'It's Only Other People Who Make Me Feel Black':

Acculturation, Identity and Agency in a Multicultural Community

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RUNNING HEAD: Acculturation, Identity and Agency

Abstract

This paper explores identity work and acculturation work in the lives of British mixed-heritage children and adults. Children, teenagers and parents with mixed-heritage participated in a community arts project that invited them to deliberate, construct and reconstruct their cultural identities and cultural relations. We found that acculturation, cultural and raced identities are constructed through a series of oppositional themes: cultural maintenance versus cultural contact; identity as inclusion versus identity as exclusion; institutionalised ideologies versus agency. The findings point towards an understanding of acculturation as a dynamic, situated and multifaceted process: *acculturation in movement*. To investigate this, we argue that acculturation research needs to develop a more dynamic and situated approach to the study of identity, representation and culture. The paper concludes with a discussion on the need for political psychologists to develop methods attuned to the tensions and politics of acculturation that are capable of highlighting the possibilities for resistance and social change.

KEY WORDS: acculturation, identity, social representations, culture, multiculture, qualitative methodology

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> Unicultures are merely mythic, like unicorns. In reality, all
> cultures have acculturative origins, which means all cultures
> are hybrid and share qualities and features with other cultures
> (Rudmin, 2006, p. 69).

1 Introduction

In our times of the meeting, mixing and merging of identities, communities and cultures it makes increasingly less sense to talk about identity, community or culture as distinct entities, with tangible characteristics and points of difference (Bhatia, 2002). It is our human quest to maintain a unique and definable identity that fuels this myth and our maintenance of cultural borders and boundaries – real and symbolic. Social and political psychology are developing theories that challenge the assumption of singular or discrete cultures: we have multiple social categorisation (Phinney & Alipuria, 2006), intersectionality (Brah & Phoenix, 2004), dual identities (Hopkins, 2011), hybridity (Cieslik & Verkuyten, 2006; Wagner, Kronberger, Holtz, Nagata, Sen, et al, 2010), bicultural identity integration (Benet-Martínez, Leu, Lee & Morris, 2002) and similar concepts. However the construction of both culture and identity as discrete entities is still prevalent in much psychological research. We are seduced into a world where there is only 'us' versus 'them', without our complex histories of intergroup contact, mixing of cultural traditions and intimate intercultural relationships (Gilroy, 2004). One of the reasons for this may be the prevalence of

experimental and survey methodology in psychological research (Hopkins & Kahani-Hopkins, 2006).

The psychological tendency to accentuate differences across groups, and accentuate similarities within groups is well known and has been often shown (Tajfel & Wilkes, 1963). Hence it is rather problematic to adopt methodologies in our scientific endeavours that do precisely this. From research on representations of identity (Howarth, 2010) we know that there is psychological injury "when others fail to recognise or categorise us in terms that are consistent with how we see ourselves" (Hopkins & Blackwood, 2011, p. 218; Magnusson, 2011).[1] Therefore, rather than impose essentialising constructions of culture and identity on our research participants it is vital that we explore how such concepts are understood, debated and dynamically practiced in everyday scenarios.

For this we need a focus on the social and cultural construction of identities and cultural relations (Lyons, Madden, Chamberlain & Carr, 2010) and an examination of the institutional and political constraints on the development of cultural identities (Colic-Peisker & Walker, 2003). It is scientifically and politically crucial to overcome the constraints of subjectivities and their narratives and to consider the processes that emerge when cultures articulate. "These 'in-between' spaces provide the terrain for elaborating strategies of selfhood – singular or communal – that initiate new signs of identity, and innovative sites of collaboration, and contestation, in an act of defining

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[1] In another study (authors, Forthcoming 2), a Muslim minority woman in India expresses this sentiment vividly: "I was always considered one of *those* people (non Muslim) but I belonged to *them* (Muslims) and although I was never targeted, it hurt. Even if my friends knew that I was a Muslim, they would say, but *you* are *not* one of *them*. But I *was*. I started feeling bit of a cheat. Why was I lying to them about my identity?"

the idea of society itself" (Bhabha, 1994, p. 2). In order to focus on these 'in-between' spaces we have chosen a very particular methodology and research site: community art workshops for children and parents with mixed-British heritage that aimed to invite critical discussion and activities about identity, race and culture. These are similar to many projects organised by community groups in the school holidays across the UK and other countries. The first author participated and observed workshops organised by a mixed-heritage community group active for the last 20 years. While this context does highlight important aspects of mixed heritage identities, we do not want to construct this as a 'special case'. If we look at any social group (white British, black African, German Muslim) we see that within each group is a complex intersection of different cultural, national, regional, ethnic, gendered and class-related identities (Brah & Phoenix, 2004; Holtz, Wagner & Sartawi, unpublished). However, whilst in the course of everyday life, negotiating cultural identities proceeds perhaps somewhat non-consciously in the course of routine interaction, this task was made explicit in the course of the workshops in an effort to expose and make salient the relational dynamics as well as the socio-cognitive processes that the negotiation of mixed-heritage identities implies.

Part of the reason for this is that identities are relational and context-dependent (Tajfel, 1981). Take this quote from two girls in the community art workshops, who are discussing whether or not they identify as black:

      Extract 1: Being seen as 'black':

Femi: I never think about colour to be honest. I know some people - like my dad - do all the time – 'Be Black and proud', yawn! It's only other people who make me feel black. As soon as I step outside my house then I suddenly realise everyone sees me as a black. I just think of myself as me – Femi Lockman. I don't know if that is a bad thing. I don't think it is a bad thing.

Mercy: I never thought of myself as black at all until I came to the UK. I don't know what I thought to be honest. I just see myself as African. People want to call me Black African. But I am African, well Tanzanian, well just me! End of story! (laughs).

[Femi is mixed British and 11. Mercy is Tanzanian and 16][2]

Femi recognises that when she is at home with her white mother she is treated as white, but when she steps outside everyone, including her black father, see her as black. When Mercy moves from Tanzania to England aged 14, she comes to feel this racialised gaze that also makes her black. As we see in more detail below, as we move from relationship to relationship, encounter to encounter, context to context—so our identities shift and mix (Dixon & Durrheim, 2003; Figgou & Condor, 2006). Identities—and the social categories they ride on—are fluid, unfinalisable and inherently messy. It is high time we engage more directly with this messiness, addressing this is our challenge (Hopkins, 2011; Dixon, Durrheim & Tredoux, 2005).

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[2] All participants have been given pseudonyms and their backgrounds are described using their own terms (such as white mother, Tanzanian and black British). Some details about the community group and the participants have been changed in the interests of confidentiality.

2 Representations of identity and acculturation strategies

Constructing one's cultural identity is a situated process of meaning making where personal life history and the representations of others meet. This process goes beyond the personal decision of "being British" or "being foreign" or any other easy dichotomy; rather, it is an ongoing process that involves a multitude of representations an individual might hold in various everyday interactions. In spite of this complexity binary oppositional categories permeate everyday thinking across cultures (Needham, 1973). The seeming contradiction between thinking in dichotomies and the complexities of interconnected and contradictory dynamics of social thought and cultural practice have been brought to the fore by social representation theory (Moscovici, 2000; Rose, Efraim, Gervais, Joffe, Jovchelovitch *et al.*, 1995), rhetorical psychology (Billig, 1987a, b), and dialogical psychology approaches (e.g. Marková, 2003). By and large these approaches share a concern of the "*tension* between a commonly shared historical background and the diverse everyday interaction of individuals who can construct and construe, invent and transform" (Rose et al., 1995, p. 3).

Contradictory themes are at the core of representations of immigration as both a potential resource and a burden (authors, forthcoming 1), representations of asylum seeker families as loving and as breeding (Goodman, 2007), representations of black communities as frightening and simultaneously as alluring (Howarth, 2010), and representations of Muslim women as subservient and as threatening (authors, forthcoming 2), among others. Studies in a range of social contexts demonstrate that there are patterns to these contradictions that reflect a sort of cognitive polyphasia. The phenomenon of cognitive polyphasia relates to the fact that representations may

be heterogeneous and contradictory and exist side by side in a social group or individual (Wagner, Duveen, Verma, & Themel, 2000; Elcheroth, Doise & Reicher, 2011), and under certain conditions they can in fact be enacted at the same time and in the same situation (Jovchelovitch, 2007; Provencher, 2011).

Hence, it would not come as a surprise if similar contradictions were also at work in identity processes. Particularly people with mixed- heritage live in ambiguous contexts where the so-called larger society's culture (Berry, 2011), in other words, a given society's dominant culture and their own family's culture, in other words their native non-dominant cultural configurations, co-exist and, ideally, need to be reconciled (Bhatia and Ram, 2009). Adopting the dominant society's identity *and/or* preserving one's inherited ethnic identity, may have positive *and* negative consequences for psychological wellbeing, social standing and political engagement; this is not an easy feat. In the present research it became apparent that many respondents highlight a pivotal opposition of exclusive versus inclusive identities.

It is clear that dominant and non-dominant groups and their individual members in modern society engage, and have to engage, with each other in many ways (Berry, 2011). In doing so, as acculturation researchers have demonstrated, they develop intercultural strategies based on two underlying issues: c*ultural maintenance*, that is the degree to which there is a desire to maintain the group's culture and identity; and *cultural contact*, that is the degree to which there is a desire to engage in daily interactions with other ethnocultural groups in society generally. In line with social representation theory, Berry (2011) does not conceptualize strategies as attitudes or preferences, but as social practices in day-to-day encounters (Howarth, 2006).

Together, the two strategies allow to describe four different acculturation strategies: separation, assimilation, marginalisation (or individualisation) and integration that correspond to complementary strategies prevalent in the dominant society (Figure 1).

INSERT FIGURE 1 ABOUT HERE

This two-dimensional model has often been translated into a research instrument yielding exciting insights in acculturation processes (e.g. Geschke, Mummendey, Kessler, & Funke, 2010). However, we consider this operationalisation of Berry's model problematic in its simplification and evaluation of acculturation into two options: 'remaining locked' in tradition versus 'adopting new ways of thinking' (Nesdale & Mak, 2000). Acculturation theorists do generally recognise the complexity of acculturation processes including societal features such as public policies, public opinion, prejudice and discrimination (Berry, 1980), arguing that integration primarily "can take place in the context of relations … between groups (within culturally-diverse nation states), and between individuals (who are members of these collective entities)" (Berry, 2007, p. 124). More commonly, acculturation research focuses on the psychological (individual) level of acculturation preferences (i.e. processes, competencies, and performances, see Berry 2007, 2011; Rudmin, 2006; Zagefka, Gonzalez, and Brown, 2011). The fourfold acculturation strategies model provides a frame for considering certain basic attitudes as heuristic preferences for intercultural relations, and such an approach has stimulated much relevant empirical inquiry. Acculturation, however, is more complex than any single figure (Berry, personal communication), and requires in addition the analysis of social

practices in the everyday (Dixon & Durrheim, 2003; Minnard, 1952). We therefore favour Bhatia's approach who sees acculturation as a dialogical process. In response to Berry's model, Bhatia writes: "The formation of immigrant identities in diasporic communities involves a constant process of negotiation, intervention and mediation that is shaped by issues of race, gender, sexuality and power"(Bhatia, 2002, p.59). Similarly Hopkins (2011) points out "in reality we belong to many nested and cross-cutting groups and this complexity can attenuate stereotyping and facilitate identification with others" (p. 252). Our methods must not obscure this.

In the present paper we attempt to uncover the complexity involved in minority members' identity work. By looking at their behaviours and discourse during their participation in a community arts project that allowed playful re-definition of identities and uses of identity markers, we show the nested structure and fluidity of their self-definition. In participating and observing these workshops, we aimed to make explicit the identity processes that mixed-heritage individuals employ in negotiating issues related to resolving cultural plurality in the self.

3 Method: Examining culture and identity in context

Whilst theoretical development in political, social and cultural psychology has highlighted the dynamic and situated nature of psychological phenomena, our methods of enquiry remain predominantly individualising and consequently lag behind (Condor, 2011). For the present study we used a method that enabled us to supplement acculturation preferences with a nuanced analysis into contextualised and collaborative relational strategies. This serves in furthering our understanding of how

respondents negotiate and deal with acculturation in everyday life (Bowskill, Lyons & Coyle, 2007); that is, we demonstrate *acculturation in movement*.

The research setting was a community arts project where participants were encouraged to explore cultural heritage, identity and cultural encounters in a series of art workshops that used photography, weaving, drama and dance (for a detailed discussion see Howarth, 2011). The aim of the workshops was to use different forms of art as a way of practically *doing* identity. Three experienced artists ran the groups, and the first author worked alongside them as a participant observer. Photography brought the visibility of identity to the fore, and this invited discussion on the relationship between other people's representations of us and our own identities. Weaving highlighted the intersectionality of identities and the ways in which our identities emerge through the relationships, attachments and narratives of others. Drama and dance centred on the performativity of identity and the ways in which representations of culture, difference and commonality are embodied.

The community arts project took place in the South of England, organised by the local community group FUSION. FUSION has organised similar activities in the school holidays for nearly 20 years. One summer they invited the first author to observe the sessions, as a way of assessing the impact of the activities. There were three workshops for younger children (7 – 10 years) and three for teenagers (11 – 19 years). Each workshop ran over four days. Most participants attended two out of the three workshops, but some attended all or only one. In order to develop an informed understanding of this research context, therefore, the first author 'observed' and 'participated' in all the workshops (as an 'observer-as-participant', Rose, 1982). In

addition to recording as much of the discussion during the course of the workshops, children, teenagers and parents participated in focus groups. Questions in the focus groups elicited talk on cultural identity, definitions of mixed-identities, experiences of racism and exclusion as well as comments on the influence of the workshops and FUSION generally on their views and confidence. The complete data set consisted of 24 days of audio and video recordings (6 four-day workshops), 2 focus groups with children (7 – 10 years), 2 focus groups with teenagers and 4 focus groups with parents.

Participants include 25 children and young people, 14 parents and 4 artists. (For further details on the methods and analysis see Howarth, 2011). Complex cultural heritage was very common for the participants as most of them identified with several different cultures. One had parents from Zimbabwe, extended family in South Africa, Australia and Dubai and had lived in Zimbabwe, Greece and Britain. Another had grandparents from Kenya, India and Britain. Another was half Swiss and half Mexican. If they were asked about 'their culture' they were understandably confused – unsure which of the different places they had associations with was the expected response and also why it was assumed they were *not* British. In a sense, all identities are intersectional, bringing together a multitude of categories that individuals may belong to and that are made salient depending on the specificities of social encounters as well as cultural contingencies. Shifting between different scenarios also means individuals shift their sense of otherness alongside their connections/disconnections to otherness. So does their sense of self (Hermans, 2001).

4 Analysis

This project produced a vast amount of rich data. All material was coded in the qualitative analysis software Nvivo and a thematic analysis was carried out (following Attride-Stirling, 2001). The first stage of the analysis involved organising all pieces of talk into different themes. The second stage of analysis focussed in detail on the themes of identity, culture and difference. In line with the mode of analyses advocated by Hopkins and Blackwood (2011), our analysis does not seek to make generalisations about the experience of mixed-heritage families but we take identity-related talk "as revealing something of interactants' understanding of their group identities and their treatment" (p. 219). The present focuses specifically on intersectional patterns that are particularly attenuated in instances of hybridity brought to the fore in this particular context. What this highlights are the ways in which the specifics of the context can open up or close down different possibilities for the construction of identities. As a whole the data reveal a complex interplay of oppositional themes relating to the strategies of cultural maintenance versus cultural contact, identity as inclusion versus exclusion, and institutionalised ideologies versus agency. While all are interconnected and there are overlaps between them, for ease of interpretation it is useful to examine these as three different oppositional themes relating to acculturation practices in this context.

4.1 Cultural maintenance and separation versus cultural contact and dual identities

Many parents asserted that one of the main aims of the workshops was to provide a secure environment for children and teenagers to talk about identity, share their experiences of racism and develop more positive cultural identities, as we see here:

Extract 2: They need to know about their culture:

Elisabeth: … So what do they get from FUSION? … It is instilling in me a sense of my positive cultural identity and being part of a group, and I think my shyness throughout my early life was to do with sort of the legacy of not having my needs met as a child. They really desperately need that, especially in mixed race black children, children from any culture. They need to know about their culture whether they are white or they are black, Chinese and Asian, you know. …I think that's what the workshops – they are aimed at raising the children's positive and cultural identity, and I think that is vital because I think if I had had that as a child I wouldn't have felt quite so – I'm trying to think of what term to describe it. I didn't feel that my difference was positive for a number of years and it was only when I started to find things out myself, because my parents never did that. I think they felt that everything British was good, everything that was West Indian wasn't good. So they never really promoted the West Indian part of my culture and I had to find all that out myself. … But I think you really need a firm sense of history in order to feel secure.

[Black British mother]

This participant clearly draws on social categories to construct a 'neat' cultural reality that stands in stark contrast to the complexity of identity dynamics the analysis of her arguments betrays. The use of such social categorisation helps individuals negotiate the complexities of everyday life. What is interesting here is that this reveals the ways

in which acculturation strategies may relate to different points in both social and personal histories, indicating that the notion of acculturation includes a dimension of movement and is processual, contextual and ever changing over time and space. This notion of movement is also evident in Bhatia's work. His understanding of acculturation, as a dialogical process captures "a constant moving back and forth between incompatible cultural positions"(Bhatia, 2002, p.57), as exemplified in extract 2. Elisabeth's parents came to Britain as part of the post world war II wave of immigration. They came with a great sense of loyalty to 'the motherland' and hopes for their lives here, despite experiencing extreme levels of racism and social exclusion (Gilroy 2004). In relaying similar histories, other parents talked about their parents wanting to "protect us against discrimination and so instil in us the identity as first and foremost British" [Alexi]. And yet, they feel this has led to other psychological problems - 'not having needs met as a child', devaluing their cultural heritage and insecure cultural identities. Not knowing about one's culture and community can have long-lasting and psychologically damaging consequences. For example, suicide rates in different Aboriginal communities correlate with different acculturation patterns (O'Sullivan-Lago, 2011). Hence it is in reaction against their parents' strategy of cultural contact and assimilation that these parents hope to encourage cultural maintenance and separation in their children who in turn also react against this (see below).

This is not to say that these strategies are simply a function of the cultural dynamics of different generations or simply the dynamics of different family relationships, although these are both clearly in part true. What this study also reveals is that through the practical activities in the art workshops, the participants were placed as

agents in the production of knowledge about their own cultural identities, family histories and intercultural relations.

Extract 3: Acculturation strategies within the family:

Michelle: I think Ama liked the photography, the fact that she was doing something without me or her dad was really good for her. … I think she really enjoyed doing the photography outside the workshops as well. Doing, taking photos of the artifacts at home and she took a photo of the map of Nigeria and of things related to her gypsy heritage and things like that. So I think she got quite a bit out of it. … Well, the way she explained it to me and her dad, I think she said that she needed to find some things about her history and about her heritage and take some photos of them, and so we thought together what we could use, and she was very enthusiastic about that, about finding the item and she even rang my mom, which she doesn't normally do. She rang my mom. Usually I ring my mom and then they speak to her, but she said, "I will go and ring Nana and ask her something", so she asked her – she thought she might have a plate, some plates from different countries, but she didn't. She did know, she kind of knew what she wanted to do and took charge of it. It got her, "I must do this or do that. This will be good, that won't be good."

[Black British mother]

Just as Elisabeth reacts to her parents' desire to position her as British, Ama is forging her own sense of her complex history and mixed identity. She works within the context provided by her parents and grandparents, and within the context of FUSION itself, but developing her own positioning between cultural maintenance and cultural contact. Whereas many of the images and associations produced in the workshop seemed to *lessen* links to parental culture and identity, as we see below, Ama's artwork did the reverse. Photos of African safaris and traveller camps were mixed together to create a picture of dual-identities, where it was the connections and tensions *between* her cultural heritages that were prominent. The tension derived from dual identities can be a value in itself that would be destroyed if one identity dominated the other (Hopkins, 2011).

4.2 Identity as inclusion versus identity as exclusion

Against the explicit and implicit expectations of their parents and FUSION, most of the participants developed an assertive British identity. They simply wanted to fit in, as Sarah discusses in relation to her daughter Susannah.

Extract 4: I want to be British. I want to fit in:

Sarah: So I think she's doing the same thing as my elder kids did when we came back from Brazil my eldest girl was with me who was 16 and it was like 'I want to British. I want to fit in'. So then we get to my oldest is married right this is quite recently and she got this packet of stuff to bleach her skin. The middle one has always been more 'I'm Brazilian with a British mum' … So my kids have been in the middle of all this kind of cultural struggle. … Susannah looks so

Brazilian and culturally is very British. She comes and says 'You don't look after me like the other mothers do.' And I said 'Yes I'm doing the Brazil way cause that's how I brought up my kids 18 years in Brazil.' I was with Brazilians having Brazilian kids you know. 'Mum you're always feeding my friends!' you know things like that other people don't do. And if I don't feed them I feel 'Oh! I haven't fed them today - sorry.' You know it's kind of, so very ironic that she looks so Brazilian but is culturally very, very British. Or is she? How do you judge all this?

[White British mother]

Sarah's children have had quite different cultural experiences. The older two grew up in Brazil and had close connections with their Brazilian father's family, while Susannah, the youngest, grew up in the UK and has little contact with her father. Susannah is the only one remaining at home. What we see here is that these changes in family location and dynamics do influence acculturation, but that Sarah's three daughters adopt quite different strategies.

This finding demonstrates how the present analysis complements measures of acculturation preferences. This mother's eldest is so desperate to be included as British that she goes to the extremes of bleaching her skin (a practice documented in other research, Howarth, 2010). Her middle daughter adopts an integrated strategy that emphasises her dual connections to Britain and Brazil (similar to Ama, above). And Susannah, who participated in the workshops, also resists an exclusive Brazilian identity. What is interesting is that Susannah's mum sees Susannah as developing a

British identity while in the workshops Susannah seemed to assert a very mixed identity: her heritage from Portugal, South Africa and America seemed as relevant to her as her English (not British) and also Brazilian heritage. This demonstrated that acculturation strategies and cultural identities are very dependent on context and the relationships in which they develop (Bhatia and Ram, 2009). At home, especially when her British friends visit, Susannah may choose to assert her difference from her mum and identify with the so-called dominant society. In the workshops, Susannah chooses to forge a connected identity as mixed, similar to the other participants and perhaps in order to 'fit in'. In this way acculturation preferences may appear contradictory.

Many other parents also spoke of their children's desire to fit in and for social inclusion, but they are sensitive to potential biases in their own acculturation attitudes such as a "false consensus" effect (Zagefka *et al,* 2011, p. 218). For instance, parents discussed the ways in which racialising expectations mark them as different and also as threatening (Lyons *et al,* 2010). These experiences exclude them from being accepted as British and sometimes even as members of the local community. Paula discusses this with reference to her 11 year old son, and Fiona, one of the artists joins in:

> Extract 5: They see a big black guy and just feel scared:

> Paula: I can feel people double-taking us as we drive past, just looking. He's actually my son, do you know what I mean? And I'm starting to feel that now. He is not treated as normal-like. He's starting to see how he's

going to be treated as a black man and he's quite well-equipped in coming to FUSION. It has really helped that, and the fact that when he's a teenager and he's walking on the street he will know how to deal with it. But I don't want him to end up really cocky and really aggressive, you know? I would hate that because he's not particularly. He's quite a jovial character and I wouldn't want him to, you know, and he gets bullied. I do see it. I definitely see it happening now. He's in the front seat and he's quite big and his hair's big and he kind of looks bigger than his age

Fiona: I worry about my brothers. One of them especially – I know that he is fighting – people think he will fight so he does. He's younger than me but he is really big. He just suddenly got really big. … So people see a big black lad and if they are looking for trouble he will get it. I know he is fighting.

[Paula is a black British mother; Fiona, also black British, is one of the artists]

Acculturation strategies and cultural identities are not developed in a social or political vacuum (Berry 2011; Verkuyten, 2005). As much as Fiona and Paula may want their brothers and sons to fit in and be seen to be 'normal-like', they are treated as different and as intimidating (Fiona). They recognise that this has damaging social and psychological consequences for them, as this may lead to a "self-fulfilling prophecy" of "really cocky and really aggressive" black boys (Paula). Indeed, some of the outfits used in the dressing up exercise played directly into these racist stereotypes:

Extract 6: People will think I'm going to stab them up:

Interviewer: Tell me about your outfit

Alec: It's gangster. It's cool. Err – don't know. I like stabbing people

Interviewer: So why did you choose this outfit?

Alec: Because it is cool and sort of scary.

Interviewer: And when other people see this outfit what will they think?

Alec: I am going to stab them up.

[Alec is 11 and mixed British]

Alec is wearing a face mask and brandishing a pretend knife dripping with blood. In the context of the 2011 English riots the image of young black trouble-maker is all too common in the news (in spite of the fact that many of the rioters where in fact white). It is disturbing to see that there are connections between society's stereotypes, images of social unrest, these young men's imaginations and the dynamics of social inclusion and exclusion.

4.3 Institutionalised ideologies versus agency

Strategies of acculturation are not freely chosen (Colic-Peisker & Walker, 2003): social structures and institutionalised ideologies shape cultural identities and acculturation practices. The parents were well aware of this: we can see this in Natasha's talk:

Extract 7: Need to learn to deal with racism:

Natasha: I think for me, I've known my children's dad for 25 years or something and … (before that) I had never encountered racism before. I will never forget, in my own country, seeing racism from the police and what have you. … That's why I want my very quiet, sweet little boy to try and be a bit, you know, wised up and go to Hinton school and, you know, I realise that these people are ignorant, you know, saying silly things, because I've seen it and I was shocked how people could act in my own country where I was born. … I know that my son is up against that, and my daughter as well, and that's why I think, you know, that there were other people that looked like him in this very white city of ours and it is great, but he is standing there with pride and looking and saying that these people are just ignorant and try and see it like that and not get wound up by these stupid people. That's how I see it.

[White mother]

Natasha and other parents were aware of the impact of outgroup representations on identities and the need to help their children to develop strategies to deal with negative and racist expectations. What is interesting is that most of these mothers wanted their children to go to Hinton, a local school with a 'rough' reputation, as they thought that racism would be more *explicit* here and so easier for their children to identify and resist, than in more middle-class schools in the area. They are aware of the ways in which different institutionalised contexts contain different social psychological resources for identity management and the development of acculturation strategies. Particularly evident in the data was broad agreement that FUSION was fairly successful in encouraging the psychological support and social skills necessary for the development of positive cultural identities (see extract 5 above). In talking about her experiences of racism Mercy, for instance, described how she used to be quite passive and "not actually do things to stop it" but that coming to FUSION's workshops has made her realise this about herself and she now hopes to change this. She goes on to say that she can see that she can choose how to present her identity. She discusses this with Dalila, who was wearing a retro afro wig and then put on a dramatic Tina Turner wig for the dressing up exercise:

Extract 8: Cultural identity is what I make of it:

Mercy: I can say my own cultural identity is most of what I make of it and not what someone else will think because I know that I've got different like races and stuff which make up my cultural identity; things which I do which make up my own cultural identity so I choose out of one of them because I feel that I can. Even if - someone can, you know, if they're like 'she's from

another race or something', I can choose something from another one because they like that. So culture is something like really big. So I'd say, yeah, I can choose my own.

Dalila: … Um I think I am quite a humble person – and a normally only speak when I am spoken to but now I am feeling quite different – as if I have an Alta ego or something! But I enjoy dressing up and stuff. … when I am wearing this, when I look at myself as another character I see myself as totally different. But I think oh at least I've changed but I know I will go back to being that person. And the way I am now I think it's a - a little bit negative and I think maybe I should change a little bit more. So I think I have changed. Even my other character probably has changed by being here and meeting new people and I am quite happy that someone is filming me! Filming <u>me</u>! (Laughs.) Which I don't get many people to do every day! So I am happy!

Interviewer: Well you look very happy! I think the wig suits you actually!

Dalila: Thank you! I'll probably go wearing it home!

Interviewer: (laughs). You might need to talk to Fiona about that!

Dalila: Yes. I have told her to watch out otherwise she will find it gone! (laughs). But I don't steal!

[Mercy aged 16 and is Tanzanian; Dalila aged 17, is African]

What is evident here is the very resistant and agentic ways in which these young women develop a sense of who they are, particularly when seeing themselves through the eyes of others. Weinreich (2009) chooses to use the concept *enculturation* rather than *acculturation* as it refers to an agentic individual who incorporates or resists (as these young women illustrate) various identities or aspects of a culture, as opposed to a move towards adopting or "receiving mainstream culture". Dressing up in different customs, donning different wigs, hats and other identity markers and playing with different poses and postures in a large, full-length mirror allowed them to present different aspects of their identities: as African, as African American, as humble, as proud, and so choosing one's cultural identity to suit the context. The activity of asking them to dress up, to pose for themselves in the mirror and for me with my video camera brought the very performative, creative and resistant aspects of identity to the fore. They were deliberately positioned as active producers of knowledge, and knowledge about identity and *knowledge about them* in particular. This showed the ways that identities, and the acculturation strategies they support, are inherently political as they support, challenge or reject the ways in which people are categorised, represented and treated. Take the last words of the extract above – "But I don't steal!": I remember that shock I felt at Dalila's light-hearted comment[3]. Even in what felt like a happy exchange, where Mercy and Dalila are proclaiming a new found confidence and an awareness of how they could reject otherising and racialising discourses, Dalila has to defend herself against the expectation, or *my* expectation, that she as a black girl would steal. The ways in which Mercy presents a cultural

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[3] 'I' refers to the first author.

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identity, maintains her 'inherited culture' and develops contacts with the dominant culture are all marked by institutionalized and historical ideologies of race – and so sit within a tension of institutionalised ideologies and the possibilities for agency and transformative identities.

5 Discussion

5.1 Acculturation in movement

Rather than see Berry's acculturation strategies as a model within which we can fit individuals' responses to a series of questions and dilemmas, our results point towards an understanding of *acculturation in movement*, suggesting that it is more useful to see these strategies as interconnected and situated 'everyday political' devices in people's quest to develop a distinct but connected cultural identity (Bhatia and Ram, 2009). Cultural identities are always inherently oppositional as they rest on our simultaneous psychological needs to belong, to develop common understanding *and* to develop a sense of difference, of agency and of having a unique identity (Callero, 2003; Jovchelovitch, 2007). We want to maintain our 'own' cultural traditions; we want to embrace cultural difference. We want to fit in; we cannot fit in. We desire difference and we fear it. This fear of difference and also the fear of cultural connections leads extremist individuals and groups to commit massacres in the name of nationalism, Islam, the 'war on terror' and European culture as we recently saw in Norway (Goodwin, 2011). The acculturation crisis of our contemporary world (Rudmin, 2006) mandates us not to shy away from difficult questions about the ways in which our own research and our constructions of cultural relations in particular play into this politics (c.f. Bourhis, Moise, Perreault & Senecal, 1997; Hopkins & Kahani-Hopkins, 2006).

The possibilities for challenging different versions of acculturation and for the social transformation of cultural relations lie in the tensions and contradictions of acculturation strategies. Such contradictions should not be defined as 'unreliable answers' (Rudmin, 2006, p. 25); rather they are an intrinsic aspect of our psychology and particularly the psychology of cultural relations. We suggest that the qualitative and participatory methodology developed here is what brings the contradictions and so the possibilities for resistance and social change to the fore. These are made all the more apparent through the combined use of different approaches, such as acculturation and social representation theories. Acculturation theory provides a rich framework to examine the articulation of cultural contact and cultural maintenance and the concept of social representations provides a counter weight to the individualism and cognitivism apparent in some acculturation research. Together they allow us to explore the oppositional themes of intercultural strategies that connect people to 'other' cultures *and* the dominant society, as a product of social and family histories *and* as a form of individual agency and creativity, embedded within the dynamics of social inclusion *and* social exclusion, framed within political ideologies that stigmatise and supported by our social psychological capacities of resistance and collaboration.

5.2 Complementing political psychology's methods

Here we have used the community arts project *as a methodology:* as a method of data collection, as a site in which to position research participants as active producers of knowledge and a forum in which to encourage a critical awareness to the ways in which identities are lived, produced and changed. This has highlighted the social

production of acculturation strategies, the ways in which different strategies emerge as a product of social and family histories, how they are embedded in particular social contexts and tied to relations of power, discrimination and resistance (Verkuyten, 2005). What was also effective was the use of art to invite the very creative, collaborative and contradictory aspects of identity production (Howarth, 2011) and community relations (Madyaningrum & Sonn, 2011). We have seen that the idea that particular groups or particular individuals have *one* type of acculturation strategy is wrong (Bowskill *et al,* 2007). From mother to daughter, from home to peer groups, from one encounter to the next, from moment to moment even, people take on and develop different acculturation strategies and so present different forms of cultural identity; once again supporting our notion of *acculturation in movement.* Berry (2011) himself has recognised the temporal and situated nature of identities (as have Tajfel, 1981, and Moscovici, 1972) although research rarely examines the ways in which acculturation is a polyphasic and contradictory phenomenon. How often do our methodologies themselves explicitly allow such contradictions to emerge as something other than a methodological nuisance?

But perhaps the polyphasia of acculturation strategies is a 'special case' for mixed families and identities? That the experience of dual- or multi-cultural parentage brings with it the skills to move between cultures, to challenge negative cultural expectations and develop assertive identities? This is in part true (Hopkins, 2011; LaFromboise, Coleman & Gerton*,* 1993), and this particular research context would have only amplified these intercultural skills. However, there are lessons here for all forms of identity and acculturation. We have seen that cultural identities are always in process, always embedded in particular historical, social and political contexts and always

have the potential to change and transform. Acculturation strategies are inherently a product of social encounters, ideological expectations and the politics of identity (Bhatia, 2002). The focus here on mixed identities highlights the ways in which common sense *as well as* academic discourses may have often overplayed homogeneity and coherence of identities and cultures (Reicher, 2004; Howarth, 2009).

5.3 Conclusion

It has been difficult to do justice to the richness of the material, the creativeness of the methodology and the value of combining theoretical frameworks. We have argued that our analysis reveals the ongoing social construction of acculturation and the tensions pervading people's accounts of their cultural identities. Nevertheless it can be said that this particular research context is set to make such constructions arise. If cultural identities are context-dependent relational practices, then the context of the community arts project will shape the kinds of identity work displayed by the participants. Hence there are many limitations to address. Most obviously, the absence of non-migrant groups in the research. As Bowskill *et al* (2007) have commented, much research in this field "downplays the role of 'the majority' and locates responsibility for the outcomes of intercultural contact with those whose ability to influence acculturation may be constrained by wider hegemonic structures" (p. 795). Clearly, this study would have benefited from an analysis of acculturation practices in different settings, perhaps more 'everyday contexts', that do not encourage a critical awareness of the psychological politics of acculturation and also settings that promote an active rejection of cultural connections and intercultural identities. This must be a focus in future research.

As Madyaningrum and Sonn (2011) point out, it is important that we "investigate how involvement in a community arts project may promote positive psychological and social outcomes" (p. 359). It is equally important to examine what happens when disadvantaged young people do *not* have this kind of social support, critical awareness and opportunities for community involvement. What happens when negative stereotypes and expectations filter into the social identities and self-expectations of young people (as was reflected in extract 6), and people appear to reject all strategies of cultural maintenance and cultural contact? Do they have no social support and no social capital (Sammut 2011)? What are the psychological and societal costs of such marginalisation? Again these are questions to examine in further research.

What the project has shown is acculturation strategies are profoundly political *and* psychological as they are embedded in the politics of intercultural relations, social histories, family dynamics and systems of social support. As we have seen, particular contexts, particular family dynamics, particular community forums encourage an awareness of the politics of acculturation and provide some social psychological resources with which to challenge this and assert positive cultural identities. As Ratner (2000) has argued, "agency always operates within and through a social structure" (p. 421). It is important that our methodology enables a focus on the social structures that promote social change and agency in the context of acculturation. The use of novel, creative methods has brought the 'messy' contradictions of acculturation and cultural identities to the fore. It is certainly important that social science needs to choose its methods carefully (Moscovici, 1972). We need to think very carefully about the ways in which our methods actually construct and simplify our object of

study and also the ways in which we assume that using particular methods makes our research scientific. The research discussed here gives a small example of how we could do things differently.

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Strategies of Ethnocultural Groups

Strategies of Larger Society

2 Relationships Sought Among Groups

+

Assimilation   Integration

Marginalization Separation

-

+

Melting Pot   Multiculturalism

Exclusion   Segregation

-

-    +

-    +

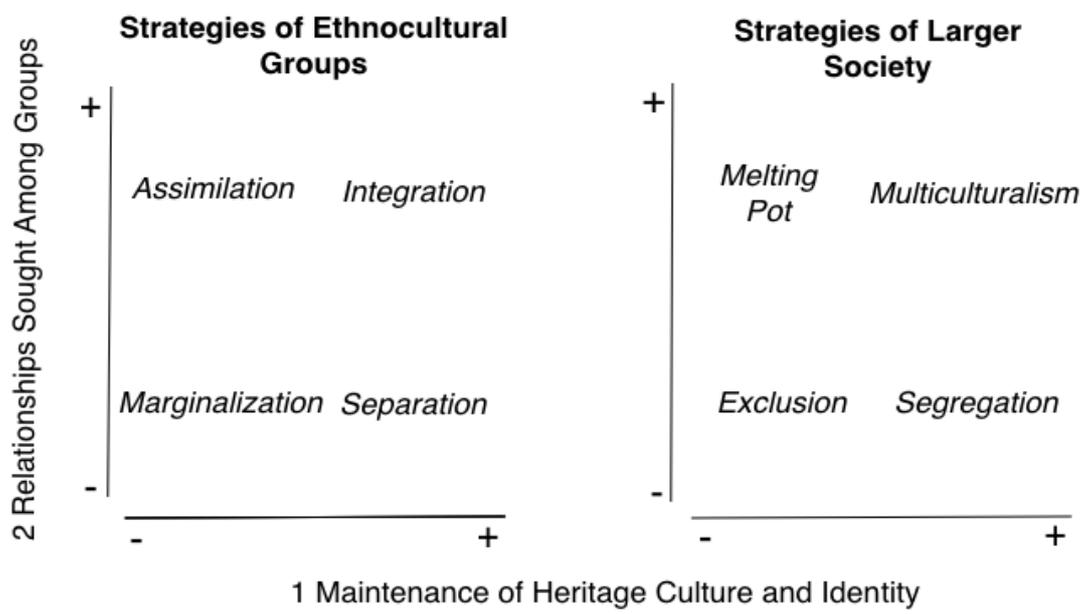1 Maintenance of Heritage Culture and Identity

Figure Caption

Figure 1:

Intercultural Strategies of Ethnocultural Groups and the Larger Society (redrawn after

Berry, 2011)