Race, place, love and family: Narratives from Black mixed-race families in a semi-rural/suburban town in England

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Declaration of Authorship

I Chantelle Jessica Lewis hereby declare that this thesis and the work presented in it is entirely my own. Where I have consulted the work of others, this is always clearly stated. Signed: Date: 04 August 2021

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Abstract

This thesis is a narrative ethnography of Black (and white) mixed-race families living in a semi-rural/suburban town in the English West Midlands. Tracing migration histories from Jamaica and Saint Kitts to Birmingham and Bromsgrove between 1948 and 2019, it is a complex multi-generational portrait of family life. Based on the narratives of twenty-two individual and family ethnographic interviews over an eighteen-month period, a research methodology that focussed on the wider social contexts of place uncovered the coexistence of an often silent family love with racism (hooks, 2000). I also explore the intricate ways in which race is socially reproduced in familial and social relationships amid the heightened monitoring of racialised boundaries of belonging routinely found in semi-rural/suburban places.

Using the concepts of hegemonic whiteness and cultures of racism, the thesis shows how Black mixed-race families in semi-rural/suburban places become susceptible to both negotiating and reproducing the unspoken power dynamics of dominating cultures, which demand the consent of both the (white) racial majority and the racially minoritised. It is a demonstration of the active struggle to maintain the imaginations of (white) place, written with sensitivity not only to the way these processes intimately pervade familial relationships, but also to how people still resist these everyday and mundane interpersonal, structural and systemic (intimate) negotiations. The thesis contributes to the

sociology of race and racism, mixed-race studies, ethnographies of race and class and (matricentric) family studies.

Chapter Zero: An autobiographical note.

Bromsgrove

> It will always be one of our first homes, but it has taken so much
> from us…

The statement above summarises some of the deeply felt emotions that present themselves when my mum, sister and I have conversations about our hometown, Bromsgrove. Among our multigenerational ponderings about how we feel or have felt about our family life in this semi-rural suburb in the West-Midlands (England) are feelings of disjuncture and anguish, but our recollections are also informed by memories of friendship and love. These reflections of Bromsgrove are supported by what bell hooks describes as instances of *genuine love* (the relationship between my mum, sister and I) which have helped me to both comprehend and reconcile with the places and people who seek to wound our spirits through acts of lovelessness (2000, p.7).

In 2001, when I was nine years old, we moved to Bromsgrove from the Medway towns. I still remember feeling that our material conditions were significantly improving as we approached this greeny suburb so far away from the beaches I visited at weekends with my grandparents in Sheerness, Folkstone and Dover. We had spent many years homeless, living in women's refuges and moving between various council flats and houses (the final property in Kent being an 'owned' semi-detached house purchased by my mums

partner). As a young girl arriving in Bromsgrove, I could already see how different this place was from other locations we had lived, first in London and then in the South-East of England (Lower Clapton, Strood, Chatham and Cuxton).

Our move to Bromsgrove meant I quickly became the only Black (mixed-race) person in my immediate family and one of very few people of colour more broadly in our new hometown. I used to think that my delayed ability to appreciate and love my own Blackness was conditioned primarily by spending the great majority of my childhood and adolescence with people who did not look like me. *But it was more than that.* There was something about the cultures in this place that seemed to suppress my very existence. It is too easy to say that my feelings of displacement were solely the result of living mostly around white people. *It was more than that.* I felt this way because difference, and in my case, racialised difference and Blackness, was something to be either observed, or denied or flattened. Blackness in Bromsgrove was compartmentalised and defined through the very narrow confines of the ascribed performance of an identity. Bromsgrove's cultures would racialise me as cool, stupid and 'foreign' all at once. They would then fetishise, and later represent me as overly opinionated and aggressive. I was routinely forced to find a way to belong that echoed one of these approved racialisations of Blackness. When I was not trying to perform their version of Blackness, I spent years longing to look like and be perceived as the delicate and desirable version of white womanhood and girlhood that surrounded me. Like lots of young Black children and children of colour who grow up in white rural suburbia, I endured a

very slow, ongoing form of racialised alienation; of heightened feelings of unbelonging that appeared to be advocated by many of the people around me.

It is important to note that these reflections on my childhood in Bromsgrove are informed by their time, before social media and the online democratisation of more readily available aesthetic bodily guidance for Black girls living in the English suburbs. Growing up, the spaces I felt most comfortable were the dancefloor (I used to be a dancer), flicking through the music videos (hold tight the Sky TV music channel sanctuary!) and during history and sociology lessons at school.

Although the cultures of Bromsgrove clearly enhanced my feelings of unbelonging, I still consider myself one of the lucky ones among Black populations raised in the 2000s in these suburban/rural places in England. I had *some* proximity to racial literacies, and from a very young age my Dad managed to instil in me the beginnings of a political consciousness, an understanding of my (Black) self in the world. Unfortunately, this purposeful parenting strategy did not negate the ongoing distress caused by the way my body and persona were negatively racialised in my hometown.

Many parts of my life in Bromsgrove were incredibly challenging; for example, the innumerable violent and interpersonal racisms I endured. However, I think it is also important to comment on the more mundane and ordinary aspects of my life there. I never went to school hungry, nor was I under any immediate threat of being removed from my home. My mum and I, and later, my sister and I, struggled through various material, social and familial situations – *but we always managed.*

During the final few months of writing this thesis, I discovered that a few peers from my school years had questioned my public description of the precarity of my racialised and class status growing up in Bromsgrove. They felt that my recollections of life in Bromsgrove did not align with what they had witnessed. To them, it appeared not just that I was exaggerating my experience of our hometown, but that my life then was relatively normal and *not that bad.* I counter these misgivings with both understanding and empathy for my fellow Bromsgrovians. Over the years, I have come to learn that in the face of a generalised collective admiration for a time and place, or when people have fond memories of a particular moment, some may find it difficult to imagine oppositional perspectives. Sometimes these idolisations of time, place and moment are embedded in such strong sentiment that people strive to find fault in others' descriptions of their lived experiences, ascribing to them individual dishonesty, disrespect and an ungracious attitude. And of course, they scorn the Black woman complaining about her comfortable childhood in suburbia!

These reflections are an example of some of the tensions I explore throughout the thesis. It is not just that the majority of people around me were white; places like Bromsgrove are socially reproduced through a variety of protected cultures of respectability. People want to find the best in places and the people in them, which sometimes means contesting very real experiences of class struggle and racialised harm. My interest in people's connection to place focuses on how talking publicly about the practical and emotional journey of childhood can generate a dismissal of such claims. The peers who criticised my account believe they have a better understanding of what marginalisation

really is. Their responses, which sought to invalidate my lived experience, were grounded in romanticised perceptions of suburbia, because in their view, Bromsgrove is a great place for everyone!

This thesis is dedicated to the Black mixed-race families who shared their stories of navigating life in Bromsgrove. It is also devoted to other Black and racially minoritised Bromsgrovians who I hope may find some solace in reading about familiar experiences of our semi-rural/suburban hometown without being questioned about their authenticity. Your experiences are valid and important. It is also my hope that Black people and people of colour more broadly, who have lived or been raised in mainly white, rural or suburban places will find some discussions and reflections here that they can relate to.

Thank you, Bromsgrove. Though parts of this thesis read as a critical reflection on my childhood there, it is clear to me that my social relations during these years were formative in shaping my understandings of myself, race and place. Though I have definitely spent the best part of my adult life recovering, I'm grateful to the friends, teachers and family I met in Bromsgrove who helped me to grow along the way!

I hope that by situating my own subjectivities concerning these matters of race, place and the family, this thesis can respond and contribute to Gail Lewis' interdisciplinary attentiveness to biographical (multi-racial) family relatedness, love and racism (Lewis, 2009, 2012 & 2020) while remaining concerned with her instructions (which she attributes to the late Ambalavaner Sivanandon) to link the politics of the individual to the collective, or rather 'to make an individual/local cause into an issue, turning issues into causes and causes into

movements and building in the process of a new political culture' (Sivanandan, 1990, p.58, as cited in Bhandar & Ziadah, 2020).

Chapter One: Introduction

I have never quite managed to attain the desired grades for the more linear experiences of academic scholarship, so before I began this research I spent a lot of time looking for alternative ways to fund my PhD. I contacted a variety of think tanks, NGOs and charities that appeared to be committed in the broadest sense to racial justice. I was looking to work with organisations that might be interested in funding research that centred on how 'mixed-race' is lived and experienced outside cities in Britain. Crucially, I wanted to find an organisation which shared my objective to discuss mixedness in a critical, situated and local way.

While I knew very little about the industry of policy research, after a series of enquiries, I had an email response from a British think tank that expressed a potential interest in collaborating on my research idea. That organisation was in the process of planning a report on changes in the West Midlands since Enoch Powell's 'Rivers of Blood' speech. The emphasis would be on Britain's increasingly 'progressive' stance on 'race relations' since the infamous speech of 1968. Although I was a bit sceptical, because Powell gave his speech in Birmingham and my research would be based in the neighbouring town of Bromsgrove, it felt like a potential opportunity to get some funding for my PhD.

In my one and only meeting with an employee of this organisation in 2016, I explained that my research would focus on the narratives of Black mixed-race families living in a predominantly white semi-rural/suburban place in the West

Midlands (around ten miles from where Powell delivered 'Rivers of Blood'). While I was talking about its fundamental focus on how Black and Black mixed-race family members endure a very particular and localised negotiation of racism, the representative interrupted me and said:

'We tend to focus more on the positive aspects of British life.'

This statement was followed by the announcement that they would only be interested to discuss supporting my research if I was going to share 'positive stories' about mixed-race families in the West Midlands. Shamelessly, they latched on to the possibility of my connection to Birmingham, and asked if I would 'pass on' the details of my 'positive participants' for their report on Enoch Powell's legacy. Delivering positive declarations about mixedness in the West Midlands seemed to be their primary objective.

This meeting reinforced what would become one of my key arguments, that public imaginings of mixedness remain distorted and selective. It is a racialised category that despite much scholarly effort over the years, continues to be positioned in civil society as an example of a national and collective reconciliation with race and racism. The think tank that responded to my enquiry is representative of a selection of publics that continually present mixedness as evidence of Britain's 'tolerance' of racialised difference.

This thesis amounts to a critical departure from the mainstream and academic emphasis on individualised understandings of mixed-race identity formation. I want to offer instead a critical analysis of the importance of wider social contexts of semi-rural/suburban place, (multiracial) family relatedness,

ethnicity, racialisation and racism. Specifically, the research addressed four key questions:

1. In what ways do wider social contexts of mainly white semi-rural/suburban place impact the way (Black) mixedness is lived and experienced over time?

2. How do places like Bromsgrove generate everyday racialised boundaries of belonging and how does this become understood over time and between family members?

3. How do familial biographies of multi-generational life and migration histories impact the way Bromsgrove is made between family members?

4. Do the cultures of semi-rural/suburban places impact family relatedness in Black mixed-race families?

Mixed-Race and the politics of (racial) categorisation

This thesis presents biographical narratives from nine Black Caribbean (Jamaican and Kittitian), white English and Irish mixed-race families in a semi-rural/suburban place in England. The discussions that follow constitute a contextualised, localised and racially specific contribution to broader debates and understandings of the heterogeneous lives of mixed-race families in Britain. This project is about people, families and relationships; it considers how cultures of place become integral to the social reproduction of what, on the surface, are generally understood as everyday and mundane aspects of social relations. It is a small-scale, critically and carefully developed contribution to a subject matter that generates passion, melancholy and exasperated responses:

> The notion of racial mixing and mixedness has thus long been encompassed by an emotive racial framework dominated by extremes of feeling around the binary of 'either/or' – or 'neither/nor' – a position often assumed to play the central role in the story of crossing racial boundaries (e.g. 'neither white nor black'). (Caballero, 2013, p.80)

This quote from Chamion Caballero – a scholar well-known for her research and analysis of contemporary mixedness – succinctly summarises the challenges of conducting social research on this increasingly contentious racial category, which demonstrates extremes of both negative and positive historical and contemporary discourse; mixed-race scholarship and dialogues understandably generate emotional responses (Caballero, 2013, p.84). In the UK context, these (mixed) emotions about mixed-race discourse produce conversations about (Black) racial hierarchisation (Phoenix, 2014; Gabriel, 2007), issues of representation (Sobande, 2020, p.37), worrying examinations of 'phenotype' (Tate, 2009; Sims, 2012), birthing and parenting racial difference (Twine, 2002 and Lewis, 2009) and (more broadly) very specific dialogues about the racialisation of 'mixed' Black and racial minority populations. It is a socially constructed racial category that produces interventions that Parker and Song contend have the capacity to 'bring out the worst in people' (2001, p1). Crucially, conversations about mixed-race trends and populations generate tentative exchanges on the intimate, systemic and relational consequences of race and its implications for a range of racially marginalised populations.

These common but emotive examinations of mixedness have informed and inspired many of the discussions in the thesis and are symbolic of my point of

departure from the 'progressive stories' desired by the aforementioned think tank. It was during these early reflections on the connection between mixed-race and emotion that I decided that I wanted to produce research that could perhaps contribute some contextualised responses to the question of why 'the terminology of mixedness' (Ifekwunigwe, 1998) can invoke Caballero's 'emotive racial framework' in both the public and private realms. The thesis should be understood as a critical, careful and solidarity infused addition to mixed-race studies which establishes the importance of place, family and everyday life to offer some ways of both understanding and reconciling the emotionality intertwined with discourse on mixedness. Put simply, I hope that this thesis makes arguments that are legible to the very people who recognise the modalities of very specific notions of race, place and family it explores.

Mixed-race, race terminology and the politics of racial categorisation

Over the past thirty years, the broadening of academic scholarship on mixedness and mixed-race through empirical research has focused on moving beyond explanations of 'race' with more focus on aspects of social life such as parenting (Caballero and Edwards, 2011); schooling (Tikly et al., 2004; Joseph-Salisbury, 2018), government interventions (Peters, 2016) and family patterns (Edwards & Caballero, 2011; Smith et al., 2011; Edwards, 2015; Pang, 2018). Much contemporary scholarship on mixedness has been concerned with understanding the position and experience of mixed-race people; the racialisation of mixedness and the implications of these recognitions, and why academia and public policy continue to adopt research attentive to these populations (Caballero et al., 2012). Fundamentally, research has challenged

the legacies of the pathologisation of mixedness by centring the voices and lived experiences of mixed-race people in interracial relationships and mixed-race families.

Race terminology is used throughout this thesis in the acknowledgement that race holds little to zero biological significance (Winant, 1994; Blackburn, 1998), but has also been identified as a social construction (Olumide, 2002) which has led to substantial interpersonal and structural harms in the lives of the Black mixed-race families outlined in the following chapters. These descriptors of race should be read as exemplifications of Frantz Fanon's (1961) attestation of its capacity to damn and condemn, or to enclose Others both discursively and materially within our social relations (Fanon, 1963). In the chapters that follow, the ways in which the systemic attributes of race impede the lives examined here are understood through the enduring impact of negative racialisation (Sharma, 1997, 2005; Gahman, 2020),[1] cultures of racism (Hall, 1986; Essed, 1991; Solomos & Back, 1996), and the way both processes rely on the social reproduction of struggles against the operation of hegemonic whiteness (Lewis, 2004; Hughey, 2012). A more detailed exploration of the historical construction of mixed-race, hegemonic whiteness, negative racialisation and cultures of racism is outlined in chapter two. For now, a brief

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[1] The notion of 'negative racialisation has been used primarily in work on environmental racism, borders and migration scholarship in describing the role of colonial power in spatialising race/racialising spaces. It appears infrequently in scholarship on race, but in this thesis it is used to respond to arguments on, and the foregrounding of, the social reproduction of race found in Levi Gahman's (2020), *Land, God and Guns: Settler Colonialism and Masculinity in the American Heartlands*.

outline of the politics of the racial category 'mixed-race', in anticipation of the more detailed conceptual and theoretical discussions below, is an essential precursor to the introduction of the nine Black mixed-race families.

UK focused mixed-race studies have evolved through an ongoing acknowledgement of the legacies of historical pathologies and the impact of coloniality and Empire on negatively racialised populations in Britain (Frederickson, 1981; Alibhai-Brown & Montague, 1992). Although this thesis engages critically with some very particular lived experiences of mixed-race in England, it is still responsive to the broader foundational impact of colonial, postcolonial and post-war genealogies of the racial categorisation of mixed-race and mixedness in Britain (Caballero & Aspinall, 2018). The values, practices and violence enacted by the British Empire created a state- and academic-sponsored correlation between mixedness and inferiority, which led to long-term state intervention for people said to be in proximity to mixedness. It is these particular lineages of mixed-race that reify the subjugation of mixedness and those in proximity to it (see chapter two). These histories begin to demonstrate why some chronological grounding of the categories of mixedness is integral to social research concerned with contemporary experiences and understandings of mixed-race.

On a close reading of histories of race and mixedness, the legacy of a state-led racial categorisation of mixed-race is clear (Aspinall, 2018; Bland, 2008; Bernasconi, 2009) and the move towards institutions such as schools, the Office for National Statistics (ONS) and local authorities collecting racial data has been understood among scholars of race and ethnicity as a broadly positive one

(Aspinall, 2003). Scholars of mixedness such as Aspinall and Song (2014) have stressed that, though flawed, the contemporary state-led politics of racial categorisation offers more thorough opportunities to uncover experiences of racial inequality. Whilst the 2001 census (which marked the beginning of the inclusion of an official category of mixed-race(s)) was clearly a more respectable way to monitor ethnicity/race, there is obviously a much longer history of labelling and classifying race and difference. The inclination of both the public and academic research to present 'true' categories of race and mixedness has often been at risk of presenting racialised categories as fixed rather than socially reproduced (Song, 2008). Despite these efforts to trace the lived experiences of mixed-race people, Aspinall (2003) contends that the formalisation of racial categories has risked reifying a mythology of 'pure races' through the creation of sub-sections of 'mixed race'.

Racial categorisation can be a way of mapping racialised inequalities, but its uncritical examination, in the absence of an emphasis on differing processes of racialisation, risks essentialising these socially constructed categories, which in turn can lead to a reinscription of race, and in more challenging occurrences, to what Paul Gilroy (2000) calls ethnic absolutism. There is a need for policy-led approaches to trace racially differentiated experiences, but scholars such as Aspinall have warned that being overly concerned with categorisation, rather than how and why racialisation and racism occurs, risks damaging the most marginalised among those who are racially categorised.

These debates about the use of racial categorisation provide practical insight into the arguments presented here, on the importance of de-

essentialising and de-homogenising research on mixed-race (Mahtani, 2012; Campion, 2021). Although this critical mapping of racial categories is important, categories like mixed-race continue to shape and pervade lived experiences and therefore continue to matter in a practical way for understandings of social life. This research therefore utilises racial categories responsive to Yasmin Gunaratnam's (2003) argument that social researchers can resist reinscribing fixed notions of race by working both with and against race. Primarily, the critical use of mixedness as a racial category in the chapters that follow contributes to a study of race and racism that focuses on the very specific and contextualised social reproduction of (mixed) race, place and family in an effort to document life stories in a way that rejects pathologies that reinscribe race. Thus, this thesis should be read as my own perspective on the limitations of formal racial categories while also being attentive to the everyday lives of family members, to reckon with the way that race is socially reproduced in localised and situated contexts.

From mixed-race to Black mixed-race

Over the past two decades, scholars of mixedness such as Song (2008, 2010, 2017, 2018) and Aspinall (1996, 2003, 2008) have recognised the importance of the ethnicised and racialised specificities of the racial category of mixed-race in England and Wales. While the arguments in the following chapters have clearly developed in recognition of scholarship on mixedness, which has continued to utilise the term 'mixed-race' on its own, this thesis is primarily responsive to the scholarly evolution of this racial categorisation, which is specific to the racialised and ethnicised construction of *Blackness,*

Caribbeanness and whiteness, in the context of the English rural suburbs. I have substantiated my approach to mixedness with the arguments of scholars such as Botts (2016), Joseph-Salisbury (2018) and Campion (2019) that the term 'mixed-race' alone weakens understanding of the multiplicity of 'mixed' experiences that are highly influenced by ethnicity. Throughout the sampling, theoretical discussion and empirical research, this thesis utilises the term 'Black mixed-race' to 'capture a certain phenomenological experience' (Botts, 2016, p.8, and Joseph-Salisbury, 2018, p.5) whereby both Blackness and mixedness create a cultural and structured familiarity that is substantially different from other ethnically mixed-race populations.[2]

To specify Blackness and Caribbeanness signifies a particular cultural experience that exemplifies the changeable nature of racialisation amongst mixed-race populations (Campion, 2021). Further, one of the central examinations of Black mixed-race in this thesis is through the narratives of members of Black mixed-race populations who have a white parent. Thus, the construction of a dominant whiteness, or *hegemonic whiteness* is fundamental to the discussions explored in the following chapters.

The focus on Black and white mixed-race families was developed in acknowledgement that mixed-race studies have tended to favour an examination of lived experiences that falls within the terrain of this 'Black and

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[2] Although this thesis is focused on Black mixed-race families, it contains arguments about parenting racial difference that I believe offer potential insight for other mixed-race populations with white parentage.

white binary' (Caballero, 2005). By and large, this is because mixed Black Caribbean and white populations are the largest mixed-race group in the UK (Office for National Statistics, 2011) . Scholars such as Minelle Mahtani (2012) have argued that there is an overemphasis on the mixed Black and white experience in research, and has contended for the discipline of mixed-race studies to 'decolonise' (Mahtani, 2012). It is evident that more empirical and scholarly attention needs to be paid to other mixed-race groups beyond populations with Black and white parents (for example, the under-researched experience of Black and South/East Asian mixed-race populations in England). For now, however, this research focuses on Black and white mixed-race families to produce arguments that grapple with the messy work of racial categories by focusing on wider social relations in the context of place and the family.

Black (and white) mixed-race families: social generation and women-centred family formations

To both contextualise and situate the variety of family narratives among and within the nine Black mixed-race families, I have loosely applied social generations to the analysis (Beck & Beck-Gernsheim, 2009; Woodman & Wyn, 2015; Campion, 2017; Roberts & France, 2020) and labelled two generational cohorts as 'Generation One' and 'Generation Two'. The characteristics of each generation are explored in more detail in the following chapters (see also appendices four and five), but for introductory purposes Generation One consisted of 'the parents' in each family and Generation Two consisted of their children, all of whom were over eighteen years-old. In terms of the specific racial

categorisation of the nine families, Generation One were Black (British/Jamaican and British/Kittitian) women and men, Black and white mixed-race (British/Jamaican or British/Kittitian and white English and/or Irish) women and white (English and/or Irish) women. Generation Two were all Black mixed-race women and men. The nine families consisted of first, second and third generation family members, people who arrived in England after the Second World War from what were then the British colonies of Jamaica and Saint Kitts.

The families are overwhelmingly heteronormative in their formation; primarily consisting of heterosexual 'nuclear' families (Smart et al., 2005), lone-parent families (all single mothers) (Edwards & Caballero, 2011), and co-parented families (where two parents more or less shared responsibility for raising their children in two separate households). One family was headed by parents who identified as a lesbian couple (two women/mothers in a sexual relationship). The families who became co-parents (which included the lesbian couple) could also be identified as 'blended' or 'reconstituted' family formations (Allan & Crow, 2001; Wilson & Pahl, 1988).

Crucially, although there was clearly a variety of family formations among the nine families, the discussions that follow, about race, place and familial relatedness focus on the fact that, with one exception (a black woman), most of the primary caregivers in the nine families were white women or Black-mixed-race women. While their family formations differed, the narratives explored among Generation One (the parents) contribute to scholarship on white mothers parenting racial difference (Twine, 2010, 2002; Lewis, 2009), the impact of the primal presence of white extended family members in mixed-race families, and

the experience of multi-racial mothering and parenting amongst Black mixed-race women (Song & Gutierrez, 2015; Song, 2016). This emphasis on whiteness within the mixed-race family is carefully explored with reference to bell hooks extensive scholarship on what is at stake, what is damaged and what can be salvageable when love and the workings of race intimately collide in the family (hooks, 2000; 2001).

The emphasis on woman-centred families contributes to broader debates about matricentric family formations (O'Reilly, 2008, 2010), but also takes inspiration from sociological research on matrifocality and matriarchal formations amongst Black Caribbean (Stack, 1974; Smith 1996; Morrissey, 1991; Blackwood, 2005; Renaud, 2018) and Black mothers and or 'othermothers' (Spillers, 1987; Hill Collins, 2005). The centring of women and mothers aims to develop critical dialogues on the possibility of resistance to nuclear family patriarchal traditions, as well as to explore the impact of place-making on these familial relations in semi-rural/suburban contexts.

Introducing place and wider social contexts: Bromsgrove

The research took place in Bromsgrove, which is a small town in Worcestershire approximately sixteen miles North-East of Worcester and roughly six miles South-West of the closest Birmingham postcode. Bromsgrove has a predominantly white population (95.8%) and contains approximately 93,637 residents (Office for National Statistics, 2011) . While it is often described as a 'town', it is framed throughout the thesis (based on family

members' narrations, conversations with locals and my own subjectivities), as both 'rural' and 'suburban' in the demographic, cultural and geographical sense. This purposeful change of terms addresses the way Bromsgrove's high street, local amenities, leisure centres, schools, countryside and farming community make it a place that contains a combination of rural and suburban features. It is also not clear in official documentation whether Bromsgrove is designated as suburban or rural, so I have defined it as 'semi-rural/suburban'.

Like much of the English suburban countryside, Bromsgrove is post-industrial and between the 18th and 20th centuries was an important location for weapons manufacturing. It was home to the first nail-making factory and is located in close proximity to the Black Country, another place in the West Midlands known for its iron foundries and forges. The Bromsgrove Society, a local membership charity founded in 1980 dedicated to the 'pride, preservation and progress' of the town's Christian, Anglo-Saxon history, describes the town's key cultural sites as the Avoncroft Museum, Sanders Park, St. Johns Church, All Saints Church and the Railwaymen's Graves in Bromsgrove Churchyard (The Bromsgrove Society, 2020). This brief overview of its heritage provides an introduction to some of the cultural markers of this semi-rural/suburban place. Over the past twenty years, Bromsgrove has seen an increase in commuter culture and wealth and has a growing middle class. In recent decades, large swathes of its residents work in retail, the National Health Service (NHS), hospitality, hair and beauty and the automotive industry (Census, 2011).

Though the main location described in this thesis is Bromsgrove, the study included towns and villages on its periphery and incorporated some

experiences (particularly school experiences) in Redditch, Blackwell and Alvechurch. For the purpose of the place-based focus of this thesis, it is worth reiterating that Bromsgrove is located in close proximity to the UK's second largest city, Birmingham, which has a rich history of disparate flows of migrant populations (Vertovec, 2007). Further, because of the typical family migration patterns among the nine families (particularly among Generation One), there are references to and narratives about Birmingham throughout.

It is with these introductory reflections on the construction and imaginings of semi-rural/suburban England that I argue – despite many of the family members' self-identifying as 'Black British' – that the Black mixed-race families' narratives about their lives overwhelmingly amounted to negotiations with what Sarah Neal has called:

> [A] post-colonial era [in which the] importance of English rurality
> has developed around the politics of (invisible) whiteness and
> constructions of ethnicity, identity and belonging (Neal, 2002,
> p.444).

The critical decision to situate the research in the local and national specificities of a semi-rural/suburban place in England recognises cultural signifiers in narratives about Bromsgrove that could not be understood simply through descriptions of Britain and Britishness. In this way, the arguments respond to Anoop Nayak's contention that the English suburbs and countryside are the 'borderland between the multicultural city' and routinely 'imagined as the last bastions of whiteness' (Nayak, 2010, p.2377). Throughout the thesis I emphasise the way family members are still negotiating their hometown in

relation to the legacies of post-war Britain and their perceived threat to white English respectability.

Locating and retrieving stories of Black life in England

The decision to situate the analysis in England, and specifically in its very explicitly place-based semi-rural/suburban contexts, was informed by the knowledge that these places may be seen as the discursive and hyper-localised sites of the social reproduction of whiteness, Englishness and identity (Agyeman & Spooner, 1997). The arguments are framed by an understanding of the racialisation of semi-rural/suburban places that is informed by colonial and postcolonial imaginings of England and Englishness as examples of the 'civilised', 'respectable', 'exceptionality' of Britain (Nayak, 2010; Bhambra, 2011; Skeggs, 1997).

The empirical chapters in the thesis contribute to the presentation of Black subjectivities and the effects of mixed-race family relatedness, race and place. But it is also in these chapters that the complicated, yet inextricable connection to the above matters with familial, parental and sibling love inform what is both shared and uncovered by family members (hooks, 2000). Does love transcend the impact of race on relationships? Or does it simply inform the ways in which racialisation becomes understood between (mixed-race) family members?

As well as contributing to growing scholarship on the very specific experiences and narratives of Black mixed-race families in the U.K (Pang, 2018; Joseph-Salisbury, 2018; Sims & Njaka, 2019; Campion, 2021), the empirical chapters respond to a need to reinstate geographically attentive representations

of the multiplicity of Black lives' in England (Bryan et al.,1985; Lewis, 1993; Meghji, 2017; Bernard, 2017; Sobande, 2020, p.53; Bentil, forthcoming 2022). The emphasis on *reinstatement* here is a political reminder for the reader that this thesis is a very small addition to existing stories of the presence of Black people and our lives in Britain and its devolved nations.

Within the last three decades, scholarship on the importance of Black geographies and Black people's experiences of place has developed considerably in North America and Canada (bell hooks, 1997; Tatum, 2000; McKittrick, 2006; McKittrick & Woods, 2007; Woods, 1998; Allen et al., 2018). Black geographers such as McKittrick (2006, 2011) have stressed that the Black sense of place is an essential study for geographical representations of the heterogeneousness of Black life. Consequently the focus here on Blackness, mixedness and semi-rural/suburban place amounts to a contextualisation of Woods' (2002) and McKittrick's (2011) note that understanding Blackness in place is about the documentation of lived experiences both within and in spite of the dominance of whiteness.

Along with the emphasis on Blackness, family and place, later discussions also respond to Allen et al.'s (2018) emphasis on relational sense of place in the study of Black life. By focussing on Black mixed-race families as an exemplification of the heterogenous nature of Black life in England, I explore how active struggles in social life are tied to the way the dominant interests of the family become localised in childhood, schooling and place-making. Scholarship has shown how nation, race and respectability are integral aspects of place making in semi-rural/suburban places and the empirical chapters that

follow show how these cultures become naturalised and normative for Black and Black mixed-race people and their white family members. This thesis is a scholarly intervention on whiteness and racism in these very particular locations, whilst also addressing how specific historical and contemporary understandings of Blackness become mobilised and lived through time, place and family.

Key arguments and thesis structure

The objective of this chapter was to show how this thesis is a critical departure from individualised understandings of mixedness, centred on the impact of wider social contexts, and located specifically in a semi-rural/suburban place. I have outlined the reasons why this research used the racial category 'Black mixed-race' instead of 'mixed-race' alone and begun to introduce the family formations of the nine Black (and white) mixed-race families.

In this final section of chapter one, I introduce how the theoretical and empirical approaches have been conceptualised through hegemonic whiteness, cultures of racism, the impact of the white gaze and double consciousness in the wider social contexts of semi-rural/suburban place. After this, I provide a brief overview of the structure of the thesis.

One of the primary arguments of the thesis relates to how family relatedness in Black mixed-race families are affected by the social reproduction of race and whiteness in the contexts of suburbia and rurality. Central to these discussions is the way I incorporate a combined analysis of 'hegemony'

(Gramsci, 1976; Hall et al., 1978; Hall, 1985) and whiteness (Lewis, 2004; Hughey, 2012) (hegemonic whiteness), to demonstrate how racialised hierarchies of power and belonging become concealed, consented to and resisted in Black mixed-race families, but also within differing family members social lives in civil society. This argument is central to the exploration of the way racialised boundaries of belonging create an everyday, but localised personification of whiteness and Englishness as integral to the most socially sanctioned and tolerated resident (bell hooks, 1997; Nayak, 2003; Back & Duneier, 2006). In this way, hegemonic whiteness works to show how places like Bromsgrove rely on the normative, silent and hidden naturalisation of cultures (Neal et al., 2013).

A second important argument relates to how *cultures of racism* become part of an active struggle to maintain the values, ideas and imaginations of semi-rural/suburban places. These processes are embedded in discourses that portray racialised inferiority as a common sense aspect of suburban rurality. In this thesis, *racisms* are addressed as part of the localised culture of Bromsgrove through their interpersonal, social, intimate and institutional occurrences (Solomos & Back, 1996). Further, cultures of racism are invoked when fellow Bromsgrovians and civil society institutions engage in purposeful and everyday racisms that monitor who is or is not afforded 'automatic belonging' (Back, 2015).

Throughout the following chapters an ongoing connection to the social reproduction of cultures of racism and hegemonic whiteness is incorporated as a way of writing against individualising the very prevalent issue of racism and

negative racialisation, to emphasise how these issues are strengthened, by examining their manifestations in specific settings attentive to time and location (Solomos & Back, 1996, p.28). Furthermore, cultures of racism provide the social, cultural and institutional arenas in which hegemonic whiteness seeks to become the normative condition of semi-rural/suburban places.

Critical to the building of these arguments, which connect hegemonic whiteness to cultures of racism was Gramsci's notion of *common sense,* which recognised that hegemony transcends understandings of social life as sanctimonious, obvious and precise, and instead focuses on their contradictory, conflicting and fragmented nature (Gramsci, 1967; see also chapter two). In this way, the thesis shows how both hegemonic whiteness and cultures of racism can be critiqued, examined and contested. While I centre a more critical analysis of Black mixed-race families and engagements with race in the context of semi-rural/suburban place, I also provide a renewed contribution to family studies by showing how bonded *sibling groups or siblingships* can generate radical spaces of love, support and solidarity through relational resistance (see chapter seven). This argument is about recentring the power of love and intimacy within families, even in the face of the impact of race and place on family relatedness in mixed-race families.

The final important argument woven through the thesis considers how Black and Black mixed-race subjectivities within the nine families situated within the very specific terrain of semi-rurality/suburbia are affected by hegemonic whiteness and cultures of racism. I contend that members of both Generations One and Two of the Black and Black mixed-race families have experienced

exceptional exposure to a 'white gaze' that routinely positions Blackness in a white imaginary of racialised subjugation (Fanon, 1967; Dubois, 1903). This thesis argues that the weightiness of the white gaze pervaded many of the lived experiences and understandings of the (Black) Self; producing what Fanon stresses as the 'racial epidermal schema' where the white imagination of Blackness was shaped by 'a thousand details, anecdotes and stories' (Fanon, 1964, p.84). These connections and exemplifications of a form of 'double consciousness' (Du Bois, 1905; Gilroy, 2000; Yancy, 2017 & Joseph-Salisbury 2018) show how the Black and Black mixed-race family members negotiation of their racialised existence was co-constitutive of their relation to the cultures of semi-rural/suburban place and their own family.   I outline poignant examples of how double consciousness conditioned the internalisation and suppression of racism among some Black mixed-race and Black family members through processes of *racialised isolation,* which clearly generated beliefs in their ability to *overcome* the pervasion of race, socially reproducing an individualised understanding of how racism presents. In this thesis, I explore some of the more challenging narratives that were obviously the consequence of racialised isolation in which family members had very few people in their lives who had had similar experiences (feeling a distorted and misdirected sense of racialised subjugation unique to *mixed-race* people) that were related to their perceptions of more intra-ethnic tensions among Black people. Crucially, throughout these sensitively written discussions, there is are a variety of analyses that should prompt the reader to pay attention to how familial, parental and sibling love becomes a demonstrable way that makes the workings of race hard to pin down

particularly when families contain distinctive racialised differences (hooks, 2000; Lewis, 2009).

Thesis structure

In chapter two, I outline how postcolonial and post-war genealogies of mixedness in Britain and its Empire are important to frame the histories which have contextualised the more localised interventions I make in the empirical chapters. I explore briefly the thirty-year development of mixed-race studies and addressed their continued impact of the pathologising histories of mixed-race in contemporary public and private discourse. The chapter goes on to assert the way that scholarship on the wider contexts of ongoing, everyday negotiation with hegemonic whiteness and cultures of place in semi-rural/suburban place-making are fundamental for making sense of the empirical interventions that are the focus of the thesis.

In chapter three I introduce the 'the unspoken' as a methodological challenge for contending with the limited discussion in the nine families about how race had impacted their family members' lived experiences in the context of semi-rural/suburban places. This is a methodological analysis focused on how narrative ethnography provides a useful research framework for empirical analysis of contemporary and retrospective narratives of semi-rural/suburban place, race and the family. This chapter concludes with a description and an exemplification of 'portraiture' to introduce the method used to 'write up' the stories from the families featured in the empirical chapters.

In chapter four, I show how and why notions of *a better life* became intertwined with constructions of a better place to live among the families, who ended up living in Bromsgrove through multi-generational migrations from Jamaica and Saint Kitts, to Birmingham and Bromsgrove. This chapter begins by contextualising the decisions made by the majority of Generation One in their childhood experiences of predominantly working class and white Birmingham, and how this partly informed their decision to move to Bromsgrove. The chapter goes on to address the narrated consequences of raising Black mixed-race families in a place dominated by semi-rural/suburban culture. Overall, this chapter demonstrates how descriptions of a better life were often socially reproduced by imaginings generated in opposition to the very existence of the Black mixed-race family formations in particular, and racialised difference more broadly.

Chapter five focuses on the narratives of members of Generation Two, who attended school in Bromsgrove. This chapter shows how the social reproduction of hegemonic whiteness in Bromsgrove relies on civil society and its agents in education (schools), media (local) and local authority (council, police and some religious establishments primarily) institutions (Hall et al, 1978; Hall, 1980). Here, I argue that the social reproduction of hegemonic whiteness generates active struggles in semi-rural/suburban places that rely on the normalisation and naturalisation of 'common sense' ideas and values that create, imagine and establish the most tolerated resident who is typically racialised as white (Knowles, 2008; Hall, 1990; Chakraborti & Garland, 2004). Mainly white schools in Bromsgrove are seen as examples of civil society institutions, where from a

very young age Generation Two were increasingly required to negotiate with hegemonic whiteness and cultures of racism. This chapter introduces one of the consequences of the intensification of the white gaze and a distorted double consciousness through the concept of *racialised isolation.* This is explored through narratives of lived experiences of school that clearly impacted Generation Two's retrospective and contemporary understanding of themselves, and the extent to which they were able to belong, both as young people and later as adults in Bromsgrove.

In chapter six, I argue that the narratives of the Black mixed-race families exemplify the way 'the family' functions as a *micro-site of civil society* which can serve as an extension to the institutional and relational social reproduction of hegemonic whiteness discussed in earlier chapters. As the families have been navigating cultures that reproduce common sense ideas and values typically found in predominantly white semi-rural/suburban places in England, I stress that these are examples of how hegemonic whiteness *can* pervade and implicate intimate and familial relationships (Lewis, 2009; Ahmed, 2014; Tyler, 2019) and argue that with immediate and extended family members having a more linear proximity to being racialised as white, hegemonic whiteness becomes a frequently hidden and unspoken power dynamic in Black (and white) mixed-race families. This can generate very specific challenges of racialised familial relatedness and parenting racial difference. More poignantly, the effects of these matters were addressed among family members via commonly expressed narratives about the normative silencing and unspoken nature of race and racism in their familial and social relations in Bromsgrove (See chapter

three). These interventions in mixed-race families should be read as a contribution to scholarship on the white women, and some Black mixed-race women, who become the primary caregivers to Black mixed-race people in the contexts of semi-rural/suburban place.

Chapter seven constitutes a departure from the previous empirical chapter by framing some clear sites of both resilience and resistance to the cultures, racisms and whiteness explored throughout. This chapter contributes to the *sociology of siblings* by focusing on the importance of *loving siblingships* in Black mixed-race families in a semi-rural/suburban place. In this final empirical chapter, I explore how siblingships in the nine families provided family members with critical space to better understand, manage and negotiate civil society in Bromsgrove. Here, I consider how adult sibling groups containing (lovingly) nurtured siblingships with familiar but different experiences can generate supportive dialogues about the effects of hegemonic whiteness and cultures of racism within their individual lives and families. Exploring how siblings come to understand race and gender through their familiar and differing experiences of their processes and using the concept of relational resistance, I show how siblingships can generate space to critically address their own lived experiences in the contexts of racial hierarchies, histories of systemic racism and differing processes of racialisation informed by gender and colourism.

I conclude the thesis in chapter eight, by returning to chapter zero's autobiographical note with some reflections that draw on Caroline Knowles' (2008) idea about the power of returning home, to uncover how race becomes hidden by cultures typically found in places imagined through nostalgia and

whiteness. With an emphasis on what happens when we have both physical and emotional distance from places, I explore how a more critical overview of lived experiences is possible, although not always a given.

The concluding remarks focus on the combination of ethnically and racially specific research on mixed-race, especially how an emphasis on family formations and place can provide more thorough, expansive and specific contributions to research on mixedness. I present some of the things at stake when semi-rural/suburban places create cultures that seek to obliterate racial difference at the same time as structurally and interpersonally marginalising Black and racially minoritised adults, young people and children. I conclude with some critical comments on how race functions in Black mixed-race families situated in semi-rural/suburban places, while also stressing that love, family and intimacy can still generate radical spaces of care and support that can contest, challenge and obstruct hegemonic whiteness and disrupt the pervasiveness of race and the white gaze.

Chapter Two: Resituating mixed-race studies: mixedness, hegemonic whiteness and semi-rural/suburban place-making

This chapter outlines how the narratives of the nine families who were participants in this research can be both contextualised and understood through broader histories of, and scholarship on, mixedness in Britain. While the overall arguments of the thesis centre on the heterogeneous lived experiences narrated by Black mixed-race families from a semi-rural/suburban place, the chapter describes the politics of racial categorisation and historical and contemporary state monitoring of mixedness which constitute the backdrop and context in which they can be understood. Crucially, it sets the scene for the importance of wider social contexts when researching racial categories like mixed-race.

The chapter is divided into two parts: part one introduces the historical background and contemporary trajectories of mixed-race studies. Here I outline the centrality of Britain's colonial, postcolonial and post-war history for the systemic and structural marginalising of mixed-race people through violence and conceptual pathologisation (Henrique, 1975, cited in Joseph-Salisbury, 2018; Aspinall, 2018). While this section provides examples of how contemporary research has sought to discredit old racist terminologies of miscegenation and notions of racial purity, the purpose of addressing these histories is to begin to outline how the discursive use of racial categorisation

has evolved in ways that continue to have serious implications for members of the nine families in this research and discussions of mixedness more widely.

This examination of colonial and postcolonial histories of mixedness is followed by more recent accounts of the state monitoring of mixed-race people in Britain after World War II. These histories are essential to the analyses in the empirical chapters, as many of the Black and Black mixed-race family members in both Generation One and Two discussed memories of themselves, their parents or grandparents arriving in England from Jamaica and Saint Kitts between 1948 and 1971. This discussion of the post-war era also provides valuable insight into the widespread policing and demonising of people in mixed-race relationships, whose legacies are discussed in later chapters via family members' memories of intimate and broader rejections of interracial relationships. These contextual histories constitute an introduction to the localised and place-based challenges narrated by family members in later chapters, which were evidently rooted in the remnants of these state sponsored harms and violences.

The chapter goes on to map some of the critical research on mixedness to show how existing scholarship on mixed-race people and their families informs and inspires my arguments and analysis. This section makes the case for the importance of this contribution to the field of mixed-race studies as an example of scholarship that seeks to resist the homogenising racial categories that have a long history of essentialising race (Gilroy, 2000). By focussing on the very specific narratives of Black mixed-race families in a specific place, the thesis contributes to research on the heterogeneity of Black and Black mixed-race

families in suburban/semi-rural places in England. It also offers a critical contribution to a more nuanced, intimate and relational analysis of parenting racial difference. Part one concludes with a short section on women-centred families or 'matricentric families' by way of introduction to the centrality of mothering and othermothers to this analysis.

In part two, I explain how I arrived at the conceptual framework of hegemonic whiteness and its implications for family members via an outline of the political and theoretical groundings of 'hegemony', 'civil society' and 'common sense'. Part two is developed through a section that examines the situatedness of hegemonic whiteness in scholarship on race and place in the context of semi-rurality/suburbia. I argue that although there is now more situated scholarship on mixedness, there is a need for more localised contributions, and in particular for contributions attentive to narratives and lived experiences from within the very specific contexts of semi-rural/suburban places. The section concludes with an introduction to scholarship on 'cultures of racism', 'double consciousness' and 'the white gaze' to contextualise some of the lived consequences of semi-rural/suburban place-making for family members' sense of self discussed in later chapters.

Part One – Mapping mixed-race studies: histories of subjugation & (mixed-race) scholarship on resistance to pathologisation

In chapter one, I introduced 'mixed-race' as a flawed and contentious racial category (Aspinall, 2003; Aspinall, 2018; Aspinall & Song, 2014). Though racial categories are limited in their capacity to redress and move beyond the social significance and construction of race (Gilroy, 2000; Gunaratnam, 2003; Lentin,

2020); different histories and contemporary processes of racialisation show how racial categories like mixed-race and the terminology of mixedness remain significant for social research (Ifekwunigwe, 1998). The narratives explored in the following chapters are of the unique experiences of Black mixed-race families in Bromsgrove. However, both the history of, and scholarly research on, the pathologisation of mixedness provide essential context. These are the grounds that nourish the roots of the issues that family members remember having to manage and negotiate in the context of semi-rural/suburban England.

A brief genealogy of the pathologisation of mixedness

Before exploring some of the academic scholarship in mixed-race studies, it is worth engaging with certain moments during Britain's (state-sponsored) rationale for centuries of violent subjugation of mixed-race people alongside colonial, postcolonial and post-war depictions and public discourses of mixedness (Frederickson, 1981; Alibhai-Brown & Montague, 1992). As Caballero (2005; 2014) has pointed out, these histories have been essential to continuous misrepresentations of mixedness as 'good' and 'bad' rather than simply being an ordinary part of the history of social life. Revisiting such recent history of socially, structurally and systematically entrenched pathologisation of mixedness in colonial Britain and its Empire (17th – 21st century in particular) has frequently led to the removal of individual agency, in favour of 'commemorative' and 'progressive' discourses. By focusing on agency in nine Black mixed-race families the thesis demonstrates how it is possible to critically and carefully explore family relatedness in Black mixed-race families while still recognising the more contemporary impact of these colonial, postcolonial and

post-war histories, which continue to affect the lives outlined in the following chapters.

A holistic understanding of the historical grounding of the category of mixed-race and its consequences requires an appreciation of the evolution of the negative racialisation of Black Caribbean colonial subjects (later British citizens), as well as systemic racism (Tyler, 2010). These histories provide fundamental background for the family members in this research – first, second and third generation British citizens who arrived in England after the second world war from the then British colonies of Jamaica and St Kitts (Karatani, 2003).

Genealogies of mixedness in the British Empire (and Europe more broadly) tell an important story of some of the ways in which race has become structurally, systemically and interpersonally 'a technology of power' (Lentin, 2020). When mixedness presented across the colonies, it coincided with both state and academic sponsored reifications of racial inferiority that were understood through the superiority of 'whiteness' and 'Europeanness' (Ware and Back, 2001; Goldberg, 2006; Garner, 2007). As both Stoler (2009) and Garner (2007) note, 'Europeanness' developed as synonymous with whiteness, and created the conditions for notions of racial purity, from which any deviation was widely understood as moral degradation (Garner, 2007; Stoler, 2009, p.393). Mixedness in the colonies became an emblem of racial contamination; it was seen to call into question the purity of the nation. Crucially, this anti-miscegenation discourse co-existed alongside mixed-race populations and interracial relationships in both Britain and its colonies. As Anne McClintock

(1995) notes, the colonial contexts of mixedness contained a plethora of circumstances which were similar to the extractive nature of Empire – violent, forced and exploitative, as well as some 'mixed' unions that were mundane, familial and unextraordinary (McClintock, 1995).

By the turn of 20th century, anti-miscegenation discourse had become the subject of state sponsored pseudoscience, with the development of eugenics and race science in Britain, Europe and the U.S.A. As Parker and Song (2001) have noted, mixedness became symbolic of the deterioration of the nation (Parker & Song, 2001, p.3). Crucially, race science suggested that mixedness should be avoided on the grounds of its genealogical effects on white populations (Ifekwunigwe, 1999; Mahtani, 2014). As Bernasconi (2002; 2008; 2010) has argued, the impact of this pathologisation of hybridity in the British empire was huge; an intellectualised and state sponsored antipathy to mixedness continued to pervade public discourse through the twentieth and into the twenty-first century (Bland, 2007).

For example, in Britain in 1930 *The Fletcher Report* was commissioned to assess 'the colour problem' in the seaport towns of Liverpool, Bristol and Cardiff (Fletcher, 1930). Its purpose was to investigate the implications of an increased presence in these towns of primarily working class mixed Black African and Caribbean and white English and Irish families. Christian (2008) asserts that the report was the first of its kind to investigate the socioeconomic 'plight of half-

castes',[3] and in doing so created further stigmatisation and demonisation of Black and white sexual relations (Christian, 2008, p.216). It is against this historical backdrop that the narratives shared by the families in this research need to be read. As I discuss in later chapters, a very particular type of negative racialisation described by both Generation One and Generation Two frequently related to the discursive reproduction of racism through notions of racial inferiority (chapter five). Both parents and grandparents experienced visceral familial rejection, but also hostility from outside the family, including violence and social exclusion (see chapters six and seven). These narratives echoed many of the themes of public discourse on mixedness that had historically been made 'respectable' by eugenics and scientific racism.

The more contemporary background to hostility to their mixed-race unions narrated by nearly all nine families and described in the following chapters can be located in a late twentieth century moral panic about sexual activity between white women and Black men in Britain (Fryer, 1984; Banton, 1987; Miles, 1993; Song & Parker, 2001; Tizard & Phoenix, 1993). As with the discourse prevalent in the British colonies (Frederickson, 1981), these unions were presented as a degradation of the nation which was said to require both monitoring and control (Edwards & Caballero, 2011). Heightened attention to these relationships was particularly evident after the war, when towns and cities in Britain were

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[3] The term half-caste was widely used within British, Spanish, Portuguese and Dutch colonies during the 19th century to differentiate natives that appeared to fall outside of restricted racial coding (Stoler, 2009). The need for more extensive racial indicators at times presented colonial administrators with the conundrum of whether these people should be citizens of the empire or remain subjects of the empire. The latter overwhelmingly prevailed (Stoler, 2009).

positioned as 'hot-spots' of 'mixing' and routinely regarded as typical of the 'underclass' (Belchem, 2014, Olumide, 2002). As the historian David Olusoga has recalled, 'the police, press and magistrates became particularly active in the matter of inter-racial relationships' (2016, p.482). The policing of mixedness, later included the naming and shaming by newspapers of white women, part of a more systemic campaign of abuse of women who had children with Black men (Olusoga, 2016, p.482; Bland, 2007, 2017). In some of the most violent incidents, children were removed from families and placed in care homes (Peters, 2016; Bland, 2019). A combination of ideas implying lack of respectability and sexual promiscuity and myths about the psychological wellbeing of 'half-castes' was at the forefront of this state led brutality (Bland, 2019).

This brief genealogy has shown how a historical anti-miscegenation discourse of mixedness and relied on subordination, dehumanisation, eugenics and class-based ridicule. These trajectories of public discourse on, and state intervention in, mixedness have been a central component of the development of mixed-race studies in Britain and help contextualise the conceptual and theoretical framework of the thesis.

Introduction to mixed-race studies

Racialisation and Mixed-race identity

The development of UK-based mixed-race studies has tended to focus on how the remnants of the histories discussed above continue to pervade both lived experience and public imaginings of mixedness.

Song and Parker (2001) have stressed that mixed-race scholarship centred on identity, racial categorisation and racialisation has been crucial to the academic field. Many of these studies, which have focused on the formation of racial identity for young mixed-race children during early socialisation, echo the narratives outlined by Generation Two and their experiences of schooling in Bromsgrove (see chapter five). For example, in their ground-breaking research, *Black, White or Mixed Race?: Race and Racism in the Lives of Young People of Mixed Parentage,* Tizard and Phoenix (1993, 2002) explored the lived experiences of Black mixed-race young people of secondary school age alongside some of their parents. They researched how these young people processed their experiences of racialisation in school settings and showed how teachers could become complicit in reproducing the discourse that mixed-race families were predisposed to socialising their children through a 'clash of cultures'. Tizard and Phoenix endeavoured to understand the relationship between public concern (mainly teachers), lived experiences and how mixed-race young people negotiated the negative racialisation of their families. They showed how identity formation among mixed-race young people was informed by the legacies of colonial and postcolonial pathologies that became intrinsic to mixed-race young people's sense of self (Tizard & Phoenix, 1993). This particular study was used to contextualise the arguments in the following chapters because members of the nine families in this research were aware of how their families were being negatively racialised by state agents in civil society, including teachers. Tizard and Phoenix raised important questions about mixedness and identity with their interviews with parents, which raised

significant considerations for the development of the arguments in this research, concerning how the cultures of semi-rural/suburban places affect the way negative racialisation is intimately negotiated beyond school and in the home (see chapter six). Further, Tizard and Phoenix generated research on mixedness which began to address the connection between the racialisation of mixed-race young people in a civil society institutions (school) and how this was negotiated by their parents, which clearly opened up the space for more scholarly attention on the long term affects of the overlapping matters of education, home and family (see chapter five and six).

Suki Ali used a research sample similar to that of Tizard and Phoenix, but examined mixedness through the perspectives of mixed-race children and their mothers (Ali, 2003). Ali's data gathering methods utilised popular culture – such as magazines and TV programmes – and family photographs. By using a multi-model methodology, she was able to show that contextual analysis was fundamental to a better understanding of mixedness and identity. She used interviewing to explore how the semiotics of race-thinking contribute to a child's sense of self, and family photographs and images of people from popular culture to show that mixedness can be understood through 'creative interpretations' and 'memory production'. With this, Ali found that exploratory interviewing methods identified the temporality and changeable nature of racial identity (Ali, 2003, p.91-93). Her research recognised the children's common-sense view of race and provided a nuanced understanding of the uses of 'mixed-race'. Ali's focus on mother-centred mixed-race families offered a useful framework for this research, which both replicates her findings and develops them by focusing on

Black mixed-families, how cultures of place pervade lived experiences, familial relatedness and issues of belonging in the context of semi-rural/suburban places.

The scholarship of Tizard and Phoenix, and Ali have provided fundamental analyses that support my discussion of Generation Two's exploration of their identity within the semi-rural/suburban confines of Bromsgrove. Other scholars of mixed-race studies have formulated research that transcends notions of race and identity. Such contributions to mixed-race studies have considered the impact of racialisation and racialised categorisation on mixed-race identities, and focused on contrasting aspects of mixedness such as the effect of place, nation and gender (Joseph-Salisbury, 2018; Campion, 2021).

Studies of mixedness beyond nation and identity provided generative points of reference for the place and family-based contexts of the arguments in this thesis. For example, in *Scattered Belongings: Cultural Paradoxes of Race, Nation and Gender,* Jane Ifekwunigwe (1998) explored the lived experiences of six mixed Black and white African and Caribbean women and their relationship with mixedness, Blackness and place. Ifekwunigwe (1999) argued that contemporary discourses on mixedness were susceptible to nineteenth century tropes of cultural and pseudoscientific constructions of hybridity, and maintained that scholarship on mixedness requires a critical framework which allows race to be understood in concert with gender, nation and historical categorisation. This is similar to the approach taken by Jill Olumide (2002), who contended that mixedness should firstly be situated within the realms of social constructionism, emphasising the effects of differential 'social relations' that

need to be separated from race and identity. Both Ifekwunigwe and Olumide argued for the deconstruction of a racialised framework of mixedness, contending that this kind of deterministic agenda hinders a true abandonment of race. However, Olumide (2002), in her book *Raiding the Gene Pool: the social construction of mixed race,* states explicitly that scholarly attention is needed if racially categorised people are defined as being 'different'. This attentiveness is imperative to the following analysis of mixedness in context as it demonstrates the relationship between social constructionism and the lived realities of place. With this in mind, Olumide coined the term 'the mixed-race condition' and argued that there are some examples and trends across history which suggest that there is often a particular experience for people racialised or identify as mixed-race (Olumide, 2002).

The scholarship of Ifekwunigwe and Olumide informs the critical frameworks found throughout the following chapters. Their commitment to the history of mixedness coincides with the objectives of the thesis – seeking to reinstate the importance of wider social contexts for making sense of contemporary social constructions of racial categories and their impacts on lived experiences. Crucial to the arguments made in the chapters that follow, this scholarship offers the possibility of developing the field of mixed-race studies to consider very specific circumstances and challenges relating to place, family and social relations. There are useful considerations but also clear gaps in the recognition of how Black mixed-race families in particular these omissions refer to how race, racism and racialisation is negotiated in places that are culturally entrenched in notions of white Englishness. These gaps also concern how wider

social contexts relate to, but also pervade, family relatedness and social relationships in the confines of places that are normatively reproduced through whiteness and respectability. They centre on the need for nuanced and critical examinations of what is at stake when the racialisation of mixedness is situated in a location that routinely reproduces racialised boundaries of belonging so pervasive that they can affect familial relationships. In this way, this thesis' very particular contributions, which extend the arguments of existing scholarship, explain how a pathologisation of Black (mixedness) conditions a form of racialisation in semi-rural/suburbia which is worth heightened examination.

Love, interracial relationships and mixed-race families

Through books, articles and more artistic expression, scholarship on mixedness has sought to create arguments that reject the historical pathologisation of interracial relationships (SuAndi, 2019). This provides analysis essential for the arguments in chapter six about how mixedness becomes intimately negotiated in women-centred families.

The central focus on scholarship on interracial relationships and mixed-race families show how racialisation and racism become everyday and normative aspects of social life. The thesis resists framing Black families as inherently deviant (Gilroy, 1987), and outlines a plethora of relational and familial experiences attentive to class, race and gender. Mixed-race families embody a range of experiences and it is this reality that has inspired Caballero et al (2012)

to call for a denunciation of the benchmark of what constitutes 'a mixed-race family'.

Scholars such as Caballero (2005) and Ros Edwards (2011) have argued that the study of mixedness should pay attention to the lived experiences of interracial couples and the mixed-race family. Both scholars stress that mixed-race studies should go beyond an observational approach and instead seek to centralise the narratives of 'the researched'. Through methods that help participants recall experiences of pathologisation and racism influenced by structural forces, their research has been crucial for the repositioning of mixed-race studies within the realms of radical politics. The politics embedded in their scholarship has sought to elevate the hidden voices of mixedness through an interview-style approach that pays close attention to how family members have been treated by different institutions and how overpowering structures have frequently positioned them as powerless.

Caballero and Edwards have exposed the way mixed-race families have negotiated the bifurcated public discourse on their family formation in government agencies and in popular culture. They argue that parents and young people have been consistently required to manage whatever society has decided they constitute, whether that be celebratory (Caballero, 2013) or demonising (Caballero, Edwards & Smith, 2011). In the arguments that follow, the reader will see the spirit of these approaches to scholarship on mixed-race families, but will also see critical additions concerning how we can better understand the experiences and negotiations of mixed-race families if wider

social contexts such as place are included in the research process (as argued later in this chapter and in chapter three).

The exploration of parenting racial difference has been a significant development in scholarship on mixed-race families, with important analysis of the mothering experience of white mothers who parent Black mixed-race children (Twine, 1999, 2002 and 2010; Lewis, 2009; Harman, 2010; McKenzie, 2013; Caballero and Edwards, 2013). This research was partly developed in response to public discourse that has problematised and analysed the way white mothers respond to racial difference through parenting. Over the past three decades, through in-depth and longitudinal ethnographies, France Winddance Twine (1998, 2002, 2012) has researched the parenting methods of white mothers with Black mixed-race children in the US and UK. Twine developed the concept of 'racial literacy' to address how white mothers parented through racial difference. She stressed that some white mothers had actively created environments and social relationships that were culturally cognisant of their children's African and Caribbean heritage (Twine, 2010). In 1998, she began a series of interventions into the white motherhood of Black children in the East Midlands (UK), which documented how white mothers would often receive disapproving remarks about their capacity to parent racial difference from other Black parents (Twine, 1999). While examining parenting strategies in white mothering of racial difference, Twine stressed that white mothers were not a homogenous group. In her other ethnographies, such as the one undertaken in a North American suburb (1997), she explored how social class could disrupt some mothers' incorporation of racial literacy in their

parenting strategies. Twine discovered how some economically privileged Asian and white European American mothers who raised 'brown' girls were predisposed to create a racially neutral experience and cultural identity for their children. This generated a delay in their children's diasporic and cultural appreciation of the African heritage which many only discovered later, at university (Twine, 1997, p.240).

A key issue for scholarship on white mothers with mixed-race children is how lone mothers in particular have negotiated manifestations of the aforementioned historical class and gender-based ridicule and demonisation. This has evolved into more sophisticated discourses in which 'concerns' are transformed into a language of viable 'care' for both mother and child. Lone white mothers have been continually questioned on their capacity to parent children who are racially 'different' and these examinations have continued among government agencies such as social services (Peters, 2016).

On lone mothering in mixed-race families, Caballero and Edwards (2013) argue for an understanding of how the morality of single motherhood and mixedness become interchangeable. In their study of lone mothers of mixed-race children, they recall mothers who were deemed to be 'living on the edges of society', and argue for the need to be attentive to the intersection of 'race', class and gender. These emphases on the class-fuelled pathologising of lone white mothers have been an important development in mixed-race studies. The contemporary manifestation of historical discourses presents them as being insufficiently prepared to parent children of colour (McKenzie, 2013), their sexual relationships with Black men and men of colour are vilified (Caballero

and Edwards, 2013), and there has been considerable research on how these mothers are likely to be judged unrespectable (Skeggs, 1997, p.77; Harman, 2010). Although these interventions to reinstate agency and racial literacy amongst white mothers of mixed-race studies are important, this thesis presents more critical developments in mixed-race studies and sensitively explores and centres the experiences of mixed-race people whose main caregivers have been white and Black mixed-race mothers.

In *Birthing Racial Difference: conversations with my mother and others,* Gail Lewis (2009) used autobiographical material to address how memories of lived experience of (white) mothering and family contextualise how intimately love, racism and familial rapport is negotiated in Black and white mixed-race families. Lewis (2009) stressed that managing maternal love and racism presented a micropolitical site at which race had become a primary structuring principle in post-war Britain. Similarly, this type of centring of whiteness in Black mixed-race families has been adopted by scholars like Jo Britton (2013), who proclaim that a more critical understanding of how race (and racism) is reproduced in mixed-race families demands further investigation of the ways that whiteness impacts mixed-race family members.

The emphasis on redressing the demonisation of white mothers who parent racial difference continues to be an important aspect of research with mixed-race families. While the analysis in this thesis clearly aims to contribute to the tradition of ensuring that the agency and lived experience of white women is heard, the research follows Lewis' critical intervention by considering how existing scholarship on mixedness should be developed in a way that captures

more of the nuances surrounding family relatedness in mixed-race families. In this way, I stress throughout the following chapters that whiteness, and its functions in more intimate settings, need further interrogation and examination. These discussions are also responsive to bell hooks scholarship on what familial and parental love produces, inhibits and enables when it is examined alongside of the social reproduction of race (hooks, 2000; 2001). For the nine families in this research, where women have been at the forefront of their family relations, I propose a careful consideration of the effects of parenting through race-sameness for Black mixed-race people's sense of self (Twine, 1997; see chapter six), but also assert that more research focused on the parenting of Black mixed-race mothers of mixed-race children can help emphasise the possibility of Blackness becoming embodied in mixed-race families (Song & Gutierrez, 2015; Song, 2016).

This thesis argues that scholarship on parenting mixed-race should now do more to foreground the narratives of children. By ensuring that Generation Two's accounts of parenting are central in the following chapters I have also extended the analysis of mixed-race family formations by locating the radical love created through othermothers, siblings and cousins while navigating the pervasive nature of semi-rural/suburban place (see chapters six and seven). This is about widening understandings of mixedness both within and beyond parental negotiations with their mixed-race children and portraying the fundamental impact of wider social networks and social relations.

In the chapters that follow, the critical interventions of Lewis and Britton are at the forefront of my contribution to mixed-race studies. I have prioritised a

joined-up approach that centres the experiences of Black mixed-race people whose main care-givers have mostly been white women (and in a few cases Black mixed-race women). As well as exploring how white mothers in particular have made sense of parenting and birthing racial difference, the thesis resists the notion (to which some scholarship on mixed race has contributed) that white mothers of mixed-race children are demonised simply because they are racialised as white women. It should be clear in the emphasis on white mothers' experience of parenting racial difference that parental proximity to their child's experience of racism *can* generate classed and gendered predispositions to prejudicial treatment, but that these experiences should not be used as excuse to inscribe these processes alongside of an imagined threat to their white identity. This thesis makes clear the need for ongoing acknowledgement that white proximities to mixedness should be recognised through class and gender rather than through arguments that exceptionalise a very particular experience for white women in mixed-race families (see the extensive discussion in chapter six).

Women centred families: matricentric (mixed-race) families and introducing love

Over the past five decades, feminist scholarship on the family has developed third wave feminist critiques, as well as global feminist and queer feminist interventions on the centrality of the agency of women in what have been conceptualised as matrifocal and matriarchal family formations (Smith, 1966; Stack, 1974; Morrissey, 1991; Blackwood, 2005; Renaud, 2018; Davies, 1981; Spillers, 1987 Hill Collins, 2005). These studies and alternative

explorations of the heterogenous, but patriarch-resistant family formations have been largely discussed and explored in anthropological and sociological studies on family formation in the Caribbean and African American households.

Chapter one and the previous section established that the nine families in this research were primarily headed by and centred around women's caring. With this, I began to explore how the family narratives in this thesis presented a combination of matrifocal, matriarchal and matricentric formations. Although extensive feminist scholarship (Oakley, 1975; Bryan, Dadzie & Scafe, 1985; Brah, 1993; Crompton, Brockmann & Lyonette, 2005) has critiqued and contested sociological studies that argue that more contemporary family formations in Britain display more 'symmetrical family structures' (see Young & Willmott, 1973),[4] this research intended to reinstate a critical review of mixed-race families alongside an appreciation of women-centred families.

It is not my intention to detract from the racialised and classed experiences of Black mothers who have been rightly centred by the literature. However, the emphasis on women-centred families in this research is attentive to the fact that the mothers and othermothers (Hill Collins, 2005)[5] in the nine families were mainly white women with some Black mixed-race women (with one exception,

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[4] In 1973 Willmott and Young argued that families were increasingly displaying more equitable household cultures with men and women in particular doing very similar if not the same jobs in the workplace or the home.

[5] Patricia Hill Collins described these as women who are both intimate and distant in family formations, such as aunts, cousins and close family friends.

who was a Black woman/mother), and had clear synergies with existing scholarship on matrifocal and matriarchal family formations.

In the chapters that emphasise the importance of family relatedness in women centred families I contend that an important contextual reality in each of the families aligned with Andrea O'Reilly's (2008) conceptualisation of 'matricentric' formations whilst also demonstrating Bridget Byrne's (2006) more critical conception of 'white mothering' as producing a performance of parenting that reinscribes both race and class. Aligned with the use of work by Byrne (2008) that centres women and mothers is a recognition of the normative performance of mothering, which produces permeations of race and racism within everyday life.

The intention here is to establish that regardless of family formation, women performed much of the care and emotion work in the nine families, but also that this intervention in families and mothers is about resisting the removal of their agency by making them victims of patriarchal formations and instead asserting their transformative and integral roles as the heads of families.

Finally, before grounding some of the key theoretical and conceptual arguments which have contributed to the following empirical discussions on parenting racial difference, family relatedness and wider social context of semi-rural/suburbia, it is important to foreground the families (primarily headed by women) in this research as relational sites of familial love. With this, this thesis is another intervention responsive to bell hooks call for a more critical centring of love within our analysis of race, family and kinship (hooks, 2000). As will be revealed, the omnipresence of love in the Black mixed-race families in this research

becomes a crucial component of how they have both navigated and made sense of their lives in Bromsgrove. Love can be a tool to reconcile with the damage caused by negative racialiation and racism, but it can also work to generate cultures of lovelessness (infused by the dominance of whiteness) whereby to become loving of one's Blackness can become more challenging. These interconnections between mothering, race and love will be addressed more explicitly in the following chapters to open up further scholarly attention to the possibilities, but also the complications love can generate when it comes to comprehending how the social reproduction of race endures.

Part Two: Hegemony, whiteness and place-making: producing the terrain for hegemonic whiteness in semi-rural/suburban England

In this section, I introduce how the key combination of scholarship on hegemony (Gramsci, 1926, 1935, 1971, 1992; Hall, 1980, 1986, 1990, 2017) and whiteness (Lorde, 1984; Frankenberg, 1993; Back & Ware, 2001; Ahmed, 2004) has contributed to the conceptual framing of *hegemonic whiteness* as a primary relational and structural implication of the family members' narrations of their lives in Bromsgrove (Lewis, 2004; Hughey, 2012). I propose some of the consequences of negotiations with hegemonic whiteness by drawing attention to the white gaze, double consciousness and *cultures of racism*. I outline scholarship attentive to the importance of wider social contexts such as a Black sense of place in the context of imaginations of Englishness, rurality, suburbia and respectability, which helped to contextualise the way hegemonic whiteness emerged in the data. This section includes a return to themes from

chapter one, in which the thesis was situated as an exploration of the geographically specific stories of Black families living among mainly white populations.

From 'hegemony' to hegemonic whiteness

Developed in the early writings of twentieth century Marxist thought, 'hegemony' first appeared as a political theory in Leninism, and was later developed conceptually and theoretically by the General Secretary of the Communist Party, Antonio Gramsci during his years in prison (1926-1935). In *Quaderni del Carcere* (The Prison Notebooks), Gramsci established the basic premise of the theory of hegemony in a series of dispersed writings which, in their simplest terms, argued that power is concealed, consented to, and socially reproduced by a variety of social agents. In his account of hegemony, Gramsci's positioning of 'civil society' and 'common sense' both underpin the concept of hegemonic whiteness, and provide a critical framework for the very specific analyses within this thesis on Black mixed-race, family and place (Gramsci, 1971; 1992; Hall, 1986). These early conceptualisations of hegemony provided a way to see how the racial coding of semi-rural/suburban place works to maintain the cultures of in everyday life. This contextualised focus on hegemony is to stress how it becomes normalised, naturalised and also struggled over intimately and socially throughout the discussions in this thesis.

For Gramsci, the state is the base on which political power is woven through the production of ideas and values; with this power, the terrain is set for how these cultures present in 'civil society'. Civil society is maintained by the ways in which media, education and religious institutions become integral to the

formation of people's identities, which ultimately contribute to the conditioning of ideological power that regulates ideas, values and social norms. The sphere of civil society is where hegemony operates, negating the need for coercive control; it requires ongoing investment in the protection and reproduction of ideologies that preserve power. Crucially for the arguments in later chapters about negative racialisation, racism, and racial difference, hegemony devises the most socially sanctioned position in civil society with the consent of the people, who both accomplish, and are denied, acceptance of this most-tolerated status (see chapter five for an exemplification of school as a micro-site of civil society). A crucial component of these processes is the way the racialised boundaries of place are routinely invoked through an active struggle to establish racisms and negative racialisation as normative and common sense.

In what follows, it is important to recognise the way the idea of hegemony has been developed in the discipline of Cultural Studies. In the late 1970s, and throughout the 1980s, hegemony became a fundamental analytical tool for understanding a number of contemporary writings on repressive governance through consent (Hall, Critcher, Jefferson et al.,1978; Thoburn, 2007). For this thesis, the scholarship of Stuart Hall (1932-2014) has been important for the application of the idea of hegemonic whiteness in very specific circumstances relating to Black mixed-race families and place.

In *Policing the Crisis: Mugging, the State and Law and Order,* Hall et al (1978) traced how the British state managed a 'crisis of hegemony' (1972-1973) through 'authoritarian consensus', which used criminalisation to justify the constant suppression of working-class communities. They argued that the

active struggle to win hegemony was located in a combination of the state's ideological and repressive institutions including those concerned with law and order, as well as newspapers (civil society) (Hall et al, 1978). Though the themes in this thesis are not directly concerned with the criminalisation of the social lives of the family members (however, see chapters four and five for examples of the over-policing of Black family members), the emphasis on place and the relationships within it show how hegemonic whiteness attempts to contruct the winning condition, and identifies the agents involved and active struggle with the ideas, values and cultures located in the institutions of civil society like schools (see chapter five).

The idea of the application of common sense in hegemony shows how active struggles rely on the normalisation and naturalisation of ideas and values. Gramsci stated that common sense presents as sanctimonious, obvious and precise, when in fact, where it is socially reproduced, it is contradictory, conflicting and fragmented. The active struggle for hegemony, and the creation of common sense through ideological subordination demonstrates how clearly regressive ideas about people become embedded in the guise of tradition, truth and wisdom. It is in the very specific circumstances of lived experience under the overlapping influences of civil society and common sense that I contend that whiteness becomes hegemonic in the particular contexts of this research. In Hall's (1986) frequent reflections on race and hegemony, he stressed that the continuity of race in accordance with common sense allows hegemony to racially construct the most socially sanctioned positions with the consent of

people who both accomplish and are denied acceptance in this tolerated criterion.

This thesis argues that although the mechanics of whiteness should be understood beyond the white subject, in the very specific contexts of semi-rural/suburban places, hegemonic whiteness is intensified by overwhelmingly white populations (Byrne, 2006). In this way, introducing whiteness in and of itself as about appropriating power, this thesis also demonstrates how the dual prevalence of power and white subjectivities impacts social and intimate family life. Much like hegemony, whiteness gets embodied in the everyday as a frequently hidden and unspoken power dynamic through dominating ideas, values, and cultures that necessitate the consent of both the racial majority and racially minoritised. While this thesis has clearly centred whiteness within the analysis, this is an unsettled application that seeks to work both with and against its formation.

The conceptual formulation of hegemonic whiteness taken forward in the thesis is that of Amanda Lewis (2004). She wrote that

> Hegemonic whiteness thus is a shifting configuration of practices and meanings that occupy the dominant position in a particular racial formation and that successfully manage to occupy the empty space of "normality" in our culture" (Lewis, 2004, p.634).

Lewis' conceptualisation of hegemonic whiteness addresses the way whiteness creates normative and naturalised cultures that are enacted, embodied and pursued in social life. The thesis is responsive to this

conceptualisation by addressing the importance of the social reproduction of these processes, both intimately in Black mixed-race families, but also socially in wider the social contexts of semi-rural/suburban places.

Lewis' formulation of hegemonic whiteness aligns with Hall's reminder of the need to understand race in relation to structures, institutions and social practices rather as than an individualised phenomena (Hall, 1990, p.7). It is also essential to point out that hegemonic whiteness "is not a quality inherent to individual whites but is a collective social force that shapes their lives just as it shapes the lives of racial minorities" (Lewis, 2004, p.634). Crucially, for the themes in this thesis that depart from individualised understanding of race, hegemonic whiteness transcends singular understandings of whiteness, and instead contextualises it within the historical and political formulation of power and ideological control of cultures and values. As Hughey (2012) has noted, the prominence of whiteness is maintained by its capacity to present as a meaningful social category as well as being heterogeneous. They contend that its capacity to adapt to changeable formations and still be idealised shows how it becomes hegemonic. Further, hegemonic whiteness requires control of the terrain of civil society to create popular consent for subordination through negative racialisation as well as normative idolisations of white ethnicities that themselves depend on the pathologisation of Black and other racially minoritised groups (Fanon, 1967).

This thesis engages with the messy and complicated work of naming the infractions of whiteness, drawing on the warnings and advisory notes of Black feminists scholars such as bell hooks (1997) and Audre Lorde (1984). In

recognising what is at stake for Black mixed-race families by exploring how hegemonic whiteness works in place and the family, the process of *naming the unnamed* amounts to a transformative politics for examining the various ways whiteness is socially and intimately reproduced (Lorde, 1984). On this, Lorde notes that whiteness exists to assign race to others, functioning to dominate, subjugate and present itself in mythical form (1984, p.116). With this in mind, I have noted many theoretical and empirical contributions to whiteness studies that have yet to find ways to erase race from social life. As Ahmed (2004) notes, many scholars engaged in critical whiteness studies state their commitment to anti-racist pedagogy and research, but there is always a risk that their interventions will function instead to recentre the white subject. It is consequently important to stress that the concept of hegemonic whiteness is applied in the following chapters as a way to de-centre whiteness but re-centre the workings of race and power in the lives of the nine families.

It is important to note Hall's reminder that the social reproduction of hegemony in civil society is not an absolute accomplishment, nor is it something that creates complete domination of a population (Hall, 2014, p.169). Popular consent to be governed/subjugated can be achieved but is not fixed or stable. Nor is it free from transgressions and objections to its varying formations. There is a certain agility within the domain of civil society which means that there are opportunities to contest hegemony. In the following chapters this is explored alongside the narratives of family members in relation to memories, time and social bonds (see chapters seven and eight).

In chapters five and six, I demonstrate how micro sections of civil society – such as the family – contribute to the normalisation and naturalisation of a particular set of cultures, ideas and beliefs that further create the conditions for hegemonic whiteness to become intimately entwined, consented to, and contested beyond state institutions. Chapters six and seven are also responsive to Hall's (2016) reminder of hegemony's impact on the complicatedness of everyday life, which is developed by paying attention to the way hegemonic whiteness works in the social bonds between family and friends. Further, the people involved in the struggle for hegemonic whiteness are explored in following chapters as both relational and familiar, as well through the actions of civil society agents located in the confines of semi-rural/suburban place (Hall, 2016, p.165).

Hegemonic whiteness, the white gaze and double consciousness

Throughout the following chapters, I constantly return to the very specific consequences of everyday negotiations with hegemonic whiteness for the Black and Black mixed-race family members' sense of self, and locate some of the racialised and gendered psychosocial implications of hegemonic whiteness in its pervasive impact on their understanding of their Black subjectivities, which are increasingly thwarted by the way hegemonic whiteness works as a reification of the white gaze. In this way, hegemonic whiteness not only affected family members' negotiation of everyday life in Bromsgrove, but also how they saw themselves through the pathologisation of Blackness exacerbated by the racial coding within wider social contexts in semi-rural/suburban places (Fanon, 1986, p.3) .

In *Black Skins, White Masks*, Fanon (1964) outlined how the process of understanding oneself in relation to whiteness is about identifying how the white gaze positions Blackness through representations of racialised subjugation and inferiority. Through the notion of a 'racial epidermal schema', Fanon stated that the white imagination of Blackness was shaped by 'a thousand details, anecdotes and stories' (Fanon, 1964, p.84). These connections and examples of a form of 'double consciousness', as critically conceptualised by W.E.B Du Bois (1905) and later Gilroy (2000), Yancy (2017) and Joseph-Salisbury (2018) demonstrate how Black people can become acutely aware of how they are being racialised in relation to whiteness. On the specific terrain of semi-rural/suburban place, and among Black mixed-race families, the chapters that follow present a variety of consequences of hegemonic whiteness through poignant examples that show how a form of double consciousness was able to condition the internalisation and suppression of racism among some Black mixed-race and Black family members. Several of them responded to the enduring combination of hegemonic whiteness and cultures of racism through dialects of internalisation and individualisation of their lived experiences. In the family and in Bromsgrove, racism is posited as something to be individually overcome (see chapters five and six).

Many of the conversations explored in the following chapters can be understood as responses to Hall's call for more analysis on 'the subjection of the victims of racism to the mystifications of the very racist ideology which imprisons and define them' (1986, p.26). The matter of internalising racism involves notions of shame, emotion and taboo, and as such scholars like Pyke

(2010) have addressed how it has become a severely understudied, yet fiercely insufferable aspect of life for racialised subjects in white supremacist society.

The discussions about the impact of internalisation of a racist white gaze on Black subjectivities in the following chapters also extend Joseph-Salisbury's argument about Black mixed-race men's innovative ways of responding to the pervasiveness of white supremacy in their lives, through 'post-racial resilience' (2018, p.193). Joseph-Salisbury contends that post-racial resilience presents through a combination of individualised fast recovery from attempts to deny racialised difficulties and the *elasticity* to resist purposeful subjugation of identity (2018, p.117). Although some narratives among the nine families clearly demonstrated post racial resilience, in the following chapters I contend that the existence of post-racial resilience cannot guarantee an understanding of the systemic nature of racism in the contexts of semi-rural-suburban place, but instead can contribute to processes of individualising the pervasions of hegemonic whiteness and an intensification of the white gaze.

Place-making of white (English) suburbia and rurality

So far, I have addressed literatures that speak to the ways race, power and relationships are negotiated in these very specific and active struggles that has informed the conceptualisation of mixedness and hegemonic whiteness, to begin to frame how the family members narrated their lives in Bromsgrove. My concern in this section is to explore how hegemonic whiteness aligns with research responsive to the racialisation of mainly white semi-rural/suburban places.

In part one of this chapter, I addressed the ways that both violence and discourse in colonial, post-colonial and post-war Britain and its Empire produced a fear of mixedness as a threat to the purity of the nation. I presented scholarship that shows how these eugenicist and racist pathologies have continued to pervade public and private depictions of mixed-race families and interracial relationships. By considering how these historical legacies of mixedness have continued to infiltrate the public imaginary, this next section connects the way these issues have become localised with place-making in English semi-rural/suburban places. Through the contextualisation of race and place, I show how hegemonic whiteness conditions the terrain on which white Englishness is socially reproduced, to signify the ideal resident of places like Bromsgrove. Place-making in suburban locations like Bromsgrove is facilitated by the cultures of attitudes, morals, and values which preserve hegemonic whiteness and condition interpersonal and structural cultures of racism (see next section). Of course, these social issues are not static, but their overarching strength is that they are routinely protected, hidden or silenced.

Whiteness in rurality and suburbia

Scholarship on the connections between suburbia, rurality and place-making offers valuable considerations for beginning to examine how the family members in this research described their social and intimate relationship with Bromsgrove, its residents and their families.

Sociologists and cultural geographers have outlined how the end of the second world war produced a renewed and popularised framing of England as both culturally and demographically 'white', with discourses that were highly

situated and provincial in character. As Katharine Tyler notes, these depictions were especially apparent in images of the English countryside as culturally superior to the growing postcolonial populations in urban city centres. The postcolonial vernacular prescribed the English countryside and semi-rural/suburban locations as 'natural' territories for white middle-class populations seeking a more respectful and quieter life (Tyler, 2012, p.40). These ongoing dialectical commitments illustrate how places become racialised through what Caroline Knowles argues is the operational production of whiteness, which serves to portray rurality as synonymous with the image of a previously imagined racially monolithic nation (Knowles, 2008, p.168).

In chapter one, I introduced Bromsgrove by describing its semi-rural/suburban characteristics. The decision to make the wider social context of place integral to the analysis was partly informed by the way the majority of family members described their hometown in ways that resembled Sarah Neal's identification of a persistent 'idolisation of rural life routinely retrieved directly from the public imaginary' (Neal, 2002, p.443). Bromsgrove is contextualised in this thesis as a place created through nation-making, in which the everyday reification of racialised boundaries informed by white Englishness is maintained through an ongoing investment in racial othering, racialisation and racism (Cloke, 1994; Chakraborti & Garland, 2004; Shukra, Cross & Back, 2004; Knowles, 2008). These places become reified by what Agyeman and Spooner's (1997) refer to as 'dominant common-sense and populist discourses... [that] (re)present the English countryside as a timeless "white landscape"' (Agyeman and Spooner, 1997, p.197).

Semi-rural/suburban places remain overwhelmingly disposed to provincial notions of both whiteness and Englishness. Scholarship that focuses on place-making, racialisation and racism within mainly white (and western) places has illustrated the centrality of the social reproduction of white subjectivities in the formation of identity, belonging and connection to the cultural context of places (Nayak, 2010). As Mischi (2009) contends, those who are negatively racialised in predominantly white places occupy an enduringly problematic position that is seen to threaten both whiteness and Englishness.

The difficulty for scholars who have sought to contend with whiteness among mainly white populations is resisting the inclination to present whiteness through individualised subjectivities independently from its systemised structure which continuously reifies the racial ordering of social life (Knowles, 2008; Nayak, 2005; Chakraborti & Garland, 2004). But one primary issue for social research in places like Bromsgrove – which has had a low number of residents of colour for a long time–is that these rigid populations create conditions in which the majority of white subjects can avoid having to understand, address and accept that England (and Britain) has always been a multi-ethnic and multi-racial polity, even though their hometown (superficially) appears to contest this (Nayak, 2003; Bhambra, 2011). Significantly, this invisibility of colour, or lack of contact with people who are not racialised as white creates a false situation in which these locations are seen to be distinctive and separable from the legacies of colonialism and Empire (Neal, 2002; Tyler, 2012).

Hegemonic whiteness in semi-rural/suburban contexts relies on the social and intimate relational processes of place-making, which, for the arguments in

this thesis begin to reveal how essential these social reproductions are among family members. Scholarship on place provides a conceptual framework for addressing how whiteness becomes reified in relation to the social reproduction of both race and place. In the following chapters I suggest that place-making in semi-rural/suburban places can be understood through the subjectivity of white family members, who become predisposed to performing a certain type of identity that is both emboldened and reified by the cultures of semi-rural/suburban place (see chapter six).

Black (and white) relational and everyday place-making

The emphasis on place-making throughout the thesis is responsive to arguments that centre the wider social contexts that inform understandings of the ways Black mixedness is both lived and experienced. In this way, throughout the following chapters, place-making is articulated via the humanist and political geographical tradition as situated, specific, and localised, or as *relational (*Allen, Lawhon & Pierce, 2018*)*. The emphasis on relational place-making in later chapters is an example of the 'philosophical, experiential way of understanding the self' (Allen, Lawhon & Pierce, 2018, p.1008). When the family members in this thesis described their lives, place was central both to how they have lived and to their experience of mixedness and the ongoing social reproduction of racialised boundaries of belonging in semi-rural/suburbia. But a crucial argument of later chapters is that the racialised self does not lack agency in relation to place; negatively racialised populations retain the capacity to both resist and contest the way place-making predisposes family members to racisms (see next section). Place-making in semi-rural suburbia sits alongside

the active struggle to socially reproduce hegemonic whiteness, which is constantly 'contested, negotiated, and renegotiated within a complex, multi-scalar set of power relations' (Allen, Lawhon and Pierce, 2018, p.1010).

The following chapters consider the way that the narratives of family members reproduce semi-rural/suburban places. In this way, Doreen Massey's description and analysis of 'place' is incorporated to help to demonstrate the geographic and cultural formation of Bromsgrove. Massey's description of place-making emphasises how these locations are generated through 'throwntogetherness', 'where bundles of trajectories become socially and politically assembled from human and nonhuman objects' (2005, p.140). For Massey, place holds associations and meanings (in contrast with 'space' that is dynamic and continually remade), and people feel attached to it. Her iteration of power shows how the politics of place are made through everyday negotiation with the cultures that define, redefine, challenge and condone who is subordinate, who is accepted and who must struggle to maintain their position (Massey, 1991). Massey's scholarship on place helped to show how family members in this research depictions of place, or how places had been made around them reified how the politics of power gets reproduced through purposeful visions of what a place should be (Massey, 2005, p.139).

Massey's emphasis on the different ways in which place is understood is particularly pertinent in families whose members experience the racialisation of place in various ways. These interferences pose critical questions for Black mixed-race families in Bromsgrove, simply because of the racialised disparities between family members, where it is clear that there are some who experience

a much less fraught relationship with the dominant cultures in their hometown (see chapters four and six). This empirical finding, which is explored throughout the thesis, demonstrates Massey's contention that places should be understood produced ever-evolving social relations including those intimately reproduced within families (1994, p.3; and see chapter six). Place-making includes complicated social and intimate relationships; day-to-day negotiation of belonging, alongside the unfolding of everyday life, is critically influenced both by how a place is made and by how it is imagined (Nayak, 2010; Back, 2015).

In the following chapters, the explorations of relational place-making in a semi-rural/suburban place consider how a Black (and Black mixed-race) sense of place (McKittrick, 2011; Campion, 2021) was integral to way the nine families addressed the impact of place on their family, social life and sense of self. Here, the place-making described in family members' narratives contributes to geographically attentive representations of the multiplicity of Black life in England (Smith et al., 2011; Bauer, 2010; Meghji, 2017; Noxolo, 2018 Bernard, 2017; Okanlawon, 2019). While scholarship on hegemony, whiteness and (mixed) race relatedness are integral to place making in semi-rural/suburban places, the empirical chapters show how very particular locations are remade and understood by the way historical and contemporary understandings of Blackness are mobilised and lived through time, place and family (McKittrick & Woods, 2007).

Connecting place-making, cultures of racism & hegemonic whiteness

Place-making, hegemonic whiteness and (localised) cultures of racism in semi-rural/suburban places, then, are profoundly interconnected.

In chapter one, I began to address one of the primary consequences of place-making in semi-rurality/suburbia narrated by family members through their lived experiences of cultures of racism. Cultures of racism present when notions of racialised inferiority are socially reproduced through a combination of structural and interpersonal racisms. From persistent racist name-calling, to street violence and more gendered pathologisation of Black women and men, cultures of racism were an intrinsic component of family members' accounts of a relational sense of place in Bromsgrove. These incidents aligned with their understandings of their everyday negotiation of (monitored) racialised boundaries of belonging in semi-rural/suburbia.

Crucially, in the following chapters, racisms are presented as demonstrating the operation of hegemonic whiteness, in contexts where the residents of Bromsgrove engaged in active struggles to maintain the desired values, ideas and imaginations of this predominantly white semi-rural/suburban place. In this way, cultures of racism are a purposeful way of producing the winning conditions for hegemonic whiteness to thrive in semi-rural/suburban places. The interaction between hegemonic whiteness and cultures of racism clearly shows how racialised boundaries become a fundamental component of the place-making of semi-rural suburbia.

Localised cultures of racism present as fixed, when in reality they are distinctively changeable, which illustrates how the racialised boundaries of belonging in places *can* become contestable. In this way, specifying how cultures of racism appear at a given moment, in a location and particular historical formation, provides examples of generational consistencies among

and evolution of the families (Hall, 1986; and see chapter four). Though cultures of racism are contextual, Solomos and Back (1996) have previously stressed how the situated nature of race and racism presents opportunities to address how these occurrences relate to wider public imaginings of the nation. Further, situating the importance of the place-making of semi-rurality/suburbia creates more opportunity to present how local specificities connect to wider public discourse and imaginings of race and racism.

The very particular and localised racisms expressed in the following chapters rely on the racialised social production of the most tolerated citizen as 'white'. Crucially, however, these processes are reinforced by the presence of the racialised Other. With very few willing to contest the interaction between hegemonic whiteness and cultures of racism, it is easy to see how these processes are described by family members as a normal and common-sense aspect of their social relations.

In spite of appearances, cultures of racism are not fixed, and it is therefore possible for those deemed racially inferior to exist and live in such conditions. It is critical for the negotiations with race in this thesis, which are specifically structural, intimate, social and place-based, to emphasise the way cultures of racism demonstrate the pre-eminence of 'dominating ideas' by creating racialised inferiority, which becomes a discursive current produced and contested through the changing nature of race (Hall, 1986). Further, hegemonic whiteness is socially reproduced through conflicting and contradictory alliances that are superficially presented as similarities via the flimsy terrain of nationalisms and ethnicities (Gilroy, 2000). The overlap between cultures of

racism, hegemonic whiteness and semi-rural/suburbia place-making relates to Hall's caution regarding the possibility of a multi-classed mobilisation surrounding an imagined and nativist understanding of 'whiteness'. As he noted, we are better off understanding racism and its pluralities in context; it is changeable and specific, so an awareness of the environmental context is integral to understanding its proliferation (Hall, 1986, p.20).

Situating the everyday in Bromsgrove: racism, whiteness and respectability

Throughout the following chapters, I emphasise that the family members are still negotiating their hometown in relation to the legacies of post-war Britain and the perception (derived from those legacies) that they are a threat to white English respectability. Regional unevenness is important in the way cultures of racism are harnessed to the winning hegemonic condition. As Chakraborti has suggested, the social construction of white English suburbia depends on a proliferation of racisms that are directed at particular residents, who are deemed to occupy a contested racial category: *unrespectable* (Skeggs, 1997; Chakraborti, 2009). Chakraborti makes visible the partial nature of belonging in such places for racialised minorities when he contends that 'racism, whiteness and respectability' are inseparable in majority white English towns (Chakraborti, 2009).

In places like Bromsgrove, that are imagined as white, English and semi-rural/suburban, the most socially sanctioned resident is routinely imagined as white, middle class, heterosexual, able-bodied and part of a nuclear family. People who fall outside these categories are required to negotiate the

consequences of their difference through multifaceted attempts at social integration. The chapters that follow critically explore the temporal and changeable aspects of hegemonic whiteness alongside its endurance through the reification of cultures of racism. This is the essential context of the detailed framing of life in Bromsgrove expressed by family members.

Places like Bromsgrove have been both historically and geographically on the periphery of the state and locally sponsored racisms and anti-immigrant rhetoric apparent in urban centres (see chapter four). But while there have been very few people resident in such places who would be categorised routinely as other than 'white English', racialised difference has continued to be positioned as a threat to their respectability. As Hall notes, critical to understanding how race and racism creates a multi-classed and seemingly ethnicised hegemonic alliance is the rich and complex theoretical formulation of winning hegemony – which does not rely on the complete unification of ideas and values. Hegemony does not depend on unity through social composition, and in this particular historical bloc, has proven simply to require the fragility of a 'native' white identity and the subordination of negatively racialised populations (Hall, 2016).

Back's (2015) emphasis on the *everyday and mundane* aspects of social life is also important for a consideration of the impact of the localised politics of place. This is a theoretical and methodological endeavour in which the *everyday* can help to 'identify the public issues that are alive in the mundane aspects of family and social life'. In addition, scholars such as Roxy Harris (2006) have stressed that looking at racism in a specific location demonstrates how race is produced normatively through ritualised engagements in racialised and classed

power structures. The issue for the family stories explored in the following chapters is that a commitment to centring the social reproduction of place generates a discourse in which the people who are most likely to be marginalised by these exclusionary processes have an investment in the imagining of the particularities of place. Their commitment to the very particular place-making of rurality and suburbia demonstrates a great degree of consent to the reproduction of belonging and exclusion through racialised logic. Normative processes in places like Bromsgrove create an ongoing preservation of structural (institutional) and interpersonal (social and family) hegemonic whiteness, regardless of whether residents are considered automatically to belong (Knowles, 2008).

This emphasis on the everyday also aligns with Anoop Nayak's (2006, 2009; 2010) interventions on white place, race and everyday embodiments of whiteness. Nayak's scholarship on how place and whiteness can create susceptibilities that both marginalise and exclude negatively racialised populations has been central to the arguments in the following chapters. Nayak's work on the pervasive racialisation of white places also contains crucial considerations of the incompleteness of these processes. With this, the following chapters outline moments of familial (more specifically, sibling) resistance to the exacerbations of white subjectivities in predominantly white places (see chapters six and seven). In this way, Nayak has routinely highlighted how it is only by engaging in the complicated clutter of daily life that race can be 'subverted, crossed over and perhaps eventually crossed out' (2006, p.427; see also chapters three and seven).

These matters of the everyday racialised boundaries of belonging in Bromsgrove begin to demonstrate what is at stake for the family members, who negotiate these cultures *together*. In chapter four I argue that the maintenance of Bromsgrove as a white suburban place extends to the family members who described their collective desire to live there through notions of safety and middle-class living; their descriptions of their visceral experiences of cultures of racism as 'not that bad' represent the pressure to perform respectability and gratitude (see more extensive discussion in chapter four).

The active struggles of Black mixed-race families (as one example of the heterogenous nature of Black life in England) show how the dominant interests of the family become localised in childhood, schooling and place-making. This demonstrates how Black (and Black mixed-race) family members in particular become susceptible to seeing themselves through common sense racialised inscriptions negotiated through the workings of hegemonic whiteness. In this way, the empirical chapters situate stories about both family and community and the prevalence of Black subjectivities in the shaping of race and place by the social reproduction of hegemonic whiteness.

Framing Bromsgrove as a place that is both routinely and purposefully protected by respectability and the everyday aligns with what Chakraborti and Garland (2006) call the normative embodiment of white Englishness. These cultures, related to national identity and whiteness, create an everyday, but localised representation of Englishness as integral to the construction of belonging in postcolonial and post-war rural and suburban contexts and

translate into (white) hegemonic conditions hidden by their naturalisation as common sense. As Neal notes:

> During colonialism it was English rurality that represented what was particularly civilized and culturally superior about Britain. In a post-colonial era the importance of English rurality has developed around the politics of (invisible) whiteness and constructions of ethnicity, identity and belonging (Neale, 2002, p.444).

Neale shows why an emphasis on ordinary everyday life has been integral to this intervention in the narratives of Black mixed-race families in relation to place-making in Bromsgrove. The emphasis on (white) ethnicity, rurality and nationality shows how hegemonic whiteness is maintained by dialects of Englishness that exclude racialised minorities via a representation of national belonging as everyday and mundane.

In places like Bromsgrove, hegemonic whiteness is consistently winning across multiple relational, social and structural frontiers as there are few who are willing to withdraw their consent to the interpretation of the most tolerated and socially sanctioned resident. Further, in places where a population dominates in both size and ideology, hegemonic whiteness is easily ratified because white people both control and embody the reproduction of racial hierarchies and classed social orders. Minoritised groups who fall outside stagnant social boundaries are encouraged to conform, supress or relinquish their difference. These processes simultaneously Other people, discourses and identities that cannot fit into hegemonic notions of acceptability and tolerated citizens. Furthermore, ongoing consent and approval of the ordering of society

is sustained by a variety of local and national ideologies, regardless of someone's position within the hierarchies of belonging.

Conclusion

The chapter has located some of the key scholarship and conceptual and theoretical groundings that provide a useful frame for the following chapters, which focus on the narratives of family members' lives in Bromsgrove.

The chapter began with a brief outline of the historical context of colonial, postcolonial and post-war genealogies of mixedness in Britain and its colonies as this history is an important consideration in the evolution of racisms and racialised subjugation that continue to permeate the lives of the families in this research. In that section, I located how mixedness became bound up with race and eugenicist thinking, which has had a demonstrable effect on the policing marginalising and pathologising of mixed relationships and families in the British Empire.

The chapter continued with a brief introduction to the development of mixed-race studies in Britain. The objective here was to contextualise my own contribution to the field, which is situated in local, intimate negotiations of the workings of race, place and the family. These studies represent thirty years of scholarly intervention through empirical research, focused on ways to both resist the way that the histories outlined in the first section have shaped contemporary discourse and the treatment of mixed-race people, families and relationships. It was important to outline this existing scholarship as a prelude to the thesis, which is written with the ambition of widening the discussion on

mixedness to focus less on identity formation and more on familial and social relationships and the cultures of semi-rural/suburban place.

In part two, the chapter addressed how scholarship on hegemonic whiteness, semi-rural/suburban place-making and cultures of racism provides is fundamental for interventions on mixedness that consider the importance of the wider social reproduction of race, whiteness and place, Using the concepts of 'civil society' and 'common sense' to explain the way hegemony has been incorporated, I began to address how ideas, cultures and values proliferate in institutions which rely on the social reproduction of the most socially sanctioned or tolerated position. This approach opens up the thesis into a demonstration of a more intimate and localised way of using a political conceptual analysis. This theoretical and conceptual discussion began to introduce how notions of the everyday create a useful framework for exploring how the local politics of place are reproduced through social and family relationships.

The decision to depart from a focus on 'hegemony' alone to using the idea of hegemonic whiteness as a theoretical frame was a way of attending to a more situated and localised representation of the way race is socially reproduced over time, but takes particular forms for Black and white mixed-race families in semi-rurality/suburbia. Critical for the application of hegemonic whiteness in later chapters is the way it is preserved through the racialisation of semi-rural/suburban places that are populated mainly by white residents.

As will be seen in later chapters, hegemonic whiteness in semi-rural/suburban places can be and is contested, even if the majority consent and hegemony appears to be winning – micro contestations always exist (see

chapter seven). The struggle to maintain hegemonic whiteness directly correlates with the inconsistencies and contradictions of social life. To study the social means to be constantly uncertain and to realise that there are inevitably discrepancies, differences and struggle.

One pressing question for this thesis relates to how this conceptualisation of hegemonic whiteness becomes localised and the consequences for Black and white mixed-race families. In particular, I have begun to address how cultures of racism are managed and negotiated, but also how they become normative and common sense in semi-rural/suburban places.

The following chapters are about stories of community and how discourses retold over time shape how a place is both made and imagined, or rather, how hegemonic whiteness becomes socially reproduced as a pervasive force intimately negotiated by all family members. My focus on the narratives of Black and white mixed-race family members and their relationship with place explores how hegemonic whiteness and cultures of racism have become a normal and naturalised part of their social relations.

In the next chapter I explore the merits of ethnography with ethnographic interviewing in mixed race studies before shifting the focus to how the research process uncovered the way hegemonic whiteness and cultures of racism routinely remained unspoken between family members. This part is about addressing how research can reveal spaces for retrospection, reconciliation and emotionality, and about how family members have negotiated hegemonic whiteness and cultures of racism within the confines of the semi-rural/suburban context.

Chapter Three

Researching the Unspoken: methodological considerations for addressing the silencing of race and cultures of racism in Black mixed-race families in semi-rural suburban places

This chapter explores how research focused on the localised specificities of semi-rural/suburban place and mixed-race family relatedness needed to take an ethnographic approach attentive to the everyday unfolding of social life and the cultures that contribute to the lived experiences of the family members in Bromsgrove (O'Reilly, 2012; Back, 2007). I address some methodological considerations of the research, which sought to uncover how hegemonic whiteness and cultures of racism in semi-rural/suburban places impacted the narratives of Black mixed-race families. Researching these aspects of race, place and the family demonstrated that these matters had rarely been discussed, or had remained *unspoken* and had even *been silenced within* many of the nine families and their wider social networks in Bromsgrove (Faugier & Sargeant, 1997; Dei, 2005). The social reproduction of the unspoken relies on its acceptance as common sense in civil society (and the micro-sites of civil society) in Bromsgrove; naturalised by an ongoing absence of opposition to its impact on everyday life. These were methodological challenges for research that explored the very specific narratives of Black, Black mixed-race and white family members in semi-rural/suburban places (Swanton, 2010; Nayak, 2006; O'Reilly, 2012).

The chapter explores how *narrative ethnography* worked to disrupt and contest what remained unspoken between family members, enabling a variety of sites of *disclosure* of some of the lived experiences of semi-rural/suburban places between close family members (Tedlock, 1991; Hampshire et al., 2014; Gubrium & Holstein, 2008). I also outline the reasons why the fieldwork created various moments at which emboldened cultures of semi-rural/suburban place had created the situation in which many family members joined the fieldwork having rarely discussed the pervasions of race and their own personal experiences of cultures of racism (Back, 1994; Nayak, 1999 & 2005; Lewis, 2005; Byrne, 2006). In this way, to create a more vivid and textured exploration of how the unspoken appeared and was worked through during the research, this chapter includes my own recorded reflections and observations from the field. This had entailed using my own fieldnotes to recall particular 'moments' captured during my time with family members that highlighted what can be uncovered 'during the complicated clutter of daily life' (Nayak, 2006, p.427).

First, I provide an outline of the research process and sampling; second, I introduce the unspoken as a methodological issue which became central to the family narratives discussed in the empirical chapters. Third, I demonstrate why narrative ethnography was a methodological process ideally situated to grappling with the unspoken. I follow this argument, on the uses of narrative ethnography, with an example of how including my shared biography in the methodological approach facilitated conversations that helped both to challenge and unravel the unspoken among family members. Fourth, I begin to address how research with Black mixed-race families in semi-rural/suburban places

made a space for retrospective disclosures of the impact of normative family practices and family values on the way race and cultures of racism in Bromsgrove had been discussed during the childhoods of Generation Two. In the final sections of the chapter, I introduce the process of ethnographic race writing through portraiture as a way to write and record the challenging, emotional and sensitive subject matters frequently uncovered during the research process. To illustrate this, I conclude the chapter with an introductory portrait from time spent with two of my participants, mother and daughter, Daphne and Sophie Smith.

The method: fieldwork, sampling and care

Ethical approval was granted at the beginning of May 2018. Fieldwork began on 23 May 2018 and continued for approximately eighteen months. The last conversation with a family member was recorded in December 2019. A full list of the nine families and the eighteen family members can be found in the appendices (appendix four).

As a former resident of Bromsgrove with existing relationships in the location, I knew many of the families or was introduced to them during the fieldwork. This combination of purposeful sampling and snowballing proved to be an efficient way of expanding the research. Though there were clearly a number of advantages to using my existing relationships in Bromsgrove to help recruit participants, it was still important to consider Faugier and Sargeant's (1997, p.791) assessment that the 'more sensitive or threatening the phenomenon under study' the more difficult sampling will be'. Familiarity with the subject matter clearly eased some of the more practical methodological

challenges like access; but when researching race in the context of the family and place, the benefits of knowing potential families did not exclude the possibility of recruiting an 'imperfect' sample (Twine, 1999).

Although the nine families were mainly accessed through my own social networks and subsequent recommendations, the recruitment process remained exposed to what Browne (2003) calls a process of exclusion, given the very small number of families of colour in Bromsgrove (see chapter one). These factors affected the type of sample I was able to access, which directly contributed to what was and what was not heard about life in Bromsgrove. Clearly, with a relatively small sample, not all the people eligible to take part in this research were included. However, my intention was not to achieve all-inclusive representation of Black mixed-race families in Bromsgrove, but rather to demonstrate a diverse range of multi-generational experiences, with key demographics being ethnicity (Black Caribbean and White English and/Irish), gender, class and family formation.

This type of reflexive sampling is fundamental in scholarship that is regularly under scrutiny – such as race and racism, as both recruitment and my interpretations of family members were informed by my own subjectivities (see below, and chapters zero and one). However, as the analysis was located in a relatively small place, and the group I have focused on are a very small proportion of this population (Office for National Statistics, 2011) , I was in a relatively good position to cover a range of lives and experiences. Despite the flaws in this type of recruitment when researching sensitive issues, using a snowballing technique helped me find other families with similar experiences of

the very specific context of Bromsgrove (Biernacki & Waldorf, 1981). As I discussed in chapter one, there were very few Black or Black mixed-race families living in Bromsgrove at the time of the research. However, many of the family members I spent time with were keen to help me find more families to take part and although I took great care of participants' anonymity, there was a lot of interest in and help offered with sampling from family members already participating:

Some of the most interesting conversations with family members occurred outside the recorded interviews. These usually took place when we were making a drink and getting ready to sit and record an interview. For example, during the time I spent with Jessica Macintosh and Leanne Jones in particular, they were really keen to explore and think about families in Bromsgrove who might be taking part in the research. Although I was clear that I couldn't share this information, as with other family members, this prompted discussion about the relationship between silence, race and racism among their peer groups during their childhoods. I return to the separate conversations with Jessica and Leanne because both reflected in particular on how we could have discussed how we were racialised in Bromsgrove as children. Further, the process of talking through Bromsgrove and their lived experiences prompted reflections of regret beyond the ethnographic interviews. (Field notes, 1st June 2018)

Most of the narrative ethnographies took place in family members' homes, with a couple of ethnographic interviews occurring in public spaces in Bromsgrove, Birmingham and London. Most of the people I spent time with still

lived in Bromsgrove, but among Generation Two, four family members lived permanently in either Birmingham or London. Over an eighteen-month period, I spent time with each member of the nine families on two or three occasions and recorded a combination of solo and group semi-structured ethnographic interviews. These narrative ethnographies included time spent in their homes, during car journeys, and in cafes and restaurants. By combining recorded ethnographic interviews and ethnographic time spent with the families in their homes and public places in both Bromsgrove and London, the research process was designed to provide space for family members to consider the research questions in the context of place.

This research approach was informed by a feminist ethic of care as well as lessons from previous scholarship on mixedness (Oakley, 2015; Gilbert, 1994; Stacey, 1988; Edwards & Caballero, 2011). Research on race, mixed-race and the family requires ongoing ethical consideration of a highly emotive and fraught subject matter (Caballero, 2013; and see chapter one). One practical application of care involved sharing with the families both the information sheet and the research questions before meeting them for the first time (see appendices two and three). This was to make clear what sort of aspects of their lives we were going to be discussing, while also giving them space to reflect on their own interpretations and experiences of race and racism in Bromsgrove (Hammersley & Atkinson, 1995; Gunaratnam, 2003). For some family members, the deliberate process of providing them with detailed descriptions of the subject matter signified the beginning of their reflections on how many of the issues had been a relatively unspoken part of their lives. Further, during

recruitment, family members often replied immediately to the initial invitation to take part in the research. This was followed by expressions of intrigue, excitement and interest. Most conveyed a desire to tell the stories of their lives in Bromsgrove.

As well as providing thorough information about the project before expecting people to taking part, being already acquainted with some of the families meant I could communicate the rationale for the research without positioning it as an obligation, or as something that they *should* contribute to. A further commitment to situating the research within a framework of care was accomplished by making it clear that they could withdraw at any point.

The significance of Generation One and Generation Two

A total of eighteen family members from nine families took part in the recorded ethnographic interviews. As introduced in chapters one and two, the descriptors 'Generation One' and 'Generation Two' are used in the following chapters to draw attention to changes in the lived experiences of race and place narrated by members of the nine families. Generation One consisted of seven parents from the nine families aged between 45 and 67. They were Black (Jamaican or Kittitian) men and women, Black mixed-race women (Jamaican, Kittitian and white English and/or Irish) and white (English and Irish) women. Members of Generation One were the parents of Generation Two although only some of their children took part in the research. Generation Two consisted of eleven Black mixed-race men and women aged 18 to 31 years old, who were born in either Bromsgrove, Redditch or Birmingham and raised primarily in Bromsgrove. Because the methods used in this research were ethnographic, a

number of other contributors and family members were also around during the fieldwork, who also belonged to either Generation One or Generation Two.

Hegemonic whiteness in the fieldwork

In chapter two, I addressed how hegemonic whiteness is exacerbated in semi-rural/suburban places through the production of normative and naturalised cultures that are enacted, embodied and pursued in social life. Some examples of the forms this takes (to be addressed more thoroughly in the four empirical chapters) can be seen in the way racist encounters with extended family members were not spoken of, in consistent dismissals of racism as ignorance or confusion, and (in more challenging circumstances) parents' questioning of the validity of the impact of race on their mixed-race children's lives. In this way, as hegemonic whiteness exists within the lives of family members as an unmarked and muted norm (Frankenberg, 1993). It clearly contributed to the unspoken and the way this was addressed during the fieldwork. While the connection between the unspoken and hegemonic whiteness became clear in the early stages of the fieldwork, it was imperative to incorporate Swanton's (2010) note that ethnographic research attentive to whiteness needs to be described in terms of its performative nature, as well as in terms of instances informed by differentiation (Swanton, 2010). Further, hegemonic whiteness was addressed methodologically through its presentation in both relational and situational processes that were both spoken and unspoken.

The fieldwork was a reminder that the demographics of Bromsgrove make racialisation and racism difficult to discuss. When conversations about race occur in semi-rural/suburban places, they are often met with ambivalence, denial and resistance (Nayak, 2009). People are reluctant to engage with the racialised

oppressions felt in the place they have made their home; they may find it equally difficult to visualise and subsequently hear about troubling experiences fuelled by racialised difference. It is also the case that some people simply do not see any reason why racialisation and racism should be positioned as structurally endemic, or even something that should be of concern. The challenge for this research was unravelling how the family members – many of whom had been victims of racism – were also susceptible to these ambivalences in various ways. Hegemonic whiteness is the key factor that endorses and, in many ways, sustains these practices. Whiteness – as a population and structural manifestation (Back & Ware, 2002) – creates normative understandings of places like Bromsgrove, which conditioned the fact that most family members felt unable to voice their experiences among their social and intimate networks:

What struck me each time I read through my fieldnotes, which were written after speaking with family members (particularly Generation Two) was how often they discussed incidents where they had spoken about an experience of racism and it had been dismissed or ignored. It took an emotional toll to continue explaining the ways in which race pervaded their lives in Bromsgrove. Staying silent on these matters - even with their own parents - was easier than trying to talk about it. Whether among peer groups or family members, racism was understood through isolated incidents, which often meant that the people they reported this to would respond by drawing on what was good about their lives. And of course, these conversations linked back to Bromsgrove being a good place to live, for everyone. (Field Notes, 10th January 2020)

Narrative ethnography demonstrated how hegemonic whiteness is reproduced through social interactions informed by the cultures typically found in semi-rural/suburban places. The normativity of hegemonic whiteness and its management by family members at the same time as maintaining their relationships in Bromsgrove and within their own families, was a central consideration during fieldwork. Emphasising the relational and situational specifics of whiteness relied on the development of an ethnography in tune with the cultures of Bromsgrove and how these presented family members' everyday social lives. This recognition of hegemonic whiteness throughout the research was about identifying how its embedded characteristics could be described in a way that destabilises its often silent, unspoken or hidden nature. In this way, narrative ethnography was positioned to grapple with the difficulties of lived experiences of cultures clearly maintained by hegemonic whiteness. What is disclosed and what remains unspoken can be understood alongside how we perform our social lives in relation to the place-making of the cultures of semi-rural/suburban place. Discussing the demographic and hegemonic whiteness of Bromsgrove – while asking family members about their life stories – created a research space that brought to life the arguments presented in the empirical chapters.

What is the unspoken? Silencing race through cultures of place.

Generation Two frequently spoke of how their family members in Generation One had engaged in very few conversations about race and racism:

On the three occasions that I met with siblings Tara and Craig Silvester, we spent a significant amount of time discussing how little race and racism had been discussed in their household. Each time, they made

space to make clear to me that this research space we were generating was a novel experience for them. These matters of silence were normative, but were a matter of fact that they wanted to be shared as a caveat for our forthcoming discussions. (Field Notes, 13th December 2019)

These disclosures were often presented by Generation Two through dialogues about the non-existence in their families of critical conversations about how race might impact their lives in a semi-rural/suburban place. Generation Two were overwhelmingly clear that race had often been an unspoken and silenced aspect of their lives in Bromsgrove (see chapters six and seven).

In this research, the unspoken refers to the silencing of race in social and familial relations situated in semi-rural/suburban places. It demonstrates one of the consequences of living among negative racialisation and cultures of racism in relation to the place-making of semi-rural/suburban places. For context, in the broader arguments in this thesis it was clear how the unspoken was facilitated through common sense engagements with hegemonic whiteness, and critically, how a variety of social actors in the lives of the family members (including kin) engaged with these processes (Gramsci, 1971; Hall, 1990; Twine, 1997):

When I first met with Daphne Smith, her husband Ryan was upstairs painting one of the bedrooms. He intermittently brought us tea and biscuits. When we were discussing Daphne's experiences of racism in Bromsgrove, she would often lower her voice. It wasn't that Ryan didn't know about all the incidents in Daphne's childhood and adulthood, but like many of the family members, there was an instinctive desire to protect the

feelings of white family members from their experiences of racism. (Field

Notes, 14th May 2019*)*

It is crucial to note that when family members spoke about matters that had been

previously unspoken, it was clear that these had become naturalised through limited

contestation of their social reproduction. For the Black and Black mixed-race family

members, the unspoken was part of a deeper response to the intensification of the

white gaze in semi-rural/suburban Bromsgrove and in their own mixed-race families

(Du Bois, 1903). It was clear that double consciousness, or rather, their own

understanding of their Black selves through the white imaginary (Fanon, 1967) was

normalised via a range of measures designed to supress a more thorough

explanation of how race had impacted their lives in Bromsgrove (see chapter five).

Further, in the context of place and belonging in semi-rural/suburban locations, there

was an awareness among the nine families that to even begin to attain their desired

position in a semi-rural/suburban place, there were limits to what could be routinely

questioned and contested (Agyeman & Spooner, 1997, p.197). Further, the unspoken

is a part of social relatedness that is justified by the desire for ease, harmony and

cohesion.

To grapple with the existence of the unspoken in this research meant recognising

it as a purposeful and normative way for some family members to avoid conversations

about race. Further, the unspoken refers to the way social relations *within* the Black

mixed-race families and *within* wider social contexts in Bromsgrove became central

to family members' narration of how they had managed and negotiated cultures of

racism (see chapters five and six). Grappling with these matters in the ethnographic

interviews necessitated the incorporation or understanding of silence in the interview

as a significant and meaningful contribution (Bengtsson & Fynbo, 2018; Heikkilä &
Katainen, 2021). An example of how silence could signal something significant in an
ethnographic interview occurred when I was speaking with siblings Frankie and Sonia
from Generation Two at their house:

*We had been sat at the table for at least thirty minutes when Frankie
began to share some of the details about racist violence she had
experienced growing up. One of the incidents she was describing occurred
at a horse racing festival when the owners of the bar she was waiting to
get served at were clear that her presence was unwelcome in their
establishment. Frankie was midway through the story when her (white)
mother came in the room and she quickly changed the subject. When
Frankie's mother left she thanked me for allowing her to quickly revert to
something about school – she didn't want her mum to hear about the
racism. When I asked why she didn't want her mother to hear, she said it
would make her really sad and possibly even make her cry. She said she
wanted to protect her. I asked who would protect her and she said I am
okay.* (Field Notes, 5th August 2019)

This reflection from the field (above) clearly exemplifies how my research
revealed the political and emotional complexities of 'mixed-race' within the intimate
confines of family life. By illustrating how the unspoken worked in Frankie's family
home, the research showed how Black mixed-race families are not immune from
silencing their experiences of cultures of racism simply because they are multiracial.
Outlining the unspoken is not about contributing to the historic demonising of mixed-
race families, but is instead located in providing demonstrable examples of Caballero

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and Aspinall's (2018) conceptual and methodological contention that mixedness should be considered as an *ordinary* aspect of social life. Further, by presenting mixed-race families as both historically and contemporarily *ordinary*, it is clear how cultures in semi-rural/suburban places condition ethnographic encounters that allow novel disclosures of multiple experiences of racism and negative racialisation between family members to emerge.

Disclosing the unspoken and addressing the silencing of race during the fieldwork provided a space for critical engagements with race, but also presented opportunities for family members to collectively describe their lives in Bromsgrove and their experiences of cultures of racism alongside their fellow family members. These were emotional, challenging and critical dialogues about race, place and their own families. Using an approach concerned with reflection as well as conversation, the unspoken became a methodological challenge, and one that narrative ethnography was ideally positioned to explore sensitively with family members. As Back and Duneier noted, 'Not being limited to what people say explicitly enables us to train a kind of attentiveness to what remains unsaid and tacit forms of recognition and coexistence' (Back & Duneier, 2006, p.13). This is a reminder of how ethnographic methods provide useful moments to explore sensitive issues – like the unspoken –in the fieldwork, even if they are still vocally silenced. Returning to Caballero's note on the emotion and tension embedded in conversations about mixedness (see chapter one), addressing family members' silence about race required constant consideration of how conversations were developing. In particular, it was important to keep track of which family members were addressing the unspoken, and which issues continued to remain unspoken. This was related to how

some family members had previously found it challenging to engage with certain conversations about race.

The unspoken was clearly facilitated by the place-making of semi-rural/suburban place, which had required Black and Black mixed-race family members, in particular, to manage normative and naturalised processes of negative racialisation and cultures of racism. While the research space clearly brought some of these issues to the fore, these conversations had to remain attentive to the fact that some of our discussions about the unspoken had the potential to disrupt particular family members localised and situated commonalities, which had created a sense of belonging throughout their lives in Bromsgrove. Here, a combination of the newness of these conversations alongside the possibility that they could have been overlooked by some family members and wider social networks was a significant consideration during the fieldwork.

While unspoken issues were addressed and explored through a variety of narratives about their lived experiences of Bromsgrove, the empirical chapters show how negotiating race had been a significant part of some family members' lives, regardless of whether these issues had been discussed prior to taking part in the research. Accordingly, the research process acknowledged that for many family members the unspoken must have entailed negotiation of denial and ambivalent reactions to race and racism in their lives. The methodological approach was also attentive to the rejections and contestations that family members might have experienced in the past while attempting to discuss these issues. These realities were a crucial methodological consideration during the fieldwork simply because most of the people in Bromsgrove do not experience interpersonal or structural racisms.

However, most family members had understood the unspoken as normative and (irrespective of this research) *had found ways of managing it.*

Narrative ethnographies of race and place

Using ethnography and ethnographic interviews together has been described by some ethnographers as *narrative ethnography* (Tedlock, 1991; Hampshire et al, 2014; Gubrium & Holstein, 2008). Scholars such as Tedlock have argued that the emphasis on *narrative* in ethnography is fundamental to thwarting the tendency to engage in the anthropological gaze. Instead, narrative ethnographies move towards 'shared intersubjectivities' (Tedlock, 1991, p.70) focused on the co-production of ethnographic knowledge of the social and political aspects under study, which in turn creates what Gubrium & Holstein call the 'narrative environment' (Gubrium & Holstein, 2008, p.252). These methodological lessons and insights guided all my encounters with members of the nine families. I sought to make clear that their individual and collective narratives were central to how we would make sense of their lives in Bromsgrove, but I also used my own narratives to create generative environments of support and familiarity (this is discussed in more detail below). Critical for the subjects discussed in this research, narrative ethnography was an ideal method for research that covers challenging, emotional and political subject matters (Hampshire et al., 2014). With the semi-rural/suburban context both narrated and discussed as a crucial consideration in how cultures of racism had often remained unspoken and silenced within the families, narrative ethnography could methodologically negotiate the challenging experiences of life in Bromsgrove voiced by family members, which included violent and

interpersonal racisms they had endured for the first time. Further, narrative ethnography provided a way of understanding how these cultures of racism were maintained by the workings of hegemonic whiteness in semi-rural/suburban places:

Some of the most poignant conversations during the research occurred between siblings. These encounters brought to life just how powerful the centralisation of narratives can be for social research. I remember sitting down with siblings Leanne and Jason for the first time, and being so enthused by their collective narratives of their family and hometown. They would agree on some matters and depart on others in unison. When we were talking about their differing experiences of school, their positioning of their own narratives felt new, with Leanne sharing stories with Jason she had kept to herself. Once Leanne did this, Jason followed suit. Neither was shocked at their revelations – both understood their experiences of racialised boundaries of Bromsgrove as normal. (Field Notes, 3rd March 2019)

The ethnographic interviews in particular provided opportunities for family members to express their understandings of racialisation, racism and Bromsgrove in a way that demonstrated their own interpretations of their lived experiences, both with and without other family members present (Hammersley & Atkinson, 1995). Micro-exemplifications of how life as a Black mixed-race family in a semi-rural/suburban place had been managed and negotiated emerged during the group family interviews:

Frankie gave me a lift back to my mum's house after our recorded interview with her sister, Sonia. Frankie was visibly disappointed that her

sister had shared stories of experiencing some of the issues she had negotiated at school just five years earlier. Frankie yearned for her sister to be able to just be herself, rather than having to respond to pathologising comments about being a Black mixed-race woman in a mainly white school. During the latter part of the car journey she spoke of being happy that she and her siblings were now able to talk about how race pervaded their lives in the context of suburbia. (Field Notes, 5th August 2019)

Ethnographers of race such as Nayak (2010) have contended that ethnography provides methodological possibilities for understanding lived experiences within everyday life which address the importance of the localised and situated occurrences of racialisation and racism. While aspects of social life beyond race remain crucial for the arguments in the following empirical chapters, narrative ethnography clearly prepared the ground for conversations in which family members addressed the way difference had been marked and enacted in their everyday lives in the context of semi-rural/suburban place.

Narrative ethnography, or the combination of ethnography with ethnographic interviewing produced family narratives of Bromsgrove beyond notions of 'race' and 'mixed-race' (Olumide, 2002) that clearly position this thesis as a contribution to the scholarship of mixedness in a more holistic and contextualised manner (Caballero, 2013; Paragg, 2014). Narrative ethnography also provided an ongoing appreciation of the significance of everyday social life for family members, as well demonstrating the racialised interpersonal and structural factors that underpinned the lived experiences of Black mixed-race families in contexts of semi-rural/suburban place (O'Reilly, 2012; Alexander,

1996; Back, 2007). Crucially, narrative ethnography offered opportunities to address and explore the way place affected relationships between family members and their wider social networks in Bromsgrove (Olumide, 2002).

Shared biographies of mixed-race and place in social research

The fieldwork consistently produced ethnographic encounters in which unspoken narratives about cultures of racism in Bromsgrove occurred between family members. In chapters zero and one, I addressed my own relationship with the issues explored in this research, having been raised in a Black and white mixed-race family in Bromsgrove between 2001 and 2011. I regularly discussed these issues with the family members, letting them know that I had both experienced and understood the types of cultures they had navigated in Bromsgrove. Sharing my biography of Bromsgrove and mixedness with the families provided further opportunities to discuss the unspoken and why race had often been negotiated through silence between family members. It was clear that personal (or researcher) openness provided a more contextual and evolved route into generating rapport within the fieldwork.

The emphasis on shared biographies in this research is responsive to the development of feminist methodologies committed to rapport, care and friendship. Feminist scholars such as Ann Oakley (2015) have asserted that shared commonalities produce research with empathy and compassion at its core and further, constitute a commitment to research spaces resistant to *observation*. Instead, such commitments prioritise a form of friendship/kinship crucial to the development of the research process. In this research, it was clear

how the 'knowing' of each other's experiences created relational understandings grounded in a relatedness beyond rapport. As Oakley noted:

> The distinctions between 'rapport' and 'friendship' in research are unhelpfully blurred (Glesne, 1989). Friendship is not a simple or unitary phenomenon in any context: there are varieties of friendship, overlapping with other types of social connection such as kinship and community. (Oakley, 2015, p. 209)

Oakley's emphasis on the plethora of friendships which cannot simply be addressed through singular notions of rapport was evident throughout the fieldwork. As well as recognising the combination of rapport and friendship, it was clear how our shared biographies served in multiple ways as a feminist method of care, but also crucially generated a supportive (research) space in which to address the unspoken. This was a central outcome of the relationships I maintained during (and beyond) the research that shows how transformative our racialised and place-based familiarity was for the types of conversations that occurred (see chapter seven).

On the subject of shared biographies, Twine argues that we cannot presume with certainty that racialised similarities will always amount to participant rapport and affiliations in social research (Twine, 1999), but I found that as an ethnographer with an existing relationship to the issues under examination, the emphasis on the specificities of Bromsgrove enhanced the research findings. During the fieldwork, I created intimate connections with family members relating to the very specific terrain of cultures of semi-

rural/suburban place and mixed-race (Ali, 2003; Caballero, 2013; Joseph-Salisbury, 2016; Campion, 2017):

Leanne was often keen to explore how her narratives of Bromsgrove corresponded with mine. This was a theme which occurred in many of the other conversations with Generation Two because we grew up and attended school in Bromsgrove at very similar times. I always shared my own narratives of Bromsgrove with the family members who asked me how theirs related to my own. The conversations which followed these stories felt like reparative conversations – we were making sense of aspects of our lives together. Leanne in particular was visibly perplexed, relieved and exasperated when I spoke of both understanding and experiencing aspects of her own narratives of school. We had both felt that our place in suburbia was contested and our ways to contest this similarly involved engaging in practices that obliterated our blackness like relentlessly straightening our hair (Field Notes, 12th November 2018).

Ethnographers have argued that a personal connection to places can provide researchers with heightened levels of understanding of some of the issues likely to occur in the field. This has been shown to be particularly useful when navigating recollections of challenging topics such as racialisation and racism (Knowles, 2008; Adler & Adler, 1987; Kanuha, 2000). Scholars of mixed-race have also argued that a combination of personal connection and shared biographies can potentially provide a more detailed level of understanding of participants' experiences. For example, Paragg (2014) notes that researching mixedness as a mixed-race researcher can lead to an identification of *complex*

commonalities during fieldwork that are further mitigated by class, gender, race and sexuality. Participants recalled lived experiences they saw as typified by their mixedness when scholars such as Mahtani (2012) used language familiar when speaking to them, such as – 'you know what I mean'. In this way, my own decision to share my biography of race, place and family with participants echoed what Caballero (2012) refers to as the positive move towards insider-led research on mixedness which has challenged earlier 'outsider-led' models, which were often dominated by pathological frameworks that frequently assumed the inherent marginality and isolation of mixedness.

Both I and the family members are from families that have been subject to a very specific type of racialisation in the context of semi-rural/suburban places. Being Black mixed-race and of a similar age to many of the family members in Generation Two I had had multiple shared and familiar experiences of Bromsgrove, including attending the same schools and, in some instances, being in the same year groups. The rapport I maintained, with Generation Two in particular, was revealed through our conversations about experiencing and negotiating cultures of racism in this specific place, in schools, and among similar social networks during the same time period. Among Generation Two and some of the family members in Generation One, race, place and age clearly presented another level of 'knowing' between us (Oakley, 2015).

These shared biographies contributed to what Tedlock has described as the shift, in ethnography, to a more narrative approach which disrupts the notion that the observed and observer are separate categories (Tedlock, 1991, p.80). In terms of discussing narratives of race and racism with family members who

had previously abstained from these conversations, my own earlier experiences of Bromsgrove were used to invoke a sense of solidarity through familiarity (Tedlock, 1990, p.8). This was a further contribution to feminist methodologies via the centring of support and care in these very challenging dialogues about race, love and intimacy (Lewis, 2009, 2020; and see chapter six).

The empirical chapters should be read as a contribution to research that proactively and purposefully seeks to disrupt the traditional relationship between researcher and respondent. Rather than analysing the possible conflict of interest between myself and the family members, the discussions cited are an example of how caution, or a fear of bias should be replaced by a commitment to rapport. Methodologically speaking, this research is opening up a different kind of space of dialogue and sharing in social research.

It is important to note that the shared commonalities with family members clearly brought to the fore my own predispositions and 'biases' towards Bromsgrove. These susceptibilities relate to my own memories of navigating cultures of racism and hegemonic whiteness and clearly informed my approach to these topics as a social researcher. I have a relationship with many of the specifics of this research and the study itself was formulated as a result of my own experience of being part of a Black mixed-race family in Bromsgrove (see chapter zero). These arguments about the transformative possibilities of shared biographies are developed in acknowledgement of their limitations; as Back argues, regardless of our objectives of 'balanced reciprocity', 'research, like life itself, is unstable and risky' (Back, 2007 p.113). But in the context of research that critically engages with family, race and place, emphasis on these shared

biographies and the possibility of bias have been described (as mentioned above) by scholars such as Caballero (2012) as a positive move towards insider-led research on mixedness, which has evidently centred an evolved sense of awareness in the research process that becomes particularly important when highlighting oppressions like racism.

Retrospection and disclosures: families addressing unspoken things

A critical component of the research process was the fact I was asking many of the family members to retrospectively discuss their childhoods and memories of family relatedness in the context of place. In this very particular aspect of the fieldwork I was attending to what Vron Ware describes as, 'dealing with an understanding of place always reconstructed in the past tense, that is, places of growing up as they are remembered in adult life' (Ware, 2005, p.7).

Notably, family members provided more critical, detailed and fluid descriptions of their childhoods in place when multiple family members were present (see chapters six and seven). With a focus on race and the racialisation of place, the narrative ethnographies with multiple family members often led to conversations about how such matters had been negotiated in their families. The research questions and interview guide (see appendices), which focused on retrospective discussion of their time in Bromsgrove, led family members to disclose the frequency with which they had been subject to aspects of this place that were challenging. These conversations presented poignant examples of why I strove to spend multiple occasions with each family to help create more

space and time to reflect on these frequently unspoken issues between family members.

In the first conversation with siblings Tara and Craig, Tara shared a story about racist abuse on the school bus. Craig was visibly shocked and frustrated that he did not know about this incident. Tara explained that the reason she had kept the encounters to herself related to not wanting to stand out at all even more. Craig understood his sister's rationale.

In later conversations we returned to the fact that Tara and Craig were learning more about the detail of their experiences of racism in Bromsgrove and how they felt finding out about this during a research project. They were both clear on multiple occasions that the research had brought them closer together. (Field Notes, 6th June 2019)

In our collective conversations, moments of disclosure in group family discussions revealed themselves in two ways. Firstly, they occurred in conversations about experiences of racism that had been concealed from other family members or wider social networks. Secondly, disclosures occurred when family members began to reflect on why they did not feel able to discuss these matters with other family members. In both group and one-to-one conversations, some family members said these ongoing discussions were the first time they were contemplating how race had functioned in their families. This methodological challenge resonated with more contemporary scholarship on mixed-studies, which has not only established the importance of relationality in mixed-race families (Edwards, 2012; Edwards & Caballero, 2011; Kouritzin,

2016; McKenzie, 2013) but also indicated that it can be very complicated to address unspoken things with multiple family members.

A significant feature of the fieldwork was that the unspoken can exist and be maintained within whole families as well as between individual family members. It was also clear that although there were instances where conversations about race had been supressed by particular family members, facilitating retrospective discussions about life in Bromsgrove made space for others to consider why some experiences had been silenced (see also chapter seven). A further consideration was how we could discuss these issues using a considered and ethical approach that remained sensitive to existing family relationships.

As I have already outlined, many family members came to the research having never before discussed some of the racisms they had either witnessed or experienced in Bromsgrove. Evidently, while narrative ethnography is ideally positioned to discuss these unspoken issues, the fact that even close relatives had never discussed them before this was crucial for the analysis in subsequent chapters. Some of these dialogues were unique in both their delivery and process – *the first time of sharing and the first time of listening.*

Collectively we were able to talk about our relationships both within Bromsgrove and in our own families. The power of 'looking back' or 'remembering a time' was an effective component of the methodological process. Through group recollections we brought together juxtapositions, different ways of understanding family life and most significantly, differing understandings of race and place. These family conversations addressed racial

and gendered boundaries but were also intergenerational in nature (see chapters four and eight).

Unspoken family practices

After the first few ethnographic encounters with families it was clear that many had created their own normative *family practices* when discussions about race presented. As will be addressed in chapter four and six, these family practices were clearly influenced by the localised specifics of semi-rurality/suburbia. While the fieldwork became a space to address the unspoken, it also became clear how the silencing of race had been facilitated by what Phoenix and Brannen refer to as the normative *constructiveness of family life* (Phoenix and Brannen, 2014, p.24). When conducting research with families, Phoenix and Brannen emphasise how narrative approaches to family research show how normatively constructed family practices can create hidden traditions which often become incontestable:

> [N]arrative approaches have much to offer in eliciting the hidden and taken for granted aspects of family life and family practices, for example through their emphasis upon temporality, context and fluidity, their attentiveness to memory and to performativity, and their sensitivity to emotional tone and the normative constructiveness of family life. (Phoenix and Brannen, 2014, p.24).

Phoenix and Brannen emphasise that family-based narrations demonstrate the possibility of uncovering how practices, traditions and cultures become normative among family members. At times, the family members in this research who displayed Phoenix and Brannen's normatively constructed family practices indicated that

questioning these practices felt like contesting the fundamental sacredness of their family unit (Hill Collins, 1998). During the ethnography, it was clear that the methodological approach was highlighting the way these family practices were embedded in family members' mundane, everyday lives and relationships in Bromsgrove. This connected place-making with family practices, and demonstrated how their families negotiated race in a way similar to the way it was negotiated in other social contexts in Bromsgrove. The combination of personal and family stories created narrative settings (Gubrium & Holstein, 2008, p.252) in which place and family spaces became interconnected. In some instances, the unspoken had developed through a family practice that was highly influenced by the restrictive cultures of semi-rural/suburban place-making (see chapter four).

From family practice to family values

The predominance of normative family practices during the fieldwork demonstrated how eventually these matters became encoded as *family values.* In some of the families, the unspoken was clearly a *practical process* of avoiding, or not discussing issues of race and racism. Here, the narrative ethnographic approach demonstrated how this *practice* became something that was *valued.* If family practices become valued, they can quite clearly inhibit challenging conversations about race between family members and thus make the silence more difficult to contest.

With the unspoken interconnected by notions of family values, it was clear how these had been facilitated and influenced by the social reproduction of hegemonic whiteness outlined in chapter two (and later empirical chapters). It was therefore necessary constantly to recognise how hegemonic whiteness pervaded

the research space, but also how the positioning of family values as sacred made it more difficult for some family members to address these previously unspoken issues.

The sacredness of family values has been outlined by Black feminist scholars such as Patricia Hill Collins (1998) who argues that when families' values become normative, they condition challenging sites of contestation of some of society's most pressing issues. Hill Collins describes the 'natural' and 'biological' positioning of the family as predisposed to functioning as ideologically symbolic through sets of what appear to be indisputable values. During the fieldwork, family values were also interpreted as a way to protect family members from racialised harms experienced in the context of place. The unspoken was routinely seen as a normative family practice which was of value because it excluded 'negativity', matters from the past, or sentiments that felt uncontrollable. The narratives of both Generations One and Two demonstrated how the relationship between family practice, family values and the unspoken was understood between some family members as a way of protecting themselves or other family members from the realities of living among some of the cultures in semi-rural/suburban places. In chapter four, I show how multigenerational imagining of places had framed semi-rural/suburban contexts as better places to live. In the context of this discussion of the methodological approach, it was clear how frequently the juxtaposition of discussions about the reality of living in Bromsgrove with the persistence of cultures of racism was connected to the negotiation of these matters through the guise of family values.

While the fieldwork with the families produced challenging conversations, there were also circumstances in which radical spaces for racial literacy and development opened up (see chapters seven and eight). As Hill Collins notes, despite the issue of normative family values, the family can also become a space for radical change, development and challenge to wider societal structures. The ones we love are at times in a better position to challenge our ways of thinking, and when the fieldwork finished, family members frequently said how necessary they felt taking part in the research had been for addressing some of these previously unspoken matters.

> One of the radical family spaces I witnessed was when Tara, Craig and their father Eric joined me for a recorded interview together. This was an encounter where the conversations felt like very poignant disclosures between children and their parents about what they *really* thought of their hometown (field notes, 13th December 2019)

The time I spent with the Silvesters is discussed more specifically in chapter seven, but the crucial component for this reflection on methodology was how Tara and Craig's narratives about Bromsgrove together helped Eric to understand how they had experienced the racialised boundaries of belonging in suburbia. Eric had previously been convinced that the respectable middle-class cultures of Bromsgrove would reject any forms of negative racialisation and racism. Tara and Craig challenged Eric about this with their own detailed anecdotes of cultures of racism, which later helped Eric to better address and describe some of the pervasive ways that both place and race had pervaded his own life among mainly white people.

As well as highlighting the place-based intricacies of Bromsgrove – with an emphasis on how place-making can facilitate racialised exclusions – the methodological approach highlighted that these processes can be further maintained between family members by the absence of discussion. Conversations about racism are routinely silenced in semi-rural/suburban places like Bromsgrove and the empirical chapters demonstrate clearly how this had an impact on the families.

Further ethical considerations on what is unspoken between family members

The retrospective disclosures among family members about life in Bromsgrove were typical of the challenges navigated by critical ethnographers of race when tackling difficult subjects like racism (Nayak, 2009; Kalra, 2006). As already outlined, the fieldwork frequently created situations in which family members learned about difficult circumstances experienced by their closest kin. These processes of disclosure between family members revealed uncomfortable and at times, highly emotional memories.

Navigating the unspoken with the families involved an ongoing reflective engagement with the ethical issues surrounding its discussion among them during the fieldwork. It was fundamentally important to be routinely aware of the emotion, frustration and at times, relief, that these conversations created both within and beyond the fieldwork. After some first-time disclosures of experiences of racisms, multiple family members followed up with direct messages to me about their sense of relief and how good it had felt to describe their lives in Bromsgrove critically. These occurrences required me to reflect regularly on my own position as a researcher, as

well as on my ethical commitment to ensuring that these conversations were facilitated by an ethic of care. As the family members were sharing these challenging dialogues, I made it clear that they could contact me by email and text message to discuss them further if they wished (see also chapter eight).

These revelations not only meant that the ethnographic encounters provided space for disclosures about unspoken realities, but also highlighted how the nature of the discussions could have wider consequences for the families beyond the research. While members of Generation Two, in particular, repeatedly described a lack of discussion about race among family members in Generation One, it should not be assumed that their memories of these silences translates into the parents' belief that their child had not experienced racism. Further, the apparent silence about race in Generation One, particularly among the Black and Black mixed-race family members, did not mean that they had not experienced racism in a very similar way to Generation Two. These tensions between family members are explored throughout the empirical chapters, but it was clear from the fieldwork that the methodological approach demonstrated generational differences in both managing and negotiating experiences of racialisation and racism (see chapters seven and eight).

The novel status of these conversations about race between many family members during the group conversations remains a key methodological consideration in this research, but in later chapters, I also show how the unspoken was a clear indicator of the longstanding and unchallenged nature of racisms that have persisted in Bromsgrove and within the families. To recognise the reality of the unspoken through a process of care, I treated these sensitive conversations with

family members as processes of *reconciliation.* This reconciling is entangled with emotion, re-evaluation and ultimately, acceptance (Ahmed, 2013).

Ethnographic race writing: portraiture

Throughout the empirical chapters that follow I demonstrate how ethnographic race writing provides a useful way to explore how the unspoken was both addressed and disclosed among family members. With descriptions of race, place and the family at the forefront of the analyses, narrative ethnography provided material that allowed me to write with attentiveness to the situated and local understandings of familial narratives of semi-rurality/suburbia. In this way, the process of writing the empirical findings in chapter form was responsive to Yasmeen Narayan's contention that ethnography is 'imaginative and inventive as opposed to transparent, factual and objective' (Clifford & Marcus, 1986, cited in Narayan, 2015, p.187).

As already discussed, during the first few months of the fieldwork, it became clear that unspoken issues concerning race would be disclosed for the first time between some family members. While I have recorded how these encounters presented in the fieldwork, it was also imperative to address *a central story* for families about how matters like race had become silenced over time; the empirical chapters consequently pay a great deal of attention to the careful and sensitive craft of ethnographic race writing to capture family lineages of the unspoken.

The ethnographic race writing adopted throughout the empirical chapters was inspired and developed by the scholarship of Sara Lawrence-Lightfoot and

Jessica Hoffman Davis' (1997) and their conceptualisation of 'portraiture'. Lawrence-Lightfoot and Hoffman Davis describe portraiture as an artistic writing form of inquiry which works towards capturing the complexity and aesthetic of lived experience through human meaning-making (1997, p.29), but note that it does not intend to depict a mirror image of people, but is rather positioned to capture the 'essence' of human character through interpretations of personal histories that have been resisted, as well as aspects of lives that are both familiar and ordinary. Portraiture is a methodological tool for ethnographic race writing which seeks to address people's strengths and vulnerabilities, as well as the beauty and imperfections of human life. Portraiture added value to this research when it came to addressing how the unspoken was addressed through varying interpretations of familiarity, and family members' introduction to new perspectives on their lives in Bromsgrove (Lawrence-Lightfoot & Hoffman Davis, 1997, p.4). Thus, each chapter develops a portrait of selected families and family members through *thick description* (Geertz, 1973) to record social life as 'an acted document' which considers how lives and experiences are performed within and beyond the fieldwork (Geertz, 1973, p.218). The portraits introduced and woven through the empirical chapters are attentive to the contexts of dialogue, and responsive to the specificities of each family member's narrative. While there are obviously scholarly discussions embedded in the next four chapters, the empirical development emphasises intimate and emotional storytelling framed to address the complicated and multidimensional aspects of family life in Bromsgrove. This way of ethnographic race writing through the combination of thick descriptions and portraits creates a central

story produced through attention to context, detail and dialogue between myself and the families, and between the family members themselves.

Some of the issues discussed in the following chapters were particularly sensitive and complicated, such as the family narratives about parenting racialised difference discussed in chapter six. Writing about what was shared and what remained unspoken in such an intimate way was informed by scholars such as Carole Smart (2009) who stressed the importance of thinking deeply and writing reflectively about family narratives of love, dispute and reconciliation. As with Lawrence-Lightfoot and Hoffman Davis' emphasis on approaching portraiture starting with 'the good stuff' (1997, p.11), Smart also asserts that ethnographic reflections on research with families should work towards exploring the past in an effort to locate hopeful possibilities - "the depth and meaning of relationships might exist in the significance of shared memory or even in aspirations for the future" (2009, p.289).

Chapters seven and eight, where I address some of the hopeful possibilities narrated by all the family members who participated in the research, draw on Smart's reminder to write with sensitivity and compassion.

The use of ethnographic race writing with portraiture in the empirical chapters was produced through a textual method of recording ethnographic observations of Bromsgrove alongside the narratives of family members. This process involved writing about race in a way that prioritised the families' narratives and contextualised the realities of social life and how the unspoken connected to the making of semi-rural/suburban place. As ethnographic race writing does not rely just on race, it allows for experiences to be understood via

the contexts and situations that fuel recognitions of racialised difference (Gunaratnam, 2003). The empirical chapters thus incorporate ethnographic race writing to situate politics, culture and place as fundamental causes of the proliferation of cultures of racism and hegemonic whiteness (Nayak, 2005).

This thesis is committed to a more descriptive version of ethnographic race writing to avoid condoning an authentic or true version of the experiences of mixed-race families. Furthermore, and in response to the methodological challenges presented in this chapter, I have consistently attended to the wider power relations that are of course embedded in what Claire Alexander calls 'always already racialised discourses' (Alexander, 2004, p.143). The ethnographic writing is also attentive to place, and focuses on descriptions of social life that contribute to, but do not rely on, notions of race (Alexander, 2004). By actively focussing on specificities and the detailed contexts of the families' narratives and life histories, throughout the empirical chapters I write about everyday life in a way that attends to how race affects their lives while refusing to reinscribe it. This in turn allows for what is and is not said within the ethnographic encounter to come to life in written form.

Exemplifying Portraiture

All four empirical chapters begin with introductory portraits of the family members whose narratives are explored in the analysis. These portraits and the use of thick description of family members' lives in each chapter contextualise their narratives, but also signal an empathetic reading of the complexities and essence of human experiences. Methodologically, the use of portraiture demonstrates just one way of recording how and why challenging conversations

about race and racism had so often remained unspoken between family members. Below is a supplementary portrait for the Smith family, whose narratives are explored in more detail in chapter four:

Meeting Daphne and Sophie Smith

When I met Daphne for the first time, she was in the middle of decorating her house with her husband Ryan. Their house had at least four bedrooms, a large kitchen, multiple lounge spaces and high ceilings. They had moved here two years ago, having lived on the other side of Bromsgrove in what Daphne described as a smaller house with a tiny garden. Daphne described how she had aspired to have a large garden since she was a little girl.

As we sat in the lounge opposite the large fireplace, Ryan brought us tea and biscuits while Daphne gave me more details about the house. Her description of their new home felt symbolic. She would later explain to me that housing had been a prominent and at times, traumatic part of her life.

Both Daphne and on later occasions, her daughter Sophie, were very generous with their time. Not only did they invite me to learn more about what they knew of their family history, they were also very enthusiastic about the research in general. Beyond the fieldwork, we have exchanged voice notes and messages about politics, race and our lives in Bromsgrove. The Smith family were warm and welcoming, but equally demonstrated through dialogue, body language and silences, how difficult it had been to talk about family, racism and Bromsgrove. The memories they shared still seemed raw, coming close to what Antze describes as 'memories still in ruins' (Antze, 1996). Giving voice to experiences we have kept

to ourselves can be a difficult process, especially when they are entwined with intimate relationships, familiar places and homes (Lewis, 2009). Although both Daphne and Sophie were consistently willing participants, these were highly emotive subjects of discussion that they addressed through their words and bodily responses. During various conversations with them about their lives in Bromsgrove, they both would check that I was comfortable with the direction of the conversation before sharing challenging subject matters, usually concerning cultures of racisms. They were both very conscious of difficult stories that involved racism; they kept saying that they wanted to make sure I (the social researcher interested in racisms) was comfortable with hearing what they would share. They said it hadn't always been easy to talk about racism and they didn't want to offend anyone.

There was a continuation of frank and honest discussions when I spent time with the Smiths, usually involving conversations about making sense of the fact that race had been such an unspoken subject matter between various other family members and in their social networks in Bromsgrove and beyond. Daphne described a poignant conversation with a colleague in which she had explained how she was taking part in this research and its subject matter. She said that her fellow Bromsgrovian was shocked that racism might be a matter of concern during her life – she questioned the validity of this type of research in a place like Bromsgrove: 'Not Bromsgrove, this is a good place to live for everyone!'

This extract from the Smith's portrait supplements the introductory portraits in the next chapter. For the purpose of this methodological analysis, it serves as a micro

example of the portraits in all the empirical chapters. It is an illustration of how the fieldwork entailed close, extended and quality time with the family members; the Smith portrait begins to show how ethnographic race writing through portraiture is ideally suited to research that is attentive not only to what is said, but also to how lives are performed in the context of place and the family.

This portrait contains at least three of the key uses of ethnography as a way of tackling the methodological challenge of the unspoken. Firstly, it highlights how time spent with multiple family members together and separately created space in which we could collectively and individually approach their retrospective narrations of their lives in Bromsgrove in a supportive manner (see chapter seven). Secondly, across multiple occasions with family members, there were various opportunities to formulate holistic discussions about relationships within the families. Thirdly, we were able to discuss cultures of racism with an emphasis on situated and localised contexts. In the following chapters, it becomes clear how the fieldwork allowed for conversations to be connected to the multiplicity of social life, why such experiences occurred and how they related to family and place. Portraits have been used to show how the research was designed to give family members time, space and support to collectively ascertain how the unspoken is connected to the place-making of Bromsgrove and the relationships within their families.

Conclusion

The primary focus of this chapter has been the question of how and why the unspoken emerged within the fieldwork during both solo and group ethnographic encounters. The research became a site at which some family members reckoned with the difficulty of discussing matters concerning race and

racism, both within their families and in Bromsgrove. At times, these revelations were challenging because they required an acknowledgement that the unspoken had been maintained by their own families' practices and values. With this, it was clear how narrative ethnography provided multi-layered understandings of why issues concerning race had so often been silent between family members, and how this silence had been primarily located in the place-making of semi-rural/suburban contexts like Bromsgrove. This commitment to recognising the inextricability of place throughout the following chapters has been both a theoretical and methodological endeavour.

What has been made clear in this chapter is that this thesis provides an important methodological contribution to research with families more broadly. The key contributions lie in the flexibility I applied to incorporating, not shying away from, my own subjectivities about the research questions. The use of narrative ethnography and portraiture together also identify how social researcher of race and racism can apply a thoughtful yet sensitive mode of inquiry to emotional, painful and challenging subject matters. In this way, the project should be understood as an example of research that moves beyond negotiating with researcher bias and instead focuses on what subjectivities or shared commonalities can bring to the research setting.

While there were challenging discussions about what it had been like to be raised and live as a Black mixed-race family in Bromsgrove, I have used this methodological chapter to emphasise how my own proximities to the families' experiences in this place, prepared the ground for a research space of both understanding and familiarity. In the chapters that follow I address how the

existence and maintenance of hegemonic whiteness in semi-rural/suburban places clearly impacted some family members' understandings of their experiences of cultures of racism. It was therefore fundamental to maintain research spaces that would reduce the chances that their narratives would be contested; my own experiences of race, place and the family in Bromsgrove offered greater possibilities for the ethnography to authenticate family members' feelings about their lives in Bromsgrove.

It is also important to remind the reader that experiences of racialisation and racism occurred *within* the Black mixed-race families. These experiences might have been overlooked by certain family members and wider social networks in the past, and so this was the first time they had been spoken about openly, creating a dual process of disclosure that complicated the research process. Sharing my own experiences of Bromsgrove was about collectively alleviating, but also collectively coming to terms with, how navigating life as a racialised subject in Bromsgrove (but also with particular family members) has been a significant part of some family members lives, regardless of whether these issues had been actively discussed prior to taking part in this research.

Crucially for the arguments in the empirical chapters, while I have contextualised the family narratives of cultures of racism in Bromsgrove and how these have been negotiated, the methodological approach showed how these lived experiences were routinely understood by some family members as simply another unextraordinary part of social life. The unspoken required a methodological approach sensitive to the issues disclosed, as their past

experiences had been processed as a normal part of life in a semi-rural-suburban place.

For the Black and Black mixed-race family members, the fact that racism had seldom been addressed means that these narrations had become a naturalised part of everyday life. Many of the anecdotes I was told marked the first-time family members were describing these experiences alongside their racialised existence; they had lived within a routinely silenced racialised position. For these reasons, discussing racism within the contexts of place and the family necessitated a methodological framework that incorporated my familiarity with the subject matter, as well as requiring me to reflect consistently on how better to create an environment of care and compassion.

In this chapter I have critically outlined how the method of narrative ethnography was best suited to address the Black mixed-race families situated and contextualised narrations of managing and negotiating racialisation and racism in Bromsgrove. I have argued that ethnography goes beyond what is spoken by being attentive to how social life is enacted every day. These methodological reflections have illuminated how the unspoken is a central characteristic of this textured research process.

Narrative ethnography brought to the fore a wide range of realities previously unspoken among family members. This was addressed by the family members who directly stated that they have supressed, ignored or tried to forget the way race has impeded their lives in Bromsgrove. These realities are inextricable from the social production of hegemonic whiteness in Bromsgrove that fuels the silencing of race and cultures of racism. Disclosing the unspoken

was a process of realisation and reconciliation that developed in the ethnographic interviews between family members (see chapter seven).

I have used ethnographic race writing through portraiture to address some of the sensitive and emotional themes and issues that emerged in the families' narratives. What was unspoken and silenced among family members prior to taking part in the research has been a central consideration here and I have shown how such portraiture provides contextual supplementation to each family narrative to better locate the reasons why some aspects of their lives (particularly those concerning race) have not been addressed. While these challenging conversations will be addressed in more detail in the following chapters, portraiture was used to attempt to capture the human essence of family members' lives in Bromsgrove, and how they had managed and negotiated race, place and the family.

In the next chapter I introduce how imaginings of a better life became a contributing factor in the ways that Black mixed-race family members assigned meaning to their lived experiences of Bromsgrove. Through a discussion of the significance of the classed and racialised histories of Birmingham, I show how Generation One's narratives of Birmingham became integral to their place-making and aspirations to live in a semi-rural/suburban place. This is a discussion about the lived connections between Bromsgrove and the Black mixed-race families, and how the characteristics of places and families are inextricably tied to one another.

Chapter Four: Imaginations of a better life and place to live: How and why did the families end up living in Bromsgrove?

The stories of how the nine families ended up living in Bromsgrove can be traced back to post-war migrations from the Caribbean to Britain after World War II. It is well documented amongst existing generations, but also sociologists and historians that those who arrived from the Caribbean after the war described varying, complex and contested reasons for migrating (Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies, 1982; McEwan, 2009). Socio-historians such as Colin Grant have addressed these as commonly held intergenerational divisions typically found in West Indian families 'between the adults, between the dreamers who were given to nostalgia about the West Indies and the sacrifices they'd made, and those more focused on the hard-nosed reality of life in Britain' (Grant, 2019, p.1). While the human story and reasons for migrating and settling in England have varied, multi-generational constructions and imaginings of place are routinely conceived through the desire for a better life and place to live (Neale, 2002; Reynolds, 2006).

In this chapter, a better life is conceptualised through the descriptive rationales of how Generation Two in particular have come to be living in a semi-rural/suburban place whereby they can be – and in most cases are – at risk of having to negotiate the everyday social reproduction of the racial coding of Bromsgrove. These are the stories and narratives of the nine families that

illustrate the meaning of McKittrick's (2011) idea about a Black sense of place within, which exists in spite of the dominance of whiteness. In this way, this chapter explores the importance of the racialised politics of place to exemplify a transcendence of understanding mixedness beyond the Black mixed-race family relationships.

The dominant cultures in Bromsgrove had conditioned family members, especially older members, to expect that they would have to negotiate a relational and normative racism that was routinely described through intergenerational explanations of what could constitute a better life and place to be. Amongst Generation Two in particular, these narrations of a better life repeatedly presented what Hannah Jones and Emma Jackson (2014) have stressed as the physical, emotional, relational, and political stipulations which make a place a home. Further, the notion of a better life is understood through the discursive positioning of a better place to live as a long-term dialectical struggle to find a home; a sense of belonging, safety and security (Massey, 1993).

This chapter contributes to arguments in both Les Back's (1996) and Anoop Nayak's (2009) research on place making in mainly white places in urban peripheries, through a discussion of how multigenerational familial experiences of cultures of racism contribute to shaping understandings of a better place to live. This chapter also invokes both Avtar Brah's (1976, 1996, 2012) and Neil Chakraborti's (2009) considerations of the race and class uncertainties posed for negatively racialised populations in mainly white places. Finally, I present illustrations of Annette Kuhn's examination of the consequences of family

secrets and Beverley Tatum's (1999) cautions about racial stress and living in mainly white communities in semi-rural/suburban places.

There were stark intergenerational differences in what had been both imagined and understood as the ideal place to live. Though the Caribbean origins of the nine families remained an important consideration for how a better life is constructed generationally, the primary argument of this chapter concerns how Generation One ended up raising their children in Bromsgrove because a better life had been constructed alongside familial lived experiences of violent, discursive and situated racisms within mainly working-class and white places on the periphery of Birmingham. In this respect, their idealisations of a better place to live were in line with Cloke and Milbourne's definition of the 'rural idyll', which is synonymous with safety, happiness and health, or more poignantly, the idealism of middle-class living (Cloke & Milbourne, 1992, p.359).

This chapter takes up the story from the Smith family portrait outlined in chapter three, with narratives moving between Jamaica, Birmingham, and Bromsgrove to illustrate how a better life and place to live is generationally reproduced. Using the testimonies of mother and daughter Daphne and Sophie Smith, I show how their lived experiences of Birmingham, alongside imaginations of semi-rural/suburban places, address some of the reasons how and why the nine families ended up living in Bromsgrove.

This chapter is arranged in three key sections. The first section contextualises Winston Williams' (Daphne's father) childhood migration from Jamaica to Birmingham. As I did not speak directly with Winston, this section was created from Daphne's reflections and description of what she knew about

her father's life upon arrival in the UK. It includes some information drawn from public archival sources on the national and localised politics of the time. In section two, I explore Daphne's childhood in predominantly white places on the periphery of Birmingham, what happened when she left home, and how she met her husband Ryan Smith and eventually moved to Bromsgrove. In the third section, I introduce the more contemporary accounts of Bromsgrove related by Daphne and her daughter Sophie.

Daphne Smith

Born in Winson Green, Birmingham, in 1972, to a white English mother and a Black Jamaican father, Daphne ended up permanently residing in Bromsgrove as a newly-wed in 1997. She has an undergraduate degree in theatre studies and during her teenage years and early twenties, was a theatre performer and actor in London. When not moving back and forth between London and Birmingham to visit her future husband Ryan Smith – she was an anti-racist activist. Daphne's children, her son Fraser and her daughter Sophie, were born in 1997 and 1999 respectively. In the early 2000s Daphne trained as a fitness instructor.

Daphne is now a freelance fitness instructor and works mainly in various residential homes for the elderly. Ryan has an office-based role and their children, Sophie and Fraser, are away at university.

Sophie Smith

Sophie Smith was born in Redditch in 2000 to Daphne and her white-English father, Ryan. While she was taking part in this research, Sophie was

completing her final year undergraduate degree in sociology and writing her
undergraduate dissertation on Black mixed-race families in Bromsgrove. She
hoped to continue studying sociology at postgraduate level.

During our time together, Sophie was still confused about how she had
ended up living in Bromsgrove. Having left to go to university, Sophie was clear
that she wanted to experience lots of different aspects of the social world,
including living and being around distinctively different kinds of people from
those she had grown up with in Bromsgrove.

Part One: From Jamaica and Saint Kitts to Bromsgrove via Birmingham: how and why do people end up living in Bromsgrove?

Soon after the British Nationality Act 1948 became law, 'British subjects' in the West Indies were recategorised as 'citizens of the UK and colonies'. This change in citizenship legislation provided the legal route for the parents and their families in Generation One to settle in Britain. Among the nine families, familial narratives of migration were usually presented through secondary anecdotes about how 1970s and 1980s Birmingham was challenging for them, their parents and older or deceased family members. These recollections of life in Birmingham frequently revolved around the sensitivities of mixed-race relationships, and emanated from broader dialects of navigating cultures of racism in work, housing and school. These cultures of racism occurred through violence, everyday interpersonal hostilities and during institutional negotiations relating to inequitable access to safety and support. These lived experiences

clearly introduced how, over time, family members had come to imagine and understand semi-rural/suburban places like Bromsgrove in opposition to their recent family histories in Birmingham.

In both group and solo encounters with family members, we spent a significant amount of time together contemplating why there had been a multi-generational reluctance to talk about the past. These conversations aligned with Kuhn's description of silences between loved ones as 'family secrets' which should be understood through recollections of the nation and the 'motherland' (Kuhn, 1995, p.147). Multi-generational 'secrets' are thus grounded in two homes; one of origin (Jamaica, Saint Kitts, England and Ireland) and one positioned as a possibility, or a home away from home (the semi-rural/suburban ideal). Kuhn stresses that family secrets are conditioned through an 'involuntary amnesia of repression to the wilful forgetting of matters it might be less than convenient to recall' (Kuhn, 1995, p.2). On the matter of family secrets in this research, Daphne described how little information she had about her father's life in Jamaica before he moved to Birmingham at eleven years old. Like many of the family members, Daphne laid bare how persistently these conversations had been both unspoken and actively silenced within her family. Together, Daphne and I worked out that Winston had arrived with his sister in Birmingham in 1958. Daphne remained intrigued about her Jamaican roots but continually stressed how difficult it had been to persuade her father to discuss the details of any aspect of his life in either Jamaica or Birmingham:

> "If you try and talk to my Dad about his life he goes "oh yeah…
> that was it" and just like moves on and goes "Oh I don't

remember Daph, I don't know, I don't know". I know that they had a kind of…I know they had a pretty…I know he didn't have any shoes. You just did not bother my Dad with questions like that. He went to work and came back and that was it."

These words exemplify the way the Black and Black mixed-race family members of Generation One narrated their parent's departure from Jamaica or Saint Kitts and their subsequent arrival in Birmingham. Questions concerning their family histories went unanswered because the answers were unknown, or were met with ambivalence, or the insistence that other family members had purposefully silenced discussions on these matters. Regardless of these omissions, there was great enthusiasm among family members like Daphne to better understand how so much time had passed without her knowing about her Jamaican family history.

As Daphne knew very little about her father's arrival and time in Birmingham, her recollections were an example of a secondary revision (Kuhn, 1995, p.149). This idea refers to the welding together of multiple sources related to a life to provide a centralised story that generates autobiographical narratives. Crucially, secondary revisions are subject to differing interpretations because they rely on personal processing by third parties. The secondary revision in this context provided a significant overview of a father's life through his daughter's retelling, which relied on her memories of hearing the stories from other family members. During the time we spent together, Daphne and I discussed the national and local political landscapes between 1948 and 1971, which provided more contextual analysis about the unknowns of Winston's life. This emphasis on local and interpersonal histories offered a framework to

evaluate how racial trauma and stress, condoned at both national and local level, might have contributed to Winston's silence. As Daphne's recollections came to be understood in the context the specific local history of Birmingham at the time of her father's arrival, we began to broach the subject of what she had witnessed or experienced first-hand during her childhood.

Black Caribbean populations in Britain and Birmingham: national and local cultures of racism

Although the silences around race and racism were ubiquitous in their personal narrations of places, lived experiences and their families, describing events and prominent racial tensions nationally and locally began to address some of the reasons why these issues had remained unspoken among the nine families. Family members recalled the extreme racism that Black and Black mixed-race family members had endured in 1970s Birmingham, as a way to introduce how semi-rural/suburban places had become imagined as a better place to live.

These historical contextualisations framed the way racial politics were foregrounded for family members who arrived in England between 1948 and 1971. In 1958, just ten years after the Empire Windrush anchored in the Tilbury Docks (Runnymede, 2018), Winston and his only sister were 'sent for' from Jamaica by their parents, who were already living in Birmingham. Although Winston's generation were not the first arrivals from the Caribbean to live and work in Britain (Fryer, 1982; Olusoga, 2016; Caballero and Aspinall, 2018; Kaufmann, 2018; Bland, 2018), his migration as a child from Jamaica to England was part of a moment of crucial political significance for 'race relations'

nationally in the UK, and also more locally within cities like Birmingham (Rex & Moore, 1967; John, 1972; Adekunle, 2015). When Daphne spoke about her father, she often explained how frustrated she felt about knowing very little about either his or her own Jamaican heritage:

> My dad comes from Jamaica. I really can't tell you too much about my dad because he's always been like…it's almost like he is a double agent and just doesn't like to talk much about Jamaica. People always say to me "oh have you been?" and I'm like "no". My dad would never go back. He just has no affiliation with Jamaica. He's got family there still. His mum and dad came over originally and then his mum and dad sent for the two. It should have been the oldest child and the girl so they sent for them. My dad wasn't the oldest child but he was the hardest working. He came over when he was like eleven with his sister and I think they came over on their own which must've been really traumatic, but my dad never said anything and I literally just know the facts.

Daphne situated Winston's arrival within the national and local racialised and classed politics of Birmingham, which we both agreed had potentially contributed to his difficulty in sharing his experiences with her. As already outlined, the majority of Generation One, or their parents, arrived in the UK during the economic recovery after World War II (Lunn, 1989). At that time, national politics focused on the National Health Service, de-industrialisation, mass unemployment, labour shortages and, more poignantly for the biographies in this research, housing deficits (Rex and Moore, 1979; Muhammad, 1995; Mckenley, 2001; Bhabha, 2004).

The popular discourse of the Windrush generation's arrival was that their presence was one of unilateral welcome and invitation. But although the post-war restoration of Britain was reliant on the labour of British citizens arriving from its Empire, the invitation to work and start a life in Britain did not receive universal support from across the political spectrum (Mead, 2009; Taylor, 2020). At the level of governance, debates in parliament show that post-war settlement from 'Commonwealth' countries was mistrusted. In the year that Winston and his sister arrived in Birmingham, immigration remained a continuous subject of parliamentary dispute. In a debate titled 'Immigration Control', Cyril Osborne, an MP representing Louth in the East Midlands – contended that control of immigration from the Commonwealth was urgently needed.[6] Mr Osborne stated that Britain should be able to exercise the same type of immigration controls that West Indian islands enforced:

> Yet I am credibly informed that in the West Indies each island, and especially Jamaica... , has the power, which it exercises, of keeping out persons from other islands. They exercise restraint and restriction against one another. Therefore, it seems to me rather out of place for Mr. Manley to come here and say that he would force upon us a gospel which he himself is not prepared to accept in the case of his fellow West Indians. It seems to me to be the worst form of colonialism in reverse (Osborne, 1958).

[6] Cyril Osborne became more overt in his racist beliefs and quest for tighter immigration control. In 1964 he wrote in *The Spectator* 'If unlimited immigration were allowed, we should ultimately become a chocolate-coloured, Afro-Asian mixed society. That I do not want'.

Cyril Osborne's intervention represented just one example of a series of public declarations from members of parliament who were suspicious of and hostile to the arrival of Winston's generation. Whether it was through rhetoric about pressure on the health service (despite the fact that many arrived to work for the NHS), education, or housing (Dodgson, 1984; Winston, 1993; Goulbourne, 1998; Reay & Mirza, 1997), at the time of Winston's arrival in Birmingham, public discourse was saturated by the notion that his presence would contribute to the 'over population' of cities like Birmingham. Discussion at the level of national and local governance made families like Winston's scapegoats for Britain's under-preparedness for their arrival to support the post-war effort, when their presence was actually imperative for the rebuilding and recovery of Britain (Tyler, 2010).

National debates about 'race relations' had their own local specificities in cities like Birmingham (Back, 1994; Adams, 2011). Members of the nine families would have navigated the highly racialised and classed issue of housing in Birmingham during the 1950s through to the late 1970s. Rex and Moore (1979) noted that the issue of 'overpopulation' and navigating the everyday politics of this rhetoric in Birmingham was particularly pertinent in the under-funded and under-resourced housing market (Rex and Moore, 1979). Rex and Moore contended that the cumulative effect of increased in-migration and the lack of housing to support this growing population created racist discriminatory practices on the part of the local council and landlords. The labour market was thriving and in need of people like Winston and his family. Many of the new arrivals occupied places near the city centre, creating homes for their families

in large 'broken up houses' that were split into rented rooms – known as lodging houses (Moore, 2011, p.8). Daphne recalled her grandparents living in these rooms before moving back to Jamaica:

> They came to Birmingham and lived in rooms for 21 years. They came here and lived in a big house, saved up enough money and then built a house back in Jamaica.

Daphne's family history is embedded in one of Birmingham city council's most notorious failings, that led to deeply entrenched racialised and classed social divisions (Rex, 1970). Whether it was the systemic structural racism they faced in search of housing, or the prevalence of racist attacks (Rex & Tomlinson, 1979), Winston's generation were regularly positioned as a hindrance; the local press were particularly interested in reporting their unruliness. As the demographics of Birmingham began to change, the Birmingham Daily Gazette ran several articles by 'concerned citizens'. In one article, titled 'Keep our Quality Up and Quantity Down' the bishop of Birmingham, Dr E.W. Barnes, continued the public discourse on the issue of 'overpopulation' in Birmingham:

> Many a West Indian island is today little better than crowded slum. Children born survive if they are vigorous: each one that dies relieves congestion. Naturally, such inhabitants can claim British citizenship and are coming here in large numbers to avoid such contestation and to enjoy the benefits of the welfare state. We are over-populated. We cannot produce enough food for our people even though the fertility of our land has artificially increased. (Barnes, 1949, p.1).

Citizens of the British Empire who arrived in Birmingham and across the UK were continuously forced to endure systemic racism (Rex & Tomlinson, 1979; John, 1972). Bishop Barnes' article, cited above, is a reminder that within each family were living memories of Birmingham as a place of racist and classist neglect and abuse (Tonkiss, 2005).

The pathologisation of (Black) mixed-race people in Birmingham

As with the considerable amount of research that has documented the visceral demonisation of mixed-race relationships (see chapter two), a number of family members described witnessing, experiencing, or hearing about these intra-familial and broader public hostilities towards mixedness and families in the late 1960s or early 1970s (Bland, 2005; Twine, 1998). These narratives accord with the work of Bland, and Caballero and Aspinall's historical research on the public and private shaming of mixed-race relationships through notions of hypersexuality and deviance (Bland, 2017; Caballero & Aspinall, 2018). Daphne described herself as a child of one of these mixed-race unions and her parent's relationship exemplified how many of these families had been imagined and, in many cases, stigmatised as a degradation of the state (Bland, 2017).

Just two years before Winston met Daphne's mother Clare in a record shop in Birmingham city centre, and only a few miles away, Enoch Powell had delivered his Rivers of Blood speech at the Conservative Political Centre on 20 April 1968. Powell's speech was made in opposition to the Race Relations Act 1968, which legislated against structural racism in the allocation of council housing. The eventual passing of the Act made it illegal to refuse housing, employment or public services to a person on the grounds of 'colour', race,

ethnic or national origins (Race Relations Act, 1968). Powell used his speech to condemn interracial unions and to contend that white men were losing power in Britain. The Rivers of Blood speech captured the way racism and the superiority of white Englishness was endorsed at the highest levels of society. This may be one reason why Winston had found it challenging to share his life story with Daphne. As discussed in chapter two, mixed-race relationships and families were consistently positioned as an example of the erosion of society. These descriptions of the local culture of racism for the adults of Winston's generation in Birmingham indicate how and why silence remained the norm amongst many of the families.

In this section, I have introduced the local and national politics at the time of Winston's and some of Generation One's arrival in Birmingham. Although Daphne was unable to share much information about her father's earlier life, I have detailed a selection of national and local issues of race and class in Birmingham from this time to demonstrate the atmosphere in which the families lived, and introduced one reason why silence persists among the older generation in each of the families (particularly those with Black Caribbean parents), leaving their stories of migrating and living unspoken.

This combination of silenced, experienced and imagined memories of Birmingham later contributed to the positioning of semi-rural/suburban places as a better and safer option amongst many of the families (Neal, 2002; Lewis, 2012).

Part Two: Racism and racialisation in Birmingham and beyond

In this section I discuss how direct recollections of being raised in Birmingham contributed to perceptions that semi-rural/suburban places like Bromsgrove would be an improvement on their childhood lives on the periphery of Birmingham. Along with the other parents in Generation One, Daphne recalled her deep frustration with the very classed and racialised dimensions of her life in Birmingham. For Daphne, the places she had lived in Birmingham, alongside an enduring desire to find out about her father's life, occurred in the context of a childhood of racist violence and racialised subjugation by local white children and adults.

Race, class and racism

The stories of Generation One about their lives on urban peripheries provided harrowing recollections of violence, exclusion and marginalisation. These narratives were a reminder of the inextricable relationship between Blackness and geographies of place through a demonstration of the social consequences of the everyday racial coding of locations (McKittrick, 2011). Daphne's family settled in various places outside Birmingham city centre in the early 1970s. She described these locations as predominantly working class and white, with her family usually being one of few Black families or families of colour on their council estate. Daphne was clear that racism was central to her childhood in these places:

> I found it hard growing up in Birmingham to be honest with you. Lots of things happened that weren't great to be honest with you. First of all, we lived in a high rise flat in Castle Vale and I was probably there for about eight years and experienced

terrible racism in Castle Vale like you wouldn't believe. And then we…because of that to be honest and because Castle Vale at the time was such an awful place to live, Mum and dad moved us to Pipease which was a little bit further down the way than Castle Vale.

As Daphne's words suggest, Winston and Clare decided to move their family because of the relentless racism they experienced in Castle Vale. This is in line with the findings of existing research on the racialisation of these mainly white places in Birmingham, and McKittrick's note that racism has always been a spatial project (McKittrick, 2011 p.947). The places where Daphne lived in Birmingham have been seen by others as containing disproportionately high levels of interpersonal racism, partly due to the overwhelming social reproduction of white Englishness, which was reliant on the construction of racialised others. Notably, Back has contended that these predominantly white places in Birmingham were more prone to racist encounters than inner-city spaces like Handsworth (Back, 1996, p.66). In 1996, in the locations described by Daphne, he found that visible minorities were ten times more likely to be the subjects of reported racist attacks than people living in the 'inner-city'. This - the verbal, violent and symbolic racism that Back outlined - was clearly something Daphne and her family had experienced in these parts of Birmingham. More poignantly, Back's description of a 'campaign of racist graffiti' (Back, 1996, p.67), was corroborated by Daphne's recollections of sites she would pass when walking to school:

Racism was everywhere. Racism at school. It was a time where you would see racist graffiti and you'd just see everywhere p**** go home, w*** go home and that sort of thing. It was just *there.*

Daphne's life in 1970s Birmingham included distressing racist experiences that she described as physically threatening. She recalled verbal and violent racist encounters perpetuated and conditioned by 'trusted' adults, peers at school, adults and children on their council estates, and even strangers on the street. In one of her earlier memories of experiencing racism in these places, Daphne shared the story below:

> Some things stand out. I can remember I was in Erdington once just on the pavement waiting for my mum, and this bloke, this old bloke, I can literally see him now in my head. Great big fat guy, looked drunk, on a bicycle, cycled past me and said – "you black bastard!" To me, I was a little girl I couldn't believe it. I actually looked round and was like has anyone just seen that? I mean that was horrible.

The majority of the Black and white parents in the nine families had lived or grown up in these predominantly working class, white places in Birmingham. This troubling anecdote prompted the question: who and what gave this man permission to racially abuse Daphne as a child? This is reminiscent of Nirmal Puwar's conceptualisation of 'space invaders', in which racialised bodies in predominantly white settings are forced to navigate relentless processes of othering which can be passive, unambiguous, and violent (Puwar, 2004).

Both the time period and Daphne's descriptions of the racism her family experienced in Birmingham mirror Brah's account of the territorialisation of race, (working) class and white authenticity in 1970s Southall, London. Brah described how Southall was routinely imagined as a white place under threat from an 'invasion' of South Asian and Caribbean families (Brah, 1979). Brah's

evocation of racism, class and place, and their connection with an imagined threat to white lives aligned with Daphne's experiences as well as the childhood experiences of members of the eight other Birmingham families. Violent and verbal racism was inextricably linked with white people's surveillance of the boundaries of belonging to places. This negotiation of white places on the peripheries of urban centres illustrates Nayak's contention about the inextricability of whiteness from the everyday. As he notes, these urban peripheries become exposed to structural processes and habitual practices where a whitening of place through the reproduction of white territorialisation is produced by the coexistence of conviviality and a (racialised) visceral hatred (Nayak, 2005, p.2389). The predominance of white subjects in places routinely understood as white English territories generates the conditions for white identities to be constructed around racialisation and the racist treatment of Others.

Racist encounters like Daphne's demonstrated how places in cities like Birmingham became generationally understood in opposition to the possibility of safety and idyllic living in semi-rural/suburban places like Bromsgrove. However, a telling narrative amongst the nine families was of how places become generationally made and understood, whilst experiences of racism were frequently unspoken and silenced.

Whiteness and racial stress

In 1987, one of Daphne's college teachers encouraged her to apply for university and by 1988, she had enrolled at a university in a small town in the North-East of England to study for a degree in theatre and performing arts.

Although Daphne described notable changes in her social life, such as feeling more confident among her peer group, she still lived mainly among white people when she went to university. This fact alone meant that Daphne still narrated a plethora of racist encounters. She told how, after she had successfully enrolled at university, one of her lecturers had made a comment:

> I remember one of the lecturers was making a joke and he was telling me how 'we only had you in [the course] because you're Black and from Birmingham'. He said it as a joke. but I was a bit like ummm? It was just me and him in the room. I was the only person of colour or black person. I've often only ever been the only black person in the room. That's often been the case, even to this day really.

This anecdote about a racism endorsed by somebody in a position of power illustrates Daphne's experience of racism and classism. Her lecturer's derogatory reference to her Black working-classness exemplified the lifelong reminder that she was, and continued to be, an invader of white spaces and places (Puwar, 2004). Daphne's encounter with her lecturer should have been simple, but similar examples of hegemonic whiteness and its power to invoke processes of racialisation in everyday social life were regularly implied by family members. Daphne's account of her childhood and early adulthood between Birmingham and university typified the way many had negotiated racisms which were often conditioned by the way whiteness and respectability in majority white English places subverted an opportunity for uncontested experience of belonging within such places (Chakraborti, 2009). The manifestations of this hegemonic whiteness were described as multifaceted, but crucially, family

members with experiences similar to Daphne's almost universally narrated a connection between racism and the predominance of white people in their lives. For Tatum (2000), one of the consequences for Black families living amongst primarily white populations is that overt and underlying racisms produce an enduring racial stress (Tatum, 2000, p.113) which often occurs after racist incidents, as well as in anticipation of other racist encounters. In this way, racial stress can be understood as a form of double-consciousness; a process that involves both experiencing and preparing for the white gaze (Du Bois, 1903; Fanon, 1967). In relation to the everyday management of cultures of place, the white gaze requires an acceptance that negative racialisation is normal, ordinary and expected. Although racial stress often remained unspoken among various family members, their disclosures about the impact of racism on their racialised sense of self demonstrated the social impact of a heighted awareness of and adaptation to spatialised white subjectivities. However, family members like Daphne had not experienced the proliferation of racism passively - these were challenging memories to recite which had clearly created a supressed racial stress connected to the places they had lived.

In chapter seven I address the way that family members were conscious that their proximities to mixedness gave them more practical space in their social relations in mainly white places to negotiate the presentation of racism (Phoenix, 2014). However, Daphne's account of her early life exemplified what was a standard narrative among family members in Generation One, whereby whiteness had created racialised boundaries of belonging in everyday social life. Racism had produced generational racial stress among the nine families,

and as there were so few family members like Daphne who had shared experiences of white places, there were very few places in which they could react to this racial stress (see chapter eight). For Daphne, the links between white places, racism and racial stress were consistently described through the categorisation of who is allowed and afforded automatic belonging to places (Back, 2015 and Nayak, 2010).

Stories about or illustrations of childhood, adolescence and early adult lives in predominantly white places in Birmingham were shared directly by Generation One or retold by their children in Generation Two. They shared generational lived experiences of racism in certain places and described how these recollections continued to inform how they imagined places.

Daphne's experiences in Birmingham had contributed to her decision to move to Bromsgrove. Like many of the parents amongst the nine families, she had anticipated a partial belonging for her Black mixed-race family in Bromsgrove that would be distinctively different from her experiences in Birmingham.

Members of all nine families communicated that the consequences of the racial coding of place were intrinsically connected to the way race becomes something that is routinely enacted whilst also being dismissed as inconsequential. These dismissals are crucial to the maintenance of hegemonic whiteness as they work to uphold power at the same time as they deny the existence of such racialised boundaries of belonging.* While these negotiations were described as a normal part of social life, their encounters with racisms - from structural and institutional marginalisation, through to interpersonal racist name

calling and in many cases violence – needed to be managed. In the next section, I address how living amongst hegemonic whiteness and cultures of racism became common sense for the family as the desire for a better life was rationalised and became attached to descriptions of semi-rural/suburban places.

Part Three: What were the consequences of moving to Bromsgrove?

So far I have located how multi-generational experiences of racialised and classed hostilities situated in close proximity to urban centres like Birmingham provide essential considerations for how semi-rural/suburban places become generationally imagined as a better place to live. Based on Daphne's interpretation and some examples of local and national discourses of 'race relations', I described Winston's arrival and early life in Birmingham, followed by Daphne's disconcerting memories of living in mainly working class and white places.

In this section, I address how the Smiths ended up raising their family in Bromsgrove and the consequences of this for Daphne and her daughter Sophie. Daphne had known that life might be hard for her children in Bromsgrove, but like many of the parents, she had considered how the combination of their family's mixedness and moving to a semi-rural/suburban middle-class place might mitigate this.

Examining how the Smith family ended up living in Bromsgrove responds to Song and Gutierrez' (2015) intervention on the need for more empirical attention to parenting and family decisions among mixed-race families with one

Black mixed-race parent and one white parent, and the extent to which race informs their parenting decisions (Song and Gutierrez, 2015). As a Black mixed-race woman, Daphne represents a growing population of multi-racial parents who have children with white partners and raise them in predominantly white places (Song and Gutierrez, 2015; Song, 2017). Song (2017) has reminded scholars of mixedness that life choices, as well as the places and cultures that these multi-racial families end up living in proximity to, can provide some indications of their identity formation and lived experiences (Song, 2015). By focusing on the importance of generational understandings of place, with an emphasis on semi-rural/suburban places, this section shows how imaginations of a better life among middle-class culture, safety and idyllic living were disrupted by the negative racialisation of family, cultures of racism and hegemonic whiteness.

Moving to Bromsgrove: 'safety' in semirural/suburban places

Family members described how it was made clear to them upon their arrival in Bromsgrove that their family was not typical of the imagined resident of semi-rural/suburban places. Further, a better life remained conditional; the racial constitution of their family was subject to challenge; hegemonic whiteness and cultures of racism were upheld, protected and embodied within their everyday lives.

In the early 1990s, Daphne graduated from university and moved to London to work as an actor and performer. Just before moving to London, she met her husband Ryan, with whom she would later relocate to Bromsgrove to start a family. Daphne spoke fondly of her time in London; immersed in the arts and

theatre scene – for once in her life living in a multi-racial and multicultural place. At this time, Ryan was still living in the West Midlands, so at weekends Daphne would commute to Hereford where they began to make a home together.

In 1997, Ryan explained to Daphne how he believed Bromsgrove might be a good place for them to raise their family (Ryan had driven through the area a couple of times on his way home from work). Daphne described feeling hesitant as Ryan portrayed what he had seen of Bromsgrove. She debated with herself and then directly with Ryan about what it would be like to raise their Black mixed-race children in a semi-rural/suburban place. For many years, Daphne had experienced being one of the only Black families (or families of colour more broadly) in a predominantly white and working class place in Birmingham. Daphne was clear about the possible implications of living in Bromsgrove, but as with most of the parents in this research, a combination of physical and symbolic middle-class characteristics translated into a type of safety which gave her a crucial sense of security or sense of place (Massey, 2003). Daphne invoked how she thought this type of place might not be as bad as the working-class ones she had known well:

> Why Bromsgrove? I mean total coincidence. We had been living in Hereford. See I used to, what's the word… commute from Hereford to London which was a bugger of a journey. Yeah, I would come back on the weekends. But I had spent most of the week in London and we were just looking for somewhere to live and Ryan had got a job in Hereford and we then had to sort of think about coming back and he actually had a house in Selly Oak and people used to say to him "oh, have you thought about Bromsgrove".

In spite of Daphne's earlier musings, the above extract sets out how living in Bromsgrove was coincidental. Although not necessarily evident in how she described their move, understanding this decision in the light of her racialised and classed descriptions of her upbringing in Birmingham began to address the considerations that affected Daphne's decision. She positioned her anticipation of Bromsgrove alongside her husband Ryan's whiteness:

> I think there was one time where he had to stop and get some money from Bromsgrove and I mean bless him Ryan wouldn't have given any thought to the makeup of Bromsgrove you know. It is difficult you know… it has been interesting being married to somebody white because of course we get on in that we are friends, but I will say Ryan is a lovely person in terms of being very understanding but I've sort of had to educate him a bit about how it is for me.

Daphne stated that Ryan had seen Bromsgrove as a desirable place to raise a family. In the above quote, Daphne is clear that the racialised demographics of Bromsgrove, or rather its whiteness, was not something that he would have considered. Daphne's body language changed as she highlighted this reality, describing Ryan as both naïve and innocent. This exchange demonstrated the existence of a hegemonic whiteness that was omnipresent in all nine Black and white mixed-race families and maintained not only by the cultures in Bromsgrove, but also in Daphne's case very intimately between husband and wife (see chapter six). Her description of Ryan's lack of awareness exemplified Britton's (2013) contention about the need to consider the implications of whiteness in mixed-race families (see chapter six). Daphne

carefully addressed how Ryan's observations did not consider the possibility of racism that she and their children might have to, and ultimately did, endure.

When I asked Daphne how she had imagined it would be for her and her children living in Bromsgrove, she instantly discussed racism:

> I think from my children's point of view they found Bromsgrove to be quite racist, more on the very racist side. They've had some not nice experiences, and I did think about this when I was going to be bringing children into the world, I thought what is it going to be like for them here? And I knew it would be tough and I knew they would face challenges but I actually thought to myself, do you know what they will be quite light skinned – not that that's what I thinking "oh I'm gunna or wanna have light skin kids" – I didn't think that. I just thought hopefully it won't be that bad for them.

In spite of Daphne's anticipation of the possibility that her children could avoid racist encounters in Bromsgrove because of their lighter complexion, both Daphne – and later in this chapter, Sophie – revealed that all three of them experienced innumerable racist in Bromsgrove regardless of their shade (see chapters five and seven for more extensive discussions about Black mixed-race proximities to whiteness and colourism).

Daphne's prediction of Bromsgrove as 'not that bad' for her children represents a recurrent musing among Generation One that is echoed by scholars like Neale (2002) on the way rurality and suburbia becomes synonymous with collective imaginations of the safety of white middle-class living. But there had been an expectation that being a mixed-race family could protect them from instances of negative racialisation that would establish racist

inferiorities. Despite Daphne's previous hesitation about Bromsgrove, the couple's decision to move aligned with that of the mixed-ethnicity couples in Tindale and Klocker's recent study, which found that although they invariably expressed a preference for areas of ethnic diversity, in practice it was rarely a decisive factor in where they chose to live (Tindale and Klocker, 2020, p.24).

Although Daphne stressed that living in Bromsgrove was Ryan's idea, she was clear that she had made peace with that decision over time and that Bromsgrove was home. As she began to describe their past twenty years of homemaking in Bromsgrove, she provided rich descriptions of how race and place continued to cause pain, trauma and racial stress, but also, conversely, acceptance and ordinariness (Brah, 1996, p.207).

Contextualising cultures of racism in Bromsgrove: police racism

The consequences of generational imaginations of semi-rural/suburban places began to emerge as Daphne recalled what it had been like living in Bromsgrove. Daphne and Ryan were pregnant with their first child when they first moved here. During the first few months, Daphne suffered relentless harassment by a local policewoman. This type of encounter with the police in Bromsgrove was voiced by several members of the other eight families; they mostly described racial profiling through stop and search, as well as uncalled for questioning, in spite of the fact that most were of economically secure middle-class status. These confrontations with the police correlate with existing research on the over-policing of Black people regardless of class status (Weitzer, 2000; Steiner, 2006; Souhami, 2014; Long & Joseph-Salisbury, 2019). Daphne's experience of police hostility in Bromsgrove also resounds with other

research, and especially with Lisa Long's call for more thorough scholarly attention to suburban and rural places and the racialised and gendered dynamics of the police harassment endured by women (Long, 2018; Crenshaw, 1990; Towns, 2016; Ritchie, 2017). Her recollection of harassment is just one among many examples of racism she has suffered whilst living in Bromsgrove. She explained how the local police-woman continually followed her into shops while she was heavily pregnant:

> I'd have this police woman who basically had it in for me. And she would constantly be… I'd be in shops and it would come on and be on all the shop radios "there is a suspected shop lifter" and she is mixed-race and she's wearing bla bla bla. And she would be describing me. And I'd be like… I'd look at the person and I mean I got to know people really quickly and I would say to them "she's talking about me".

This sort of harassment exemplifies the way that the boundaries of belonging are not just reproduced, but crucially, policed, in everyday life in predominantly white places (Nayak, 2006). In places like Bromsgrove, hegemonic whiteness is maintained by a collectivised culture of negative racialisation where those who are seen to threaten this are monitored (Mischi, 2009). Daphne was told by the police more than once that she 'fit the description' of a known shoplifter:

> I was constantly on her radar to the point that I felt like I was being harassed, to the point where Ryan and I actually went to the police station to make a complaint. We went to the police station and said look…because at the time I was also pregnant and getting more and more pregnant and as it went on getting

more and more heavily pregnant and it was getting more distressing to be brutally honest. And I was getting some stuff from the shop with my sister and again the radio had gone round and you could see it going round from shop to shop and my sister actually confronted this police woman and said "will you just leave my sister alone. Can't you see she is pregnant and you're upsetting her" and my sister had a real go at her and she was like really defensive and was like "well it's not our fault if she fits the description of the people that are coming through".

This dialogue, which was visibly draining for Daphne, brought to mind Tatum's (1999) conceptualisation of Black people, white places, and racial stress, which I have discussed above. It concludes with the police officer in question justifying her behaviour by claiming that Daphne 'fits the description', which made her even more exasperated. She was tired of Black people in Bromsgrove being 'lumped together'.

In concluding this story, Daphne described how 'by way of apology', several of the police officers visited them at their new house. Daphne said they excused the police officer's behaviour by stating that they also stopped and searched white skinheads, in a purposeful attempt to mute the racialised aspects of her own harassment. The police then asked Daphne to personally take control of the situation. There seemed to be a presumption that she needed to prove her own innocence:

You know they actually said to me... and this will make you laugh: they said "well what can we do, what can we do?" And they said "how about you coming to the station and we do kind of like a… get all the kind of local officers to come and see you

so they know it's not you?" and I said how about no! How about
we are telling you now leave us alone.

Despite not being a shoplifter or having committed any criminal offence, Daphne had been negatively racialised as a potential threat to Bromsgrove's residents and the police told her it was her job to rectify their misrecognition.

Daphne's reflections on harassment were reminiscent of what Nayak refers to as place-based processes grounded in denial, whereby the predominantly white population in the white place exempt themselves from complicity through notions of respectability (Nayak, 2006, p.427). In this sense, the police officer harassing Daphne effectively claimed that she was 'just doing her job'. This anecdote contextualised the wider cultures of semi-rural/suburban places like Bromsgrove and the racist realities that many family members narrated.

Daphne's emotional testimony about her treatment by the police also illustrates Chakraborti's claims about the social construction of white English suburbia through racism, and the pressure to perform respectability for those recognised as demonstrating contested occupancy (Chakraborti, 2010). This example of the fusing of hegemonic whiteness with a culture of racism demonstrates just how quickly the boundaries of belonging in white semi-rural/suburban places can be examined, and as in Daphne's anecdote, policed.

Between Daphne's early contemplation of moving to Bromsgrove and their first few months living in the area, there were demonstrable examples of the racial harms and stress produced by places. Her stories voiced clearly how she often had to find innovative ways to anticipate what Frantz Fanon has outlined as the relationship between the declaration of blackness and its

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likeness to a racial slur. In this way, when Black and Black mixed-race family members described racialised experiences alongside their anticipation of racism, what they were narrating was routinely Fanonian in its similarity to Frantz Fanon's description of the white child looking at him and saying to its mother - "Look, a Negro!" (Fanon, 1986, p.3) . It is 'the look' and becoming customised to the workings of the white gaze which were described as some of the most pertinent aspects of life in Bromsgrove. Daphne's accounts were typical of stories I heard in all nine families whereby civil society agents such as the police had forced family members to become even more mindful of way that race functioned in alignment with the normative cultural signifiers of the place making of Bromsgrove.

With the powerfully hidden nature of whiteness remaining ever-present in Daphne's life, as we moved onto discussing what it was like for her to raise her family in Bromsgrove, she began to examine how much places had impacted her sense of self:

> I've had a lot of racism in Bromsgrove and I'll be honest Chantelle I've scratched the surface on some of the things. I've had more than most Black people I know because I've always been in white places and I guess straddling two worlds but at the same time I wasn't straddling the Black community because there hasn't been any [Black people] around me.

Daphne's above exasperation about whiteness and the lack of Black people was consistently expressed across the other eight families. The constantly protected whiteness of Bromsgrove, coupled with the absence of Black

Caribbean people (and cultures) in the lives of each family member, were continuously positioned as factors that made life more difficult.

Narrations of place, race and (middle) class

With the importance of race, class and the family at the forefront of conversations about their lives in Bromsgrove, the biographical stories explored by the nine families illustrated the complexity and uncertainty of the racialised and classed dynamics of semi-rural/suburban places. It was clear that class, for both Generation One and Two could be understood though Kuhn's analysis of the importance of understanding these matters beyond 'the nature of your job' (1995, p.98). Although some family members clearly had a steady economic status – particularly in the Black and Black mixed-race families - their position remained unstable in the context of education, work and social life. However, class does not operate independently of other axes of differentiation in place-based contexts; and race was as just as important, in this context, as class, emphasing Brah's evocation of race through the racialisation of colour as exactly 'what colours us' (Brah, 2012, p.24). Crucially, even for those with a relatively secure economic position, race made the families' classed status in Bromsgrove tentative (see chapter six).

It is well-documented in the literature on white suburbia, rurality and racism that these places make for interesting case studies on the multifaced operations of race. But discussions with family members consistently provided accounts of how understandings of places had evolved, from a generational standpoint. At this point it is useful to combine contributions from her daughter, Sophie, with Daphne's more contemporary testimonies about Bromsgrove.

Family members frequently discussed their perception of themselves as occupying an economically middle-class status. After describing their experiences of cultures of racism in Bromsgrove, they would return to classifying them alongside an awareness of their middle-class privilege. This made for engaging debate, as many excused their experiences of racism in Bromsgrove with the assertion that these incidents had not directly harmed their well-established class position. Although many family members were conscious of their class privilege, it became clear when delving deeper into their lived experiences and life trajectories that race had had both a structural and an interpersonal impact on them, regardless of their middle-class status.

Daphne and Sophie were clear that their experiences should not be divorced from their middle-class credentials which had created more opportunity for them to 'partially belong' in Bromsgrove. These realities corresponded to the space that hegemony, or hegemonic whiteness, provides for deviant positions within the naturalisation of common sense, or the most tolerated citizen. However, on the possibility of belonging and class, Chakroborti (2009) notes that in semi-rural/suburban places, the capacity of class to bridge purposefully racialised and ethnicised divides is not guaranteed. As most family members discussed their seemingly secure class position, it was clear it was clear how much they were willing to endure in semi-rural/suburban places, irrespective of potential or actual racist incidents. Aside from the varying ways that both race and racism had impacted their lives – family members made collective allowances for it, justified through place-based imaginations of class, suburbia and whiteness.

Sophie Smith demonstrated her understanding of race and class when I asked how she would describe Bromsgrove. In response, she instantly personalised the question, asserting her family's class position in Bromsgrove as immersed in economic privilege:

> Bromsgrove is a place of, I think, of privilege. I think it is very white. I feel like I am very fortunate to have lived there and whenever I have conversations, particularly with my Dad I have to definitely reassert that I am very grateful to have lived in such a nice area, gone to very good schools and you know be amongst middle-classness.

Brah (1996) noted that evocations of whiteness require consistent and purposeful deconstruction and examination, rather than simply being stated as fact. Therefore, it is crucial to unpack how race, class and whiteness interacted in family members' descriptions of Bromsgrove, taking into account their middle-classness and the mobility this afforded them. Sophie made clear that she understood her experiences as a racialised subject, but that her middle class subjectivities had to be negotiated alongside the socially mobile force of whiteness (Brah, 1996, p.207). This recognition of her class status was coupled with a declaration of gratitude; she wanted to make it clear, to her father especially, that she appreciated being raised in Bromsgrove. Sophie's statement invoked tensions that were similar to Daphne's earlier descriptions of Ryan. Of course, her mention of her father should not be separated from the power of heteronormative patriarchy bound by processes of family-based facilitation like gratitude (Hill Collins, 1998). However, in this instance, Sophie stated a normative family practice of explaining the racism she had experienced

in Bromsgrove, but adding the caveat of recognition of her class privilege (see chapter seven).

Sophie's appreciation of her class privilege was coupled with an awareness that her position in Bromsgrove was contestable because of her mixedness. Despite these tensions, Sophie still felt compelled to perform a sense of gratitude for being exposed to cultures deemed exclusive to semi-rural/suburban places. Like many family members in Generation Two, Sophie also spoke of how leaving Bromsgrove had made her realise what she had actually endured:

> Leaving Bromsgrove now I feel like I have really mixed feelings about Bromsgrove. Like when I initially left Bromsgrove I actually felt really angry towards Bromsgrove ummm yeah I just felt like pissed off like why did I get raised there? Sometimes that still comes up now like when I'm in a funk or when I'm annoyed with my parents specifically like I'll say to them I don't even know why you raised me there, like I don't like it. I think overall I have good memories there. I have a good set of very sensible good friends but I have really mixed feelings towards it and in other ways I get a bit anxious to go home from university.

The way Sophie analysed Bromsgrove showed that she was aware of the contradictions of her lived experience of benefitting from being middle-class alongside her sullen recollection of cultures of racism that usually required her to grapple with ignorance, racist name calling and anticipation of the sheer range of people who might invoke dialects of negative racialisation towards her (see chapter five on teacher racisms). Sophie's description of her emotions

when she left and subsequently returned to Bromsgrove can be understood in terms of Knowles' (2008) analysis of what it means to have spent formative years in places deeply invested in racism and imaginations of white Englishness. Knowles argued that the process of leaving and returning to our rural hometowns which are culturally conditioned by whiteness and racialised exclusion affords the space for returnees to critically visualise how everyday racism manifests in these places.

In Sophie's portrayals of Bromsgrove, she continued to return to describing suburbia as 'better' and 'safe'. Alongside her fractured childhood memories, Sophie reverted to referring to her peers in Bromsgrove as 'good' and 'sensible'. Here, what stands out is how descriptions of place are reliant on people and the cultures they reproduce. Sophie's frustration about cultures of racism in Bromsgrove were once again caveated by the way white Englishness is routinely imagined and protected, through descriptions of specific people (Mann, 2011, p.125). Sophie typified a continuous need to highlight 'goodness' in spite of the prevalence of various racialised and racist harms.

spoken about her family's privilege, Sophie moved swiftly on to her childhood in Bromsgrove, which contained a surplus of racist incidents. These discussions began to reveal both generational consistencies and how their management and negotiation of race over time had evolved. The primary difference between Daphne's and Sophie's experiences of their childhoods in places were defined by class, respectability and generational imaginations of Birmingham. Although the racist encounters experienced by the parents, who were mainly raised in Birmingham, were localised in how they were culturally

conditioned, similar incidents were endured by their children in Bromsgrove (see chapter five). The crucial difference between Daphne and Sophie and among Generations One and Two altogether was the desire to highlight how racism wasn't as bad in Bromsgrove because it was a better place to live.

Generational change and evolved consistencies:

> I mean Sophie has been a force of nature in dealing with racism around her and she says she's done it because I've always done it. I guess as you get older you just kind of ignore things and think you know what? You do you and I'll do me.

When we spoke about Sophie's childhood in Bromsgrove, Daphne was clear that all three of them (including Sophie's brother) had experienced a lot of racist name-calling. Daphne's words, above, exemplify her admiration for Sophie for actively challenging racism in her everyday life. Daphne spoke about being proud of Sophie for having the strength to cope with racism, but she had also longed for her daughter to have a peaceful life. It was clear that Sophie was one of the family members with a strong and positive sense of racial identity, but that this had been informed by her experiences of the cultures and people in Bromsgrove, as well as by developing wider social networks at university and beyond (see chapters six and seven).

Bromsgrove had conditioned more respectable ways for racism to proliferate for Daphne's children than the versions she had experienced and witnessed in Birmingham. The racism Sophie described experiencing and witnessing in Bromsgrove had become more sophisticated; she spoke of violent

acts of racism at school, but equally of the more subtle testing of boundaries that she had negotiated with her peers:

> I am quite resilient and stand alone. I can stand on my own and I am confident. But I just think things started to get said in year 10 and 11 and then to sixth form that things started to get said that were so uncomfortable and so racist that it was just shocking but I just didn't really know how to articulate around it. I feel like people always wanted to test the boundaries.

Many of the family members who attended school in Bromsgrove described the relentless appetite of their peer groups 'to test out' their learnt racist language and attitudes (chapter five). On various occasions, Sophie continued to state how privileged she was to be raised and schooled in Bromsgrove, but in common with many of the younger family members she responded emotionally with anger and sadness when we discussed her childhood in Bromsgrove. These exacerbations were constantly expressed, as many of them recalled witnessing, hearing, or experiencing unrelenting racism in Bromsgrove:

> It would be a constant defence or like I had to always defend Black people. Anything to do with race or immigration it would always be me that people would ask about and that I would be the person that people wanted to test their racist opinions on. I remember a boy once said to me that you've got to think of refugees as a box of smarties. One poisonous smarty and you are dead. It's better to kill them all.

The production of uncontested cultures in semi-rural/suburban places provided an abundance of space for violent racisms to be expressed by children and young people (Myers & Bhopal, 2017). After sharing this anecdote, Sophie

began to cry. These sorts of violent expressions of racism were clear in the memories of several of the family members who were raised in Bromsgrove. How Sophie made sense of being raised amongst cultures of racism was through recognising her fellow (white) residents of Bromsgrove actively identifying the power they had if they chose to construct a white identity:

> As other people around me started to understand themselves as white and understand that there was a world outside of Bromsgrove that wasn't white that contained immigrants, Black people and brown people and Muslims and people different from people in Bromsgrove, that's when I really started to notice.

In this quote, Sophie is demonstrating her recognition of how whiteness acts not just as a tool of identification but also as a justification for racialised subordination. Put simply, in places where white people have very few physical encounters with racialised populations, difference becomes normalised as a threat. Sophie's recollection shows how people's investment in, and protection of, whiteness continues to function in places like Bromsgrove because everyday racialised exclusions produce ubiquitous cultures of denial that operate to maintain cultures of suburbia and rurality (Neale, 2002).

Sophie's narrations of Bromsgrove revealed the veracity of social relationships and everyday life and illustrated how race functions to hide whiteness in semi-rural/suburban places (Lentin, 2020, p.96). What is more, focusing on the everyday shows the extent to which inhabitants of these places are deeply invested in the social and economic imagination of a better place.

This purposeful and conscious process of place-making through the exclusion of others was expressed by Sophie (see also chapter seven):

> I only started to understand what it was like as other people started to understand themselves.

Sophie – like Daphne – expressed being on her own personal journey of reconciling and coming to terms with growing up in Bromsgrove. Further, although this recognition necessitated a return to racial stress and the emotional toll of racism, both Sophie and Daphne still described Bromsgrove as better place to live. In spite of detailing just a few of the harms they had both suffered in Bromsgrove, Sophie exemplified what so many of the other family members across the eight other families expressed - they continuously felt the need to caveat their time in Bromsgrove - *it wasn't that bad.* Rather, although a plethora of institutional, verbal and physical racist incidents were narrated in all the families, descriptions of the 'good' aspects of middle-class, white English suburbia were routinely conveyed.

Conclusion

This chapter has shown how listening to people's narratives, and thinking about their lives, not in isolation, but across generational divides and geographical distance, can uncover their connected and relational stories of how semi-rural/suburban places like Bromsgrove come to be understood as better places to live. This process of analysis produced multi-generational interpretations of the relational sense of place for family members, from Jamaica and Birmingham to Bromsgrove. This discussion contributes to research focused on Black mixed-race families that prioritises contexts of place,

but is also an example of scholarship focused on highlighting the heterogeneity of Black life in England. Taking a more biographical approach to these matters of race, place and family, with a focus on generational interpretations and memories of Birmingham and Bromsgrove, I have outlined an example of the complicated and at times contested ideations surrounding the way a place comes to be understood as a better place to live.

The focus on generational understandings of place has highlighted the evolution of, as well as consistencies in, the pervasive nature of race in familial lived experiences, but also indicated how racism had become an anticipated and normative aspect of social life in mainly white places. In this way, I have addressed the importance of situating familial histories of living, moving and homemaking in different locales alongside the inter-generational endurance of the production of hegemonic whiteness. I have also described how family members, who are unlikely to have a linear relationship with belonging in places like Bromsgrove, come to engage with common sense perceptions of suburbia, whiteness and respectability.

Family members like Daphne had invariably anticipated that their families would have a better life if they moved to places imagined as better and safer by comparison with their own childhoods in Birmingham. This more desirable life in a semi-rural/suburban place was consistently positioned as a step towards a peaceful and middle-class existence. However, although family members, especially those who were parents, described their original expectations of Bromsgrove as 'better' and 'safer', Daphne also described her anticipation of the racialised harms her children might incur in Bromsgrove.

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By centring the narratives of Black mixed-race family members and their negotiations of race and racisms in a place routinely imagined as white, this chapter also contributes to scholarship on English suburbia and rurality in a way that prioritises residents who are regularly marginalised by the racialised boundaries of belonging. Here, Daphne's and Sophie's narrations are clearly an example of the reclamation of Britain's always already multi-ethnic landscape. Crucially, it became clear that although semi-rural/suburban places had habituated them to the challenge of negotiating racial stress and cultures of racism, the way family members had processed these was linked to the unspoken nature of race (addressed in chapter three). Family members from all nine families discussed their visceral experiences of negotiating the way race pervaded their lived experiences and their boundaries of belonging in Bromsgrove, and in doing so revealed some of the reasons why, for some family members, taking part in the research marked the first time they had discussed these matters together. While families like the Smiths addressed their multigenerational learning about how they had made homes, there were several demonstrations of Stuart Hall's (1986) contention concerning the power of hegemonic whiteness and its capacity to win through the collaboration of those it will routinely subordinate. This challenging theme was evident across all nine families; the ability to endure semi-rural/suburban places requires a normative silencing or ambivalence about how race is operationalised through cultures conditioned by places and the people within them. These findings show how Tatum's notion of racial stress is inextricably linked to the relational sense of place.

Through the Smith's family's migration from Jamaica to Birmingham and Bromsgrove, I have explored the importance of place through the lenses not just of emotional belonging and racial stress but also of material rootedness. This is an initial example of the fundamental importance of family members' descriptions of, and attachments to, places for the biographies and relationships that will be explored in the empirical chapters to follow. In particular, the stories in this chapter have centred on how the workings of hegemonic whiteness were maintained by Generation One's memories of living in urban centres in close proximity to metropolitan Birmingham. Using the narratives of Daphne and Sophie, I have introduced the complexities of race and class in Bromsgrove, but also addressed how a Black sense of place is integral to the spatial project of racism. From cultures of racism and their connection to the racialised boundaries of belonging on the urban periphery in Birmingham, through to the violent dialects of Sophie's peers in Bromsgrove, the chapter provides a crucial demonstration of the consistency and longevity of racial pathologisation irrespective of the classed subjectivities enacted in the imaginings of place.

From Daphne's and Sophie's recollections of the consequences of living in places Bromsgrove I learned that they had endured an intensification of the white gaze sustained by everyday racism and racialisation, racist jokes and a consistent identification of difference (Fanon, 1968). In the next chapter I address how this was managed and negotiated by family members like Sophie who attended school in Bromsgrove.

Chapter Five: Civil society and hegemonic whiteness in mainly white schools: Retrospective narrations of cultures of racism and racialised isolation

Black children and young people who complete their formal education in mainly white schools in semi-rural/suburban places endure a very particular racialised experience which has remained largely under-researched in the sociology of education. In UK schools in general, institutional racism is socially reproduced through a variety of structural formations (Cremin, 2003; Arday, 2020), including the delivery of a Eurocentric curriculum (Harris, 2013), the suppression and tokenised portrayal of cultures beyond white Christian traditions (Gillborn, 2005), the school-to-prison pipeline (Wallace et al., 2008; Graham, 2014)) and the policing of Black hair (Tate, 2009; Joseph-Salisbury & Connelly, 2018; Dabiri, 2019). Historical and current testimonies about the schooling of Black children and young people in mainly white schools suggests that the consequences of the above are exacerbated when most of the students and staff are white. Such consequences risk having a profound impact on Black children's relationships with their racial identity and sense of self, their proximity to a structurally sponsored sabotage to their education, and in more critical examples, their mental well-being and physical safety (Coard, 1971; Coultas, 1989; Gillborn, 2008 & Doharty, 2019).

Building on research on racism in mainly white schools and scholarship on race and class in UK education, this chapter demonstrates how schools can

become institutionally racist spaces where hegemonic whiteness and cultures of racism are maintained by policy, practice, and curriculum (Coard, 1971; Crozier, 2005; Alexander, Weekes-Bernard & Chatterji, 2015). Narratives from my fieldwork described deeply concerning experiences of schooling across both Generations One and Two that correspond with earlier research. Scholars such as Troyna and Hatcher (1992) studied mainly white schools in the early 1990's, but this chapter tells a more evolved and contemporary story of how the cultures of semi-rural/suburban places rely on civil society institutions like schools to maintain the hegemonic condition.

In this chapter I use the narratives from Generation two to argue, with Troyna and Hatcher, that mainly white schools in predominantly white places are particularly susceptible to perpetuating racialised harm and cultures of racism through the social and institutional reproduction of hegemonic whiteness (Troyna & Hatcher, 1992, p.3). Variations of these processes were routinely echoed in participants' retrospective accounts, but members of Generation Two consistently recalled negative racialisation and harmful incidents of structural and interpersonal racisms located in schools in Bromsgrove. The relationships they had cultivated and navigated during their school years were a central feature of Generation Two's descriptions of their childhoods, whether this was racist name calling by peers, or teachers' racist behaviour. Thus, this chapter outlines how schools are fundamental to the social reproduction of hegemonic whiteness and cultures of racism in semi-rural/suburban places.

I argue that the cultures produced in mainly white schools generate an ongoing struggle with *racialised isolation.*[7] Racialised isolation is a repercussion of the intensification of the white gaze (chapters one and two) and is a more psychosocial manifestation of the consequences of double consciousness in semi-rural/suburban places. It generates complex feelings of sadness, ambivalence and seclusion and ways (retrospectively described) of coping with this. As racialised isolation relies on the struggles produced by hegemonic whiteness, it is by no means absolute; it is negotiable and can be (and *is*) resisted. However, for the purposes of this chapter about school, the social reproduction of racialised isolation relies on two criteria: 1) living with, and engaging with, mainly white people in civil society; and 2) living in semi-rural/suburban places where there are few or no Black and people of colour in someone's everyday social life*.* Racialised isolation can present when negatively racialised populations are socialised in places where their racial identity is discursively, interpersonally and structurally suppressed over time. It is a suppression of racial identity which happens through the dominant population's investment in a combination of notions of racial sameness ("we are all the same/equal!") as well as cultures of racism.

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[7] Racialised isolation is not exclusively experienced by Black and white mixed-race populations in predominantly white semi-rural/suburban places; but this is a group which has intimate social and familial relations with the dominant population of predominantly white semi-rural places*.*

School years typically produce a range of formative social bonds, so by focusing on how their social relations contributed to racialised isolation, I stress that Generation Two's understandings of racist incidents and negative racialisation have become clearer over time. 'Looking back' on the way racialised isolation developed and what this meant for their sense of self allowed family members to better articulate how they managed it. With this emphasis on memory, or 'looking back', this chapter uses both holistic and specific examples of how mainly white schools in semi-rural/suburban places play a key role in the production of racialised isolation, by recounting retrospective conversations about different school stages (primary/first school, middle/secondary school, high school and college/sixth form).

To support the conceptual ambitions of this chapter, I introduce the narratives of Neale and Fiona Jones, who are mixed-gender Black mixed-race siblings. Through Neale and Fiona's testimonies about their school years, this chapter shows how 'siblingships' (sibling-group relationships) (Edwards et al., 2006; Davies, 2015) offer unique insights into experiences of cultures of racism and hegemonic whiteness, and how these are understood in Black mixed-race families in Bromsgrove (see also chapter seven). By focusing on the lived experiences of schooling for mixed-gender siblings, this chapter begins to address how negative racialisation is gendered, but also the different ways that Blackness becomes pathologised and suppressed in civil society settings such as schools.

Neale and Fiona's narratives show how hegemonic whiteness works through a combination of teacher-student, parent-teacher and peer group encounters. In turn, these social reproductions generate various specifications of Blackness. The chapter draws out the ways that Black masculinity and Black girlhood were pathologised in their mainly white schools (which is more easily identified from the accounts of siblings who share similar experiences). Family members narrated being bound by gender and its racialising principles, and I argue that *how* and *why* these social relations occurred were distinct and gendered (McKellar, 1994; Phoenix, 2009) as both Neale and Fiona experienced difficulties at school due to the overwhelming whiteness of the population and the culture.

Neale Jones

Neale was born in Birmingham in 1991 and is twenty-nine-years-old. He spent most of his childhood in Bromsgrove, raised by his white-English/Irish mother, Tracey (to be formally introduced in chapter six) and Black Jamaican stepfather, David. He started school at a local primary on the periphery of Bromsgrove in 1995 and attended a number of pupil referral units and about five different schools during his years of formal schooling between 1995 and 2009. He was at first enrolled in state schools and then, through a combination of scholarships and financial support from his grandparents, he attended fee-paying schools with significantly smaller classes. Despite leaving Bromsgrove to work in hospitality in London when he was twenty years old, he remains close to his mother and his sisters Fiona and Jessica. He is also very close to his

grandparents on his mother's side. After living in London for approximately four years, he now lives with his partner and son in Birmingham.

Neale had a difficult childhood in Bromsgrove; the combination of structural and interpersonal racism and a difficult relationship with his stepfather meant his narratives of childhood were ==fractious==. He was labelled a 'naughty' child from an extremely young age and described being repeatedly let down by adults and institutions in the area. He attended multiple schools, had a poor relationship with the local police and found himself made the scapegoat for various 'anti-social behaviour' issues in the area. Crucially, in his teens, Neale was diagnosed with Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD). At the point of diagnosis, in Neale's own words, "it was almost too late".

Neale spoke of how leaving Bromsgrove had been life-changing for him. He found himself reading more, learning more about who he was and working in hospitality in London meant meeting lots of different people from all walks of life. He is now an entrepreneur working in property development and management across the West Midlands.

Fiona Jones

Fiona was born in 2001 and is nineteen years old. She is very close to her brother Neale. She was raised by Tracey and her father David until they separated in 2010 when she was around eight years old.

Fiona has lived in Bromsgrove her entire life which she frequently described with ambivalence and apathy. She described her childhood as isolating, but also recalled material privileges including access to physical open-space and a comfortable family home. On several occasions, she also described her childhood through the lens of Neale's experiences during his school years. Even though years had passed since

Neale lived in the family home, what her brother had endured still weighed heavy on Fiona, though she also spoke of how proud she was of everything he had overcome. The emotions she spoke of and physically displayed had clearly impacted her own sense of self in a fundamental way.

Fiona has found life difficult in Bromsgrove and spoke of consistently struggling to belong among peer groups and even within her own family. She currently works in hospitality in Bromsgrove.

Part One: School: Black masculinity, racialised isolation and relentless (cultures of) racism

Neale spent the majority of his childhood in Bromsgrove negotiating civil society institutions like school and later the criminal justice system. In this section I address Neale's experience in schools as an overwhelming example of racialised isolation. As schools are an example of an institution in civil society that maintains and sustains processes of hegemonic whiteness, I argue that mainly white schools in suburban/semi-rural places are micropolitical spaces where young people like Neale grapple with racialised isolation by both engaging and resisting its logics (Haynes et al., 2006; Rollock et al., 2014; Wallace, 2017; Wekker, 2016).

It is essential to contextualise Neale's experiences during his school years, by emphasising that his childhood was severely impacted by the lack of a diagnosis, for most of his childhood, of his neurodiverse traits. It was clear during our time together that a combination of racism, ableism and a consistent lack of care had damaged Neale's capacity to belong in the mainly white schools of Bromsgrove. Furthermore, Neale's mother Tracey

spoke about how many years it had taken her to get teachers to take seriously the need for Neale to be tested for neurodiversity.

Neale's experiences in school have parallels with some of the other narratives (both serious and mundane) recounted by members of Generation Two, so although this section highlights in particular the challenges of mainly white schools for negatively racialised young people with neurodiversity, it is also an introduction to how the structuring principles of race in schools were an intrinsic part of Generation Two's narratives of childhood in Bromsgrove. In this way, Neale's story is a textured biographical case study which shows a detailed portrait rather than a generalisable claim about social life in Bromsgrove. But crucially, it is about exploring the long-term impact and understandings of the hidden and often unspoken power dynamics of schools, which reproduce common sense values and cultures through both education and rules, and about how the unwritten codes of peer-to-peer relationships become racialised.

Racism at school: hegemonic whiteness and ableism

As I have already outlined, Black and white Caribbean families have long endured a racialised and classed pathologisation by civil society institutions like schools (Peters, 2016; Bland, 2017). Tizard and Phoenix (2002) have contended that Black and white mixed Caribbean pupils, in particular, have experienced many years of negative racialisation through essentialist tropes surrounding a 'clash of cultures' (see chapter two). There has also been extensive scholarly work on the experiences of Black Caribbean and mixed Black and white Caribbean boys enduring the cultures of racism enacted by

teachers (Mac an Ghaill, 1988; Mirza & Gillborn, 2000; Tikly et al., 2004; Haynes, et al., 2006; Wallace, 2017; Lewis & Demie, 2019). In particular, the pathologising histories of eugenic deficiencies and mixedness outlined in Chapter Two is still present in teachers' complicity in more contemporary social reproduction of these matters. In this way, one of the more challenging narratives that emerged from across Generation Two related to their descriptions of teachers' interpretation of their existence. These types of projections, which were frequently discussed in relation to expectations of low attainment, have been explored by scholars such as Haynes, Tikly and Caballero (2006) who found that some teachers associated Black mixed-race pupils with demeaning accounts of mixed identities and backgrounds.

The prevalence of this issue of race and 'ability' became clear during conversations with a number of the family members who attended school in Bromsgrove. Expressed mainly by members of Generation Two, this corresponds with existing and emerging research on the intersecting nature of race, gender and disability in school settings (Coard, 1971; Leonardo & Broderick, 2011). These matters have been addressed by research among Black boys, who endure a very particular form of racialisation that is both ableist and racist (Rollock, etal., 2014, p.80; Leonardo & Broderick, 2011). For the focus on the way Blackness becomes highly susceptible to pathologisation in mainly white schools, Leonardo and Broderick's (2011) scholarship offers a useful reminder of the way racism and ableism intersect and the need to combine education research with whiteness, disability studies and race, to show

how racial hierarchies are sustained by the uncontested marking of white bodies by teachers as either smart (abled) or requiring more care (disabled).

In our conversations about school, Neale addressed how being taught wholly by white teachers who refused to engage with the way race and neurodiversity impacted his sense of self, had demonstrated a profound and continuous lack of care in this civil society institution. These omissions were narrated by Neale and his family members as enduring because various teachers had failed, and on many occasions refused, to support testing him with the UK standard test for neurological diversities. All the Jones family members spoke of how damaging the late diagnosis of Neale's neurodiversity had been for his quality of life at school, but also at home. During many of our conversations, Neale reflected deeply on what could have been:

> So I think it's so commonly misdiagnosed in people that are just naughty, and it's just like…whenever I hear people talk about ADHD as a thing, it really upsets me because I don't think people understand the fact that when you can't even control yourself, that's not something - you know - that's not behavioural. That's not emotional - that is a condition, you know? So, I think if society and schools took more time to actually understand the reasons behind it and the solutions behind it. Because like, there's still traits in my personality today where I find it difficult to - to control my impulses and stuff like that. I'm quite obsessive in my nature with things. But that's through personal development. I've learned to control it, channel into the right areas. Whereas if someone had grabbed me at that age and tried to do that from that age, things could have been massively different, you know?

Neale's retrospective meditations on the systematic lack of will amongst his chools to grapple with his ADHD, and society's misunderstandings of these conditions more broadly, showed that he knew that he had been mistreated. In this way, having spent many of his school years living with undiagnosed neurodiverse traits, his narrations about school echoed scholarship on the way these institutions become hotspots for racialised ableism (Rollock et al., 2014, p.80). On the prevalence of racist ablism in schools, Leonardo and Broderick contend that race and ability are a relational system (2011, p.2208), constructed through the structures of whiteness. Further, it becomes inevitable that schools that seldom prioritise anti-racist frameworks of either pedagogy or neurodiversity will not only fail children like Neale, but cause long-term harm to their sense of self.

The conversations Neale and I had about his neurodiversity are a further indication of the merits of retrospectively discussing how negative racialisation occurs in schools. Together, we were able to pinpoint various moments throughout primary and secondary school at which incidents between teachers and children would have been exacerbated by hegemonic whiteness – or how negative racialisation becomes normative in social relations- but it is likely that Neale's undiagnosed neurodiversity would have been just as important. As this was such a live memory in Neale's recollections of school, he remembered when he moved to a primary school that they began to take his condition seriously:

> So, it was - it was the first time that someone had - or
> teachers should I say, or anyone of any kind of authority - tried

to actually understand my behaviour. Whereas before that it was just a case of you're just - not naughty but you're a danger basically. Which I can understand, but it was the first time someone had actually taken the time to understand what was behind it and realise that actually there's something underneath that, that if harnessed right could not only be in the right direction, but has a lot of potential.

Crucially, this was just one of the primary schools he attended, and was a private school (this will be discussed further later in the chapter). Neale's account of what was possible when his school began to care about his wellbeing was expressed through aggravation. In this way, looking back at school life for Generation Two – especially for those like Neale who had been harmed at various moments in civil society – presents opportunities to connect the ways hegemonic whiteness and cultures of racism evolve and develop through school years, but still appear and manifest themselves continually.

A final comment on the intersection of race and ableism in this research relates to some of the more general themes about 'ability' narrated among Generation Two. There were at least two other family members who had neurodiverse traits, but even those considered 'neurotypical' described incidents and cultures that clearly contributed to a socially reproduced myth that Black children and mixedness ties children to marginal educational ability. This is a clearly demonstration of the historical and colonial subjugation through eugenics explored in chapter two, and is thus indicative of the need for this type of writing and research that both exposes and pushes against these mythical and dehumanising discourses.

Primary school: racialised isolation and racist name-calling

As outlined above, racialised isolation is a contested, yet frequent, occurrence when negatively racialised populations are discursively, interpersonally and structurally Othered by a dominant group through the social reproduction of exclusionary cultures and social relations embedded in the social fabric of places and institutions. Crucially, racialised isolation is produced between friends, peers, teachers, strangers, and close and extended family members. One of the most profound examples of racialised isolation across the nine families was how it developed through racist name-calling during school years.

Across the nine families, primary school was consistently described as a space where the younger generation first started experiencing unchallenged racist name-calling. This usually started with white peers' observation of racial difference, eventually evolving into active participation in the use of racist language. The impact of racist name-calling in mainly white primary schools has appeared in education scholarship as something intrinsically linked to the construction of white identities in predominantly white locations (Raby, 2004). In 1992, Troyna and Hatcher published Racism in Children's Lives: A Study of Mainly White Primary Schools and many of the white children they spoke to who participated in racist name-calling justified their language as synonymous with the cultures in their local white community (p.92). Sociologists such as Bennett and Lee-Treweek (2014) have argued that when there is a predominance of a purposeful production of white identities in a local area, the overabundance of

racist naming-calling in schools is inextricably linked to the power these afford white people in white majority places.

Like the majority of family members who attended school in Bromsgrove, Neale recited multiple examples of racist name-calling perpetrated by white children, interpreting racist name-calling during his primary school years as a normative and unextraordinary part of everyday life; the white gaze and navigating its infractions were, for him, just common sense. This sort of incident varied across Generation Two, but most were embedded in Nayak's (1999) notion of 'joking around' or 'banter' and, in the more severe cases, used as a way to be violently threatening. Nayak contends that these incidents are overwhelmingly found in predominantly white places invested in belonging through racist ordering and whiteness (Nayak, 1999, p.237). The connection between racist name-calling and white children was described by Neale as relentless, but crucially, it was also something he was routinely blamed for:

> So, school was tough, but I was alright up until year three, then
> I got suspended in year three and then went into year four pupil
> referral unit.

As the racist name-calling at primary school persisted, Neale began to respond violently to the white boys who goaded him. He described being consistently targeted by white children spouting racist language to provoke him to fight, for which he was consistently blamed, scapegoated, and targeted by teachers. This meant that school became a space where Neale was ceaselessly disciplined through phone calls home, isolation and eventually exclusion. Like the majority of Generation Two who recalled relentless racist name-calling at

primary-school, Neale described how his younger self did not know how to explain to white teachers that he was being subjected to racism by his white peers:

> I was looked at almost as being more primitive. And so to be a criminal. To have no manners, to have no respect - that kind of thing. So - and I think I've always had to always deal with that. So ever since I was very young - the naughtiness just came up at split moments. So I just really focused on that side of things.

Throughout the time we spent talking about Neale's schooldays, he was clear that he was forced to negotiate racist stereotyping by both teachers and his peers. In the quote above, he describes how he was treated as 'primitive' - a naughty child, with animalistic tendencies. Neale was a victim of pre-existing pathologies about Black masculinities, in a way similar to Phoenix's (2002) account of Black boys having to construct their identities around the racialisation of Black masculinities in comparison to the more desirable versions of Blackness. He was racially stereotyped by primary school children who positioned his racial difference as a reason for targeting and harassing him (Phoenix, 2002, p.509). For Neale, primary school was the beginning of the clash between his undiagnosed neurodiversity, racism and the pathologies associated with Black masculinity (Wright et al., 1998), making school relentlessly uncomfortable and unsafe.

One of the most distinctive and commonly expressed themes about attending school in Bromsgrove concerned the ordinariness of racist name calling. Though many among Generation Two described experiencing this as

expected and unextraordinary at the time, our retrospective discussions provided a space to connect how race and gender were intrinsic to the way these cultures of racism become socially reproduced. For Neale, while the white boys continually bullied him, he was also denied the opportunity to articulate what he was experiencing and how he was feeling. Retrospectively recounting racist name-calling in primary school enabled Neale and I collectively to understand that these incidents were not isolated, they were connected, and had grounded Neale's relationship with schooling in general. These conversations also addressed one of the most challenging aspects of racialised isolation through its social and relational characteristics. Neale's narrations show how racialised isolation is negotiated with a variety of collaborators, which include children.

Teacher racism

Some of the principal explanations for the proliferation of racialised isolation in schools amongst the families were intrinsically linked to the uncontested cultures and ideas that teachers upheld. Generation Two, in particular, felt that teachers should have been better equipped to protect them from cultures of racism. When Neale described moving from primary to secondary school, he spoke of becoming increasingly aware that few of his teachers were not going to protect him from cultures of racism. And like Neale, many others among Generation Two described how these teachers were unlikely to understand or protect them from what was happening in the classroom. In this way, it was clear that racialised isolation also required the collaboration of teachers.

Neale described his fractious relationship with teachers through what he believed to be their preconceptions about his 'identity issues' and his family household structures, which have a clear historical synergy with post-war depictions of Black and white Caribbean families (see chapter two) and research on mixedness more broadly. Crucially, Neale, Fiona and their mother Tracey all spoke of how the labelling of their family as troublesome and fractured (see chapter six) was made possible by the narrations I highlight throughout this section.

Every family member who attended school in Bromsgrove spoke of experiencing and witnessing teachers or professionals who ignored or perpetuated racism. This finding corresponds with Knowles and Ridley's study, Another Spanner in the Works: Challenging Prejudice and Racism in Mainly White Schools (2005), in which they found that teachers and staff were the primary instigators of unchallengeable cultures in conversations about racial difference, which in turn maintained racism in schools:

> 'Teachers in mainly white schools are more comfortable looking outwards at other countries for contrasting localities and opportunities to incorporate multicultural education, rather than drawing on the diversity and confronting the prejudice towards o''ther cultures within their own communities. (Knowles & Ridley, 2005, p.1)'

Since Knowles and Ridley's research showed how teachers in mainly white schools are susceptible to perpetrating racialised harm on Black pupils, Doharty (2019, p.120) has more recently stressed that teachers create unchallengeable

cultures that reflect wider, more ubiquitous patterns of social power, which solidifies the presence of anti-Black racism in schools. Articulations about teachers among members of the nine families not only resonated with this, but also illustrated some of the more disturbing consequences when teachers become apathetic to the structuring principles of race or even engage in racism themselves.

Neale was one of two individuals amongst the nine families who were subject to physical violence inflicted by a teacher. The incident occurred when he was just eleven years old, during Sports Day in secondary school. Spectators, who included both children and adults, witnessed a schoolteacher grab and push Neale for 'cheating' in a football match. Neale retaliated by hitting him back. During Neale's narration of this incident, he articulated the aftermath of this physical altercation, which resulted in the duplicity of said teacher and an unexpected expulsion:

> He knew that he was in the wrong on the day, so he knew he shouldn't have grabbed me. He grabbed my arms so I just punched him. So after that, he basically - he [trails off] Not "begged", but he was like… the wrong word. He was - he assured my Mum that it would go no further. He basically took responsibility for what happened. He said, "Look, it will go no further"- and the next day when I was in the headteacher's office and they were basically saying I was going to be expelled. I was just confused. I was like, what for? He almost admitted his guilt, said he was wrong and it was going to go no further, and yet the very next day I'm in the office and we're talking about me getting expelled. It was just confusing, you know?

Sixteen years later, Neale described still being confused and frustrated about the situation. He reminded me that there were witnesses present, including both his mum and sister. He spoke of the ongoing misunderstanding about how it had not been a "he said, she said" moment, and people had seen the teacher violently provoke him. At this point, Neale's neurodiverse traits are important to flag. For many with neurodivergent tendencies, people need to be clear when they are going to physically make contact, and at this point in his life, Neale's neurodiversity was still undiagnosed.

Not long after his expulsion, Neale experienced more racist name-calling by white boys. He had been placed in another school in Bromsgrove, where, after a child relentlessly pinched him whilst engaging in racist name-calling, Neale retaliated by taking off his shoes and hitting him with them:

> And then I was sent to the headmaster's office and then the same thing happened in the headmaster's office as well. So I was excluded for that, but they allowed me to come back. And my Mum was broken after that, cried her eyes out, and it hurt me so much, but then the thing that hurt me the most about getting expelled the second time was my Mum was completely numb. She didn't react at all. And when I said "What - why aren't you upset?" she was like, "It's gone past that. I'm too hurt to be upset". And I think that is the thing that hurt me the most.

In his emotional recollection of his mum's reaction to his expulsions there were a couple of complicated considerations which Neale's narration laid bare. His experience of being reprimanded by schools for responding to the physical

and racist actions of teachers and fellow pupils corresponds with those of other family members who attended school in Bromsgrove. What is perhaps most salient about the similarities in their descriptions was their parents' reaction. While they experienced the operations of hegemonic whiteness and cultures of racism within the confines of a semi-rural/suburban place, it was almost inevitable that tackling institutional racism at school would be a difficult task within the families themselves. In a semi-rural/suburban place and a civil society institution (school) in which attempts to understand the subjugation of Black people were rare to non-existent it makes sense that these occurrences were individualised, and treated as a result of Neale's behaviour and character. This is discussed further in chapter six.

In Joseph-Salisbury's (2017) discussion of Black mixed-race men, their white mothers and their responses to teachers' racism in the UK and US, he showed how these families proactively responded to the types of racialised subjugation Neale narrated. While addressing the various ways teachers appeared to both engage with and ignore the racism that many of Generation Two experienced at school, it was clear that the workings of hegemonic whiteness through the silencing of racist encounters, and the unquestionable authority of white teachers created immovable barriers for many of the families in this thesis to navigate successfully processes that would contest the institutionalised nature of racism in school (see chapter six).

All the Jones family members (Neale, Fiona and their mother, Tracey) recollections of Neale's experiences with teachers made it clear that, as his primary caregiver, Tracey had found it difficult to deal with the way he was

perceived and treated consistently, across all school stages. Tracey grappled with numerous teachers, who consistently prophesised that Neale was a bad child. Looking back on how teachers had caused him racialised harm, Neale spoke fluently about the lack of care he received. After he was suspended for the third time at just twelve years old, Tracey's parents assisted her financially to send Neale to private school to support his needs and perhaps begin to undo the harm that had been caused during his education so far.

Racism and private schooling

In Chapter Four, I began to attend to the complex intersections of race and class among the nine families (Kuhn, 1994; Brah, 1996; Chakroborti, 2009). There I have focused on how race challenges access to material privilege in the confides of semi-rural/suburban place (Brah, 2012). Among the nine families, there were at least three other sets of parents who had opted to send their children either to a religiously selective or a fee-paying school in the Bromsgrove and Redditch constituency. The parents in Generation Two explained their engagement with the selective and fee-paying school system via a desire for smaller classes and more intimate teaching, but they also put their trust in a religious institution to provide a well-rounded education for their children. Neale's was the only family who sent him to private school when he was twelve years old because of various school suspensions and expulsions. At this point, it was clear that the family were attempting to mobilise their class privilege to help with what they had been told was Neale's relentless individual disobedience (Rollock et al., 2014).

Private schools tend to have much smaller year groups, and in Neale's experience this meant that apart from one other boy who would later become his only friend at the school, he was one of just two Black (mixed-race) students in his year group (there were no other Black people at all in his year group). During his first term, Neale was suspended for having a shaved head:

> So, my Mum cut my hair the one day and it was a number 1. Anyway, so I got pulled into the office and they excluded me for it. But I was just so confused. My Mum came into the school in bits because she'd cut my hair. So she was like, "I'm so sorry I've cut it!" But the - there was a guy, I can't remember his name, but he was an African prince and his hair was constantly shorter than how I had it. And there was other kids that had shorter hair than mine as well. So I just *could not* understand what the issue was about having short hair.

Neale's experience of expulsion because of his hairstyle is an example of what Tate and others have argued – that the policing of Black hair in schools amounts to a class and race based governance of Blackness that seeks to socially control cultural aesthetics framed in opposition to the valorisation of whiteness (Tate, 2009; Joseph-Salisbury, 2018; Dabiri, 2019). Neale described a fellow Black pupil in another year group who had shorter hair than him, but at this point in his school life, he had already been marked through institutionally racist practices that had pathologised his presence in civil society. Neale had an existing record. His experience of the policing of his hair, and punishment for his hair style, was echoed by at least four other participants, one of whom also faced school suspension for having an afro hair style.

While he continued to be racially isolated through the policing of his appearance by teachers, Neale and the only other Black boy in his year group faced more racist bullying from a group of older white boys in the school. This presented through the familiar racist name-calling and goading:

> They were basically saying, calling us gangsters because we were the only Black people. They didn't know us, never spoken to us but because we were mixed-race they were calling us that. So, it - in essence if I then would have retaliated it would just have proven everything they were saying.

Neale described how frustrating he found the constant racist provocation of groups of white boys. This frustration echoed his earlier reflections on being isolated at school. At this point, he had already been labelled, pathologised, excluded, and rejected by various schools and teachers; he described how he knew – despite how difficult it was – that he needed to control his temper:

> I was able to control it while we were in school, but there was one occasion when I saw them outside of school and I did retaliate basically. But while we were in school, I did not want to fall -into that - that stereotype. It was like, because - I don't know how to explain it. It was almost [sighs] I almost felt a little bit helpless, to the point where I knew I could do something, but I knew that I couldn't.

Neale's recollections of managing his reactions to the racism at private school emphasised how the Jones family had intended to mobilise their economic class privilege to alleviate his supposed behavioural issues. Although it seemed to be about neutralising Neale's conduct, the private school he attended proved to be an extension of the cultures of racism which facilitated

the racist spaces in schools with which he was already familiar. This mobilisation of class privilege could only take Neale so far in a private school because interpersonal and institutional racism still exists within elite spaces (Gillborn, 1997; Herr, 1999). Looking back at Neale's time in school shows how class status was activated to alleviate race, but racism prevailed.

Cultures of place and the capacity to belong at school

In recounting Neale's story above, I discussed the troubling and distressing experiences of his childhood interactions with schools in Bromsgrove. From the physical violence inflicted by one of his teachers to targeted racist attacks by white boys, Neale's narrative stood out among those of the other participants, in terms of the structural and interpersonal implications of hegemonic whiteness and cultures of racism. Neale often framed his understanding of how these aspects of his childhood had played out in the a lack of trust he had developed for the majority of the white populace he had encountered at school. When I asked Neale whether he remembered being around a lot of white people, he laughed while answering, with a sense of exhaustion:

> "100%. Yeah, yeah, yeah [chuckles] Yeah, definitely. Yeah. Not only just the population of Bromsgrove, but also the family as well because it was just - yeah. Everyone around me was white.

The above quote is a response to a question I asked all the family members: "Do you remember being around a lot of white people growing up in Bromsgrove?" This question illustrates the constant interplay between methodology and place-making in this research. By talking about the whiteness

of Bromsgrove, the endeavour was to make clear to Neale and the other family members that we were going to collectively name and *unmute* race. Neale was also one of the family members who connected the racism he had witnessed and experienced in school with other parents in Bromsgrove:

> So, basically - so certain kids were racist and then I ... [chuckles] I accepted that but then when I realised their parents were also racist as well [trails off]... It almost meant for me, it was kind of like - how open can we be?

When Neale connected the types of racist cultures tolerated at school to the parents of his peers, he began to contextualise how racially isolating childhood had been for the members of Generation Two who had been raised and attended school wholly in Bromsgrove. Family members' retrospective accounts of going to school in Bromsgrove presented the extent to which they felt they had the capacity to belong in white places. However, as with Sophie Smith's reflections in chapter four, these narrations were regularly coupled to a declaration of appreciation that they had been raised in a semi-rural/suburban place. While these expressions of appreciation of spatial privilege occurred, the retrospective nature of these accounts gave them space to reflect on the extent to which they had benefitted from living and attending school in Bromsgrove, particularly for their sense of self. As Neale stated:

> I didn't know who I was and whatever. So I think that was what was weird for me growing up in Bromsgrove. If I'd been around other Black people or whatever, I'd have kind of had a different [trails off] I think that was the main weird experience growing up. Being isolated, you know, what I mean?

The way hegemony and whiteness blur the lines of power but crucially win over common-sense culture was an unspoken aspect of social life that Generation two were routinely forced to manage at school. In this way, although the need to respond and conform to the white gaze was both relentless and normative in relation to school, family members expressed how unmanageable it felt looking back on it (see chapter three on unmuting the unspoken). In his reflections (above), Neale spoke of how greater proximity to racial sameness might have helped his experiences at school, and poignantly states that in the absence of a close relationship with Blackness, he experienced continuous racialised isolation. The nature of racism in white suburban places like Bromsgrove creates environments in which the combination of Neale's racialised hypervisibility and his neurodiversity were consistently misunderstood through pathologies of both Blackness and masculinity. Coupled with this, the Jones family had not necessarily understood Neale's experiences as a product of the long history of institutionalised beliefs that pervades and harms the lives of Black boys and men (Wallace, 2017).

When he was sixteen, in 2007, Neale left school to join the local college and become a builder's apprentice. He spoke of how much better suited he was to manual work than to school; he enjoyed the physical challenge and responsibility. After finishing his apprenticeship in 2009, Neale eventually moved to London, which he described as a significant turning point in his life. Family members who moved away from Bromsgrove all emphasised

that leaving school had been liberating for their sense of self (see chapter seven), and that it was cathartic to live or spend time in cities as opposed to their semi-rural/suburban hometowns. During his time in London, Neale spoke of an epiphany, which had occurred when he immersed himself in personal development literature in an effort to understand and make sense of his childhood in Bromsgrove (see chapter six).

Like the majority of Generation Two, Neale was very much aware of the racist labelling he had been subjected to throughout his entire school life and it was clear how this had damaged his sense of belonging in Bromsgrove. The process of retrospection, conditioned by the ethnographic nature of this research, provided the space for family members to explore how semi-rural/suburban places overexpose negatively racialised children to uncontested cultures and values that marginalise their presence. In this way, mainly white schools in semi-rural suburban places can be seen as a Fanonian example of the stakes at play when an overabundance of whiteness both in population and culture produces social representations of Blackness and mixedness which become understood as things that need to be consistently impaired in order to socially reproduce the most tolerated citizen (as white). The crucial and most concerning aspect of these variations of the workings of and negotiations with hegemonic whiteness was how early in their lives Generation Two recalled the need to establish a double consciousness of these matters which involved an active awareness that they were likely to be negatively racialised by teachers and their peers.

Part Two: What about Black girls? Racialised isolation, gender and school

In this section I introduce some of the ways that Black-mixed race women in Generation Two described their years at school in Bromsgrove. Although many of the women described experiences similar to those recounted by Neale, such as violence perpetuated by a teacher and being suspended because of a hair style, conversations with the women clearly demonstrated how their retrospective accounts of school and experiences of racialised isolation were both gendered and racialised in accordance with their Blackness. Here, I argue that the double consciousness narrated by the women in Generation Two presented as a gendered reification of the white gaze (Fanon, 1967). This argument is supported by Fiona Jones's account of her time at school, and introduces the idea that school contains civil society agents that work to maintain gendered and racialised oppressions that are distinctive to Black and Black mixed-race young people (Doharty, 2019). These issues were first introduced in chapter four in the narrative of Sophie Smith, but in this section the empirical discussion is aligned with McKellar's (1994) and Mirza's (2008) note on how the symbolic violence imposed upon Black women during their childhood should be distinguished from their Black boys/men counterparts. Consequently, I detail the recurring themes recalled by women in Generation Two that clearly differed from Neale's experiences of more direct and violent racisms.

While schooling had clearly had an impact on Neale's sense of self and belonging, similar reflections were narrated by his younger sister, Fiona

Jones, as well as the majority of the Black mixed-race women across the nine families. Fiona was nineteen years old during the time we spent together and had lived in Bromsgrove her whole life. Like most women in Generation Two, Fiona revealed systematically gendered and sexist experiences of racist oppression of the sort that Black women are routinely forced to navigate in civil society (Mirza, 2002; Coultas, 1989; Davis, 1989; Defrancisco & Chatham-Carpenter, 2000; Hill-Collins, 2000; Phoenix, 2009; Bryan et al., 1985). These retrospective revelations aligned with the gendered pathologies that Black girls and women endure at school and in more broader societal institutions (Lewis, 1993; Mirza, 1998). Crucially, these multifaceted experiences of racialised isolation were described through a gendered experience of separateness, loneliness, and undesirability.

'We wear the mask': isolation and stigma

When we met, Fiona was only three months clear of her formal education in Bromsgrove. She was pleased to be finished and was looking forward to concentrating on paid work. Like the other women in Generation Two, attending school and college in Bromsgrove had hindered Fiona's capacity to be herself. Fiona was quiet at school and described being constantly uncomfortable. Whether it was through years of grappling with assumptions about athleticism, being bullied about Black aesthetics, or being consistently positioned as undesirable among their peers, the childhoods described by Generation Two in schools had conditioned feelings of racialised isolation. They frequently explained how fellow pupils and teachers would either consider them to be loud

and aggressive, or inconspicuous and passive (Mirza, 1990; Carby, 1982). In line with literature on the stigma navigated by Black girls throughout their childhood, such as Weekes (2002) and more recently, Pennant (2020), Fiona was able to powerfully articulate how gender and race had permeated her childhood in Bromsgrove:

> When I did sociology, in sixth form, I remember we were talking about Black children in education and they spoke about the difference between male and female, and it [trails off]…They said, which I found like, connected with me, was that the Black boys tended to act out and to rebel against any kind of school - whereas the Black girls would keep their heads down and would just get on with stuff without anyone dealing with them. And that was - that's what our family is like. Because - and so no one picked up on it, because they were just like, "Oh, that's how she is".

In the quote above, Fiona was describing a moment during sixth form where the class were reading sociological research about 'typical' responses to education among young Black people. Although these types of generalisations in textbooks are reductive, as they tend to homogenise and avoid wider structural arrangements, it was revealing how Fiona saw in the textbook her experience both at school and in her family. Fiona articulated other reasons why she had remained quiet throughout school, one being that teachers had not really paid attention to her. In line with Mirza's (1992) arguments about Black girls and teachers in Young Female and Black, Fiona's depiction of her relationships with teachers was like many of the other women in the nine families – teachers simply ignored them, or if the situation or moment arose,

racially pathologised them. Like the other six women in the nine families, Fiona described her relationship with teachers as non-existent, apart from when she took an interest in sport.

In the context of Neale's experiences of school, which are recounted throughout the chapter, Fiona spoke of there being little space to convey how she felt about school as she did not feel her lived experiences were as important as what her brother was enduring. Other women in Generation Two who also had brothers also described experiencing this conundrum. They worried about what their brothers were experiencing and saw their own inability to 'fit in' - or rather, their daily negotiation of cultures of racism - as insignificant. Their siblingship and the witnessing of what their brothers experienced shows how important it is to understand racism at school and within the family as connected and inseparable (see chapter six).

Fiona's quiet nature had for years been noticed by her family. When we spent time together as a group, Fiona, Neale and their mother Tracey collectively spoke about how they often worried about whether Fiona was being bullied at school. While all three of them chipped into the conversation about Fiona, Tracey said the following:

> Remember, it was - I think it was on back-to-school week and they were talking about doing all the anti-bullying on like, *This Morning*. Do you remember? And - and Fiona said to me, "Do you remember when you used to ask me like, every week am I being bullied?" And Jessica goes, "You've never asked me." And I said, "I'd know exactly if you're being bullied, because we

would have a full on storm!" I said, "Fiona would be quiet and wouldn't say anything about it."

Tracey's description (above) was part of a wider conversation between Tracey, Neale and Fiona about what school had been like in Bromsgrove. It was clearly something that had worried Tracey, but just like many of the other Black mixed-race women across the research, Fiona did not feel she could adequately describe why she was persistently discreet about what school had been like. On the occasions where Fiona and I spent time together without her mother and brother, she spoke of how difficult it had been, not knowing people who were having experiences similar to hers. The combination of her own Black mixedness and the clearly disruptive experiences endured by her brother were the reasons she gave for her silence, or rather, the challenges of racialised isolation she experienced. Despite clear acknowledgements of how race and gender had infiltrated her time at school, Fiona, like many family members, was reluctant to link these experiences to racism:

> Although I'd say I haven't experienced racism, I'd say that there has been stereotyping. And I'd say one of the stereotypes is this idea of the strong, independent Black woman. And I feel like with all that was going on with Neale, when I was feeling - struggling to deal with it and my emotions, this idea that I had to put up a strong front was very difficult, because I wouldn't tell. I didn't tell family for a long time.

In these emotional declarations about suppressing her experience, Fiona was cognisant of how racialised stereotypes (to me, this was racism) were

projected onto her existence, but also of how she felt she needed to comply with them. Her narrative also links with the earlier discussion, in chapter two, of the internalisation of the white gaze and suppression of racism as a consequence of hegemonic whiteness. These conversations about how Fiona managed the pervasions of race illustrated the emotional fatigue produced by performing and understanding oneself in relation to whiteness. In this way, Fiona's narratives were a reminder of Fanon's analyses that to wear the white mask as a Black subject requires a delineation of space that impacts both the body and psyche (Fanon, 1967). Alongside the impact on their subjectivities, these matters had to be understood and negotiated through the common sense and dominating cultures of hegemonic whiteness that worked to silence their effects as insignificant or simply immaterial. Further, Fiona did not feel she had peer groups or family members who could help her come to terms with her emotions; at times, she referred to these as typical experiences for a teenage girl, but also intermittently declared that school had made her childhood challenging:

> Definitely didn't tell any of my friends -And I'd have to like, section off places where it would be safer to like, let out emotions and things. So I think that - that, being a stereotype and I wouldn't call that racism. And I think that definitely made a big impact on myself and how I developed as a teenager. At the time, I was working, school and I obviously lived at home. So the idea was home is safe to be - to just relax and let everything out. But at work and at school it was - you just have to put up a happy front. Like, be - be OK for everyone else and don't let them see.

Fiona's narration of not wanting people to know that she felt isolated at school was another theme that recurred among the Black mixed-race women across all nine families. I heard echoes of Fanon's writing in Black Skins and White Masks as many of the women in Generation Two spoke of their time at school, but these narratives were also in harmony with Maya Angelou's (1983) adaptation of novelist Paul Laurence Dunbar's (1895) spoken word poem We Wear the Mask. In Dunbar's words, Angelou recites the internalised submission of Black people as a way to survive the everyday traumas of white supremacy (Angelou, 1983). This notion of wearing the mask was later developed by bell hooks (2001) in Salvation (part of the Love Trilogy) to address how in order to be *loved and* experience a *loving* existence, Black people must find ways to adjust and adhere to the values imposed on them by a racist society. Both Angelou and hooks' presentations clearly resonates with Fiona's words (above) as she recounts creating safe spaces at home (or more precisely, alone in her bedroom) for her emotional submission.

Tears and frustration were frequently expressed by the women in Generation Two when we spoke about their school years. As we continued to explore how these feelings of racialised isolation had impacted their time at school, Fiona began to get quite emotional, but insisted on continuing the conversation. At this point, she began to describe to me how she eventually found some culturally competent literature online, to help her to understand what she was feeling about school:

> When I read up on like, anxiety and depression, a lot of it was
> - if it was from a person that was black or mixed-race - a lot of

them said they didn't feel like they could tell their family, or they couldn't share it because the ideals that were like, passed down through that family were that you know, it's – like you're fine. Like, be strong. Stay - keep going. And so they felt like they couldn't share, which obviously I did manage to eventually and that way like now – my family, they're the best support system I've got.

In schools in semi-rural/suburban places like Bromsgrove where race is frequently silenced and muted, but cultures of racism persist, Fiona's narrations are an example of how Black people are consistently forced to reconcile themselves with the obliteration of difference through what bell hooks describes as the politics of sameness (bell hooks, 1992). Fiona's experience of school was pervaded by the continuous mistreatment of her brother, but she had at the same time also to make sense of her own gendered and racialised identity without the tools to reconcile them with (see chapter six). In outlining this retrospective account of how Fiona felt about school, it is important to make clear that her narrations of racialised isolation and self-deprecation were shared by the majority of the Black mixed-race women across all nine families. However, although these were commonly narrated experiences, it is important to refer back to the earlier conceptualisation of racialised isolation as incomplete and contestable; further, although these emotional testimonies were prevalent, their narrations were coupled with explorations of settings and relationships beyond school where they had found both solace and respite from these pervasions (see chapters six and seven).

(Un)desirability, hypervisibility, and colourism

The Black mixed-race women in the families understood how they would often be positioned as the more palatable version of Blackness in the media, in popular culture and in everyday life (Sobande, 2020); being raised in Bromsgrove and attending mainly white schools meant coming to terms with being exoticised and fetishised, when they had spent their much of their childhoods being racially reduced and pathologised. Unlike mixed-race girls and women residing in multi-ethnic and multi-racial metropolises where colourism and proximity to desirability routinely manifest and present (Gabriel, 2006 and Campion, 2019), these experiences were rare among the nine families in this research.

Almost all members of Generation Two narrated a troubling relationship with their appearance during their school years. The women described a childhood of wanting to look the same as white girls and struggling with their felt racialised hypervisibility among the majority (white young people and white staff) of the school population. In chapter six, I discuss Black hair as a site of familial tension and frustration in the families headed by white mothers. But in the context of school, Fiona's relationship with her appearance and specifically with her hair texture was a site of contestation exacerbated by the predominance of white children and teachers around her (Tate, 2009; Joseph-Salisbury & Connelly, 2018; Dabiri, 2019).

Processes of gendered racialisation in schools seemed to cement many of the women's feelings of undesirability and hypervisibility. These issues of identity and belonging were not something imagined but were narrated clearly

by all nine families. Other children and adults around them in school, and more widely in Bromsgrove would comment passively on their racial difference from an extremely young age. Fiona (and in another conversation, her mother, Tracey), spoke of an occasion on World Book Day where she recalled the response from a primary school staff member when she described planning to dress up as Little Miss Sunshine:

> And like, the story where my Mum told you about when my Mum went to get me my World Book Day costume, and I was going as Little Miss Sunshine, and the woman said, "Has your daughter got blonde hair?" I was like, *Why would I have blonde hair?* Like, *that would* never *happen!*

The staff member seemed so perplexed at the idea of her dressing up as Little Miss Sunshine that she felt it appropriate to ask if Fiona was blonde, despite the fact that she was standing in front of her teacher with dark brown afro-hair. Of course, the teacher may have been mistaken about who Tracey's daughter was, since she is white and Fiona is Black mixed-race, yet this anecdote appeared as if the staff member was either testing whether they were related, or needed to make clear that Little Miss Sunshine had to be white. Either way, this incident illustrates the racialising and racist discursive behaviours of the adults and children at school disclosed by most family members. The combination of this felt and expressed hypervisibility and undesirability meant that the women described childhoods and adolescences which evolved into severe insecurities in later life. Declarations like the one below were repeatedly expressed by the younger women when we discussed how they felt about school:

Fiona: It was more - I think an insecurity, because - because I didn't know anything else. And the fact that [trails off] And I guess like, I was envious because wanting something that I didn't have that everyone else did, that I - I couldn't understand why. Or like, why I couldn't have that.

Chantelle: What did you want?

Fiona: Well, the straight hair because that's what everyone had. And it was – in my eyes, it seemed so much easier to manage, because obviously everyone would go to school and you'd see all these girls and they'd just have their hair down. And they'd just have it down the whole day and it would be fine. They wouldn't have to brush it or nothing!

This desire for sameness, as expressed by Fiona (above) was returned to time and time again by the women I spoke with - especially when it came to their appearance at school. The majority spoke sombrely about having hair which was a distinctively different texture from that of the white girls at school. Fiona and the other six women recalled wanting to have straight hair like everyone else and connected racial sameness (being white) with the chance to be less visible in school, but that would also allow them to be seen as desirable – both as friends and romantically, among potential love interests.

What is interesting about the connection the women made between undesirability and their school years was that in multi-ethnic and racial metropolises, opposite experiences are more likely to arise (Gabriel, 2007). Colourism cements a hierarchisation of racialisation and racism, grounded in

the history of slavery and colonialism, which in contemporary society is dictated by proximity to 'light-skin' shades and whiteness (Tate, 2009; Phoenix 2014; Hall, 2017). In the context of institutions like school, scholars such as Craddock et al (2018) have contended that the expansion of such a hierarchisation should be recognised as a public health concern because of its clear structural implications among the African and Caribbean diaspora (see also Morrison, 1970; Couzens et al., 2017). Despite their own experiences of hypervisibility, the existence of colourism and their position in the hierarchy was well-known by the women of Generation Two, including Fiona:

> "Yeah - I'd say it is easier because of the fact that you've got
> the links in your - within your family, your own family"

In the quote above, Fiona was describing how Black and white mixed-race young people could more practically and emotionally manage the cultures in schools like Bromsgrove because they had experienced these among their own (white) family members. However, it was still difficult for Fiona and the other women to correlate their childhoods and school years with colourist hierarchies. This was not about denying or ignoring the existence of colourism, but more about addressing how predominantly white semi-rural/suburban contexts made it difficult for the women to see how they sometimes directly benefitted from colourism because of their mixedness and proximity to white racial sameness. This is one of the issues with narrations of (Black) mixedness: benefitting from colourism and experiencing continual racism – particularly during school – can co-exist. When we discussed their childhood and teenage feelings of undesirability, these Black mixed-race women created a dichotomy between

their experiences of racialisation and racism in a place where multi-racialised hierarchies were non-existent (because most people were white), in the face of the local and global institutions that would still predominantly position and receive them as the more desirable, palatable version of Blackness (Phoenix, 2014). To be clear, the women's emphases on their felt and experienced undesirability at school was coupled to an awareness of the systemic pathologisation of dark-skinned Black women (see more on colourism and proximity to whiteness in chapter seven). These conversations were clearly important for the women, who wanted to generate reparative discourses that addressed their challenging school years, but also recognised that they are still negotiating the social world through the racialisation of Blackness (see chapter seven).

When we concluded our discussion about schools, it felt cathartic to hear Fiona speak of becoming more open with her family and peer groups about the challenges of racialised isolation. She was in a period of her life, she said, in which she was dealing with what had happened during her school years. Racialised isolation had informed how she saw the world and her place within it; she now wanted to disrupt these tensions. Towards the end of the time I spent with her, Fiona spoke more optimistically about her future self beyond school (see chapter eight). For the purposes of this chapter, Fiona's admission that she had eventually opened up to her family shows how looking back on school life in retrospect can create hope and the possibility of greater comprehension and reconciliation (see chapter eight).

Conclusion

The narrations of schooling from siblings Neale and Fiona in this chapter have shown how schools with majority white leadership, teachers and pupils in semi-rural/suburban places like Bromsgrove become particularly susceptible to maintaining what Gillborn (2005) has referred to as the cultural groundings of white supremacy. What is more, because there is a lack of will to contest hegemonic whiteness and cultures of racism in mainly white schools at a practical level, there is a corresponding absence of foundational racial literacy and anti-racist praxis, which for many family members meant that teachers and children were likely to ignore or perpetuate negative racialisation and racism. That semi-rural/suburban places are routinely imagined as places inhabited by flawless examples of humanity demonstrates how these cultures are routinely and normatively entrenched and protected in civil society institutions like schools (Neale, 2002).

This deliberate dedication of an entire chapter on schools was a response to the fact that schools are among the most integral primary institutions of civil society, which socially reproduce naturalised systems around common-sense ideas and values that aim to win people's consent. In semi-rural/suburban places, schools are spatialised examples of the struggle to produce hegemonic whiteness and how these processes can have exceptionally harmful consequences for negatively racialised children and young people. Members of Generation Two narrated their experiences of Bromsgrove schools as key spaces of racialised contestation. In detailing the ways Neale and Fiona remembered navigating school, I have begun to explore some of the more

disconcerting themes that emerged repeatedly among the nine families. These related to the unspoken power dynamics central to civil society institutions and to the people whose function was to uphold this. This is a reminder of themes from chapter three, which showed that the pervasive nature of race and experiences of racism rely on being unspoken and silenced. This is a social reproduction that represents how narratives of surviving in places like Bromsgrove required a silencing or ambivalence about the cultures critical to the place-making of semi-rural/suburban places. This has led me to conclude that mainly white schools in predominantly white suburban places become intersecting spaces where racism is experienced, and a series of multifaceted coping strategies develop in response to racialised isolation.

In the first section I addressed Neale's experience of schools in Bromsgrove via his narratives of teachers and white children perpetuating, witnessing or ignoring racism. Neale's anecdotes about school showed that he experienced a callous disregard for his wellbeing, which consistently positioned him as unworthy of care: he was continually moved, disciplined and punished. Crucially, I addressed the long-term impact on Neale of the institutional failure to diagnose his neurodivergent status until later on in his teenage years. A combination of stigma, neglect and stereotyping enhanced the likelihood of Neale being consistently isolated within, suspended and expelled from the school environment. In the second section I analysed Fiona's narrations of school and childhood. Here, I argued that the Black mixed-race women amongst the nine families voiced a distinctively gendered and racialised experience. I also contextualised Fiona's feelings of isolation amongst her white

peers and teachers as something synonymous with the way Black women typically experience and are received in the social world. I also drew on contentions about desirability and hypervisibility as something regularly expressed among these Black mixed-race women, and began to introduce colourism and how it appeared (or not) in their recollections of life in Bromsgrove (see chapter seven).

While I have presented narrations of racialisation and racism experienced by siblings Neale and Fiona during their school years in Bromsgrove, these concluding points are in line with Blau's contention that although racialised subjugation within schools is particularly harmful for Black children, these manifestations of white cultural dominance and violence inflicted by white teachers and students remain detrimental and injurious to everyone (Blau, 2003, p.22). Here, I have drawn on the wisdom expressed by many family members, who spoke of how, looking back, these issues were extremely frustrating. In spite of voicing this frustration, they also at times described sympathetically the people they encountered who seemed wedded to reproducing exclusionary and dominating cultures as normative and common sense. School had served as a space in which they had clearly felt the daily grind of racism, yet talking about this retrospectively enabled them to express just how detrimental the structuralising positioning of race and hegemonic whiteness was for everyone.

The conceptual contribution of this chapter has centred on how the idea of racialised isolation helps us to understand the multi-layered experiences of

racism in schools, and crucially the way hegemonic whiteness operates by putting the onus of cultures of racism back onto the individual. In this way, for the negatively racialised population(s), the suppression of their racial identity finds ways of generates various forms of ambivalence about how race and racism impede their lives. With very few people around them who understand or recognise their lived experiences, racialised isolation can present as a way of coping with the intensification of the white gaze. Unless the social relations that condition cultures of racism and hegemonic whiteness are discursively addressed on an ongoing basis, schooling in semi-rural/suburban places creates racialised isolation that presents fundamental challenges to racial identity for people like Neale. One of the key challenges for the members of Generation Two who narrated these issues was that the dominant population who maintain these cultures are also their main source of social bonds. This reality clearly demonstrates the extent to which they experienced a constant and active struggle with the dominant population's ongoing investment in cultures of racism and hegemonic whiteness.

By presenting schools in Bromsgrove through the differing retrospective reflections from siblings Neale and Fiona, I began to introduce one of the primary findings within this thesis; how the perspectives of mixed-gender siblings creates a nuanced and holistic illustration of the way hegemonic whiteness and cultures of racism in places are enacted, understood and endured (Davies, 2015). Neale and Fiona's time in school produced a succinct analysis of how race becomes gendered within mainly white schools. Neale was overexposed to both physical and symbolic violence typical of the

pathologisation of Black masculinity, whereas Fiona recalled the daily grind of racism, where Blackness and girlhood are endured through a contrasting combination of hypervisibility and invisibility. Their different experiences of school, partly the result of their different genders, were exacerbated by the predominance of whiteness – both hegemonically and demographically in the school itself. But neither Neale nor Fiona experienced hegemonic whiteness and cultures of racism during their school years alone. Like the other siblingships in six of the nine families; racialisation and racism in school had been understood not just as an individual, but also as a witness to what their sibling had faced and how they had made sense of it.

In the next chapter, I introduce how family members across the nine families narrated how their own family unit had at times become a micro-civil-society site where hegemonic whiteness and cultures of racism were maintained. It was important to understand these conversations in tandem with an appreciation of the experience of school, as in many instances these cultures were replicated by family members. The codes of semi-rural/suburban places were respected, managed and reproduced intimately among the Black and white mixed-race family members. As Nayak (2005) contends, those who experience racism in predominately white spaces are often silenced. However, I extend this idea in the next chapter by examining the roles that internal family relations play in facilitating these practices of denial and silence in semi-rural/suburban places. I also develop the themes of this chapter further by addressing how the cultures in places like Bromsgrove create subjectivities which internalise racialised and racist pathologies.

Chapter Six: Familial love and intimate negotiations with race and hegemonic whiteness: family and parenthood

In Chapter Five, I argued that mainly white schools in semi-rural/suburban places can produce an intensification of the social reproduction of hegemonic whiteness and cultures of racism. Using the accounts of Neale and Fiona to support the argument, I conceptualised racialised isolation as a consequence of negotiation with winning hegemonic cultures, which are largely uncontested in civil society institutions such as schools. These aspects of the arguments presented in chapter five are an essential foundation for this chapter, which discusses family relatedness in Black mixed-race families in semi-rural/suburban places.

In chapters one and three I introduced the nine families, which are primarily headed by, and centred on, the care of mothers, showing how this research incorporates some matrifocal characteristics (Smith, 1966; Stack, 1974; Smith, 1996; Morrissey, 1991; Blackwood, 2005; Renaud, 2018). Crucially, in chapter two, I positioned the research as a contribution to scholarship on mixed-race families that is mainly concerned with white mothers who parent mixed-race children and Black mixed-race mothers[8] who were mainly raised by white relatives. While the analysis that follows has been developed through a critical intervention on family relatedness in Black mixed-race families in semi-rural

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[8] One mother among the nine families was a Black (not mixed-race) woman.

suburban places, the centring of women and mothers also contributes to critical dialogues on family practices that resist patriarchal family formations (Stacey, 1988; O'Reilly, 2010). Additional to these more sensitive discussions about mixedness and place, I have also began to introduce the ways in which love creates additional considerations for understanding the complexity of family relatedness (hooks, 2000).

As the family is understood here as a micro-site of civil society (see chapter two), this chapter explores the following questions: i) What is at stake when hegemonic whiteness and cultures of racism are conditioned and manifest between family members? ii) How does hegemonic whiteness manifest within Black (and white) mixed-race families when most of the main caregivers are white women or Black mixed-race women (who were primarily raised by white mothers) in the context of semi-rural/suburban place? While I have already shown how semi-rural/suburban places can produce visceral experiences of cultures of racism, it is crucial for the arguments in this chapter to show how family dynamics can become embodied by these cultures, and how as a result they are managed between family members through *intimate negotiations.*

I use the phrase intimate negotiations to describe a relational process which can take place when relationships within Black (and white) mixed-race families reproduce the social reproductions of hegemonic whiteness. Intimate negotiations require contributions from both close and extended family. Family members who perpetuate racialisation and racism as well as those to whom it causes the most harm all engage in intimate negotiations. The conceptualisation of intimate negotiations in this chapter is both a response to,

and a contribution to *Birthing Racial Difference: conversations with my mother and others* (Lewis, 2009; see also chapter two). Further, one of the primary forms of intimate negotiation explored in this thesis is the active suppression and silencing of conversations about race between family members, or what I referred to, in chapter three, as 'the unspoken'. With this, I focus on how intimate negotiations in Black mixed-race families who reside in semi-rural/suburban places demonstrate an active struggle with race, as places like Bromsgrove require consent to, and collaboration with, the social reproduction of the desired conditions and cultures of hegemonic whiteness.

The emphasis on social relations produced in the context of place remains integral to the arguments in this chapter, as most family members' primary relationships and social networks in Bromsgrove were with white people, many of whom did not know any other Black people locally. This predominance of relationships with white people appeared within and between all nine families. Further, most of the white people (Generation One) within the nine families had limited contact and connection with Black people beyond their partners, their children and some extended Black family members.

This chapter uses the idea of intimate negotiations in Black mixed-race families to build on Caballero's (2011), Joseph-Salisbury's (2018) and Mahtani's (2014) cautions against the romanticisation of mixed-race families via public presentations of mixedness as a progressive racial utopia. It is a critical analysis of intimate negotiations that aims to contribute to scholarship on Black mixed-race families, via a demonstration of the harms inflicted by hegemonic whiteness on Black mixed-race family members in particular, while also

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showing how these (intimate) matters produced an intensification of the white gaze (Tate, 2009).

This chapter contends with the pressures and tensions manifest in, and socially reproduced among, family members with proximity to mixedness who intimately negotiate the operationalising of race within their family (Ali, 2003). To explore these tensions, I introduce Tracey Jones, the mother of Neale and Fiona. Then, drawing on the accounts of all three Jones family members, I examine their narratives of parenting, and being parented and raised in a Black mixed-race family in Bromsgrove. Through an examination of family narratives about race and place, I present how hegemonic whiteness works to oppress all family members, critically outlining some of the challenges of parenting racial difference in predominantly white places generates. I also introduce Leanne Davies - a Black mixed-race woman from Generation Two, who narrated her relationship with her white mother and white grandmother during our time together, in support of the Jones family's accounts and the chapter's arguments.

By emphasising family dynamics and parenting racial difference in the nine families, I uncover the way intimate negotiations become intensified in semi-rural/suburban places. By focusing on the family, parenting and semi-rural/suburban place, I show how the unspoken can be used as an intimate way of parenting racial difference, emphasising how the combination of race, place and whiteness are invariably positioned as something that is not spoken of, but more poignantly, something to be *overcome.*

Tracey Jones

Tracey Jones is forty-six years old. She was raised in a predominantly white-Irish area in Birmingham in the 1970s and 80s. She was brought up in an Irish Catholic household, and to this day remains close to her two sisters and her parents who all still live in Birmingham. In 1990, when she was eighteen years old, Tracey became pregnant with Neale. She moved to Bromsgrove in the mid-1990s when he was a toddler.

When Neale was around six years old, Tracey met Fiona's and Jessica's father, David, who would eventually take on the role of stepfather to Neale. In 2001, Tracey gave birth to Fiona, and in 2006, Jessica arrived. In 2015, Tracey and David separated.

Tracey is a qualified nursery practitioner and teaching support assistant, and has intermittently worked in schools and nurseries. For Tracey, working with young families and pre-school children has been a passion for most of her working life. She is a mother, community worker and specialist in early years care.

I met Tracey, in the company of her son Neale, and daughter, Fiona. Tracey spoke sensitively about what they had experienced as a family during their time living in Bromsgrove. She wanted to make clear that although Bromsgrove was home, it had not always been a place of harmony for herself and her children.

Leanne Davies

Leanne is twenty-seven years old and was born in Birmingham to her white-English mother and Black British/Jamaican father in 1993. She has one younger brother, Jason, who also took part in the research. Leanne described herself as a family woman; she has a close relationship with her parents and brother, and now has a partner and son of her own who is four years old.

The Davies family moved from Birmingham to Bromsgrove when Leanne was around three years old. Leanne described moving to Bromsgrove and going to primary school in the area as the moment when racism began to obstruct her everyday life.

Like Neale and Fiona, Leanne narrated some very distressing accounts of her childhood in Bromsgrove, especially about her school life. She recalled many experiences of racism in this semi-rural/suburban place that were perpetrated by her peers, teachers and family members. During our time together she made clear how it was only recently that she realised how much her childhood had impacted her sense of self. Leanne owns her own business and is a qualified hairdresser and beautician.

Intimate negotiations of racism in families: white family members objecting to mixedness

Intimate negotiations can be located in familial 'moments', such as a parent's first encounter with an interracial relationship, the announcement of pregnancies, mixed-race childhoods and adolescence, as well as in more mundane settings, such as family ceremonial celebrations, mealtimes and car journeys. Intimate negotiations take place between parents, children, grandparents, uncles, aunts and cousins, but they can also appear beyond the family among other kin and close relationships.

Whether it was through the silencing of experiences of racism and their interpersonal and structural implications, or by actually witnessing the use of racist language, nearly all the family members spoke of how the cultures they negotiated in Bromsgrove had appeared among close and extended family members. The prevalence of these cultures cannot be separated from the racialised isolation discussed in Chapter Five. Crucially, however, they are made possible through *intimate negotiations.*

Intimate negotiations among the nine families tended to follow a typical chronology that either began with a narrative about what happened when their

white parents introduced a Black partner to their white family members, or with the white or Black parent's description of what it was like to tell their family about their relationship or marriage. Although families' reactions varied in severity, narratives about introducing their family to mixed unions were often cited to show when and how intimate negotiations began in their families. Most of these family-based introductions to interraciality within the nine families happened between 1970 and 1990.

As one of the white mothers who took part in the research, Tracey Jones clearly represented lived experiences of Birmingham and Bromsgrove which differed from the Black and Black mixed-race family members across the nine families. However, in terms of time and geography, Tracey's arrival in Bromsgrove followed a similar trajectory to that of Daphne Smith (chapter four) and most of the other parents in the research who were raised in Birmingham. Tracey was born in a predominantly white area of Birmingham, raised in Digbeth and lived in and among a large white Irish Catholic community. When we discussed her Irish heritage, Tracey spoke of how Irishness had given her an introduction to the changing nature of race over time. More broadly, all three members of the Jones family were privy to the anti-Irish racism endured by their family and wider Irish communities in Birmingham. At least five of the nine families contained white Irish parents and grandparents who spoke of how recently the Troubles had affected their families. The recalling of anti-Irish racism experienced by older family members across the sample illustrated what Hickman (1998) refers to as an awfully specific racialised experience grounded in stigmas of religion and class.

Although anti-Irish racism amounted to structural racist discrimination similar to that experienced by Winston's generation on arrival (discussed in chapter four, above), many family members with white parents and grandparents of Irish heritage described witnessing a significant change in the way their Irishness had been racialised over time. They clearly recalled lived experience of what Lentin and McVeigh (2006) describe as the cultural 'whitening' of Irishness over a period from the late 1980s to the present day. Once the family members had acquired what King-O'Riain (2019) refers to as a cultural resemblance to whiteness it was clear that they presented new tensions by introducing Black partners to their parents. As Tracey recalled:

> I think my Mum had about one day where she was like, 'this was not expected'. And then that day passed. And it was [trails off] ... . And I think it's a case of, she was worried about what other people were going to say [about Neale] - How he's going to be treated. And I think that kind of - that problem kind of went away as soon as he was born. I think she worried about it while I was pregnant, and I think once he was born it was no longer an issue.

Tracey's description contains a powerful recollection of the complex ways in which race functions and is woven into familial relationships. Tracey's mother's initial reaction connects to the capacity of hegemonic whiteness to present as racist common sense in one instance (i.e., it becomes reasonable for Tracey's white mother to be concerned about her having a mixed-race child), and then adapt over time to the changing social terrain, or in this example, once Neale was born (Hall, 1986; Hughey, 2012). Crucially, although Tracey (and later, Neale and Fiona), spoke of how her parents eventually accepted Neale's

and Fiona's fathers, there was still caution initially, as in many of the other families, about how people would receive their new proximity to Blackness. It is in this way that to love Blackness whilst adhering to the workings of whiteness becomes an intimate challenge and negotiation routinely presented alongside of interracial unions (Lewis, 2009; hooks, 2001). Their parents fears related to other people's judgement (and that of family members) as well as how their children (and grandchildren) would be received by wider publics. As I outlined in chapter two, these pathologies have been commonly endorsed over time and, in many instances, have simply evolved into more contemporary vilifications of mixedness that not only operate publicly, but also intimately between family members.

Although Tracey's account about her parents' relatively swift acceptance of her relationships, it was clear that her family had been small but close, and that she remained relationally close to her parents (Neale's and Fiona's grandparents). Like at least four of the nine families - particularly on the Irish side of the family – participants described a long-term distance from wider family networks, beginning at the point of these initial interracial unions. Some aspect of this familial distancing were more pronounced than others, but all were similar in terms of their racist foregrounding.

In more direct recollections of the older white generation's rejection of Black partners, Daphne Smith (introduced in chapter four) narrated a long-term tempestuous relationship with Ryan's (her white husband's) parents. Daphne's descriptions of intimately negotiating familial cultures of racism were typical of some of the more explicit memories among family members:

> I remember having a conversation with my husband's mum and
> she said you know if you have children, they are going to have
> a hard time. It was like she was always trying to put me off. She
> said you know your children will have a really hard time.

Although Daphne's remarks show that the reaction of her in-laws was more pronounced than that of Tracey's mother, they are similar to the extent that their concerns were not only justified, but also presented as common sense. This 'concern' for the mixed-race children born of interracial unions has a long history in both public and private discourse (see chapter two) (Bland, 2019; Peters, 2016). Crucially, Tracey's and Daphne's narrations about their white parents and in-laws represent an imaginary of interraciality so deeply embedded that even a previous Home Secretary, Herbert Morrison (1942), had pronounced that the children of these relationships will "be handicapped in the struggle for life" (Olusoga, 2016, p.484). And these public objections to mixedness clearly had intimate consequences among all nine families. Although these were varied in how they manifested, intimate negotiations among family members (of the ways in which mixedness could be discussed) were described as inevitable. From white mothers being kicked out of their family homes to white grandparents describing their grandchildren as gollywogs, concerns about mixedness were described alongside cultures of racism in most of the nine families. For many family members – correlating with their narrations of life in Bromsgrove – these intimate negotiations are another normative culture which regularly requires acceptance and silence about how race seeps into family life.

Intimate negotiations with white family members

Leanne Davies has lived in Bromsgrove for most of her life. She was raised by her white-English mother and Black British-Jamaican father alongside her younger brother Jason. Leanne's immediate family are close-knit, and they stood out from the other eight families in terms of their familial bond. Like many of the families, Leanne's description of her own family was complicated, juxtaposing, and conflicting. The Davies family were clearly part of a kinship among which there was love and respect. However, it was clear that hegemonic whiteness and cultures of racism in semi-rural/suburban places had permeated their family relationships. This was particularly evident in the way Leanne discussed her white relatives approach to her racialised difference, and more broadly concerned how her own experiences of racism were translated as normative and just a product of semi-rural/suburban life that she was expected to overcome.

In the analysis of the relational place-making of semi-rurality/suburbia, I have argued that many of the Black and Black mixed-race family members experienced a form of double consciousness generated by an intensification of the white gaze (Dubois, 1903). There were clear narratives concerning an overabundance of racism, racial stress and racialised isolation, often determined by the workings of hegemonic whiteness in places they had lived. Among these experiences of place-based hyper-negative racialisation were incidents that occurred with their white family members that mirrored, and made intimate, those wider experiences. Most of the conversations I had with Leanne about her life in Bromsgrove centred around her challenging relationships with

white people. She had a tough time throughout her school years with the racism of children and teachers, but she also disclosed how she often felt that her white family members, especially her mother, grandmother and aunts, misunderstood her.

More than half of Generation Two had been parented by a white mother and Black father with the remainder parented by Black mixed-race mothers and white fathers (with one exception who was a Black woman). As with previous research on mixed-race families (Edwards & Caballero, 2011) and in line with census data (Office for National Statistics, 2011) , this trend among the families in the sample corresponds with the wider population of Black Caribbean and white families in the UK. As I will show, this maternal and paternal contextualisation is an important consideration when tracing intimate negotiations between family members.

In families headed by white women, the white maternal side of the extended family had a more pronounced presence. Whilst this proximity to white family was referenced, family members still positioned themselves at the periphery of family relations (relations with white grandparents were an exception; as most family members described a relatively close relationship with them). However, despite many (like the Jones family) describing a certain amount of distance between their immediate and extended white family, extended families would coalesce around particular rituals such as birthdays, anniversaries and funerals, and these were attended. Many also described maintaining virtual connections with white family members via social media websites like Facebook and

Instagram. Crucially, these intermittent online engagements with white family networks frequently involved witnessing, or engaging with, cultures of racism.

The most pronounced narrations of cultures of racism occurred with white relatives. In all nine families, these incidents were overwhelmingly related in terms of mundane, everyday encounters. Family members did not always see these confrontations as especially harmful,but were clear that they had to regularly reconcile themselves to the fact that they were related to people with racist views. Leanne's experiences of structural and interpersonal racisms throughout her school years in Bromsgrove were as serious as Neale's had been. But like many family members, she also had to manage these prejudices (particularly the expression of derogatory views about Black people), among her white relatives. On several occasions Leanne spoke of witnessing and experiencing racism expressed by her nan, grandad, aunts and uncles:

> When I hear about my Nan's stories [stories of being racist towards her Black father] it hurts my feelings to think she thought in that way. But then I guess if you live in this area and that's what everybody's like, you're going to be like the people that live around this area, you know?

While Leanne frequently described how difficult she found it to witness her white relatives racist views, the quote above shows how she sought to position her Nan's racism towards her father as an inevitability of living in a place like Bromsgrove. As Twine and Gallagher (2008, p.5) have argued, examining the social consequences of whiteness requires an analysis of 'the role whiteness and white identities play in framing and reworking racial categories'. This means that articulations like Leanne's are embedded in an ongoing reconciliation with

the intimate, emotional, and longstanding impacts of how white identity formations present within Black mixed-race families in semi-rural/suburban places. For Leanne, the white identity formations she witnessed in her family had become common sense, and something she had to accept to keep these relatives in her life.

These conversations about family, race and whiteness were complicated and emotional. Crucially, they correlated with Lewis's (2009) contextualisation of how intimately love, racism and familial rapport is negotiated in Black and white mixed-race families. In her autoethnographic commentary on managing maternal love and racism, Lewis described her white mother walking in front of her when they were passing her white work colleagues to avoid them becoming cognisant of the fact that she had a Black daughter. In an almost identical articulation from Leanne, she spoke of her white grandmother walking ahead of her when they took the dog to a local park:

> I've noticed before like when we go out to walk the dogs with my Nan, she walks a little bit ahead of me. But you'll see that older couples that will pass my Nan will say "Hello" to my Nan, but they don't say "Hello" to me.

Lewis's and Leanne's almost identical examples of white family members physically distancing themselves from their Black relatives succinctly describe the sorts of intimate negotiations I refer to throughout this chapter, which is about reconciliations with family members' adherence to and maintenance of the cultures of Bromsgrove (outlined in chapters four and five). Critically, Leanne's reconciliation with her white grandmother's racism shows how we

need to understand these family relationships as visual representations of the mechanics of hegemonic whiteness at work (Lewis, 2004; Garner, 2017, p.1584). In these contexts, hegemonic whiteness is socially reproduced mainly by white people asserting that it is common sense to engage in the reaffirmation of racialised boundaries of belonging in front of the very family members most likely to suffer from these racisms. It is also reproduced when family members like Leanne discuss these processes as unextraordinary. Hegemonic whiteness relies on the consent of family members, who are required to intimately negotiate the way cultures of racism present in their families – regardless of how they affect one's sense of self. In particular, intimate negotiations with racism are about finding ways to maintain a relationship, whether this involves excusing, suppressing or even justifying people's racist acts.

In their descriptions of the mundane everyday occurence of hegemonic whiteness and cultures of racism they had endured in Bromsgrove and throughout their school years, family members were clear that these cultures were echoed by white relatives. Usually, they were described through the character of a racist uncle, aunt or cousin. As with Leanne's description of her Nan, most had stories and anecdotes about witnessing white family members' racism. When Tracey spoke of introducing Fiona's father to one of her uncles, she described being aware that he had racist views:

> I mean, he's never had an issue with me but when I took David
> round to the first family function - I'd already had Neale by this
> time - and it was the first family function that I'd took him to as
> a new boyfriend. And my uncle worked at a factory, and the first
> thing he said to him was: "We've got quite a lot of black guys

working at our -" [trails off] No, did he say "black"? Or did he –
no said "coloured lads" I think. "There's quite a few coloured
lads who work at our company".

Though these direct dialogues mainly occurred with family members outside their immediate households, they were a prominent feature of discussions about the culture of families with white relatives. Of course, Tracey's account is of an exchange that was not necessarily intended to cause *harm,* but it is evidence of just how mundane and naturalised these kinds of expressions were – *they were common sense.* The Jones family knew who to avoid when it came to discussions about race, a sentiment also expressed by several other family members across the nine families. Daphne and Sophie Smith articulated the much more distressing example of an uncle who justified taking part in 'Black face', and recalled more direct conversations they had had to manage, in which white relatives actively espoused the racial inferiority of Black people. These examples of racism perpetrated by white family members are important, because they both highlight the ordinariness of interracial families, and also refute empirically the myth that 'mixed-race' is synonymous with the end of racism (Caballero, 2005). These families and interracial unions are part of society and thus contain attitudes that reflect those of wider populations; intimacy, love and familial connection cannot entirely transcend racism.

How is this racism damaging?

Examples of managing and negotiating reductive conversations about race with extended white family members were common, and discussed over and

over in ways that represented them as separate from the sort of *racism that produces real harm.* Although many were clear about who was racist in their families, they were reluctant to discuss them as if they were contributing to systemic racism in a broader sense. With this, it was interesting to converse about the extent to which these white family members were in fact perpetuating harmful attitudes that can have long term effects on negatively racialised populations. There are two questions to consider here. First, was participants' downplaying of white family members' racism a product of familial closeness and a desire to avoid demonising a loved one? Or do these examples simply demonstrate that familial love can occur at the same time as familial cultures of racism? These are poignant and complex questions that I discussed repeatedly with all the families as we sought collectively, not just to come to terms with intimate negotiations, but also with the extent to which these micro-relations tell a wider story about the structuring of race in society. In this way, the subtlety and everyday workings of race were also seen through the ways Black and Black mixed-race family members excused or sought to explain their own ambivalence towards whiteness. These discussions were usually centred around questions about *what racism really is?* and were responses to other conversations, such as the one explored in chapter four, in which Daphne spoke of her husband Ryan's approving of Bromsgrove as suitable for their family: *"I mean bless him Ryan wouldn't have given any thought to the makeup of Bromsgrove you know".* Crucially, these were all different intimate negotiations that excused the racism and negative racialisation of white family members.

It was clear among both Generations One and Two that intimate negotiations had been a troubling aspect of their family lives and they were hyper-acutely aware of how Blackness was negatively racialised amongst white family members. They often recalled how they felt personal responsibility for these actions or attitudes. In their accounts of family rituals or ceremonial get-togethers, they narrated reflections similar to Yancy's renewed exploration of how the performance of double consciousness among white people can work to reinscribe the white gaze that harms a Black sense of self (Yancy, 2017). Crucially, for the arguments in this chapter, these intimate negotiations are made common sense and naturalised in a way that protects familial bonds.

Having engaged with family members repeatedly over time, it became possible to have more nuanced conversations about the operationalising of racism and its interpersonal and structural components, which they are likely to have witnessed in their own families. These reflections about wider family networks and racism should not be read as a profound finding as such, but are more about beginning to foreground how hegemonic whiteness and cultures of racism become silenced in intimate family settings.

This section has addressed how intimate negotiations are a consequence of hegemonic whiteness because they occur with the consent of both Black and white family members. Black and Black mixed-race family members narrated negative racialisation and racism among close and extended family through notions of acceptance, avoidance and – especially when it involved a parent – a defence of these expressions, which is of course reflective of how intimate these negotiations can be**.**

Intimate negotiations while parenting racial difference in Bromsgrove

Women were the primary caregivers across the nine families, regardless of family formation (see chapters one and three, and appendices four and five). While this analysis is a critical reflection on family relatedness in Black mixed-race families, it is also a demonstration of how women-centred families, or matricentric family formations are managed and negotiated in the contexts of semi-rural/suburban places and the racialisation of mixedness (O'Reilly, 2008). It is therefore essential to preface this section with a reminder that these nine women-centred families were mainly headed by white mothers, as well as by Black mixed-race mothers who had been raised by white women.

So far, I have addressed how family members have intimately negotiated cultures of racism with white family members. These discussions were an important preface to a discussion of how these tensions impacted parenting mixed-race in a semi-rural/suburban place. In this section, I address how the existence of these cultures within their families affected the relationships between parents and children. The section continues to examine narrations about intimacy and proximity to white relatives, how this affects relationships, and how silence about the structuring principles of race and cultures of racism becomes naturalised. This involves drawing on family members' culpability in discursively engaging with the socially reproducing race and the denial of its structuring principles, whilst simultaneously addressing whiteness as common sense.

In an effort to extend the arguments about intimate negotiations already outlined, I now offer an exploration of how these processes are connected with

parenting, and more specifically, with the white mothering of Black and white mixed-race children in semi-rural/suburban places.

Single motherhood: race and class

The timing of Tracey's arrival in Bromsgrove between the early and mid-1990s is in line with most of the parents across the nine families (see chapter four). Of course, the difference between Tracey's arrival in Bromsgrove and Daphne's is that Tracey was a single white mother with a Black mixed-race toddler.

In chapter four, I introduced Daphne and Sophie's narrations of how race and class had operated as a complex phenomenon whilst living in Bromsgrove as a Black mixed-race family. Although they both firmly acknowledged that they lived a middle-class lifestyle, the varying ways in which they were racialised often called into question the stability of their class position. Rather, the extent to which they were able to belong in Bromsgrove was not secured by their social class. Although Tracey was clear that her move to Bromsgrove as a single mother at the age of eighteen was economically supported by her parents, it was evident that the combination of gender, class and a racialised proximity to Blackness affected the way she was treated by others in civil society. As well as being a working mother, Tracey also expressed that she had remained secure in her class position for most of her life; her parents had remained both socially and economically supportive throughout.

The combination of having a Black partner, being the white mother of three Black mixed-race children and living in a semi-rural/suburban place suggests

that Tracey's experience is an extreme example of the assumptions and misrecognitions that all nine families were forced to navigate (Harman, 2013; Mckenzie, 2014). Whether at work, among her peer group, or managing relationships with schoolteachers, Tracey described many occasions where it would be deliberately pointed out to her that her children were Black or racially different from her.

Tracey's recollections of her early years in Bromsgrove illustrate how hegemonic whiteness is negotiated through dialects of common sense in semi-rural/suburban places and how this normativity would eventually become challenging to contest between family members.

Parenting racial difference in civil society

When she returned to work after maternity leave with Fiona – despite the fact that Neale was already of school age – Tracey described the reactions she experienced when she brought her newborn daughter into school:

> So I went back and some of my parents, that I'd had the class before with when I was pregnant were there. And this one woman, she just looked at her [trails off] ... . But then they obviously didn't know what race my family were and they just saw this white teacher and just thought, you know. And they saw Fiona and this woman just went, "Oh, look!" And I could see she looked and said "Ooh, she's quite dark!"

This sort of racist interaction is well documented in the scholarship on white mothers of mixed-race children (Tizard & Phoenix, 2002; Caballero & Edwards, 2013; Harman, 2010). These identifications of being a parent of racial difference were consistently described across all nine families, with many expressing

these exchanges as frustrating, but overall observing that they had spent their life understanding them as normative in semi-rural/suburban places.

Parents' experiences of both civil society and its micro-sites clearly contributed to how hegemonic whiteness became intimately negotiated in the families. These experiences of grappling with public perceptions of mixedness demonstrate the impact of the normalisation and naturalisation of a particular set of cultures, ideas and beliefs, which create the conditions for hegemonic whiteness to become intimately entwined in, consented to and contested beyond the institutions discussed in previous chapters.

Research on mixed-race parenting and families has shown how white women who mother Black mixed-race children contend with multiple stigmas: from their capacity to mother racial difference, to pathologies surrounding their choice to have children with Black men, and their assumed class position as working-class and poor (Tizard & Phoenix, 2002; Wilson, 1987; Barn 1999; Twine 1999a, 2004; Harman, 2010a; Harman & Barn, 2005; Katz, 1996; Olumide, 2002; Tyler, 2005; Edwards & Caballero, 2011). In highlighting Tracey's experience of managing the stigmas of being a white mother to Black mixed-race children in Bromsgrove, it is clear that neither she nor the other white mothers in the nine families experienced racism directly, but their familial closeness to Blackness destabilised their class position, which might otherwise have alleviated their tense interactions with civil society institutions like schools (Harman, 2010). These issues seemed to connect to how Neale's Blackness and neurodiversity (see chapter five) affected the way Tracey's parenting skills were assessed by others. It was in descriptions of Neale's schooling that Tracey

was able to capture how gender, a perceived class status and her closeness to Blackness had meant that her parenting style was regularly scrutinised:

> It was like, teenage Mum, single Mum, mixed-race family - it's like, are they like… A few - I think like some of his behavioural problems, a lot of it was like, well it's a parenting issue. And at the time I was just like, you know, I wouldn't argue, "Oh no! Actually it's not a parenting issue." It was like, "OK, you know, I'll try and sort something out." And I think a lot the - there was a lot of judgement.

It was at these moments that Tracey voiced how people's responses to her parenting were informed by stigma (Goffman, 1963; Tyler, 2018). Neale's behavioural issues were continuously understood to be the product of Tracey's parenting, in line with what Caballero and Edwards (2011) have described as the belief that parenting mixed-race children was synonymous with 'living on the edges of society'. Tracey stated that she had always been conscious of how her family was negatively racialised, but she also expressed an expectation of the prejudicial treatment they would endure in Bromsgrove:

> It was like, this is - you know. We've got this family, look. There's single parent, there's young parent, there's mixed-race. It doesn't fit into the demographic of this school - and it's like, OK of course there's going to be problems. But it's never like, OK this is a problem let's deal with it. It was like, Oh it's obviously something else going on, that's why there's problems.

Tracey's reference to the pathologising of her parenting and their family has a long history in descriptions of both mixed Black and Black families in the U.K.

(Gilroy, 1987). Tracey's narrations represent a typical understanding across the project; white, Black and Black mixed-race mothers all articulated clearly that the predominance of whiteness in Bromsgrove had created a combination of hypervisibility and pathologisation that their children were forced to negotiate, not just at school, but also within wider social contexts. Parents in Generation Two spoke of a variety of occasions where strangers in Bromsgrove had been forthright in pronouncing on, and examining, the fact that they were parenting racial difference. Tracey spoke of one occasion where she took Fiona and her white friend (Sarah) to church:

> So I've got the two girls with me and I've got [trails off] You were about [looks at Fiona], I don't know, about 8 or something? And this old woman came up to me and Sarah was stood next to me and she said, "Oh! Isn't your daughter beautiful!" And I said, "She's not mine! That's - these are mine." And this old woman went right up to me, and she goes: "Are you sure?"

There are some crucial dynamics at play in this anecdote with regard to how the stranger chose to approach and address Tracey as a parent of racial difference. Firstly, it is worth recognising that Fiona and Neale were present while Tracey recited this story, and this incident was collectively understood as a normal encounter for the family, illustrating how intimately these experiences were navigated. During the church visit, Tracey had been accompanied by her daughter Fiona and her daughter's white friend, Sarah. The stranger chose to identify the beauty of the white friend, directing her appreciation of her looks to the person she assumed was her white mother, while ignoring Fiona. When Tracey corrected the stranger, they proceeded to ask her *if she was sure* that

Fiona was her daughter. There are a number of possible interpretations of the stranger's intention, but her perception of beauty and questioning of Tracey and Fiona's relationship was something consistently described by the Black and Black mixed-race women from other families.

In chapter five, I addressed how Generation Two frequently described how their racialised hypervisibility at school had positioned them as both *undesirable* and *hypervisible* among their peers. Tracy's narration above is an extension of these troubling memories of undesirability, as the stranger's misrecognition highlights the complexities of parenting racial difference in predominantly white places, while attempting to nurture their children's sense of self and identity. At this point, it seems important to question the extent to which white mothers like Tracey can actively manage the emotional implications for their Black children of witnessing wider peer groups and strangers openly reifying whiteness as normal and desirable? Further, going back to the core issues raised in the previous section, what if these cultures have already been expressed by relatives? Tracey and many of the other parents wanted be clear about their love and appreciation of their children's racial difference, but growing up in places and being part of families where whiteness is hegemonic means that these communications often lacked the capacity to combat the everyday nature of these interactions and what I have previously emphasised as an intensification of the white gaze.

Tracey's narrations of people engaging with her position as the mother of mixed-race children is an example of the effect of hegemony in the complicatedness of everyday life (Hall, 2016) located among social bonds, but

also critically through engagements with agents of civil society. Tracey's experience of engaging with people who commented on her parenting of racial difference is one of the standard ways in which the racialised boundaries of belonging are invoked in semi-rurality/suburbia. These are the discursive ways of monitoring who is considered the most tolerated citizen, *without question.* In this way, it is clear how the normative formation of hegemonic whiteness in everyday life could become relational and familiar, within the more intimate settings of the family.

Parenting love and ambivalence

In this chapter so far, I have introduced how Black mixed-race families offer a different perspective on how intimately these spatial power dynamics co-exist with love and intimacy. Although Tracey made clear throughout our time together the extent to which her children had been forced to manage cultures of racism, she also spoke of these occurrences in a way that resembled many of the other parents in all nine families. There was an active awareness of the fact that their family and children were negatively racialised in Bromsgrove, but conversations about how this might evolve throughout their lives had rarely been discussed between family members. When they were addressed, and even when we spoke directly of the proliferation of cultures of racism in Bromsgrove, these incidents were frequently moderated – *"life hasn't been that hard"*. In recalling how instances of racism had been managed, what often transpired was a reaction to a situation, rather than engagement with more long-term discourses about how race had functioned intimately in their families' lives within the confines of a semi-rural/suburban place.

On several occasions, Tracey was clear that raising her children around Black people would have been her preference. However, like many of the other parents, she expressed some indecision about the notion of culturally competent parenting of Black (mixed-race) children. Although there were instances in which racial literacy (Twine, 2010) was present at various points, it was limited among all the families. In the families where the white parents were the main caregivers, there was little understanding of afro-hair or skincare for example, as well as a distinct absence of cultural knowledge of their Black Jamaican and Kittitian heritage. These parental ambivalences co-existed with negotiations of negative racialisation and cultures of racism in their children's lives. But crucially these moments were also demonstrable of how love cannot guarantee a nurturing of Blackness. To paraphrase bell hooks, these ambivalences could be understood through wider omissions which have consistently implied that simply naming of love is *overcoming*. This is not about suggesting that white parents in this research loved their children any less, but it is about emphasising that even an expressed and embodied familial love cannot simply overcome how race works to silence the demonstrable impact of racialised difference in families. In this way, the existence of an expression of love can in fact become one of the modes in which parenting mixed-race through notions of ambivalence present.

Whether it was Daphne talking about the possibility of her children avoiding racism due to her own mixedness, and her own children's possible physical proximity to whiteness, or Tracey talking about being a white mother; family members were clear that race and its long-term consequences for the Black

and Black mixed-race family members were rarely discussed unless the younger family members directly spoke of a racist incident they had encountered. However, even when younger family members like Leanne disclosed experiences of racism to their white mothers, racial literacy was not guaranteed:

> We didn't really have those conversations. Like, it didn't need to have much light on it, because she didn't get it, so you know. She didn't hear what people in the playground was saying, so yeah. She just thought: "People are asking 'Why are you brown' and you go and tell them at school that you're brown because of this, and embrace the colour of your skin, and say you look like you've been on holiday. So I would kind of tell my Mum, but yeah, she'd just explain to me like "You're the same as everybody else. You've just got lovely, beautiful skin. You look like you've been on holiday."

Leanne's mother's response to the racism she was experiencing at school was a recurring description in Black mixed-race family members' narrations of how their white mothers had or had not discussed race. Leanne's mother's silencing of her daughter's racial difference as a way to reconcile the racism she was experiencing is comparable with my earlier conceptualisation of intimate negotiations, foregrounded through Lewis's analysis of birthing racial difference and the manifestation of love and racism during mixed-race parenthood. Leanne's recollection also calls into question the extent to which existing literature on parenting racial difference has attended adequately to the prevalence of these intimate negotiations with race within the families themselves.

White mothers and racial literacy

In her study on the mothering patterns of white women who raised their children in a London borough, Bridget Byrne (2008) found that through their narratives of metropolitan place these mothers often contributed to the inscription of both discursive and structural implications of race. Through a recognition of how racism permeates everyday social life, she showed how white mothers would demonstrate that their whiteness meant they felt they would evade matters concerning 'race' (Byrne, 2008). In some of the narratives of the white mothers in my own study (as well as the narratives of members of Generation Two who had been parented by white women), there were echoes of the narratives about variations on a 'race neutral' approach in Byrne's, and the combination of place, family relatedness and mixedness created tentative narrations of mothering and parenting racial difference.

While the development of scholarship on mixedness that redresses the historical and contemporary demonisation of white mothers of mixed-race children has been an important and necessary trajectory in mixed-race studies, a lack of engagement with intimate negotiations has limited the critical capacity to adequately address some of the more challenging aspects of parenting racial difference. In some cases, this has resulted in the view that the demonisation of white mothers of mixed-race has proliferated because they are racialised as white. However, while I have addressed how the white mothers, and relatives more broadly, intimately negotiated race, this research is positioned actively to resist a discourse that assumes their experiences are straightforwardly

determined by their white motherhood per se, but instead considers how proximities to Blackness affect parents' experiences of both class and gender.

In chapter two, I discussed Twine's (1997, 2002, 2010) substantive contribution to the research on the parenting style of white mothers with Black mixed-race children in the UK and her concept of 'racial literacy' (Twine, 2010). Twine's note on resisting the homogeneity of white motherhood has been an important consideration for the analysis of intimate negotiations, but a lack of emphasis on how whiteness becomes operationalised and hegemonic – even between parents and their children – can generate gaps surrounding the parenting of racial difference. More broadly, there can be positive discussions about the presence of racial literacy among white mothers of mixed-race families, while also acknowledging that in some instances racial literacy has been limited, and that this limitation can be particularly evident in semi-rural/suburban places.

The Black mixed-race family members whose main caregivers had been their white mothers explored how when intimate negotiations occurred in family settings, the idea of proximity to racialised difference was conflated with an instinctive access to racial literacy (Twine, 2010). Here, I return to one of the overarching themes of the thesis – that hegemonic whiteness is conditioned by the place-making of semi-rural/suburban places, but that these dynamics also extend intimately to the relationships between family members. In this instance, I argue that Tracey, Leanne's mother and other white parents in the research either recalled using, or were described by their children as using, silence as a way of parenting racial difference. It became clear in both solo and group

interviews that although several of the parents were aware of the way cultures of racism had infiltrated the lives of their children, these discourses had rarely presented in family discussions. Further, one of the more revealing intimate negotiations that occurred in parenting racial difference was the silencing of race, which created an unspoken condition (see chapter three). Silence about cultures of racism is the most straightforward intimate negotiation, enabling family members to maintain love, harmony and respect. But what is at stake here? The suppression of racial identity, racial isolation and perhaps later antipathies?

More recent empirical research is delving deeper into the varying geographical complexities of parenting and white mothering of Black mixed-race young people and the need to name these intimate subtleties (Britton, 2013; Pang, 2018; Campion, 2021; King-O'Riain, 2019), but in this thesis I frame these conversations through the arguments I made in chapter four about intergenerational idolising of semi-rural/suburban places. Eventually, the silencing of race through hegemonic whiteness can suppress conversations that vary from simply sharing experiences of racism, to greater cultural understanding of ethnicity, heritage, and hair. If the operationalising of race had remained unspoken in parenting practices, it was clear that white relatives in particular could continue to reproduce, unchecked, the cultures of racism outlined in the first section of this chapter.

Emphasising racial sameness through parenting

Considering Twine's uneasiness about the homogenisation of white motherhood and parenting racial difference, there is still room to explore how

hegemonic whiteness affects maternal or parental bonds. In their accounts of parenting and childhood, both parents and children in the majority of the nine families, demonstrated how hegemonic whiteness and cultures within the family and Bromsgrove more widely had silenced race in the lives of the Black and Black mixed-race family members. As Pang (2018) noted in her study on mixed-race families in Scotland that parenting was often described in monolithic terms:

> Sharing an ethnically monolithic parenting style, these individuals grew up knowing little about their immigrant ties. Interviewees interpreted this position as a conscious choice made by their parents, which they then received, interpreted and selected in articulating their identities. For them, whiteness is a 'proximate', as Ahmed (2014) puts it, as they were brought up in a 'white' environment in terms of social networks and friendship, being encouraged to practice whiteness under the belief that being white was the preferred identity. (Pang, 2018, p.425).

The Jones family's narrations of parenting resonate with Pang's description of monolithic parenting. It was also identified in Twine's (1997) analysis of white and Asian American mothers' parenting of economically privileged brown girls in a racially neutral milieu which strove to generate a racially unmarked childhood. Similarly, when Tracey discussed how she had approached issues of racialisation and the racism her children had experienced in Bromsgrove, she spoke of notions of 'sameness' and 'resilience' (hooks, 1992; Joseph-Salisbury,

255.

2018). She did not want people in Bromsgrove to treat her children differently and voiced frustration about people's fears of being labelled 'racist'. In describing these incidents, Tracey also noted that she did not want her children to become victims of their circumstances:

> I think.. [trails off] I don't want them - I don't want [trails off] I don't want them to have to feel sorry for themselves. Do you know what … . You know like, - I mean, I do! And I think, You shouldn't have to deal with that, but you're going to have to deal with it. And I'd rather put a spin on it that this - I want you to be able to deal with it properly - Rather than just have them think, Oh Mum feels really sorry for me, because that's happened to me. But then whether you just think, Oh she feels really sorry for me, but there's nothing I can do about it. It's like - Not a victim of their circumstances. It's like, I can't really do an awful lot about it. You're going to come across that and I'd rather you just say, Well that doesn't matter - and this is how you're going to have to deal with it - Rather than say, "I'm going to get out there. I'm going to try and stop everybody".

In the quote above, Tracey describes the complexities of parenting racial difference when race remains largely unspoken within the family. She was one of several family members who recalled other people's fears of being called racist when confronted with their own racism. Tracey's assertions were similar to findings in Sandra Kouritzin's (2016) research on white Canadian mothers of mixed-race children, which found that although mothers had tried to help their children develop a strong sense of self to protect them from racism, they felt unable to completely identify with, sometimes even to recognise, their children's experiences.

All three members of the Jones family spoke of how frustrating they found it when people were discernibly nervous about being labelled racist. Like several of the families, they had clearly understood that while people wanted to distance themselves from racism, hegemonic whiteness had facilitated an individualisation of racist attitudes. I witnessed conversations that showed how, despite family members' awareness of their existence, cultures of racism had intimate consequences for the capacity of both parents and children to discuss the way they pervaded family life. The silence about race, and the way family members recoiled at the idea of people being labelled racist, demonstrates how striving for sameness was used to adopt what Twine (1998) refers to as parenting through racial neutrality (see chapter two).

The complexity of white mothering of mixed-race children

Narratives of white mothering and caregiving across the families exemplified one of the more challenging aspects of intimate negotiations. They also demonstrated Phoenix's (1998) caution about the difficulty of getting white people to reflect on what it means to be white. Along with the fact that their children are racialised as Black or Black mixed-race, this remained evident throughout the research. Phoenix notes:

> … it can be very difficult to analyse 'whiteness' or for white
> people (other than those associated with opposition to racism
> or with white nationalist organizations or standpoints) to reflect
> on what it means to be white. (Phoenix, 1998, p.110)

Intimate negotiations and some of the unspoken narrations concerning race within each family had clearly had an impact on nearly all the Black and Black

mixed-race family members' sense of self or double consciousness (Du Bois, 1903; Fanon, 1967). Parents had routinely employed a politics of sameness, which bell hooks (1992) cautions has the capacity to suppress difference and affect our racialised sense of belonging. I found that families' management and negotiation of racialisation in a way that avoided the complexity and existence of hegemonic whiteness had had a long-term (internalised) impact on Generation Two and had motivated them to take a different approach to their own parenting, with existing and future children (for a more thorough discussion of this, see chapter eight). Although this was a clear demonstration that family members were trying to tackle the way race had too often been an undiscussed dynamic of their lives in Bromsgrove, their internalisation of this issue remained clear. In chapter five I discussed the way racism had violently, symbolically and physically pervaded the school years of some in Generation Two. It was clear that these experiences had consequences that were not only internalised by the children, but were also intensified by some of the intimate negotiations among family members. How these matters became normative in the families seemed to be connected to the way love had been routinely addressed as something which made the intimate negotiations *worth it.* All nine families silenced the tangible and structural implications of race in Bromsgrove, and to some extent creating environments in which family members were more likely to individualise what they had experienced throughout their lives.

Intimate negotiations across the nine families were clearly grounded in the workings of a hegemonic whiteness that is intrinsic to semi-rural/suburban places. The lack of conversation between family members demonstrates the

complexities of race and class, place and mixed-race families. Earlier in this chapter I discussed how many of the parents had experienced the objections of white relatives or in-laws to their mixed-race union. That these family-based tensions appeared in each of the nine families is indicative of the importance of race and class for parenting racial difference.

Previous research has focussed concisely on the class demonisation of white mothers of Black mixed-race children (McKenzie, 2014; Harman, 2013), but the material conditions of most of the white mothers in this research were not directly affected by their engagement with mixedness and proximity to Blackness. The starting point for this research, which explores the lives of economically secure families in semi-rural/suburban places, is the way hegemonic whiteness is or is not interrogated in more intimate settings. When Black mixed-race families are clear about their middle-class status, the stakes change, and it is not inevitable that white mothers will experience a long-term contestation of their class status due to their gender and proximity to Blackness. Although Tracey and the other white mothers clearly experienced what Harman (2015) conceptualised as the 'frequent contestation of their white privilege' when parenting mixed-race children, the retrospective nature of this thesis challenges the extent to which this concept applies when race and class are prioritised. The white mothers in this research had not experienced the same issues of racialised belonging and identity that their Black mixed-race children narrated. But a focus on the long-term impacts of race and sense of self among the mixed-race children of white mothers should not preclude a discussion of the lived experiences of the white mothers themselves (who face gendered and

classed demonisation for their choice of Black partners), or of the parenting of racial difference.

By exploring intimate negotiations and the way hegemonic whiteness oppresses all family members – while keeping class within the frame of these experiences - there is more opportunity to discuss the challenges of parenting racial difference in semi-rural/suburban places. In returning to Twine's concerns about homogenising white mothering, my focus is more on the power of naming racial difference in a society maintained by racialised structures that hide whiteness (Lentin, 2020). These realities intensify in parenting Black mixed-race families in mainly white semi-rural/suburban places.

The conversations I had with Tracey about parenting racial difference were accompanied by recurrent narrations of the cultures of racism experienced by her son, Neale (discussed in chapter five). With most of the families, I initiated conversations about the impact of cultures of racism, but it remained consistently difficult to get an account of how various processes of racialisation occurred *within* the family. Familial bonds and parental love make it challenging to move beyond sameness, as naming difference could be understood as a betrayal of kinship (Lewis, 2009). However, for Generation Two in particular, the more I spoke with them about what race and whiteness had meant for their families, the more clearly they voiced their understanding of how intimately they had had to negotiate these matters. Further, by employing Britton's (2013) contention about centralising the impact of whiteness in mixed-race families, questioning the role of white relatives was not only challenging for Generation Two, but also something they had seldom seen as important, or as previously

stated, there were clear ambivalences about it power (Phoenix, 1998; Byrne, 2006).

Resisting intimate negotiations of racism and proximity to Blackness: family, hair and belonging

Moving on from the critical reflections on and analysis of Black mixed-race families in semi-rural/suburban places, this final section presents narratives about proximities to Blackness to explore the ways family members described the radically transformative possibilities of family relatedness in Black mixed-race, matricentric families. These reflections are a response to the narratives of Black mixed-race mothers (Song, 2017), their children in Generation Two, and the impact of *othermothers* on the lives of family members parented primarily by white mothers and relatives. Our conversations identified an active struggle among all nine families to contest the hegemonic whiteness (socially reproduced through family relatedness) that becomes resistant to the common-sense cultures of semi-rurality/suburbia.

In chapter two I introduced Twine's arguments about the pathologising of white mothers of mixed-race children, and the need to dehomogenise, but also recognise, their capacity to apply racial literacy to their parenting of racial difference. The key to racial literacy according to Twine (2002) the combination of an active and physical closeness to Black family members and cultural knowledge of Black bodily aesthetics. Participants who had significant relationships with Black family members clearly described how being close to Blackness had been positive for their sense of self and racial identity, and had also created substantial opportunities for *respite* from intimate negotiations.

Prior to Tracey's separation from Fiona and Jessica's father David, they had close and regular contact with their Black Jamaican family. This closeness to Blackness was something all three of the Jones family members spoke about fondly. Tracey expressed disappointment in relaying how – due to the timing of her separation from David – her youngest daughter Jessica was too young to reap the benefits of these relationships:

> Yeah, since we actually used to go round and spend time at their house and they used to come and spend time here. So she's not grown up at all with a Black family, which I do think is a bit of an issue, whereas I never felt that with you two. I used to think, Well at least you know - you've got both sides.

Relationships with extended Black family across the nine families varied. However, those who had spent time with Black grandparents, aunts, uncles and cousins were clear not just that these relationships had been affirming, but also, crucially, how they did not require preparation for intimate negotiations. More close family relations among Generation Two had been parented primarily by Black mixed-race mothers, and there were demonstrable examples of how these bonds actively resisted the cultures of semi-rural/suburban place and the workings of hegemonic whiteness. On her close relationship with her mum Daphne, Sophie routinely said that although race made Bromsgrove an immensely challenging place to grow up, she was grateful to have her mum around to help her feel confident in herself as a Black mixed-race woman:

> Like, my Mum is like - just hilarious. She's confident, she loves herself like, unapologetically. Not even just - not even to do with her blackness. She just naturally just - she just loves herself.

Across the nine families the desire to be close to a sense of Black identity was consistently narrated, and in many instances (as with Sophie's above), family members recalled how the existence of such a relationship had been transformative for their sense of self in the context of a semi-rural/suburban place. In this context, in discussions with family members who remained relationally close to their extended Black family, it was evident that the cultures that surrounded these relationships were at odds with what they lived and experienced in Bromsgrove. Both Neale and Fiona spoke of the personal benefits of being close to their Black relatives and among family members who echoed this love and appreciation, it was clear that this proximity to Black family constituted a challenge to the obvious silencing, throughout their lives, of the issues of race and whiteness. Crucially, a close relationship with Black family members gave Black and Black mixed-race family members people they trusted to empathetically discuss the impact of race on their lives:

> But yeah, when I speak to my family members that are Black,
> it's something that we like to talk about, because we know
> certain situations that we've been in is due to our colour and
> kind of being, yeah pinpointed really.

In the quote above, Leanne was talking about how she felt more comfortable around her Black family when talking about how she understood Blackness. Black and Black mixed-race family members who had close relationships with their extended Black family, often disclosed the nature of these in contrast to the sorts of relationships they had with their white extended family. Familial Blackness had presented the opportunities and possibilities to

love one's Black sense of self in spite of the normative dominance of whiteness (hooks, 1997; 2001).

Black bodily & cultural aesthetics

As well as creating environments in which the Black mixed-race families felt more comfortable with their racial identities, proximity to Black family members was fundamentally linked to a more harmonious relationship with Black bodily and cultural aesthetics (Twine, 2002) like afro hair care and styling. Almost all the Black mixed-race family members described a difficult relationship with their hair (as stated in chapter five). In more difficult conversations, the issue of 'dealing' with hair was echoed by the white mothers and fathers, who overtly complained about 'managing' their child's hair. Black hair is a cultural signifier for Black people (Tate, 2009; Joseph-Salisbury & Connelly, 2018; Dabiri, 2019) so it was challenging to see how hair had been rearticulated within many of the families as a site of pain and frustration. But crucially, families with a connection to Black relatives spoke of how cathartic it had been to know other Black people who could advise them on hair care. For example, Neale and Fiona spoke affectionately of their Black aunties who would visit Bromsgrove to braid their hair during the school holidays:

> When I was younger and I'd spend - I'd spend like, the summer with my Auntie and she used to canerow my hair at the start of the summer, maybe re-do it like, once while I was there. And the whole time, never even thought about it. Like, my hair was done. It was out of my way - didn't have to think about it once.

The quote above was just one of many examples in which Black mixed-race women like Fiona spoke longingly of the aunts or othermothers that would braid and canerow their hair (Hill Collins, 2005). Their parents' separation was described by all the Jones family members as a key moment at which their relationship with hair deteriorated. These illustrations correlate with Twine's (2002) argument about the importance of Black bodily knowledges in mixed-race families headed by white mothers. Both Fiona and Tracey spoke about the lack of Black hair shops or Black hairdressers in Bromsgrove, which made it difficult to find hair care support and advice. Particularly among the family members with white mothers, there were many discussions about their relationship – or lack of relationship – with Black relatives, the significance of this for their hair and the impact it had had on their racial identities.

Families with mainly white caregivers often had an assigned day for 'hair washing and brushing'. Even as the families narrated these hair care days (years later) during our conversations, Black hair was still described as a bodily pathology and site of familial frustration. The lack of knowledge of the importance of a Black cultural aesthetic was exacerbated when there was little to no contact with Black family or Black peer groups with similar hair textures. Further, from the ways in which family members like Fiona narrated their childhood relationship with their hair and their lack of connection with Black relatives, it became clear that places can also obstruct the capacity to create positive relationships with cultural aesthetics.

These conversations were poignant examples of intimate negotiations with the workings of hegemonic whiteness in Black mixed-race families in semi-

rural/suburban places. Nearly all the Black mixed-race women spoke of their desire to have straight hair like the white girls at school. For Fiona and many of the other Black mixed-race women, the combination of a fractious relationship with their hair and their lack of connection to Black relatives and others led to them (describing) wanting to become white. Straightening their hair, investing in chemically altering hair products and choosing to sit out of the sun were all disclosed as part of an unrelenting desire to belong in their semi-rural/suburban hometown. Several of the Black and Black mixed-race women had actively sought to quash their Black bodily aesthetics because the place as well as their family had consistently turned their bodies into contested sites.

Being close to familial Blackness was narrated as something that gave them a break from intimate negotiations. Familial closeness to racial sameness or similarity illustrated the importance of knowledge of Black cultural aesthetics and how this tended to be lacking when the main caregivers were white. Family members who were clear about the lack of Black family within their lives spoke of how life-changing these relationships could have been for their sense of self. These descriptions, and the imagining of closeness to racial sameness and Blackness emphasise how intimate and oppressive the dominance of hegemonic whiteness had been for the families.

Conclusion

In this complex and textured chapter about intimate negotiations in Black mixed-race families residing in a semi-rural/suburban place, I have conceptualised such negotiations as multidirectional social relations. This highlights the way that race is negotiated at the same time as family

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relationships. Crucially, I have addressed how Black (and Black mixed-race) family members are required to find ways to maintain a loving relationship with a racist white family member. I also showed how intimate negotiations can occur when white family members are seen to question the social reality of having Black family by simultaneously loving and spending time with them, while also discursively distancing themselves from their racial difference and identity through notions of racial sameness and race neutrality.

Intimate negotiations are an active struggle with the ways in which hegemonic whiteness pervades intimate social relations. This chapter has discussed the way intimate negotiations are defined through the process of coming to terms with the appearance of cultures of racism and negative racialisation within families, regardless of whether such attitudes or beliefs cause harm or seek to racially homogenise family members.

With the narratives of Tracey and Daphne, I addressed an experience that was common among the women who introduced mixedness to white families, which was seen invariably to invoke rejection by these relatives. In this way, family members' accounts of their relatives' hostilities to mixedness align with the extensive literature on white motherhood and mixed-race parenting, in a much more localised way. While I have outlined the gendered and classed inequalities that white mothers like Tracey endure in semi-rural/suburban places, I have also shown how these experiences of white mothering needed to be explored in terms of their impact on their Black mixed-race children.

One key contribution of this chapter is a sensitive discussion of how the family effectively becomes a micro-site of civil society when it appears to

implicate the social production of race, place and family relatedness. This demonstrated the ways that hegemonic whiteness operates in semi-rural/suburban places that work towards an intensification of the silencing of race in the family. This process can be seen in the ways family members spoke about race, or the ways they narrated struggling through common sense expectations of experiencing negative racialisation and cultures of racism whilst having very few people who understood what they were enduring. In this respect, hegemonic whiteness operates to both silence, but also to facilitate, racisms (Hughey, 2010). However, the discussions here also demonstrate the need to contextualise spatially the presence of hegemonic whiteness in Black and white mixed-race families. It was clear that the demographics of semi-rural/suburban places exacerbated intimate negotiations, and focusing on Bromsgrove allowed a more situated appreciation of how family members collaborate and consent to racialised boundaries of belonging.

Proximity to racism within families, but also in the places they live, creates a unique set of conditions in which white parents navigate race in their children's lives. The consequences of these cultures are explored by prioritising the narratives of the Black mixed-race children and how they have come to terms with these intimate processes. Through an exploration of the way most of the white parents and family members in the study (dis)engaged from race, I analysed how these intimate negotiations contributed to creating the conditions for the silencing of race. Crucially, I presented the internalisation of cultures of racism as something to be *overcome.*

The combination of hegemonic whiteness in both place and the family necessitates a reflection on the negotiation of parenting racial difference. Whether it appeared in accounts of parenting, or on the challenge of childhood in Bromsgrove, overcoming race was consistently described as the journey towards sameness or race neutrality. The systematic and structural nature of race was often not acknowledged, as sensitive family issues came to be understood through processes of intimacy, love and racism. Rather, when cultures of racism presented in the family, they were described as not *too* harmful, but also as something that individuals could overcome (see chapter eight).

In the next (and final) empirical chapter, I continue with themes introduced towards the end of this chapter about the importance of proximities to racial similarity and Blackness as sites of resistance to intimate negotiations and hegemonic whiteness. The next chapter addresses how mixed-gender Black mixed-race siblingships offer valuable opportunities for reflecting on opposition to hegemonic whiteness and cultures of racism in Bromsgrove, as well as in their families.

Chapter Seven: Sibling groups with loving siblingships. Racialised familiarity, gendered differences and relational resistance

This final empirical chapter provides a hopeful intervention on the radical possibilities of the remarkably under researched presence of sibling groups in Black mixed-race families (Song, 2010). In particular, the focus now turns to how siblingships nurtured by ongoing expressions and acts of love and friendship respond to the operation of hegemonic whiteness and experiences of cultures of racism in the context of semi-rural/suburban place and in their families. This is chapter is dedicated to illustrating how loving familial bonds can transcend the pervasive cultures in society and places, resisting what bell hooks describes as individualisation and acts of lovelessness which can become normalised in families (2000, p.115). Instead I propose that in spite of the troubling lived experiences of place and family explored in the earlier chapters, that the sibling groups in this research demonstrated the emancipatory possibility of love to question and in some instances, flag and expunge the intimate workings of race.

This thesis has explored some of the lived experiences of Black and white mixed-race families, but the conceptual contributions in this chapter transcend the intimate and emotional politics of mixedness and mixed-race families and constitute a broader addition to research on siblings in families that experience negative racialisation in semi-rural/suburban places.

The chapter develops sociological interventions on the significance of siblings in identity formation, place-making and the family (Wilson & Pahl, 1988; Punch, 2005, 2008; Edwards et al., 2006; Song, 2010; Davies, 2015). More specifically, this chapter responds to Song's (2010) call for more sociological interventions on particular mixed-race sibling relationships, situated in specific social and spatial locations (Song, 2010, p.282). The siblings in the families in my research were of Black Caribbean, white-English and Irish heritage, raised in a predominantly white semi-rural/suburban location. I address how siblingships were described as relationships that helped family members make sense of racialised micropolitics during their childhood and adult lives, both within their families and amongst their peer groups in Bromsgrove.

Existing scholarship has shown how siblingships become essential to identity formation and resistance to the transgressions of other people (including other family members) (Brannen et al., 2000; Smart, 2007; Davies, 2015). Considering the various lived experiences explored throughout the previous three chapters, this chapter outlines how siblingships can be foundational to the way racialised and gendered experiences become *unsilenced* and challenged. Through descriptions of racialised familiarity, gendered difference and the conceptualisation of 'relational resistance', I address how siblingships shape the possibility of reconciliation with the racialised hostilities that exist not just in places, but also in their own families.

Racialised familiarity and gendered differences between siblings present as fundamental to how lived experiences of place, race and the family become understood *in relation* to a sibling or siblings. This examination builds on

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Davies' (2015) contention that relationships between siblings - as they observe and witness each other's similarities and differences – are fundamental to the construction of the self. The concept of both race and gender as both familiar and different addresses how children, young people and later adults find ways to understand how racialisation and racism operate, in relation to their sibling's experience of them. This chapter also considers how siblings relate to their similarities and differences *together,* emphasising how siblingships are a typical product of processes of understanding, and reconciliation, of gendered and racialised difference. These processes demonstrate how racialised and gendered similarities and differences between siblings provide reassurance and validation of their lived experiences in places and their families. Crucially, this chapter argues that the way race and gender becomes understood between siblings can also help to shape more critical and holistic understandings of race, hegemonic whiteness and cultures of racism - or what I conceptualise as 'relational resistance'. As an extension of the above, relational resistance produces actions and responses rather than just feelings of support between siblings, that function as an active space of solidarity in the face of an abundance of silence endured in social and family networks and relationships.

To illustrate why siblingships matter for research on negatively racialised families in predominantly white semi-rural places, I introduce the collective testimonies of mixed-gender siblings Tara and Craig Silvester. Using their narrations about life in Bromsgrove and their relationships with their peer groups and family members, I establish how Tara and Craig's loving siblingship helped them come to terms with their childhood and adulthood in Bromsgrove,

supporting eachother and creating relational resistance to hegemonic whiteness and cultures of racism.

First, I offer a more detailed explanation of how this thesis develops the sociology of siblingships by exploring the significance of racialised and gendered similarities and differences for understandings of the self, family and places. Second, I address how a collective understanding of race and gender between siblings enable relational resistance(s) which provide siblings like Tara and Craig with the space to critically engage with race as a power structure, with particular emphasis on proximities to whiteness, being mixed-race and what it means to bear witness to – but not necessarily be a victim of - heightened forms of interpersonal and structural racism like colourism. Finally, by means of a poignant conversation about family and Bromsgrove between Tara, Craig and their Black Kittitian and British father, Eric Silvester, I explore how relational resistance can provide the conditions in which to challenge hegemonic whiteness in families.

This chapter demonstrates why siblingships matter in sociological considerations of race, family and place by posing questions that explore how siblingships become a site of support and resistance to hegemonic whiteness and cultures that have previously remained unspoken. During the research, siblingships were routinely described as an essential form of solidarity and were narrated as normal, everyday and embodied.

Tara Silvester

Tara Silvester is thirty-one years old and was born in 1988 in Birmingham to a white mother and Black Kittitian father. In 1990, not long after her brother Craig was born (when she was around two years-old), the family moved from Birmingham to Bromsgrove. Tara and Craig's parents separated when she was fourteen; during our conversations, she frequently described their divorce as something she had found difficult to come to terms with throughout her teenage years.

Tara left school at eighteen and spoke about her time there in a similarly ambivalent way to Fiona Jones. It was not a remarkable period in her life and nor was it particularly enjoyable. For Tara, school had contained the cultures of racism addressed in Chapter Five.

After leaving school at eighteen, Tara began training as a marketing executive and working in PR. Tara is now an accomplished PR manager having been part of both large and more boutique organisations in Birmingham and Bromsgrove.

Tara is really close to her brother Craig; she said on a number of occasions that taking part in this research had brought them even closer together.

Craig Silvester

Craig Silvester was born in Birmingham in 1990 and is twenty-nine years old. Like his sister, Craig has spent most of his life in Bromsgrove.

Craig described himself as young person who was admired during his school years, and he and Tara agreed this was mainly because he played rugby

for the school and the local team. However, he continually described the admiration he received from peers and adults around him as conditional. The conditions were that he would endure without objection were racial microaggressions and stereotyping focused on his appearance and ability as a sportsman. Throughout our time together, Craig was passionate about these long-term racialised restrictions on his sense of self. Craig said that he had not discussed his experience of conditional belonging with his parents.

After leaving school at sixteen, Craig attended college and started an apprenticeship as an electrical engineer. He is now qualified and travels for work both within the UK and globally.

Introducing the siblingships

This chapter makes a significant contribution to scholarship on siblings by considering how race, gender and place affects siblingships. In Katherine Davies' argument on the significance of young people's sibling relationships, she contended that the construction of the self is inextricably linked to the fact that sibling groups witness each other's similarities and differences (Davies, 2015, p.680). Similarly, Carole Smart (2007) notes that the interwoven nature of sibling relationships contains 'sticky proximities' which have the capacity to influence our emotions and practice (Smart, 2007, p.45).

In this thesis I have shown how negatively racialised populations who are overexposed to the white gaze in both place and the family, can experience a sense of self is which is consistently thwarted - mainly because there are few people who understand the very particular (racialised) circumstances of their

lived experiences (Fanon, 1967, p.116). Instead of experiencing (what has been conceptualised above) racialised isolation and its consequences, as described in chapter five above, siblings with nurtured and loving siblingships can develop an understanding of race and gender through an ongoing and collective sense of self in the context of the places they live.

Early conversations with sibling groups in the nine families showed how the ordinary aspects of life had been understood and experienced in common. Similarly, racialised family members experienced places together, which generated organic processes that validated what they had witnessed and endured through language and action. It is possible that for family members raised in a place with cultures opposed to racialised difference, the existence of familial closeness between siblings creates a radical love bound by solidarities through similarity, familiarity and difference.

In this research, most of the family members raised in Bromsgrove (Generation Two) were still living there as adults. It is still home to Tara and Craig Silvester, now in their early thirties and late twenties. Tara has her own property and Craig lives at their mother's house in their original family home about five minutes' drive from Tara's house. Both spoke of spending a significant amount of time travelling outside Bromsgrove after finishing their formal education and college, for work, holidays and to visit friends. Tara and Craig described their affiliation with Bromsgrove in a similar way to Sophie Smith in chapter four and Neale Jones in chapter five; they still considered Bromsgrove home, but creating some distance had helped them understand how cultures of racism had infiltrated their childhood and adult lives.

Out of the nine families, I spent most time with Tara and Craig. When I first contacted them about taking part in the research, they were keen, and borrowing from Craig's feedback - "excited". Spending a significant amount of time with them over a two-year period created a continuous, collective dialogue of reckoning, evaluating, and contesting their family and social life in the context of semi-rural/suburban place. As with the other sibling groups across the nine families, I witnessed Tara and Craig speak together about their childhood and their relationships with their parents and extended family and social networks. These conversations routinely evolved into a cathartic appreciation of how their siblingship had helped them understand their lived experiences in Bromsgrove. Whether it was the culture of place or their family dynamics, they returned routinely to their siblingship as a relational, dialogical and embodied enrichment of their lives.

Among the nine families, siblingships were recounted as a familial and relational space which conditioned an ongoing awareness of racialised and gendered difference, alongside descriptions of acute and contextualised similarities. Tara and Craig's collective and retrospective exploration of Bromsgrove and their family was habitually overlaid with an appreciation of their siblingship. In this section I explore how siblingships help create relational and racialised familiarity, understandings of embodied gender differences, and ultimately how siblingships create a space to reckon with and understand how racial hierarchies present in social life.

Racialised and relational familiarity in siblingships

The strength of a loving siblingships in this research was evident in an ongoing appreciation of shared and familiar lived experiences. In this way, relational familiarities were recalled throughout the lives of the siblings in the research. They became felt and known by the overlapping of their lived trajectories, described as being highly influenced by the workings of race and gender that then became embodied through a *knowing,* which transcended actual conversations about what they experience(d). However, it became clear during the conversations in this research that openly discussing the specifics of siblingships enabled a new-found exploration of the underpinnings of their family relatedness connected to their relational and racialised similarities.

In bell hooks' notable 1997 essay *Representing Whiteness in the Black Imagination,* she addressed and described how a combination of collectivity and the Black imagination works to expose whiteness and its varying proliferations in specific contexts. She addressed the transformative possibilities for Black people's quality of life when the pervasions of whiteness in their mainly white rural communities were openly discussed between and among loved ones and kin. An examination of whiteness between close friends and family members was a way of surviving, navigating and coming to terms with its frequently unnamed inflictions. Siblings, who experience negative racialisation and live in contexts that present everyday challenges surrounding race and gender, demonstrate bell hook's argument about the power of naming whiteness among people who experience it in a very similar way. When siblings described their

shared sense of familiarity with Bromsgrove and their families, it was clear that their siblingship had had a profound impact on how they understood their lives.

A crucial element of sibling groups' descriptions of a shared and familiar sense of place and family was coupled to mutual love, understanding and support. This research repeatedly raised challenging and emotional topics, but the value of siblingships was consistently emphasised as a relational coping mechanism, especially during the exploration of shared lived experiences. For example, for Tara and Craig, their racialised familiarities meant they often finished each other's sentences when describing racist incidents or the ways in which the normativity of whiteness meant that the pervasions of race in their lives became common sense and expected. In their conversations about their family and Bromsgrove, both siblings used language that was validating and encouraging. They had the following dialogue when I asked them what it had been like being around mainly white people for most of their lives in Bromsgrove:

> C: People who live in Bromsgrove - who are a majority - feel
> safe in that environment and -
>
> T: Yeah.
>
> C: I don't know if I'm going off topic with the question here, but
> I think -
>
> T: Go for it!
>
> C: For people who are secure, secure in their environment, but
> insecure in their intellect - I'm [digging people out] right now,

but insecure in their intellect - feel the need to put minorities down.

T: Yeah. I agree with that. Because it makes them feel big. It makes them feel, yeah, that little bit more important.

C: Yeah, definitely. But if I was down Small Heath [Birmingham], they wouldn't be saying half of this fucking shit. And they'd be shitting themselves! And then they would find themselves in someone else's shoes. You know, like? Yeah. So, they might find themselves getting talked to how they might not want to be talked to.

During this conversation, Craig stated that being white in a semi-rural/suburban place enables uncontested belonging. Craig's and Tara's analysis of cultures of racism in Bromsgrove echoed Nayak's contention that predominantly white English places become locations of vocal resistance to threats against imagined identities, even though there are very few people in the locality to disrupt their desired construction of white Englishness (Nayak, 2010). Craig alluded to the way racism is perpetuated by ignorance, but by illustrating what might happen to the perpetrators in a multi-ethnic and multi-cultural place like Small Heath (Birmingham), he argued that these racisms are facilitated by the small number of people who can challenge their bigotry. Supporting his statements, Tara located Craig's observations in a discourse of dominance – or the operations of hegemonic whiteness to protect a racial ordering – "*racism made them feel big*". These descriptions are an important contribution to the broader themes of this thesis, but this conversation between

Tara and Craig was typical of the way siblingships created relational and racialised familiarity to help contest the hegemonic whiteness and cultures of racism which were routinely silenced in their lives.

Craig and Tara's analysis of belonging and security in Bromsgrove is embedded in the racialised familiarities they experienced together. This exchange shows how a siblingship can create the conditions for support and solidarity to be enacted, rather than elaborated. It might not always have been named explicitly throughout their lives, but these types of conversations show how important it is to know someone else who understands how race is constructed in everyday life. Mutual understanding of race and whiteness in semi-rural/suburban places present through relational and racialised familiarity.

Tara's and Craig's individual experiences of racialisation and racism in Bromsgrove varied, but their combined interpretation of racialised familiarity was narrated as a way of contesting marginality in their hometown. The simple fact of being in a household together with someone witnessing, and even experiencing, similar things was another site at which hegemonic whiteness could be contested. This process of knowing challenged the way whiteness remained hidden, via a local and intimate contestation of how the white gaze works to internalise a pathologisation of Blackness. Like the family members who had attended school in Bromsgrove who were still working in predominantly white spaces (in civil society), Tara and Craig were clear that they found it challenging to integrate socially in these environments. Speaking in unison, they stated that their Black Caribbean identity and racial difference had been constant topics of inquiry. These realities underlined the reasons why racialised

and relational familiarity had been an important component of their siblingship - they recalled finding comfort in knowing that someone else understood their lived experiences.

Siblings demonstrate deep recognition of each other through shared reference points. In places like Bromsgrove this recognition becomes particularly poignant because there is so much familiarity with (specifically) family dynamics and cultures of place. These issues seem to both challenge and develop Song's (2010) research with mixed-race siblings, in which she contended that siblingships tended to transcend race, racism and racial identity. Put simply, Song's arguments centred on the unimportance of race between mixed-race siblings, emphasising how racialised similarities had been regularly described in an ambivalent manner:

> While various markers of difference were commonly reported among the sibling pairs (e.g. differential levels of interest in minority heritage, physical appearance, one's friends, modes of presentation, such as speech and dress), these were not necessarily regarded as meaningful or important in these families – for many, such variation among siblings was regarded as unremarkable. (Song, 2010, p.269).

The novelty of these very acute conversations about race and racism was made clear among the nine families during our first group encounters. During our first discussion together, Tara and Craig were more ambivalent about the connection between race and their siblingship, which corroborated Song's 'unremarkable' account. Like many family members, when they first entered the research setting, they had stated that race and whiteness had not obstructed

their lives *that much.* They would later dedicate several conversations to explaining the multiple ways in which race and whiteness had affected their sense of self. Once we started to focus on the particularities of Bromsgrove and their family formation it often became clear that race, or a perceived relational and racialised similarity, had been an important component of the siblingship (see chapter three). Tara and Craig described their siblingship as increasingly bound by their ongoing awareness that they had experienced (and were experiencing) Bromsgrove in a remarkably similar way.

Regularly discussing intimate and specific connections to race, place and family cultures produced more detailed presentations of how racial and relational familiarity is enacted and embodied in nurtured siblingships. With research that returns to issues over time, it becomes possible to demonstrate the difference between enactment and embodiment in comparison to vocalised description and discussion. Further, though siblings like Tara and Craig might not have discussed overtly the nature of their siblingship before the research, this did not and does not negate its fundamental role and impact on their relationship. Similarly, Punch (2008, p.342) asserted that undisclosed dynamics within sibling relationships highlight how much of the essential dynamic in siblingships 'plays out in the backstage conditions of shared knowledge, time and space'. Rather, to live closely with someone who shares a particular experience of place and family formation was a source of comfort. This solace had not necessarily been named as such, but it had existed as type of *known unknown,* or as Punch notes, a reality which 'played out in the backstage' (Punch, 2008, p. 343).

Of course, racialised familiarity was not the only factor that created closeness between siblings in the nine families. Siblings like Tara and Craig were friends; they had a lot in common and had grown up with a small age gap. However, in the next section I address how racialised and gendered *differences* are also fundamental to siblingships.

Racialised and gendered differences between siblings

In chapter five, I began to explore how sibling groups offer insights into the way gender influences individual family members' experience and understanding of hegemonic whiteness and cultures of racism (Edwards et al., 2006; Davies, 2015). Further, sibling groups among the nine families tended to see the impact of gender as inseparable from racialisation and their lived experiences. In this section I outline how a collective awareness of racialised and gendered differences within sibling groups becomes fundamental to the shaping of siblingships. Though it was clear that racialised and relational familiarities had been an important part of the development of siblingships, highly gendered racialised differences enhanced individual understandings of life in the context of place and the family. As with racialised familiarity, racialised and gendered difference is how the structures of society become understood through witnessing their effect on social relations. In this way, sibling groups with an existing siblingship who observe each other's lives reinforce an understanding of how gender impacts processes of racialisation. With this, siblingships assist in the development of critical understandings of the way gender and race are produced in everyday life.

When Tara and Craig outlined their racialised and gendered differences, they revealed how their observations had been enabled and enhanced by their siblingship. They demonstrated how having a sibling can be integral to the understanding and making of oneself. This echoed Davies' note on siblings and the self:

> ...the comparability of siblings emphasises similarities and differences between individuals in a sibship so that the self is constructed in relation to siblings. (Davies, 2015, p. 680)

Davies' analysis of siblingships, which highlights how lived experiences are often understood in opposition to, and alongside, brothers or and sisters different encounters, is a starting point for identifying how racialised and gender *differences* can be just as revealing as the similarities and familiarities expressed and embodied by sibling groups.

A nurtured and loving siblingship creates more opportunity to comprehend how gender differences correspond with the effects of hegemonic whiteness and cultures of racism. As Edwards et al have noted, on the important – yet under-studied – construction of gender among siblings:

> Gender and the reproduction of versions of femininity and masculinity has been a curiously neglected issue in work on children's sibling relationships, as has children's own perspectives and agency. Yet it is evident that children 'do' gender in their relationships with other children. (Edwards et al., 2005, p. 500)

This research takes further the work of Edwards et al on gender reproduction among siblings by recognising how processes of racialisation can

be fundamental to how children, young people and later adults, understand themselves in relation to a sibling's navigation of gender and race (which they witness). Further, the way siblings relate to these differences together emphasises how their siblingship typically becomes a product of understanding and reconciling their gendered and racialised differences.

Tara's and Craig's close relationship and gender differences provided more opportunities to collectively reckon with and recognize how the racialisation produced by their peer groups over time had affected their sense of self – and particularly Craig's. For example, both described how their siblingship had helped them to reconcile and comprehend how and why Craig remained *conditionally* popular amongst his peer groups in Bromsgrove:

> C: I think being different in this situation [predominantly white places and space] if anything, especially as kids and certain guys who I've become quite good friends with, they sort of gravitate towards you because you are different. You know what I mean? I think kind of growing up in a time where being black is considered "cool". Let's be honest - a lot of kids want to be friends with "the black kid" in class and stuff.

Supported by Tara's approving bodily endorsement of his statement, Craig was describing experiences of racialisation in Bromsgrove that were mirrored by many of the Black mixed-race men in the nine families. This was an important revelation among the families. As Mac an Ghail (1998) stressed, peer-group sensitivities connect to the formation of racialised and gendered identities among people of colour, which can provide a renewed access to social capitals. Craig's narrated perception of his peer groups was in line with the stereotypical

endorsement, in the media and popular culture, of Black men as attractive, desirable and 'cool' (Pascoe, 2011; Joseph-Salisbury, 2018, p.189), and it is well documented that Black mixed-race men have been notable benefactors of these gendered social patterns (Alexander, 1996; Khanna, 2011; Tutwiler, 2016; and Joseph-Salisbury, 2018). On various occasions (often with regret), Craig narrated a connection between his peer-group popularity and notions of 'coolness' and Blackness (Joseph-Salisbury, 2018, p.189), as well as how his popularity had been dependent on his capacity to endure racial microaggressions (Yancy, 2008, 2017; Joseph-Salisbury, 2019). For example, one of the ways he could access the capital of desirability was by allowing his peers (during childhood and adulthood) to use the n-word around him:

> C: Well, they want to see if they can be [racist]. They want to say "Are you my n*****?" Because they see that, or hear that through music or see it in films and they want to be able to repeat what they're seeing and what they're hearing "Can I please Craig - is that OK with you?" I think, maybe I should have laid the law down early as a kid and just said "No!".

Based on his anecdotes about childhood and adulthood, Craig understood his contrasting experiences of gendered racialisation as embedded in mixedness, masculinity and his Black aesthetic. But Craig's articulations and intermittent interjections on gender and race had also been understood in relation to Tara's different (gendered) experiences among her peers. Tara's gendered experiences of racialisation tended to be relayed through notions of ambivalence, undesirability, or racist-name calling. For example, on one occasion she described being called "a Black b*****" on the school bus for sitting

in the 'wrong' seat. Craig had not heard about this incident prior to Tara's sharing it during one of our conversations. But even though these racist incidents were being disclosed for the first time, neither Tara nor Craig were surprised - they mutually expressed a *'knowing'* of each other's lives - irrespective of the anecdotal detail.

These examples of reciprocal but different racialised and gendered experiences provide further contextualization of Punch's (2008) discussion of the unnamed dynamics of siblingships which 'play out in the backstage' of an unspoken shared understanding and knowledge of each other's lives. It was because of their siblingship that sibling groups like Tara and Craig were able to address the impact of gender differences on how they had been racialised in Bromsgrove. There are certainly other ways to address the impact of gender on racialisation in specific contexts, but the combination of relational closeness (the siblingship) love, and regular observation of the different experiences of the other offers a more fluid and dynamic way to explore how cultures of racism are managed and negotiated in semi-rural/suburban places.

While Tara and Craig were discussing their lives in Bromsgrove, they frequently described how these retrospective conversations about race and gender helped them to address previously unspoken matters:

> C: Yeah - I think with the area and sort of, the place that we grew up in, it was sort of [trails off] Like, you mentioned sort of brushing aside the racism. It sort of just goes over your head, like you don't - especially back then when you're younger - you don't see it as that. Firstly, you don't have a real understanding of what racism actually is and how it can manifest at such a

young age. But it's only literally coming back, when we're talking to yourself, that we're thinking, "Oh shit, that was actually a little bit wrong of that person or people to have said that, or called me n*****, or alien, or you know.

T: Yeah, when you think back to past experiences, you think "Oh actually, thinking about it, yeah [that was racism]!". Yeah, it's been really, really good to reflect on this.

These examples of brother and sister looking back and exploring their lives in relation to each other highlight the conceptual and methodological contribution of this research. Relational and racialised familiarity, and embodied and expressed racialised and gender differences, mean that the presence of a sibling can enhance the process of thinking about how race is produced. By using Tara's and Craig's collective testimonies about their lives and senses of self, I have begun to address how longstanding siblingships function as a way of coming to terms with silence about the functioning of race and whiteness in their family and Bromsgrove.

Relational Resistance: Challenging cultures of racism and hegemonic whiteness

Racialised and gendered familiarities, similarities and differences between siblings also help to create a more critical and holistic understanding of race, racism and hegemonic whiteness - or what I will now conceptualise as *relational resistance.* Relational resistance occurs when siblings collectively comprehend why cultures of racism and hegemonic whiteness manifest in their lives over time.

It is *relational* because it requires an intimate relationship that generates understandings of each other's lives, but also refers to the way subjectivities are made in relation to each other. This process of relationality becomes resistant when it seeks to contest and resist the social reproduction of normative hegemony. In the context of siblingships, relational resistance refers to how siblings collectively find alternative ways to reject the pervasions of race, grounded in the mutually felt love and friendship between them (hooks, 2000). This can develop and be enhanced through a loving siblingship, but also as the result of an ongoing appreciation and awareness of each other's familiarities and differences.

Relational resistance: collective articulations of proximities to whiteness and colourism

In chapter five, I began to address how the younger generation of Black mixed-race women understood their experiences in relation to the profoundly colourist hierarchies operationalised societally, but also more locally in institutional spaces like schools (Gabriel, 2007; Tate, 2005; Glenn, 2008; Harrison, 2010; Phoenix, 2014). These conversations often occurred via their awareness that they had been racialised as a more desirable and palatable version of Blackness, whilst also struggling to describe how they might have benefitted from this in places like Bromsgrove where there are very few Black people and people of colour more broadly.

During my time with Tara and Craig, they voiced similar recognitions of their position as Black mixed-race people within colourism's pigmentocracy; on numerous occasions, they expressed how their experiences in a semi-

rural/suburban place like Bromsgrove would have been different if they had not been both light-skinned and mixed-race. They were able to articulate manifestations of colourism in Bromsgrove because they had been able to observe, and disclose to, each other throughout their lives. On one occasion, Craig described how peer groups had used racist and colourist language to describe dark-skinned Black people:

C: One of my pals. He's kind of [trails off] Again, this is [sighs] I don't know if we were on the subject of my race or my colour, or whatever but it wasn't - it was getting to an uncomfortable point.

T: Mm hmm.

C: But he's turned around and said, "If you were much darker, I probably wouldn't be your mate".

T: What?! Who said that?!   You've got to tell me -

C: I can't say!

T: I can't have a rapport with them after this.

Craig's friend had said that their friendship depended on the combination of his mixedness and proximity to whiteness, or rather, on him being a lighter shade of Black and not dark-skinned. This exchange aligns with Phoenix's analysis of the historical, contemporary, and geographic persistence of colourism, which seeks to assign higher social status to those with lighter skin (Phoenix, 2014, p, 101). While Craig soberly recalled this relatively recent

exchange with his friend, Tara remained adamant that she needed to find out which of Craig's friends had said this so she could end her rapport with him. Tara's and Craig's desire to critically engage with the changing nature of racisms and how they had seen colourism play out during everyday encounters among their peer-groups in Bromsgrove was clearly helped by a relational resistance grounded in their siblingship:

> T: I think white people feel more comfortable, to a degree, around socially integrating with a mixed-race person, as opposed to you know, a person with darker skin -

> C: Yeah. They'd rather that -

> T: Because it's - they can see more of themselves in us, I'm sure!

> C: Yeah.

> T: I'm sure it's got something to do with that psychologically. And I think for me, particularly because my eyes are light, lots of people don't - and straighten my hair for example - people don't even know I'm mixed-race. People don't even perceive me to have - you know - a Caribbean heritage or background.

> C: Yeah. White people would rather that wouldn't they?

After Craig's disclosure of his friend's colourist declaration about the conditions of their friendship, the pair then engaged in the dialogue above, about white people feeling more comfortable around mixed-race people. On several occasions Tara stated that she thought there might be a psychological aspect

to white people's greater acceptance of light-skinned Black people. Nodding profusely in agreement, Craig stated that white people would prefer to be around lighter skinned or mixed-race Black people. It became apparent that Tara and Craig's siblingship improved their critical articulations of uncomfortable they were about witnessing colourist racism. Together, they were able to locate their own racist encounters in Bromsgrove and how these could be understood in relation to their mixedness. With Craig's support, Tara voiced an awareness of the known impact of colourism in relation to how she is perceived in comparison to darker-skinned Black people.

Of course, it is not guaranteed that mixed-race siblings will produce a critical exploration of their own positions within cultures of racism (see chapter five). In fact, in mixed-race populations it can be challenging for these conversations to emerge at all among people who have been raised in semi-rural/suburban places by mainly white care-givers (Caballero and Edwards, 2011). However, siblings like Tara and Craig demonstrate what is possible when siblingships emerge within cultures of racism and hegemonic whiteness, while also being conditioned by a mutual respect for and awareness of each other's experiences of race, gender and place.

When siblings discussed the extent to which cultures of racism in Bromsgrove had been challenging, they often caveated these statements with conversations about racial hierarchisation, colourism and Black mixed-race families in particular, to describe experiencing a form of *partial* belonging. This partial belonging was conditional, and for most family members still required an ongoing negotiation of racism and negative racialisation. However there were

several clear declarations - mainly in the presence of a sibling - that there had been times when their proximity to whiteness – or their (structural) *privilege* of being lighter skinned - had allowed them more space to negotiate their extent of their own subjection to the white gaze.

Siblings like Tara and Craig identified how their mixedness and proximity to whiteness added notable nuances to their lived experiences of semi-rural/suburban place. Across the nine families, whenever siblings engaged critically in conversations about colourism, it was clear that talking about an issue which had previously made them feel uncomfortable became easier when exploring it with a brother or sister. But it was not enough to just *have* a brother or sister; siblings who had nurtured siblingships were better equipped to manage these critical dialogues. Their siblingships allowed them to be vulnerable about a historically and contemporarily loaded intra-ethnic discussion. Tara and Craig were clear that despite their own experiences of racism, their mixedness and proximity to whiteness had given them more space to negotiate hegemonic whiteness both structurally and interpersonally in their everyday encounters in Bromsgrove.

Siblingships can be fundamental to the formation of identity and a sense of self in relation to others (Davies, 2015, p.679). But, crucially for this section, their conversations about familiarity, difference, gender and colourism emphasised how siblingships can also create the conditions for understanding the impact of exclusionary cultures in semi-rural/suburban places on their lives and senses of self.

Relational resistance to hegemonic whiteness and cultures of racism in Black mixed-race families

In this (final) section of the chapter I present a more contextualised and family-based analysis of the possibilities of siblingships, supported by narrations from a group conversation between Tara and Craig and their father Eric. Using examples from the discussion between Silvesters, I show how siblingships can become foundational to relationally resisting the silences of race within the family. In addition to the mixed-race and mixed gender sibling specifications (Song, 2010), by featuring some narrations from Generation One, I demonstrate how siblings in a siblingship can take to task the hegemonic whiteness which can impact family cultures and relationships. This is a brief departure from the matricentric focus of earlier chapters, to demonstrate the role of siblingships in action in the fieldwork. Further, although Tara and Craig had a good relationship with their father Eric, they were clear that their household, like all the other families, had been centred around the care of women and their othermothers.

Living through structural and interpersonal conditions which are both gendered and racialising (and racist) intensifies the importance of a siblingship, but also provides scope for challenging conversations to occur between peers, friends and family beyond the sibling groups. When family members voiced how silences about race and whiteness had manifested, they were questioning a normative and lengthy family practice. Enacted and embodied siblingships in a sibling group clearly showed how the plethora of silences about cultures of racism and hegemonic whiteness were more easily managed from within a siblingship.

The Silvesters were among a majority of the nine families, who collectively disclosed how rarely they had spoken as a family about Bromsgrove in a way that considered how its cultures fuelled racism in the place. Although these conversations were complex, emotional and challenging, they were clearly made more comfortable by Tara's and Craig's loving siblingship, which gave them the space to question their father in a sensitive and meaningful way. When I asked Tara and Craig to discuss the function of their siblingship in these family silences, it was clear that they were disrupting a normative practice. When Tara and Craig spoke about the connections between racism, their families and Bromsgrove, they used language that suggested they were questioning the congealed cultures of hegemonic whiteness. They described feelings of guilt and regret when talking about the personal impact of race and whiteness. In Phoenix and Brannen's (2014) exploration of how collective family narration lays bare the normative constructiveness of family cultures, they identified how these frequently hidden - familial - traditions become uncontestable:

> ...narrative approaches have much to offer in eliciting the hidden and taken for granted aspects of family life and family practices, for example through their emphasis upon temporality, context and fluidity, their attentiveness to memory and to performativity, and their sensitivity to emotional tone and the normative constructiveness of family life. (Phoenix and Brannen, 2014, p. 24)

Phoenix and Brannen emphasise that family-based narration offers the possibility to uncover how narratives, traditions and cultures become normative. Family members who begin addressing Phoenix and Brannen's normative

constructions can appear to be questioning what Hill Collins (1998) notes is the fundamental sacredness of their family unit (Hill Collins, 1998). Moreover, nurtured siblingships clearly provide more opportunities for thoughtful discussions about how exclusionary cultures in semi-rural/suburban places infiltrate family dynamics and thus become normative.

When Tara and Craig were joined by their father, their siblingship became a mechanism for naming the ways the cultures in Bromsgrove had been exacerbated by their family practice of silencing race. In conversation with their father about race, place and the family, Tara and Craig evidenced how their siblingship functioned to address, but also to rectify, the silences about race to which their parents had at times contributed.

The workings of race had not been silenced in a siblingship like that of Tara and Craig. For example, they knew people had been alarmed by their parent's relationship in the 1980s. In the conversation below, Tara spoke of how they had both been thinking together about why their parents had not passed down their knowledge of the way cultures of racism in semi-rural/suburban places can relentlessly infiltrate social life. Tara and Craig would invariably return to the following statement about their family:

> C: We never had that conversation.

> T: Or sit us down and say "You may encounter this, or this might happen, you need to be prepared". None of that conversation happened about: "You may experience racism." Nothing really.

The conversation above illustrates how siblingships create relational resistances that enhance their relationship by affirming each other's position

and experiences. Drawing on their shared recollection, they questioned Eric on a subject that was repeatedly explored across the nine families: why had they not been prepared for life in a semi-rural/suburban place like Bromsgrove? This issue of non-disclosure was almost immediately addressed when Eric joined our conversations. He carefully outlined why his parenting strategy did not include talking with his children about situated cultures of racism. But before doing so, he wanted to make clear that when Tara and Craig told him about the research and what they have been talking about together, he was sad and frustrated:

> E: So, what you're almost saying to me now that you as children of mixed-race families feel that - and I think this is what you're saying - that you found it difficult to share back with your parents the pain or [trails off] that you felt - or you felt you experienced out in the world at school and whatever, it obviously makes me sad to hear that.
>
> You know, when you first told me that this had happened, I thought, "Hmm. Ouch, that hurt!" And I kind of wished you'd said something now, of course.
>
> T: Yeah.
>
> E: And what could I have done about it? Hmm -
>
> C: Educate us
>
> E: Yeah -
>
> C: I think that's it –

T: To listen [to us]!

The Silvesters repeatedly returned to the themes in the above conversation. Eric felt troubled that his children had not spoken to him about how they had experienced Bromsgrove. Initially he seemed to put the responsibility for these silences onto Tara and Craig, or onto the fact that he was separated from their mother. Once Eric returned to his own memories, he began to make the connection between his decisions and how he had imagined and experienced semi-rural/suburban places. There was a variety of reasons why many of the family members in the project were able to use the research environment to disclose their feelings about Bromsgrove and how these issues had or had not been dealt with between family members. But Tara and Craig's collective siblingship clearly gave their father room to enter a reflexive space where he could contemplate his own relationship, memories and history with hegemonic whiteness, the potential impact of this on his impression of Bromsgrove, and what it would have been like for their family. By addressing these memories with parents who interpreted their memories differently; sibling groups with siblingships had created a space of solidarity, in which the process of unmuting race alongside contested memories became a site of relational resistance to race.

Of course, parents like Eric had not intended to cause their children harm – quite the opposite. However, the lack of discussion about the operationalising of race within their families and wider social contexts in semi-rural/suburban places meant siblingships - where these conversations could occur - were often

radically situated in opposition to their surrounding place- based and family contexts.

Like Neale and Fiona, Tara and Craig also described being raised amid ideas of racial-sameness, or through dialogues that sought to obliterate racial difference. They were clear that their parents did not want them to be treated differently. But despite their emphasis on racial sameness, Tara and Craig revealed that they knew their parents' relationship had been a topic of concern for their peer groups and other family members in the 1980s:

> Craig (C): You see our Mum's pale, Dad's black as black. It's polar opposites.
>
> Tara (T): It's more of a juxtaposition.
>
> C: Yeah - a juxtaposition. It's just obvious. I don't think people were afraid to let them know about it on certain occasions. They first started their relationship in Birmingham, which wasn't a good area to be black anyway. That was the times, it was the 80s. I suppose when we grew up they'd already settled in Bromsgrove.
>
> T: But they didn't really like, highlight that we were like different.
>
> The above conversation between Tara and Craig signifies how the siblings had developed a collective awareness of the way racialisation and racism had presented in their families and among peer groups over time.

One of the more challenging narrated consequences of siblings collectively talking about their lives in Bromsgrove was when they began to identify how

their parents had engaged in the illogicality of race and hegemonic whiteness (see chapter six). They were not complaining or undermining the way they had been raised. They were recognising hegemonic whiteness and cultures of racism as systems designed to include the collaboration of the very people they are most likely to harm. They were collectively identifying what Roediger (1994) refers to as the normativity bound to the construction of whiteness, where silences about its hegemonic power become routinely naturalised through the denial of its possible existence. Tara and Craig had accepted how family members and peer groups in Bromsgrove (including themselves) should be understood as casualties of these structures, and their empathetic approach of course extended to both of their parents. One example of this was when Eric returned to the question of silence about the possibility of racism taking place in Bromsgrove:

> E: I certainly didn't feel that my kids were going to experience any racism. I didn't think it was going happen and I'll tell you why, because although I too was brought up [trails off] My childhood was predominantly in the white community. I mean, the early days I was in the black community - in the church. Then I left the church and when I left the church, I was completely immersed within white people. I was [trails off] Most of the time, I was the only black face in the room. I mean, the school I went to you know, you could count the number of black boys on two hands! So, I didn't feel it - the kind of racism - so much. I didn't [sighs] It wasn't visited upon me very often.

While Eric could see how Tara and Craig's siblingship had helped them locate the origins of the silence about cultures of racism in their family, he made

clear that he had not thought his children would experience racism in Bromsgrove because he did not believe he had experienced it. Eric initially presented his own life - immersed within white people – as devoid of racialised maltreatment. However, several opposing and contesting narratives emerged as we continued to talk about why the cultures within Bromsgrove had not been discussed in their family. Before Tara and Craig carefully laid bare their perceptions of Bromsgrove, Eric said he thought racism was determined by prejudice or a dislike of Black people. When Tara and Craig spoke about their life in Bromsgrove and began asking him questions about earlier decisions, Eric began to understand that their experiences went much deeper than just racist name-calling. Crucially, he also began to understand his own life as remarkably similar to his children's. This space of relational resistance was facilitated by Tara and Craig and their siblingship.

During earlier conversations about racism, Tara and Craig had spoken about racism in the same way as Eric – they described it as a way of thinking. By the time Eric joined the research, they were talking about racism in a much more structural and critical way. With this, Tara and Craig patiently watched their father looking back on his life, and listened to him unravelling what he had actually experienced as a Black man in the West Midlands. After Eric spoke about not experiencing racism in the predominantly white places in which he had been raised and lived, he spent a long time talking about incidents where he had in fact endured cultures of racism, especially during his time as a rugby player on tour:

E: There would be 700 people saying, "Kill the fucking Zulu! Kill the fucking Zulu!", you know, and [trails off] That was kind of acceptable in Wales back in the 1980s.

This was the first time Tara and Craig had heard this story about the violent racist language directed at Eric during a rugby game in Wales. This was just one of many anecdotes recounted by Eric that contradicted his initial thoughts about racism. Given the operational and structural conditions that enable race to maintain its power, it is understandable that Eric would initially find it difficult to connect racism to place. He routinely spoke about his success, and his ambition to raise well-rounded children in a desirable location (see chapter four) – he had not thought he needed to take account of racism in achieving this aspiration. Here, it became clear that Tara and Craig's siblingship in action profoundly affected their father. Their capacity to sensitively challenge his perspectives and experiences was so effective that he disclosed information about his life to his grown up children for the first time.

Eric's revelations to Tara and Craig illustrate how siblingships have the capacity to provide relational resistance within families, where race can begin to be outlined and understood as a decisive technology of power (Lentin, 2020). These disclosures between family members should not be understood as examples of the exposure of duplicity, but recognised as another manifestation and consequence of hegemonic whiteness. Hegemonic whiteness requires limited recognition of its normative characteristics, and race facilitates the maintenance of this power by hiding and naturalising its infractions (see chapter two). But nurtured siblings in these contexts show the radical possibilities of

relational resistances grounded in love, support and a collective reckoning of their shared experience of social and family life.

In chapter six, I addressed how these familial tensions created recurring issues for the Black mixed-race family members because of how intimately they had negotiated the oppressive negation of race. Moreover, I have shown how centring sibling groups, their siblingships and their experiences of racialisation and racism offers an opportunity not only to name these structures, but to challenge their parents and other family members with questions that can help to repair the damage done by infiltration of hegemonic whiteness within their lives. They began to consider how hierarchies of race - which had affected their lives in various ways - are purposefully designed to manifest, but also intended to be hidden. In this way, there was scope for all family members to both question and refuse race.

Whilst this section has used conversations between Tara and Craig to contextualise relational resistance amongst siblingships, the family's discussions about their lives in Bromsgrove did not end there. On the contrary, it is clear from the conversation below that this was a beginning, for Tara, Craig and Eric, of a collective reckoning and evaluation of their experience of Bromsgrove as a Black and white mixed-race family (see also chapter eight):

T: We've loved talking about it.

C: Cool.

E: Yeah. Well, you and I [points at Tara and Craig] need to talk more.

C: We've made ground for that, haven't we?

T: Yeah.

E: We have.

T: We've made in-roads now to open up the debate.

E: We have. And we also must think about this for the future, too. About what it means - Going down the line.

This final exchange between Tara, Craig and Eric showed how they were looking forward to continuing their conversations about family, racism and Bromsgrove. This contextualisation of the siblingship in action epitomises the radical possibilities of racialised resistance in sibling groups who reside in semi-rural/suburban places. But given that this was the first time Tara and Craig had addressed these issues directly with their father, there remain some lingering questions about the role of siblings and the extent of their potential responsibility for each other's wellbeing when it concerns their experiences of race and place.

Siblingships became essential within the very specific racialising and place-based contexts in this research as a space which recognises and validates lived experiences routinely ignored or unacknowledged by other people in their lives – even parents. It is about being heard as well as about creating, enacting and embodying a supportive relationship. However, there are perhaps other things to take away from this section and chapter, including the pressures of being

raised and socialising amongst very few people who understand or have the desire to comprehend these very particular racialised and gendered experiences of social life in semi-rural/suburban places. Further, although this chapter has shown the radical possibilities of sibling relations, it also illustrates the pressures to which siblingships may become exposed. The possibility that this tension will manifest in a negative way shows why some siblingships in these specific contexts do not have the space to create a nurtured siblingship. While sibling groups could of course be grounded in love, they could also – among family silences and in places where very few others are positioned and racialised in a familiar or similar way - become a relational responsibility which tests the foundations, or even the prospect, of a radical and nurtured siblingship.

Conclusion

This chapter has extended the sociological analysis of siblingships to address the way that understandings of race, place and the family can be shared with a sibling. Siblingships were frequently described as a significant aspect of family and social life in Bromsgrove, and it was clear that sibling groups had found their own ways of addressing the importance of their siblingship prior to taking part in the research. However, these renewed conversations about familial relationships emphasised how these particular relationships had become integral spaces of support and care. Focussing on sibling dynamics in the nine families has shown the power of nurtured siblingships through their embodied and enacted characteristics. This extends understandings of family relatedness to include the specific conditions generated by nurtured siblingships. In this way, the siblings I spent time with

had bonded not just through familial love but also through their shared lived experiences of place and their relationships in it. These sibling groups, in particular, were experiencing the social world together, through observing and witnessing how people receive and relate to each other in the local confines of Bromsgrove. Siblingships in the nine families provided a space for relational, dialogical and embodied resistance to the structural and interpersonal racialised infractions witnessed and experienced throughout their lives.

This chapter contributes to the study of siblings by focussing on the power of a relational and ongoing validation of experiences of race and place which transcended vocalised acknowledgements – these processes were felt and known between kin. In the face of silence on the operationalising of race in place and the family, the existence racialised and gendered similarities and differences between siblings provide comfort and support. Although witnessing a loved one experience racism can be emotional, this opportunity to observe a sibling throughout their life can help to create a site of validation among an abundance of silence about what they have themselves endured. These reconciliations between siblings are not a fixed relational destination, but represent ongoing processes of learning and unlearning, recognition and resistance.

When Tara and Craig discussed their lives in Bromsgrove together, their engagements with their lived experiences of managing and negotiating racism, racialisation and hegemonic whiteness enabled them to critically reflect on their own racialised position within the everyday construction of race. With this, this chapter has considered and demonstrated how siblings talking together about

race, place and family enables a critical engagement with the structures and systems through which race and hegemonic whiteness endure.

During the research process, Tara and Craig displayed relational resistance to changing their position within the racialised, but structured hierarchies of race in Bromsgrove. They spent a lot of time explaining how pervasive whiteness and racism had been, but were clear that they wanted their lives to be understood as subject to the permeations of colourism, and contingent on the privilege of growing up in a semi-rural/suburban place (see chapter four). Tara and Craig were just two of the many family members across the research who noted that their mixedness was something that relieved them of what darker-skinned Black people and people of colour more broadly suffer in places like Bromsgrove (Gabriel, 2007). Their siblingship provided the space for critical dialogues about mixedness and their own proximity to whiteness which considered how racisms like colourism had affected how they were racialised. Together, siblings like Tara and Craig positioned mixed-race as a more palatable version of Blackness, of which they experienced the benefits despite being around very few other Black people in Bromsgrove.

Because they witness, on a daily basis, how their sibling managed and negotiated hegemonic whiteness and cultures of racism, sibling groups with a nurtured siblingship are also ideally positioned to collectively examine the way Black people and people of colour are positioned and received. In this research, which was concerned with the lived experiences of Black and white mixed-race families in a predominantly semi-rural/suburban place, I observed how a combination of the politics of place and being mixed-race allowed siblings to

collectively and critically engage with manifestations of racial hierarchisation. Because they experienced both place and their family together, siblingships provided sibling groups with more space to critically engage with, and reflect on, their own positions in society, thus allowing them to produce critical dialogue on the social construction of mixedness in Bromsgrove.

In the final section, I drew on conversations between Tara, Craig and their father Eric, to show how siblingships can condition relational resistance to hegemonic whiteness and cultures of racism through the unravelling of memories, decisions, and practices between family members. As Tara and Craig engaged in a critical dialogue with their father about race and whiteness, I evaluated how they challenged the normative family practice of silencing cultures of racism. Tara and Craig supported their father in locating how and why they had not been prepared for life in a semi-rural/suburban place. In this context, their siblingship created a radical and loving encounter with their father in which they could discuss in detail the impact of race and whiteness on their lives.

Sibling groups that collectively developed relational resistance and who eventually had conversations with their parents demonstrated the profound possibilities of nurtured siblingships. With some parents, like Eric, who had perhaps misrecognised how his children had managed and negotiated cultures of racism, siblingships created a foundation for these complex and emotional revelations and discussions. In challenging, exploring and naming race and whiteness together in their collective family narration, siblings like Tara and Craig disrupted the normative silencing of race in their family. These

deliberations were clearly challenging for family members, but sibling groups can use their siblingship to come to terms with hegemonic whiteness and cultures of racism by clarifying and evaluating these realities. These reflections and concluding remarks about the importance of siblingships constitute a call for more family-based research on the transformative power of siblings, with renewed focus on the impact of race, place and gender. These relationships have the capacity to condition a combination of love, friendship and solidarity in the struggle for belonging in places that socially reproduce exclusionary racialised boundaries of belonging.

Sibling groups that create a siblingship make space for a dynamic analysis of wider family relationships (close and extended) and their contribution to an individual and collective understanding of family members' lives (Davies, 2015, p.680). Further, the collective perspectives of sibling groups provide more contextualised considerations of race, family and place. In this research, nurtured siblingships were an everyday form of solidarity which was explicitly disclosed and addressed during the ethnography. Siblingships are lifelong relationships which can help family members bear witness, come to terms with, and create a more holistic understanding of their lived experiences of both child- and adult-hood. Crucially for themes in this research, siblingships have the capacity to challenge dominant discourses of race and racism at times and in places where such contestations are lacking, denied or ignored.

Chapter Eight

Conclusion: Returning home

This thesis has applied portraiture to the production of written narratives - presented here as multigenerational stories that illustrate the social and structural contexts of participants lives in Bromsgrove, and through which they had come to understand them. The use of portraiture, one criterion of which is a researcher's understanding and relationship with the subject matter, meant that the interpretations of the multi-generational trajectories were crucially informed by my own subjectivities, in turn informed by my own sense of home, belonging and emotion. Because I brought to the fieldwork my personal connections with Bromsgrove as home, this conclusion has been grounded in a demonstration of the depth and texture in social research that combines shared biography with a methodological praxis that centres a careful process of piecing together differing familial narratives. This process aimed to uncover complicated family histories of love and care, but also entailed some challenging conversations about racial stress, and in some cases trauma. In this way, throughout the thesis I have offered portraits that connect this methodological process of interpretation to the way the subject matters of race, place, love and family were discussed during the fieldwork.

Among the nine families, the ability of (mixed-race) family-relatedness to cope with everyday negotiation with race and whiteness was an integral part of their narratives. Inevitably, these profound issues presented through some of the more challenging discussions in the research. Conversations about how family members had made sense of the racialised positioning of their family in the intense context of

suburbia and rurality became an incredibly emotional process for many within the nine families. For this reason, it has been only by returning to my personal and political foregrounding in chapters zero and one, in which I explain what it meant to me as a social researcher to *return home*, that I can begin to find a way to conclude some of the extraordinary multigenerational perspectives on race, love family and place uncovered during the research. What sort of home had I returned to? And what did this process of returning home through retrospective memories invoke for the family members?

To begin this conclusion, I want to be clear that one of the fundamental objectives of this research was to generate some answers to my earlier references to the emotionality entwined in studies of mixedness, mixed-race families and interracial relationships. In this way, the process of talking both with and about family members in a localised manner produced some contextualised additions to Caballero's note on 'the emotional framework of mixedness'; or what Song and Parker have called the subject matter that can 'bring the worst out in people'. Many of the Black and Black mixed-race family members were still coming to terms with how they had lived and experienced places and social relationships at the same time as negotiating the workings and normativity of hegemonic whiteness, which is routinely upheld through negative racialisation and racisms. The process of disclosing how their lives and lived experiences had been affected by the functioning of race was always going to provide challenging (and emotional) research environments and data to work with, but the combination of an intrinsic link to locality *as home* (Bromsgrove) and intimacy as family relatedness (family and social relationships) should be read as an essential contribution to the study of mixedness. Further, both the conceptualisations and

theoretical direction of the discussions throughout have led me to conclude the thesis through the complexity embedded in the impact of *home*, or how the process of *returning physically and discursively home* helps to make sense of these findings as conditioned by contestations of love, challenge and resistance to cultures of racism and hegemonic whiteness in semi-rurality/suburbia (hooks, 1997; 2000). The family members did not need to have physically left home in order to return home – these conversations were about demonstrating what happens when the combination of time and space allowed family members to address their various interpretations of what their home had meant to them, or in some cases, what this home had *done* to them.

The physical act of leaving and returning as someone who represents a challenge to what is considered desirable in suburban rurality has allowed me to make visible not just the way race structures place, but also our social and intimate everyday lives. This multifaceted process of returning home echoes Knowles' (2008) scholarship on whiteness, nostalgia and rural racism incorporated in the arguments in chapter three and four. But it also prompts recognition of how the conceptual focus on family relatedness and emotionality in the empirical chapters was as much about my own physical return home as it was a discursive and retrospective return for my co-conversationalists (even for the people who still lived in Bromsgrove or hadn't left). In some ways, it was as if the family members were reporting back to me what *our home* had done to them. Spending time away from the place and its civil society institutions in which were embedded both racialised exclusion and the routinely desired reproduction of whiteness brought into stark relief what we witnessed and in many cases, endured, in these places. There was a sense of knowing about this place, prompted by the process of recalling what can be uncovered when we return

home *together.* Thus, this concluding chapter explores what can be uncovered when time and space away from the places we have called home allows the imaginations we have built around our lives to be questioned and explored. With this, as well as outlining the key conceptual and theoretical contributions in the thesis, I also use this conclusion to show that this process of returning home was integral to the arguments developed throughout.

This final chapter returns to some of the themes that set the scene in chapter one. These focused on the thesis as a contribution to stories of the everyday and heterogeneous nature of Black life in Britain, with a contextualised focus on Black and white mixed-race families in mainly white places. But this chapter is also an overview of my response to the research questions, through concepts invoked by this localised exploration of family relatedness and mixedness in semi-rural/suburban place. In addition, as chapters four, five, six and seven consist largely of micro-representations of Black mixed-race families negotiating semi-rural/suburban places, this conclusion draws on the methodological and conceptual notion of returning home to address some of the key findings; findings that show what is at stake, what is being resisted and what is being socially reproduced when families must negotiate the ongoing tension created when their racialised position is routinely seen as a threat to the winning conditions socially reproduced by the working of hegemonic whiteness. In this way, I draw on the power of returning home to better understand and examine what is at stake when the active struggle to maintain a suburban and rural culture and demographic becomes a dominant way of relating to home, and familial and social relationships.

Returning home methodologically: retrieving the unspoken

What do we uncover, and what do we learn when we return home or begin to understand it in a nuanced and critical manner? As a Black (mixed-race) woman raised in Bromsgrove in a similar type of family formation to those in the research (with a white mother as primary caregiver), I knew it would be important to embrace my own emotions on these subjects by aligning my praxis as a social researcher sensitively informed by my own subjectivities of mixedness and (white) place (see chapter three). Because of this, the autobiographical introduction in chapter zero consisted of my own reflections on having spent a large proportion of my childhood in Bromsgrove. My mum and sister still live in the area, which means that I still visit several times a year, but when I conducted the research and spent time with the families, I consistently grappled with complex feelings conjured precisely by the process of returning home. As someone who presents as a (racialised) bodily representation of the active struggle to maintain the boundaries of belonging in semi-rural/suburban places, returning home to a place so invested in an imagined sense of the rural and suburban ideal generated instinctive feelings of sadness, confusion and relief. These contested feelings about returning home are just a few of the reasons why the conversations I had with the nine families were so rich, emotional and captivating. Our discussions consisted of a collective but complex process of returning home - returning to our similar family lives, returning to how our parents arrived in England and returning to how we have managed and negotiated Bromsgrove in spite of the dominance of whiteness. These methodological reflections demonstrably contribute to considerations for future research on race and place when social researchers share aspects of their biographies with participants. This

methodological finding resonated with existing scholarship on mixedness; both Paragg and Caballero, have emphasised the possibility of more critical interventions on mixedness by mixed-race people.

In chapter three, I addressed a fundamental theme of conversations among the nine families – how little they had spoken about the impact of race and racism on family members in the local context of Bromsgrove, a place they have called *their home.* I argued that this was a methodological issue that required a feminist praxis of care to create supportive and safe environments from which to explore how semi-rural-suburban places produce a heightened risk of cultures of racism becoming *silenced or unspoken* in Black mixed-race families (Bengtsson & Fynbo, 2018; Heikkilä & Katainen, 2021). This methodological discussion showed how this thesis provides an innovative approach to social research with Black mixed-race families, one that connects care(ful) praxis and shared biographies. Crucially, the process of attempting to discuss matters left unspoken between family members was as much about me engaging with a retrospective analysis of home or a home away from home, as it was for the family members.

As I have demonstrated throughout the thesis, conversations about race and whiteness generated challenging discussions during the fieldwork. I sought to mitigate tensions through a particular conversational and interview style, with multiple ethnographic encounters in which I also made clear that in many instances, I had had very similar experiences of racism and negative racialisation in Bromsgrove to those described by family members (especially Generation Two). But my overwhelming feeling during the research was how the act of speaking about the unspoken processes of racialisation and racism that impeded our lives

in our hometown was a radical act of reconciliation with the past. Returning home, damaged by experiences of the marginalising structures of race and class, with the help of families who instinctively understood the memories of place I was attempting to grapple with, showed the power of storytelling and ethnography to address 'that is it only in the complicated clutter of daily life that race can be 'subverted, crossed over and perhaps eventually crossed out' (Nayak, 2006, p. 427). This thesis has clearly demonstrated an innovative way of using methods to uncover sensitivities that would not have necessarily been found in an interview solely focused on identity formation. Our shared stories of place alongside the very rich biographies provided by the family members supported the conceptual development of empirical discussions that should be noted as a significant contribution to ethnographies of race.

In chapter four, I began to introduce how this process of returning home had been a significant feature of Sophie's descriptions about being raised in Bromsgrove. When Sophie left to go to university and intermittently returned home, she spoke of her ongoing confusion about why Bromsgrove was chosen for her to grow up. But crucial to the arguments I made about how a better place to live becomes generationally constructed, like many others, Sophie's feelings about home were expressed alongside her desire to demonstrate respectability – even to me, someone who made clear that I understood the types of negative racialisation and racism she had endured in Bromsgrove. Sophie felt lucky to be raised in Bromsgrove but also expressed how isolating she had found her childhood there. This sort of juxtaposed contemplation, about the process of returning home and the emotions surrounding it, demonstrated how this methodological approach also generated important

contributions to studies of mixedness that consider the impact of wider social contexts on how lived experiences become understood over time. In this way, the ability to generate a critical overview of the effects of everyday, but life-obstructing (especially for Black and Black mixed-race family members) racialised boundaries of belonging on their selves was not guaranteed, even among those who clearly voiced abhorrent cultures of racism.

Though there were multiple expressions like Sophie's, the power of returning home, or even becoming inquisitive whilst still living in this home is not without its complications, and sometimes misrepresentations of the functions of race. Although the research methods generated what often felt like cathartic conversations about race and place, it remained clear that hegemonic whiteness was still able to condition common sense cultures that were family members defended in spite of their harmful implications (for themselves). One example of this recurred when family members individualised racism as something to be overcome personally. Rather, the symbolic value of home - even in a semi-rural/suburban place that socially reproduces racialised boundaries of belonging - made it difficult to see this place as a micro-representation of systemic racism and structures of race. Bromsgrove was home for the majority of the family members, but in some instances their repeated expressions of connection with this semi-rural/suburban place, despite the racial stress it had caused, illustrated that even if physical and discursive space is achieved, feeling sentimental about our homes is prioritised over a sense of belonging where racial codes are not common sense. *It was still home.*

Racialised isolation and overcoming racism: critical dialogues on mixedness, place and the family

In chapter five I introduced how mainly white schools in predominantly white suburban places become intersecting spaces in which racism is experienced, and a series of coping strategies were employed to respond to what I conceptualised as *racialised isolation.* Racialised isolation was conceptualised as occurring when negatively racialised populations are socialised in places where their racial identity is discursively, interpersonally and structurally suppressed over time. Crucially, racialised isolation was consistently narrated amongst Generation Two as way of coping with the intensification of the white gaze while attending school in Bromsgrove. In this way, it was clear during my analysis of the challenges narrated by family members that the process of returning home or returning to matters of the past helped them to better understand the inevitability with which some of these processes became internalised. However, this finding also appeared to disrupt the emancipatory and cathartic possibilities of conversations about returning home, making it important to understand these concluding points about 'overcoming racism' (as part of a response to racialised isolation) alongside Hall's contention that race is malleable and can conform to hegemonic conditions (see chapter two). Further, although family members had clearly generated a critical perspective of how race operated in a localised way in Bromsgrove, there was also an overwhelming emphasis on how ways to surmount it were supressed.

This thesis has argued that one of the primary ways in which hegemonic whiteness wins the active struggle to maintain common sense understandings of who belongs in semi-rural/suburban locations is the way people outside the category of most desirable resident can participate in these processes. For family members who

were Black and Black mixed-race in particular, this was routinely conveyed as a negotiation they had to endure in order to benefit from middle-class cultures. While there were clearly instances in which this was contested, there was an overwhelming feeling that racism in Bromsgrove had to be overcome by internalising what they had experienced or were experiencing. In this way, returning home or returning to childhoods or raising children meant taking a critical look back on how they had made sense of the racialised boundaries of belonging in Bromsgrove and further, how these processes had been socially reproduced on an intimate familial level (see next section).

With the conceptualisation of racialised isolation, I demonstrated how the absence of social relationships that discursively addressed the impact of race and place constituted an overwhelming challenge to family members' ability to understand their own racialised position (see chapters five, six and seven). An example of this was explored in chapter three, and discussed further in chapter five, when I contended that the lack of conversation in families about race, but also in the wider social contexts of civil society (like school) meant that the spaces generated in the research for discussing the unspoken allowed it to be discussed (in some instances) for the very first time. As descriptions of their Blackness had been supressed through the lack of sustained social contact with people racialised in a similar way, it was clear how the silencing of race and familial commitments to racial sameness had become incorporated into their everyday lives. The thesis has also considered how these processes are fluid and changeable, while remaining clear that the silencing of race and racism in social relations can create a number of long-term consequences for a (Black) sense of self.

Many family members, including Daphne, Sophie, Neale and Fiona, consistently inscribed race as something they could personally and individually *overcome.* Crucially, racism was regularly described as an inevitability which could be avoided through their own personal development. Arguably, Neale experienced some of the most violent experiences of racism in Bromsgrove, but when I asked him questions that implied his experiences resembled the operationalisation of systemic racism in institutions and wider society, he obviously did not want to recognise racism as *uncontrollable,* even though he did not dismiss my observations. Racism was something in Neale's past and these experiences could be overcome through a commitment to individual personal development (see chapter five). With many of the family members, who like Neale expressed ideas of resilience as a solution to racism, I routinely engaged in discussions about their reluctance to understand themselves as victims of racism bound by the exhaustive cultures of place-making in semi-rurality/suburbia. It was at moments like these, where loyalty to home entailed a notable absence of critical dialogue about race, that belonging prevailed. Without an ongoing reckoning with the pervasions of race in their lives, family members were still able to voice an appreciation of their home, instead individualising what they had endured.

Several of the Black and Black mixed-race family members narrated their own identity formation as co-constitutive of their social relations in the cultures of semi-rural/suburban place and their family formation. This made it clear how the weightiness of the white gaze had permeated many of their lived experiences and understandings of themselves. Paraphrasing the words of Daphne (chapter four), after very little contact with Black people throughout her life and so many racist

incidents in Birmingham and Bromsgrove, she had been left feeling that her life around mainly white people had been exceptionally challenging. Using the narratives of Daphne and other family members, it was clear that although some family members illustrated Joseph-Salisbury's concept of 'post racial-resilience' (see chapter seven), there is no guarantee, in the context of semi-rural/suburban place, that they will develop a critical understanding that the racism they endure is intrinsic to its systemic and structural nature. Rather, with family members like Neale and Fiona, the workings of hegemonic whiteness in civil society clearly generated a variety of understandings about race that caused then to internalise and individualise cultures of racism.

These narratives seemed to relate to how family members had reconciled the combination of racial stress and trauma (see chapter four), racialised isolation (chapter five) and intimate negotiations (chapter six) by a process of self-examination rather than by looking at those around them (Fanon, 1967). For example, on their mistreatment by white teachers and peers at school (which resulted in their becoming victims of racist violence) both Neale and Leanne (chapters five and six) said at times that these issues were related to their own, internalised and individualised 'naughty behaviour', connecting the causes of racism to their own 'personalities'. These responses echoed Pyke's (2010) contention that these processes exemplify an internalised pathology of racial oppression which further cements the strength of whiteness (Pyke, 2010, p.557). Given that widespread cultures of racism were recalled by all the families, it was poignant to hear some family members reconcile their lived experiences by changes in *their mindset.*

Had the families and cultures of place experienced a substantial degree of racial literacy (see chapter Six), rather than a constant vindication of the cultures that hegemonic whiteness protects, racialised isolation might have been reduced along with such (internalised) challenges to their Black selves and racial identities. What happened *did happen* and the circumstances in which it occurred confirm why several other family members also described racism as an individual hindrance to be personally overcome rather than something related to wider structural and interpersonal factors to do with race and the commitment to hegemonic whiteness engaged with by most of the white people in their lives.

The notion of overcoming racism and the process of individualising racisms provided a complex answer to one of the research questions: - *1. In what ways do wider social contexts of mainly white semi-rural/suburban place impact the way (Black) mixedness is lived and experienced over time?*

One of many answers to this question related to how the wider social contexts of Bromsgrove and family relatedness affected understandings (among Generation Two in particular) of the functioning of race. Statements about overcoming racism through internalisation revealed the limits of critical engagement with the individualised impact of racism on Black people, and also showed the lengths to which family members would go to avoid saying that the place they called home was an intrinsic part of the cultures of racism they had endured.

Intimate negotiations and mixed-race families: unspoken racisms

Throughout the thesis, I have addressed the need for an exploration of the impacts of semi-rural/place, hegemonic and whiteness and cultures of racism to extend to the relationships within the nine families. How could I make sense of descriptions of white grandparents refusing to walk next to their mixed-race granddaughter on a dog walk and at the same time resist individualising this sort of troubling and intimate functioning of race in families? In response to the research questions, these examinations have contributed to research that reveals how intimately embedded the micro-politics of familial love, race and whiteness can be in mixed-race families. In this way, while I have already centred how cultures in a suburban place give visceral rise to experiences of racism, I have also argued that family dynamics can further condition these realities through an ongoing engagement with the workings of hegemonic whiteness between close and extended family members. The conceptualisation of intimate negotiations in mixed-race families in chapter six contributes to scholarship on mixedness by focusing on how whiteness affected familial relatedness and relationships in spite of the familial love and care present across the nine families.

While sharing my similar biography of race, place and family facilitated the more challenging conversations about mixedness in Bromsgrove among the nine families, it was clear that this became particularly important when we began to return home to memories of negotiating the functioning of race between close and extended family members. These discussions about the possibility of family members engaging negative racialisation and racism, even towards members of their own family, echoed existing scholarship on the complexity of parenting and being in families with racial

difference (Twine, 1998, 2010, 2012; Lewis, 2009; Joseph-Salisbury, 2015, 2019; Pang, 2018). This analysis of family relatedness and mixedness contributes to the field by addressing how wider familial contexts (and tensions) are intensified in a semi-rural/suburban place, which become imagined and maintained by racialised structures that seek to hide whiteness (Neale, 2002; Knowles, 2008; Lentin, 2020). These issues were explored in chapter six through narratives of race, place family and love with Tracey, Neale and Fiona Jones, and Leanne Davies. Crucially, it was this chapter that sought to centre a critical dialogue about the impact of mainly white parents caring for Black mixed-race people in places overexposed to civil society institutions that structurally and discursively reproduce hegemonic whiteness.

The ambition was to show the connection between family moments such as the introduction to mixed-race relationships and more mundane encounters between close and extended family like birthday celebrations or social gatherings at church and school. But these matters were also raised in (what would become described as) normative conversations with racist family members. The significance of these seemingly loose connections was that they were conveyed as a normative family practice which was clearly related to how cultures of racism had become unspoken over time among kin and wider social relations in Bromsgrove. Racism and negative racialisation had become common sense in Bromsgrove, but on many occasions these matters were also described alongside encounters with a racist uncle, cousin or nan.

It is important to contextualise these concluding points about intimate negotiations within the nine families around the narratives of Generation Two, who were routinely quite direct in their descriptions of racism among their relations. A

principal reason for the silencing of conversations about experiences of racism was often that members of Generation Two had chosen not to share these encounters with their parents (see chapter three). The reasons for this varied, but the most revealing and recurrent explanations were narrated as guilt, the protection of their parents' feelings, and the fact of their mothers being white. As I began to introduce, in and after chapter three, through the portrait constructed with my help by Daphne, of Winston's arrival in Birmingham as a child, the normative constructivism of family practices that silence matters concerning race and racism becomes intensified by their *value,* but these processes also rely on understandings of multigenerational stories of migration and racism that contributed to the romanticisation of suburbia and rurality. Further, among Generation One, it had become common sense that the cultures of racism that appeared in cities like Birmingham during their childhoods wouldn't present in the same way in Bromsgrove. Of course, this was not the case, but it often seemed as if the processing (and acceptance) of intimate negotiations had been heightened by the social reproduction of Bromsgrove's respectability by comparison with the city. The emphasis on Bromsgrove as a place of value for their families facilitated familial practices of the unspoken, which led to (what I described in chapter three as) the research space becoming a site of family disclosure.

Several of the family members who were cared for mainly by white mothers said they did not share their experiences of cultures of racism with their mothers because they did not think they would understand. In some incidents, Generation Two recited love as a reason for avoiding these conversations with the white mothers. However, racialised difference in general was routinely interjected as a reason to keep racism away from family discussions about race, something that also extended to their

mainly white peer groups in Bromsgrove. Even some of the family members who had more contact with Black family members held an underlying belief that sharing experiences of racism would be 'pointless'. In some families, it seemed as if the workings of hegemonic whiteness (In this instance, to explicitly hide the functioning of race) meant that tangible or restorative conversations to grapple with cultures of racism were avoided. The family members who mentioned the few times they had sought to redress the racial harm they had experienced in civil society settings like school said they had not been taken seriously, or that the incident had been understood as 'two sided'.

Among the Black mixed-race family members raised in Bromsgrove, there were narrations which alluded to their fear of misrecognition by white family members, while also expressing how they wanted to protect them from the details of what they had experienced. These reflections were conveyed by all the Black mixed-race people in the project whose main care givers were white women. Disclosures about the desire to protect their white family members from the racism they had experienced prompted me to explore with them who had been in the best position to protect *them* (as children growing up in these semi-rural/suburban places) from racial harm if they were protecting their parents? The majority responded with ideas of resilience and "growing a thick skin". Here, I return to reflections (above, in this chapter) on the significance of the families' having individualised and internalised racism. The consequence of the intimate occurrence of race in their lives – often without vocal acknowledgement – meant that protecting their white family members (and mothers) meant supressing, individualising and internalising racism. It is also a reminder of how a double consciousness of Blackness is internally pathologised and reinscribed

(Yancy, 2017, p. 22) as something the Black and Black mixed-race family members felt they needed to protect the white people in their lives from. Racism was regularly expressed as something that could be defeated through familial closeness and love. These responses were mainly recalled through decisions to disengage from its impacts, and this meant keeping racist and negatively racialised encounters a secret from parents and family members and instead focusing on their familial closeness, or love, as overcoming these harms.

Although I have sought to present critical dialogues about parenting and family in Black and white mixed-race families in semi-rural/suburban places, these reflections transcend engagements with reductive accounts of the historical and contemporary demonisation of white women and white parents of mixed-race. Instead, I have considered how hegemonic whiteness is powerful enough to exist at the same time as love and intimacy (hooks; 2000; Lewis, 2009). In this way, one of the central contentions about intimate negotiations in Black mixed-race families has been about exploring what is at stake when race and whiteness are conditioned and manifest between family members in semi-rural/suburban places. These contemplations were coupled with a probing of whether it is possible to adequately resist the racism socially produced in everyday life when primary caregivers in Black and white mixed-race families are mostly white and situated in semi-rural/suburban places.

Though family members articulated critical responses to race as something that functioned in families, but was also often unspoken between them, there was still an overwhelming desire to present these issues (especially when they concerned racism) as harmless. This is why it was important to contextualise the Black mixed-

race families in this research as examples of the intimate relationships that occur at micro-sites of civil society, which then become intrinsic to the winning hegemonic condition. Of course, these can be sites of contestation and resistance (see next section), but throughout the research and conversations it was clear how the combination of family relatedness, emotionality and home had conditioned intimate negotiations as a necessity for survival in semi-rural/suburban place, but also for their relationships with loved ones.

These arguments about intimate negotiations contribute both to the study of mixedness and to the study of the impact of wider social contexts and relations in semi-rural/suburban places. In this way, I have addressed how the operation of hegemonic whiteness and cultures of racism should be understood through descriptions of the functions of race in families. While exploring the relationships in the Black mixed-race families, I have revealed how *intimately* embedded the micro-politics of race and whiteness have been for many of the family members. Whilst I have already centred how cultures in a suburban place give visceral rise to experiences of racism, I have also argued that family dynamics can further condition these matters as normative.

Though white mothering and issues with extended white family members clearly dominated how family members narrated their childhood and adult lives in Bromsgrove, sites of respite from these challenges were also related in most of the nine families. This notion of respite from intimate negotiations with race and racism in their families was usually described as time spent with Black family members. Especially among Generation Two, othermothers, such as Black aunties and cousins, were described through emotional testimonies of *longing and loving*. Whether they

had been able to spend quality time with their Black family or not, these were described as relational connections to a home in which family members could abandon performing and adhering to the white gaze. The challenging discussions about black hair in chapters five and 6 showed how Black family members had eased their frustrations about their bodily aesthetics. Time spent among kin with whom they felt more racialised familiarity was repeatedly narrated as something that could, and in many cases did, ease the tensions of intimacy with whiteness that they regularly had to negotiate in their immediate families.

Siblingships and relational resistance

This thesis has used a loose application of social generations to understand different perspectives on race and place within the nine families (see chapter one and three). Although this chapter has already recapped some of the more challenging issues narrated by family members, the emphasis on generations and changing landscapes presented opportunities to address how they had contested issues that obstructed their family formations. In Generation One, these rejections of race had usually occurred when parents had resisted the demonisation of their interracial relationship by wider family members, but in Generation Two such contestations presented through the existence of a nurtured and loving siblingship. Though it was clear that siblings were bonded prior to taking part in the research, a number of the sibling groups I spent time with shared how the research process of talking together about their shared past in Bromsgrove had brought them closer, but had also helped them discuss aspects of their lives which had previously been unspoken. These conversations with and about siblings presented another example of returning home, and thinking collectively about a version of home that

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had been made more bearable through the very existence of a sibling who had simultaneously experienced the culture of semi-rurality/suburbia.

In chapter seven I developed a contribution to the sociology of siblings to stress that this familial relationship has the capacity to produce discursive rejections of the cultures which sustain the racialised boundaries of belonging in semi-rural/suburban places. By locating existing scholarship on siblings, my contribution argued that siblingships in racialised families in the context of a dominating whiteness needed more thorough scholarly attention. For example, the findings in this research contested Song's (2010) argument that racialised similarities between mixed-race siblings are an unremarkable part of their relationships. Contrary to Song's discussion of some of the ambivalent discussions about race between siblings, this research supported other research which found that siblings focused on the significance of siblingships as central to the formation and understanding of a sense of self. Though these scholars did not centre race in the analysis, I found that their examination of the significance of sibling bonds helped me locate how racialised similarities (and differences) had been a known unknown in sibling groups in the nine families, and that their siblingships had been important for their psychosocial management of, and negotiations with Bromsgrove. I argued that although siblings might not have vocally expressed the importance of this relationship with someone who has been racialised in a similar way, it could still be (and often was) an important space for resistance to race. On the contrary, in their recollections of grappling with their Bromsgrove upbringing, family members described siblingships as a site of solidarity, love and support that

co-existed with their constant negotiation with the workings of hegemonic whiteness both in Bromsgrove and their families.

Prior to the discussions in chapter seven, the analyses in the empirical chapters centred on how Generation Two in particular had negotiated Bromsgrove through the normative and common-sense notions of the most desirable resident of Bromsgrove, that required them to simply accept from a very young age the instability of their place in the town. As these negotiations had extended to their relationships with both close and extended family, I have made it clear how the Black and Black mixed-race family members in particular needed to generate a systematic double consciousness intimately, socially and structurally throughout their lives. With this, my discussion about the possibility of siblingships is a radical intervention on the discursive and relational power of these familial spaces to disrupt the social reproduction of hegemonic whiteness. These disputations occurred through the way the consequences of racialised isolation were rejected through a collective understanding of how both race and gender impacted their lives. The particularities of being raised in Bromsgrove had clearly conditioned an ongoing and collective sense of self in the context of the place they lived. Some of the sibling groups who witnessed each other negotiating cultures of racism and negative racialisation in Bromsgrove had realised throughout their childhood and adult life, as well as during the fieldwork, that they were not experiencing these things in isolation. Bearing witness to how a sibling made their life in spite of the dominance of whiteness, while also having a nurtured siblingship, was one site at which the winning hegemonic white condition could be contested. The contestation was not always voiced prior to the fieldwork, but the fact that family members could

become cognisant of the pervasions of racism by seeing what their sibling endured, produced spaces where the functions of race could be questioned. For Tara and Craig, witnessing how their experiences of race and gender were similar, familiar, and in many cases different, had allowed them to collectively produce a wider recognition of race and its gendered and colourist nature.

These discussions of siblings constitute a new direction for the study of family relatedness in mixed-race families, by considering how the impact of place and intimate life produce issues that require an analysis driven by the wider social contexts in which they occur. Although I suggested that the arguments about siblings in chapter seven transcend mixedness, and could be applied to other racialised families, this was a presentation of the power of siblingships when whiteness dominates intimately in families. Crucially, the siblingships in the nine families highlighted how resistance to the white gaze and racialised isolation still occurred despite being largely parented, taught and in friendship with white people who routinely demonstrated their collaboration with the operation of hegemonic whiteness through defence of, or ambivalence around, the intensification of the functioning of race in semi-rural/suburban places.

The concluding section of chapter seven constitutes a brief departure from the matricentric focus of the thesis, incorporating Eric's testimonies about race, place and fatherhood during a conversation with Tara and Craig. This section addressed the way relational resistance could be generated through the multi-generational methodological approach of narrative ethnography. The argument centred on how siblingships could become spaces that disrupted family practices which had maintained cultures (inside the families themselves) in

which race and racism were rarely discussed. As well as learning from them how their lives in a semi-rural/suburban place had been a challenge, Eric also offered a portrait that supported the earlier arguments in chapter four about how places become generationally understood as a better and safer place to live. As siblings like Tara and Craig in Generation Two clearly disrupted narratives which suggested places like Bromsgrove were safer for negatively racialised people (as opposed to cities), this section of chapter seven also demonstrated the strength of numbers when trying to describe matters that hegemonic whiteness purposefully reproduces as difficult to pin down and describe.

Siblings' solidarity with one another was as much about the comfort they experienced from witnessing how the other had managed and negotiated the cultures of Bromsgrove, as about the process of learning and becoming more critical together about it.

More resistance to intimate negotiations: Black Lives Matter and social media

The arguments in this thesis have centred around the narratives of members of the nine families, which were significantly assisted by a methodological approach that was committed to conducting an ongoing narrative ethnography and where I spent time on multiple occasions with different family members over an eighteen month period. Returning to memories and homes of the past meant the research became a space of learning, and of reckoning with challenging issues including racial difference, family relatedness and semi-rural/suburban place. Throughout chapters three, five and seven I addressed how the process of looking back with other family members enabled some family members to produce a more critical view of their lives

in Bromsgrove, which evidently contested the mundane common sense conditions civil society had forced them to internalise and excuse. Although the pervasive theme of overcoming racism above was a key feature of their dialogues, which clearly needs further scholarly intervention in its connection to semi-rural/suburban places, the possibility of more sustained attentivity to racial literacy was clearly assisted by critical conversations about race, place and family occurring over a span of time. As I left the fieldwork, for many of the family members it seemed as if they were at the beginning of a new era of conversations centred on the impact of the wider contexts of Bromsgrove on both family relations and the Black and Black mixed-race family members' sense of self. Both Generations discussed disrupting family practices concerning race and place, but emphasised that committing to this would be challenging because of heightened political differences within families.

Daphne's reflections on the racism she experienced while living on the periphery of Birmingham during the 1970s and 1980s, and Eric's later recall of how the English Defence League had marched through Bromsgrove during the 1990s, illustrated the heightened awareness across the families of the renewed and continuing presence of the far right in the West Midlands, both locally and in neighbouring locations. Crucially, a number of now banned terrorist organisations have both organised and marched both in and near Bromsgrove over the past five years. In chapter four, I outlined some of Sophie's reflections on attending schools in Bromsgrove during the 2016 EU referendum campaign. Though few family members had attended school at this time, many spoke about a post-Brexit cultural change in Bromsgrove in the way their fellow Bromsgrovians were talking about race. There was an overwhelming feeling that a sense of nostalgia was heightening tensions in the town, and they were

seeing more direct displays of interpersonal racism which included violence. For example, Sophie and one of the mothers reported a growth in online vigilantes targeting racialised minorities in Bromsgrove. Both Generations One and Two recounted multiple experiences of both interpersonal and structural racism, which were among the most commonly narrated reflections on their lives in Birmingham and Bromsgrove. Though many family members continued to discuss their lives in Bromsgrove in a way that resembled gratitude, it was clear that cultures of racism had changed and were changing over time, and there were some stark consistencies and causes for further concern for the future.

Six months after I wrapped up the fieldwork, saw the emergence of a renewed global Black Lives Matter movement (BLM), with protests and demonstrations triggered by the murders of Breonna Taylor, George Floyd and Ahmaud Arbery at the hands of police in the United States of America. In June 2020, social media played a significant role in the rejuvenation of the BLM movement, which created a moment at which global and local conversations about race reached another crescendo. At this point, several family members contacted me directly, stating that they were using this moment to both confront and stand up to some of the racist (white) family members discussed in chapter six. Some of them wanted to speak to me about what they were seeing in the media and how they were thinking back to the conversations we had had during the research process. Though these conversations went beyond the data collection, they are still important to report in this concluding chapter, because issues surrounding the silencing of race within families have featured widely throughout the thesis. Family members contacted me about engaging in conversations of resistance to racism, showing how they were talking about matters to do with race, place and

family in a way that was new to them. June 2020 seemed to present a moment for some consciousness raising among the nine families and they connected their feelings with their descriptions in chapter six about negotiating racist attitudes with family members on social media. Social media was discussed at various points during the fieldwork as a space which had generated a series of unsafe and racist environments for many of the family members. As I recalled in Chapter Four, Daphne and Sophie, as well as Neale described how often they would have to dodge racist Facebook groups and family members' posts as well as the posts of people they had known at school, who were also engaged in local racist vigilantism. It was both powerful and emotional to hear multiple family members share how they were tired, but had also had enough of keeping quiet about the racism they were witnessing in Bromsgrove and among some of their own family members. This additional consideration, which presented outside the fieldwork, demonstrated the profound possibility of social media (and social movements) providing Black and Black mixed-race family members with the tools to contest the white gaze.

It is worth reminding the reader at this point that most of the families had raised their children before the widespread use of social media, and prior to more democratised (online) information about Black cultural and bodily aesthetics and more readily accessible racial literacy. Future research on Black mixed-race families should consider how negotiations with hegemonic whiteness continue to evolve, and are both reproduced and contested among young people raised in semi-rural/suburban places but at a time of rejuvenated (online and offline) critical engagement with race.

Returning home one last time

This conclusion has considered how the discursive and physical return home, or both my own and the family members complicated relationship with Bromsgrove *as home* was a fundamental tool in the conceptual development and contribution of the research. These concluding discussions have outlined how during the fieldwork collection, multigenerational engagement among the nine families in narratives about this discursive process of returning home invoked notions of both emotionality and belonging.

This conclusion has reviewed the methodological, theoretical and conceptual discussions in the empirical chapters in a way that centred the complexity of family relatedness, race and place. This has been as much about the descriptive interpretation of managing the combination of the cultures of semi-rural/suburban place and family relatedness in Black mixed-race families as about uncovering the way family members adapted and lived among an intensification of the white gaze. Though a return to these critical reflections is an essential component of the thesis, I have invariably presented how matters of race and place were both resisted and contested by various family members. In this way, this chapter has reasserted that this thesis is a critical departure from the mainstream and academic emphasis on individualised understandings of mixed-race, and instead presented a critical and sensitive account that reckons with the wider impact of civil society on Black mixed-race families in the very specific contexts of mainly white semi-rural/suburban place.

The way the families had constructed various notions of home over time by emphasising their multigenerational migration stories, their lived experiences of cities, and their capacity (still) to understand suburban rurality as better despite the

dominance of whiteness, were central reminders for these concluding remarks about the research. Whether in Birmingham or Bromsgrove, across their family genealogy, reaffirmations of the tension between safety and hostility prevailed in their search for homes. Many of the family members were in the process of reconciling themselves to the fact that 'racism is a territorial form of power' (Back, 2007, p.51) maintained by cultures and populations deeply invested in whiteness, which cannot be entirely avoided through an immersion in middle-class cultures (Chakraborti, 2009 & Brah, 2012). Some were clear that to question the existence of racism in Bromsgrove, is to defy the codes of suburban respectability. Crucially, this demonstrated how in spite of many first-hand experiences of cultures of racism and constant negotiation with the workings of hegemonic whiteness, nearly all the family members wanted to express gratitude for having been allowed to call Bromsgrove home - *they were lucky to live in Bromsgrove.*

Writing through portraiture has allowed me to carefully develop and incorporate existing scholarship on the psychosocial impact of race into interpretations of the way family members could produce harrowing accounts of racism while still stressing how *lucky* they were to live in such a place. Whether in Neale's account of his challenging school years, or Sophies critical reflections about why her family had chosen to reside in Bromsgrove, this conclusion is a reminder to the reader of the various sites and occasions in the preceding chapters that show where the struggle over hegemonic whiteness appears to be winning across multiple micro- and macro-sites of civil society in Bromsgrove. In this way, this thesis in another sense is an intervention which stresses that Black mixed-race (and other racialised families) are not immune from fuelling, and in some cases conditioning the functions of race.

At the end of the fieldwork, the vast majority of family members spoke of their desire to 'do things differently'. This was particularly evident in the analysis of how siblingships could become relationships that contested and resisted the intensification of the white gaze in a semi-rural-suburban location, whether this was when Tara, Craig and their father Eric described the next chapter of their relationship as including critical discussions about their past and family life in Bromsgrove, or when Neale and Leanne spoke of how taking part in the research had made them more determined that their own children would be better equipped to handle racism and being racialised as Black mixed-race. More than half of Generation Two (especially the younger ones within this sample-set) spoke of how growing up in Bromsgrove had made them even more clear about providing critical racial literacy for their own (and future) children, as well as carefully considering the place they chose to live.

Finally, it is important to note that I am writing up the thesis during the 2021 Census. Early indications are that the data is likely to show an increase in the movement of Black people and people of colour to rural and suburban places like Bromsgrove. This project shows that although ethnic minorities have always had a small presence in these areas, they are places which have always already existed as multi-ethnic and multi-racial locations. In this way, any increase in the population of Black people and people of colour in semi-rural suburban places should be read alongside research like this, that provides micro-examples of what can be learnt about these places by families leaving the city. Furthermore, future social research on Black mixed-race, and negatively racialised families more broadly, should continue to focus on *stories of living* in places while navigating what Agyeman and

Spooner described as the timeless "white landscape" (Agyeman and Spooner, 1997, p.197) and the intensification of the social and relational reproduction of white Englishness (Cloke, 1994; Chakraborti & Garland, 2004; Shukra et al., 2004; Knowles, 2008).

Appendices

Appendix One:

Research Questions

I.   In what ways do wider social contexts of mainly white semi-rural/suburban place impact the way (Black) mixedness is lived and experienced over time?

II. How do places like Bromsgrove generate everyday racialised boundaries of belonging and how does this become lived through time, place and family?

III. How do familial biographies of multi-generational life and migration histories impact the way Bromsgrove become understood between family members?

IV. Do the cultures of semi-rural/suburbia impact family relatedness in Black mixed-race families?

Appendix Two: Consent form for all interviewees

The Department of Sociology, Goldsmiths College, University of London attach high priority to the ethical conduct of research. If you have any questions regarding the research or use of the data collected through the study, please do not hesitate to ask the researcher. We therefore ask you to consider the following points before agreeing to take part in this research:

- The interview will be audio recorded.
- Some data will be used as part of sharing research findings in book form, in academic articles and as part of conference presentations.
- All data will be treated as personal under the 1998 Data Protection Act, and will be stored securely.
- All participants receive anonymity unless a wish to be identified is specified. Please tick the box below if you do.

  I wish to be fully identified ☐

- If you decide at any time during the research that you no longer wish to participate in this project, you can withdraw immediately without giving any reason.
- You will be given a copy of this consent form to keep and refer to at any time.
- By signing this form you assign copyright of your contribution to the researcher.

If you have any concerns about the conduct of the research, please contact the department's ethics officer Professor Marsha Rosengarten,

I confirm that I have freely agreed to participate in the 'How have 'mixed race' families managed, negotiated and overcome processes or racialisation and racism in a predominantly white town in the West Midlands? research project. I have been briefed on what this involves and I agree to the use of the findings as described above. I understand that the material is protected by a code of professional ethics.

Participant Signature:

Name: Date:

Contact   details   (for   feedback purposes):_____

I confirm, for the project team, that we agree to keep the undertakings in this contract.

Researcher Signature:

Name: Date:

Appendix Three: Information sheet for participants

How have Black and white mixed-race families managed, negotiated and overcome processes or racialisation and racism in a predominantly white town in the West Midlands?

Research Aims

This research aims to provide a more situated and localisation understanding of how family members within Black and white mixed-race families manage and negotiate growing up or raising children in Bromsgrove.

Why have I been invited to participate?

You have been invited to participate as you have been recognised or identify as being 'mixed race' or as being part of a 'mixed race' family.

You also might have been selected because one of more of your children has been recognised or recognises as being 'mixed race'.

What will happen if I do take part?

You will be interviewed about your experiences of being part of a Black mixed race family in Bromsgrove. The interview will take between 30 minutes – 1 hour. The interview will be recorded and transcribed. I will send the transcripts within two weeks of recording.

What are the benefits of taking part?

There are no are no direct benefits to taking part, but your contribution will help with wider understandings about 'race' and racism for mixed race families in towns that are predominantly white.

Your time will also help to argue that the way we understand the experiences of mixed race family's needs to be more attentive to localised contexts and racialised specificities

Appendix Four: Interview guide

1. The purpose of this project is to understand the experiences of Black and white mixed-race families in a predominantly white town on the outskirts of Birmingham. What were your thoughts about this subject?

2. Tell me about Bromsgrove?

3. Do you remember being aware that the majority of people around you were white growing up? Can you tell me about instances where you were particularly aware of this?

Family

4. Can you tell me about the formation of your family, specifically surrounding ethnicity, gender and identity?

5. Do you think any members of your family ever felt particularly aware of being part of a Black mixed-race family? Can you think of specific instances of this?

   Primary education

6. Can you tell me about some of your earliest memories as a child? And specifically starting school?

7. How do you think students treated you? Do you remember experiencing or witnessing racism in primary education?

8. What about your parents? Do you remember them being treated any differently? Or specifically do you remember people commenting on 'race' and your family?

9. Did you ever talk about these instances as a family?

   Secondary education

1. Do you remember being racialised in secondary (education) school by other people? How did this make you feel?

2. Were there ever times when you were growing up where you felt like you didn't belong?

3. Do you think it is easier to be white in places like Bromsgrove town and school? If yes, why?

   Racism

1. As you started leaving Bromsgrove more as an adult did you experience racism?

2. Within Bromsgrove and outside of, do you think people feel comfortable talking about race?

3. Do you think racism was spoken about enough within your family and ultimately outside of it? If yes can you give some examples?

4. Do you think your siblings felt similar to you? What about your parents?

   Additional questions:

   Is Bromsgrove still home?

   What does it feel like being in environments that aren't predominantly white?

Appendix Five: Sample data on families

Name	Generation	Family Name	Relationships	Gender	Ethnicities	Age	Occupation	Recruitment Method
Jason	Two	Davies	Sibling, Son	Man	Black Jamaican and white Irish	21	Student and semi-pro athlete	Snowballing
Leanne	Two	Davies	Sibling, Daughter	Woman	Black Jamaican and white English	28	Hair and beauty practioner and business owner	Snowballing
Sonia	Two	Frazer	Sibling, Daughter	Woman	Black Jamaican and white Irish	18	Student	Snowballing
Frankie	Two	Frazer	Sibling, Daughter	Woman	Black Jamaican and white Irish	26	Marketing executive	Snowballing
Sandra	One	Harris	Mother	Woman	White English	53	Counseller	Snowballing
Fiona	Two	Jones	Sibling, Daughter	Woman	Black Jamaican and white Irish	19	Student and waitress	Snowballing
Neale	Two	Jones	Sibling, Son	Man	Black Jamaican and white Irish	29	Property developer	Snowballing
Tracey	One	Jones	Mother	Woman	White English and Irish	47	Childcare specialist and practioner	Snowballing
Charlie	Two	Lewis	Son	Man	Black Jamaican and white Irish	28	Academic	Snowballing
Jessica	Two	Macintosh	Daughter	Woman	Black Jamaican and white Irish	29	Social care worker	Snowballing
Francesca	One	Macintosh	Mother	Woman	Black Jamaican and white Irish	52	Social care worker	Snowballing
Joyce	One	Sampson	Mother	Woman	White English and Irish	55	Retired from prison services	Snowballing
June	One	Sampson	Step Mother	Woman	Black St Kittitian	67	Retired from prison services	Snowballing
Craig	Two	Silvester	Sibling, Son	Man	Black St Kittitian and white Irish	29	Engineer	Snowballing
Tara	Two	Silvester	Sibling, Daughter	Woman	Black St Kittitian and white Irish	31	PR executive	Snowballing
Eric	One	Silvester	Father	Man	Black St Kittitian	65	Sales Director	Snowballing
Tina	One	Smith	Mother	Woman	Black Jamaican and white English	45	Fitness instructor	Snowballing
Sophie	Two	Smith	Daughter	Woman	Black Jamaican and white English	21	Student/ Civil servant	Snowballing

Appendix Six: Generation breakdown

Reported frequencies for age ranges (years)			
Generation two		Generation one	
18-21	27-31	45-55	65-67
4	7	5	2

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