

Attachments and connections: a 'white working class' English family's relationships with their BrAsian 'Pakistani' neighbours

Abstract

White working class people have been portrayed in the media and political discourse as unable to keep pace with the demands associated with living in multicultural Britain. In this article I shall challenge such representations of white working class people's attitudes towards racialized 'others'. To do this I explore the views of the members of a white working class family to the changing racial composition of their once ethnically homogenous council estate (municipal housing). My ethnographic attention is directed to the connections, affective ties and emotional investments that the members of this family have with the estate and its community, and the ways in which BrAsians become configured in these narratives of belonging. I will show how analytical attention to the connections and attachments that white working class people form with those they identify as ethnic and racial 'others' provides an account of white working class identities that undermines popular representations of 'them'.

Key words: white working class; connections; affect; BrAsian; values; council estate

Introduction

Feminist sociologists have critiqued the ways in which white working class Britons' physical appearance, ways of speaking, tastes, and worldviews, as well as their attitudes to sex and race, are caricatured and stigmatised in political and media accounts of them (see for example Haylett 2001; I. Tyler 2008; Lawler 2012; Skeggs and Lovejoy 2012; McKenzie 2013). These sociologists have also argued that underlying these depictions is the white middle classes' deep-seated emotions of disgust and moral outrage (McKenzie 2013, 1346) directed at white working class identities which they represent as 'ignorant, brutal and tasteless' and the 'outcome of individual and familial pathology' (Lawler 2014, 156). These sociologists have also shown how white working class people reject and negotiate the stereotypes, and in

so doing live their lives through social and moral frameworks that are given little credence in popular representations (Gillies 2005; Skeggs 2007; Skeggs and Lovejoy 2012).

My interest in this article is in political and media depictions of white working class responses to ethnic and racial diversity. White working class people have been portrayed in the media as unable to manage and negotiate the social, economic, political and personal demands that come from living in multicultural Britain (Haylett 2001; Ware 2008; Lawler 2012). My aim here is to show how these public images are too simplistic and that the realities are more complex. To do this I shall explore the views of members of a white working class family that participated in a project that set out to explore residents' attitudes towards the ethnic diversity of their neighbourhood.¹ My focus here is upon family members' attitudes to the changing racial composition of their once ethnically homogenous council estate (municipal housing). My analytical attention is directed at the 'connections' (Edwards 2000), affective ties (Walkerdine 2010) and 'emotional investments' (Gillies 2005) that members of this family have with the estate and its community, and the ways in which BrAsian 'Pakistani' Muslims become configured in these narratives of belonging. I will show that detailed attention to the attachments and connections that white working class people make with those they identified as ethnic and racial 'others' opens-up a space for an account of white working class identities that undermines simplistic popular representations of 'them' by restoring their humanity. To develop and advance the details of this argument, I shall begin by exploring the sociological critique of political and media representations of white working class Britons' attitudes towards multiculturalism, and then turn my attention to the ways in which sociological and anthropological analytical conceptions of connectedness and affect can usefully be deployed to facilitate an alternative narrative.

Representing white working class lives

Sociologists have analysed how media and political accounts portray white working class people as resentful of multiculturalism and immigration. For example, Ware (2008) explores how the producers of a series of programmes titled *The White Season* uncritically set out to show how white working class

resentment towards multiculturalism stemmed from a feeling that their voice is ignored by 'politically correct dogma' (Ware 2008, 2:5). The latter, associated with the previous 'New Labour' government (1997-2010), is thought to prioritise the socio-economic needs of immigrants and ethnic minorities with reference to the distribution of state resources above those of the 'indigenous population'. This has allegedly fostered in white working class people a sense of abandonment by the state and their political representatives. This feeling of abandonment has been hypothesised by the media and politicians as an explanation of white working class people's supposed resentment and expressions of racism towards ethnic minorities and immigrants, exemplified by their electoral support of far-right political parties.

In her exploration of the newspaper commentary on *The White Season*, Lawler (2012) expertly scrutinises some of the logic guiding these assumptions. She suggests they are embedded within the historically recurring idea that the white working classes are reactionary and so in this case are thought to be unable to keep pace with the demands associated with multiculturalism. Lawler argues that the white working classes are not simply racially marked as 'white' in the context of multicultural Britain, but as 'hyper-white', as illustrated by their supposedly endemic racist attitudes. Consequently they are positioned by the media and politicians as 'too white' and 'embodying extreme whiteness' (Lawler 2014, 155; see also I. Tyler 2008; Reay et al. 2007, 1049). In short, media and political accounts of white working class people's lives ensure that they come to represent and 'embody a racism that is officially condemned' (Lawler 2014, 155).

Alongside this discourse of racialized resentment, the media and politicians have portrayed white working class people as being too socially intimate with ethnic minorities. This discourse is most clearly evident in popular representations of white working class women. Feminist sociologists have insightfully demonstrated how the othering of white working class women and the questioning of their competence as mothers have historically played a crucial role in the objectification of the white working classes (for example see Skeggs 1997; Lawler 1999). Most recently, popular attention has turned to the maternal competence of white working class women who are the mothers of mixed-race children (I. Tyler 2008; Mckenzie 2013). These white

women have been portrayed in the media as over-sexed, over-fertile and irresponsible mothers. Echoing colonial discourses on interracial sex, contemporary British white working class women's sexual relationships with black men have been read as symbols of their immorality.

In addition to these discourses, scholars have highlighted the significance of the geographical symbolism associated with council housing and housing estates in the popular stigmatisation of white working class identities. For example, sociologists and geographers have argued that council estates are depicted by politicians as 'broken ghettos' and an expression of 'everything that is wrong and loathsome about British society' (McKenzie 2013, 1343; Watt 2006; Rogaly and Taylor 2009). This is epitomised in the popular idioms of 'chav' and 'chavmum' (I. Tyler 2008) which are used to describe the white working classes and are said to stand for, amongst other things, **Council House And Violent**.

Sociologists, geographers and some anthropologists have produced ethnographic accounts of contemporary white working class Britons that capture their diverse local realities and identities, and in so doing highlight the distorted nature of public representations. A central feature of these ethnographic studies is a relational approach to conception of the formation of white working class identities that emphasizes the 'attachments and connections' (Edwards 2000; Edwards et al. 2012; Degnen 2013), 'emotional investments' (Gillies 2005) and affective ties (Walkerdine 2010; Skeggs and Wood 2012; Skeggs and Lovejoy 2012; Degnen 2013) that white working class people have with local home-places including 'houses, factories and pubs' (Edwards 2000, 18; Degnen 2013), pasts, memories and futures, communities, nation, incomers and each other. Part of an ethnographic focus on the *connections* that people make is an analysis of the everyday *disconnections* and feelings of alienation that white working class people experience, for example, in their interactions with their children's schools (Gillies 2005), access to work (Walkerdine 2010), to political representation (Smith 2012) and to council housing (Degnen 2013). This relational approach to social class within specific locales offers what Edwards et al. (2012, 13) call a 'double-plied' analysis that examines how the everyday 'structures of

feeling', and political, socio-economic processes work to create 'particular kinds of places and people' (see also Lawler 1999, 5).

It is in the context of ethnic and racial diversity and migration associated with decolonisation and globalisation that sociologists, and more recently some anthropologists of Britain, have shown how the extent to which white working class people connect to those identified as racial and ethnic 'others' is a matter of local context and personal emphasis (Watt 2006; Garner 2012; Howard 2012; Rhodes 2012; Smith 2012). Crucial to this analysis is the idea that white working class people's lives and identities represent what Garner calls a struggle for a 'moral universe' associated with 'hard work and earned entitlement, civility, pride in appearance (of self as well as house and garden)' '...solidarity, community-mindedness, work ethic, cleanliness, strong parenting [and] respect for others' (2009, 45; 2012, 454).

There is some empirical evidence from different parts of the UK, including council estates and residential areas in London (Watt 2006) and the north of England (Rhodes 2012), that suggests that when ethnic minorities and migrants exhibit valued attributes and characteristics they are included in the rhythms of daily life that shape white working class identities, communities and places. For example, Rhodes' (2012, 489) work in a former mill town in the north of England demonstrates how notions of 'moral citizenry' based on ideals of 'respectability' and 'responsibility' are *not* 'forged around notions of belonging to neatly defined racial and class collectivities', but rather through 'home ownership, property-maintenance, self-improvement, law abidance and paid employment'. Similarly, Watt's (2006, 794) study of council estates in North London highlights how black and Asian residents could 'prove' their respectability to their white working class neighbours overtime if they demonstrated such qualities. Moreover, Howard (2012), in her anthropological study of the fishing industry in Scotland, analyses the affiliations forged through working and socializing together between white working class fishermen and their ethnically diverse co-workers.

In an attempt to develop and advance these observations on the ways in which white working class people form relationships across ethnic and racial differences, my focus is on the connections and investments that white working class people make to place and community and the ways in which

those identified as ethnically and racially different become configured in these discourses of belonging. My argument is that analytical attention to the *attachments and connections* (as opposed to an overwhelming public focus on the disconnections) that white working class people make with so-called ethnic and racial 'others' provides an avenue to show how public representations of the white working class are simplistic and wrong.

My ethnographic attention is upon the racialized narratives of members of a white working class family whose identities are positioned within the aforementioned public representations in complex ways. The members of this family include Mable (all names are pseudonyms), a white woman in her seventies who has lived on the same council estate for over forty years and Lorraine and Simon, her middle-aged children who grew up on that council estate. Over time BrAsian 'Pakistani' Muslims have settled onto the estate, in part attracted by its closeness to the town's Mosque. Lorraine is the mother of mixed-race 'Pakistani' descent children.

By examining in detail the accounts and experiences of members of the same family I am able to provide an intimate portrait of the everyday values, dispositions and feelings that members of this family share across generations, as well as illustrate how these inherited ways of being constitute a discourse of respectability associated with a 'general ethos for living, for sociality, and connecting to others' (Skeggs and Lovejoy 2012, 476). Detailed critical attention to the narratives of this family also enables me to explore how values and attitudes are open to transformation across generations, and so are put to work in contrasting ways by Mable and her children to form differing degrees of connections with their BrAsian neighbours.

Underlying these degrees of relatedness are Mable's and her children's feelings and experiences of emotional connection to their community and the estate. To explain these emotional investments in their estate and its community, I shall draw on feminist sociological approaches to the role of affect and emotion in the making of white working class identities (Gillies 2005; Walkerdine 2010; Skeggs and Lovejoy 2012; Skeggs and Wood 2012; I. Tyler and Gill 2013). Skeggs and Wood (2012, 134) provide a good starting point to think about how the concept of affect is used in the literature. These writers contend that affect consists in 'those forces that can make us "do

things”, move us, connect us to things, but which can also overwhelm us. In this sense, affect is: ‘...nothing less than the whole of our sensate life together – the business of affections and aversions, of how the world strikes the body on its sensory surfaces, of that which takes root in the gaze and the guts...’ (Eagleton 1989 cited in Skeggs and Wood 2012, 135). In my analysis of Mable’s and her children’s ‘talk’ I shall draw upon the ways in which feminist sociologists have discussed how affect takes form within, and is shaped by, wider structures of class inequality.

Before moving on to explain the details of the broader project of which Mable and her children were a part, I should explain my use of the terms ‘white working class’ and ‘BrAsian’. If I asked Mable and her children what they thought of the term white working class to describe themselves, I would not be surprised if they rejected it because of its negative popular connotations, as Smith (2012) found to be the case in her anthropological study of class and fairness in Manchester. However, I deploy the term ‘white working class’ as a ‘descriptor’ for that which I know is a much ‘more complex and contingent set of identifications’ (Rhodes 2012, 491). In this sense I attempt to show how my interpretation of Mable and her children’s accounts resonate with the ethnographic observations made by scholars that have studied ‘white working class’ people’s lives and identities across Britain. Most importantly, I am motivated to use this label because it allows me to draw upon Mable’s and her children’s interviews to challenge public depictions of the white working classes in relation to multiculturalism. I therefore mobilise the term ‘white working class’ in an attempt to contribute to the sociological critique of its construction within public discourse, rather than deploying it as a category with which to explain things (Rhodes 2012, 489).

Likewise, the term ‘BrAsian’ is not a category used by research participants themselves. Following Ali et al. (2006), I mobilise this label to highlight the historical relationships of empire that bind people of South Asian descent that live in Britain to Britishness. The widely used term, ‘Pakistani’ was deployed by Mable and the commonplace term ‘Asian’ was used by her children.

Methodological reflections

The interviews with Mable and her children formed part of a project, consisting of ten months of fieldwork (2008-9), that explored ideas of community and belonging with the residents of an ethnically diverse neighbourhood in a town situated in commuting distance from London. In the 1960s and 1970s people from villages in Sicily and the South of Italy, and Asians from the Mirpur area of Pakistan, migrated to this town for work. While Italians took employment in horticultural work in the area, the main employer from the 1950s to 1980s was a large engineering firm. Since the 1980s, most local industries have disappeared, and people's working lives have diversified to include self-employment, evidenced by BrAsian-run taxi companies in the town. According to the 2001 government Census, which was the official data at the time of the fieldwork, 2,409 residents of this neighbourhood out of a total population of 8,974 self-identified as 'Asian or Asian British: Pakistani', and 5,310 as 'white'. The housing estate on which Mable lives was built after the Second World War by the local council. The estate is close to a Mosque. Census data suggests that approximately 40 per cent of the BrAsian population living in the town reside within a one mile radius of the Mosque.

Crucial to fieldwork was the conducting of interviews with families across ethnic and racial locations, including at least two generations. In total fourteen families participated in the study, which included Mable and her children. These family-centred interviews explored people's experiences of living in the area and their views on the changing ethnic, racial and class composition of the neighbourhood. These themes were contextualized within individual's self-narrated life-stories. Mable was recruited to the research through her participation in an oral history project based at the local museum. She suggested her children for interview.

In what follows, I draw out the central themes of Mable's, Simon's and Lorraine's accounts by presenting and analysing extracts from their interviews. My contention is that this specific family's connections with their BrAsian neighbours resonate not only with other white working class families that participated in this study (K. Tyler 2011), but as mentioned earlier, with ethnographic studies of white working class lives in Britain more broadly.

Making connections across ethnic and racial identities

Mable: affect and attachment to community

When Mable participated in this project, she was seventy-five. She was born and brought-up in the town, married at sixteen and is now widowed. She is the mother of five children. Mable worked all of her life in the catering industry and there were times when she took any job that was available to keep her family financially secure. She purchased her home from the council some thirty years ago. She said proudly: 'I own the house outright, it's mine'. Her ability to purchase her council house was part of the 'right to buy' policy whereby council tenants were given the 'right to buy' their homes from the council at a reduced price depending upon the length of their tenancy (Garner 2009; Rogaly and Taylor 2009). This has led to an element of autonomy from the state for some former council tenants like Mable. However, local councils were unable to invest money from the sale of council houses into the upkeep of existing stock and the development of new properties (Rogaly and Taylor 2009, 130). One consequence of this is that there is now a severe shortage of council houses in Britain.

Mable lives alone in the house where she once lived with her family. Her description of the estate on which she lives is framed by a narrative of decline associated with the loss of a past that she considered to be better:

There weren't the cars that there are now ... the lawns and the trees were all trimmed... And the houses were all uniform ... not like it is now ... it's ruined ... this estate...

Researcher: ...when did it start going the other way?

Mable: ...When the Pakistanis started coming over ... it's the wrong word I suppose, when the rot set in... Because ... being so near the Mosque, they gyrated round to this area... They've got such big families, they were given council houses [i.e. by the local council] and as soon as they were able, they bought [their council houses]... They could get the money ... because they used to be able to get a loan

from the Mosque... The people next to me that are doing [i.e. decorating] that house ... they've got four houses on the estate... And they do it by buying one, renting it out, buying another...

Researcher: ...when the Pakistanis started moving in, you said that the rot began, in which way?

Mable: It's like anybody, they want to get on ... their sons' pass [driving] tests, they get a car, so it's just ... like one giant car park... If an old person is still council and they die, the council gut the house, do it up, and it goes to Pakistanis...

Researcher: It does?

Mable: Always... The more children they've got, the more points they get, and the more points you've got, the easier [it is to get a council house]... The council will never admit this but it is the policy that if a house becomes vacant ... it goes to Pakistanis... My son [i.e. Simon] said to me the other day "how can you stand living on this estate...?" And I said "well, I've lived here for over forty years, why would I want to move?"... I've still got friends on the estate.

Researcher: What did he mean "how can you stand it"?...

Mable: ... mainly the cars ... and he doesn't think it's safe for me anymore. But I'm perfectly safe here because I've got good neighbours. They maybe Pakistani but they are good neighbours. If I needed anything they would be there. I know they would... I mean when my husband died, the two girls were the first on the doorstep ... to offer their sympathy and [ask] could they do anything for me... So they're fine.

A superficial reading of Mable's 'talk' renders her reflections troubling. Many of her thoughts seem to align with popular representations of white

working class people's resentment of ethnic minorities. In this vein, Mable shows resentment towards 'Pakistanis' for what she considers to be their preferential access to local council houses. It has been widely believed by potential tenants that councils prioritise property to couples and individuals with children (Degnen 2013). Mable merges this common-place belief with assumptions about 'Pakistanis' perceived cultural characteristics. She implies that 'Pakistanis' will have 'large families' by virtue of being 'Pakistani'. Mable also thinks it is 'Pakistanis'' religious affiliation with the Mosque that equips them with financial support and thus gives them an unfair advantage to buy their council houses. However, simply to interpret Mable's attitudes towards her 'Pakistani' neighbours through a discourse of resentment would be to misunderstand her talk about her experience of life on the estate and the ways in which her 'Pakistani' neighbours have become part of that life.

I have been helped in my alternative reading of Mable's narrative by Walkerdine's (2010) and Edward's (2000) ethnographies of the ways in which white working class people's relationships of reciprocity and neighbourliness mediate their affective ties and belonging to place and community. Walkerdine (2010) examines how the residents of a Welsh ex-Steel production town felt deep emotional and psychological ties to their community that formed a sense of 'continuity of being' (2010, 92). Townspeople's affective ties to their community facilitated a 'sense of life' (2010, 92) and 'communal beingness' (2010, 94) that was 'deeply tied up with how the community was held together and so held them' (2010, 92).

While for some residents of Steeltown this sense of 'communal beingness' led to the *rejection* of outsiders into their community, Edwards' (2000) anthropological study of Alltown, a former mill town in the north of England shows how feelings of belonging to place and community can provide the impetus for the *inclusion* of incomers. Edwards (2000, 112) argues that for some Alltown residents it was not the identity of incomers that mattered for inclusion into the community, but the 'kind of social relationships' that they made. From this point of view, residents valued expressions of 'neighbourliness' and 'friendliness', as well as displays of 'reciprocity' to the town's resources including its housing (2000, 112). Incomers developed negative reputations if they 'exploited' the area's resources for their own

personal gain. Edwards (2000, 114) comments that this 'leaves open the possibility that if incomers' motives for settling ... were different (not merely for financial gain) ... they would be accommodated with little risk to Alltown's integrity'.

Like the townspeople that feature in both Edwards' and Walkerdine's ethnographies, Mable values reciprocity, neighbourliness, care, sociality and community-mindedness. Moreover, her identity is also entwined with her sense of emotional connection to her community and place. It is from this standpoint that the full force and conviction embedded within Mable's assertion that the houses on the estate are 'gutted' when they are inherited by Pakistanis takes its meaning. That is to say, the family histories, relationships and memories that bind Mable and the 'old' white working class tenants to the estate and to each other is supposedly lost and destroyed by those 'Pakistanis' that appear to get the lion's share of council housing and are thought not to invest emotionally in the community and its resources. In short, Mable believes *these* Pakistanis do not make council houses their homes. They are thought to buy their houses and rent them out to other tenants. In this way, they are believed to exploit local houses for their own personal profit, to the detriment of the community. In her anthropological study of a former mining village in South Yorkshire, a place where people also knit themselves and their pasts into the places they inhabit, Degnen explores how affect is embedded in and thus experienced by people within 'the objects in life and the non-human environment', including, as in Mable's case, their houses (2013, 566).

However, the affective ties that bind Mable to the estate, its houses and its community also underpin her belief that her Pakistani neighbours are 'good neighbours'. While her 'Pakistani' neighbours are of a different cultural origin to her, they show her kindness, care and true neighbourliness. They are thus 'good neighbours' who become part of the fabric of her life on the estate facilitating a continuity of identity, community and 'beingness'. From this stance, it becomes clear that it is not the ethnic or racial identity of incomers that ultimately matters to Mable. Rather, it is the reproduction and thus display by incomers of the neighbourly characteristics of care, sociality, reciprocity and community-mindedness that are paramount.

It is precisely these values of 'solidarity', 'community-mindedness' and 'respect for others' that sociologists have identified across differing contexts as 'respectable' 'working-class' values (Garner 2012, 454; Skeggs 1997; Watt 2006). Similar values have been identified by Gillies (2005) as 'emotional capital'. She suggests that these values form a stand in for the types of capital usually associated with the middle classes such as income and educational achievement. For Mable, neighbourliness, care and kindness transcend ethnic and racial identities and are crucial to the reproduction of her life on the estate. In this sense, the acquisition and self-display of these characteristics is 'something that has to be continually' illustrated, 'earned/ won/ offered/ given' (Skeggs and Lovejoy 2012, 480). Furthermore, by evaluating the actions and qualities of her 'Pakistani' neighbours in the way that she does, Mable is not only 'legitimizing' their value, but also generating value for herself by making connections to her neighbours (Skeggs and Lovejoy 2012).

Simon: affect and judgement

At the time of his interview Simon was forty-two. He was interviewed at his mother's house. Mable listened to some of the discussion and at times added her views. Simon has worked for various organisations in the area including security firms and the post-office. Like his parents, Simon married at sixteen. He is the father of two children who are teenagers. Simon is a divorcee and now lives with his second wife in a house that he owns just outside of the town.

When Simon was asked how he thought the estate where his mother lives had changed since his childhood, his response suggests that he is nostalgic for a time when the population of the estate was homogenous in terms of racial and class composition. However, to probe Simon's reflections no further (as popular media accounts of white working class resentment to multiculturalism do) would be to simplify and ignore the ways in which his opinions are embroiled in discourses of class value and distinction:

It's like nobody seems to care anymore... When I was young ... all the gardens were immaculate, the houses were well looked after... The

estate has deteriorated in the way that it looks, the way that the people treat the estate... There's not a lot of community spirit here anymore.

Researcher: When did that start going?

Simon: I think [it was] end of the 80s... A lot of people were selling up... Because they'd bought their council houses [from the council] quite cheap ... [they] were looking at making quick money [profit]... I don't know whether it's because people just don't care anymore... Regardless of whether you're white, Asian, whatever... You can still see it even with the Asian or white families ... you can see the ones ... that do take a pride in it [i.e. the estate]. But on the whole it's like most families now ... there just doesn't seem to be that discipline ... or pride in how you present yourself any more ... to the rest of the world or to your neighbours... It's almost as if "well, it's council, it don't matter". And you think "ooh I couldn't live like that"... I like to keep the place looking at least half decent... Maybe the thing with the way that different cultures are brought-up ... whether there's differences that make it ... the way that it is now... You can't put your finger on it because you don't want to sound racist ... because I like to think that I'm not [racist]...

[Mable joins the conversation]

Mable: ...the Pakistanis are buying up all the houses, renting them back to the council for the Polish people...

Simon: But then again mum if you had the money ... whether you're Asian or white, if you think you can cash in on a bad situation...

Mable: Well there you go [agreement with Simon].

Simon: People will, people will [cash in].

At the heart of Simon's account is his concern to stress his 'respectability' and 'self worth' in the face of what he believes to be the estate's physical and social decline (Skeggs and Wood 2012). Simon was brought-up on this council estate and thus, as with his mother, it is an integral part of his biography and identity. However, by contrast to his mother, Simon no longer lives on the estate and so he does not have relationships with contemporary residents. Rather, he distances himself from what he perceives to be the lack of 'discipline' of incomers in the upkeep of their homes, the estate, themselves, and the way they represent themselves to their neighbours and 'the rest of the world'. In this way, Simon's sense of belonging to the estate and his emotional investment in it becomes the impetus for his critical judgement of incomers.

In their analysis of how affect mediates white working class womens' reactions to reality television programmes, Skeggs and Wood (2012) illustrate how affective ties facilitate avenues for individuals to feel, react, judge, evaluate and express what they think are legitimate, morally upright and worthwhile ways of being and behaving. For example, some white working class women that Skeggs and Wood (2012, 170-175) interviewed judged negatively the attitudes and practices of a white working class mother that featured in one of the television programmes. In their emotionally-charged criticisms of this woman's decision to place her child in childcare, these research participants asserted what they thought constitutes proper ways of mothering. They thereby created a space within which to affirm their experience of motherhood as morally correct and thus accrue meaning and value to themselves and their choices no matter how limited they were. From this stance, Simon's narrative, like his mother's, represents a struggle for the reproduction of a moral universe which facilitates an avenue for him to generate value for himself and his way of life through judging how incomers relate to the estate, its community, and each other.

Significantly for my focus here on race, Simon's evaluation of incomers is not determined in any straightforward way by ideas of racial and ethnic distinction. For Simon, individuals - 'regardless of whether ... white or Asian' - may show a lack of 'decency'; conversely, both 'Asians' and 'whites' can display what he perceives to be decent ways of living. Thus in parallel with his

mother, what matters ultimately to Simon is not the ethnic and racial identity of incomers, but whether they have and display the characteristics of reciprocity, neighbourliness and decency towards the estate and its community. From this point of view, it is easy to understand how Simon thinks that Polish immigrants, 'whites' and 'Asians' are all capable of 'cashing in on a bad situation' and thus exploiting for financial gain what does not really rightfully belong to them (Edward 2000, 121). As he says, 'people will, people will' cash-in. That is to say, like the women that feature in Skeggs and Wood's (2012) study, it is displays of 'decent' and 'worthwhile' ways of living that evince Simon's feelings of disconnection and connection to others. My point is that this feeling of (dis)connection does not correlate with and map straightforwardly onto ideas of ethnic and racial distinction.

It is noteworthy that Simon is much more careful than his mother in the way that he expresses his views on the changing ethnic and racial composition of the estate. For example, he eschews the term 'Pakistani' in his references to BrAsians in favour of the more contemporary term 'Asian'. Indeed, Simon is keen to stress that he does not consider himself to be 'racist'. Moreover, unlike his mother, Simon does not identify the decline of the estate with the settlement of 'Pakistanis'. Rather, he thinks it is the policy of selling council houses cheaply to established residents and their subsequent making of 'quick money' that has led to the estate's decline, a slight but important nuance given the broader context under discussion here. Such shifting attitudes towards BrAsians across generations and within one family are also apparent in his sister's narrative.

Lorraine: affect and mixed-race kinship

Lorraine was forty-four years old at the time of her interview and had four children. The father of her children was born in Pakistan and migrated to the town with his father when he was a child. Lorraine never married her partner but lived with him for over twenty years. They are now separated. She now lives with three of her children in a rented house in the town. She works full-time as a cook, and for a period of time worked alongside her mother. When Mable suggested Lorraine for interview, she did not mention that her daughter was the mother of mixed-race children.

Reading across Lorraine's narrative, it becomes clear that her experience of being the partner of a BrAsian man and the mother of mixed-race children facilitates a 'racial literacy' (Twine 2011) that is absent from her mother's and brother's narratives. Yet Lorraine's views are also underpinned by some of the same values as those expressed by her mother and brother regarding appropriate ways of living. For illustration, let us begin by considering how Lorraine draws similarities between her ex-partner's BrAsian family and 'Italians' purchase of local houses:

...you never see a poor Italian ... because they do work ... they do put in some hours and they are prepared to do any type of job which I think ... my own ... [white] English people are not prepared to do these days... I'm not too proud, I'll clean toilets, I'll do whatever... As long as you've got the money and you pay the rent ... pay your bills... I like the way they [Italians] work in the families ... that's probably how they've managed to get properties, they buy one [house] for one ... family, ... then they buy another one [house] and another [house] ... My ex-partner's brothers were like that, they were very good that way. They would all live in one house, buy it, and then they would move on to the next [house].

Echoing aspects of her mother's and brother's value systems, Lorraine admires hard work, reciprocity within families and social mobility through the ownership of property. She believes that these attributes are evident in Italian families, as well as her ex-partner's BrAsian family but not 'my own ... English people'. Sharing some similarities with her brother's disdain for other white English people, she suspects that her 'own' are 'too proud' to do unskilled and dirty work. This assumption resonates with popular discourses that advocate that the white working class includes 'a get rich quick ... generation, who are unable to make sacrifices for the good of themselves, their children and communities' (Allen and Taylor 2012, 8-9). In articulating some of these popular sentiments, Lorraine is keen to distance herself from 'her own', and in so doing she aligns herself with a more positive portrayal of 'Italians' and BrAsians.

There are some interesting contrasts to be drawn between Lorraine's account and the ways in which Reay et al. (2007) have discussed white middle class affiliations with 'aspirational' ethnic minorities and disdain for white working class 'others'. Reay et al. (2007) argue that white middle class discourses become embroiled in the reproduction of a 'future-projected, strategizing, capital accruing self that epitomises middle class subjectivity' (Reay et al. 2007, 1053). Clearly, Lorraine's account does not represent a calculated strategy associated with the accrual of capital. Rather, in identifying with her ex-partner's family and 'Italians', she emphasises her ability to work hard to provide for her family, including doing the dirty work of cleaning toilets.

The following interview extract pinpoints how Lorraine's views on the changing ethnic and racial composition of the estate diverge from those of some older white residents. Unlike her mother and brother, when asked how she thought the estate had changed over time, Lorraine replied positively:

I would have to say it's changed for the better. I know a few of the old people on the estate would say "No"... but then to me they're sort of not ... moving with the times. We're in a country now that's multicultural... One of my mum's friends ... she had a run-in with a group of Asian lads and they told her to ... "move out" ... this was "Estate-stan" [a play on Pakistan]. And I ... burst out laughing... I said: "...these are young lads ... come on Estate-stan!" But she said: "No Lorraine ... that's how it's gone now". And I thought well they're here... They're not going to go anywhere. You have to ... cope with it and move with the times.

This passage from Lorraine's interview provides useful insight into her perspective on some older white people's attitudes towards the changing ethnic and racial composition of the estate. For her mother's friend, the term 'Estate-stan' connotes that this estate is no longer part of the town and the English nation but has been colonized by threatening young male 'Pakistanis', rendering it a part of Pakistan. Crucial to this older woman's experiences of multiculturalism is the idea that BrAsians represent the antithesis of neighbourliness and reciprocity. From this standpoint, BrAsians' exploit and

colonize territory and resources that do not belong to them, to the exclusion of white working class residents and annihilation of their culture.

Significantly, Lorraine's depiction of this older woman's views resonates with popular accounts of white working class people's supposed inability to keep pace with the demands of multiculturalism. However, what is often ignored in public discourses is the ways in which white working class people themselves, like Lorraine critically engage with and reflect upon and analyse the racist views of others (see also K. Tyler 2012).

Lorraine's laughter at this woman's views accentuates how Lorraine perceives her mother's friend's reaction to these young Asian lads in particular and multiculturalism more generally as outmoded and absurd. However, it is the openness of this older white woman in articulating her opinions on race, as opposed to the sometimes more subtle racialized discourses of the white middle classes (see for example Reay 2007; K. Tyler 2012), that provides Lorraine with the opportunity to discuss and challenge her opinions. For Lorraine, the mother of teenage sons of 'Asian' descent, the young lads' antics are typical of the bravado and behaviour of young men more generally. The term 'Estate-stan' signifies to Lorraine the young 'Asian' men's affective connections and sense of belonging to the estate and the nation. Indeed, Lorraine's critical reflections demonstrate how growing up as a white woman on an ethnically homogeneous council estate, and being the mother of mixed-race BrAsian children, can facilitate insight into what it means to live in multicultural Britain for both white working class and BrAsian people. In this way, her account highlights that there is not a simple clear-cut 'us and them' division separating whites and BrAsians, but ethnically diverse continuums and shared feelings of belonging.

Conclusion: 'affective surplus' and 'seepage'

I conclude by evoking I. Tyler and Gill's (2013) discussion of what became known in the press as 'Gamu-gate'. Gamgu Nhengu, a Zimbabwean teenager, was ejected from the television talent show *X-Factor*. Soon afterwards, her family were refused asylum in the UK. The expulsion of Gamu from the television programme *and* the nation led to public outrage and expression of support for her and her family. I. Tyler and Gill (2013, 79) argue

that this emotional response created 'an affective surplus' that opened the way for public discussion that exposed and troubled the 'neo-colonial logic of neoliberal capitalism' embedded within the asylum system. While I. Tyler and Gill (2013, 92) acknowledge that discussion of Gamu's situation was in some ways situated within the 'deep-seated xenophobia' that frames immigration debates in Britain (2013, 92), they also argue that sentimental identification with Gamu's situation generated 'heated debates about immigration and postcoloniality amongst the most unlikely of audiences' (2013, 91). In this way, 'manufactured intimacies' (2013, 79) via exposure on a popular television show facilitated a 'rupture in the prevailing frames of visibility' (2013, 89) and entitlement.

Like public discussions evoked by Gamu-gate, Mable and her families' narratives include antagonistic feelings towards 'others'. Mable thinks that some 'Pakistanis' have exploited the estate and its resources. Simon believes the estate is in a period of social and moral decline that he associates with white and 'Asian' incomers. Like her brother, Lorraine is keen to distance herself from specific characteristics associated with her 'own English people'. However, to leave discussion of this family's narrative here would be to misunderstand their affective ties and attachments to place and community, and how BrAsians fit into these senses of belonging.

I suggest that this analysis highlights the ways in which the 'affective surplus' within Mable's and her children's narratives of belonging actually connects them with their BrAsian neighbours rather than re-inscribing racial division. Indeed, analytical attention to this 'affective seepage' (Skeggs 2009, 640) can be deployed to challenge one-dimensional media and political representations of white working class racism and resentment of multiculturalism by opening new and highly pertinent vistas for understanding the complex, shifting and diverse ways in which people come to connect across ethnic and racial differences. Moreover, the careful tracing of these configurations of 'affective surplus' and 'seepage' enables the critically important intervention of reclaiming white working class people's humanity, which is often denigrated in public discourse.

Acknowledgements

I am grateful to the Reviewers of ERS, Cathrine Degnen, Nigel Pleasants and the seminar audience at Canterbury Christ Church University for their excellent comments on drafts of this article.

Notes

1. This research formed part of an ESRC funded project (RES-000-22-2796): 'Communities within communities: a longitudinal approach to minority/majority relationships and social cohesion'. I was the Principal Investigator and Ole Jensen the Research Fellow. We were assisted by two neighbourhood-based researchers.

References

Ali, Nasreen, Virinder Kalra, and S. Sayyid. eds. 2006. *A Postcolonial People: South Asians in Britain*. London: Hurst and Company.

Allen, Kim and Yvette Taylor. 2012. "Placing Parenting, Locating Unrest: Failed Femininities, Troubled Mothers and Riotous Subjects." *Studies in the Maternal* 2 (4):1-25.

Degnen, Cathrine. 2013. " 'Knowing', Absence and Presence: the Spatial and Temporal Depth of Relations." *Environment and Planning D: Society and Space* 31 (3): 554-570. doi: 10.1068/d5412.

Edwards, Jeanette. 2000. *Born and Bred: Idioms of Kinship and the New Reproductive Technologies in England*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Edwards, Jeanette, Gillian Evans, and Katherine Smith. 2012. "Introduction: the Middle class-ification of Britain." *Focaal – Journal of Global and Historical Anthropology*, no. 62: 3-16. doi: 10.3167/fcl.2012.620101.

Garner, Steve. 2009. "Home Truths: The White Working Class and the Racialization of Social Housing." In *Who Cares About the White Working Class?*, edited by K. P. Sveinsson, 45-50. London: The Runnymede Trust.

Garner, Steve. 2012. "A Moral Economy of Whiteness: Behaviours, Belonging and Britishness." *Ethnicities* 12 (4): 445-464. doi: 10.1177/1468796812448022.

Gillies, Val. 2005. "Raising the 'Meritocracy': Parenting and the Individualization of Social Class." *Sociology* 39 (5): 835-853. doi: 10.1177/0038038505058368.

Haylett, Chris. 2001. "Illegitimate Subjects? Abject Whites, Neoliberal Modernisation, and Middle-class Multiculturalism." *Environment and Planning D: Society and Space*, no. 19: 351-370. doi: 10.1068/d237t.

Howard, Penny, M. 2012. "Workplace Cosmopolitanization and the Power and Pain of Class Relations at Sea." *Focaal – Journal of Global and Historical Anthropology*, no. 62: 55-69. doi: 10.316/fcl.2012.620105.

Lawler, Steph. 2014. *Identity: Sociological Perspectives*. Cambridge: Polity Press.

Lawler, Steph. 2012. "White Like Them: Whiteness and Anachronistic Space in Representations of the English White Working Class." *Ethnicities* 12 (4): 409-426. doi: 10.1177/1468796812448019.

Lawler, Steph. 1999. "'Getting Out and Getting Away': Women's Narratives of Class Mobility." *Feminist Review*, no. 63: 3-24.

Mckenzie, Lisa. 2013. "Narratives from a Nottingham Council Estate: A Story of White Working-class Mothers with Mixed-Race Children." *Ethnic and Racial Studies* 36 (8): 1342-1358. doi: 10.1080/01419870.2013.776698.

Reay, Diane, Sumi Hollingworth, Katya Williams, Gill Crozier, Fiona Jamieson, David James, and Phoebe Beedell. 2007. " 'A Darker Shade of Pale?' Whiteness, the Middle Classes and Multi-ethnic Inner City Schooling." *Sociology* 41 (6): 1041-1060. doi: 10.1177/0038038507083214.

Rhodes, James. 2012. "The 'Trouble' with the 'White Working Class': Whiteness, Class and 'Groupism'." *Identities: Global Studies in Culture and Power* 19 (4): 485-492. doi: 10.1080/1070289X.2012.710548.

Rogaly, Ben and Becky Taylor. 2009. *Moving Histories of Class and Community: Identity, Place and Belonging in Contemporary England*. Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan.

Skeggs, Beverley. 1997. *Formations of Class and Gender*. London: Sage.

Skeggs, Beverley. 2009. "The Moral Economy of Person Production: The Class Relations of Self-performance on 'Reality Television'." *The Sociological Review* 57 (4): 626-644.

Skeggs, Beverley and Vik Loveday. 2012. "Struggles for Value: Value Practices, Injustice, Judgement, Affect and the idea of Class." *The British Journal of Sociology* 63 (3): 472-490. doi: 10.1111/j.1468.2012.01420.x.

Skeggs, Beverley and Helen Wood. 2012. *Reacting to Reality Television: Performance, Audience and Value*. London: Routledge.

Smith, Katherine. 2012. "Anxieties of Englishness and Participation in Democracy." *Focaal – Journal of Global and Historical Anthropology* 62: 30-41. doi: 10.3167/fcl.2012.620103.

Tyler, Imogen. 2008. "Chav Mum Chav Scum." *Feminist Media Studies* 8 (1): 17-34. doi: 10.1080/14680770701824779.

Tyler, Imogen and Rosalind Gill. 2013. "Postcolonial girl." *Interventions: International Journal of Postcolonial Studies* 15 (1): 78-94. doi: 10.1080/1369801X.2013.771008.

Tyler, Katharine. 2011. "New Ethnicities and Old Classities: Respectability and Diaspora." *Social Identities* 17 (4): 521-540. doi: 10.1080/13504630.2011.587306.

Tyler, Katharine. 2012. *Whiteness, Class and the Legacies of Empire: On Home Ground*. Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan.

Twine, Winddance, Frances. 2011. *A White Side of Black Britain: Interracial Literacy and Racial Literacy*. Durham USA: Duke University Press.

Walkerdine, Valerie. 2010. "Communal Beingness and Affect: An Exploration of Trauma in an Ex-industrial Community." *Body and Society* 16 (1): 91-116. doi: 10.1177/1357034X09354127.

Ware, Vron. 2008. "Towards a Sociology of Resentment: A Debate on Class and Whiteness." *Sociological Research Online* 13 (5): 9. doi: 10.5153/sro.1802.

Watt, Paul. 2006. "Respectability, Roughness and 'Race': Neighbourhood, Place Images and the Making of Working-class Social Distinctions in London." *International Journal of Urban and Regional Research* 30 (4): 776-797. doi:10.1111/j.1468-2427.2006.00688.x.

KATHARINE TYLER is Lecturer in Social Anthropology in the Department of Sociology, Philosophy and Anthropology at the University of Exeter.

ADDRESS: Sociology, Philosophy and Anthropology, University of Exeter, Amory Building Rennes Drive, Exeter, EX4 4RJ, UK. Email:

k.tyler@exeter.ac.uk

