, 1995; Maxime, 1993; Prevatt-Goldstein, 1999). This position led to an easy acceptance of high numbers of black (and mixed) children in care and the assumed cultural benefits of transracial fostering and adoption.

The critique led by the Association of Black Social Workers and Allied Professionals (ABSWAP), as well as the growing numbers of black social workers, resulted in the move

toward a more anti-oppressive practice. During the 1980s new approaches, underpinned by cultural relativism, stated that all cultures were to be seen as equal and this strategy aimed to subsume the cultural deficit model. However, Barn (2007) highlights concerns about the consequences of this mode of assessment aimed at black families. Such thinking leads to social work practitioners operating within a framework of the rule of optimism (Barn, 2007). Some children were left in homes in which values associated with cultural modes of parenting left the child at very real risk, as highlighted in the case of Victoria Climbé.

Fostering for Long Term Success

Debates concerned with transracial adoption centre on black and mixed young people but often no distinction is made between children with one black parent and those with two black parents (Small, 1986). The adage that mixed people are black because that is how society sees them has been considered worthy of critical attention and deconstruction by mixed race studies (Root, 1989; Olumide, 2002; Dewan, 2008; Song, 2003). Within social work literature concerning hard to place black children (de Sousa & Simmonds, 2007; Gaber & Aldridge, 1994) mixed children were included but rarely explicitly so (Tizard & Phoenix, 1993). Debates against transracial adoption and fostering (placing black and mixed children with white families) used the language of racism; identity stripping, assimilation, cultural hegemony, authentic black identity, confusion and survival techniques for racism to describe experiences of those transracially adopted. The Association of Black Social Workers and Allied Professionals (ABSWAP) gathered support for opposing all transracial adoptions and fostering practices bringing their objections and solutions to the House of Commons Select Committee to support a same race policy, arguing that 'black children should be placed exclusively with black families' (Tizard & Phoenix, 1994:89). Mixed children were never considered separately from

black children. Despite being embedded within their white maternal families it was assumed that mixed children ought to be seen as black and racialised into one of the two available classifications and thus they were placed as black in the care system.

As the political tide moved away from transracial adoption and fostering and gathered political momentum 'race became the principle factor for matching and bonding in families' (Cohen, 1994:59). However, Gilroy argues 'cultural sameness and common bodily characteristics do not, by themselves, promote good parenting' (1994:xi). The sweeping generalisations made about the dysfunctional nature of black families and the authenticity of their ability to promote culture are two sides of the same coin; both lack interrogation of black family forms and treat the black family as homogenous. Currently the policy of same race matching remains in practice within local authority placement processes. However, within this policy it is the responsibility of the social worker to decide upon appropriate placements by taking into account the wishes of the child and the family and the opinions of the departmental manager. The confusion over how to racially classify mixed children and young people and select the appropriate placement reflects the lack of critical attention paid to their identification practices and their family background, and it also reflects the lack of attention paid to the heterogeneous nature of black and mixed family forms.

The Fostering Network claims that almost 50,000 children in the UK live with foster families (2010), but there remains a shortage of carers for children of all backgrounds. Overall estimates suggest eight to ten thousand more carers are needed and two thousand of these are needed in London (British Association of Adoption (BAAF), 2010). Further, not only is there a shortage of carers but the quality of available carers varies.

'The current shortage of foster carers means that children in crisis are all too often placed in any free bed, rather than with the most suitable foster family. If these children are going to have the same opportunities in life as other children then we need to invest in a foster care service fit for the 21st century'. (Collier, 2010)

The government approach to improving the image of fostering in order to enlarge the pool of carers focuses on initiatives such as a guaranteed minimum fostering allowances, structured training programmes and the opportunity to work in partnership with other childcare professionals (BAAF, 2010). Such professionalisation of foster care places carers in dual roles, as nurturers and administrators, and this theme emerges through the data in chapter four. The National Minimum Fostering Allowances have been set in order to reflect age differences, with higher rates for the South East of England and London. Rates among private agencies can be as much as £400-500 per child per week depending on age. The emergence of fostering as the best form of care for children who can no longer live at home is now in crisis due to the shortage and the quality of care, as children and young people fail to find suitable long-term matches or are moved through a series of short-term placements.

Foster placements for mixed children within a climate of same race matching, in conjunction with the foster carer shortage, means that for the most part, mixed children wait longer for an appropriate match during which time they are mostly placed in short-term placements not always appropriate to need (Thoburn, 2005:118). In practice the placements thought suitable for mixed young people often include white carers as a preference as this reflects the birth family. However, in policy white foster carers are not always thought to be suitable for long term fostering of mixed children and young people. These assertions have their basis in arguments about cultural reproduction and appropriate socialisation, which are aimed at lone white birth mothers of mixed children. In practice social workers often have a shortage of black carers and mixed young people

do not get priority of need in relation to culture and ethnicity. The Thoburn (2000) research examined foster placements and the attitudes of the children and their carers over the time of the placement. The findings suggest the families, even if two parents were white, became mixed upon the arrival of the foster child, which raised race awareness as 'all the families empathised with the issues around visible difference and racism' (2000:12). The research concluded that race, ethnicity, faith and culture had a bearing on how integration into the new family was negotiated with the child (ibid:122). The overall conclusion states that 'some white families can successfully meet the needs of children of mixed parentage, especially if they live in ethnically mixed communities' (ibid:123). However, for black families and same race-matching the Wilson research (1987) discovered that 'it is not enough for prospective parents to be black they must also feel good about being black and be able to transmit that feeling to the child' (1987:ix). Such a dissonance between how white and black families are assessed for their suitability to foster leaves mixed young people in a precarious position. Black families must feel good about being black, but, given the outcomes of racism, this can sometimes be difficult to achieve. How families can be measured in relation to 'feeling good about being black' is unknown but it may account for the reduced number of black foster carers. The Children Act 1989 (section 22, 5, c) requires children to be placed with families who can meet their individual needs and who are of a similar cultural and ethnic background. This is not always possible due to foster care shortages and the unknown nature of some children's heritage (some fostering agencies undertake DNA testing of children to determine ancestry, such is the emphasis on racial and ethnic matching) hence some placement matches are often deemed unsuitable.

Thoburn's (2000) research notes the importance of geographical location for the success of long term fostering with white carers and the location of carers in multiethnic areas is

a theme that arises in other research findings (Barn, et al., 2005; Tizard & Phoenix, 1993; Robinson, 2000; Fatimilhein, 2005). Children and young people who grow up in their own families or in residential homes with a multiracial staff and in multiethnic areas are said to receive good, positive and appropriate racial and ethnic socialisation (Barn, 2009) leading to an awareness of self and ethnic group belonging as well as strategies and awareness of race discrimination (ibid). The role of place and its expression of identities enable families to articulate and express their connections to race, ethnicity and culture through their choice to live in multi-ethnic neighbourhoods. Such locations are seen to offer a lived experience where mixed families are seen as ordinary. Location has a part in how young people establish a sense of self through family structure, friendship groups and the visible difference among a multiethnic population within everyday interactions (Cabellero et al., 2008). Further 'bringing up their children in a racially and ethnically diverse area can be important to the mixed parents' in deciding where they should live (ibid:12).

Transience and the Mixed Classification

Doreen Massey, (1994) claims that all social identities, social categories and hierarchies articulate in some way with place and are routed through discourses such as race, gender and class. Concurring Nassy Brown (2005) further suggests that 'place, local and global are not abstract, objective, neutral spatial constructs. Rather, the particular ways in which they get invoked and naturalized – both textually and in actual social life – are directly implicated in the subject positions we know as gender, race, and nation' (ibid:242). The findings of the Ince (1998) study concluded that young black and mixed race young people in care experience a loss of identity when removed from multiethnic locations. It is further argued that 'measures have not been taken to sustain racial and cultural identity' (Lewis, 2004:213). Such measures of same race matching, multi-ethnic locations

and appropriate socialisation are measures taken seriously by local authorities when placing children. However, despite best intentions it is not always achieved.

'In terms of placements with foster carers which reflected the young people's racial and cultural background …mixed parentage conveyed a history of placement disruption and the instability caused by this'. (Barn, 2009:10)

Research shows that mixed children and young people in care experience two types of disruption to home life the first being moving from one foster family to another and the second being changes in geographical location and schools (Barn, et al., 2005). Finding suitable matches for mixed children and the shortage of carers results in movement through a series of short-term foster placements (Thoburn, 2000). 'The upheaval of home, carers, schools and geographical location has implications for trust, a sense of belonging and impacts on young people's relationships' (Barn, 2009:10). Trust is critical in understanding young people who experience instability (Oosterman et al., 2006). Stein and Carey claimed the average number of placements was over four moves per young person in care (1986). During the 1990s 40% of children in care had four or more moves and within this cohort 10% moved more than ten times (Biehal et al., 1992; 1996). The emerging trend for this new decade reveals that 30-40% experience more than four moves and within this group 6-10% have over ten moves (Stein, 2005). Research shows that young people in stable placements are more likely to be successful in education and work as care leavers and become socially integrated, than those who experience movement and disruption (Stein, 2005; Barn et al., 2005; Beihal et al., 1996). Movement and disruption, which are a result of placement breakdowns and result in unplanned moves, can often 'be experienced as another relationship failure and rejection' (Frost et al., 1999:117). There is a complex relationship between stability and good outcomes, so individual personality or educational success may contribute to stability in a placement,

despite transience also being a feature of the care experience. What is of concern is why social work practice places the emphasis in overcoming transience through building resilience in children and young people, rather than an engagement with the policy and practice to remedy care processes that engender transience.

In social work literature, resilience is deemed 'the quality that enables some young people to find fulfilment in their lives despite their disadvantaged backgrounds…it is about overcoming the odds, coping and recovery' (Stein, 2005:264). Resilience and protective factors are the positive side of risk and vulnerability both within the young person and the care system. Considerations of intelligence, temperament, and education, in addition to caring adults, good schools, and high expectations, make some children more resilient than others (ibid). However, a focus on the resilience of the child omits an engagement with the very practices that make the concept of resilience a pre-requisite for children in care. While resilience is an essential life skill, its over-application negates poor practice and burdens children in care with the responsibility for overcoming what can be dire circumstances.

Care Leavers: Some Considerations

Outcomes based research on care leavers' show them to be one of the most disadvantaged groups in society. They have poor educational outcomes, are less likely to be in post-16 education, experience high unemployment, homelessness, mental health problems, young parenthood and engage in risk-taking behaviours such as criminal activity and drug use (Biehal & Wade, 1996; Barn, et al., 2005; Stein, 2009). They leave care at an average age of seventeen – much earlier than those not in care. Any support they receive from foster carers as care leavers is due to goodwill rather than any secure official arrangement (Barn, et al., 2009). Preparation for leaving care is now implemented

through the Children (Leaving Care) Act 2000 which outlines pathway planning to include discussions with young people about impending independence and to move them on in similar ways to other young people; ideally a more protracted and supported way. Young care leavers are more likely to leave care from a residential placement and not a foster home (Barn, 2009). Barn et al., (2005) suggest that 'local authorities actively seek to avoid disruption and instability to avoid social exclusion and accumulative disadvantage in the lives of young people' (ibid:5) since such instability is thought to precipitate poor post care experiences. 'Two groups namely white and mixed parentage conveyed a history of placement disruption and the instability caused by this' (Barn, 2009:10). Mixed young people experience such higher rates of disruption and instability that their disadvantages in all areas of concern are markedly greater than for other ethnic groups (Barn et al., 2005).

Young care leavers have been a significant voice in calling attention to their experiences through a series of workshops aimed at listening to the young people in care making a valuable contribution to care and post-care trajectory (Stein & Carey, 1986; First Key, 1987). New initiatives to smooth the transition of care leavers were the outcomes of these consultations. Despite this, research findings show that young people feel rushed, disappointed and forced to make unsuitable choices of accommodation post-care (Stein, 1999; Barn, 2005; 2009). The poor planning and support and the fast changes are found to be disempowering for young people and lead to adverse experiences around budgeting, tenancies and employment (ibid:2009). The first two years out of care can result in further disruption as a 'half make two or more moves and a sixth make five or more moves, as well as one fifth becoming homeless' (Stein et al., 1999:121). Care leavers' accommodation choices often leave them lonely and isolated with poor networks in the community and little by way of educational or employment opportunities (Barn,

2009). A recent conference in Manchester run by the Care Leavers Association (2010) consulted care leavers and their findings suggest that greater support to achieve independence through help with budgeting, housing, education, careers and life skills would make the transition from care to care leaver smoother. Lewisham Leaving Care Service has an innovative response to the problems faced by care leavers. One of their more inspired innovations is to take a group of care leavers on a gap year type experience to a monkey sanctuary in South Africa. The scope to support care leavers does not have to remain within a local context and opening the world up beyond their immediate community presents opportunities for maturity, independence and community building.

Care leavers may often try to establish contact with their birth family as they look for answers to their personal histories (Stein et al., 2005:122) and the continuing importance of family links has been highlighted as enabling young people to build social capital (Bullock et al., 1993). Social capital is a term that, although contentious, can be theorised in a number of ways. One definition is 'the values that people hold and the resources that they can access, which both result in and are the result of collective and socially negotiated ties and relationships' (Edwards, et al., 2003:2). Co-operation, reciprocity and trust are named as key moral categories (Putnam, 2000). Attention has been given to how social capital is mediated by gender, race and class (Lucey & Reay, 2000). However, theorising the relationship between social capital and ethnicity is under developed (Goulbourne & Solomos, 2003). Chapter seven utilises and builds upon how these concepts are mobilised to examine how one participant in this research built social capital across race, gender, sex and place enabling her to make a relatively successful transition from care to care leaver.

In conclusion, as Du Bois suggested at the beginning of this chapter, 'being a problem is a strange experience' and such strangeness has been witnessed through how mixedness and mixing was examined throughout the literature. Approaches to race are mediated through its awkwardness as an enduring social category premised upon the body, twinned with the recognition that race has a real impact on and is a serious consequence for individuals. The first problem of defining mixedness then becomes part of the recognition that race exists and is thus meaningful in social life and that mixed people are somehow the sum of two disparate and irreconcilable parts of a whole. Yet, this understanding becomes critiqued by critical mixed studies, which ask how and why one ought to be split into two or more parts and whether race is in fact useful or if its abandonment would be more fruitful. The second consideration of mixedness concerns whether or not it can be theorised beyond the individual since defining mixed as an ethnic group relies upon processes of inclusion and exclusion. This then leads us into asking who can be mixed and how that can then be defined without invoking race through essentialism. The dilemma for mixed young people in care is that these problems of definition inform the constructions of their care experiences and the practices they engender which impact in specific ways with adverse consequences for their care experiences. Such experiences of mixedness can become even more 'peculiar' to the young people through the ways welfare intervention and foster care act back upon racialisation through discursive repertoires of race in care practices. Such experiences are the focus of this thesis and explore the 'problem' through attention to its constitutive parts (care processes) and its constituents (care experiences) in order to examine what is peculiar about being mixed and in care.

The consideration of existing research suggests that birth families have been the primary sites for the socialisation of children into racial identification. For mixed children this

process is made complex through assumed racial difference within mixed families. Studies that consider empirical research into how mixed children in care make meaning from their mixedness and negotiate identification without the role of the birth family as a force for socialisation are absent from these debates. Despite the acknowledgement that the family is a primary means of socialisation, the impact of its absence is not equally considered when examining the lives of young people in care. Mixed young people in care are over-emphasised as having a problematic identity but there is very little research pertaining to how care shapes their racialisation through its practices.

In summary race mixing and mixedness, are situational and contextual operating within shifting boundaries of time and space, mixing and mixedness simultaneously engage with the ambivalence of fear of/desire for. Mixing is at the intersection of gender, sex and class and operates as a symbol of liberalism and (im)morality within a class paradigm. Mixedness is caught up within complex negotiations of colourism in which the splitting of the corporeal body through lightness of skin and texture of hair both elevates social status and becomes valorised but is also denigrated through invoking a lack of racial *purity*.

This thesis aims to make an intervention into the existing paradigm by situating the mixed young person in care at the centre of empirical research in order to reveal how young people make meaningful their identification practices outside of the birth family. It aims to understand how care experiences and discursive constructions of mixedness in the care system impact on the identification practices of young people.

Chapter 3: An Account of the Research Process

This chapter explores three methodological considerations: firstly, how researching the impact of race classification and race making through experience focuses on how mixed young people manage their identifications in the context of care. The classification mixed presents methodological dilemmas due to its lack of clear definition and its internal diversity. Secondly, the experiences of mixed young people were captured by qualitative and visual methods, which were adapted to the participants and utilised physical space as both method and data. Thirdly, a discussion of the fieldwork and how my own intellectual and experiential biography informed it situates the development of ethical and reciprocal research relationships.

Raced Experience as Knowledge

Investigations of experience among groups with a common racial or ethnic classification can often lead to groups being said to share a unitary experience brought about through their shared social location. An interrogation of this position has allowed experience to be opened up to claims that a deeper understanding of how categories construct experience is required (Lewis, 2000). The achievement of this through an examination of the meanings attached to race, gender, class and age at various moments, and deconstructing categories and classifications of groups, has renewed knowledge production as both experiential and situated. I would go further and suggest that the boundaries of experience are constituted through attention to the impact these categories have on social relations and how they are made meaningful through social interaction.

Mixed race as a category is a shifting, political and symbolic classification and cannot be easily fixed in research to produce specific, neat, conceptualisations of experience

(Olumide, 2002). Keith (2005) suggests 'race, ethnicity and identity cannot be taken for granted as objects to be studied, precisely because their meanings are context dependent' (ibid:4). In this research it was more useful to place an emphasis on racialisation in situ to examine how 'mixed', as a category, operated across the specific social site of social services. In this 'way how we act upon classification in everyday practices and how we are positioned within a racial order' can emerge through attention to experience (Ware, 2005:124). Racialisation in situ offers a way to conceptualise race, ethnicity and culture as flexible, contestable and shifting, dependent on the location being studied. Racialisation operates through people in specific social sites and is embodied and acted upon by others, which impacts upon conceptions of the self. It operates within other embodied readings such as class, gender, education and all these factors taken together discern layers of meaning through social practices and the everyday experiences those practices precipitate.

In social research, as in day-to-day life, racial categories can produce 'dominant, fixed, homogeneous ideas about the individuals within those categories' (Gunaratnam, 2006:28). For example the association between mixedness and identity problems has generated a sustained focus on mixed identity, as if there were some inherent essence to mixedness. Being aware of how categories are understood and how experiences become part of accepted discourse informs how the category mixed was used in this study. Mixed as a category of investigation was utilised to consider how care processes impact on the lived experiences of young people and how these in turn constituted the boundaries and limits of a racialised self.

Theoretically, race has dubious underpinnings in terms of pseudoscientific claims to essential differences among human populations and these have been discounted.

However, race has social consequences with particular manifestations, expressions and outcomes located in specific places and mobilised in specific ways according to the logic of the site. Duster (cited in Twine, 2000: xii) states 'there are those who argue that just to acknowledge race, is to perpetuate the biological myth of race. But, this is to confuse the biological with the social'. People make race meaningful across all types of social and institutional discourses and it structures lives in real ways (Knowles, 2003). Studying the social construction and racialisation of mixed in the site of social services and foster care can build insights into processes of race making and how these structure the experiences of young people.

The Research Site: Class, Ethnicity and Mixedness

The London Borough of Lewisham[9] has a mixed socio-economic profile with wards of both prosperity and poverty. Lewisham is amongst the most deprived local authority areas in England; in the overall Index of Multiple Deprivation (IMD) Lewisham's average score was 31.04 which puts it as the 39th (up from 57th in 2004) most deprived of all Local Authorities (with one being the most deprived and 354 the least). There are a significant number of areas within the borough which rank amongst the 20% most deprived areas in the country. For instance: Downham has the highest teenage pregnancy rate in Europe; the notorious Milford Towers Estate, site of murders, prostitution and drug dealing, dominates Catford; neighbouring Eltham, once home to Stephen Lawrence, has a local reputation as one of the most racist wards (along with Downham). Children from poorer homes and neighbourhoods, characterised by poverty, are more likely to be admitted to public care, which is a reflection of the socio-economic demographic and this was a consideration in the selection of the borough for this research.

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[9] Home to Goldsmiths

Lewisham is a multicultural and multi-ethnic borough and the fifteenth most ethnically diverse local area in the country. Its largest black minority ethnic (BME) groups are Black Caribbean and Black African. Borough statistics claim a higher than average Black Minority Ethnic (BME) population at 34%. My target sample was young people with one black parent and one white parent and this was more likely to be achieved in a borough with a high percentage of African Caribbean residents. Race mixing among black African Caribbean men and white women is common and the socio-economic profiles of couples show that they tend to come from lower socio-economic backgrounds (Alibhai-Brown, 2001). Further, as discussed in the literature review, mixed children and young people in care are more likely to come from lone mother homes with young white mothers under 26 years of age (Barn, 1993).

Lewisham council statistics state that 11% of all schoolchildren are mixed race. My own statistical research, using figures from the borough, state that 16% of all children in care are mixed, of black African Caribbean and white parentage; double the national care population of 8%. These figures are possibly due to the socio-economic and ethnic demographic of the borough.

Access to the Research Site

I had worked as a volunteer mentor for the Leaving Care Service Mentoring Team in Lewisham and I first approached its co-ordinator about the possibility of doing some research in the borough. I gained her support and was asked to write to the Head of Children's Services to get formal approval (see Appendix 1). While awaiting a decision letters were also sent to the Head of Children's Services in boroughs with a similar demographic: Croydon, Southwark, Lambeth, Greenwich, Haringey, Islington and

Wandsworth. Croydon and Greenwich responded most positively; Greenwich subsequently decided not to go ahead as they had just completed a small research project[10]. Croydon were de-selected as they had a high number of unaccompanied asylum seeker children from Asia, Africa, and Eastern Europe due to the Asylum and Immigration Office located in Central Croydon, who did not fit the demographic profile sought for this study. Lewisham appeared to offer the best support and research demographic.

The Children's Social Care division is part of Lewisham's Children and Young People's Directorate and has three remits. These are, firstly, children in need (CiN) which includes services for health, parenting and Children and Adolescent Mental Health Services (CAMHS). Secondly, the remit of 'support and services' which includes a helpdesk that provides consultation for practitioners to help identify and assess the needs of children as a 'Team Around a Child'[11]. They work closely with other services in Children's Social Care to match children with foster carers and promote child welfare and outcomes and this includes the Leaving Care Service. Thirdly, Child Protection who carry out all new child protection investigations, initial assessments on children in need (within seven working days) and core assessments (within 35 working days). They also undertake emergency legal action to safeguard children when they are assessed to be at risk of significant harm. Lewisham staff procedures for looked after children are implemented by individual social workers with support from team managers. On an unannounced

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[10] A qualitative project with a boys' secure unit in which all occupants were mixed.

[11] Team Around the Child (TAC) is part of the strategy for integrated service delivery to improve outcomes for children and young people, a response to the Government Every Child Matters. It allows a range of professionals such as social workers, police and school nurses to work together to develop care plans for children with additional needs in a multi-agency working environment.

Ofsted visit recently Lewisham were rated 'excellent'. Its procedures, staff support and responses were all commended as effective (Ofsted, 2010).

I[12] was given official permission to go ahead with the research and was invited to the social worker team meeting for Looked-after children who are under 16 years of age. I was to present my research project in a ten-minute slot. I shared my research aims (see Appendix 2, Research Brief) and spoke about how I would conduct the research, also giving an overview of the aims and timescales of the project. A social worker asked how much time they would be expected to contribute and whether they would have to do any follow up work in addition to their existing workload. I assured them that an initial introduction and then telephone or email communication for me would be sufficient. There were also concerns about how the children would handle any emotional fall-out that might arise from their participation in the research. We agreed that the local Children and Adolescent Mental Health Services (CAMHS) would offer support to the participants and their foster families. Recruiting young people under the age of sixteen for the project took several weeks of negotiation with social workers. Spending time at the offices and discussing individual participants was essential as social workers gained trust in the aims of the project and slowly began to make referrals.

Gatekeepers and Censorship

The social workers were gatekeepers, responsible for protecting the young people. They operated within a position of professional vulnerability as they mediated an outsider doing research with vulnerable young people. The decisions they made were tied to issues of self-preservation as well as doing what was right for the young person. One

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[12] The text boxes are used throughout the thesis to refer to notes made in my field diary during the research process.

social worker became quite protective of a young person stating that "she had a lot going on, counselling sessions, reviews, issues over sibling contact" and that she (the social worker) felt that the young person may feel a sense of overload. The social worker decided not to tell the young person about the research. Another social worker expressed concerns about a young person's placement being unstable and the possibility that the young person may have to move. It was deemed a bad time to participate in a project. Another social worker told me about a young boy who was seeing a counsellor as he had problems with behaviour at school and in his placement. A social worker excluded a young person because they lived 'too far away' (Cambridge). She said his placement was unsuitable and his carers were having difficulty managing his behaviour. Another young person was 'too troubled' by multiple moves, unstable placements and an unplanned pregnancy, which made it difficult for her to participate. Another was said to be in the midst of a review regarding parental contact and was also experiencing behavioural problems at his placement and at school. The lives of the young people in care were complex and beyond what could be termed ordinary experience as they dealt with massive changes and uncertainty while in care. The protection of young people in care and the complexity of their lives made recruitment slow. The social workers acting as gatekeepers for the young people informed participation and sampling during the initial stages of research.

The consequences of censorship had implications for sampling as the social workers handpicked all the participants. I was concerned that the sample of participants did not reflect the full range of experiences and complexity of young people's lives in care. For example, at the beginning of the project all of the handpicked participants that took part in the research had stable, secure placements with foster families. They were settled at schools. They presented few problems in terms of behaviour. They were too perfect.

However, the yearlong project witnessed a range of issues pertaining to the how the care system can impact on young people, despite them being settled. Although, initially, some participants presented as being in relatively stable placements in their current circumstances, some of them went through instability during the research and it is likely that they would not have been initially thought of as suitable participants.

Previous research with children and young people in care (Thomas & O'Kane; 1998) highlights the practice of social workers acting as gatekeepers and excluding young people from making decisions to participate in research. Research with young people in care confirms that 'distressed young people or those in transition may not want to be involved in research' (Connolly et al., 2006:62). Their right to make decisions over their participation remains crucial, especially within a care system that works to protect and uphold children's rights. The United Nations Convention declares that children have the right to participate in decisions that affect them. Article 12 states 'every child who is capable of forming his or her own views must have the right to express those views freely in all matters affecting the child' (Cloke & Davis, 1995:29). The government Every Child Matters Agenda (ECM) aims to keep children safe, healthy, engaged and enable them to make a positive contribution and achieve wellbeing. Care Matters: Time to Deliver also campaigns for Looked-after children to enjoy the same rights as children living with parents (www.dcsf.gov.uk, 2008). The right to participate in decisions is not contingent on a judgement about the child's competence or restricted by an adult's perception of their best interests (Thomas & O'Kane, 1998). The dissonance between policy and legislation and its implementation at the level of individual social workers can have an adverse impact on the way in which children in care make their own decisions about their contribution to their lives. The censorship of the project lead to a concern

over the rights of young people's participation and also impacted on the final sampling of the young people.

Racialisation and Identifying Mixedness

> "I can think of a child for you…she's mixed race; she says she's black and she denies her white, you know…she doesn't want to talk about the white side, but you can see it, you know, when you look at her". (Social Worker at Lewisham, March, 2008)

During the meeting to brief the social workers there was a further discussion about mixed as a category and how the young people were to be classified[13]. This discussion opened up how social workers were relying on a range of practices to inform them about identification. It also revealed the complexity of mixedness, as its diversity and lack of definition about what constitutes mixed is a real problem in social work. As discussed in the literature review the debates over identification and terminology pose dilemmas in practice and policy. Race works through visual grammar, how we look matters and classification practices are subject to individual understandings of what 'mixed' looks like and how it ought to operate in an existing racial schema. The numerous permutations of the mixed race classification and the ethnic affiliations within mixedness point to the complexity of working with racial classifications and to the open, contestable nature of mixedness.

Mixed was understood by social workers as an ambiguous social location in which a number of affiliations could be made. They had the task of classifying the young people they worked with and classified them according to heritage and visual appearance. Such classification determined how young people experienced care; if they were classified as

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[13] More research is needed to examine how classification processes work in practice among social workers at referral, early intervention and care admission as well as across placement.

mixed they would be placed as mixed and their care experiences would be influenced by that classification. To gain an understanding of how social workers classified young people as mixed I decided that social workers could refer all young people who were recorded as mixed in their care files and use their official classification to recruit for the project.

The complexity and variation within the mixed race category illuminated how group identities deconstruct race. It was impossible to close down mixedness in familiar terms e.g. through the closed boundaries of race or ethnicity. Mixed as an ethnic classification confirms the poststructuralist concern with acknowledging 'erasures and exclusions at the level of categorization' (Gunaratnam, 2003:31). Mixed heritage and the ethnic differences within the category had to be flattened or erased in order to encompass those who were defined as mixed by social workers. Mixedness at the level of aggregation erased race in its inclusion of diversity within the final group of participants.

In order to mobilise mixed and make it meaningful it was important to consider its relationship to other categories of difference such as the intersection of class, sex/gender, ethnicity, cultural affiliations, location, education, sexuality and family form. All of these act upon and illustrate the complexity of lived experiences in how multiple identifications are lived with and acted upon. These variables work to oppress and are often studied in isolation so the impact of race is made an additional aspect of discrimination. Reducing mixedness a priori to race reaffirms essentialist identities in a way that denies complex subjectivity and ignores the lived ways that people negotiate their multiple and shifting identifications. Investigating a range of other identifications and paying attention to the personal biographies of the participants allowed the lived experience of mixedness to be prioritised.

It is the experience of mixedness that is the focus of this thesis and how mixedness comes to be integrated and lived within the site of foster homes and the regulatory processes of the care system. Such an approach integrates a diverse range of identifications and what emerges is the opportunity to examine how mixedness can be conceptualised beyond racial identity or boundaries of ethnic inclusion and exclusion. Despite the difficulty of definition over what is mixed, given its diversity and whether all mixed people could be said to experience their mixedness in similar ways, mixedness is a lived experience that can be investigated through attention to themes of ambiguity, misrecognition and social legitimacy. I want to give an example of this using my own experience in the social work office as I was seeking referrals.

After the team briefing I spent a further three half-days in the departmental offices speaking individually with the social workers answering queries, clarifying issues and talking about possible referrals. My own visual appearance prompted numerous discussions with social workers about mixedness, terminology, expression and perceived inherent difficulties. In all instances the social workers asking about my heritage were black Caribbean and in one case mixed, black Nigerian and white English[14]. Questions from black social workers and the absence of questions from white social workers could be due to the ease with which black people talk of heritage and shade, as in the Caribbean there are over 100 terms to describe skin colour. The absence of questions from white social workers made me curious as to whether they discussed heritage and mixedness with interracial families and mixed race children. Research by Lewis (2000) explored the experiences of black social workers as structured through race and racism in their work settings, which created boundaries between black and white social workers in

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[14] We had an extended and personal discussion about growing up as mixed, comparing our lives as this social worker was raised in Nigeria and I was raised in London.

everyday practices. Questions remain over whether the white social worker in this instance was marginalised in an office of mostly black African Caribbean social workers or whether race was not an issue she was used to discussing. This is an area in which more research is needed in order to see how this position is worked out during interventions between white social workers, white mothers, and mixed race children.

The Caribbean and African social workers wanted to explore my experiences. This type of practice raises questions about my social legitimacy, as I felt interrogated while asked to make claims in order to interact within social relations. In order to do that I relied on culture and cultural practices, a common response for mixed people as ethnic and racial affiliations are not to be assumed. There is an ontological tremor that comes with mixedness. Such ambiguity of mixedness can be allayed with forays into cultural knowing, practices and belonging. Cultures are conjured as a means of locating oneself outside of the murky realm of racial ambiguity and inside the steadier terrain of cultural practice. Cultural practices do the work that mixedness fails to do and anchors ambiguity or misrecognition, legitimising mixedness as socially recognisable. This enables social relations to be secured.

The Meaning of Mixed Racial Identity

During referrals mixedness was also spoken of in ways that racialised it as a repository to explain complexities in young people's lives through inherent difficulties of 'mixed identity' such as behaviour, issues of belonging or fitting in and rebelliousness. Empirical research by Owusu-Bempah (1994) describes the findings of an exercise in which trainee social workers were given three case studies of boys with behavioural problems, one white, one black, and one mixed race. The social workers task was to assess the core causes of the boy's problems and their intervention needs. Among the social workers

85% of the respondents attributed the mixed race boy's problems to his identity needs, as opposed to 59% for the black boy, and 25% for the white boy. The recommendation of 'identity work' as an intervention process to 'correct' inherent difficulties remains common practice within social work. Some referrals to the project were born out of concerns social workers had about mixed young people with problems that they thought might benefit from some direct work around issues of mixedness.

My position in this scenario was ambivalent. On the one hand the participants were being referred and referrals were rare especially at the beginning of the project. Was I to challenge the terms of referral or accept them and work with the young people? I decided to explore with social workers why they thought young people might need identity work what they (the young people) might get out of it and how the social workers thought I might help. The discussions with social workers about potential referrals often revealed the young people's circumstances as more complex than 'identity'. Children were living with massive uncertainty. One boy came home after school and found his belongings stuffed into bin liners, was told he was being collected by his social worker, and moved on – leaving his sister at the placement. One girl I tried to work with and meet with repeatedly over a two-week period was moved three times. There was widespread disruption in their lives; court cases, issues of sibling and parental contact, problems at school, with foster carers, breaking curfews – these are complexities that cannot be reduced to the mixed race classification and a focus on solving problems through identity work. These young people were not able to be fully included in the final sample as any arrangements to meet them fell through or they changed their minds about their involvement.

Katz and Treacher (2005) argue that 'overt attention to the identity needs of mixed young people often fails to consider a wider attention to needs' (ibid:45). Psychologising tendencies in social care take the personal problems present among individuals and attempt to solve them with attention to difficulties the individual may have managing social life – rather than paying attention to inequalities of social life and linking those to manifestations of personal difficulties. A lack of attention to social forces and processes of discrimination then locates those problems within the individual/group most afflicted by them. Care admission rates of mixed young people signal a breakdown in social process not due to an inherent dysfunction of mixing or mixedness in and of itself. While the debates around mixed identity are useful for locating mixedness in the matrix of racial categories, it only vicariously engages with mixedness as a lived experience beyond the boundaries of identity and within social care processes. Bauman suggests:

> 'One thinks of identity whenever one is not sure how to place oneself among the evident variety of behavioural styles and patterns, and how to make sure the people around would accept this placement as right and proper so that both sides would know how to go on in each other's presence. Identity is the name given to escape from that uncertainty. Hence, 'identity' though ostensibly a noun, behaves like a verb albeit a strange one to be sure; it appears only in the future tense'. Bauman et al., 1996:19)

Identity is an important aspect of self-definition and began as an emancipatory project central to the way we perceive others and ourselves. For subordinated minorities, race became a central way in which to form oppositional identities that fought for justice and equality. In this way the very thing that was fought for was a definer of the group identity and symbolised a position. Groups began to have a real and vested interest in race and could come together under one racial identity and gain consensus and belonging. Solidarity has had to work well in this way and now it is rather more complex if groups are asked and/ or expected to be cohesive without the boundary of race. What is our commonality? Hence, moving towards and away from mixedness, as a racial identity, is

politically problematic. The use of identity covers for the failure to interrogate social forces and the productions of inequality within the experiences of specific groups of mixed people.

Identity is active and performed in order to be recognised and socially legitimated and this is undertaken through cultural practices that secure and anchor recognition. Through the data chapters I will argue that through the assertion of mixedness as a lived experience of ambiguity, and through its desire for social legitimacy, mixedness can move away from its focus on racial identity. Utilising mixed as a category defined by social workers for referrals revealed how processes of race making brought about diversity within the mixed classification that revealed its 'inadequacy as a single and coherent category' (Ali, 2003:5). The final sample of participants demonstrates this[15].

Fig. 1. Participants –

Name	Age	Time in Care	Classification	Current Foster Placement	No. of placements
Lucy	20	14 years	Jamaican mother and Jamaican father	Semi-Independent/care leaver	16
Amma	12	6 years	Irish mother and Ghanaian father	Jamaican carer	15
Anna	12	9 years	Scottish mother and Jamaican father	White British family	2
Anita (sister of Anna)	14	9 years	Scottish mother and Jamaican father	Jamaican carer	3
Stealth	12	18 months	Mixed mother (Jamaican/ English) and Jamaican father	Jamaican carer/s	1

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[15] All names used are anonymous, chosen by the participants.

'Pen portraits' appear in each data chapter to introduce the participants. These contain information from my time in the research setting or additional background details about each young person. They offer a potted history and convey context and description (Hollway & Jefferson, 2000:70). These portraits provide access to interpretations and make the narratives meaningful to the reader, offering the opportunity to build further insights.

In summary, using experience as a form of knowledge production to examine mixedness in the context of care could be critiqued as leading to generalisations of experience being made within categories. The favourable demographic of the research site offered access to the black African Caribbean and white British mix under examination. Sampling proved complex as social workers varied as to how they classified mixedness and this lead to a range of ethnic diversity within the category. Such uneven, ambiguous and visual processes of classification erased mixedness at the level of aggregation. How the project mobilised mixedness and made it meaningful is through attention to how it becomes lived through care processes. This was understood through my own vignette as I sought referrals that paid attention to ambiguity, misrecognition and social legitimacy. These themes are carried through the data chapters as way to understand mixedness as a lived experience and not solely a racial identity. The project engaged with issues of consent and participation and revealed that in an effort to protect young people living within complex circumstances, social workers sometimes denied young people the right to make their own decisions over whether to contribute.

Selecting the Methodological Toolkit

'There are things that I'm interested in that people don't bring up. And I feel that sometimes I can't bring them up because I really want to get at what people think

is important to talk about. So I take from what people say; that's where all my questions come from, just how people talk'. (Nassy Brown, 2005:223)

The qualitative interview is an opportunity to talk through an agenda and is part of the interpretative tradition that believes in a rational and knowing subject who is able to 'tell it like it is' (Hollway & Jefferson, 2000:3). It also assumes a researcher imposing an interview agenda, structure, and narrative ordering onto a participant's 'story telling'. The attempt to locate the expression of our many selves within a matrix of social relations is often undone by thematic research agendas using question and answer formats that leave participants the task of conjuring up cold, hard answers from a range of pre-determined themes. Semi-structured interviews offer more scope for expansion and elaboration and are perfect for use with adults willing to meet the researcher's aim for rich data. Relying on thematic interviews with young people in care could close down how they narrated their lives; they could tell me the well-worn versions of their story, the ones they have told other professionals. There was also a concern that an overly structured interview experience could lead to non-participation because of their experience in reviews and meetings concerned with care planning subject them to a question and answer format set within the themes of the care system.

I met one participant who regaled me with tales of her life during an initial hour-long meeting. At the end of her story, as we were readying to say goodbye, she asked, "What was your name again?" I realised how cheap talk could be and how stories could be told almost unconsciously and how much more meaningful talk is when relationships are built and participants and researchers can get to know each other. I set about building an ethical research project bounded by trust, confidentiality and with time built in to get to know the participants and for them to know me. I hoped that using open-ended and non-directive methods would offer participants the opportunity to direct their own

research themes. As Nassy Brown (2005) asserted to get at what they think is important. The physical collection of data gathering began long after I met the participants as we spent some time getting to know each other, building rapport and trust, before I introduced the tools of the research. Initially I felt the camera and voice recorder were a barrier to communication, not to a tool to facilitate it, since some participants became self-conscious whilst others enjoyed the tools and having an official record of their stories.

Participation or Consultation

I had one concern over the collection of useful data: how does social research fulfil the aims of participation and what methods/ways of being are most conducive to entrusting leadership to participants without losing the central themes of the examination? (see Appendix 3, Participants' Research Brief)

> 'Participatory action research can help children construct their everyday experiences into knowledge, gain self-confidence in their abilities and influence decisions that are taken about their lives'. (Fraser et al, 2004:207)

To make the research meaningful for the participants it had to be aware of their needs and motivations for engaging in research, open to their agendas, and sympathetic to what they wanted to gain from it. There were times when I wished for a structure despite my commitment to participation and a participant led agenda. Much of the supporting role in true participation is uncomfortable especially in the first weeks when communication is measured and sparse. At each session not knowing what, where, when or how the session would develop led to a feeling of wanting to take back control and impose a structure in order to standardise responses and minimise uncertainty. For example, one of the research participants, Amma, decided, spontaneously, that she wanted to visit her

old nursery school and primary school. It was 4.00 p.m. I was rationally against the idea although I didn't voice this to her. I felt an unplanned visit would be 'unprofessional' in the eyes of other professionals and that without some prior arrangement she would not get the best out of it. Competing with my emotional response was the rationale that suggested that this was Amma's life, her project and her past and that she was fully participating and this acknowledgement challenged my own boundaries and terms of engagement.

Judgement calls about what I deemed as fitting and/or professional competed with demands of ethical and participatory research. Decisions had to be made on the spot using intuitive insight, trusting the participants to know their limitations and to know their lives better than I could. Social research with young people in care was an ethical minefield of on the spot judgements about safety, welfare and support that entailed a high level of engagement to guide safe explorations of life stories in all their complexity.

The gathering of narrative data owes much to Hollway & Jefferson (2000), the technique of free association 'widens access to a subjects experiences and meaning' (ibid:155). However, my interpretation and analysis does not delve into unconscious intersubjectivity nor does it develop a detailed profile of participants or their motivations or desires that drive their actions or preferred identity.

Ramblings: Just Telling a Story

> "I want to show you where I used to live, and the school I used to go to, the places that I've been, that I can tell stories about". (Amma, July: 2008)

The usefulness of personal narrative is that it can 'extrapolate…to the broader social location embodied by the individual' (McCall, 2005:1781). During these ramblings we

talked in a focused but loose way about the local area or wherever they had asked me to drive them to in the car. Occasionally we arrived somewhere they remembered from their past that held precious memories which they either met head on or concealed, only to share these details with me much later during the course of the research.

Field Diary 28/04/08
Lucy contradicts herself or maybe she tells me things at the beginning, and then forgets I have really heard them. Like her relationship with Rick, she said she didn't see him at all or talk to him but I overheard a conversation she was having with him on her mobile phone. She knows I know.

The position I adopted in the research was of interested, attentive listener, avoiding direct questions, or closed questions that stymied a response. Often I would repeat what they had told me or prompt with how, where, or who but never why as this serves to intellectualise a response. Most of the talk was generated by the participants, in this way a much larger range of themes were discussed, not all of them relating to care but to what was active at that time in their lives such as, friendships, siblings, family, events or school. As the research relationship began to grow the talk was free flowing, taking on a conversational style in which they brought issues for my attention.

Lucy often opened her conversations by regaling me with the latest episode in what I would describe as 'tales of violence', in which she narrated herself as violent, aggressive and focused on hurting others. If I were to have taken her scare stories at face value they may have been a distraction from the narrative as a resource, not solely a topic. What were her motivations for telling this story to me? Such strategies revealed the tension at the heart of her narratives and suggested possible themes to further examine. The topic of the story is not diminished but works alongside her motivation for the telling. The participants' story telling is informed by my intervention and presence and this awareness moulds self-representation and a preferred identity.

Biographic Interpretive Method (BIM) is useful in understanding and interpreting the dissonance between the 'lived life' and the 'story told' (Wengraf, 2001:144). What we experience in the world and what we are willing to tell others is understood in the context of our accumulated knowledge of the social world and locates multiple positions as a particular kind of social being (Chamberlayne et al., 2000). Narrative analysis is considered an alternative to scientific understanding of the individual abstracted from context. Putting the subject in context through the narrative study of lives combines both life experience and identity connected to social groupings, situations and events (Josselson & Lieblich, 1993). Narrative was considered the construction of a life story but was not always congruent with what I heard and saw, which could be contradicted by their use of strategies to conceal and reveal specific versions of selfhood. Often contradictions arose or I felt or thought a participant may be lying or withholding information. However, I never pushed as these inconsistencies, I let them sit with the data as demonstrated in chapter seven, and used them as resources to think through their role in making meaning in the participants lives.

During each interview session the participants talked about what was on their mind allowing unconscious logic to determine the themes of the interview. 'The associations follow pathways defined by emotional motivations, rather than rational intentions' (Hollway & Jefferson, 2000:37). In this method free association allowed the anxieties and defences that arose in the participants a narrative that revealed the whole person – their Gestalt. Wertheimer, the founder of 'Gestalt', believed that the whole is greater than the sum of its parts and that understanding 'the structure we shall need to have insight into it. There is then some possibility that the components themselves will be understood' (cited in Murphy & Kovach, 1972:258-9).

The opportunity to produce and construct knowledge, to give it meaning and to share that meaning with others, can be 'transformative for the participant' and is an aspect of research reciprocity (Denzin, 1989:17). The transformative nature of research in this thesis intervention did not always make impact and if it did it, it was not always apparent. Life narratives can be a catalyst for change for young people, enabling them to 'interrogate, evaluate, disrupt,' or even overturn their narratives in order to promote positive and creative change (Holland et al., 2008:21). I had hoped my intervention would prompt a process of change but realised that such change would be difficult to measure and may not happen during the research process. My influence over their narrative co-production rested upon the quality of the relationship, depth of communication and my interpretation, subject to human flaws of misunderstanding.

Looking for a Story: How Images Can Enrich Research

Children and young people in care often do not have family photographs or albums and their scarcity encouraged the participants to make images and to store them in the photo album that I offered. The status of the image became elevated in their lives and the scarcity of images made the method of image production enticing. Using image making equipment as a tool of data collection and analysis had a recognisable value to the participants and somewhat ensured interest. Disposable cameras have become a popular way to record visual narratives of young people. However, the low value of throwaway cameras was inappropriate to use with young people in care as their disposability from their families could not be confirmed and mirrored by the project. The use of a mid-range point and shoot digital camera meant they could see the images immediately and delete the ones they disliked (a poor outcome of technological advance). I only had one camera so they could only use it when we met. This offered a mediated access into their

life worlds, as they did not keep the camera for extended periods of time; consequently the visual narratives are partial views of their social world. They became adept at using the equipment; voice recorder held in one hand and digital camera in the other. The physicality of the camera became a repository for memory and a tactile distraction from talk in addition to being a distraction away from or toward adult intervention – the camera acted like a mediator of conversation, holding silences and prompting discussion.

Despite setting out with the intention to not fear the traumatic memories and experiences of the young people in care, there was no doubt that I had to be aware of its presence and when revelations came they were often distressing for both myself and the young people. Batmanghelidjh of London charity Kids Company, suggests when working with children and young people who hold traumatic memories selecting the appropriate tools is key in eliciting life stories. She suggests that the use of creative or artistic methods is 'one of the best ways to go visiting the trauma that they are storing in their memories is either play or artistic expression' (Batmanghelidjh:2010). Most of the participants had been damaged by their pre-care experiences in their families and some were being further damaged by their care experiences in the present. By using a creative tool I knew there would be a discursive space opened to talk through or to demonstrate trauma and to delve into memory work. This is made explicit in varying degrees of detail in chapters five and six but runs as a theme through all the chapters. The use of digital photography offered a fairly sophisticated creative outlet, the development of a technical skill and an archive of photographs for the young people to keep. Using image production was a process to enable and facilitate talking and these verbal accounts were further analysed as data while the presentation of the subsequent images within this thesis offers an illustrative content.

The camera's intrusion into space and narrative highlighted what could not be said or easily raised and showed themes of home, family and belonging, as well as revealing what had been left out of talk. The appeal of the visual, as a way to get underneath the surface of experience and language, is illustrated in chapter six. Similarly, how photographs were understood as part of the fabric of home is revealed. For instance, in chapter four Stealth's carer placed his school photograph on the mantelpiece in the front room, a symbolic gesture of belonging to both family and home, which sit ideologically side by side. They are often twinned in ways that make them difficult to explicate. Stealth removed the photo and placed it in his bedroom. When I asked why he responded that he did not want to be seen by other family members who visited over Christmas. Much could be discovered about his belonging to his foster family though the removal of his school photograph from the mantelpiece as well as the value of photographs, as private archives, which young people in care can demonstrate some control over.

The majority of the images produced are remarkably absent of people and suggests new ways to think about how young people in care think about their connection and relationship to family. Only two of the participants took photographs of people; Lucy took many of her daughter, Ocean. Children are favoured subjects for family snaps. Anna, who was the most supported young person on the project, took photographs of her entire foster family. Using the camera for production and the awareness of the camera as a tool for discovery led to an understanding of the image as both enabling narrative (Ali, 2003), through a focus on the subject of the image and through the power of the image to tell its own story. Despite the intentions of the image-maker such visual narratives were often not purposive but emerged through the camera's ability to show absence and presence through production.

The use of images in this thesis pays further attention to issues of representation and considers how mixed as a classification is currently understood in the context of children and young people in care and aims to use images appropriately. The cultural turn interrogates social categories as constructed and as such takes a visual form rendering social difference visible. These ways of seeing are not neutral acts but it is through images that we look at the relation between things and our selves (Rose, 2007:8). The proliferation of images of mixed children in care and in need of fostering and adoption demand interrogation beyond the remit of this thesis and outlines my position on the use of images.

The British Association of Adoption and Fostering (BAAF) publication 'Be My Parent' uses images to sell mixed children to prospective carers. The mixed young person becomes read as the unwanted embodiment of race mixing gone wrong. These images feed into a discourse of visible difference and can suggest that race mixing does not work. The visible and social fact of high numbers of mixed young people in care who are caught between the irreconcilable differences of mixed relationships substantiates this claim. Quite whether the young people are truly 'unwanted' by their parents or are judged as 'not belonging' to their families is a contentious question. Using images in the project recognises the social construction and position of mixed children and young people in care within the visual imagination as one of vulnerable, unwanted and powerless victims of race making and mixing.

The images taken by the young people and myself have been selected for inclusion in this thesis as a counter to dominant imagery of mixed young people in foster care as vulnerable. They show resistance, capability, loneliness, resilience, disappointment, autonomy and the complexity of personhood present within young lives. There is a

fusion of researcher images and images taken by the participants and these are indicated with a caption. The captions are either direct quotes made while taking the image or observations made during the research. The participants agreed to the use of the images in this thesis but further use would have to be re-negotiated as and when necessary. Images of participants in this thesis tend to be considered through their power to disturb how mixedness has come to be both associated either with vulnerability or the 'tragic mulatto' imagery.

Family Snaps: Raced and Gendered Constructions

During the research the opportunity arose to work with one sibling group and their family album, which is fully explored in chapter six. The social construction of mixed families is subject to visual constructions of the social categories of race that question their social legitimacy. Exploring this through family albums is a key way to understand mixed families subject to welfare intervention and the relationality of care admission. Lending from visual narrative (Ali, 2003) and memory work (Kuhn, 1995) the resource of this specific family album had to adapt in order to work with the memories, experiences and stories of family life that it contained. The birth family album of sisters, Anita and Anna, contained the usual images of family life; birthday celebrations, children with visiting relatives and lots of snaps of everyday domesticity. The family of black father, white mother and two mixed little girls marks this family as the site where raced, sexed, classed and gendered narratives emerged as ways to understand the dynamic of the mixed family.

Analyses of the mixed family has somewhat escaped scrutiny as families are assumed to be homogeneous; white families are differentiated by class and black families are pathologised through an emphasis on the dysfunctional nature of family forms, as

discussed in the literature review. If we are to take the disproportionate numbers of mixed race children in care as a way to understand the social construction of the mixed family, it could be understood as not belonging together (Olumide, 2002). The social legitimacy of the family often relies on ideas of belonging through sameness and familiarity and the visible difference of the mixed family marks it out as incompatible.

While working with the siblings the conflict of memories over the photographs in the family album illuminated the tension between past and present, rather than any straightforward connections to people and place. The search for a shared memory and the insistence that it be mirrored often over-shadowed and caused conflict in the sibling relationship. Kuhn (1995) recollects during excavating her own family album her mother's 'attempts to force her memories in line with her own' (ibid:21). Such tension also underpinned the sibling relationship, as one sister, Anna, claimed to have no memories of her birth family and so excluded herself from the work. Using the photographs of others requires respect for the emotional investment they contain, in this instance the family album was a repository for absent memories and suppressed emotions.

Amblings: the Role of Space as Method and Data

Despite a consideration of a suitable methodology before the research started, one of the strengths of the research was its ability to adapt to the specificity of the young people's living circumstances and their status as young people in care and this impacted on the inclusion of space as both method and data. Most of the research took place outdoors, primarily for three reasons; firstly, young people were more comfortable talking away from their placements where they could not always talk freely although, if they were particularly frustrated, being overheard would not stop them. Secondly, it was summer

and outdoors seemed a more natural place to be with a young person to relax and amble through local places and those farther a field that held memories they wanted to re-visit. Thirdly, foster carers did not always welcome the research intervention. On occasion my presence was explicitly disregarded and I was made to feel unwelcome or an unwanted intrusion in carers' homes. These factors led to a kind of 'homelessness' (fine when the weather was good but not if it was wet) and these meetings, in places of the young people's choosing, had a bizarre quality. McDonalds was a favourite place to go and this brought about their reminiscences of supervised parental contact, which often took place there. The interactions in places spoke of the position of the young person in care as one in which public space becomes the site for alternative places of belonging.

Field Diary 12/7/08
On the way home Stealth pointed out the flat where he used to live with his mum, we have walked past it at least five times.

The value of space in social research and social relationships is recognised in terms that state its significance for social identities. As discussed by both Doreen Massey (1994) and Jacqueline Nassy Brown (2005) space is constitutive of social relations. Chapter seven engages with the power invested in spaces to coerce specific types of recognition through constructions of gender, mixedness and visibility (Puwar, 2004). In chapter seven, Lucy's narrative of urban space becomes a way to document the use of space as a classed, raced and gendered way to read mixedness as a cultural practice embedded by performance within spaces imbued with social relations.

In summary, the methodological tool kit was formulated with a commitment to an ethical and participatory research project. The data collation relied on and trusted the participants to shape the trajectory of the research; hence all narratives are grounded in specific lived experiences of mixedness through the context of care processes and

consequently vary in their focus across each empirical chapter. The use of visual methodologies allowed the unspoken aspects of the participants' lives to be fore-grounded, minimising the emphasis on talk and also leading to specific ways to understand belonging through the camera's intrusion into private foster placements and communal local spaces. Understanding and adapting methods to how the participants used space raised new avenues of investigation around exclusion and inclusion from family and from home.

Intellectual and Experiential Biography

> 'The approach suggested by the experiences of outsiders within is one where intellectuals learn to trust their own personal and cultural biographies as significant sources of knowledge'. (Hill-Collins, 1990:122)

My participants may have been curious about my zealous interest in their lives, but did not ask me whether or not I had been in care myself. I know that my experience as a young person in local authority care for three years shaped my interest and subsequent decision to examine this area of research. What is evidenced through the chapters is part of a subjective interpretation and carries familiar themes. In all the participants' narratives there is a little of my own experience. Holding up a reflective mirror to my experience was useful as it engendered an enormous capacity for empathy. On many occasions it was painful to bear witness to their lives and even more painful to re-connect with my own feelings of the powerlessness and vulnerability which I remember was such a big part of my life while in care.

It is the loneliness and isolation of care that often remains unspoken in research with young people in care. Thus offering support and building positive research relationships, albeit relatively short term, and documenting these experiences with a photograph album, could add quality to everyday life and reduce isolation. I hoped this would be a reciprocal

intervention. It is these objectives that have motivated this research as opposed to any sense that the research will give voice to the powerless; they really did not care if the research was completed and were unimpressed by the academic community of which I am a part. They wanted to be listened to; their experiences and frustrations, their joys and their fears – they wanted to be respected on their own terms. They enjoyed the intimacy of the research relationship and so did I. There was trust and laughter, frustration on both sides, and times when I thought I would never make it to the end and felt like giving up. Nevertheless, something pushed me on and I persevered. It was probably, all these years after leaving care, that I, finally, also had the opportunity to be heard through this thesis.

Oakley (1982) suggests that to achieve non-hierarchical, reciprocal relationships between the interviewer and the participant, researchers should emotionally invest in the research and be prepared to self disclose. I was emotionally invested but remained unwilling to self disclose simply to reduce any assumed differential in status or in order to gain richer data. There was more at stake. I felt the relationships were fairly equal; I had experienced what they were living through and was now re-living it vicariously. My own vulnerability was with me throughout and this reduced any sense of ego position that status, age or education may have bestowed. I felt my own story might have gotten in the way of them telling theirs.

The complexity of self-disclosure can lead to an exploitation of power in relationships as Gunaratnam summarised Lee (1993) to reiterate that 'self disclosure can be used to strategically ingratiate, so that ethical considerations become displaced' (Gunaratnam, 2003:88). This makes it difficult to balance when 'enough is enough' (ibid) for both researcher and participants. In this instance self-disclosure, solely to reduce any assumed

power differential in this relationship, may have diminished their own expertise as they deferred to my social status and my experience.

In spite of my mixedness and my care experience I was an outsider in the field but I retained tacit and experiential knowledge, which informed my actions, decisions and research trajectory. Assuming this position does not mean that the research made no impact on my own memory work or that my emotional and experiential knowledge was discounted. My own memory work began to play a role in how the research developed, the questions and themes I became stimulated by, and my responses to their changing circumstances. Using my own subjectivity brought about insightful knowledge[16]. Both memory and emotions were resources and tools to situate myself within a one-to-one relationship, which became a space of confidentiality, caring and trust. I adopted an approach that could allow for emotions, status and place to be part of the negotiation of micro-interactions taking place within the research relationships.

Knowing My Place and Relegating My Status

There was a hierarchy of status at work in the research relationships, co-constructed and stratified along similar lines to most ordinary everyday interactions across race, gender, class, age, social class and sexuality. However, the commitment to a participant-led agenda, and a reduction in my control over the research trajectory, worked to subvert these status positions within the research to make the interaction a more meaningful and shared experience. While status may inform social relations in the real world, within these research relationships 'place' became how roles were occupied and interacted with, subverting status positions and increasing equality between the participants and myself.

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[16] As serendipity would have it I bumped into a friend of a friend who introduced me to a psychotherapist and she was valuable in guiding me through my own journey once again enabling me to continue the research, even when I felt overwhelmed by it.

> 'Place is to everyday interaction what social status is to social structure. That is while a status is a socially agreed upon, macro-level position, a place is less well defined, micro-level position such as follower, leader, star, supporting character…the concept of place encompasses differences in what sociologists have called power, prestige, face-to-face status, and social distance'. (Clark, 1990:306)

My social position that gave me status as professional/adult was subverted within the context of the one-to-one research relationship; a position in which I deferred to the motivations, desires and instructions of the participants – they knew and were experts in their lives. The awareness of my place was achievable through emotions, negotiation and impact. The emphasis on research with a caring ethic and a focus on place led to an encounter, which showed the subtleties of the negotiation and the slippage that can occur as status and place become inversed during micro-interactions. During a conversation with Amma, in which she recounted abuse at home and in foster care, my response prompted an apology for some of the things that had happened in her life. My sympathy was guided by an intention to let her know these things were wrong and asserted my status as a caring, capable adult. By apologising for the wrongs against her I was simultaneously offering her the place of 'victim of abuse'. Interestingly, and in line with Clark's (1990) emphasis, Amma rejects my response of sympathy and retorts, "you don't need to be sorry – it's not your fault". In doing so she asserts her place as more powerful than the victim of abuse status I had offered.

Clark's (1990) analysis goes on to suggest that offering sympathy can be a way of establishing superiority, yet the receiver may not accept sympathy as a strategy to refuse the problem 'because it acknowledges failure to control either oneself or the environment' (ibid:325). If Amma had acknowledged my sympathy and accepted it as valid, she may have moved status position within a research paradigm in which her place

was one of leader. She took charge of her 'Life Story'[17] work and my place was follower; this structure enabled her to take control. In emotional research, place engages with the micro-politics of interaction to subvert social status within the shifting terrain of claims, whereby an offer of sympathy, born out of a caring ethic, can clash with the commitment to participation and leadership within the project. In this scenario of place and empathy between researcher and participant the assumption that the social status of adult, professional researcher always holds the power in research relationships with young people which can be over-turned in ways that highlight the nature of participation. When and if participants are truly self-directed in research projects and have accepted their role fully, the status of the researcher is relegated and interactions become negotiated through roles determined by place not status.

Boundaries in Ethical and Reciprocal Fieldwork

Negotiating safe and ethical boundaries for the research relationships was also a key way to understand the vulnerability and circumstances of both my role as researcher and the role of the participants. During the referral stage and meeting with individual social workers, there were more women than men in the offices. I wondered if the gender of the social worker made a difference to Stealth, who was the only male on the project. Would a preference for women be a natural response given his biography: single mother household, good relationships with his mum and grandmother and a feminised educational experience?

> Fiona: What was it like having a social worker that was a man?
> Stealth: Um, it was all right but I like women (laughter).
> Fiona: You prefer women?
> Stealth: That sounds funny

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[17] Amma was referred by her social worker who told her she could do some of her life story work with me. Life Story is a tool used by social workers and specialist counsellors, which helps children in care, who have little hope of returning home, come to terms with their pasts. In practice very little time is devoted to this work.

> Fiona: (Laughter) and now you have Chrissie how long have you had her for?
> Stealth: A while, I can't remember. My mind is blank. I should remember these things

His recognition of his heterosexuality and 'preferring women' amuses him. I am embarrassed and want to change the subject, feeling safer on gendered territory by returning to social workers rather than letting the conversation follow its unknown course, which is common in much of 'free association'. In my haste to move the threat of risky conversation about sexual preference with a twelve-year-old boy, I rush in with my next question after polite/uncomfortable laughter.

> Fiona: How often do you see her?
> Stealth: I was supposed to see her last Wednesday but she had to cancel it. That's the thing I don't like about social workers, they always cancel things, it's just like you don't have a social worker that doesn't cancel stuff they always have change of appointments
> Fiona: Maybe you could try canceling something?
> Stealth: yeah (laughter) I could say 'oh hi Chrissie I'm at my grandmothers can you meet later' (Laughter)
> Fiona: Do you expect that now that they will cancel?
> Stealth: With social workers you expect them to be nice, but when there is a social work meeting and you have to meet up and talk to them, then you can't depend on that, because they phone at the last minute.
> Fiona: What if you have something important to talk to them about?
> Stealth: I can phone their workplace and they will answer it and call me back.

Mediating the relationship in this environment of child protection carried its own risks and raised issues about my own professional vulnerability. My conduct, although relaxed and open, was aware of boundaries at all times. My heightened awareness in these one-to-one research relationships was to allegations about young people feeling unsafe, threatened or worried about the content of the discussions. I did not want any allegations made against me for inappropriate behavior or language, nor for causing offence or distress. I had to be cautious in dealing with themes that entailed any perceived threat or abuse of power.

Juggling the Many Research Roles

The participants had their own expectations of the research and of me. Juggling their varied and numerous needs made fieldwork both time consuming and emotionally challenging. The young people with the most needs were those without appropriate or adequate support from carers and only one participant was adequately supported. There was a lot of slippage in my role as I often found myself on the receiving end of personal dilemmas: boyfriends, friends, foster parents, birth parents, social workers, placement movement and money challenges amongst others. I was the new resource in their lives as I offered time and attention and they used me as a sounding board, confidante and mentor. I was in the thick of really complex dilemmas, much of it characterised by frustrations, which was demanding; these lives were complex and stressful. In addition I had also been asked to perform specific tasks by social workers that I had accepted, such as Life Story work with Amma and Family Album work with Anita and Anna; these are specialist tasks and I was unprepared for the complex life stories that unfolded. These circumstances were difficult to juggle; making me think through support networks or the 'team around the child' and how this was mostly absent at times of crisis or confusion and my role was filling a gap in services for a time.

There were moments I experienced depression and anger and it was hard to listen/counsel, be aware of unacceptable or abusive treatment, dangerous situations and concerns for welfare and not be able to do anything to change the circumstances. I had to also take care of my own well being and talk to people I trusted who could give me a steer in the right direction.

The foster families of the participants also used me as a resource to vent their frustrations with the young people, social services and my own presence. In addition

there was poor time-keeping and I was left waiting around; sometimes the participants were not in, or would not turn up at the time agreed, or they would not speak to me and not tell me what was bothering them. They might complain for the entire session about whatever or whoever had annoyed them that day. The problems were family related, care related, carried enormous weight or were trivial but it was still valid, could not be dismissed and still part of their story that day. Being all things – researcher, confidante, counsellor, and mentor – due to a lack of available support to the young people through social services, which had an impact on my methodological approach.

I began to experience overload and felt overwhelmed by their concerns and my inability to make any changes as well as juggling the complex lives of five participants simultaneously. I began to assert my opinion more regularly to try to encourage the participants to see their role in scenarios and how their actions resulted in consequences. On one occasion this entailed a deliberate attempt to address a particular narrative that had caused Anita years of self-blame and destructive relationships and was causing a wedge between herself and her sister. This is explored more fully in chapter six. This shift in strategy from listener and collector of stories, to one in which opinions were given if asked for, began a

> **9th June 2008**
> The other thing that really troubles me is that they are looking for so much and what I have to offer only scratches the surface of their needs; a place to belong, family, security, and stability, crucial things for growth and to be listened to and supported.

process of re-framing their narratives and managing my increasingly untenable role.

The parallel between therapy and research is clear as the researcher often uncovers hidden, painful, or deeply complex memories or feelings. Such disclosures tend to deepen relationships between the people involved (Lee, 1993). I cared about my participants, thought about them, re-worked their stories, re-read their transcripts, and

probably tried too hard to understand them. My desire to protect them from sharing painful topics was an almost natural response that adults have towards children and I felt responsible if they became upset or distressed by these meetings. It was not always possible to lift their mood before leaving them. A healthy sense of reciprocity, an engagement with their dilemmas and an approach with an emphasis on caring was the most productive way to proceed through the yearlong research process.

There is some consensus that a longitudinal approach when collating data from children and young people yields greater quality of data (Jones & Tannock, 2000). I spent just under one year in the field, meeting with each young person individually as often as once per fortnight. Each session lasted 2-3 hours; shorter if they did not want to participate that day, or longer if there was a practical issue that needed dealing with and they had no other support. Importantly, ending the research relationship was explicitly discussed well in advance to minimise the consequences of further broken attachments. Some participants wanted to stay in touch after the research ended and we did meet a couple of times but I maintained that the research did have to end at some point. We are now in touch through e-mail or Facebook. Longitudinal research is preferable as long as the demands of the field do not overwhelm the interaction and the collection of data remains at the forefront of the researcher's agenda. It is all too easy to become part of a support system and risk further broken attachments when working with young people in care.

Data Analysis: Sifting Through the Lumps

The hermeneutic craft of intuiting, or spending time dwelling on the text, analysing the meaning of the things and writing a full description, was the key analytical method. Moustakas (1990) claims that researchers engage in a journey of discovery too, which draws on their capacity to learn and know, stating that qualitative discoveries cannot be

forced, they emerge through waiting and patience. I did not try to find patterns across experience, nor commonalities across themes, instead the focus was to contextualise for understanding each participant's experience emerging through the care processes arising from their mixed classification. How mixedness was experienced and lived through care practices was what interested me.

The stories the young people told were interpreted by an approach to narratives that informs 'the ways in which we make and use knowledge to create and preserve our social worlds and our places within them' (Fook, 2002:132). In the analysis of each narrative, I asked what the story was and why it was being selected for telling during our conversations. The interview can be used by researcher and researched for invention and re-invention of the self. By treating the narrative as a topic to be explored often points to and engages with how specific types of identity are performed as co-productions (Hollway & Jefferson, 2000). Seale (1998) claims that such presentations often contain moral elements in which responses to specific circumstances and events can be threats to the 'coherence of a secure personal narrative of self-identity' (ibid:214). Moving beyond text and representation present in qualitative interviews required an awareness of participants being 'motivated not to know' as they possibly engage in a psychoanalytical model of subjectivity to produce 'defences against anxiety' (ibid:246).

I present an analysis rich in meaning, diverse and representative of the young people's experiences in all their richness, but in all their wholeness too – their Gestalt. The whole in this instance as outlined by Hollway & Jefferson (2000) also refers to 'all I have accumulated relating to a particular person who took part in the research' (ibid:69). These ephemera are transcripts, memories of meetings, field work diaries, meeting other people who the participant knows and what was said about them, back story from social

workers and foster carers, observations and random interactions of which I was a part. Gestalt refers most broadly to holding all of these things in mind to retrieve, primarily through awareness, close attention to and immersion in transcripts, intuition and attention to the participants.

The case study lets 'readers discover what is there that can be applied to their own situation and what cannot' (Hollway & Jefferson, ibid:93). Each narrative is presented as a case study, is true to that participant and I would hope that they would recognise themselves in their stories. Presenting the data as a case study has strengths in that it offers deep insights that may resonate in wider cases.

Representation and Ethics

However robust I deem the data to be there are flaws in the approach and the design. 'Care and mixed race classification' is a common but under-researched area in which little rich empirical data exists. Ethical responsibility for misrepresentation lies with me and I apologise in advance if any stories have been taken out of context or distorted. There is a question about how generalisable qualitative research on young people's views can be (Jones & Tannock, 2000:93). The validity of the data is robust and is representative of the specific space, time, relationships and circumstances present during the research period.

Despite having consent from the young people's social workers, their foster carers and in one instance, the parents, I sought their on-going consent at the beginning of each recorded session. At the completion they signed a consent form, which was witnessed if they were less under 18 years old. Some of the topics were sensitive and this offered them the opportunity to let me know if it was okay to use this material in an anonymous

way under their chosen pseudonym. Confidentiality was discussed with the young people and I was duty bound to notify the relevant social worker if disclosures were made that affected the safety of the young people.

My research project adheres to guidelines set out by the British Sociological Association (BSA) and defers to the ethics statement of the Economic and Social Research Council (ESRC). It was also cleared by the Research Ethics Committee at Goldsmiths. I had a valid Criminal Records Bureau (CRB) check[18]. The project referred to the guidelines for working with children set out by Barnados (2003). The storage, use and disclosure of data are within the Data Protection Act 1998. All data is stored in a locked filing cabinet and secured on a computer that requires a password.

In summary, the role of the researcher's intellectual biography can lead to insightful knowledge production and develop a capacity for empathy enabling a research relationship based upon trust and reciprocity. Approaches to research often place reciprocity as central in giving something back (Skeggs, 1995). The role of emotions also informed the research relationships; status and place became ways to acknowledge how participation could be measured. The boundary between research and therapy was permeable as the researcher role became subject to slippage and I became part of a patchy and inconsistent support network. The longitudinal nature of the research allowed time for themes to be fully explored, generated a lot of verbal and visual data, but was also a test of endurance as demands became overwhelming. The approach to data analysis was immersion and such narrative constructions were analysed and interpreted in

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[18] Although I had a valid CRB check for another project I had been involved in, each project requires a new disclosure. However, I was given the go-ahead to begin the project while waiting for my new CRB. I waited several weeks and eventually called the CRB who claimed they needed additional information. They contacted Lewisham but had received no reply. I gave them the information they needed and the disclosure arrived within a week. This was a delicate situation of trust, I was known to the organisation. Could guidelines have been more strictly adhered to?

relation to how the young people made meaning from their experiences of mixedness in the context of care.

This chapter demonstrated the methodological approach, which emphasised the particularity of circumstances and the need for highly engaging, ethical and participatory methods. Theoretical observations in the research design included how to avoid the reification and racialisation of mixedness which produce fixed categories of experience, through both a reflexive approach to mixed experience and being aware of social services strategies of race making. My own experience with social workers revealed that while they thought about my presence through the fixed lens of mixedness and race, I was negotiating my mixedness through my own lived experience and the strategies I have built to do the work of race making in social interaction. Such a dissonance between classification and lived experience was a useful way to further conceptualise how mixedness is made in practice. The reflexive section demonstrated that mixedness is often understood through ambiguity or an ambiguous appearance. Further, that mixed people can be subject to misrecognition, leading to questions about heritage and belonging; in my case this was secured through my cultural practices, in order to achieve desired social legitimacy. A demonstration of cultural practices also offers ways to build social relations. In my experience of mixedness this is part of everyday experience. In designing how to examine mixedness in the lives of young people I straddled two positions, using mixedness as lived experience and also as a classification with specific social meanings attached.

During discussions about referrals identity problems among mixed young people were highlighted by social workers. My own mixedness was thought to be a useful antidote to what was sometimes considered a problematic racial identity. In this model, identity can

almost always be a cover for inadequacies in meeting the needs of mixed young people and obscures the impact of social processes of care within the difficulties young people may experience. During referrals, issues of participation demonstrated how the rights of young people were denied as social workers acting as gatekeeper's censored their participation.

Developing and adapting the methodological tool kit took account of a recognition of the young people's age, life experiences and feelings about being in care, reciprocity, level of need, ethics and their desires and motivations for being involved in research. A highly participatory model was designed using free association, so they could speak through their own themes and raise issues of importance outside of the parameters of the research. Their narrative co-productions were examined for instances of how mixedness and care processes demonstrated a causal relationship to their experiences. Beyond the aims of the research for data collection, the intervention aimed to reframe narratives and instigated reflection, but the impact of such interventions are difficult to measure.

Visual methods offered a source of engagement, making the camera and image production a repository for things that could not be spoken of or were subconscious and below the level of cognisance. Image production was used in a number of ways: as life story work, as a means to open themes for discussion, and a way to illustrate belonging and home. Image making was a highly successful method engaged in by almost all the participants as the value of photographs was elevated within this group of young people, who rarely have photo albums or visual representations and records of their lives.

The use of the family album was serendipitous and offered an opportunity to work with the structuring absence of the family. An examination of belonging despite physical

absence revealed that young people invoke family in thinking through their care experiences and their identifications. This is demonstrated in chapter five in which the dissonance of memory between siblings and their divided loyalties suggested that the needs of siblings could be given greater attention through working therapeutically with the family album.

One of the strengths of the method was that it adapted to the circumstances of the participants, after the early stages of fieldwork were characterised by a sense of their exclusion from their placements and having no indoor space in which to work. The spaces of the foster placements were not always welcoming and there were issues of privacy and belonging. It soon became apparent that homelessness was part of how the experiences of young people were structured and this was discussed through the notion of transience and belonging. As a method the physical spaces of placements and the local area became part of a wider consideration of how space structures both experience and social identity and this is examined fully in chapter seven.

Data analysis through in dwelling and writing descriptive accounts of the data were useful in retaining a sense of wholeness about each participant, a sense of their gestalt. This strategy kept my own insights and descriptions of the data close to experience and observation. Such a large collection of data through verbal accounts, visual representations, observations, conversations with professionals, foster carers, birth family all offered insights to make meaningful observations about young people's lives. The images in the thesis counter the representations of mixed young people in care as vulnerable and tragic, rendering an engagement with how mixedness is represented through discourse and through visual imagery.

"Where a placement with a foster carer or prospective adoptive parent is required for a child, if it has not been possible to secure an ideal ethnic, cultural or religious match, all efforts will be made to find a family placement that is as close a match as possible. The placement must meet the assessed needs of the child and the child should not stand out as visibly different" (Lewisham guidelines on Trans-Racial and Trans-Cultural placements, 2010).

Lewisham guidelines for trans-racial and trans-cultural placements are decided upon through a consideration of the young person's assessed needs. Matching a young person to a family through race, ethnicity, religion, culture and visual appearance seek to ensure the best possible compatibility within a family. The placement team work in consultation with social workers, young people and parents to reflect the composition of the birth family when placing a young person. If a child has a white birth mother they can be placed with a white carer but this is subject to negotiation with the social worker. The main consideration is matching from a limited pool of foster carers and balancing ethnic, racial, and cultural needs with the need for safety and protection of the young person. Lewisham has no formal policy guidelines concerning the placement of mixed young people and suitable matching depends upon communication, between social workers, placement team, young person and in some instances birth parents, in each individual case to ensure that decisions are made effectively.

The following empirical chapter examines one of the first issues to present itself during the referral stages of care admission when decisions are made about who mixed young people are best placed with. Specific attention is paid to how to classify mixedness and how the boundaries of ethnic, cultural and racial belonging can be constituted when making decisions about suitable foster placements for mixed young people in care.

Chapter 4: Stealth: The First Year in Care and the Matrix of Classifications

> Stealth: I've got loads of stuff to think about
> Fiona: So you only thought about it because we're talking about it?
> Stealth: Yeah
> Fiona: Did you expect to be coming into foster care?
> Stealth: A bit of a surprise, it wasn't like, it wasn't like Hull beat Arsenal, you see like probability in math, and it's like even chances. I did think something like that could happen because of the conditions I was living in and um I never knew it was going to happen like that. Say you buy a 1962 Rover some old car you go out driving in it in the winter and there's a possibility that's its going to break down but you don't think it's just going to stop like that. I knew something eventually would happen but I didn't know what day what time". (Interview with Stealth, July, 2008)

Stealth's experiences are mediated through the processes of the care system. Such processes are part of the fabric of his everyday life and they exert an influence on how he makes meaning through his mixedness within his care experiences. The structures of care reflect public discourses of management and the standardisation of young people's care experiences. The management of care is constituted through specific processes that aim to enhance the care experience by considering the needs of the young person. Needs are assessed individually and are constituted by race, gender, religion, family circumstances and reasons for admission. These considerations of a young person's biography are then managed by processes set up to monitor and evaluate the young person's care experience and to improve care outcomes. The discussion within this chapter focuses on how these processes mediate the care environment, and the experience of the young person, within ways that restrict autonomy and reduce ordinary experiences. The first half of the chapter is devoted to an exploration of how race and, more specifically, mixedness impact upon Stealth's experiences. The discussion centres on how mixedness can be defined and begins part of a larger debate carried throughout the remaining empirical chapters, which concerns how mixedness can be conceptualised through experience. The second half of this chapter is a discussion about how care processes impact on the quality of Stealth's life and how he manages and negotiates these interventions.

Defining Mixedness

Experiences of care are considered through attention to how racialisation structures Stealth's processes of meaning making as his racial classification impacts on his lived experience. Stealth's mixedness is outside of the binary black white split common to other participants in the thesis; his mother is mixed; black Jamaican and white English and his father black Jamaican. Attention to Stealth's care experience demonstrates how processes of inclusion rely on a) being other defined leading to a split in private/public identity and b) synthesising the varied approaches to mixedness within wider social life and social services in order to understand where he belongs within a racial schema. These debates about how the boundaries of mixedness can be drawn assert that ethnic and racial boundaries cannot contain mixedness because of its internal diversity. The complexity of who counts as mixed is not clearly defined and so this too is challenged by Stealth's specific heritage. Mixedness remains an undefined classification and presents a series of dilemmas due to its contestable boundaries.

The definition of what constitutes mixedness and who is included and excluded from the category informs how people are able to choose their identity and is much debated (Song, 2003). Mixedness has been narrowly defined and is mostly theorised through overt attention to a one white parent and one black parent paradigm (Wilson, 1987; Tizard and Phoenix, 1993; Ifekunwigwe, 1999). Such understandings and attention to mixedness as black and white reflects race thinking. It is noted and significant that mixedness can also be characterised by ethnicity, faith and religion and a growing attention to these permutations is beginning to be theorised (Cabellero, 2008). The over emphasis on the irreconcilable differences between black and white leads to race mixing being underpinned by notions of difference and sameness. There are differences within the categories black and white but they are erased at the level of aggregation, as was the

case with mixedness during the referrals processes discussed in the methodology chapter. Hence mixedness, as the embodiment of both black and white, is understood as racial difference in relation to the polarisation of race thinking and the symbolic and often oppositional positions and values attached to blackness and whiteness. How race becomes read and understood then leaps back to essential differences between the two distinct categories known as races. These meanings inform how Stealth positions himself within the available identifications and classifications of race and mixedness. Despite his specific mixedness being misrecognised Stealth aims to make sense of race making processes to inform him of his identification choices.

It was Chrissie, Stealth's social worker who had asked during the social work briefing "How mixed could the young people be?" As discussed in the methodology chapter, this posed a perplexing process of racialisation within the research itself. My response that the young people referred to the research should be recorded as mixed in their care file prompted Chrissie to refer Stealth to be part of the project. I was introduced to Stealth by Chrissie at his foster placement. I explained that the project was to talk about and show his everyday life and that it was specifically for mixed young people in care. Stealth responded by stating "I don't know if I'm mixed or not".

Pen Portrait
Stealth came into foster care just over a year ago. His mother has multiple sclerosis and can no longer look after him and it is unlikely he will return home. Stealth's father lives nearby but has no contact with him. He feels that his elderly grandparents and mum are vulnerable and he takes on the role of carer. Stealth has spent the last year in one placement five minutes walk from his old family home, although his mum has now left the area. Sheila, his carer, says being in care embarrassed him at first but she feels that he is now getting used to it. The foster family are a Jamaican couple with three children, one of whom still lives at home. Stealth goes along to the Sunday service and youth club with the family and he describes himself as Christian. Stealth's care admission was due to his mother's illness as she was no longer able to offer the kind of care deemed 'reasonable'.

My first impressions of Stealth were that he was chatty and was interested in the research but unsure how he could contribute. He told me he was good at sport and competed for the school in the 100 and 200 metres races, being the second fastest runner in his year.

He was an intelligent boy concerned about environmental issues and politics. He also had a fear of dogs, which on our first visit to the local park resulted in me having to coax him out of the toilets. I enjoyed interviewing Stealth. We had a good rapport, he had a good sense of humour, loved jokes and his use of analogies was original, accurate and inspired.

> Fiona: Did anyone give you important advice when you came into foster care?
>
> Stealth: I got no advice actually. It's a funny story how I found out I was in care. Shall I tell it? I was at primary school in year 6. I was in a science lesson. The office lady said 'I'm going to introduce you to some people. I said 'oh no has my granddad died?' She said no. My mum died? She said no. My grandmother?' She said no. She said the people in here will explain it and there was a room in the office and I saw two policemen and my mum's social worker and they explained how I was going to be in care and I thought I was going to be like Tracey Beaker [19] and it was going to be fun. Then I realized oh no what am I thinking and I got angry, was upset and they gave me a tissue and took me in the police car to um Laurence House, on the top floor and they were ber (lots) people in the office trying to find me a placement.
>
> Fiona: You waited there while they looked?
>
> Stealth: Yeah. 3pm till 5pm. Two hours playing with action men. She said any particular race and I said I would not mind if it was American, African, Caribbean, or Australian. I wouldn't mind English, the best ones would be cockney, I like cockney ones they're funny they're like 'hello lovey'. The women are lovely they smoke and make sandwiches. I like Scottish and Irish.
>
> Fiona: Good you had a choice
>
> Stealth: At first it sounded like they were giving me a choice but when they talked about Sheila it sounded like they were actually forcing me to do this. They were like Wow! We found you the perfect placement very near home, Caribbean people and regular churchgoers. I said 'Do I have a choice?' They said 'You do, but we have to tell you this placement seems so perfect'. I was like ok. Then the cab driver didn't know where number 29 was so he went up and down the road.
>
> Fiona: Who were you with?
>
> Stealth: Some nice Australian girl. She was nice but for some reason she acted too causal like we was going to Pizza Hut or somewhere. She wasn't like your placement I hope it's okay. She was like; oh I wonder who will be behind the door, like a mystery.

Care Admission Processes and Race

Planning care admission in advance with the consent and views of the young person being taken into account is advocated as a way to reduce the impact and loss of family life (Stein, 1999). Stealth's mother reached crisis point very quickly and this resulted in his emergency care admission. It is not known what levels of support there were prior to

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[19] Tracey Beaker is a fictional and feisty character in Jacqueline Wilson's novel about a girl in a children's home, popular with children and young people and dramatised for BBC1.

his admission and this raises questions about the effectiveness of early intervention, and measures taken to ensure support for families in crisis.

In arranging a placement a social worker would make an assessment of needs outlining the young person's package of care which would aim to meet their educational, psychological and parenting needs within an appropriate placement. This could be within foster placements, residential homes, secure accommodation, or friend and family placements known as kinship care. Once the placement has been identified and authorised by the service manager, the budget for care is agreed. It is usually preferable and a cheaper option to choose in-house placements, that is foster carers employed by the local authority as opposed to private fostering agencies, which charge more. Residential homes are expensive care options and a last resort for stretched local authority budgets.

Stealth points toward the illusion of choice as he is asked by the social worker if he has any specific requirements for his placement. There is a shortage of foster carers for African Caribbean and mixed children and the social worker's relief at finding an appropriate foster family is palpable. Stealth's request for a placement with an English Cockney family is highly unlikely as the Association of Black Social Workers and Allied Professionals (ABSWAP) had gathered support for opposing all trans-racial adoptions and fostering practices during the 1980s. In taking this position ABSWAP were also responding to the developments in social work culture of the often-unnecessary removal of children from black families by white social workers. Moves away from trans-racial adoption and fostering gathered political momentum, rallied by accusations of identity stripping of black children being placed with white families. Same race matching practices continue to influence decision-making about how children are placed.

Recommendations were subsequently included in the Children Act 1989. Same race matching practices are made complex by mixedness and on-going debates over how mixed children ought to be classified and placed (Barn, 1993; Okitikpi, 2005). Stealth's racial identification (of mixed mother and black father) further complicates placement policy, as he neither fits the strict boundaries of how mixedness has so far been defined as black/white, or as half and half. Stealth's mixedness remains an aspect of his identification which is difficult to define, classify and name. Stealth is not yet recognisable as belonging to a distinct ethnic category and does not sit easily within understandings of what it means to be mixed or black.

The complexity of mixedness enables a recognition of race as a sliding signifier (Fanon, 1968) that constructs categories we assume to be racially or ethnically distinct. People make mixedness through discursive repertoires of race making and mixedness in specific sites such as social care. Such discourses also inform constructions of race as they invoke, through these practices, who can and cannot be mixed. Sliding referents work to re-position mixedness according to the logic of the site and the actions of those within it who decide on how mixedness can be expressed. Such expression of how mixed is defined and the lack of clarity about that definition means mixedness is often misrecognised. Utilising the racial and ethnic systems of inclusion and exclusion as boundaries of classification is what makes the definition of mixedness so problematic. Such schemas rely on biological ideas of race. Mixedness then becomes positioned outside of the existing racial and ethnic schema and outside of the margins of social legitimacy.

The inclusion of mixed as a classification on the UK Census 2001, its underpinnings as a social category constitutive of a group is yet to be defined. The classification of mixed is

an important aspect of social legitimacy as Bauman states 'Being human and valued is about being visible, recognised and counted' (1996:60). However, definitions of how mixedness can be conceptualised remains a significant debate within critical mixed studies (Tizard & Pheonix, 1993; Ali, 2003, Song, 2003). Mixed remains characterised by racial difference. It becomes that which is positioned in opposition and outside of what it means to be neither black nor white. It is widely accepted and recognised that race is fluid, multiple and the influence of the environment constructs differences in how race is acted upon and underpinned (Butler, 1993). Investigating how practices of race making construct difference are useful in undermining and deconstructing race. Mixedness is positioned on the margins of existing race discourse. Part of the problem with re-defining mixed as an ethnic and racial group is asserting the continuing salience of race just as its deconstruction takes place. However, removing race while racism is active negates its importance as a structuring force in life experiences.

Organising Principles of Race

> 'Understanding the idea of race involves grasping how people think about races: what they take to be the central truths about races; under what sort of circumstances they will apply the idea of race: what consequences of action will flow from that application'. (Appiah, 2000:33)

Race is a factor in all of our lives. No one is untouched by it. For some it may be invasive. For others it operates at the periphery of their lives. Race structures the world we live in, how we live in it and how we engage with the environment around us. Race evolves over time and across geographical locations to change its parameters of belonging. Race is signified by the biology of skin colour and this bodily (mis) recognition reifies race by fixing the visual markers of race on the body. These markers are subject to individual and societal readings that shift through contexts. Race appears as an intellectual mythical exercise yet has real socio-economic manifestations and political

consequences. Holt (2002) argues that the very nature of race is ambiguous and chameleon-like and thus its temporal and spatial resilience is its key feature. The consequence of this is that an attempt to harness the way that race works, or contain its key manifestations, is likely to be anachronistic. Race is most easily understood as a lived reality in the way that people organise their lives individually and collectively as families and social groups. Even though race has an historical trajectory, it is a 'complex, lived, material, reality' (Frankenberg 1997:22) This is also because race confers a more complex social reality and lived experience due to its structuring presence in social relations and hierarchies of difference.

Race thinking and making structures how Stealth is considered in social care; his classification, his placements, his experiences all depend upon it. Thus the process of his placement selection reflects policies of same race matching and simultaneously prioritises cultural reproduction in a black family. The discovery of a 'perfect' placement is not so perfect for Stealth since Jamaica, despite being part of his heritage, is unfamiliar to him. His grandfather's ambivalent relationship to his birth home, signalled by his purchase of a "one-way ticket to England" which has not seen him return since his arrival and his absent Jamaican father are all familiar but elusive. Jamaican cultural practices were either ignored or derided in his birth family and so his placement with a Jamaican foster carer, given his mixedness and his relationship to Jamaica, was characterised by ambivalence.

> Fiona: I suppose you could learn about Jamaica from Sheila
> Stealth: Yeah most of what I know about Jamaica is actually from her because her family goes to Jamaica a lot and they talk about Jamaica a lot and how it is, so most of what I know is from them talking
> Fiona: Do you have Jamaican food?
> Stealth: Yeah, if she's up to it
> Fiona: What do you like to eat?
> Stealth: It's spicy and I'm not used to it
> Fiona: So your mum never cooked like that

> Stealth: Nah, my mum could hardly cook because she shakes. My granddad doesn't cook he will cook beans on toast and put garlic on his food. He doesn't cook especially Jamaican
> Fiona: He really doesn't like Jamaica does he?
> Stealth: One-way ticket to England

The value and emphasis on cultural practices was fought for during the 1980s by ABSWAP to reproduce culture for black and mixed children who were fostered and adopted. The model of care Stealth receives in his new foster home would be idealized yet for Stealth it is no easy resting place. Stealth's mixedness becomes a disruptive and recurring theme in our conversations as racial classification processes restrict how he is able to racially define his heritage.

Living through Race and Ethnicity

> 'An ethnic group is a selection within a larger society having real or putative common ancestry, memories of a shared past, and a cultural focus on one or more symbolic elements which define the group's identity such as kinship, religion, language, shared territory, nationality or physical appearance. Members of an ethnic group are conscious of belonging to that group'. (Bulmer, 1986:54)

Bulmer's definition allows for a fluid sense of identity that changes and shifts over time and space whilst common-sense, dominant understandings of ethnicity and culture as fixed/atemporal do not allow space for shifts or changes – ethnicity becomes deterministic and fixed. It is further argued that there is 'no one definition of ethnicity that is universally accepted' (Song, 2003:6). Ethnicity in this sense is an emphasis on the group's beliefs – the social meanings its members attach to a shared ethnicity - as Song reiterates: 'It is a group's belief in its common ancestry and its members' perception and self-consciousness that they constitute a group which matter, and not any evidence of their cultural distinctiveness as a group' (ibid:7). Bulmer further states that ethnicity is more inclusive than race because race is predicated on biological membership of a specific group and the boundaries of ethnicity are more fluid (cited in Song, 2003:10). Race relies on the perception of others to assign belonging and racial markers can be ambiguous and subject to misrecognition, leading to concerns over classification,

labelling and identification practices. Further, an awareness of group belonging which fails to be recognised, leaves ethnicity in a precarious position and the boundaries of ethnic belonging are untenable. Stealth makes meaning from his mixed classification through his consciousness of belonging to a mixed group, however the terms of his belonging remain unclear.

Stealth's heritage and his inclusion in the mixed category raise the question of how the boundaries of mixedness are being drawn and whether processes of inclusion and exclusion are possible without fractional or splitting approaches (Root, 1996). These boundaries are problematic as they exclude on the basis of visible difference through measuring heritage. A lack of clear definition of how mixedness is constituted leads to uncertain and shifting boundaries for how his foster carer, Sheila, understands his identification.

> Fiona: So, you think that Stealth doesn't like that other people see him as black?
> Sheila: And the reality is that people do. Society would, you know the reality is, yes you're dual, in the fact that Stealth is three quarters as such.
> Fiona: So multiple heritage?
> Sheila: I don't know.

Sheila insists that society would 'see' Stealth as black and so in order to achieve a consistent identity he ought to identify as black. Sheila stumbles through language and highlights the opaqueness of terminology suggesting Stealth is biologically 'three-quarters' but is so close to black that he ought to position himself socially as black. She invokes notions of purity while also revealing the trouble with defining mixedness within the existing schemas of ethnicity and race. Further, the public/private split and the usefulness of private identities if they are not socially recognised generates a concern over 'how meaningful is such an identity if it is not recognized or legitimated in social interactions with others' (Song, 2003:60). Research by Wilson (1987) and Tizard &

Phoenix (1993) claim that mixed children often identified as mixed at home and black in public spaces. While these choices are feasible in the setting of the birth family and the community they are not available in the care system as a workable possibility. Care is a public institution and the site of the foster home is a private aspect of that and as such it is expected to reflect public care discourse and policy. There is no private sphere in foster care as the foster family are expected to mimic and conform to social care discourses of race and mixedness.

> Fiona: So how would you describe yourself?
> Stealth: What my colour?
> Fiona: Yeah
> Stealth: I would say I'm three quarters black and a quarter white
> Fiona: So when you say you're three quarters black and a quarter white, does that means you're mixed race?
> Stealth: I think it means mixed race you know, can I tell you why?
> Fiona: Yeah
> Stealth: In school there's a really dark dark Stealth and they say he's blik. There's two Stealth's in my class there's blik Stealth and mixed race Stealth and they call me mixed race Stealth, that makes me think I'm mixed race, even though I'm not mixed race. I think like in my paper where it says about me, my profile it says I'm mixed race. Sheila makes up rubbish she says how Barack Obama is black and Lewis Hamilton is black when they're mixed race. It's like begging it, begging to be black when you're not really black; you're half white and half black
> Fiona: Or even like you with a white grandmother
> Stealth: Okay you got an apple and blackcurrant smoothie if it was all apple it would be apple smoothie if it was all blackcurrant it would be blackcurrant smoothie
> Fiona: Good point
> Stealth: Sheila keeps saying I'm mixed race when I'm quarter white, three quarter caste that's what you call it three quarter caste. If Barack was a criminal who killed a thousand people I bet she would be saying he was mixed race then.

Among Stealth's peers at school his racial classification is made certain by the presence of another Stealth who is darker skinned and the young people in his class use the term 'blik' as a descriptor of racial classification. 'Blik', meaning dark skin is in common use among young people but is a derogatory term that reveals the continuing presence of skin occupying a sliding signifier of value. Obama and Hamilton signal mixedness as part of a new and growing classification to which there is a tangible sense of presence and based around mixedness as valorised (Dewan, 2008). These discourses present mixedness

as the best of worlds, a harmonious symbol of integration. Being defined by others through discursive constructs of mixing fail to account for Stealth's biography and his specific type of mixedness. The slippage of race becomes apparent as he traverses school, popular culture, foster care and social work. His personal biography is not represented in the terms of his choosing and although he is certain he is 'three-quarter caste' the language of description relies on essentialist terms. The mixed category is internally exclusive creating the same dilemmas for those who do not fit within the demarcations of half and half, black/white mixing. The multiple discourses locate and over lap spheres of historical underpinnings, popular social life and skin colour. Stealth invokes all of these to inform him of the choices that are available to describe his specific heritage. Stealth is beginning to make meaning from discursive repertoires and practices of race making, finding that his lived experience of identification is not socially recognised. His process of negotiation complicates debates about who can be mixed as he fails to be socially recognised and legitimated.

Stealth describes his mixedness as 'three quarters caste' and resists the classifications of black and mixed race, stating why he does so and demonstrating how he makes meaning from the terms. How Stealth understands the repertoires of race available suggests that he is uncomfortable claiming to be black or to be mixed and further that he would be challenged if he did so. He positions himself outside of both classifications in relation to his processes of meaning-making. He is also aware that peers may question his choice of classification and he will be accused of "begging it".

Labeling is known to impact on how people come to act and understand their position through shared and acceptable modes of behaviour and norms. Stealth makes meaning within the classification mixed, as he is able to isolate and make meaning from 'tracing

the history of the signifier, a label, but also the history of its effects' [Appiah, 2000:607]. Stealth knows who belongs in the mixed category, as he understands it to mean black and white in equal measures. He also feels that to claim a black classification relies on being pure black and not part white and that the impact of claiming black as a classification would deny his white grandmother, who he is close to. His membership within a mixed classification is dependent on context and era. However, at the crux of his choice about how he decides upon racial identification is the knowledge that where 'both parents are of a single race, the child is of the same race as the parents' (ibid:608). For mixed children and young people this does not apply and historically such children have been labelled black.

Racial labelling subsequently has an impact on the social and psychological life of the individual labelled. There are two points to be made about labelling. Firstly, people experience a process of identification; that is they shape their lives according to the labels available to them. So it follows that people are expected to behave in particular ways given their racial identification and therefore are expected to act under descriptions. What people are able to do is shaped by what is available. So a certain label gives way to a certain type of person. The performance portrays conformity to that label. However, this intentional identification is often at odds with the labels that people choose to ascribe to, thus there can be a gap between 'what a person ascriptively is and the racial identity he performs' (Appiah, 2000:609). Secondly, labels leave very little choice open to the individual, for example the fact of being black or female. Stealth is able to exercise choice in deciding how to centralise his identity and what aspect of it he chooses to emphasise albeit this is fraught with contradictions. His choices are made complex because he is other defined in ways that do not fit how he understands his own racial classification. All of which suggest that he is only able to make choices from those classifications and/or

labels that are both socially recognisable and legitimate. For Stealth's specific mixed heritage he is aware that a position exists in a biological racial schema. He labels himself three quarter caste. However, he also demonstrates that his own term is not widely used nor acknowledged among any of the groups that define him and he is also unable to act under description as his specific heritage is further marginalised in repertoires of mixedness.

In summary, Stealth's care admission means he becomes part of the discursive constructions of race making within the site of social care. The practices of racialisation in situ pose the question of how mixedness can be defined, what its constitutive boundaries are and whether these can be within the same terms used to characterise race and ethnicity. Stealth is placed as mixed in the care system and his ethnicity is asserted as a means of placing him with an appropriate family. However, as he begins to question his mixedness, it becomes apparent that he is misrecognised by social workers, his foster carer and his peers at school. He describes himself as 'three quarter caste' insisting that he is neither mixed nor black and his choices reveal how he makes meaning from the available repertoires of race within his milieu. Despite his resistance to processes of labelling, Stealth's experiences of the race making processes of others and his own processes of making race are restricted by the opaqueness of language to describe his specific mixedness and so he relies on biology, skin colour and splitting or fractional identification to position himself. He is passed for black by his carer and this makes his choice of identification assert whiteness but simultaneously deny mixedness, both of which are ambiguous social locations. A further dilemma is how mixedness and its internal diversity can be further defined without the boundaries of inclusion and exclusion common to the ethnic and racial classification process. Such constructions of mixedness within the terms of race lead to what Olumide (2002) considers a denial of

118

social legitimacy.

> 'Where racialised groups come to promote or accept their constructed differences as distinct and even absolute, there is no legitimate social space accorded to mixed race'. (Olumide, 2002:181)

Stealth's care admission narrative opened up a discussion of racialisation in situ and demonstrates race making through the site of foster care and school. Stealth makes meaning from the practices of care through the lens of race and ethnicity. They impact on the ways that Stealth is able to express and engage his identity. However, classification processes are not the only way that his care experiences are mediated. I want to move toward a discussion of care processes to examine how Stealth's lived experience prompts a consideration of the limits and obligations of care processes and his capacity to remain engaged in ordinary life. Despite such distinctions being theoretically split as care life versus ordinary life, they emerge in Stealth's narrative as an integrated lived experience.

Managing Lives Through Care Processes

A few months into the fieldwork Stealth asks me to take him to Greenwich Park, a place he used to visit with his mum and that held special memories for him. I agree to ask Sheila for an available date, possibly over half term. Managing the diaries for the varying processes care required for its assessment and evaluation of effectiveness is a task undertaken by Sheila, Stealth's carer. Managing and regulating children in care entails structured times for meetings, reviews, counselling - and researchers! Sheila looks through the A5 black diary and suggests that the half-term holiday is not a good week for appointments. She reads his commitments for half term.

"Monday – Meeting with social worker to discuss review meeting
Tuesday – Contact afternoon with grandparents
Wednesday – Counselling session with Children and Adolescent Mental Health Service (CAMHS)
Thursday – Review Meeting

Friday – No plans – but Stealth has exams the following week when he returned to school so he would have to fit in revision in his free time
Saturday – Contact with Mum"

Stealth responded with a barrage of objections "Why do I have to do all that stuff? I want to go out to Greenwich Park. I won't have anytime time to see my friends. It's not fair. Can I go out after review?" I ask if half term is usually filled with official meetings. She replies yes, that social workers like to arrange meetings for half term because children do not have to miss school. Stealth throws himself down onto the hallway floor and bangs his fist on the ground when he realises she will not relent. I think his actions strengthen her resolve. Stealth crouches on the floor and pleads, as opposed to argues, cajoles and not challenges. It is as if he has given up. Sheila is immovable. She stands with her arms folded across her chest. I feel annoyed at his readiness to defeat. Stealth's entire half term is taken up with care matters leaving little time for his life.

The contribution of children to care processes is born out of an improvement to services, which in the past were not so child-centred and which excluded young people from the decision-making process. Stealth's participation is actively sought as a means of ensuring his opinions and views are heard, leading to a paradox in which they are in such demand that the processes exclude him from his own life, which is over-shadowed by care practices. Care plans and reviews are set out to assure the child's quality of care is consistent and takes their views into consideration but the processes of evaluation often have an impact on the quality of the daily lives of children in care. How Stealth experiences life is split between the demands of care and the desires of life. The distribution of his

Field Diary 12/07/09
These small things have an impact on ordinary life – what does he say he did in the half term? Hang out with a bunch of social workers and counsellors. And then there's me adding to the professional intervention what could he do other than go out to the park with me on his last day off – I'm just as bad as they are!

experiences through the matrix set up by such splitting has to be prioritised and care is placed as central. The demands of care and the obligation Stealth feels to conform to its authority and regulation means his ordinary life is placed at the periphery.

I would not normally intervene between the child and the carer, however on this particular occasion I could not be complicit and leave Stealth's complaint unchallenged. At this point he remains on the floor and cannot physically stand up for himself. I step in and respond to Sheila by acknowledging that his week is not very child-centred and Stealth is obviously unhappy about so much intervention. I am annoyed. I suggest to Stealth that we can go another day. I also suggest that he could write a diary of his week detailing the meetings and events (he subsequently decides not to do this and instead writes about overcoming his fear of dogs). I decide to leave. I can feel my anger rising as I leave the house. As I get into my car, I bang my head on the roof. This prompts me to burst into tears.

Walkerdine et al., (2001) cite similar occurrences in their research encounters, when researchers left the field feeling depressed after an interview, even when interviewees were happy, cheerful or positive. Further, they state that 'These emotions, experienced as those of the researcher rather than the research subject, can be helpful in pointing to and understanding what might not, indeed cannot, be expressed by the subject' (ibid:90). Stealth was on his knees on the floor, pleading and this expression of anxiety and disappointment was saddening and yet my response was anger. I wondered if Stealth's anger was somehow unable to be expressed and if care processes were inducing a sense of powerlessness.

Planning for Reviews

Stealth's presence at the pre-planning meeting with Chrissie and at the review meeting is a requirement to ensure his contribution and feelings are taken into consideration when decisions are being made. The review is an opportunity for the care plan to be considered; reconfirmed or changed. Decisions are agreed and recorded in consultation with all those who have an interest in his life. Looked-after Reviews are on-going meetings to discuss aspects of care. Documents include a copy of the care or pathway plan, a review of care arrangements, a summary of work from latest action and assessment records in addition to information directly relating to the health and well being of the child. A record of the review and the decisions made are then given to the Care Planning Team.

The Care Plan outlines the purpose of the placement and ensures clarity regarding the overall aim of the child's care trajectory and the timescales involved, changes to which can only be made at a Looked-after Review. The Care Plan also identifies what services and actions are required to respond to the child's needs e.g. health, education, placement, risk assessment and children and adolescent mental health services (CAMHS). Children's contributions to care planning and reviews were hard won after a series of consultations held with groups of children in care during the 1980s (Who Cares, First Key, Black and In Care). It seems ironic that such contributions to care processes now squeeze young people's ordinary life to the periphery. Such planning for his care life and the decisions made are important aspects of Stealth's holistic well-being and he says he quite enjoys the meetings where he is asked to contribute to discussions. Aspects of his care plan are further discussed here to illustrate how Stealth manages the demands of care and how his adaptation to care processes is sometimes a cause of frustration.

Stealth: On a Tuesday after school I get on a bus a 171 then a 124 and if my granddad is in a good mood it's all right but if he's in a depressed mood it's bad, you know, he just hates everybody and he only likes it when the visitors are work people. He gets out a lot but he just finds it boring at home with the telly

Fiona: What happens on a good day?

Stealth: He'll make me tea happily. He might ask everybody how their day is and he'll read the newspaper. He'll be happy gardening but if he's in a bad mood he will look at everybody and kiss his teeth. If my mum shakes or my grandmother says something silly he'll just find an excuse to swear and say f*** and b**** and c***.

Fiona: How do you know if he's in a good or bad mood?

Stealth: Just see it on his face

Fiona: What about Sal (grandmother)?

Stealth: Yeah she's always happy, the only time she's not happy is because of my granddad but she is mostly happy

Fiona: Are you happy when you go there?

Stealth: Yeah if my granddad is happy

> **Field diary 20/08/2008**
> Sheila says that often after contact Stealth complains that he feels unwell or comes back looking a little down and spends time in his room. Sheila regularly takes Stealth to the GP as he complains that he gets pains in his chest/heart and even though he is reassured he is healthy he insists the pains are real.

Contact refers specifically to time spent with the child and its family members and includes letters, emails, photos, reports as well as face-to-face meetings. A 'contact plan' is part of the overall care plan and details the arrangements for each individual child. Stealth feels he is lucky to have regular contact with his family. He spends Tuesday evening at his grandparents' and is collected by Sheila at about 8.00pm. He also visits his mum on Saturday afternoons. His visits to his mum, he says, can be boring, as he has nothing to do when he is there. Contact on Tuesday evening clashes with athletics practice. Contact on Saturday clashes with football practice. Despite him wanting contact with his family it coincides with sporting activities he is interested in pursuing, so he has to balance his desires with his family obligations. In ordinary family life the obligations to parents often take a back seat as the pursuit of hobbies and interests are placed as central, the inverse of this paradigm. The purpose of attention to the family here is to demonstrate, through Stealth's account, that contact often hampers the opportunity to

participate in ordinary everyday life; immovable contact arrangements to maintain family links, inhibits the opportunity to develop his interests.

Planning for Educational Success

Government initiatives aimed at improving the educational achievement of children in care have led to the development of the Personal Education Plan (PEP). Statistics from the Department for Children, Schools and Families showed that in 2008, 14% of children in care achieved 5 A*-C GSCE's in comparison to 65% nationally. The strategies used to improve statistics have an impact on Stealth's educational experience.

> Stealth: She takes the mick. She takes liberties. You know what she does she takes me out the lesson to talk about PEP (personal education plan) I don't mind because it's DT and stuff but you know where she does it?
> Fiona: Where ?
> Stealth: In the middle of the staircase where people are walking up and down and say how's Sheila, how's the placement and someone will come down 3 or 4 times and say I'm sorry
> Fiona: Does she have an office?
> Stealth: But guess what she said? I was going to go to the office but it's too long to walk all the way up there. It's 10 metres or something, she's lazy just like Sheila. She doesn't care.
> Fiona: That's quite a public place in a school
> Stealth: I wouldn't mind in the dinner hall, everything gets done there but like so slap in the middle of the staircase. Doh - on the staircase nobody will go here

The PEP is a way to maximise the relationship that children have with school, as it may be one of the most consistent places in their lives. It is based on understanding and facilitating a child's educational experience and progress over time, their relationship to school (including any support they may have) and support they receive for being in care. PEP meetings, which take place at school, draw attention to Stealth as he attempts to fit in. The advisory teacher for Looked-after Children is assigned to aid educational success and motivate young people, as well as liaise with the carers and social workers if additional support is needed.

The educational achievement of young people in care is more formally monitored and regulated than that of other children. For example, in a birth family a child might receive a cash incentive for good exam results or be taken for a treat to celebrate educational success. This celebratory act confirms the child's place as the ultimate responsibility of family in the recognition of their achievement. Children in care can be more formally and officially recognised by the local authority with ceremonies and awards but while the child's effort is recognised borough wide they may go un-celebrated at home. These interventions place a wedge between the child and the carer and remove any autonomy a responsible carer make take toward educational achievement, thus removing a sense of responsibility from the carer and placing it back with the borough. The Government Every Child Matters (ECM) guidelines offer a framework that includes children in care having access to the same life chances as other children but this further stigmatises young people through intrusive interventions and diminishes impact. While these initiatives to monitor educational achievement are laudable, meetings with large numbers of professionals held at school single out young people in care for 'special attention', removing any anonymity they may require to fit-in at school.

> Fiona: And when you leave the lesson do people know why you're going out?
> Stealth: No they wouldn't know but she says it to the teacher. If that happened I would complain but I didn't complain about the staircase, I'm only telling you right now I didn't tell Sheila. I feel embarrassed. Foster care is very embarrassing having people at school walking around with you like it's a big complication with bits of paper. Ah, this is horrible about my school year nine girls I don't know them really, but I was having my PEP meeting in their classroom; a door with a window in and everyone about 10 people round the table, me sitting there, for everybody to look through the window at. I get rudely interrupted and have them looking at me like this (sneers). It's not very nice everybody knowing I'm in care it's not like winning the Olympics.

> 'Many of the children and young people referred to our service experience instability in their placements (…) and experience care as stigmatizing and

profoundly   disruptive   of   their   identity   development'
(http://www.proceduresonline.com, 2010).

Goffman's (1990) contribution to theorising stigma suggests that specific groups are differentiated and labeled within categories attached to specific attributes. Such acknowledgement of care as stigmatizing is known to hamper identity development and to reduce access to an ordinary life. Yet the processes of care, in order to regulate, manage and measure consistency, further hamper those already living within an inherently stigmatising system. Stealth's management of these care processes is minimal. Despite his opinion being sought he is not able to actively resist the impact of processes, make changes to routines, resist meetings that impede his ordinary life. His frustrations at the restrictions have yet to be voiced to any of the official bodies that oversee complaints as he chooses not to share his experiences among those professionals who may be able to make a difference.

Managing Care Administrators

> Stealth: I got through two social workers and then a third one. I had to wait a couple of months until they came along but that was okay.
> Fiona: Chrissie?
> Stealth: First there was Joy, then David, then and Chrissie.
> Fiona: That's three already, in a year and a half, what are you doing getting rid of them?

12th August 2008
I am unable to make changes to his living circumstances nor the ways in which these processes are undertaken and so his experiences with social workers and disappointment contained are processed in ways that not only stir emotion as empathy but also anxiety at my role of researcher with no real power to make interventions aside from the ones made during conversations.

Stealth: (Laughter) I just say 'you're fired', well sometimes it's because of Lewisham and sometimes their own personal things. The first one had to go and get her son and the second one, Lewisham made a mistake and they were supposed to get a different one.

To reframe his circumstances, enabling a more resilient or pragmatic approach, I ask "what have you done to get rid of them?" lightening the conversation through attention to how he understands his role/experience

and hoping he takes up the rhetorical challenge and humor in my question. He does see the funny side and uses the Alan Sugar phrase 'you're fired' and laughs his way through my response. One way to understand the use of jokes, humor and laughter is their use as ways to minimize anxiety and lighten conversation. As Freud suggests, a benevolent superego allows a light and comforting type of humor (Freud, 1960).

Stealth has a good relationship with Chrissie although he does not see her regularly. He knows he can phone her if he needs to and in some ways this knowledge is comforting, even if he doesn't exercise the right to do so. Deference to administrative practices has very real consequences for relationships as research shows children in care cite inconsistency; unreliability and social workers cancelling appointments makes them feel they are a low priority. They want a more 'emotional, empathetic level of interaction' (Connolly et al., 2006:67). Social workers are under obligation to carry out specific duties, such as reviews, care plans, personal education plans and attend court to confirm decisions made in care planning. But, as Stealth describes, these obligations are directly responsible for missed appointments and lack of time to nurture relationships making it more likely that issues of trust, consistency and reliability arise and less likely that children will talk to social workers about their concerns. Hence, Stealth had not spoken to his social worker about his concerns and they were left unaddressed.

Foucault (1991) describes the subordination of practitioners to administrative procedures as a source of conflict and as a feature of the social work profession. The administrative apparatus and professionals who uphold it are ultimately responsible for inhibiting practitioners from offering the highest standards of care by 'refusing resources, niggling regulations and imposing functions of control and repression' (ibid:291). As such practicing social workers often feel constrained by demands of bureaucracy and, instead

of being guided by demands of high care and meaningful relationships, they defer to policy, administrative demands and collation of facts, statistics and outcomes.

Care Processes and Foster Care Relationships

Sheila is both an administrator of care processes and a carer/nurturer. Everyday concerns, such as managing Stealth's diary, money and clothes are channelled through the triangular arrangement between social services, foster carer and Stealth. As the research relationship built trust Stealth was being more open about his concerns and I began to encourage him to become aware of services that could support him, in order to encourage his sense of responsibility and to cultivate a sense of self-reliance. Sheila's dual role as carer/nurturer is a point of tension in their relationship and within his interactions with her.

> Fiona: You feel like she complains about you?
> Stealth: Yeah, even at school with the other boy and the exclusion meeting, she wanted to complain about stuff and because the social workers kept canceling the appointments, she goes, 'oh Stealth there's an advocate line if you want to complain.' Her whole life is complaining.
> Fiona: So she wants you to complain about your social workers being unreliable- do you want to?
> Stealth: No.
> Fiona: Do you feel like you need them to come more often?
> Stealth: Nah, I'm all right I can phone them if I want
> Fiona: You've got a number to phone, have you called the number?
> Stealth: No
> Fiona: You haven't needed to? But when you're feeling frustrated like this, wouldn't you like a social worker to come more regularly so you can talk things through?
> Stealth: Sheila's very argumentative, very argumentative.
> Fiona: And you don't like it.
> Stealth: She's just….
> Fiona: Have you met people like that before, who argue and complain?
> Stealth: My granddad.
> Fiona: And how do you cope with him, how do you deal with him?
> Stealth Well, when I go I don't mind.
> Fiona: You can put up with it; he's quite a bit older isn't he?
> Stealth: If she's like that at this age, I wonder what she'll be like at 50
> Fiona: You will have left care by then.
> Stealth: Arguing is the highlight of her day.

Fiona: Does it make you unhappy?

Stealth: Sometimes, I want to come home late on purpose, I don't want to sit down and have a nice argue. She likes to argue.

Fiona: Do you feel you want to leave the placement?

Stealth: I could've done that when they picked me up from school and said I was going to go into foster care I could've run away you know. I should've done that. Too late now unless, unless, unless, I saved up £800 buy the van on the corner from those hippies, I'm not even joking and then buy it off the internet using my mum's credit card, give her the money and then I put all my games and stuff in the van and put all my cards and papers and all my clothes put them into a bin liner stick it in the back drive, drive, drive, to my grandmothers house, drop it all off and then say let's have a discussion. I'm not going back to Sheila's, I'm going back to school and if the police come outside I will jump in my van, they can't catch me you know then I'll go back to my grandmothers play my x-box have a nice life, do my homework, get good grades and then every time Sheila tries to call me on my mobile I'll block her number

Fiona: So if you could choose this placement again would you choose it?

Stealth: It wasn't a choice you know. I probably would choose it because it's so close to places

Stealth knows his rights in theory; he is reasonably well informed; however he does not exercise them by accessing the services that are available. The local authority advocacy line is confidential but he does not use this either. The services aim to encourage young people to call, yet Stealth is intimidated by the adult intervention of strangers and the possibility that any complaint may have adverse consequences. Private fostering can bring about this isolation as young people are disconnected from others and so do not know how to claim their rights nor how to complain if things go wrong.

Fiona: Have you said to her you feel that she treats you unfairly?

Stealth: Nah because she will start an argument

Fiona: Can your grandparents or Chrissie help have you told them?

Stealth: No

Fiona: So how come you're telling me?

Stealth: Ha ha I don't know. I can't trust Sheila she's says I'm sometime-ish. If I didn't buy this I'd be wearing my underpants right now and she says to me you shouldn't really be buying clothes you should be saving for your games and but I said you're not buying stuff that I need. I'm waiting, I'm waiting she's like okay, and she's so lazy

Fiona: She gets money every week for you for clothes and food and things

Stealth: I know. She probably puts it in the church collection plate or something

Fiona: So you don't feel she's spending that money on you?

Stealth: No way

Fiona: Do you get proper food?

Stealth: Yeah I get a decent meal

Fiona: And your room a wardrobe and bedding

Stealth: Yeah but its not spent on me clothes wise, I'm not even going to be nice on the way I say this now, because it's annoying me. She spends my money on cheap Primark church clothes, she don't buy me no casual wear or jeans she got me jeans once because I needed it for school. She's so tight

Fiona: Do you know how much money she gets?

Stealth: No do you?

Fiona: No, but carers are pretty well paid

Stealth: I researched it once and it was £340 a week or something like that, what does she do with it? I bet she's putting it for her own children's future or something.

The autonomy of young people in ordinary families is encouraged, pocket money and saving or buying their own clothes are stages of independence and facilitates an accepted part of the transition from childhood to adulthood. For Stealth the opportunity to gain gradual freedom and autonomy is reduced through care processes that place carers as financial administrators. Outcomes-based research suggests that increasing autonomy should be encouraged as much as possible (Stein, 1999) due to the age at which young people are expected to leave care. Preparation for leaving care could be more in line with how families operate by offering young people the opportunity to develop skills of budgeting, as well as acknowledging their desire for responsibility and reducing the points of tension in the relationship between foster carers and young people.

Foster care is set up to mimic the model of family life yet much of its practices go against the ordinary and stigmatise young people through processes of regulation and management. The emphasis on care processes and care planning actively seeks young people's contribution as a means to evaluate effectiveness. Achieving consistent standards of care is a central aim of fostering. However, Stealth's engagement with the demands of care processes eases his ordinary life to the periphery. Is this paradigm of care possibly beyond the interest and capability of the average twelve year old?

Conclusion

This chapter focused on making sense of mixedness through care admission, which drew attention to racialisation and race making revealed through culture and implicit notions of whiteness and blackness. Stealth's initial care admission story recognises the limits of classification as they applied to his specific heritage; there is no space afforded mixedness outside of the binary of half black and half white. In Stealth's experience his Jamaican heritage and assumed knowledge of Jamaican culture fixed his complex mixed classification and determined his placement. Such cultural practices determine which social relations are entered into, and despite his placement preference for a white English cockney family, his skin colour, mixedness and ethnicity made this impossible.

Stealth's account demonstrated how the meaning of racial classifications varied across sites of home, school and care. Subsequently, this limited the available choices of identification, as his specific heritage failed to be recognised, meaning he was unable to act under description. However, he made meaning from these varied understandings and utilised them to claim his position of 'three-quarter caste'. Others positioned his racial classification in varied ways within a paradigm of race-making, which used a consistent attention to appearance and its most utilised signifier, skin colour. He revealed that although his mixedness failed to be recognised through care practices he could resist their discursive repertoires. He contested understandings of mixedness through both its internal diversity and its un-chartered social location and he invoked these post-race positions in choosing his identification. However, he was still only able to choose identification from those available and the claiming of three-quarter caste plunges him back into the essentialism he wished to reject. The nature of language to describe mixedness in ways that recognise its diversity is an ongoing concern for those theorising the future of mixed as a classification.

Foster care is a reflection of public and social understandings of race and mixedness. Foster care offered no opportunity to claim an identity with a private/public split like that available to those young people in birth families, as suggested by Wilson (1987) and Tizard & Phoenix (1993). However, through Stealth's resistance to processes of race making in the site of foster care and through using the available discourses within social and popular culture, school and home, Stealth invoked a nuanced understanding of the boundaries of mixedness. Stealth's self-definition three-quarter caste invoked notions of purity, but also utilised critical mixed theory and lived experience to affirm his informed choice of racial position. The parameters of this position further problematise how mixedness is conceptualised. Through the discursive repertoires of race and mixedness in care practices, meaning can be made about the opportunities and limits of classification and belonging.

Stealth narrated his experiences by centring care as a process that regulated every sphere of his life, from the ways in which he is able to experience his racial classification through to who buys his clothes. Stealth regulated and managed his relationships to the administrators of care and made contributions to his care plan and these care demands pushed his own ordinary everyday life to the periphery, while meeting the demands of care he failed to engage his own interests. These care processes could be noted for the limits they place on young people's participation in their own ordinary lives. Efforts to prioritise time to offer active encouragement for the development of hobbies and interests must be a prioritised. Once young people leave care their independence will increase if they have been given opportunities to develop interests outside of the demands of the care system. Care matters such as reviews are important aspects of administration and evaluation and young people's contributions are crucial to make

improvements to the care system; yet this does not have to be at the expense of their childhood or adolescence.

The following chapter considers how the racial classification mixed structures how young people are cared for in foster care and the impact it has on their stability and security in long-term foster placements through attention to the structuring absence of the mixed family.

Chapter 5: Anita and Anna: Family Ties Through the Lens

Anita and Anna's care experiences are discernable through attention to three different sets of photographs; firstly, the photographs in their birth family album reveal a construction of raced, sexed and gendered readings of family life beneath which lurks poverty, abuse and drug addiction. Secondly, there are the images of the sisters in a family album taken by the foster carer, which claim an association through familiarity since they have been in long-term foster care for over nine years. Finally, the researchers use of image production with Anna that demonstrates her relationship to her foster carers and my own image making which aims to re-imagine the birth family. These three sets of visual representations of family life are part of how Anita and Anna understand belonging despite their different experiences, memories and loyalties.

Pen Portraits

Anita, aged 14 has a Scottish birth mother, Yvette and a Jamaican father, Nick. Anita says she came into care because her parents were arguing; her father served a prison sentence for grievous bodily harm and sexual assault on her mother. Anita sees her parents regularly and increased contact of her own volition, in spite of efforts by her social worker to reduce it. Anita's parents remain married and have three other children who are all in care, the youngest child Leroy is aged four and adopted at birth. An older brother Callum was also in care but left a few years ago. Anita has a deep yearning to return home now that she feels she is old enough to look after herself. Anita relies on her social worker, Marie, for a consistent relationship and trusts her judgement and advice. Marie's referral was primarily for Anita whom she describes as needing a role model and some work around building her self-esteem, through engaging with issues of mixedness and identity. Anita has a tricky relationship with her younger sister Anna and blames favouritism in her previous and current foster family for this.

Anna aged 12 came to the attention of social workers when she was brought into casualty aged 10 weeks with a fractured skull. Anna says she has no memory of her birth parents before coming into care aged three. She meets them regularly at contact with Anita and says she does it for Anita's benefit, as she would rather not go. Anna says her father is old, smells of drugs and hates that her mum gave her up for a man who badly abused her. Anna is committed to her foster carer and they see her as one of the family. She refuses to fully engage with the research on the birth family album but enjoys taking photographs of her foster family.

The foster family are a married couple with two teenage daughters who both live at home. One of the daughters has a young baby and a boyfriend who lives there too. Greg the foster dad is uninvolved and Denise the foster mother prefers it that way. He is semi-literate so cannot participate in the training, nor does she want him to. Fostering the two girls gives Denise a very good income of approximately £580 per child per week. They

live in a large house in Eltham and maintain two Mercedes cars. During the research period of a year Denise had two holidays, one to Dubai and the other to Las Vegas; Anita and Anna stayed at home with the family.

Value of Images

The value of family photographs when working with children in care is rarely exploited as a professional tool. The potential of images is to open up a number of themes concerned with time, experience, loss and belonging in ways that simply talking can fail to. I came to use the images through a conversation I had with Marie about referrals to the project. She asked if I could do some work with two sisters, Anita and Anna and their family album. I agreed. She said she would scan the photographs and let me have them a week later. When I returned to see her she had not scanned them yet, so she handed the originals to me in an over-stuffed envelope. I refused them and asked if she could give them directly to the girls or to Denise, their foster carer. I felt uncomfortable being given responsibility of photographs that contained intimate details of lives to which I had no emotional connection or knowledge. There was a sense that these photographs really had no true owners and yet they represented memories, and attachments – significant moments such as a 1st birthday party or now deceased relatives. The way in which I came by the images is telling of their status, ownership and their value. The value of Anita and Anna's family photographs were not held as precious but offered to a stranger and excised of their personal and emotional significance and this had implications for how their connections to family were valued.

The opportunity to work with Anita and Anna with their album had been serendipitous and was somewhat coerced through Marie's intervention. I was a little hesitant about this type of intervention, as I had not planned for it. Images are part of they ways in which stories of selves are told. Through attention to the particularity of circumstance narratives emerge about how we once were and whom we were once connected to. I

would also suggest that the absence of family snaps re-awakens consciousness and re-presents memories distorted by time. Such re-emergence had different outcomes for Anita and Anna.

> 'Snapshots are part of the detailed and concrete existence with which we gain some control over our surroundings and negotiate with the particularity of our circumstances…. they contribute to the present day historical consciousness in which our awareness of ourselves is embedded'. (Holland, 1991:10)

Care, is a specific type of childhood experience in which care admission forces a hiatus from family life, its routines, habits and normality; such ruptures considerably alter perceptions of the self and the ability to control circumstances and surroundings. When children and young people enter care, family photographs are not thought to be a useful artefact to accompany them. Their value is possibly diminished because young people are leaving families who can no longer care for them and such families are often thought to be a poor influence. The contribution that family photographs can make to the personal consciousness of young people in care is interrupted with the absence of family and images. Family ruptures that precede children and young people coming into care often result in torn, lost and discarded photos and young people in care do not often have family albums.

The visual representations of Anita and Anna's birth family were constructed in their selection by the birth mum, Yvette, and show how she understood the purpose of the family album for her daughters and how she embeds her two daughters in her own intimate life. These family snaps were conventional in their poses of respectability; smiling faces beamed toward the camera and the expected events of birthdays, visiting relatives and new babies were present. A range of sizes and finishes, the collection spanned about five years, beginning when Anna was born and ending when she was

about five and had been taken into care with her sister, Anita, aged three. Anita and Anna were to see the photos for the first time and recount any stories from their past which relied on childhood memory. The aim was to arrange the photographs in a brand new album of their choice and, while so doing, talk though some of the images to use the images as tools for talking and listening.

Using Family Snaps in Research

The family photographs offer a partial view of social lives or as Banks (2001) terms them 'tiny mirror fragments', (ibid:79) such glimpses of family life are small reflections of specific times, places and people. The ways in which photographs can be used by sociologists are considered through three themes as Banks suggests; i) 'context of their original production, ii) subsequent histories of the photographs, iii) context in which the social researcher deploys the photographs in the course of an interview' (ibid). In the context of working with young people in care, family albums can raise concealed feelings or issues, which are best, met with the approach taken by therapeutic photography. Wheeler (2008) suggests that 'The use of photographs in a therapeutic or personal growth context in educational or social work settings is for self-directed exploration' (Wheeler, 2008:1). Using these family photographs was within an exploratory context and through their own associations, memories and relationships would direct the use of the snaps and set the tone for building research relationships. I had been made aware by Marie, the girls' social worker, that there were difficult feelings toward the birth family, which could be excavated during our sessions, so I asked few questions allowing space for self-directed exploration. By offering space to speak about the photos if they chose to and by simply asking for clarification or the context of relationships I hoped I could minimise distress and only speak through the themes that emerged. The use of open methods was similar to the free association approach toward narrative and verbal

interview methods used throughout, but the prompts of family photographs added another dimension to speak through family and belonging. The aim was to create a dialogue in which the sisters had an opportunity to revisit memories, as well as to think through how their circumstances had been created by the people in the pictures. The best way of achieving this was 'by creating a discursive space for family members to revise and frame past struggles in the context of the changes that have occurred in their lives' (Twine, 2006:22).

One sunny afternoon as we sat in the garden at the placement, Anita emptied the bulging envelope and spread the photos across the garden table. Every so often Anita picked one up to inspect it. There was silence as Anita moved through the images. Anna sat still in her chair gazing at the table filled with photos. Anita picked up a picture of a dog.

> Anita: What breed is that dog anyway?
> Fiona: Um looks like a Rottweiler.
> Anna: How long have we been here for?
> Anita: Coming up to eight years. That's Anna's 1st birthday.
> Fiona: Nice homemade cake – Thomas the Tank Engine. Do you think your mum might have made that?
> Anita: I don't know, probably

She selects the only non-human in the pile and chooses that one for clarification. Anna needs to know how long they have been at Denise's. At that very moment she needs certainty there was another life before being in care. Anita continues to organize the photographs and they decide to put the images into the album in chronological order with baby ones moving through the ages. It is progressing reasonably smoothly; they seem interested in the pictures and enjoy looking at them although Anna is becoming distracted as Anita gets more animated. They are discussing birthday cakes, toys they shared and people Anita vaguely remembers but Anna does not. Anna was much

younger - aged three - when she came into care and her memories are hazy. Annette Kuhn (1995) suggests that memory work is driven by two concerns: 'Firstly, the way memory shapes the stories we tell, in the present about the past – especially about our own lives. The second has to do with what it is that makes us remember: the prompts, the pretexts, of memory: the reminders of the past that remain in the present' (1995:3). Anita remembered stories from the past and the emergence of the photographs prompted memory of her role in the past. I return to this theme later. This is the first session and we move slowly through the images.

Productions of Family History

Despite the girls not knowing much about the people in the photographs these images have been selected by their mum as part of family history and these are the people Yvette wants them to remember. Family connections through blood, lineage, shared past, and relatives are aspects of how families can be understood. There are a number of photographs of Anita and Anna and their parents with relatives sitting together on a well-worn sofa in a dark front room. Some of the photographs showed posed images of family and its extended members squashed together and smiling. Children occupied the laps of adults and the photographer may have asked everyone to shout 'cheese' after three so they all had similar grins showing both familiarity and joy at being posed and snapped together. Family respectability is often shown through the proximity, position and pose of the subjects in the image: people huddled close, posing for the camera 'to generate representations of their intimate lives' (Twine, 2006:17). Family photography was institutionalised as a middle class visual culture in which the representation of respectability was paramount. Such imaginary representations often conceal what lurks beneath the surface of the image. These particular family snaps were later understood through an internal narrative of dysfunction so endemic as to question how family can be

so (mis) represented in the popular imagination.

Once we decided to work with the photographs we were somewhat bound to the physical space of the placement. Private photographs and public spaces seemed incompatible; despite my own intervention as a stranger exploring the intimacy of the family album it was a step too far to do this type of work in McDonalds or Pizza Hut. Consequently we spent most of those sessions in the garden of the placement in the hubbub of (a slightly chaotic) everyday family life. Denise the carer arrives in the garden and begins to pick up some photographs.

> Denise: I remember that one they were four and six, that's when they first came, and that's you with Chelsea there. That's down Lee Park. They're the ones your mum probably took. That was when they went to Cyrilla, their first foster carer.
> Fiona: Right
> Denise: Ah look at that, look at Anita, aren't they lovely, they're beautiful babies aren't they? Is that your mum's sister? Look at Anita there, you can tell who's Anna and who's Anita can't you, that was their great granddad, that was Yvette's granddad I think, who used to look after her, look at their little car they had there, that was Samantha's little boy the same age, what was his name now Anita?
> Anita: Luke
> Denise: That's it Lukas, here you are, that's their great Nan, I'm trying to think if that was the granddad because I saw him once, I think that is him, that's Yvette's granddad because that's who brought Yvette up, her Nan and granddad, I don't know what happened to Yvette's mum, their mum's mum, their first Nan. I think she's died anyway, her first mum.
> Anita: Luke
> Denise: Yeah that's it
> Anita: She never lived with her.

Denise fails in her recollection of a name, while Anita's memory remains clear. Anita's face becomes tight and strained. She takes control of the conversation by inserting the correct family history not the ill-remembered version of her carer. She wants to tell her own story of her past and assert her memory to shape the story she can tell in the present about the past. Yet, she also relinquishes her ownership of the images as Denise begins to spread them out, plucking one out, disrupting their groupings, and pointing out faces she recognises while discussing the images. Her narrative is directed at me and for me.

She asks rhetorical questions aimed at Anita but never waits for an answer. She does not direct any questions at Anna who is assumed not to remember. The conflicting memories question who the owner of this album is and whose memory will prevail if we take into account Anna's silence, her lack of memory from the past family scene and her absence from the present conversation. It also raises questions about how the family album can tell its story without the owner or the image-maker. What is clear during this interaction is that the visual representation of family was not fully owned by Anita and Anna. The competing version of Denise, despite inconsistencies, the previous ownership by the social worker, who kept the photographs in her drawer, as well as my intervention, all competed for ownership. Anna failed to remember, thereby relinquishing ownership and leaving Anita alone with her memory and her desire to tell her own story about the past in the present.

As referred to earlier the visual representations of family are supposed to conceal the less respectable or dysfunctional aspects of heterosexual relationships and family life and the photo album can be made to present respectability on the surface. The family history of Anita and Anna's family is known by professional agencies (due to their lifestyle and the problems they experienced over many years) such as GPs, schools, housing, drug and alcohol rehabilitation services, Children's Social Care, domestic violence units and refuges. For every service and professional intervention there is a story about this family. Marie, the social worker, has a version of the story of this mixed family. Marie offers in graphic detail the family history of Anita and Anna's parents, which I felt I needed in order to gain new ways to work with the sisters (which was throwing up a range of concerns about their relationship to each other).

Marie suggests Yvette likes older Jamaican men; she had been with one before meeting Nick, and she had been abused in that relationship too. She claims Yvette had been too weak and too lonely to leave Nick and so she had been dominated by emotional, physical and sexual abuse for over 30 years. The couple had been smoking crack cocaine for several years and fuelled with alcohol they were unable to parent any of their four children ranging in age from early twenties to four years old. All four of their children have been taken into care. The youngest child was adopted immediately after birth and has letterbox contact.

Marie's version of family life centres on her professional understanding of the raced, gendered and sexed dynamic of a heterosexual relationship. Yvette often arrived at the pub bruised or bleeding to spend the entire evening keeping Nick and his friends company. Occasionally, after heavy drinking sessions, he lashed out at Yvette in public. The police became involved with the family and charges were brought against Nick for domestic violence and rape (for which he served a prison sentence). While he was in prison Yvette was re-housed with the intention of raising the children alone. However, she was re-housed locally and he soon found her again. The violence continued. Eventually, after numerous interventions by social services, the children came into care. Yvette acknowledged to Marie that the demands of her relationship with Nick afforded no extra time, energy, or emotional commitment for her children. Nick is an alcoholic, drug user, schizophrenic and currently being treated for lung cancer. Yvette is a drug user, an alcoholic and has recently undergone a biopsy for which she awaits the results. In Marie's version of events, it is Yvette's preference for Jamaican men that leaves her vulnerable to abuse as well as her social class, which prevent her having sufficient material resources to leave an abusive relationship.

The intersection of race and gender in this narrative of abuse and family violence also bears the impact of class and poverty. Class can no longer be conceptualised as a static identification due to social mobility and dis-identification. Social indicators of improved life expectancy, infant mortality and educational qualifications are all effects of class opportunity. The resurgence of class as a lived practice reworks class as 'dynamic, symbolic, and culturally produced' (Gillies, 2007:21) as discussed in the literature review. Families living in poverty are more likely to experience attention from welfare intervention. The scrutiny of mixed relationships has erred toward analyses based upon this dysfunctional family type as normative, meaning mixed families have been subject to a somewhat dysfunctional representation within sociological analyses or have been entirely ignored (Cabellero, 2008; Twine, 2006). Increasing the data on all mixed families, including middle class families, is a step toward freeing families from being a caricature of narratives of inner city mixing among the poor. However, there is a concern about the instances of violence in the care stories of my participants and more research is needed to examine domestic violence in heterosexual relationships across race and gender. Mixed families are not solely to be understood through their racial classification and re-working class in understanding mixed families deepens insights into how families who come to the attention of social services function.

There remains a concern about how poverty, race and class impact on the durability of mixed families (Barn, 1993) and in particular how this becomes symbolised by the disproportional representation of mixed children in care. This context of production, to use Bank's (2001) thematic, frames a conversation with Anita that picks up the theme of violence at home and her role as a four year old, which relies on a story she has been told by Marie. Had the photographs prompted these memories through attention to the past? Did Anita live with them in an everyday way? How can the impact of memory on actions

in the present be measured? Such questions are possibly beyond the investigation here but they focus attention on understanding how memory frames the present and their role in how the stories told by others shape our experiences.

Who Tells the Family History?

Fiona: So you think your mum and dad fighting is because of you?
Anita: Uh huh
Fiona: It's never the child's fault it's just two people who don't know how to communicate.
Anita: Marie said to me I used to be ber (really) horrible to my mum, like to my dad, I'd say to my mum, I'd say to her, go and get that for me or I'll go and get dad. I can't believe I said that. I wouldn't say that though
Fiona: So Marie said that you said things to your mum to make her do things and if she didn't do them then you would say I'm going to tell dad. But you don't remember doing that?
Anita: I just remember helping her
Fiona: If you don't remember those things then maybe you didn't do them? It's not your fault, they were the adults, and it's not your fault they couldn't communicate. Adults are supposed to know what they're doing and you were a baby, a little girl. You couldn't make them fight; four year olds don't have that much power or control in a family. Even at your age, you're being told what to do, at four you couldn't have told your mum and dad what to do. You weren't to blame.
Anita: If Marie says so it must be true. She's been with me my whole life she wouldn't lie about that
Fiona: Really?
Anita: She's been with me my whole life she wouldn't lie about that
Fiona: It's your word against hers isn't it? You have to believe what you remember not what Marie tells you, especially if it means you blame yourself for what happened. Even if Marie says it's true even if you did do it, you were four! You are not responsible for them fighting and coming into care that's not your fault. Things that have happened to you are not down to anything you said or did at the age of four, if they were you would be the only one in care but you're not. Your mum and dad couldn't take care of themselves and that's why you all came into care. There's lots of young people who grow up in care, lots of young people adopted, and for most of them they've not done anything to be there, just parents who can't cope or who can't take care of them.

> **Field Diary July 2008**
> I feel the work is making a difference. Marie, the social worker told me that on the last contact with their mum the girls asked 'why?' they came into care. They had a deep talk, which made Yvette stand and be counted. Marie feels that the work around the family album had prompted it. That and a whole load of others things.

During the interview Anita is slumped on the sofa,

avoiding eye contact. She looks defeated by the enormity of knowing/feeling that she was maybe a prime instigator of violence. Her own memories are not sufficient to redeem her, even though she recognises her helpfulness toward her mum and does not recognise herself as destructive or manipulative, she believes Marie's story. Yet she resists my re-versioning of events that may bring relief from her burden of guilt and blame. While Marie's version gains credibility her own self-knowledge lacks evidence. There is no other information or informer to verify that she was helpful or a manipulator. The longevity of her relationship to Marie is underpinned by her family knowledge and her cultural background in the absence of any other family members give her further status. Anita believes her role in her family dynamic was the catalyst for change in her family; for violence, for her care admission and for her disloyalty to her mum, something she is possibly not able to come to terms with. The family history offers her an important role as the catalyst for change but that means shouldering the responsibility for its consequences and this is her version of a family story.

Anita is making sense of her experience of family life through a narrative of the family album but, unable to gather all the relevant pieces of information from the narrator and image-maker, she is vulnerable to Marie's version of events, which are based upon professional discourses about mixed relationships. Part of the role of the family album is to offer the family a 'retrospective coherency', a way to gather its chaos or unpredictability, and this narrative function stabilises a sense of purpose, either positively or negatively (Watney, 1991:29). Family knowledge in all its gritty detail can often remain unknown by ordinary families and is not information privy to children in families. However, the openness of the care system offers these stories in order to explain why children and young people can no longer live at home. Often the details and horrors of

these stories are themselves haunting and would not be told in ordinary families in order to protect children.

Marie's professional role was more than that of a social worker. Marie has the professional power to propose decisions about the girls' lives in the absence of the carer holding parental responsibility. Hence, the importance of Marie's role as social worker to the family goes beyond her duty; she knows the family well, has a long-standing relationship with all the members, although she has not always been their social worker. Marie is called to deal with problems. The girls had been in long-term foster care with Denise and her family for over nine years. They had little or no contact with the black birth family on their father's side and although he was part of the contact arrangement he had only been coming along recently. Placement practice and policy, as discussed in the literature review, suggests that white foster families do not make ideal long-term placements because of the lack of cultural knowledge. Marie, as a black Jamaican social worker took on the responsibility of nurturing their cultural needs; whether or not this was part of her official duty was unclear. She invited them to her family gatherings (but never to her home), cooked Caribbean food with them and inculcated them with her particular version of black Jamaican culture. Marie served as a cultural custodian in the absence of both birth and foster family having the cultural resources to effectively nurture through socialization the specific and desired identity among mixed young people in care. Hence, Anita was influenced by Marie's cultural knowledge, her professionalism and her knowledge of the birth family and her susceptibility to Marie's story meant her own family history was questioned.

Children and young people in general and more specifically those in care live within a framework of knowledge production and validity which minimises the accuracy of their

own memories and asserts those of professionals as having greater validity. Anita's version of her role as a four year-old mimics that of all children who have a manipulative tendency, which ensures they get their needs met. They do not accept 'no' easily and will often play one parent against the other or treat the refusal of one parent as an opportunity to ask the other – pester power. If Anita's mother did not give into her demands or requests, Anita's four-year-old response would have been to tell or ask her dad. If he had not been a violent man this behavior would have been unremarkable and without serious repercussion. However, her father is violent and so her harmless behavior results in arguing and fighting between her parents. Anita fails to recognise that she was in no way responsible for his violent response to her manipulation nor could she control his violence. Anita's narrative of self-blame overplays her power in events and what is child behaviour becomes a distortion of character brought about through the re-telling of a narrative by Marie.

In response I wanted Anita to see her position in Marie's version of events as one of many versions of a story and one that she could reject in favour of another. One such strategy to examine her narrative of self-blame could be, as Fook (2001) suggests, re-frame the narrative in ways that can be empowering. There were others stories that I was made aware of through Marie. Being able to see the many versions of both sides I made an instinctive and rational judgement toward an informed and appropriate response, one not undertaken lightly. When I suggested that possibly Anita's memory may have the upper hand in the story and, if she failed to remember, maybe she was not the instigator of violence, I asked her to do a number of difficult things: to distrust Marie's version and to distrust the value of a life long and fairly consistent relationship. In essence I asked that she believe my assertions and in so doing relinquish a strong narrative of self-blame that she had used to position herself in the family. As Watney (1991) suggests this

negative story offered her an internal coherency, one which made sense of her circumstances. In making the intervention I questioned if I had abused my own power and influence through my status/position? I thought I could possibly gloss over this exchange or refer to it in my field notes as an aside, diminishing the power I held to intervene and leaving the field untouched by my presence to reveal my researcher position as outside of these narratives and interactions.

I knew the story Marie had told Anita, as Marie had also told me. I was somewhat armed for response when Anita shared it. When Anita repeated Marie's versions of events I realised how harmful such stories could be. They have value, affect emotions and actions and become part of a narrative, used to structure how Anita thought about herself. I could not understand why Marie would tell Anita a story like this. As discussed in the methods chapter these ethical decisions and emotionally demanding research relationships demanded sensitivity through a series of on the spot judgements informed by feeling, instinct and logic and in this way research becomes alive and active for researched and researcher.

> **Field Diary July 2008**
> Those girls were fine until those family photographs turned up now there are so many issues coming up and I'm not sure if they are about feelings toward the past or my intervention possibly both? If I did it again I would leave a much longer time before doing any of this type of work.

Privacy, Participation and Ownership

During an interview with Anita, I ask a general question about where her first foster carer lived as she held the photograph of her in her hand. I had stumbled into dangerous territory. She resents this intrusive line of questions. She is angry and shouts, "it's not good there". I assure her that I ask because I had not read her care file. I tell her I am

genuinely sorry if it had been a bad experience and if she refused to talk about it that was fine.

> Fiona: Are there others things you don't want me to ask about or to know because I will respect that it's your private life, it's about you, and you share what you choose.
> Anita: You've seen the pictures anyway
> Fiona: Do you feel they're private and you don't want me to see them?
> Anita: You've seen them already anyway
> Fiona: Would you rather I hadn't seen them?
> Anita: Some of them
> Fiona: Which ones?
> Anita: Cyrilla (the first carer) ones of my family
> Fiona: So, which ones are you happy for me to see?
> Anita: Any ones but them
> Fiona: So the ones of Cyrilla and ones of your mum, dad and brother your um…
> Anita: and my uncles and them.

Anita embraced the ownership of the images despite her hazy memories of their context of production. 'Photo albums come to individuals who can look after them, the details of the stories are no longer remembered, and they are private and archaic museums of kinship' (Williams, 1991:18). The potential of the representations offered a past and imaginary sense of the present, belonging, and personal identity made possible. She could speak herself into being through family ties, blood and attachment and take on the responsibility of custodian. These fragile family links of blood, shared memories and belonging were broken and severed. Birth family remains for her a cohesive group, stilled by time and in an instant snapped forever as family. However, while Anita becomes the new custodian of her family snaps, embracing their historical and personal meaning, Anna chooses not to participate beyond her initial cursory inspection of the snaps at the beginning of the research period. Anna is positioned on the periphery as she fails to remember but she also would rather not remember through the narrated versions of others – maybe her choices were right.

Dissonance of Siblings and Memories

Anna was a reluctant participant in the research surrounding the family album and initially my researcher arrogance and naive approach blinded me to her reasons. Anna's presence beyond the first session became characterised by tension or her reluctance to engage. I was looking to her behaviour to try to explain the distance that increased with each encounter. Knowles elaborates, 'Antagonism, of course, is a dynamic between researcher and participant, not a problem with the informant' (2006:394). Knowles makes a valid claim that research, although dominated by the consensual model, has much to learn from research relationships that are characterised by difficulty. During subsequent sessions working with the family album, Anna used all the diversionary tactics she could think of; take phone calls, invite friends over, leave to play with the baby (the grand daughter of the carer), place her mobile playing music next to the recorder and make hand signals signifying her boredom, notably the noose around her neck. Her carer told me she had asked for 'help' to get out of the session. She reminded me that not all 'research ethics' live at all times in my desire for professionalism. I was frustrated, happy to dismiss Anna altogether or put her behaviour down to her 'adolescent mood' or her refusal to see herself as in care because of her sense of belonging to the foster family. Knowles argues that 'handling your baggage in the field' means being aware of antagonism and difficult relationships as being of value. In this instance it did 'yield more rigorous field work, with more insightful results' (ibid:393). I became aware of the subtle coercion she was experiencing. I asked Anna whether she would prefer not to participate, she replied, "my sister wants me to". Her social worker, Marie also had a lot of influence and told her the "project would be good for you". Her feelings of coercion made her continue to participate in the project albeit not wholeheartedly but enough to satisfy her obligations. The coercion was a significant

aspect of the sibling relationship and I began to pay more close attention to the dynamics between the sisters, the foster carers, the birth family and the social worker.

We are again sitting in the garden one afternoon and it becomes apparent that Anna's reluctance to be involved is influenced by her relationship to Denise. Her relationship to her foster family requires specific demands and expectations. Her position within the family must be maintained through behaviour.

> Denise: Get out there now. Do you need Anna out there Fiona?
> Fiona: Does she want to? We're doing the front page.
> Denise She doesn't want to do nothing I tell you Fiona. Come on Anna, now stop it, you're supposed to join in, and Anita is taking part. Lauren is going to have her bath now.
> Denise: Yeah, you all right? You hungry Anita?
> Anita: Don't look at me, yeah. I've done loads she hasn't done shit. She can do it.
> Denise: Don't say that when its recording Anita that's not very nice. Where you going to have your bath Lauren, she has it out here on the table. Are you going to clear it now? Are you going to be long Fiona?

Field Diary July, 2008
Denise wants to avoid the pain of the past by ignoring Anita's emotional life; it is inconvenient and disrupts the flow of everyday life such as the practicalities of food and bath time, which can happen as long as emotionally sensitive content and history can be effectively cleared up. And she is trying to get rid of me again, so fed up of this.

The younger sister Anna failed to remember the past. She had made family with her foster carers and had no desire to tell herself into existence from a family history that had failed her. 'Family photographs are supposed to show not so much that we were once there, as how we once were: to evoke memories which might have little or nothing to do with what is actually in the picture' (Kuhn, 1991:18). Anna chose to align herself with the foster family she lived with and within which she could locate her childhood memory. The unknown faces of people in the images prompted no recollection of who she once may have been within this birth family.

As the sisters sit surrounded by images they didn't say much apart from bicker. They look at each other and sneer "What? What? What?" in a way that sisters can argue without even speaking or contextualizing what the argument is about – but only they know. Anita claims "She doesn't remember nothing so it's like I'm on my own anyway". Anita's attempts to make and re-make her family without her sister's memory to validate, reminds us that 'photographs may be sites of conflict as memories are our own and not shared' (Kuhn, 1991:21). Anita's attempts to force Anna's memories to be in line with her own were creating a rupture, which fore-grounded their sibling relationship. Anna's inability or refusal to remember brought about irritation from Anita as she berated her and criticised her lack of interest in the album work. The girls have conflicting memories of birth family life and subsequently their care experiences and attachments reflect their varying pre-care and care experiences; despite being placed together their understandings of belonging to birth and foster family are at odds.

The family album does not resonate with Anna, not only because of her absence of memory but possibly also because of the context of their production. The images show poverty, the sisters wear well-worn clothes, their hair is untidy and they sit in a scruffy and dark home on furniture that is worn out. Anna may not remember them but she knows the circumstances of her care admission well. Marie tells me that Anna is angry that her mum put her into care because of "that piece of shit". Anna's (dis) connection to birth family exposes her strong and important attachment to Denise, her foster carer, and the story she wants to tell about her own life. I suggest to Anna that she could take some photographs of 'family' or those people and places that are important to her, leaving her free to embrace the here and now and not feel pressured to have her own memories coerced in line with Anita's.

Anna's life is anchored to the present and the re-emergence of the album, though significant, was not changing her perspective on her immediate circumstances nor her perception of the past and why she came into care. Anna had formed a very close bond with the entire foster family and especially Denise who she called Mum. Anna responded to the task of image production with enthusiasm and produced a set of photographs that are intimate, embedded and individual. Her photographs show the family members: Denise and Greg her foster dad, Denise's granddaughter Lauren and her sister Anita. She took images of the television, the computer, and the food cupboard where all the sweet treats are kept, the cat next door and the front door of the house, from the outside. Anna's photographs, in contrast with the images made by other participants, show her sense of belonging to the people at the placement. All the images are of smiling faces and the gazes that look upon her as a photographer are welcoming; no one spurns the camera's gaze. Anna appears to be fully invited into the family. She is secure enough to take photographs without asking permission. Anna is in a very successful placement in which she is cared for, loved and fits in with the entire family and this healthy attachment is both right and proper after nine years with Denise and her family.

Long term fostering of mixed children in white families is not encouraged in policy nor in practice as the aim of same-race matching is thought to offer children cultural knowledge and belonging (Small, 1986; Maxime, 1993). At one point a mixed carer was identified for both girls but the arrangement fell through. An enduring attention was focused on the girls not being with a white carer family long term. As time passed reviews always sought to identify mixed carers, but the shortage of carers and a willingness to take two siblings with complex needs, made it difficult to find a match. During the nine years the girls have been in long term fostering with Denise, the

arrangement has not been brought to panel to be assessed for 'permanency'. Permanency demonstrates a long-term commitment and entails working a little bit harder at the needs of the young people and assures them of a place in the family; offering a greater sense of security. There were indications that the several social workers involved over the years were doing permanency reports for the review panel but none of them saw it through and so the girls remained in a fostering arrangement that was only supposed to be short term. In order for the fostering arrangement to take on the characteristics of normal family life, foster carers/parents must have authority over the welfare and well being of the children through the rights, duties, powers, and authority granted by a parental responsibility order[20].

Throughout the weeks I worked with the girls on the birth family album, Denise was very keen to get her own collection of family snaps down from the loft. Her insistence that the girls also belonged to her family was touching and I looked forward to seeing the photographs. Denise had placed the photographs in separate albums for each girl. It struck me that each separate book often held identical photographs. It is relatively unusual for a family album to be separate for each child and also contain identical images, which implied that in future there could be a separation of the girls from each other and a separation from their current placement. These were albums that were prepared for departure.

Inside were photos taken over the years during summer holidays, two little girls on holiday standing by the poolside in bright sunshine. In another photograph, Christmas presents were piled high and the girls were in matching outfits, wearing Santa hats in a

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[20] Parental responsibility can be granted to carers through adoption in which the child becomes one of the family's own children. It is a special guardianship which does not sever links to the child's family, and in which the local authority support the foster family for up to two years both financially and socially or emotionally.

large, bright front room dwarfed by a huge Christmas tree. The increase in the materialism of the children lives from birth family to foster family was apparent through attention to the objects in the family homes. Such symbols of material wealth such as summer holidays abroad, piles of presents and the décor of the rooms, all showed choices over how income was spent. The children brought in over £1 000 per week income for Denise. The material well being of the family was in evidence throughout the family home and lifestyle. Their means were well beyond that of Denise who worked part time as a teaching assistant and Greg who drove for a mini cab firm. Would this lifestyle be outside of their means if they did not foster Anita and Anna?

On the mantelpiece in the back room are an arrangement of studio portraits and the girls appear in one, Denise and her daughter appear in another and her grand daughter in yet another. Anita and Anna are part of the history of this family too. The siblings have different experiences and memories of birth family and varied connections to their foster family, illustrated by the varying levels of engagement with the family album. Mantelpieces show close family members, the display on the mantelpiece demonstrates who belongs to the family. As discussed in the methodology chapter, Stealth removed his photograph in order that he would not be seen as part of the foster family. The studio photograph of Anita and Anna on display was taken when they first arrived at Denise's, aged about five and three. The sisters are integrated into their foster family fairly well, the dissonance of memory and different relationships they have to their foster carer are an accepted aspect of how this particular family functions and has endured for over nine years.

During the research Anita's behaviour begins to spiral out of control, she is truanting, staying out late and every time I arrive at the house there seems to be another boy

standing at the end of the street waiting for her. She is also changing schools as she wants to be at the same school as her half sister on her father's side, which also happens to be the school Denise works in as a teaching assistant. Denise regularly gets calls from the school about Anita's persistent truanting, which she is irritated by as she has more pressing concerns about Anita, who is having unsupervised contact with her birth parents. In one conversation Anita begins to confide in me about her relationship to her birth family and her desire to return home.

> Anita: Yeah but you don't get it, because since I was born my mum and dad argued, when I was with Cyrilla (the first foster carer), she cared about Anna, like in here...that's why I hate when people go on about Anna, like at home, like here, but like at home, I feel like they actually care. It would be better if I didn't have Anna. I do love her but I just don't want to be with her. She doesn't remember nothing, so it's like I'm on my own anyway
> Fiona: Silence
> Anita: Leroy should've been with us still because they've changed
> Fiona So now they've changed?
> Anita: They changed now
> (Denise knocks and comes in).
> Denise: Have you finished?
> Anita: No
> Denise: Emma's going to walk round the doctor's do you want to do that?
> Anita: Nah
> (Denise leaves the room)
> Anita: Yeah, but now I can look after myself, so why can't I move back?
> Fiona: That's not a question I can answer. Is that what you want? What do you think you would get there?
> Anita: I don't care

Denise interrupts in order to rescue Anita from a past that she wants to talk about but which Denise feels underpins her increasingly uncontrollable behaviour. Anita made me think through how she saw my role as one with status and/or power to 'put in a good word' about the possibility of her returning home. I knew that returning to her birth family had been ruled out and although they were "sorting themselves out" they were still drinking, smoking crack cocaine and violent. Marie felt that Anita's return would be to take care of them as they were both quite ill and she was against it. Anita demonstrates

faith in her parents' capacity for change. She offers them forgiveness and redemption through an opportunity to prove they can parent her, if only social services would allow it. Anita had not attached to Denise and her family and favouritism towards Anna was blamed for this; she felt sidelined by Anna's attachment to Denise. The birth family were encouraging Anita's visits and this was further fuelling her attempts to return permanently.

Family Re-invention Through the Researcher Gaze

I had been invited to a supervised contact visit with Anita and Anna (who brought her friend along), their parents Yvette and Nick and the social worker, Marie. It was the week before Christmas. We waited at Marie's office for the parents to arrive. It was an opportunity for the girls to have a family meal and receive their Christmas cards containing the obligatory £50 in cash from their parents. The parents are late. While Anita goes willingly, Anna is more hesitant and Marie feels that she will give up contact when Anita leaves the placement to move into semi-independent accommodation in the next two years.

Marie told me in advance that she would have to tackle an ongoing issue of unsupervised contact between the parents and Anita. She felt it would be useful to have me there to occupy the girls. Marie was unhappy with the contact and had been suggesting that Anita's recent poor behaviour at Denise's was a direct outcome of her increased visits to her birth family. Marie felt the visits were compromising Anita's safety and making Marie's position as their social worker vulnerable. Her managers had been suggesting she no longer work with the girls as she was losing control and authority. Christmas contact was an opportunity for Marie to propose to the parents that they stop the visits or run

the risk of losing the supervised contact arrangement as well as losing Marie as their social worker.

Eventually we all meet on the high street. As we approach the Chinese restaurant where we will share lunch, the girls link arms with their mum and almost skip down the street. The relationship Anita and Anna have with their mother appears warm and loving. They look as though they genuinely enjoy each other's company and for many years only Yvette went to contact but recently Nick has been coming along too. Nick lags behind. Yvette, noticing his mood, hangs back and walks by his side. Anita looks dejected. Her face sullen and upset, she walks alongside me. I ask her if something has upset her. She is silent. Anna links arms with her friend. We arrive at the Chinese restaurant. Nick holds the door open for us all. Nick styled his hair in a neat Afro; he was wearing a three-piece suit and tie on a warm Wednesday afternoon. There is an air of forced respectability and hints of masculine gesture as he holds the door open for the females, including his wife. Does he think we do not know his masculinity has no boundaries? I return his gesture with a knowing look, rejecting his preferred self-presentation. Mum is wearing a black leather jacket, blonde hair, straw-like from over-dyeing, ¾ quarter length jeans and fake Egg boots: a woman refusing to show her age through her choice of clothes. Marie sits with the parents to 'talk' about Anita's visits. The girls and I sit together and I work hard to lift the mood. Anita is refusing to speak. Anna chats with her friend. We eat. The parents leave most of their food. Marie refuses to pay for their partially eaten meals. Marie cuts short the contact. The parents have barely exchanged two words with the children and Yvette looks disappointed.

The girls get their Christmas cards, they open them immediately; the cards are identical, the only difference is their names. They smile and I gather the family for a Christmas

snap. I feed into the discourse of family convention reproducing an acceptable and yearned for pose which conceals the chaos of abuse, dysfunction and sadness. It is the construction of an instant of happiness for them by encouraging them to laugh and gaze at one another, posing them, to display the love beneath the disappointment. All faces are turned to the camera. Eyes gaze off in different directions not meeting the unified gaze the camera demands of family snaps. Snap. Frozen. The Family.

> 'Images exist materially in the world, are involved in particular and specific human social relations. Their meanings are historically and socially embedded, told through their internal and external narratives'. (Banks, 2001:179)

The images in this family, as with every family, have multiple stories concealed and revealed through attention to the 'right' representation; this has as much to do with the photographer as it has with the family itself. The external narratives of families sucked my gaze into its convention, with a desire to re-produce the fiction of a happy family unit – even the dysfunction of this family could be re-created. I was sad for their circumstances and in some ways wanted to gather the remnants of loss into a conventional pose, giving them the opportunity to fit together, to be as one. This was my own desire to reproduce their contact through a happy image to take home. Through this happy take away image they are able to discard the reality of chaos and dysfunction, not only of the day but also of their lives. Through each new family snap they can possibly continue to believe in family. And so the image I take is what I wish for their family or how they could be, if only they were not the people that they are.

The physical image I have is disappointing, it seeps lies and truths and possibly too much is known about the internal narrative of this family. Their smiling faces appear to mask unhappiness, yearning and frustration. Smiles are mistaken for grins – grin and bear it, I think. Their body language looks wrong; surely the girls should be seated, cuddled and

adored by parents who stand lovingly behind, pushing the children forwards, wanting the image of their likeness put forward first. Their roles appear reversed in the image. I know the internal narrative and the context of the image and I can no longer elude its presence when I look repeatedly at what I have made. In the process of production my desire was to re-create their family anew. Yet in the translation to the printed image they are mis-represented; they can never be what they appear.

I notice the physical distance between Anna and Nick: they are not touching at all, she leans heavily on Anita and places one arm loosely around the outside of her mum's shoulder. Anna is also gripping her card and cash in a large white envelope, which is central in the image. Their eyes gaze in different directions; Anna looks at Marie, Yvette gazes off into the distance, Nick has one eye closed in a wink and Anita is smiling so hard her eyes are almost closed. The external narrative could tell the story of any family - smiling girls, physical affection and warmth, the respectable image of family life - but there are clues on the surface and I begin to read from its internal coherency that this image is gathered from chaos.

This image fades away and what I am left with from that day is an image in my mind, not in print but more powerful than that: a memory of the day. There is a long communal table in a cheap Chinese restaurant and a family separated by spare seats and strangers: Yvette and Nick sit side by side and Marie sits opposite Yvette. Between us there was space enough for another four people to sit giving them privacy and distance. I sat beside Anita and opposite Anna who sat beside her friend. The communal table was two separate groups, talking, eating and unaware of what was being said at either side. At the end of the meal Anita is keen to rejoin her parents while Anna remains seated chatting with her friend. The chaos of the alternative image was the reality of the contact –

supervised interaction with their children, being reprimanded for encouraging visits. The dysfunction of the family becomes infantilised by Marie's powerful intervention. Who wants to crystallise that image? A family divided by seats and held apart by outsiders, strangers mediating the space of contact to provide a distraction and to assert rules, policy and regulations. That is the end of Christmas contact, we all leave, the girls and I stroll ahead and Marie continues to talk to the parents berating them for their complicity in Anita's visits and warning them of the consequences

Race Making in the Mundane

> **20/07/2008 Field Diary**
> Today remains one of the saddest in the entire research process it was so full of hope and longing, unrequited and fractured, the image of the family – and its longing to be real, unfulfilled yet yearned for.

We left the restaurant and walked back through the high street to Marie's office and en route I am reminded of the way that class, gender and race can be played out in unremarkable daily conversation and how this is structured through the power of status and place. The practice of race making in ordinary conversation makes me think about the power of welfare intervention over the lives of families and how these interactions are not usually topics of conversational analysis and are usually undertaken privately beyond the gaze of researchers or analyses. The girls walked into the local black hair and beauty shop. The adults waited outside for them. The following, seemingly innocuous, chat took place between Marie and Yvette.

> Marie: I took Anita out the other day to get her some make-up. She turned up with all this horrible looking make up on.
> Yvette: Oh yeah.
> Marie: I told her that if she was going to wear make up, and then she should wear the right stuff you know
> Yvette: Yeah
> Marie: Forty quid it cost me because I bought 'Fashion Fair'[21]

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[21] Fashion Fair is make up for dark skin tones.

Yvette: Uh huh.
Marie: It's really nice on her looks right you know. I told her she has to wear make up for black skin, because she is black. She can't be wearing that other stuff you know, it makes her look funny.

Marie is an expert whose knowledge professionalism and heritage enable her to make a judgement about Anita's appearance and what is appropriate. Marie's black Caribbean heritage assures Yvette that her embodied and experiential knowledge about what is right for black skin is superior to any contribution Yvette may make about her daughter's appearance. Marie assumes that Yvette, as a white mother of a mixed child, is unprepared for and ignorant of the ways to instil cultural knowledge in her 'black' daughters. Social work discourse of white mothers being unable to care for mixed children's hair and skin and cultural needs is prevalent in interventions with mixed families (Banks, 1995; Barn, 1996). In contrast Twine's research points out that white mothers learn black cultural practices of food preparation and child rearing in order to be accepted and become honorary blacks in their husbands' families (2006). Marie reiterates that Anita needs her cultural knowledge in an area that she assumes could not be met by Yvette, whose nods of agreement seem to confirm Marie's knowledge as better informed.

Marie further states that Anita is black and this returns us to debates about how mixed children are considered in practice and whether the children are mixed or black with a white parent (Prevatt- Goldstein, 1999; Banks, 1995) However, had Anita been a black child, a long-term foster placement with a white family would not have been approved. Because the children have a white mother, white families are more or less acceptable for both short term and long term fostering (Thoburn, 2000). Marie's middle class status (and my silent and so complicit presence) becomes normative through professionalism and accepted as right. Marie's professional power to make decisions about contact and make up is fully legitimated, despite them possibly being disagreeable; Yvette will nod

assent whether in agreement or not. Marie's professional status, access to financial resources, social and cultural capital position, Yvette as lacking ethnic/racial awareness, class privilege and economic resources - the trajectory of whiteness, class and status in this interaction render Yvette's opinion invalid.

A recent report for the House of Commons Children, School and Families Committee Looked-after-Children states 'Parents campaigning groups told us that interactions between families and children's services are in many cases, fraught with anxiety, confrontation and a perceived lack of respect' (McLeod et al., 2008-09:28). It suggests that much of the early intervention with mixed families need to be further researched in order to understand how interactions between families and social workers can be more productive in supporting the young people.

The snippet of conversation between Marie and Yvette points to dynamics that are often unrecognised and unremarkable in formal intervention. Social workers adhere to guidelines that enable them to work more effectively with families but the interpretation and implementation of policy varies across axes of class, gender and race. It is suggested that both black and white social workers who are 'working with women, check their own attitudes towards them and mixed-race relationships, just to make sure there are no hidden, counter-transference dynamics' (Banks, 2001:186).

The parenting of mixed children by white working class mothers operates within raced, gendered and classed discourses of mixed families disseminated through social services practice and policy through state intervention on parenting. Owusu-Bempah (2005) challenges social work practice surrounding mixedness. He argues 'To provide a professional service to 'mixed race' parentage, attitudes must change; we must discard

our racial myths and beliefs, our racial stereotypes and assumptions about the offspring of interracial sexual intimacy' (2005:40).

In the interaction between Marie and Yvette there was a form of raced and gendered discrimination working to marginalise Yvette's whiteness and class positioning as inferior. Research on whiteness points to it being a raced discourse discernable through normative and hegemonic discourses (Ware & Back, 2001) mediated by middle class values. The privilege whiteness offers remains contingent; whiteness operates as race and is situated through other social differences such as class and gender. This shifting terrain of race making suggests that white mothers lose any privileges previously afforded and this would have been dependent on class position. White mothers of mixed children witness racism from both black and white people and experience all-white groups of people as unwelcoming or hostile towards black and mixed race people (Alibhai-Brown, 2001:189).

Further, the racial difference of mixed families infers they do not belong together, the black father, white mother and two mixed girls points to racial difference. Understanding how the visual construction of the family infers specific types of interactions leads to families being over-determined by notions of racial difference. 'In matters of race there is an emphasis on purity as sustaining a sense of ontological security gained through being able to be placed racially through appearance' (Peters, 2000:3). For mixed people such ambiguity becomes subject to interrogation in efforts to secure status and grant social legitimacy. Being questioned reduces social legitimacy and this impacts on how the mixed family is constructed. For the mixed family looking visibly different invites questions of belonging and at the root of such understandings is the premise that parents and children can be made to feel they ought not to belong together. Olumide states 'On the basis of

appearance, assumptions and judgements are being made which point to perceptions about the inappropriate mixing of difference' (2002:108). For mixed children in mixed families questions of social legitimacy are raised through attention to how the visual constructions of racial categories construct how difference and sameness is understood.

Airbrushing the Foster Family Albums

I begin to wind down my involvement with the girls and the research relationship comes to an end. Several weeks pass and I have little contact with Marie; she is writing the report for the Panel for a 'permanency order ' to be put in place to secure the long-term future for Anita and Anna with Denise. I receive a phone call from Marie in which she relays the news that Denise has met a man, has left the family home and the girls have been left behind with her ex-partner Greg. I call the house hoping to speak to one of the girls but they are not in and do not return my calls. Denise tells me that she feels she has raised her family and now she wants to focus on her own happiness and build a new life. Although her birth children are grown up, Anna is only twelve and Anita is fourteen. It appears they are no longer part of the family. Denise wants to give up caring for the girls. Several weeks go by with the girls uncertain as to whether they will stay with Denise. Anna is devastated by the news and tells Denise "I just want to stay with you". Anita challenges Denise about her decision and they argue so much that Denise feels she is doing the right thing in giving them both up. Marie confirms that the girls are 'emotionally floored' although responding very differently to the news. Marie seeks a new placement for them both. I hear from Marie again; she confirms that Anita wants to leave the placement. Anna wants to stay with Denise. Denise tells me "I couldn't do it to Anna, she is family, I couldn't let her go in the end". Marie looks for a placement for Anita. The sisters will separate but in the meantime they remain at the family home with Greg. Denise applies for permanency for Anna and the case goes to Panel for a final

decision. Denise is worried that leaving the family home and giving up Anita may backfire and she may lose Anna. Denise helps Anita to move out by buying her a new suitcase and things she may need in her new placement. She tells me she can't understand why Anita is being so horrible towards her. Anita moves to a new carer in Catford. The Panel consider the case and agree that Anna should remain with Denise. In the meantime Anna is living with Denise's daughter Lisa at the old family home and cannot move in with Denise and her new partner until he has been cleared through a Criminal Records Bureau (CRB).

Conclusion

This chapter examined three sets of photographs to demonstrate the role of the birth family and how the structure of mixed families through race, class and gender influenced decisions made about how mixed young people in care experience long term fostering placements. The visual representations of the birth family demonstrated an internal coherency and despite their visible difference they conform to constructions of the family through poses and events such as birthdays and visiting relations. However, the internal narrative revealed the dysfunction of the family through domestic violence and drug-taking, which lead to child neglect. Such narratives of family life cannot be concealed once they seep from the paper, nor can they be re-imagined through attempts to improve the durability of the mixed family in order to meet the desires of the participants.

Using the family album opened a discursive space for memory production and allowed for differences between family members to structure subsequent research sessions. The family snaps were crucial artefacts in the making of identity, making connections through the familial and the familiar, which are impossible without visual representations of

family life. The re-emergence of the family albums offered a powerful tool for the participants to connect with how social relationships were constructed, to examine how their care was experienced and understand how their belonging to both birth family and foster family became negotiated. Their use as both enabling identity and concretising biological connections was revealed, despite the physical absence of family who became psychically invoked through memory, experience and longing. The under utilisation and lack of value currently attached to family albums for young people in care fails to realise their potential for deep therapeutic work.

Anita and Anna's vulnerability to instability was in part due to the structuring absence of their mixed family that continued to influence their care trajectory. Each stage of their care lives were structured through how their mixed family was understood by their black social worker. The limitations and expectations of this particular mixed family were described throughout the interaction between the birth mother and the social worker. The classed and raced dynamic during this interaction raised issues around challenges to the rights of white mothers to parent their mixed children. The implicit absence of attention to birth fathers in both theory and practice negates their role in family life and greater attention could be paid to their influence, whether positive or negative.

Denise, as a white carer, was never considered good enough for long term care, hence a rolling short-term contractual agreement which failed to offer stability and security. Airbrushing the foster family album and giving up the care of one of the siblings was made possible due to the ever-present possibility that there may be a more suitable carer identified. After a nine-year commitment to two young people most carers would have been granted permanency, but it was the mixed classification of the girls and the white classification of the carer that prevented this. Anita and Anna's lack of permanency was

due to the awareness that only a mixed or black family would be suitable as long term carers for two mixed sisters.

The following chapter considers a further consequence of how the mixed classification structures foster care and leads to circumstances in which short term care can lead not to the default of long term fostering but to excessive transience through foster care.

Chapter 6: Amma's Journeys: A Portrait of Transience in Care

> "And then like yesterday, I heard her on the phone, no this morning, and she goes, "I can tell social services if I want her to be moved and she'll be moved, they'll come straight away", and I'm like we're not puppets you know". (Amma, June, 2008)

The camera and image production is a significant methodological tool, and its intrusion into the space of the foster home enables a deeper examination into how Amma understands home and belonging. Her narrative of care includes; discussions of race, culture, class, geographical location and suggests that a more fluid approach to identification than the one currently utilised in social services placements practices could increase stability. This chapter argues that placement practices that emphasise the mixed racial identification lead to excessive transience.

Pen Portrait

Amma was living with a single Jamaican female carer in Downham and attended the local comprehensive school. Amma came into care aged eight. She was placed alone, as she was told that she needed one-to-one care; she had been a carer for her brother and two sisters. Amma says her mother 'treated them badly'. At the time of the research project she had not seen her mum in three years.

Amma's mother is white Irish and her father black Ghanaian. She has no contact with her dad and she claims he is unaware that they are all in care. She tells me he thinks they are in Ireland. She had been told by her social worker that this was 'Life Story' work and she embraced the project with enthusiasm. As her placement began to break down she was increasingly distant and pre-occupied, appearing worried, tired and stressed about the changes. When she moved she refused to be involved in the project anymore and cut her ties with me.

> Amma: We're going to take some pictures and that means you!
> Pearl: Of me? (Laughing) but I haven't done my hair yet today
> Amma: Okay, what is important to me here? The kitchen that's important
> Pearl: No, it needs cleaning, something else
> Amma: My fish is important
> Pearl: But you haven't cleaned the tank
> Amma: It has to be precise
> Fiona: This is real life photography, no preparation needed
> Pearl: Next time, next week, you can clean up and take some pictures

Spaces to Belong

Amma was able to share numerous stories of care and the impact it had on her; using the camera became a new way to tell her story. Amma was enthusiastic about using the digital camera and I took her to the 'Amazingness' workshop to build her skills and confidence[22]. Amma begins her 'life story'[23] project by taking images of her foster placement, she wants some images of the interior and she negotiates this with Pearl her carer. Amma reveals the important aspects of her placement. These are Pearl, the goldfish and the kitchen - and she makes an attempt to concretise her belonging with an image that shows she was once here. Pearl's refusal was disappointing but simultaneously revelatory of the rules she places on Amma's belonging and ownership of space. Amma was the 'permission seeking child' and the 'child in care'; a temporary resident without rights over the communal physical space. Her image production was an uninvited intrusion into Pearl's private space of home.

Foster carers undergo a fairly rigorous assessment of their personal and home lives to assess their suitability for fostering. Their subsequent approval means they become a focus for monitoring and reviews, which entail an explicit demand for verbal openness and the divulging of private information. Such opportunities of disclosure are somewhat a performance; a self-presentation of mediated information. The camera was a challenge to Pearl's private space and she resisted its intrusion. This was possibly due to a number of factors; Pearl was unprepared and wanted to show her home at its best, my presence (I was not an official sent by the local authority and my student status) led to her being

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[22] A one-day photography course run by Anna Hillman, a local photographer who works with young people. During the workshop Amma took images of the local urban environment, and chose three to discuss among a group of other young people.

[23] The Foster Care Associates promote its benefits: Life Story work can help children make sense of their past, gain a balanced understanding of their present and, as an ongoing process, plan for a healthy and stable future… a tool to help children connect with significant people and places, their family of origin and their heritage (2004). The time pressures on social workers mean that Life Story is an under used resource and no work had been done with Amma so far.

170

able to refuse permission. Amma's participation was voluntary and so the status of the project was different to any official intervention she may have undergone. Those factors aside, her refusal enabled an interest to be developed into how Amma negotiated belonging to her placement and the boundaries within.

Domestic photography was an attempt at a visual close up of an unrehearsed scene in all its daily grime, unwashed hair, dirty fish tanks and grubby kitchens, in which Pearl was an unwilling subject and gate-keeper. The status of 'home' and its integral role in the ideology of the family is an aspect of Amma's life that cannot be assumed. Amma subverted Pearl's' refusal to take photographs of her or her home and she decided not to wait until everything was "precise". She heads upstairs to her bedroom and took a few shots, in her private space, in which permission does not need to be sought. I stand and wait in the hallway. Pearl sits at the computer in the front room. I look around for evidence that Amma lives here. The hallway is sparse and no coats or shoes are on show. I look for photographs of her in the front room – nothing. Amma returns to show me half a dozen images of importance in her bedroom. In her study on mixed race children Ali (2001) encourages her respondents to produce images of home, which prove to be relatively unproblematic in terms of permission seeking. The children offered her images of pets, family members and communal spaces. This contrasts sharply with Amma's experience, which demonstrates no sense of ownership of her foster home in which permission has to be sought and was denied. Amma's visual and physical exclusion prompts further investigation.

In the relatively free and unregulated space of her bedroom Amma produces an image with an internal narrative that is symbolic of her connection and sense of belonging to her current foster home and family. The content of the image conveys a sentimental

offering of apologetic remorse in the form of two occasion cards; an 'I am Sorry', 'special daughter' cards and an old class photograph of Amma at nursery school occupy this altar, a shrine to her past. These objects on display transcend her care experiences offering her a sense of self, attachment, belonging and stability in the absence of birth family and home. Her image production captures her foster placement but the restrictions placed on her belonging through the censorship of communal space squeeze her into the parameters of her bedroom.

Amma's image and the circumstances of its production show that her sense of belonging to her placement was tenuous; the camera's intrusion was into a yet unspoken area. On the altar are objects from the past to represent home through nostalgia, which prompts an examination of how Amma anchors belonging. Through each placement, each journey, she can take these objects with her; they are things she is attached to that cannot be removed or taken away and they are significant aspects of her story. The cards are from her mum, the photograph of her at a restaurant is of her on a contact visit and the book was bought for her by Pearl; it is a misery memoir about a damaged child. Her exile from the physical space of the placement leads her to privilege her past in ways that assert the importance of birth family and belonging and thus limit the impact of her exclusion in the placement. Such strategies have possibly been born from Amma's transience through care.

Amma negotiates placement moves through physical space, unknown and unfamiliar cultural practices, racialised locations and class backgrounds. These configurations of Amma's journeys show they are of specific kinds in which her choices are limited; her frequent movement is primarily determined by her mixedness and her biography. Amma

makes sense of her journeys and her transience through the different versions of home

she constructs as she traverses foster placements.

> Amma: At least you got me a birthday present. Unlike Aunty Pearl, she only got me a card and I had a birthday party, a barbecue and all my friends said she was moody because she kept telling me to do chores, half her family didn't even bring a card they didn't even know it was my birthday.
> Fiona: Was the barbecue your birthday present?
> Amma: She said because she spent money on the barbecue and I said I don't mind about the barbecue, I could just have some friends over and have some nibbles
> Fiona: Yeah
> Amma: And then, she said, no, I'll do a barbecue. We did the barbecue and then she said, sorry Amma, she didn't even say happy birthday on the day. She gave me a card and she said I'll get your present this week and she said oh did I say this week? I meant next week and it's the beginning of next week but I don't really care. I just want my £45 that my mum sent me, that's she said she sent me, then I can go buy um a digital camera
> Fiona: Um is that what you want?
> Amma: Um and I want to paint my room, I want to have it stripes.
> Fiona: What did you do on the day?
> Amma: I went out with Grace[24] on my birthday, um I went to church and the cinema to watch The Mummy, then Nandos.

The family fail to know why there was a celebration and this confirms Amma's position as an outsider, despite her living at Pearl's for almost a year. Amma mediates her exclusion by relying on her mum to both provide her with some birthday money and to anchor her to a consistent relationship; this is also uncertain as her mum has been unreliable and so may not have left any birthday money for her. She chooses to spend her birthday money buying a gift she knows would please me. After describing her sense of exclusion from

Field Diary 12/08/2008
I feel bad, as I now know that she wanted her own digital camera and instead I bought her a book. She scanned a few pages and made the remark that she has a friend at school that can read any book. I wonder if the copy of Checkmate by Malorie Blackman is too difficult. We have all disappointed her.

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[24] Grace is a mentor who Amma has been seeing for a few months. They go out to the gym, restaurants and the cinema. She feels that Grace is hard to talk to and that she does not understand her, but she likes the trips. Grace is a Jamaican woman who volunteers for 'The Looked After Children and Leaving Care Mentoring Project'. Mentoring for under 16s is part of a government funded pilot scheme to provide mentors in order to plug the failure of residential care to offer consistent one to one relationships, by offering young people a mentor for minimum of a year with a volunteer from the local community.

Pearls' family she explains she wants to paint her room, to assert ownership over her sanctioned space. It is interesting that she chooses stripes, which are symbolic of imprisonment. Pearl relinquishes Amma's birthday celebration to her mentor. Amma's circumstances and her image production, given her exclusion from the physical space and her poor treatment and exclusion from the foster family, raise an interest in how she thinks about belonging to home and family.

Anchoring Belonging

One way to think through the ideology of home is the concept of diaspora with links to national/familial identities that rely on ideas of roots and routes; that is where we originate from and where we are at (Gilroy, 1993). Amma spent three years in foster care in Cambridge. She craved a return to London and her desire was so strong it meant leaving her brother behind at the placement. She spoke fondly of her affiliations to her maternal Irish grandfather, re-telling stories of her visits. She was also curious about Ghana, her father's homeland, and spoke of her desire to visit in future when she became an adult. Her paternal family reside in Liverpool and she is aware that her grandmother is still alive. Amma retains a grasp of diasporic belonging through a narrative of familial heritage and migration that appears to offer an alternative means of belonging to home and family, transcending her current foster care experience. The migratory journeys of Amma's family mimic her own transience; she leaves behind family and friends, she has to find ways to fit in and experiences the disappointment of a new places. Such experiences are characteristic of migration narratives and movement in novels by Sam Selvon 'A Lonely Londoner' (1956) and Andrea Levy 'Small Island' (1995).

Amma's narrative of care experiences in relation to movement and transience can also be understood within the political use of diaspora, which refers most broadly to those who have been forcibly exiled from home and denied return (Unterhalter, 2000). Amma is not, strictly speaking experiencing, an exile in the sense of a 'lost' homeland but the concept of belonging through a sense of familial diaspora may appeal precisely because it mirrors her own immediate experiences – of a lost home. Amma's removal from her home and family into care are a micro reflection of exile, denial and transience. As stated above she uses a narrative strategy to speak of cultural belonging to her birth family through diaspora and connections to people through places and cultures. The strategy of belonging Amma invokes implies she is making meaning from transience as she negotiates belonging through care placements, using aspects of her identification to do so.

Living Through Images of the Past

"I want to show you where I used to live and the school I used to go to the places that I've been that I can tell stories about" Amma tells me one afternoon as I meet her. The past is a key aspect of Amma's life story; Amma uses this opportunity with me to look back upon her past. She decides she would like me to take her to the nursery and primary school she used to go to when she lived at home with her birth family. I am reminded that she is telling her story and her readiness to approach her life are indications of a positive intervention; one in which she feels supported and confident in looking back. As we approach her old nursery school her memories become clear and she returns to the past and her siblings and place.

Field Diary 20/6/08

Her spontaneity is great but I am worried about her ability to handle the past and my skill at dealing with fallout and professionalism of the project which may be at stake by just pitching up without prior permission. She is determined and so I agree that we at least take a drive to the area and see how I feel when we get there.

Amma: I started school here. It does bring back memories. My brother and sisters they love London. I remember when they came to London and they said I can't believe it, London, nothing like home and I was laughing. It was so funny, because she was like; it's good to be home. I started laughing the way she said it

Fiona: She misses it

Amma: It's completely changed. Oh I know him.

We walk toward the entrance and meet the nursery teacher who also recognizes Amma. I explain that we are doing some Life Story work and Amma has strong and fond memories of this nursery and wanted to return to explore and maybe take some photographs. The building is empty apart from him and the cleaner. He is happy for us to stay and for Amma to stroll through the building taking photographs

Nursery Worker: Amma, I remember you, do you remember me? How are you getting on? Do you still live with Donna?

Amma: We split up. The place is changed

Nursery Worker: Do you see each other at all?

Amma: I haven't seen my mum in 3 years but we're going to see her this week

Nursery Worker: How is your mum?

Amma: I don't know but I heard she was doing a campaign in Ghana

Nursery Worker: Is she? Sorry don't mean to be personal. You were in my class, red class, which is gone now

Amma: I've still got a picture from when I was here and I recognized that lady in pink

Nursery Worker: Come and wander round, take some photos

Fiona: That's impressive that you remember the people

Amma: But it's confusing because I can't remember the rooms. I normally know people's faces but not their names. I want to take a little couple of pictures just to remind me and if I show my siblings they'll know what it is, because we all came here except for Sian, because she was younger

One of her treasured objects on her altar is a nursery class photograph; without that photograph I wonder whether she would have come to the nursery. I ponder on whether that memory of being here had not been stilled by time and whether studying the teacher's image, who now stands in front of her, gives her a clearer sense of her past as belonging here; possibly stronger than ordinary memory would allow. The value of

photographs was discussed in depth in the previous chapter but this can change across context as images not only become prompts for memory but also confirm the importance of tracking place and belonging through space and time. For young people who experience transience in care, photographs can enable them to locate and track who they once were through significant places.

Noticing the camera and sensing that he is asking intrusive questions, possibly having his own concerns about emotional fallout, the nursery worker suggests that we wander around and take some photos. 'Telling stories about the past, our past, is a key moment in the making of our selves' (Kuhn, 1995:2). As we stroll through the building her memories become alive. The objects in the space of the building such as the climbing frame, the rooms (she notices the changes that have been made) bring back images of the people who were using them when she was here. The internal space of the nursery prompts Amma to reflect on her story and why they came into care and how she felt while living at home.

> Amma: I didn't the like the way my mum, the reason why I came into foster care because my mum abused me, and never looked after us and treated us really badly and I had to look after my brother and sisters
> Fiona: And you're the oldest?
> Amma: Yeah, I had to look after them take them to nursery and then get to school and then my mum, I had to go up to the local shop to get her, like, because she liked cheese and onion crisps and she liked mash and ketchup, so that's why I went into foster care
> Fiona: You did a lot for your family
> Amma: Yeah
> Fiona: Was your mum drinking a lot?
> Amma: Yeah, I remember when she left me and she went clubbing with her friends and then she left us and there was vodka and we tried it and didn't like it.
> Fiona: Did you used to be hungry sometimes?
> Amma: Bin
> Fiona: You had to look in the bin to find something to eat
> Amma: All my siblings know that we had to look in the bin for stuff and it was like when she used to go out she'd leave us there and we'd all sit down on the chairs and talk about a new better family and one of us was always either crying at the end or happy to think of a new better family.

Amma's care admission narrative reiterates the discourses that guide social work intervention and the removal of children who need 'saving' from poor parenting. Schools and nurseries that draw attention to neglect invoke these guidelines. Her family came to the attention of social services and the children were offered nursery places to alleviate the parenting burden of a lone mother. She mentions abuse but does not detail whether it was physical, emotional or sexual. She mentions that her youngest sister had a large bruise on her face the last time she saw her mum. She mentions that her dad was abusive and that's why her mum abused them.

To separate children from families, send them away, to regulate and control them and sometimes remove parental responsibility, makes the care system a political site where the exercise and distribution of power is contested. As such the public care system bears relation to wider social and political themes such as social class, gender, ethnicity, and disability. As discussed in chapter 6 the impact of mixing and mixedness at the intersection of class and poverty make the mixed family more vulnerable to social services intervention. Cohen (1994) claims that 'transclass' placements - that is the movement of children from poor families to better off families - have always been a characteristic of the care system. Only recently have black and now mixed families become subject to intervention (1994:48).

Welfare Intervention

The class and race of families signifies whether they are more or less likely to be under the scrutiny of welfare intervention. Services aimed at tackling social exclusion through the remedies of assisted nursery places, back to work schemes, Sure Start Centres and health visitors are sites of localised power in spaces close to areas of deprivation and

impact on poorer families in highlighting poor parenting. That is not to say that poorer parents are all bad parents nor that neglect of children from poorer families should be ignored; rather I am suggesting that increased attention to the standardisation of parenting will inevitably result in greater, or at least consistent, care admission of poorer children.

Amma's family, lone parent living in social housing and in receipt of benefits, is more likely than any other family type to experience care admission (Barn, 1993). Amma's father left the family and was not a positive influence on the family while with them. There is a lack of attention paid to the role of fathers in current research on mixed families subject to welfare intervention. However, critical attention to white women's experience as lone parents of mixed children highlight high instances of care admission and causal factors of social isolation and poor support networks (Barn & Harman, 2006). McKenzie's research on the St.Ann's estate in Nottingham offers insight into the coping strategies used by working-class white women in mixed families whose success is dependent on finding value in Jamaican cultural forms (McKenzie, 2008). The dis-identification (Skeggs, 1997) of white mothers from normative white working class values suggests that white mothers adapt their parenting, appearance and cultural practices in order to find value in their marginal experiences. Despite attention to the poor parenting of mothers and lack of critical analyses aimed at fathers, the ideology of the family and the benefits of maternal care continue to influence the current preference for foster care.

Statistics from research by The Fostering Network estimate there are forty three thousand foster families looking after approximately 68% of the total care population (2004). Fostering is now the most widespread form of residential care and 77% of all children start their care life in foster homes (ibid). There is a national shortage of carers,

estimated to be around ten thousand. In London an additional two thousand are needed to offer a choice of quality placement. The ideological benefits of the foster family, which mimics as far as possible the ecology of the modern family, are considered preferable to expensive residential care reserved for children and young people for whom fostering is inappropriate, mostly those who have had a series of foster care breakdowns – young people like Amma.

Amma and her three siblings were placed in a residential home for three weeks while waiting for foster parents. Foster carers with the skills and space in their homes to take four small children are rare. The size of their family made it difficult to keep them together and they were split up. In recognition of this issue more generally Delma Hughs, a woman who was also in care and placed separately from her own siblings, set up a group called 'Siblings Together' which offers siblings in care, separated through foster placements, a holiday together. Since the split Amma and her siblings see each other sporadically at contact visits, a complex logistical operation as two siblings come from Norwich and one from Cambridge. It entails social workers escorting all of the children to London and back again, meaning contact is not as frequent as she would like it, at about six times a year. Statistics surrounding contact with birth families shows that mixed children are more likely to lose contact with their families and siblings than African Caribbean children. Research by Thoburn (2000) claims, 'only 18% of mixed heritage children had any contact with birth family after placement and 9% of those had contact with a sibling placed elsewhere…in contrast to the 38% of children with two black parents having contact with birth parents' (2000:118). The higher instance of separation of mixed children and young people from the ecological benefits of family life signifies that they will experience greater problems as care leavers as the family are key tools with which to build social capital.

Amma's nostalgia for the past had been satiated for one day; we say goodbye and leave the nursery and head toward the car. Amma suggests we now drive to her old primary school. I suggest that another round of questions about the past might be a lot to take on. She replies that she is enjoying the visits, how great it was to get some photos and that she can't wait to share them at the next contact with her siblings. Being a pushover, I agree that we could drive past the building. Of course she wants to get out of the car and before I know it, she is pressing the buzzer at the school gate – like I knew she would! I give her a disapproving look. We are invited in. The deputy head teacher and the meals supervisor greet us warmly. They remember Amma clearly and she begins to field questions about her current circumstances and her family.

> Amma: I'm not with my baby sister anymore, she's with my other sister and Chris is on his own. I'm going to see my birth mum on Saturday, I haven't seen her in 3 years, and so I'm going to see her in the contact centre
> Teacher: Is everyone living here now?
> Amma: No Donna and Chris um, we moved from the placement where we were over a police situation, then we moved onto a lady called Janet and then my sisters came and then um because I needed one to one I went to another placement with my brother. They couldn't give me one to one so I went to my mum who is Pearl now. I find it fun being back in London
> Teacher: Good it's really nice to see you
> Amma: Can I take a photo?
> Laughter – they huddle together and smile

Amma has a warm relationship with the meals supervisor. They reminisce about how Amma would come to her for a cuddle if upset. The meals supervisor may not have been aware of what Amma's home life was like but she was responsive to her need for warmth and love while on playground duty. Amma still has a palpable connection to her. I get a new sense of the role of the humble dinner lady as someone who is witness to children's free play and their role modeling, much of which happens outside of the classroom and remains unseen by teachers, and which gives clues as to their home life. This woman was clearly someone with whom Amma had a warm and significant relationship but one that

may not have been recognized as so.

Mixedness and Transience

Research shows that mixed children and young people in care experience a higher incidence of two types of disruption; firstly moving from one foster family to another and secondly changes in geographical location and schools (Barn, et al., 2005). Finding suitable matches for mixed children and young people, due to the shortage of carers, results in movement through a series of short-term foster placements (Thoburn, 2000). The upheaval of home, carers, schools and geographical location has implications for trust, a sense of belonging and impacts on young people's relationships (Barn, 2009:10). Trust is critical in understanding young people who experience instability (Oosterman et al., 2006). Research evidence into the movement of children through care over the past thirty years points to a failure to adequately safeguard children from frequent disruption and placement movement. As early as the 1970s, an empirical study by Stein and Carey claimed the average number of placements was 4.2 per young person in care (1986). During the 1990s approximately 40% had four or more moves and within this 10% moved more than ten times (Biehal et al., 1992, 1995). The emerging trend for this new decade reveals that 30-40% of all young people in care experience more than four moves and within this group 6-10% have over ten moves (Stein, 2004).

To date Amma has moved fifteen times over the six years she has been in care. The Fostering Network advocates that good quality placements and appropriate matching are the key characteristics of successful placements - ensuring stability and consistency of care (2004). Findings by Barn et al. suggest that 'Local authorities actively seek to avoid disruption and instability to avoid social exclusion and accumulative disadvantage in the lives of young people' (2005:5). Mixed young people experience such higher rates of

disruption and instability that their disadvantages in all areas of concern are markedly greater than for other ethnic groups (Barn et al. 2005). 'Two groups namely white and mixed parentage conveyed a history of placement disruption and the instability caused by this' (Barn, 2009:10).

Research shows that young people in stable placements are more likely to be successful in education and work and become more socially integrated as care leavers, than those who experience movement and disruption (Stein, 2005, Barn et al., 2005, Beihal et al., 1995). There is a complex relationship between stability and good outcomes meaning that individual personality or educational success may contribute to stability in a placement and some young people still manage to be successful despite instability. It is not known how and why some young people overcome transience and instability to make successful lives as care leavers.

Amma's ability to rise above what are trying circumstances of excessive placement movement reveals that transience is both a causal factor and an effect. One causal factor of excessive transience is the over-emphasis on how mixed as a racial identity is mobilised in matching practices. The effect of Amma's transience also highlights the isolated nature of foster care; children living in the homes of private individuals are sometimes not a priority for regular visits from social workers and they can go several months without contact. The subsequent dislocation arising from such isolation (such as in Stealth's narrative) can promote abuse or poor quality care.

Matching and Mixedness

> Amma: I try and get on with life, like auntie Pearl she's really great. I'm not racist or anything but I was with a lot of white women, that like couldn't see what I was

going through and I wanted to be a part of both of them, I was with too many of them. At the same time I wanted to be black again as well, that's why I went to auntie Pearl as well
Fiona: Has she helped you find that part of yourself?
Amma: But auntie Pearl is Jamaican.

The conflation of race as culture is revealed as Amma's asserts that despite Pearl's 'race', i.e. her symbolic and political position as black, Pearl's Jamaican cultural practices are at odds with her own Irish and Ghanaian parentage. She expresses her desire to be both black and white, however, in her specific circumstances and in social practice, living as both is problematic due to the wider practices of race making that determine definition. Amma's 'bothness' continues to be elusive as she negotiates Pearl's Jamaican expression of culture through church attendance, parenting practices, expectations of behavior, food preferences and Amma's responsibilities around the home. Pearl conforms to Jamaican standards of parenting that assert discipline, obedience and respect and although these are admirable values, Amma refuses to defer completely to Pearl's ways of doing things as they are oppositional to how she understands aspects of family life such as chores. When Amma lived with her birth family she did the chores and child rearing and now resents being told what to do. As a black carer, Pearl was deemed well equipped to engage with Amma's 'identity' and also to meet her needs for a warm significant relationship and one-to-one care. However, subsuming race with culture leads to difficulties over values, methods of care and cultural practices.

The conundrum of matching mixed children has a part to play in Amma's placement movement and her ability to fit in with her foster families, leading to an excessive number of short term placements. The care system has a shortfall of black minority ethnic (BME) carers who are particularly in demand. The Children Act 1989 states that due consideration be given to 'a child's religious persuasion, racial origin, and cultural and

linguistic background' (1989, section 22, 5, c). This policy framework for placement makes a number of considerations to ensure an appropriate match [25] and in current practice matching for fostering mixed children can be considered through two competing paradigms. On one hand there is the liberal perspective that asserts loving families of any ethnicity are suitable places to raise black and mixed children and shorten the time they wait in residential children's homes. On the other hand the black paradigm asserts that the liberal perspective ignores children's culture, heritage, and religion and does not equip them with the survival skills to live in a world polarised by race. While these competing perspectives differ in their approach to placements, they both share a desire to consider the over-riding needs of the child for a stable, secure and loving family. However, an emphasis on identity has led to children and young people being matched in ethnically appropriate families but not always receiving consistently good quality care.

The shortage of black minority ethnic (BME) carers translates as a shortage of families for mixed young people, meaning 'that 84% of all mixed children are placed with white carers, while only 55% of children with two BME parents are placed with white carers' (Thoburn, 2000:117). This dissonance in practice reflects the greater emphasis given to the maintenance of racial and ethnic identity needs of young people with two black parents. Subsequently, BME foster families are prioritised for young people who, it is assumed, have a greater need for cultural socialisation. Mixed children are considered suitable matches for white carers, as this mostly reflects their birth families. Amma's

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[25] Children Act 1989 Guidance and Regulations, Volume 3 Family Placement; and Volume 4 Residential Care. These requirements include:
duty to promote and safeguard the child's welfare
duty to consider the wishes and feelings of the child
duty to consider the wishes and feelings of the parents
duty to consider the child's religious persuasion, racial origin and cultural and linguistic background
duty to make arrangements for the child to live with a parent, someone with parental responsibility, or a relative, friend or person connected with the child, unless this would be impractical or unadvisable
duty to provide accommodation near a child's home
duty to place siblings together where appropriate

cultural needs are not as highly prioritised as for example those of a child in care with two Ghanaian parents. Mixed children are often placed with white carers and can be left in what are considered inappropriate long-term foster care or, like Amma, they are moved through a series of short term white carer placements deemed unsuitable in matching policy.

The model of mixedness as racial identity in social services policy is acted upon in static and fixed ways. Mixed children and young people are positioned as having inherently problematic identities. There is an assumption that they will find it difficult to belong and such a premise informs their package of needs. The ideal preference for BME carers for mixed young people is premised upon the belief that mixed young people will be seen as black by society and so they need preparation for inevitable racism. Such carers are then equipped to transmit what is believed to be an authentic and discrete 'black culture' despite it being contentious as to whether there is such a phenomenon. Such social and political beliefs negate and undermine the practices and impact of inter-racial families who are able to successfully raise mixed children. What is ordinary within mixed family life is denied by social services practices, so for example the belief that white mothers cannot successfully raise or care for mixed young people means that placements with white carers are always spoken of as 'inappropriate'. Part of the problem with this discourse, which Amma reiterates and acts upon when she asserts, "I was with a lot of white women, that couldn't see what I was going through", is its impact on the young people themselves. These discursive repertoires circulate and are cited as explicit reasons for the practice of moving mixed young people through a number of short term white carers, which rests on the assumption these carers are unable to do the work of race. For Amma this political position becomes personalized and the designation of white carers as poor mother substitutes with an inability to parent is confirmed by her own mother's

perceived failure. This position and perception persists, despite white mothers having been able to successfully parent mixed children in families across Britain over generations. The practice of higher numbers of mixed young people placed in white carer families highlights that in everyday understandings of race and mixedness, differences in biography, family background and needs *are* considered but this is often the responsibility of the individual social worker and so varies across local authority.

Amma's mixedness intersects with other variables and shows that her transience through foster homes is cut across raced and cultured aspects of difference, as well as geographical and class boundaries. Social class is a factor in how subjectivity forms through location and time and it is accepted in social work practice that carers and the children they foster will be in different socio-economic classifications; as Cohen (1994) points out, placements have always been transclass. The majority of children in care are from birth families in the lower socio-economic groups with carers occupying higher groups. Amma's geographical location of Cambridge, surrounded by people from a different class background and in a predominantly white area, was disastrous for her. She described feeling as though she did not fit in, that she had the wrong class background (Skeggs, 1997). Social class and location are crucial to children's sense of belonging and their ability to fit into foster families. Amma says "I didn't like Paxton because it was too posh and I'd already been to a private school and it was really, I tried to do suicidal in it, so that's why I didn't like it". Amma suggests that this experience of not fitting into a predominantly white, middle class area informed her decision to return to London, her subsequent choice of secondary school and the knowledge that choice of school is crucial as she claims "I like to be myself in school". Her strong attachment to being herself signals that her belonging in placements could be tenuous as she is possibly unable to be herself and thus she positions school as the place where she is most

comfortable. Research findings from Barn et al., (2005) suggests that a multi racial locality may help mixed children feel secure in their individual and group ethnic identity and thus promote their resilience and belonging.

Geographies of Mixedness

Research with mixed families outside of social services intervention also points to the importance of a multiethnic area for parents raising mixed families (Caballero et al., 2008). Census data shows that mixed families with children are more likely to live in multicultural metropolitan areas and such clustering may be due to several factors. They may have always lived there, may have chosen to raise children there because of a diverse population, or they may feel area is an important aspect of raising mixed children (2008:41). The majority of Amma's placements with white women were outside of the multiethnic area of Deptford, where she grew up. The rural locations, class backgrounds and the race and culture of her carers suggest that many of Amma's placements enabled her to step back and decide her own rules about where she most easily fits in and who she is most comfortable with. Such high instances of movement through placements confirms that Amma has to adapt to survive in care and part of this is through paying attention to how she fits into specific placements and which edges she has to smooth in order to fit more easily. There are aspects of her identification that she refuses to relinquish such as her class background, cultural heritage and her attachment to London.

Mixedness as a practice of identification is fluid and shifts in encounters across other axes of similarity and/or difference as it intersects and interacts with biography, gender, location and class making new forms of identification possible. Song (2003) characterises identity as a cyclical journey where fluid ideas of identity are practised. Root (1996,) considers identity through the role of family and community. Such understandings

suggest that for mixed young people in care, identity emerges through variables made in and through connection with others; carers, peers, family and that these processes of race making inform subsequent cultural practices and the social relations brought about through them in specific places.

Amma's fostering experiences have led to her sense of dislocation; she traverses boundaries of race, class, culture and geography, continually moved on informed by the inappropriate nature of placements. Amma's transience has an additional consequence of risk, aside from dislocation. As she traverses an array of foster homes she is made vulnerable through her dislocation and reduction in social worker contact.

Care Risks

> Amma: I call auntie Pearl 'mum' sometimes, because I forget which one, all the time that I used to call people mum like Maria. She was a foster carer, but um she abused us while we were in foster care and then she got arrested and then we got moved. [26]
> Fiona: How long were you with her?
> Amma: 18 months
> Fiona: What was she doing?
> Amma: Hitting us, I remember she had this party and me and my sister, I was crying because I wanted her because she said she would read us a story and then she didn't so I was crying and she did that (she holds her hand flat over her mouth) held her hand over my face and I started to bleed and then I was in this room and there was cameras on me and I had to wear this thing here and they interviewed me and she had fostered six children
> Fiona: Had she abused you all?
> Amma: Not my baby sister though, she was her favourite, but Donna got hit with wooden spoons.

Among the consequences of Amma's transience is her greater susceptibility to abuse and poor quality foster care. Abuse is a long-standing and widespread issue in residential care homes and the move toward foster homes was partly as an outcome of abuse scandals;

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[26] Amma later received criminal compensation as the carer was found guilty of abuse and banned from fostering children.

foster care was thought to minimise the risk of abuse. Attention to abuse is more often focused on the care home and increasingly on the birth family. Instances of child abuse/death in the home of the birth family only make the headlines when associated with a failure of professionals to spot the signs. Culpability often lies with the professionals while parents are said to have been failed by the system designed to protect them and their children. Child protection procedures and even the removal of children at risk of harm do not mitigate deaths at home as the figures have remained constant but they do assuage the public (Ritchie, 2005).

Once children are admitted into care there ceases to be any systematic data collation or evaluation of the risk of care, despite abuse in residential care and foster homes being brought to public attention through inquiries into abuse scandals[27]. There is more focus on the birth family home as a site of abuse. However, global research data on abuse in residential care suggests that 'public care may be a greater risk than remaining in the family' (Ritchie, 2005:3). An American study found that abuse and deaths in foster care appear at three times the frequency of the general population (Nunno & Motz, 2005:3). Once children are in care it appears that concerns over risk of abuse and appropriate parenting minimise due to the rigorous selection and training of foster carers. There is less monitoring and evaluation by social workers, with fewer visits and therefore fewer opportunities for children to discuss issues of abuse that may arise. The Waterhouse (2000) report suggested young people in residential homes and foster care are less likely to report abuse or to have it forwarded to the appropriate authorities. Amma's endurance

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[27] a. John Darby, who ran the Hollydale Children's Home in Catford between 1971 – 1983, was found dead at his home in 2010, just prior to his court appearance on charges including sexual offences and cruelty. It is thought he took an insulin overdose.
b. In 1971 Edward Paisnel was sentenced to 30 years in Jersey for charges of assault and sexual offences. It is suspected he was linked to the child murders at the Haut de la Garenne home.
c. North Wales has the largest ever inquiry into abuse in homes. Allegations of a council cover up and a failure to take complaints seriously led to retrospective court cases and compensation awards for hundreds of victims. Some abusers have been jailed.

of abuse at a foster placement, her failure to report it and the ensuing court case culminating in a criminal compensation award, highlights one outcome of transience through care. The removal of children and young people from the birth family home can result in their greater susceptibility to physical violence, neglect and abuse as the professionals in the system attempt to manage the inherent risks within the institutional crisis of care.

Transience and Resilience

Amma's movement through a series of short-term placements is a direct result of poor placement planning and strict adherence to racial matching practices and its inevitable outcome is transience. As a phenomenon of care experience, transience is reflected in social work training through an emphasis on building resilience among young people in care. The emphasis is put back on the individual to overcome their circumstances. In social work literature resilience is about overcoming the odds, coping with adverse circumstances and making a recovery. Resilience and protective factors are the positive side of risk and vulnerability within the child and within the child's environment (Stein, 2004). Resilience entails moving away from a focus on the problems of the care system toward a focus on the positive aspects of individual children's lives and how some (but not all) children manage to overcome institutional failings in their care experiences. Considerations of intelligence, temperament, and education, in addition to caring adults, good schools, and high expectations, make some children more resilient than others (ibid). Some of these protective factors can be difficult to secure if young people experience transient care live or receive poor quality care. However, a focus on building and relying on the capacity of the young person to build resilience omits an engagement with the very practices that make the concept of resilience a pre-requisite for young people in care. While resilience is an essential life skill, its over application negates poor

practice and burdens children in care with the responsibility for overcoming what can be dire circumstances and over which they have little control.

Living within Narratives of Care

The final image in the sequence makes reference to Amma's immediate future; we are in Greenwich Park, one of her 'historic places', meaning a place she used to visit with her birth family. She wants to get into the children's playground and go on the swing but insists that the main gate is too far to walk to so she begins to scale the fence. Later on, when returning to the car, she is hesitant about going home. She also has a rash all over her face, is complaining that she was unwell yesterday, she has toothache and now tells me she has not eaten lunch and it is after five o'clock. She begins to walk slower and slower while I am eager to at least get back to the car, as the parking time is due to expire risking a hefty parking fine. However, we continue to walk slowly uphill.

> Amma: Now her fiancé is going to move in and I hate him he gets too involved
> Fiona: For example?
> Amma: When auntie Pearl tells me off, he's getting involved in that
> Fiona: He has an opinion
> Amma: And he's going to move in when they get married which is November; they're going to Bahamas
> Fiona: Quite soon isn't it
> Amma: They didn't tell me I had to find out by myself
> Fiona: How?
> Amma: I listen I'm not very stupid. I do listen to stuff
> Fiona: Does Pearl know you want to move?
> Amma: I think she does, um suspect it
> Fiona: Um
> Amma: And then like yesterday, I heard her on the phone, no this morning and she goes I can tell social services if I want her to be moved and she'll be moved they'll come straight away and I'm like we're not puppets you know.

Amma is irritable, she is distressed and feeling unwell and I am irritated that she has waited until the end of the session to raise some really tricky issues that she wants to discuss. The transience narrative has a powerful hold over her and she begins to

convince herself that moving out is the only solution and such movement has become normalised through the care system. I get a sense that she is rejecting Pearl before Pearl inevitably rejects her. Pearl's personal life is out of bounds even though it affects Amma who requests information and is told by Pearl "it's none of your business". Amma's exclusion from Pearl's decision making and not being privy to her wedding plans distresses her. Further, she now feels insecure at the placement as the marriage means inevitable changes. She overhears Pearl's conversation with social services about her being moved and suggests, "She is not a puppet". She resents that she can be moved at short notice without her consent upon the say so of the carer. Amma is upset and angry and refuses to leave Greenwich Park.

> Amma: I'm very bored. Please don't take me home, don't take me home
> Fiona: Oh Amma, how about talking to Pearl about how you feel
> Amma: She's going to start an argument
> Fiona: What do you argue about?
> Amma: I do try and do my chores but sometimes yeah I hate it, like yesterday I had to do underneath my bed and everywhere I had loads of mess and had a migraine my throat was hurting and I was hot and sleepy I told her I need an aspirin and she said go upstairs Amma
> Fiona: Were you ill? You have this rash
> Amma: All I want in my whole entire life, if I could have one wish, is to be with my mum
> Fiona: What would you like to say to Pearl to help her understand
> Amma: I don't want to say nothing. She should already understand. That's what foster carers are meant to do, understand
> Fiona: She's human, Amma, not a mind reader
> Amma: I know she thinks everything's normal and its not, in front of the social worker she acts all right and she isn't.

Amma and Pearl's focus on chores may be a distraction from the transition they are experiencing; it is safer for Pearl to blame Amma for not doing chores than to meet her insecurity surrounding her own impending marriage and Ezra moving in. The 'chores' Amma complains about are also an historic issue, as when she was living at home, she says "I missed out on my childhood because I had to do chores, and now I just hate chores" and so her reluctance to clean her room, her private space where she can take

photographs unregulated, now comes under the supervision of Pearl who insists on certain standards of hygiene. The tension and arguments over an issue common to most teenagers – an untidy bedroom – masks the real threat Amma feels over her immediate future and the arrival of Pearl's new husband. The private space of the foster placement exposes Amma to changes in the personal lives of carers and to adaptations in living arrangements, which threaten her – she has come to Pearl for one-to-one care. Pearl is not allowed to foster any other children while Amma lives there in order to focus on giving Amma the one-to-one relationship that has so far been elusive.

Field diary 10/9/08
This scenario has spiralled out of control. There appears to be no immediate support from social services. Amma did not know when she was next seeing her new social worker. I knew I had to make an intervention before I left. It made things worse and brought issues to a head. Amma who seems to have few ways of letting her feelings be known.

Eventually, after much cajoling, we arrive back at the placement but Pearl is not at home. I ring her. We wait. She arrives back with Ezra. Amma refuses to leave the car. Pearl approaches. She asks if Amma has told me what has been happening. I reply that we have spoken. She asks me to come in. I ask Amma if she wants me to. She says yes. The four of us sit in the front room. Pearl and Ezra begin to talk about Amma and the gripes they have about Amma that centre on her reluctance to clean up her room. They say that she has been moody and un-cooperative. I hear them out, all the while thinking that this scenario could be part of any other family's life too, except they appear to be bullying in their manner and are ganging up on her. Ezra in particular is verbally aggressive and crossing the boundary of personal privacy as he talks about Amma's hygiene, manners and character.

I suggest there may be others problems bothering Amma, such as the wedding and that maybe we could talk about their plans? Amma sits looking down at the floor. I ask

Amma if she wants to say anything to Pearl. Silence. I suggest it is a good opportunity for her to speak. She does not address my point and instead refers to Pearl and Ezra's complaints. The elephant in the room continues to sit in the corner, un-remarked upon. She begins to say that she felt sick yesterday and couldn't do her chores. She says that she does try to clean her room and keep it tidy. They retort that her efforts are not good enough. Amma leaves the room and goes upstairs. There is a pause and I suggest I go up. However, they continue to talk at me and by the time I excuse myself moments later and follow Amma upstairs, I hear a loud thudding noise. When I get upstairs to her room and find her window wide open. She has jumped from the first floor. I look out but she has gone.

Field Diary 15/09/2008 Pearl called to say that I shouldn't come this afternoon as Amma was moving out that evening. Her mum rang social services to complain that Amma is being mistreated! Her mum remains the only consistent figure after all these years of care, she still wants her, with all her faults she is still better than any carer they have given her.

I call later that evening to see if Amma has returned. Pearl says the police are looking for her. They find her later that night at her mum's house, hiding in a tent in the back garden. Pearl tells me she is sorry the placement is breaking down and that she has been asking for respite care for months but is receiving very little support from the social worker as they go from one crisis to the next. I make an arrangement to visit Amma.

Toward the end of the research Amma began to have increased supervised contact with her Mum who wanted her back home. They were in touch via email, MSN, and mobile phone – all disallowed by social services. Social workers cannot regulate contact between children and parents with the increase in personal forms of communication. This constitutes a new challenge for social workers. The young people are obliged to tell their

social workers if they have contact with a parent through email, telephone or text – Amma does not and the contact is unregulated.

I spoke to Amma on the telephone, she is okay about moving. She is sure she will stay at the same school and in South London. She seems happy to be moving on. I asked when I could visit her. She retorted by asking when the research was finishing? Maybe she's had enough, yet another transition in which people disappear and she will now meet another set of professionals to support her journey. I attempt to see her twice and she cancels both times.

Amma was placed with a local family she knew and she was quite happy there for several months. However, she shared the placement with two sisters who had been with the family for several years and the family were moving toward permanence with the girls. Amma was sandwiched between the girls in age. The sisters' social worker and the neighbouring local authority objected to Amma's presence in the placement as they argued three girls were too close in age. The carers insisted that they could cope with all three girls and Amma seemed to be thriving. However, the local authority offered an ultimatum to the carers; choose which placement to continue with. Amma was moved on from the placement to an inexperienced foster family, where she regularly ran away, she has since moved on again, and is now living with another carer; her fifteenth foster placement over the course of five years.

Conclusion

This chapter examined how the camera became a key methodological tool that excavated how family and belonging was understood in relation to transience through care

placements. The censorship to the camera's intrusion was through the physical boundaries of belonging placed on young people by carers in their placements.

How Amma negotiated belonging was coerced through her exclusion from her foster placement leading to nostalgia for her birth family, culture, community and significant places. Her use of culture and geographical place located her connections to family and were reminiscent of narratives of diaspora. One way to think about her experience was through the relationship between diaspora and exile. Two arguments were made in the context of Amma's care experiences. Firstly, discursive repertoires of racial and ethnic matching lead to excessive transience. Secondly, whether the model of child removal and care is fit for purpose within its current crisis.

The reality of a carer shortage and matching practices suggested that mixed young people would be placed with white carers. These carers must be supported in offering high quality care, rather than moving young people through a series of short-term white carer placements. Greater understanding and support of both white birth mothers and white carers of mixed children and young people can lead to effective and permanent families. Mixed young people are not ethnically matched because the small pool of BME carers is just about adequate to meet the needs of young people in care with two black parents. Acknowledgement that white carers can make adequate families for mixed young people could ensure stability and reduce the risks of transience witnessed in Amma's care experience. The risks of care to Amma through removal, separation from her siblings and transience resulted in physical abuse. The effect of transience on her ability to make and break attachments and sustain relationships was witnessed during the research in how she dealt with problems and the ease with which our attachment was severed.

The second argument this chapter made was that the notion of care for the purposes of saving children from poor parenting needs evaluation. There is no doubt Amma's lone mother needed support, she had four children under the age of five, was living in poverty on benefits and was unable to care for the children. However, the large size of the sibling group meant they had to be split up in order to fit into the nuclear foster family. The benefits of sibling relationships and the ecology of the family in relation to how social capital is built are undermined by splitting large sibling groups. European claims for social pedagogy and small group home care could have facilitated greater stability for the children and more support for the mother. Such homes offer a holistic approach and support the whole family rather than only removing the children. The former Labour government initiated a series of pilots currently being run in English children's homes and these are due to be evaluated for further funding in 2011. Has care saved Amma? Or has it presented her with an additional set of problems that are a consequence of a failing care system, which struggles to meet the needs of young people?

Mixed young people in care who experience such transience are less likely to become successful care leavers as their capacity for resilience is diminished, their attachments broken and their movement leads to a sense of dislocation. The following chapter examines how leaving care was negotiated through mixedness and gender in order to build social capital in the absence of family networks and peer support.

Chapter 7: Lucy's Space: Mixedness and Leaving Care

Lucy is entering a specific phase of care as she prepares to leave semi-independent accommodation and move into her own flat, which she will share with her daughter Ocean, aged 20 months. Care leavers are one of the most vulnerable groups in society and outcomes-based research suggests they are more likely than other young people to enter prison, experience homelessness and unemployment. Young women care leavers are highly likely to become young mothers. Little is known about how care leavers successfully manage to live full and independent lives and the strategies they use in order to do so. This chapter considers how Lucy manages the process of leaving care and how this is inextricably linked to her mixedness, gender, (hetero) sexuality and her appearance. Further, that her lived experience of mixedness and desire for social legitimacy is a key strategy in how Lucy builds social capital in order to make a successful start to independence.

Pen Portrait

I met Lucy when she was living in semi-independent accommodation in Catford, where she had lived for six months. She was bidding on properties through a local housing association and wanted to move out of Catford to somewhere quieter. Her flat was clean and well organised, filled with toys and clothes for Ocean. I respected her efforts at parenting. She began to ask my advice and confide in me. Lucy is a full-time mum to Ocean aged 20 months. I experienced this research relationship as demanding of my time and energy as Lucy rang me regularly, wanting me to visit but she was not always reliable.

Lucy's parents are both Jamaican. She describes herself as black but her referral from social services states she is mixed race. Lucy came into care because of domestic violence. She has five stepbrothers who were also in care. She lives near her maternal family and is in contact with her parents on her terms and she lives in close proximity to her large extended family.

I got on well with Lucy; she was the eldest of the participants and was keen to tell me stories from her experiences of care. She was helpful in enabling me to understand how care was structured. Through some of the issues Lucy raised I was able to highlight areas for specific attention among the other participants.

Building Independence

Social capital is a term that, although contentious can be theorised in a number of ways to describe 'The values that people hold and the resources that they can access, which both result in and are the result of collective and socially negotiated ties and relationships' (Edwards, et al., 2003:2). While it might be expected that young people would first form these ties with family, young people in care and care leavers are often both physically and psychically separated from these links or trust has been broken and relationships are precarious and unstable. As co-operation, reciprocity and trust are named as key moral categories of social capital (ibid) it is less likely that care leavers find such qualities among family members. Lucy makes social capital through the means at her disposal. Due to the conceptualisation of mixedness, gender and sexuality her opportunities for building social capital are enhanced. In addition to building social capital though mixedness and through sexual relationships Lucy is further able to secure capital through motherhood.

During my initial conversations with Lucy she spoke about criminality and danger, all events, which took place on nearby council housing estates. I thought the stories were fabrications and questioned how Lucy, who appeared so calm and settled, could be so involved with violence. All the events she narrates have happened and were reported in the press and media but I remain uncertain of her role in the stories as she claims it; whether she is as involved and if she has such close relationships to the people at the centre of her stories. However, the status of her narratives as truth accounts is irrelevant. It is their pertinence as a topic that offers an opportunity to examine how Lucy understands her identifications through her narrative. Such narrative co-production is useful in highlighting not only the content of the story but also why the story is told.

The analysis of the interview as both a resource and topic shows the value of the council estate as a symbolic representation in how Lucy understands and chooses to share her life narrative. She presents the council estate as a place of fear, vulnerability and danger. During our initial meetings, she told three stories all centred on the estate. The fourth story, which centres on her first meeting with Rick, also features the estate.

> Lucy: That girl has done a runner; she left London. He broke up with her and next thing you know petrol poured through the door, only one exit on the 5th floor the kids couldn't get out or anything.
> Fiona: How many children were in the house?
> Lucy: So we got back. Six kids. We saw so many police. We stayed there for 3 nights waiting. He thought he saw her a couple of months back in a club but as he went through the club she disappeared. I had a big a fight with her outside the studio, them times I was a little bitch, the girl must have went for my face, I threw her against the wall, me and her went through the window together. The police got called and they hauled me off her. I calmed down so the girl spat in my face. I had handcuffs on and I just flew at her and fly kicked her in her face. She was obsessed with him he couldn't even go toilet by himself. The girl started stalking him. This girl knew we had been friends since 7 yrs old. She thought we were doing a ting.

The first story of the estate Lucy tells is of her enduring relationship with a friend who lost his family in a fire and who she says is now a godfather to Ocean, Lucy's daughter. She met him when she used to sing and he was a rapper; they performed together. Lucy considers the space of the estate as partly responsible for the kids not being able to escape the fire started at the flat, as there was only one exit on the fifth floor. My interest in this version is whether Lucy's representation of herself in the past and the present were two strategies she was using to build a specific persona in the context of our interviews.

A week later Lucy narrated the second story of the estate and again violence is the theme. She begins talking about two murders on the Milford Towers Estate in Catford. She is related to one of the victims and mourns her loss as they were close in age and grew up

together. The other, Wesley, was a friend. Again the safety of the estate, through its physical space and its ability to trap its inhabitants into vulnerability and danger, is a strong theme.

Fiona: Do you think that what happened to her would not have happened if cameras were there, to see it, to stop it?
Lucy: Nah, because he grabbed her, but he done it devious by grabbing her from the phone box and took her up the back way, it's stupid the police and the community can't see that them young black mums are at risk. They got ber bars on their doors to keep people out man
Fiona: I've never been there what's it like?
Lucy: There are five levels and four staircases untold things can happen, basically three houses and one balcony. The lifts hardly work, you need cameras on them stairs to watch who is coming in that block.

The role of the estate in Lucy's narrative continues to centre on danger; this time through how gender invites a greater vulnerability to risk of crime. Although her relative did not live on the estate, she was in its proximity when she was kidnapped and murdered. This event causes Lucy to worry about other young, black women and mums on the estate who she feels are vulnerable to crime and in need of protection. She is involved in a campaign to improve lighting, add CCTV cameras and to increase surveillance on the estate in order to deter criminal activity, or at least identify the perpetrators. The safety campaign run by Lucy's family is raising the problems of the estate, which the family claim Lewisham Council has ignored over the years. The family argues that the campaign forces Lewisham to take responsibility for what has become neglect leading to a crime-ridden area. The third story centres on her friend Wesley.

> Fiona: So your friend who was attacked, if there was a camera it would have been seen?
> Lucy: Nah they put the gun in the bin took the balaclava off and put it in the bin, the boy in court was no more than fifteen that shot Wesley
> Fiona: Did someone older tell him to do it?
> Lucy: Must have been. A fifteen-year-old boy isn't just going to do that. It was all over a dog you know, Wesley's dog, that's how sick people are, killing black people for their things
> Fiona: They wanted to steal his dog
> Lucy: The guy wanted Wesley's puppy a pit bull, a blue one, they're worth over £600. That's all they killed him for.

Lucy's acquaintance, Wesley, was murdered on the estate for his dog: an expensive blue pit bull terrier, prized for its ferociousness. Many so called 'dangerous dogs' are kept as status symbols among the poor but they also serve another poverty-driven function as they are kept for protection from violence. In this instance the dog was so highly prized as to be the causal factor in Wesley's murder. Lucy's narrative re-asserts that the young people she knows who live on or near the estate are not protected from violence, crime or death. The poverty, neglect and poor security led to the estate being neglected and failing to protect its inhabitants as well as housing those who pose a danger to the surrounding communities. Lucy's narrative opens up a discursive space to examine how unregulated space is constituted through danger, fear and death. The value of particular types of bodies is relegated in specific spaces and that value is measurable through attention to in/visibility.

Lucy's social positioning as poor, a care leaver, female and mixed, living in a geographical location with high levels of crime and violence, make social capital difficult to construct. Her peer networks are unstable, as the circumstances in which she lives offer no guarantees of mortality or longevity of relationships. It is known that young people actively create social capital across social and family networks and across their ethnic and cultural identities (Reynolds, 2009) to use social capital for their own ends (Helve &

Bynner, 2007). However, research findings with young people in gangs by Briggs (2009) suggest that young people can make social capital within social and peer group networks as they exhibit autonomy over their lives, solve conflicts and cope with uncertainty en route to adulthood. However, the trajectory of decision-making, taking responsibility for their lives and constructing their biography is less clear-cut. Lucy's specific biography and the relationships she has with family and peers suggest that strategies and opportunities to build social capital are markedly reduced.

In summary, Lucy's narrative production centres on her relationships to other young people and heavily features violence, vulnerability and death. Her relationships with her peers are curtailed by murder. These happen on neglected council housing estates, which Lucy argues are spaces in which vulnerability is high and a causal factor in how specific types of bodies and the values attached to them are acted upon. Those who are poor, black or female become more likely to be victims of crime. Even keeping a dangerous dog is not enough to stall the violence. The lack of police protection, surveillance technologies and the architecture of the building place the inhabitants at risk. Beyond the violence and the death of her peers, the role of the estate became one way to further examine how Lucy's own interaction within space is a mediation signified by the value of specific types of bodies and the social hierarchies attached to them. Lucy's fourth story places her in the space of the council estate as she negotiates the presence of others and manages her own body safely in what she understands to be dangerous territory.

Space, Vulnerability and Mixedness

> Lucy: When I left Mottingham that's when I met Rick.
> Fiona: How did you meet him?
> Lucy: You know what it wasn't even funny. I was in Hackney yeah, it was summer and I was in Hackney and all the girls had their shorts on and their vest tops and we all had flip flops on, walking round the estate and he must have

driven round in his car music blasting out and everyone turned round and looked at him and all of a sudden he must have drove round the block and I thought what's this man doing? He come out the car, come right up to me and grabbed my hand and goes can I talk to you? I say, yeah what's up? He goes can I talk to you in private. The next thing you know, he took my number and I took his. He said ring me when you want yeah. I said all right. I never rang him for about five months. I see him again. He said how come you didn't ring? I said I lost your number. He said no you haven't. I said yeah I did, sorry. Next thing you know he turned round and says you want to go out for something to eat. We went out for lunch, went out for everything yeah. Then I found out I was pregnant. I didn't want to tell him but he guessed. I was being sick in the morning and he goes I'm taking you doctors. We went to the hospital. They goes do you want the good news or the bad? The woman goes, you're pregnant and we looked at each other and he goes you happy and I slapped him and goes you fucking bastard.

Lucy's understanding of space is also informed by her care experiences. She was in care for over nine years. During this time she was moved through over eighteen foster and residential children's homes before finally arriving, at the age of sixteen, in semi-independent accommodation positioned close to the Hackney council estate where she met Rick. The words Lucy uses in the narrative signify a sense of fear of the unknown as he gets out of the car and she questions his motives. He grabs her hand. She takes his number but does not call him. She is disinterested and it is only when they meet again five months later that they begin dating. The narrative density signals that "lunch and everything" leads to pregnancy. This phrase signifies both the speed of dis/connection of a transient relationship. Within the space of the estate a specific set of practices emerge, underpinned by understandings of space as the site of expressions for bodies that perform specific practices to produce social relations.

Place invokes social relations that are both a creation and production of those who inhabit it and move through spaces. Specific spaces inform how people interact with one another across social hierarchies. These social hierarchies of relationships are structured, in this instance, through the meanings of the racial and sexual categories of male and female, mediated by class and bounded within spaces of danger and vulnerability. The

enclosed classed space of council housing, as a site of poverty and government neglect, has its own laws and regulations over usage and can reveal oppressive practices through the negotiation of sexuality and gender.

The urban housing estate is a domain subject to attention due to its propensity to become a ghetto and a no-go zone to police and authorities, still somewhat true in the case of Milford Towers. This image has receded since the 1985 Broadwater Farm riots in which the residents' (young, black and male) response to the police presence was a fatality. Council housing estates are places controlled by men and the current postcode wars reflect the ownership over poor urban areas. Young men are unable to encroach on another gang's territory without fear. This is not to suggest that women are absent from gang membership, simply that the association with men as primary subjects in and of such spaces has been the topic of more attention. How I interpret Lucy's understanding of space previous to her meeting Rick is through how space controls risk and vulnerability and how the council estate is a place, which conceals danger and death through lack of protection and surveillance.

Certain types of men are able to move through estates more easily than others. Rick is the man on the estate who is able to move freely and become invisible because of the power he wields through his age and status, which (in an environment where black men die young) is valued. He is seen and highly visible but what he is able to do remains 'unseen' by others, in a metaphorical sense. He is feared by women for his history of sexual assault, kidnap and rape of minor/s and revered by men for his power and his wealth. Rick is divested of race; as a black man on the estate his power to move through the geography is unhampered by other men; blackness, money/status and age are valuable on the estate. The social relations Rick enters into with Lucy are mediated

through unregulated space, through the value and visibility of particular bodies and how some bodies remain in/visible in relation to the status they acquire through what becomes valued in specific spaces. What is negated and under-valued more widely in social life often becomes of greater value in spaces that are marginal within wider social relations.

Doreen Massey (1994) claims that all social identities, social categories, and hierarchies articulate, in some way, with place and are routed through discourses such as race, gender, and class. Nassy Brown (2005) further extends this to suggest that 'place, local and global are not abstract, objective, neutral spatial constructs. Rather, the particular ways in which they get invoked and naturalized – both textually and in actual social life – are directly implicated in the subject positions we know as gender, race, and nation' (ibid:242). The estate becomes a site of power negotiable through gender and race. The structuring of Lucy's position in relation to Rick's is through how the values of their bodies are acted upon and this is underpinned by in/visibility. Such freedom of movement without being visible is theorised by Puwar (2004) through attention to in/visibility of bodies. Puwar, pays attention to the white male body in spaces in elite institutions of power as it acts upon the presence of black female bodies. Invoking constitutive boundaries can apply to raced bodies (in places not usually associated with hegemonic understandings of power through place) and shift attention to the intersection of race, gender and sexuality.

> 'Processes of invisibility and visibility help us to understand the nuanced dynamics of subtle forms of exclusion as well as the basis for differentiated inclusion…they have a social position in (occupational) space that is tenuous, a contradictory location marked by dynamics of in/visibility'. (Puwar, 2004:58)

When a body is empty of its gender or race it becomes invisible and its privilege as normative is to be seen without corporeality and this is how white male bodies are conceptualised. Puwar (2004) claims that the relationship between space and bodies is characterised by a constellation of social practices and behaviours that permit and deny particular types of bodies. Social spaces are not blank and open for anybody to occupy. While all bodies can enter, certain types of bodies are natural occupants of specific positions. Some bodies have the right to belong but others trespass in accordance with how space and bodies are imagined – they are out of place not being the somatic norm; they are 'space invaders'. (2004:8) Women in public spaces that have been designated male spaces are abject and constitute space in ways that embody their gender and sexuality making them highly visible.

Male spaces that are also bounded by class can be sites neglected by wider social mores or are sites marked by the dominance of men who can act without scrutiny. When women negotiate these spaces they can be routinely reminded of their embodiment through wolf whistling, sexual remarks and chatting up or other practices that mark the body as gendered and exclude it on that basis. The presence of Lucy and her girlfriends walking through the estate in "flip-flops, shorts and vest tops" defines the boundaries of who can pass through the space and be in/visible. The contentious issue of whether women wearing revealing clothes invite sexual advances is much debated in legal and social discourse. Clothes signify the performance of one version of adolescent, heterosexual femininity. Lucy's account of her presence on the estate highlights what has become the norm for the estate, which is the right of men to inhabit the space freely. The body of young women on the estate is not the somatic norm, they are of the space but not constitutive of its limits; rather they draw its boundaries. The young women act back upon the estate through appearance, gender and sexuality and expose its male

constitution through a performance coerced through how others understand and act upon their gendered (hetero) sexuality.

> 'What constitutes an adolescent girl – the version that constructs who she is seen as and who she can be – links her in a variety of ways to her body, in terms of becoming the object of sexual positioning as the recipient of a visual definition of self' (Frost, 2001:81).

The social relations of the estate and the visible materiality of the young women's bodies, define them as the sexual objects of male attention. The adolescent gendered body makes an impact through its materiality and visibility in public spaces; this is extended through attention to the visual grammar of race to take account of who is the object of the gaze and who gazes. Lucy is the object of Rick's gaze as the most sexually appealing. Why she is the most appealing has its basis in the social construction of categories through visible difference (Lucy appears mixed and passes as mixed) and the active nature of race making sustained through attention to the performance of the gendered body.

Shades of Beauty

Theorising the experiences of black women entails acknowledging that what is considered feminine and beautiful continues to structure opportunities due to skin colour, hair texture and features. Although analyses of the black subject reject the biological essentialism of identity (Gilroy, 1993) and argues for blackness as a socio-political and cultural construction, essentialism continues to inform everyday practices of race making. This research data reveals that in an everyday way 'skin, hair and features' matter; they constitute belonging more so than the fragmented, fluid subjectivity of position prevalent among post-modern theorising of the subject. Lucy's mixed appearance (despite her black heritage) and her being chosen by Rick as the *one* is no coincidence. What is acceptable as beautiful and (hetero) sexually attractive among black

women remains within an 'essentialist construction of black womanhood' signified by hair length and texture; skin shade and parentage (Weekes, 1997:114). Definitions of beauty make whiteness the norm and self-effacing practises among dark skinned black and Asian women such as skin bleaching and hair straightening offer evidence that heterosexual desirability has its roots in white European beauty ideals.

Lucy's cultural heritage is Jamaican yet her skin, hair and features suggest mixedness and she passes as mixed due to misrecognition, which is a common aspect of the lived experience of mixedness. Jamaicans acknowledged their mixed heritage when they achieved independence in 1962; the leaders chose the motto 'Out of Many One People'. This motto reflects the history of an island that has been mixing race for centuries and acknowledges that nation rather than colour is paramount in understanding identity. Not that mixedness can be solely understood or recognised through visible appearance as racial difference, rather that the constitutive elements of mixedness are ambiguous. The elements are not routed solely through appearance or through cultural practices. Such ambiguity is one way to understand the lived experience mixedness confers and I return to this theme later in this chapter.

> 'My very existence demonstrates there is a slippage between the seemingly discreet categories black and white. It is at this point of slippage that we can clearly see that race is not a biological fact but a social construct … creating and maintaining, a racial identity takes a lot of effort on my part, and on the part of others. Race is not an act of imagination. It is a very demanding verb'. (Scales-Trent, 1995:3)

Race is a sign of visible difference read off the body that serves as its text and its meaning appears fixed by a genetic code. The visible racial differences attached to skin are signifiers believed to be indicators of unseen qualities such as morality or sexuality and can be said to constitute an inner schema embedded in DNA. Race is one of many

constructs that signify difference and is relational to other variables such as gender, sexuality, location, and class; such signifiers are referred to as sliding (Cohen, 1994). Race is made among people to assign others with identities that somehow characterise them through a bodily schema and further define the social construction of categories. In practice Lucy is tied to her body in ways that signal an identification through her skin, in which her gender and sexuality is mobilised and read within specific contexts which carry meaning and are made accessible through discursive constructions of race making and the discourse surrounding the sexuality and sexualisation of mixed women.

Gendering Mixedness

The historical place and role of how mixed women in particular became tied to their bodies emerged during American slavery and has an enduring legacy seen in popular culture in Hip-Hop. During American slavery the sexual exploitation of black and mixed women was justified through racial classification, a classification that denigrated black and mixed female bodies. It was also a necessary tool of slavery in that it reproduced slaves. As American slavery endured through four centuries, mulattos, quadroons and octoroons[28] swelled the ranks of slaves and ensured a steady supply of labour. Increasing numbers of mulatto, quadroon and octoroon slaves posed a dilemma for the continuation of slavery, as they were white skinned. However, legislation was passed and the 'one-drop law'[29] asserted that, despite white skin, a social classification of black would ensure the labour supply. The hierarchy of difference between blacks and whites, was buffered by this growing population and occupants of this new generation of mixed people were afforded greater privileges – house slaves as opposed to field slaves for example – but this made mulatto women more vulnerable to rape within plantation

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[28] Mulatto is one black parent and one white, quadroon is one mulatto parent and one black parent and octoroon is one mulatto parent and one white parent.
[29] One drop of black blood led to a black classification

homes (Reuter, 1918). The intersection of sexuality and race mixing led to the female mulatto body as symbolic of sexual exploitation. Every mulatto was proof that the colour line had been crossed and in this regard, they were symbols of rape and concubinage (ibid). This socio-historical context of rape and concubinage, the ownership of the mixed female body and its association with sexuality, still endures.

The ghosts of slavery; those ideas, understandings, underpinnings and representations, the things unsaid but acted upon, the things not understood but practiced and embedded in social relations have their remnants in contemporary culture. For example, during slavery, mulatto women held social events for white men to meet other mulatto women. These events were known as 'Quadroon Balls'. The aim of the events was for the women to secure financial support from white men in exchange for long-term sexual services – a practice known as placage. This racial dynamic continues to influence contemporary and popular culture. For example, Halle Berry, Oscar winner for her role in the film, *Monsters Ball* (!), plays a woman who exchanges being taken care of financially in return for a sexual relationship. Halle's Oscar win for her role confirms that her mixedness is well suited to the demands of mainstream American audiences in which the degradation of mixed women's sexuality feeds into the marketplace as a commodity. The social relations that emerge through the female mixed body are discernable through historic remnants and the traces have consequences for race making in contemporary popular and cultural life.

> **Field Diary 5/5/09**
> The intersection of the category mixedness and woman becomes sexualized and exploited by men and women alike and my position as a mixed woman, understanding my own experiences and watching and documenting Lucy's life brings attention to how her life and her experiences are exploited by this process and how ugly it feels to document that.

The prevalence and preference for mixed race women to appear as sexually provocative dancers in Hip Hop videos; known as 'video hoes' has been documented by Sharpley-Whiting (2008). An article written by Searle (2010) refers to an interview Kanye West did with *Essence* Magazine in which West made the following comments: 'If it wasn't for race mixing there'd be no video girls . . . Me and most of our friends like mutts a lot. Yeah, in the hood they call 'em mutts' (West, 2006). The association here is that despite calling mixed women 'mutts', he acknowledges their status as trophy girlfriend as light-skinned women convey social status whilst at the same time are described as lecherous (Searle, 2010). The position of light skin as higher status, coupled with a derogatory response to evidence of race mixing, degrades the bodies of mixed women through an overt focus on sexuality. The 'mixed race girl syndrome' [30] whereby men desire light skinned women, is fed by discursive constructions of what light skin means – status and sexual voracity – which informs how young women are able to construct their identifications in the presence of men working within these configurations of raced, sexed discourses and practices.

British popular culture leans heavily on African American cultural exports. Whether or not Rick was playing the Jay Z track as he cruised the council estate looking for 'mutts' and his projection of a specific masculine self feeds into these models of social practices and social relations. Mixed women are sexualised in different ways to both black and white women and this specificity impacts on identification and the sexualisation of adolescent girls. On a macro scale, these discourses and underpinnings do the work of race by actively creating and maintaining difference through prisms of popular culture and socio-political history re-worked at each exploitative stage through the intersection of gender, race mixing, mixedness, place, time and sexual relationships.

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[30] Little Baby Jesus, performed in 2010

In summary, Lucy's 'mixedness' is read through her ambiguity and subsequent misrecognition upon which the intersection of sexuality and gender act back within dominant understandings of the social hierarchies of bodies on the estate. The estate is situated near to the children's home and as the girls from the home meander through the estate they become vulnerable to sexual exploitation. It is known that care facilities are targets for pimps who can lure girls into prostitution (Nash & Cusick, 2004)[31]. This specific matrix of identifications of mixed, female, teenage and care leaver suggests that the lack of adult supervision and poor regulation of public spaces and the position of homes near council estates increases vulnerability and sexual exploitation.

Social Legitimacy through Culture, Gender and Sexuality

Lucy ensures that her ambiguity and passing as mixed is made secure through maintaining race by invoking specific practices that confer social legitimacy, despite her being on the margins of both mixedness and blackness. Social legitimacy is a queried aspect of the lived experience of mixedness that cannot be assumed. Lack of social legitimacy and misrecognition often coerces a cultural performance since mixedness alone does not offer social status or ontological security (this was part of the reflexive discussion in the methodology chapter). What work does Lucy do to claim her black heritage, to embody it in ways that activate and mobilise race – as Scales-Trent (2005) claims, to 'create and maintain' race? Lucy expresses and performs her Jamaican heritage in order to claim through cultural practice, that which is denied through visible difference. She is too far away from a common understanding of blackness to be black and too far away from a common understanding of whiteness to be white. Thus Lucy makes race matter by creating and maintaining a recognisable identity in which she

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[31] Nash and Cusick (2004) Report 'Sex industry and Sexual Exploitation in Lewisham' found that residential care homes were targets for the formation of a network of young girls being abused through prostitution by a man known as Martin Malone. His accomplices included an employee from Lewisham Social Services.

expresses her blackness via a cultural performance. These gendered and cultured performances are sexualised and build social legitimacy through making specific choices of heterosexual dating partners.

In one observed interaction between Lucy and her current black British Jamaican boyfriend, Ron, which took place on the street, I recognise Lucy as Jamaican through her use of patois. Patois is a hybrid language of the Caribbean, which varies according to the colonial influences of the islands, be that French, English, Spanish etc. The topic under discussion between Lucy and Ron was the re-appearance of Rick, Ocean's father, sitting in his car and watching Lucy's flat at six in the morning; possibly checking for the presence of another man. Lucy seems to enjoy delivering a commentary on Rick's past criminal activity and spells in prison. Ron seems like a nice guy who has worked in the local DIY shop for over ten years. At stake were two versions of masculinity, which Lucy fuels with a particular form of heterosexual femininity to develop feelings of fear, sexual jealousy and to possibly test/witness a vile form of masculinity. Lucy uses Jamaican patois and sexually explicit language, including aggressive and violent descriptions of things that Rick was responsible for. Lucy's performance, in the context of her sexual relationship, anchors her social legitimacy through cultural practices and her performance, to mobilise and maintain race. Lucy is Jamaican and she can be ambiguous as Jamaicans are by their very nature, a mixed society but they also have a firmly entrenched stratification, which has its basis in skin shade. The question that needs asking is 'How does the intersection of both a heterosexual and gendered identification inform the basis upon which social relations are mediated through specific spaces?

Butler's work on performance and gender claims that masculinity and femininity are 'scripts, which animate by the work of the body' (1993:111). Butler's premise is that there

is no essence to gender, it is not a fact but is always in the process of becoming. Our gender identities are an accomplishment, an act, constituted through performance and 'renewed, revised and consolidated through time' (ibid). The acts are not natural but over time they become so through repetition, making them appear natural and giving the illusion of an abiding, gendered self amounting to a set of cultural fictions of what is a real man or real woman. 'The gendered body acts its part in a culturally restricted corporeal space and enacts interpretations within the confines of already existing directives' (Puwar, 2004:80). Bodies act back upon their constitutive elements, for instance the mixed female body constructs itself through discursive repertories of ambiguity, beauty and sexualisation in a local context. Despite the ambiguity of mixedness (which results in passing) and the lack of social legitimacy it confers, Lucy acts through a cultural self, rooted in her Jamaican heritage. While out with Lucy we met her maternal Aunt who began to talk about skin tone and hair texture - she expressed that if she were to change her own appearance she would have longer, straighter easier to manage 'good' hair and pointed out that Lucy's hair was perfect. Further, she stated that Lucy's skin tone was almost white rendering the symbolism of skin benign through its non-representation of blackness. The denigration of Lucy's skin tone and the elevation of her hair texture is symbolic of mixedness as a contestable position. As referred to earlier in the literature review the splitting of the body and the symbolic positions of skin and hair are illustrated through Lucy's family positioning. For Lucy the cultural enactment and performance of a cultured and gendered self secures social legitimacy within a valuable and recognisable form within a paradigm of denigration and misrecognition.

Lucy's repertoire of cultural fictions for how she secures ambiguity through culture and gender are a useful strategy for survival as a heterosexual woman living at the boundaries of what it means to be both black and mixed. Within a cultural geography in which

dominant black cultural forms both elevate and denigrate her body through her gender and her appearance, she is able to access an additional resource of Jamaican culture, which secures social legitimacy through recognisable repetition. The purpose of these sexually transient relationships are to anchor social legitimacy as she only chooses to date particular types of men and they offer a source through which she is able to build capital.

In summary, Lucy creates a racialised self, (one somewhat denied through the ambiguity of her mixedness), which grants automatic social legitimacy. She uses cultural practices to perform a specific type of heterosexual self. In doing so Lucy attracts suitable dating partners and such social and sexual relationships enable her greater social legitimacy. The opportunities to perform a heterosexual and ethnic self through the social constructions of mixed women in relation to beauty and sexuality, within socio-political and popular cultural forms, offer Lucy a remarkable strategy to build social capital through dating practices.

Shortly after this observation in the street, Lucy ended the relationship with Ron as she found out that he had been unfaithful. One afternoon, several weeks later, as I drop Lucy off at her new flat, she spots her friend Janie's partner. Lucy is coping well in her new flat. She has also started her third sexual relationship in less than six months. I question the value of these relationships and begin to examine how Lucy is coping with independence and the networks she utilises to do so.

Social Capital, Family and Peer Networks

> Lucy: They're going to Janie's
> Fiona: Is her partner African?
> Lucy: Yeah, not something I would go for

> Fiona: Not your type?
> Lucy: Hell no
> Fiona: They look quite handsome though
> Lucy: Nah man, I don't go for African
> Fiona: Where is Jerome from?
> Lucy: Jamaica. His mum's from Jamaica, his dad from Barbados, he isn't no yardie and he isn't no African. I like him the way he is. I wouldn't change him.

Jerome is Lucy's new partner; they met in Catford and have been together for several weeks although she has known him for several months. Lucy's choice of sexual partners are older, black British men who constitute part of her strategy to maintain social legitimacy and through which she is further able to build and maintain social capital. Her sexual relationships are important as they offer her the capital building resources that are absent on both her peer network and her family relationships. She refuses to date African men and the long-standing hostility from Caribbean people towards Africans makes them an unlikely choice as a way to secure legitimacy or social capital. (The hyphenated words African-Caribbean often fails to acknowledge this disjuncture or plays with the split and re-connection of what has been an antagonistic relationship). The recognition that she only dates black Caribbean British men enables her to retain her sense of Jamaican cultural identity within the networks within which she remains loosely tied and within which she still defers.

It is these networks of family and friends that remain crucial to how she understands and mobilises her heritage and which also underpin her strategies of capital building. It is crucial that her family (despite their failures) like her choice of partner and are not antagonistic toward him. Such antagonism from her family toward any partner she may have would make her position within the family network she continues to value even more tenuous. She regards the networks as informative of how she is able to act. However, she does not use these networks as sources of trust or reciprocity. Lucy holds

the values of her family and peer networks across social ties bound by ethnicity, cultural practices, family history and biography as ways to build social capital. However, because they are unstable she also uses her sexual relationships to maintain capital.

Moving Toward Independence

The process of finding permanent accommodation was through bidding on-line for properties that were becoming available through a housing association. Eventually her bid on a flat about three miles away was successful. An uncle came with her to sign for the flat and collect her keys. As Lucy left semi-independent accommodation to move into a permanent flat, she was juggling utility providers, arranging moving dates, packing, meeting furniture deliveries, putting together flat pack furniture and caring for Ocean. The moving date was continually put back by months as the multitasking overwhelmed her efforts, especially if there was a hiccup in the routine. She said she could not wait to move in but there was some confusion over what she had to do in terms of putting on services and utilities at the flat. Leaving Care Service had offered packing boxes, which we went to collect. When we arrived they told her a staff member was now using the boxes so she was unable to have them. Lucy thought this action was due to the court case for assault against her personal advisor, whom she accused of hitting Ocean. The advisor was currently on suspension. As she began to pack up her possessions she was often reflective about the placements she had lived in and the difficulty, in particular, of being a young, first time mum under close surveillance in a mother and baby home.

Lucy's pregnancy made her subject to close surveillance by social workers because of Rick's conviction for sexual assault and kidnap of a minor. Social workers ultimately put a stop to the relationship as Lucy felt threatened by the fear that Ocean may be taken into care if she continued her relationship with Rick. The cycle of care in families is a

social concern and statistics suggest that parents who have been in care are more likely to be the parent of a child in care. I met one of Lucy's aunts who explained that she had also lived in foster care as a young person. Lucy's cousins, aunts and all five of her brothers had been in care at some point. The majority of adult men in her family, including her dad, had been to prison. The British Association of Adoption and Fostering, estimate that children and young people who have been in care are sixty six times more likely to have their own children taken into care (BAAF, 2010).

> Lucy: They told me I'm going to a mother and baby unit to look after my child, telling me they could decide whether you can have your child or not, out of all these that was the worst place.
> Fiona: How old was Ocean?
> Lucy: Three days old, just born. A lot of girls come there and left without their baby, social services come take their child. I was quite lucky to leave with Ocean, a lot of the girls fell asleep with their babies in the bed social services come and take them.
> Fiona: You did well.
> Lucy: I said you're mad; none of you lot are taking my child off me I'll escape.
> Fiona: What made you different to the other girls?
> Lucy: I was determined I wouldn't let her go through what I went through man, that was madness. So I said you know what, let me just do it and look after her and that's what I done, didn't pay any mind to all them girls just arguing. Them girls lost their children because they decided on using arguments bitching with other girls, saying I fucked your baby father and all this, one of them girls had sex with my daughters' dad.

Statistics on female care leavers' show that approximately 1 in 7 are pregnant or are already mothers (Haydon, 2003). High teenage pregnancy rates have their basis in a number of factors such as limited sex education through missed lessons, early sexual experiences due to a desire for love and affection and increased vulnerability (2003). These factors make it more likely that girls in care and leaving care will enter into sexual relationships earlier. However, pregnancy can be a positive choice for cares leavers with no qualifications; motherhood offers status and maturity, a sense of purpose and direction (2003). Lucy's relationship to her family and friends had the potential to be

renewed through her becoming a mother and offered a potentially meaningful opportunity to build social capital.

Sources of Social Capital

After Lucy moved into the flat she began to see her family as she felt an obligation to Ocean to know her grandparents. Research shows care leavers may often try to establish contact with their birth family as they look for 'answers to their personal histories' (Stein et al., 2005:122). The continuing importance of family links has been highlighted as enabling young people to access and build social capital (Bullock et al., 1993). Motherhood was renewing Lucy's relationships with her family but on her own terms and through a focus on adulthood and independence, not vulnerability to their poor choices and poor parenting. However, her parents were still influential in Lucy's decision-making.

> **Field Diary July 2008**
> Through the process of moving in it made me think about the support and guidance Lucy needed in getting the flat ready and organising stuff – I wondered who would do these things if I was not available?

> Lucy: She (mum) doesn't know my address. I said to her I live somewhere in Catford. I haven't been there yet.
> Fiona: You're the only girl for your mum aren't you? I bet she feels bad she doesn't have a proper relationship with you?
> Lucy: She keeps telling me she wants a relationship with me, I just sit there and laugh at her. I don't need a relationship with her I got my daughter, I don't worry about them man they got their little lives I just leave them to it.

For Lucy there was no relationship to be built with her mum and she preferred to spend her time and energy focused on giving Ocean the care her mum had failed to deliver. Having children and being a parent propels her into adulthood within her family. Lucy

exerts autonomy over her life through independent will such as refusing to let her mum know where she lives. She states "I don't need a relationship with her I got my daughter". In the absence of trust and reciprocity within her relationship with her birth mum, Lucy displaces her need for family onto her relationship with her daughter. It is this role of motherhood and the importance she places on the mother/daughter relationship that enables Lucy to build social capital. She is content with the family she is re-making as it offers the opportunity for purpose and independence. For Lucy to build social capital she has to be in a position where she is able to trust others within mutually beneficial relationships; the challenge is that Lucy has had a series of broken attachments to her family and will not trust them.

> Fiona: You get on well with your dad don't you?
> Lucy: Yeah since my ***** died, yeah, I got close to my family before ***** died I used to hate him, I never used to get on with that man.
> Fiona: How comes
> Lucy: Basically he left my mum when we were kids, so I never grew with him for a certain period of time. Then he came back, out the blue wanting to be dad again. I didn't really know him full well I was like yeah hi and bye.

Her relationship with her dad is somewhat different; despite him being in prison for most of her childhood she felt able to connect with him. Her dad's form of parenting restricts the capital she is able to build through family networks as he places his needs before her ambitions or plans. For example, Lucy is thinking of getting a job and she holds up a yet to be completed application form for work as a Community Support Officer. I know she struggles with literacy so offer to go through the form with her but she refuses. She has made an effort to fill in some details but I feel she is embarrassed and does not want me to see it so she holds it while we talk. Lucy tells me her dad's response to her application to be a CSO was "don't grass me up or come to my yard looking for stuff". Her father gets along with Jerome, a man a similar age to himself –

forty-five. Lucy exhibits a desire to remain within the family but this restricts what she is able to do within her own terms without incurring the disapproval of her father. Lucy considers her limited options of work and her dad's response becomes a way for her to make an alternative choice that does not mean being ostracized (once again) from her birth family.

> Lucy: At the moment I do want my son but not until she is bigger and can walk around a lot more because there is no way I will be pregnant and carrying her and a double buggy not happening. If ever I got pregnant. I would use the sling.
> Fiona: Or longer give yourself a chance to get into your Community Support Officer work. Is it good money?
> Lucy: Yeah, about £16k a year, when Ocean's four, she will be at school and I can work full time and have more money.
> Fiona: Are you looking forward to doing that?
> Lucy: Yeah, but I want my son but I know I would get another girl I wouldn't get a boy. I would like someone for Ocean to grow up with and play with.
> Fiona: What other ambitions have you got, what other things do you want to do?
> Lucy: I want to work. I need to work. I'm going insane just looking after this girl man. I need a life.
> Fiona: You have had two years with her full time.
> Lucy: My life is good, it's quiet, I got my daughter, no arguments, and no men jarring me, that's what I want. I want to see where it goes with me and Jerome, we been there for quite a while now, see what happens.

I encourage Lucy to consider other options and present earning money as an option as I know she sometimes struggles financially as she is claiming benefits. Although she is going 'insane' being a mother, the options for employment are limited because she feels her lack of formal education is a barrier to her getting a decent job. Lucy is against going to college and being in a large group of learners in order to improve her skills[32]. The limitations of her choices are structured by her care experiences and also somewhat determined by the ways she chooses to build social capital through transient relationships, which are sanctioned by her family, and now through motherhood.

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[32] The numerous changes of schools meant she finally refused to return to mainstream education at the age of fourteen and was sporadically educated in a Pupil Referral Unit.

Peer Networks and Mothering

Lucy's two-bedroom flat is in a new build in a much quieter area than where she was living in semi-independent accommodation, offering her the chance to raise Ocean in better conditions. She mentions that some other young mums she knows also live in flats in the block. These relationships could be potential sources with which to build capital across peer networks. However, despite these friendships offering support or childcare, they become a source of frustration as Lucy's parenting is at odds with the parenting of the other mums and this creates a wedge in their relationships. Lucy prides herself on her parenting skills. She gives to Ocean through depriving herself not only of material things but also freedom. For instance, as Lucy rarely leaves Ocean with a baby sitter, she and Jerome have never been on a date. The stories she relates about her neighbours demonstrate her frustration at their lack of parenting skills and lack of interest in their children. For instance her neighbour, a young mum who goes out clubbing weekly, leaves her child at Lucy's overnight. Lucy is fed up with the intrusion and on one occasion while I was there she refuses to open the front door, despite the neighbour calling her through the letterbox. Her friend, Janie, lives downstairs with her partner; they have a one-year-old son with cerebral palsy. Lucy was angry that Janie was not taking him out to stimulate him, nor was she taking him to the baby clinic for his checks. Lucy took me downstairs to meet Janie; the flat was airless, Janie appeared quite depressed and her child was grizzling the entire time I was there. Several weeks later Lucy told me that Janie was pregnant again but had been drinking neat vodka to get rid of the baby. Lucy, who desired a child, thought this was wrong. One day she is at Janie's with Ocean.

> Lucy: I want to move from here you know because the girl downstairs you know she's doing my head in
>
> Fiona: Who? Janie?
>
> Lucy: Yeah me and her got into a mad ruck the other day you know
>
> Fiona: You two have got a love hate relationship
>
> Lucy: You know what? She hit Ocean. I put her through her kitchen door she hit her again, lost her temper with her. She made her fly across the room
>
> Fiona: What's she doing to her son down there
>
> Lucy: I don't even want to know. She hit her and you know what happened, I ended up giving her a black eye, punching her in the mouth.
>
> Fiona: Where were you when it happened?
>
> Lucy: I was in the toilet. She shouted at her and all I see was Ocean flying across the room and she had a red mark across her face

The networks to build social capital are difficult for Lucy to negotiate, as issues of trust and the differences in values and acceptable standards of parenting which complicate capital building. As the Briggs, (2009) research demonstrates young people can make social capital within social and peer group networks but these are not clear-cut. Lucy's peer networks are the other mothers in the block where she lives and the varying standards of parenting are barriers to the creation of positive relationships. These peer networks do not enable trust or reciprocity but rather she feels used and let down by the poor parenting of her friends and neighbours. The judgements she makes about the poor parenting among her friends and neighbours and her own mother's failures enable her to feel a sense of pride in her role. Lucy is building social capital and doing so in remarkable ways that utilise the skills she has learned through her care experiences: adaptability, control over her life within a limited framework and how to parent effectively.

> Lucy: Yeah every morning when I wake up and I feed Ocean and then I take it, I feel sick in the morning last night I was sick as hell, this morning
>
> Fiona: Maybe it was food
>
> Lucy: Nah I didn't eat much last night
>
> Fiona: What have you said to Jerome?
>
> Lucy: I didn't see him last night
>
> Fiona: So he doesn't suspect anything

> Lucy: Nah but he's beginning to because in the morning I've been grouchy. He says you all right? I said yeah I'm cool
> Fiona: Lucy what will you do if you are
> Lucy: Don't know, probably keep it knowing me. I want my son don't I?
> Fiona: are you ready? You're a good mum but another baby how would you manage two babies?
> Lucy: Ocean is getting older so she's starting to do things by herself
> Fiona: She's two

Lucy was not pregnant on this occasion but she did get pregnant within the next two months. During the early stages of her pregnancy her relationship with Jerome went through a bad patch, as she described being moody with him and not wanting him around. She asks him to leave the flat reassuring him that once she was feeling better he can return. He never returns although he supports her by going to the hospital for antenatal appointments. He was there at the birth of their son and spent the first few weeks with them as a family. Several months later Lucy told me that Jerome had developed a serious kidney complaint. He was in hospital and had been in for several weeks. She was able to take their son to visit him at weekends.

As Lucy leaves care for independent adult life her limited choices of motherhood and/or employment are further informed by the remnants of the relationship she has with her birth parents. She makes her decision to be a worker or a mum based upon her care experiences, family experiences and her desire for independence and autonomy but also wants to remain connected to her birth family. Lucy is using her mixedness, gender, sexuality, and fecundity in remarkable and resilient ways to build social capital and to negotiate her place in the world as a care leaver.

This chapter demonstrated that free association interview methods offered opportunities for participants to build their own themes and engaged with insightful ways to explore the role and symbolism of narrative co-productions. The symbolic role of the estate was

a place of vulnerability and danger in Lucy's narrative. The re-telling of symbolic places in narratives and the links made between each account were significant beyond their value as stories. The symbolic role of the estate became a way to understand how Lucy made meaning from and how she used public spaces as she entered the phase of leaving care. Such spaces constituted specific social relations and meanings of mixedness, sexuality and gender. The discursive repertoires of the estate were further constituted through in/visibility of specific types of bodies and embedded in power relations.

Mixedness became examined through embodiment and how this became acted upon by common and popular constructions of the sexualisation of mixed young women. Mixed young women leaving care are made vulnerable to both early sexual maturity and sexual exploitation due to the un-regulated nature of public spaces and the increased freedom from supervision and protection as they move into semi-independent accommodation. Lucy routed her mixedness through both gender and sexuality in unregulated public spaces, which she used as sites for a cultural performance to fix the ambiguity of mixedness. She demonstrated that cultural strategies of performance were engaged to achieve social legitimacy through specific types of social and sexual relationships.

Lucy's particular cultural performance and passing as mixed does two things: firstly, it granted greater social legitimacy as she used recognisable cultural practices routed through her Jamaican heritage and such practices became part of how she elicited social and sexual relationships. Secondly it allowed her to build social capital and feel a sense of stability through relationships, which, although transient, offered opportunities for motherhood in which social capital was further, built and secured.

What Lucy's narrative further suggested is that attention to the physical space inhabited by mixed female care leavers are needed in order to avoid sexual exploitation and building social capital through sexual encounters or transient relationships. Strategies and attention to how young women build capital through mixedness, gender and sexuality suggests that care leaving practices leave girls vulnerable in unregulated social spaces.

Chapter 8: Mixedness: Is it Useful?

This thesis examined how young people made meaning from their foster care experiences and how their lives were structured through understandings of mixedness, which were disseminated through social care policy that informed every stage of foster care planning from care admission through to care leaving. Two research questions framed the data collection and analysis:

- How do young people make meaning from the discursive repertoires of the mixed classification in their care experiences?

And

- In what ways are care experiences structured through understandings of mixedness?

This thesis concluded that practices of foster care that inform the trajectory of care planning for mixed young people lead to adverse care experiences in a number of ways. Foster care admission was the initial point where race was acted upon by social workers, where culture and race were assumed to be one and the same, which determined how the mixed classification became a means to structure experience and also worked to exclude classifications that did not fit the black/white binary common to theorising mixedness. The regulatory processes of care were critiqued as pervasive in young people's lives, reducing their opportunities to experience an ordinary childhood and adolescence. This thesis further examined, through the family album, how the discursive space opened by the process of sorting images raised issues of memory and belonging, and revealed a dissonance in how siblings experienced care. Also explored were the social relationships between young people in care and their birth family, foster carers and social workers – and it also considered how I, as a researcher, became implicated in the lives of the

participants. Specific attention was given to how mixedness was understood in relation to long term fostering and stability of mixed young people in white foster families. The mixed family, as a site for raced, classed and gendered welfare intervention, was explored through its construction and its internal and external narrative, through notions of social legitimacy and visual representation. Following this, the impact of mixedness and the relationship between placement practices and transience was explored, which was further related to how discursive practices and repertoires of race making impacted on how young people made meaning from their mixed classification in the site of care. The nostalgia that arose as an outcome of transience impacted on strategies of belonging to home and family, as well as to notions of stability. Finally, this thesis explored the process of leaving care, which is characterised by outcomes-based research as being particularly problematic period of transition for young people. Leaving care was viewed through the lens of the lived experience of mixedness, along with gender and sexuality, which incorporated notions of passing and ambiguity, and lead to specific types of social relations. It was these social and sexual relations that proved significant in securing independence and building social capital through the opportunities they provided for motherhood. The following sections are organised according to the main findings of the research and endeavour to tease out some of the antagonisms inherent in the crises of the care system and how they impact on the care experiences of young people through the context of mixedness.

Mixed and Matched

The racial classification mixed, in the context of care, is asserted a priori in planning placements for young people. Prioritising race and mixedness in care planning fixes it as static and unchanging variable, and it is this practice of race making that is problematic and at odds with how identity and mixedness is lived and experienced. Identity utilised in

social care is fixed by race, gender and sex, which has a deterministic and psychologising tendency. For instance, young people are understood to have fixed identities determined by their race, ethnicity and cultural practices as well as their class background (class tends to remain static, as the majority of young people were from lower socio-economic backgrounds). The legacy of Association of Black Social Workers and Allied Professionals (ABSWAP) continues to influence how race and culture is understood, and mixed young people in care are ideally placed with Black Minority Ethnic (BME) families. These *ideal* placements are often unavailable due to a shortage of BME foster carers and if these carers were available it is highly likely those placements would go to young people with two BME parents.

White carers were identified as suitable for short-term care for mixed children. As Thoburn (2001) asserted, these placements have always been appropriate for mixed children who tend to come from lone white mother homes. However, these short-term placements have a specific trajectory, demonstrated in Chapter Five, and they are terminated frequently because they are seen as unsuitable for appropriate cultural socialisation. The transience that arises from these placement practices has a pernicious impact on stability. The care lives of Amma and Lucy are characterised by excessive transience through the care system; between them they have had over thirty placements. The discourse, which informed transience, is absorbed by young people who actively negate the value of white carers, as Amma states, "I was with too many white women". Amma's white birth mother was unable to parent and her white carers were also unable to parent; Amma is distanced from her mother and white carers and comes to believe they are not suitable for the job of mothering her. White mothers can and have successfully parented mixed children; but what is permissible in nature is denied in the care system.

Racial identity like any variables, such as class, gender or ethnicity, offer one way to consider the matrix of identifications that young people utilise to construct and make meaning from their circumstances. The answer is neither to exchange one variable for another, nor to add variables in fixed ways to re-consider placement practices for mixed young people in care. The discursive repertories of race making as they impact on care planning also shapes how young people make meaning. For instance, Amma absorbed care policy in such a way that she lost her own sense of identity; she adopted the policy of social services in asserting the racial profile of who would make the best carer, which would be a BME carer, while the worst, in her view, would be a white woman, despite her having a white birth mother. The discursive repertoires of race making in the care system are flawed through their attention to specific social and racial classifications, which fix young people in ways that compete with how mixedness is lived and experienced. Young people in care who desire a life with a foster family often have a greater need for family belonging, warmth and care than for the shackles of racial identity – or any other type of identification.

Previous research with young people asserted that the salience of race is not always a priority and that young people considered other identifications such as gender or sexuality as equally salient Ali (2003), and that race was not necessarily dominant in the lives of mixed people (Root, 1996). While both these positions speak from a deconstructionist approach they are situated and partial. I would suggest that mixed young people in care are situated very differently in relation to the impact and power that race and mixedness has in structuring their lives. In the site of social care race has a symbolic power that grants it status and resources in the battleground where race politics are fought; witnessed in ABSWAP. Young people in care live within a pervasive rhetoric concerned with how raced people are represented and how identity is expressed in wider

social life. While race jostles for position between its deconstruction or abandonment it still matters for specific identifications, and I would argue that mixed young people in care are one of the groups for which race is dominant and has salience in structuring their lives.

Mixedness and Classification

The terrain of mixedness is yet to be settled, there are no real boundaries of classification along ethnic and racial lines, and this is one of the primary problems of definition for mixedness. The diversity within the designation mixed makes it difficult to draw boundaries and, further not all people experience mixedness in the same way. Mixed young people in care are not socialised in the same way as young people in birth families and unlike them young people in care are not protected from the notion of a public/private split in which to claim mixed identity, which Song (2003) suggests is one such strategy of mixedness (albeit one that is not entirely useful if identity fails to be socially recognised). The private identities of young people in care are scrutinised by social workers that then attempt to control how identity can be expressed. For the social worker, judgements about appropriate expression are routed through both visual appearance and cultural practices and performances and are subject to individual interpretation of care policy. The public scrutiny of mixed as a racial identity is judged through how young people appear to look and how they might perform their identity. As the social worker in the methodology chapter suggested "She denies the white side, but you can see it when you look at her". Through the denial of whiteness mixed is understood as a cultural performance, which anchors and legitimates what is an ambiguous racial location. Mixedness is locked into specific ways of being and its ontological status is secured by the expectations of others who rely upon visual signifiers to fix race to the body and reify its expression. The varied expressions of mixed as a lived

experience and not a fixed identity common in wider life can be taken as signs of identity problems which need to be remedied (through my intervention in this instance or though Children and Adolescent Mental Health Service (CAMHS). Young people in care were shaped, defined and restrained by the constitutive boundaries of their mixed classification and how they were able to express their identity; this suggests that the racial classification mixed is over-emphasised and its contestable social location leads to mixed young people becoming racialised and socialised through the contested terrain of race-making in the care system.

Defining Mixedness

A position on identity which asserts experience and the shifting nature of variables, such as race, class and gender, is lived and experienced through how they intersect in specific instances and give rise to specific strategies of race making. The tension in the positions becomes most apparent when mixed young people in care are wrongly classified or misrecognised in care planning. Mixed young people are considered as having an inherently problematic identity due to assumptions made about their ambiguous social and racial location. Such assumptions emerged from historical literature in the field of psychology and continue to influence how mixedness is understood and acted upon in the care system. Mixed young people do not experience mixedness as static, fixed nor out of the ordinary. In the empirical chapters there was a sense, particularly in Chapter four, in the narrative of care admission and classifications, that there was confusion over who could be mixed and how this was to be worked out in lived and experienced practice. Further, how Stealth experienced his mixedness straddled two discourses: that of fixed categories that determined how he could understand and claim a racial classification, and that of multiple points of identifications which could shift across space and time in the sites of school, home and foster care. Mixed has to ask how it is defining itself in this

terrain of race and post-race politics; can it or should it be a racial or ethnic classification and if so how are boundaries to be drawn?

In chapter seven, a more complex negotiation of mixedness was taking place in Lucy's experience, as she was ambiguous through appearance. She was passed by and passed for mixed; her mixedness was experiential and meant she could utilise the discursive positions available (through her own specific range of identifications, as mixed intersected with gender and sexuality) for her own ends to build social capital – again her experiences straddled multiple discursive constructions of mixedness and race. For the Stealth and Lucy it was the system of racial classification, the bi-polar discourse of white/black that created a problem in how they were able to experience and live with mixedness. Such a racial system acknowledges mixedness in theory, by creating it as a social category to which people with more than one heritage can belong. However, in practice how mixedness is acted upon falls between the gaps of accepted systems of racial classification and lived experience to becomes a precarious balancing act.

Mixed young people in care made sense from two paradigms of mixedness to locate their racial and social positions; firstly, through understandings of mixedness fixed as problematic identification in the site of care and what this means for their care experiences in relation to placements and care planning. Secondly, through experiential lived mixedness within which they are subjected to ambiguity and misrecognition leading to the necessity to demonstrate cultural practices in order to re-fix what can be a chameleon like identification – such movement from one position to the other reworked how mixedness was understood and made meaningful. It is an untenable position, as moving away from deterministic identifications leads to further ambiguity which is then

re-affixed through cultural performance; others rely on race-making and continue to use its expressions of culture and ethnicity to give certainty to ambiguity.

Mixedness, Experience and Social Capital

Conceptualising mixedness as a lived experience potentially offered a more nuanced way of understanding lives as eliciting specific types of experiences through social relations. Static identifications such as gender, class and race have symbolic and cultural values attached. These are acted upon within social relations and determine experiences. This was demonstrated specifically through Lucy's narrative in which she used her mixedness in remarkable and resourceful ways. As Lucy became a care leaver she attracted sexual attention due to the value of mixedness at the intersection of sex, class, age and gender. This combination illuminated how she anchored what is contestable and open about mixed as a classification; it is neither a social location nor a racial classification, yet it carried social and cultural meaning. Her cultural performance located mixedness within expressions of her Jamaican heritage and brought about specific types of social and (hetero) sexual relationships. These relationships were part of how Lucy gained social legitimacy, as mixedness can be further understood as a classification in which there is little recognition of racial boundaries of belonging. Lucy used her mixed classification through her experiences and interactions to structure relationships that anchored her social legitimacy. The relationship between social legitimacy and mixedness is revealed through her preference for specific types of sexual relationships and her dating practices confirm how she claims cultural and racial belonging. These relationships also serve another function as they secure her mixedness as socially legitimate, and she used these networks of sexual relationships to build social capital.

The sources of social capital, characterised by moral values such as trust, co-operation and reciprocity, would usually be found within family and peer networks (Edwards, 2003; Briggs, 2009). These were absent in Lucy's relationships. She did not trust her family. Her friendships were affected by her transience through care. Her education has been impacted by the delays in getting her a place at a school each time she moved foster placements, meaning her employment opportunities were reduced. She was left with her embodied identity, as everything else has been stripped away, and she used this resource to secure sexual relationships with which to build social capital. However, her status as a care leaver suggested minimal adult supervision and this made her vulnerable to sexual exploitation, as she used unregulated public spaces to perform a gendered script. She attracted relationships seemingly unaware of her exploitation. Lucy's transience through care was reflected in her transient sexual relationships and although she gained legitimacy through them they were an unreliable source of social capital. What they offered was the opportunity for motherhood, and her limited range of choices due to her status and position posed mothering as an effective and successful way to maintain capital. Her determination to keep her children out of the care system served a number of functions; it gave her a sense of purpose and independence, enabled her to retain capital and re-frames her relationship to her birth family. Lucy serves as an example of the opportunities afforded through mixedness, and its constitutive elements of appearance, desirability and the cultural constructions of mixed women, which afford an engagement in specific types of social relationships and offer important sources from which to build social capital for mixed female care leavers, but may also leave them open to sexual exploitation.

The Young Person in Care

Care offers a specific type of childhood in which ordinary understandings of children and young people are neither valid nor applicable to their circumstances; there is not the luxury of sentimentalising this type of childhood. Young people in care do not have ordinary childhoods or childhood experiences; they are forced into a position of self-reliance and responsibility. They are vulnerable for two reasons firstly: they are young and more widely conceptualised as unable to fend for or defend themselves. Secondly, when they enter care they effectively lose the asset and advocacy of their parents. Being in care pre-supposes that their pre-care experiences may be characterised by having to fend for themselves, defend themselves and sometimes take care of others, and this was true of all the participants in this research.

One of the major critiques of the care system by the former Labour government was that care *fails to care* and that young people in care find it difficult to get their most basic needs met from loving, supportive families and through a care experience filled with stability and security. Hence, the introduction of a number of European Social Pedagogy pilots[33] whose objectives are to re-introduce English children's homes to the premise upon which the care system was based; these pilots aim to mimic, as far as is possible, the role of the family in giving young people support, warmth and a family life, recognising that one of the chief principles of child rearing is that relationships are crucial to learning and development.

Maslow's (1943) hierarchy of needs offers one way to consider how humans function as social beings. In this model, which is imperfect but useful in understanding how needs

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[33] Currently being piloted in children's homes across England. Emphasis in earlier care admission, more warmth in family style homes and greater whole family support. Proven to be effective in Northern Europe.

are layered and inter-dependent, specific processes such as physiological needs, safety, love/belonging, self-esteem and self actualization are placed in relation to one another. Self-actualisation represents what is possible once all the other needs are met and mastered. For young people in care the physiological need for food, stability and shelter cannot be taken for granted. Nor can safety, security of the body, health, family or belonging and friendship, nor self-esteem, confidence and respect. The young people in this thesis had not reached the top of Maslow's pyramid; rather they shuttled back and forth amongst the lower levels. Such luxury of lived potential and embracing the self is difficult for young people in care, as their experiences do not propel them toward the apex.

However, identifications such as culture, ethnicity and class are linked to notions of self actualisation, and I question how meaningful these concepts are for young people in care. Do they care about ethnicity, class, and race more than they care about food, shelter, love, and belonging? In applying Maslow's model I have exposed the care system as undermining the attainment of human needs, making it almost impossible for young people in care to rise through the hierarchy. It is not yet salient to speak of issues of self-actualisation, through culture and identity, if survival mode is actively being used to cope with uncertainty, instability, issues of safety, abuse, lack of love or belonging – which signals the institutional crisis of the care system. That is not to say that young people in care should not be considered worthy or potentially able to reach their potential to self-actualise, but rather that a focus on meeting basic needs would be a better starting place. Until that is secured, racial identification should be left out of decision-making when making placement choices. The care system is asked to do too much in relation to race and ethnicity when its focus would be better served on placing the young person

according to their most pressing human needs not solely in accordance to their racial or ethnic identifications.

Throughout this thesis the young people repeatedly demonstrated that what they cared about was safety from abuse, maintaining relationships with their birth families (who continued to offer belonging in the absence of care providing it), warmth, love, support and encouragement for their interests and hobbies. These are basic human needs necessary for survival. They spoke of classification in ways that suggested it was a barrier to belonging. For instance, through attention to class they felt they did not fit in, so they were moved; through attention to race, their mixedness made long term fostering problematic, so they were moved; attention to culture was seen as oppositional, so they were moved. Ironically, basic human needs were neglected: Amma was physically abused, yet she stayed for over eighteen months in that placement; Stealth was unhappy as his carer constantly argued with him, withheld clothes and showed no encouragement for his interests, yet he had been in that placement for over a year; Anita a fourteen year old staying out until the early hours, truanting from school and miserable at her placement for over nine years, only moved when the carer gave her up to start a new relationship; Lucy was left to fend for herself at sixteen and vulnerable to sexual exploitation. In no sense were these young people getting their basic needs met, why should race and culture matter more than basic needs? For these young people self-actualisation and the importance of cultural and racial identity is way beyond their immediate needs for safety, security and love. Young people in care live through the opposite childhood experience that has become so sentimental. They have to survive; their lives are serious to them, yet they have little control. Their views are not taken seriously enough by adults in the care system and as a result the brutality of their lives as they negotiate the care system is based

upon a Darwinian survival model, which teaches them how to live without those things that others sentimentalise childhood to be.

Making Meaning from Care

The most salient way to understand the needs of young people in care is through paying attention to how they think and act in their own lives within the context of their circumstances. In establishing how and why young people would order their own priorities for care would illuminate how they could be cared for and who would be most suitable to do that caring. It is not only the variables that have become entrenched in care policy and practice through a deterministic approach to race, but also the ways in which young people in care are consulted. This is either restricted to the themes of care or limited to frameworks that fix young people's opinions and choices as consultants, but not partners, in their care planning. The maturity of young people in care, their capacity to understand and their capacity to understand complex systems and structures, does not elude their consciousness; they know and recognise oppression, isolation and the failure of care to *care* for them. Throughout this research young people expressed frustration at the limitations of the care system, whether they received poor quality foster care, were annoyed at frequent changes of social workers, felt resentment toward restrictions placed on family contact and were frustrated by the transience associated with poor placement matching.

Throughout all of the empirical chapters the young people demonstrated an understanding of the parameters into which they are coerced. This shaped the meaning they were able to make in their lives. For instance, for young people like Stealth the emergent theme was concerned with restrictions and regulatory practices. Such micro management of his life impinged in many areas, from how he was able to self-identify

through racial classification and how he became aware of the salience of race during his care admission, to whether he was able to pursue his hobbies and interests. Stealth questioned every care practice and constantly challenged the political positions on race and the processes within which he was regulated. He was able to question wider discursive repertoires of race and mixedness through a consideration of how they varied across different sites, and challenged the basis under which he came to live at his Jamaican carers. Amma made sense of her care life though her exclusion from her placement and from foster family. She also absorbed social services policy on matching to assert what she felt were her rights as a child in care. Anita fought hard to leave her foster carers but only succeeded when the carer gave up caring for her. Anna, in order to really belong to her foster family, gave up her loyalty to her birth family and relinquished her remaining connection to her sister. Lucy blamed the care system for her lack of education, poor friendship network, reduced job opportunities and her transience. These narrative summaries are not solely focused on race, ethnicity and culture, as there are more crucial issues that create lasting impacts on young people's lives that are not shaken off as soon as they leave care. Placement planning for foster care emphasises identifications as more important to effective care for young people than their need for loving, stable families. It is not that the two are irreconcilable; there are suitable racial and ethnic matches within loving foster families. However, in this data this was not the case and some, if not most of, the young people, while they may have been appropriately racially or ethnically matched, were lacking in the most basic needs. While identifications are important for young people and enable them to locate themselves among a matrix of belonging, I question whether they are so useful if young people do not have their most basic needs met.

Parent Power

Young people in care are vulnerable as they lose the asset upon which most young people continue to rely on beyond childhood and adolescence – parents. Three participants expressed a desire to return home to their parents, as they understood their lives at home to be characterised by love and warmth. Even as they described neglect they offered redemption and empathy through acknowledging the living circumstances and pressures upon their parents. Amma who probably had the most tragic start to life had "one wish, and that would be to live with my mum" after six years in care and fifteen moves. I would say she has been failed by the system; abused and let down, she views her alcoholic mother, accused of neglect, as able to offer higher quality care than what she ahs received in the system. The irony of this case was that her mother made an official complaint about Amma's care experiences, despite her own parenting being judged to and failed to meet required standards. Children and young people who are so let down no longer have their fiercest protectors at their side to advocate for them; their parents are sidelined by the care system through their inability to care for their children.

Parents become marginalised through their diminished status and because they have failed to demonstrate the ability to parent correctly. Further, attitudes to race mixing and assumptions about mixed families (as difficult to understand) guide interactions between parents and social workers. These parent and social worker dynamics are beset with power and status positions in which professional judgements undermine parents, as social workers have the power to take children away, or as demonstrated in Anna and Anita's chapter, to stop contact altogether. The small snippet of conversation described in chapter six between Marie and Yvette also illustrated how power, status, class and ethnicity are enacted during conversations and which work to marginalise and infantilise parents. Close attention to social worker interactions with families can offer insight into

the assumptions made about race mixing and mixedness. The House of Commons report for Looked-after children (McLeod, 2008-09) suggested one method utilised in America was an independent panel to assess interactions between social workers and clients (parents). The panel were able to spot when assumptions and discriminatory practices based upon race or class arose. These strategies improve practice, offer greater parity between social worker and client group, and suggest new ways to understand how assumptions can lead to negative intervention rather than whole family support.

The parents of the young people in this thesis could not fight the care system as they did not know the rules of combat nor did they have sufficient social capital to do so. Often the mothers in these families were living with domestic violence. How can a mother advocate for her children if she cannot physically defend herself or her children from a violent partner? Being a child witness of domestic violence can now be the sole reason for child removal. All of the young people in this research spoke about being a witness to violence in their home. Further research is needed into how domestic violence may be raced, classed and gendered, and such research and attention to how men manage anger/power in hetero (sexual) relationships could mitigate the removal of children and young people from violent homes. Additionally the relationship between poverty and welfare intervention structured through understandings of race mixing, geographical location and class is another theme arising from this potential further research.

Rebuilding Lives

Separation of young people from their families entails a re-thinking of how they understand family and belonging, as the adults young people assumed were trustworthy because they were named, as parents are no longer able to offer safety or security. These young people are looking for and needing a replacement or substitute adult relationship,

which offers guidance. For instance, the relationship Anita had with her social worker Marie went beyond professional, as it was both warm and significant. It was enduring, consistent, reliable and was the most important relationship to Anita outside of the ones with her birth parents. Although it was a relationship that was open to exploitation (which is not the point here but must be held in mind), it offered Anita a point of recognition and a base to return to repeatedly. However, the relationship was beset with problems as boundaries were unclear, trust was an issue, and when decision-making was flawed Anita terminated the relationship. Social services also threatened to terminate it. How do young people form positive adult relationships when: transience is an accepted characteristic of care, meaning that foster carers provide unreliable sources; social workers experience high burn out rates, so are unreliable sources; and parental separation can often lead to poor frequency of contact or no contact at all? One answer could be the role of mentors, which is part of a government strategy in response to the vulnerability of care leavers[34]. In the local authority where this research was undertaken I had been a volunteer mentor in a successful scheme before this research started. Mentors can be valuable assets in the lives of young people in care as described in chapter six. Aside from mentoring which is still not widespread it would appear that young people in care have very few available resources for forming strong attachments to adults. Hence, my role in the research relationships was multi-faceted and included a range of positions, including the role of mentor, which enabled me to meet some of the needs of the young people, which were based upon my understanding of the range of their circumstances. However, their needs stretched my resources as I demonstrated this through the discussion of research relationships in the methodology chapter. The team around the child devolves responsibility and, despite young people having a range of adult

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[34] In 1998 the Prince's Trust and Camelot Foundation set up the first network of locally based mentoring projects, for young people in care, a partnership with the National Children's Bureau.

professionals at their disposal, what they most lack is a significant one-to-one, dependable relationship with a trusted adult.

Methodological Intervention

The multi-method approach I developed worked well in part due to my own experience and empathy, and due to the time I took to build research relationships. The boundaries of the research were both ethical and reciprocal and gave space to developing themes driven by the agendas of the participants. Although true participation can be difficult to evaluate there were plentiful opportunities for adapting methods, raising issues and developing strategies to increase participation. Using some of the principles of 'free association', such as letting talk emerge, being guided by participant's interests and conversations, was fruitful, but again was sometimes dangerous territory as traumatic memories and difficult circumstances were raised that sometimes required a high level of support and engagement. This was time consuming, demanding and energy draining emotional work, which I had not anticipated would be so all consuming from the outset.

The camera was a crucial tool in enabling narrative and highlighted as yet unspoken themes. Once those themes were revealed, either through the physical image or through the process of production, they could no longer be unspoken – like a genie escaping from a bottle, they held a message and a new area of discovery. For instance, until Amma was denied permission to take images in her placement I had no idea that her belonging was so tenuous. Once I had witnessed the denial of permission, Amma could speak about how she really felt living at Pearl's house. She then discussed how she felt excluded and ignored on her birthday and the problems she was experiencing with Pearl's extended family not accepting her. In some ways Amma wanted to believe she had found the perfect one-to-one care her social worker told her she needed. Yet it was far from

ideal. Although she did not tell me this, the camera let her reveal it through the process of production - it opened up a discursive space, characterised by what she held as important. It was not the final images that were so important, rather it was the opportunities they created for opening up themes for discussion and revealing things previously unspoken. Amma's final images tell of her (lack of) belonging as she fails to get any photographs of home; her images show her exclusion. She then claims an un-restricted access and belonging to the past and actively creates nostalgia in order to live in the present insecurity. This strategy to find belonging through the past and nostalgia made her circumstances meaningful.

Conversely, to Amma's experience Anna was so integrated into her long-term foster family that she was able to take images without permission and experienced no censorship. This foster family were thought unsuitable because they are white. Ironically it was the failure to get a more appropriate racial and ethnic match that has given her stability but without permanence in her placement. This fostering arrangement, despite its longevity, was precarious, as the carer separated from her husband and wanted to give up caring for the girls. The carer effectively airbrushed Anita from her family but kept Anna; possibly partly due to their attachment. Both Anna and Amma experienced how fostering can be subject to changes in the personal lives of carers, which makes young people easily dispatched back into the system, where they compete for good quality carers. Notions of home and belonging were made possible through the intrusion of the camera; however, it was demonstrated that there were no guarantees of stability or security for young people in foster care as even the most stable placement could become precarious.

Fostering as a Substitute Family

For Anita and Anna's carer, Denise, part of the motivation in keeping Anna was her financial dependence on fostering as a good source of income, as her ability to live the lifestyle fostering offered was threatened. Foster care plays a pivotal role in caring for young people who have previously been cared for in institutions. The high cost of residential care makes fostering a more economical choice for cash strapped departments. It can cost over £2,000 per week to keep one child in residential care (which exceeds the cost of Eton) while foster care can be bought for under £500 per week. Often the motivations for carers are not altruistic and while there are undoubtedly some carers who have a genuine capacity to offer a young person a real place in their homes, unfortunately, those carers appear to be rare. Denise also worked part time in a school with young people offering learning support, and while this offered an income it was not one which could support a lovely home, a Mercedes car and two holidays per year (which were taken without the girls). Her earning potential was low; she was neither highly educated nor highly skilled, and fostering was a career choice, which offered a lifestyle that exceeded her skill set. The assessment criteria for carers asks if they have a spare room, not spare love; such criteria indicate carers who offer space, but not much quality of care can be approved.

Through my experience and through this research I have come to believe that the criteria for carers could place an emphasis on understanding, warmth and the capacity to offer security and stability in addition to meeting basic human needs. At the moment potential carers who can offer that, but do not have a spare room, are unable to foster. How else may these potential carers be put to use in substantive ways? How could the care system adapt its ethos to spare love and not a spare room to become criteria by which to measure the suitability of carers? One young person I know of lived in a shed at the

bottom of a garden. Despite this being thought of as problematic by the system, he was adored by his carers and had a great relationship with them. The shed gave him space as he approached independence, but he had real support when he needed it. These particular carers advocated on his behalf as social services were forcing him into taking a council flat as a pre-requisite to university - which he was keen to. Social services threatened not to pay his carers if he stayed in the shed rather than taking the flat, but after a long battle in which the carers supported his decision he was able to stay. What if they had not had a shed? A young person would have been denied what some young people in care need most, a parent figure to advocate in their best interests.

Foster care is set up to mimic the sentimental role of the family, but it can often be as dysfunctional as some of the worst birth families. The state makes an economical investment in foster carers who sometimes do not have the best interests of young people at heart, and the criteria to assess carers emphasises the material and physical space and not the spiritual and emotional warmth they have to offer. If fostering is the future of residential care for young people it must be fit for purpose; young people need love and stability and many carers are failing in their duty to provide that or are fostering because it is a lucrative profession, which is primarily taken up by women who have poor earning potential in the labour market.

Despite the popularity of foster care and improvements being made to professionalise the industry, such a move makes foster carers both nurturer and administrator, which is problematic. In Chapter Four it was clear that Stealth resented such an emphasis on management of his care life and he did not feel nurtured but administered. Foster care, as Amma stated, is about carers "understanding" and being empathetic. Such warmth and nurturing is not necessarily taught by courses aimed at improving retention rates and

attracting more carers through increased remuneration, professional qualifications and the opportunity to work alongside social workers and other professionals. Improvements are needed to emphasise the needs of the child and young person for a safe, supportive and caring environment in which their needs are effectively met through time and energy devoted to building significant relationships. Much of what the young people say about their experience of foster care places these qualities high on the list of desires.

What was also significant in the research was that foster families, despite being comprised of a mum, dad and siblings, would often in practice only engage the involvement of the woman in the care of the young person. This was true of all the participants in this research living in foster care. In Stealth's care experience Sheila's husband was not involved, he did not do activities with Stealth or engage with any care matters. For Anita and Anna, Denise and her partner Greg had relationship difficulties and he took very little interest in the home or the girls. For Amma, a lone female carer about to get married to a man precipitated a placement move. The absentee role of fathers in both birth families and foster families is a theme, which needs further exploration.

The importance of men in mixed families is often negated through an overt focus on the failings of how to support lone white birth mothers. Interventions with mixed families must fully investigate whether fathers are willing to take an active role in parenting even if they are currently absent from the family. Greater interest in the role of fathers could improve how families are both understood and how they respond to welfare intervention, whether as mixed families subjected to it or as foster families employed by it. Fathers are valuable resources for their children and their role as nurturers is

underplayed by an emphasis on mothering, which places immense pressure upon mothers.

Experience and Knowledge Dissemination

My research began with my own experiential and intellectual biography; it had initially been my intention to compile a book of narratives of mixed adults who had been in care and who had achieved success in their lives. That remains a project of interest. However, this project took shape in my mind as much as I tried to resist it, as it was both a pain and a pleasure to use my experience to build knowledge. To share such knowledge and to be open about my experiences has reduced the stigma I felt about being in care. In many ways this was a project with its own value in which I grew in intellectual understanding of how care shaped my own life. That is not to say others could not have done this type of research, just that their own experiences would have taken it in different directions. Using personal experience crystallised my commitment to making improvements to how care in relation to mixedness is understood.

The details in this thesis will be useful for practitioners and researchers working directly with young people in care wanting rich data about experience through using innovative methods. It could be useful for social workers and foster carers finding it difficult to understand the salience, or not, of race in their lives of mixed young people. It could be useful for young people who feel the isolation of care and mixedness difficult to reconcile or to live with. A number of policy and practices guides will be further developed for use in education and social work settings around issues of race and mixedness. Further practice guides surrounding issues of care and attention to how its processes marginalise and grate against the ordinary will offer attention to the quality of life that young all people in care deserve.

In relation to my own commitment to sharing these findings I will be involved in a number of events to share my findings and contribute to the work of others.

- To organise a conference with Professor Ravinder Barn aimed at an academic and practitioner community to consider the vulnerability of black and mixed young people in care.

- To deliver a seminar with a social enterprise organisation called 'Mix-d' who work with young mixed people in schools and further within the same organisation to do some direct work with foster carers in understanding mixedness using the good practice guide to emerge from these findings.

- To write a project proposal in conjunction with British Association of Adoption and Fostering (BAAF) to do direct with work with young people in care using photography.

- To submit a final copy of this thesis to the Children's Social Care Department in the London Borough of Lewisham.

Further Research Themes

- One of the most important themes to emerge from the research and one, which could not be pursued at this time, was the relationship between mixed families and poverty. Implicit to this thesis is the awareness that families subject to welfare intervention are not solely constituted through their mixedness but through their poverty. Investigating the link between the two is critical to understanding the complexity of the crisis in care.

- The use of technology such as email, mobile phones and facebook have all re-drawn how children communicate with their parents. In the site of social care such communication can be counter to the regulations of social workers. Their inability to regulate contact between young people in care and their families was witnessed during this research. Long term this will have wider implications in relation to contact arrangements.

- A further theme that was not pursued was attention to how a 'mixed masculinity' may be defined and a consideration of ways of conceptualising or theorising whether there could be such a phenomenon. This would offer a counter balance to existing literature and demonstrate more fully how mixedness is gendered.

Finally, what this thesis aimed to do was examine how young people's experiences could contribute to the ongoing debates about the problem of mixed children and young people in care. Their contributions serve two purposes. Firstly, they act as an intervention for the young people to choose the terms of their engagement and speak through themes that can often be neglected by current debates. Secondly, they provide an anchor to inform the responses and initiatives, which engage the persistent problem of the over-representation of mixed young people in care. What the young people in this thesis made clear is that their care experiences and mixedness exist in relation to each other and in addition to other variables such as class, gender, sexuality and geographical location, and they challenge existing and dominant understandings of mixedness as a 'racial identity'.

An overt focus on racial identity often obscures how social processes work to marginalise experiences, which can then be inferred to neatly capture and homogenise

the experiences of an entire group. Such an over-emphasis on racialisation in young people's experiences negates the complexity of their lives as they deal with loss, rejection, memory, vulnerability and powerlessness and as they attempt to re-build their lives in a care system often dogged by its own internal failings. Yes, the young people in the group were all classified as mixed (despite the internal diversity), and, yes they were all in care, but the range of circumstances, narratives, experiences and textured complexity of their lives cannot be said to capture a specific experience of mixed in care; this partial and situated knowledge about mixed young people in care are a co-production of time and space.

This thesis make claims and recommendations solely about foster care in an inner city borough and the study is a product of both a specific time and place. The findings and recommendations made in this research are only applicable to fostering and not to other forms of social care such as adoption or residential care.

Mixedness was conceptualised as a lived experience, such theorising offers a way to understand how the classification works in the site of foster care and reveals the dissonance between theory and lived experience. The ways in which the category mixed is conceptualised (within social care discourses as well as more generally) have lead to an overt focus on racialisation and mixedness as a problematic identity. Mixed as a classification has real and adverse impacts on care experiences, which suggests that the classification, and its associated practices and care processes, contribute to the problems experienced by mixed young people in care.

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Appendix 1, Letter of Introduction to Children's Services Departments

The Construction of Identity in Multiple Heritage Looked-after Children Research Project.

I am writing to ask for your department's permission and assistance with an ongoing PhD project being undertaken in the Sociology Department at Goldsmiths, University of London. The project is funded by the Economic and Social Research Council (ESRC) and is supervised by Professor Caroline Knowles (c.knowles@gold.ac.uk)

More particularly I am hoping that your department will be able to put me in contact with looked after children who are of multiple heritage. The objective of the research is to explore ways in which to effectively engage with and meet the cultural needs of multiple heritage young people in the context of corporate care. Being able to listen to young peoples experiences would be enormously helpful to my project.

Their participation could become part of their Life Story work. All sessions will be recorded by either audio or video. The research period will be undertaken over several months.

I am fully aware that there are important issues of confidentiality that need to be respected and therefore all research participants will remain anonymous. The care and well being of all participants will be at the forefront of research. Any issues or queries that arise will be discussed with staff. A process of on-going consent will be in place, meaning the young people can withdraw from participation at any time during the research process. I am of course happy to share any conclusions with your department. My research project is approved by the Goldsmiths departmental ethics committee and will meet the guidelines set out by the British Sociological Association. For more details of the department please see the attached summary. I do hold a current CRB enhanced disclosure for a collaborative research project with Coram about the experiences of young mothers. The final thesis will be published and placed in the University library and made available to students and staff.

Thank you for your consideration, to discuss this further, or if you have any questions or concerns, please contact me. I look forward to hearing from you.

Kindest Regards

Fiona Peters
Mob 07930 958 940
020 7978 5117
Email f.peters@gold.ac.uk

Goldsmiths Sociology Department

The research is being undertaken in a department that received the highest possible, 5* rating in the 2001 Research Assessment Exercise, placing it amongst the top sociology departments in the country. The department has 27 full-time academic staff as well as a number of part-time staff and visiting tutors. Goldsmiths Sociology has supervised over 140 students to completion, with a completion rate of 95% for ESRC funded students. Over the past five years the department has been particularly dynamic with regard to developing partnerships with external agencies. The Centre of Urban and Community Research has undertaken wide range of consultancies and research evaluations with organisations ranging from the South London Health Action Zone, the Home Office, Positive Futures, Lewisham Borough Council and Kick it Out. Other collaborative projects include the evaluation of Sure Start in the Bellingham and Downham districts.

Appendix 2, Research Brief for Social Workers and Carers

MY EVERYDAY LIFE

Dear Carers and Social Workers

The 'My Everyday Life' project is part of an ongoing research PhD, which, I am undertaking in the Sociology Department at Goldsmiths, University of London.

There is no current research about the lives of mixed race looked after children and young people. Their stories are important to carers, social workers, and other professionals and especially important to the young people themselves.

I am exploring the everyday life of mixed race/dual heritage African Caribbean and British young people who are looked after. I will be working with the young people over the coming few months.

I hope that you will be able to support your young person taking part in the project.

If you would like to meet me or to discuss any aspect of my research please do not hesitate to get in touch.

Yours Sincerely,

Fiona Peters
f.peters@gold.ac.uk
07930 958 940
0207 078 5117

Appendix 3, Research Brief for Young People

MY EVERYDAY LIFE

My name is Fiona Peters, I am running a creative project about the everyday lives of mixed race children in care.

You can also choose what part of your everyday life you want to explore. It could be your relationships with people in your life. It could be an activity or hobby that you love. It could be places in your local area that are important to you.

If you think you would like to know more or get involved please fill out the questions on the form. And return them to me in the envelope. Keep the CD. I will contact you as soon as possible.

Thanks for listening to this CD and reading this letter and I hope to meet you soon.

Appendix 4, Consent Form

CONSENT FORM FOR PARTICPATION IN THE RESEARCH PROJECT
The Construction of Identity in Multiple Heritage Looked After Children

I agree to take part in the above Goldsmiths, University of London research project. I have had the project explained to me, and I have read the research information, which I may keep. I understand that agreeing to take part means that I am willing to
1. Be interviewed by the researcher and be quoted word for word
2. Allow the interview to be videotaped/audio taped
3. Be photographed
4. Read or listen back to what I have said and withdraw or change that information

This information will be held and used for the following purpose(s):
1. As part of the researchers PhD project.
2. To be shared with the academic University community
3. To be shared with the Looked-after Children's Teams.

I understand that any information I provide is confidential. No information that could lead to me being identified in any reports or to any else will be published. The identifiable data such as my name, age, and address will not be shared with any other organization. My participation is anonymous. My photograph will be used with my consent.

I understand that confidentiality cannot be guaranteed for information, which I might disclose about harm to myself or another child.

I understand that my participation in the research is voluntary. I can choose not to participate in any parts of the project or the entire project. I can withdraw at any stage of the project.
Name:
....
(Please print)
Signature: ....
Date: ....

Independent witness to participant's voluntary and informed consent

I believe that …………………………. understands the above project and gives her/his consent voluntarily

Name:

....

(Please print)

Signature……………………………………………………………….Date:

.…

Appendix 5, Questionnaire

Everyday Life

Name

Birthday

Address and Telephone Number

Male or Female

What is your ethnic identity?

Who do you live with?

How long have you been in care?

Favourite Activity?

If you had 3 wishes what would they be?
1.

2.

3.

Thanks for answering these questions. Put this sheet into the stamped envelope and send it back to me. I will get in touch as soon as I receive it.