THE CONSTRUCTION OF RACIAL IDENTITY IN INFANTS OF MIXED PARENTAGE

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ABSTRACT

In recent years there has been much debate in this country around the issue of race, and specifically around the role of 'black' children placed trans-racially for adoption. Little attention has been focused on the situation of mixed-race infants in their natural families. This study aims to explore the origins of racial identity development in mixed-race infants; consider how family relationships affect this development; study some of the effects of parents own identity development on the development of racial identity in children; and examine how parents and children negotiate racial cultural and gender differences within the family.

The study was carried out in three phases; two intensive infant observations were conducted over several months; semi-structured interviews with five white mothers; and a second set of interviews was carried out with nine sets of parents, employing the 'life history' approach.

The thesis considers the current debate around interracial families. This debate is then placed within the wider discussion on the development of racial awareness, preference and identity, and the role of racism in contemporary society. Theories of the genesis of prejudice are discussed, as are the studies which consider the racial preferences of children. The condition of mixed-race people as viewed by the marginal theorists is addressed, and the nature of interracial sexual partnerships.

Previous studies have focused on racial awareness and preference. In order to focus on identity, the thesis discusses theories of identity development which encompass the sociological, cognitive and psychoanalytic perspectives. These theories were used as a basis for the first two phases of the study. These 'modernist' theories are critiqued, in the light of 'post-modernist' theories of race and identity on which the third phase is then based. These interviews concentrate on families' constructions of difference and identity.

After discussing the methodologies of previous studies in the area a methodology is set out for this study. The first two phases were aimed at discovering causal links between mother's pasts, their parenting behaviour and their children's emerging racial identities. In the third part the method aimed at obtaining parents' life stories, establishing narrative rather than causal links. Stories were analyzed to confirm similarities and differences in how families deal with race and culture issues.

The observations and interviews all showed that racial and cultural issues were significant in all the families, and formed part of the infants' milieu from a very early age. However these issues were dealt with very differently in various families. Some were concerned about 'race' and colour, while others were more focused on culture, religion or nationality. Conflict in some families became racialised, while in other families gender or cultural issues caused more difficulties. Racism was experienced by all the 'black' parents, but its effects were very variable. All the families felt that their children were in a process of developing positive 'mixed' identities. Class was found to be a critical factor which influenced the way racial identity was constructed.

The thesis concludes with a re-examination of the notions of 'race', 'identity' and 'development', and shows that the 'structural-developmental' model of identity development shared by social-work anti racist and psychoanalytic theory is too narrow and prescriptive, and should be replaced by a new theory of 'narrative identity' based on post-modernist insights.

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CHAPTER ONE
INTRODUCTION

The work for this thesis began in the mid 1980s when race and racism had become perhaps the most important and certainly the most contentious issues within the social work profession. For many white social work professionals this debate was, along with the earlier 'radical' critique of social work, one of the first real challenge to their basic notions of the aims of social work and the 'good society' it was aimed at promoting. It showed that there were other, equally valid positions, and that a complacent belief in the liberal status quo of the profession could lead to inequality and oppression. As the anti-racist critique advanced, it became evident that not only individual practitioners but also the structures of the profession were discriminatory. Possibly the biggest challenge to the liberal orthodoxy was the growing opposition to trans-racial adoption and the concomitant focus on natural inter-racial families.

Because of my own background as a white Jewish South African, issues of race and culture had been a central aspect of my own personal and political identity. However, the way the debate was framed in Britain was entirely different to that in South Africa, most specifically in its focus on personal relationships and racists rather than on political and economic struggle. I became involved in this debate, and felt that it was a legitimate area to study. Having just completed a training course at the Tavistock Centre, I felt that the method of infant observation which is used to train therapists, would be a germane and interesting method for this enquiry. This led to the development of the methods and concerns of the first part of the study, which consisted of two infant observations and five interviews with white mothers of 'mixed-race' children.

The purpose of the first part of the study was to observe the interactions between mothers and infants to see how the issue of race affected the relationship and specifically the identity development of the child. 'White' mothers were chosen because they are the group who were most problematised by the current anti-racist theory, which assumed that all 'black' mothers, having experienced racism, would be 'good enough' parents, at least in terms of the racial identity of their children. At this time anti-racist theory posited a

direct link between racism and racial identity, and assumed that because they would be subject to racism, the children would have to develop a black identity. The problem was therefore how positive this identity would be, and how the mother affected this development. Mothers were chosen because of the emphasis all theories placed on their centrality to children's development. The notion of 'identity' used in this first part of the study was the conventional 'structural-developmental' view, which conceives of identity as a hierarchy of psychological structures which develop and become more complex over time.

The two observations were conducted concurrently in 1986 and 1987. They largely appeared to confirm that race was an important factor in the mothers' relationships with the children, although the effects seemed quite subtle, and the mothers' perceptions of the issue changed over time as their children grew and circumstances changed.

The first set of interviews were based on the same premises as the observations and were meant to provide a wider perspective than only two families. The aim of both these stages was to seek commonalities and to begin to develop a 'theory' of early identity development in children of mixed parentage. They were limited to five interviews by the difficulty I had in finding appropriate subjects. These interviews confirmed the central role of race in the first years of the children's lives, but they showed that there was great diversity in the ways the families dealt with race. They also showed that culture, gender and class, which were not seen by anti-racist theory as fundamental aspects of 'black' identity, were at least as important as race in the life choices of the mothers and the identity development of the children. However, the current conceptions of identity and race made it difficult to conceptualise these factors in a theory of racial identity development.

The second part of the thesis consisted of nine interviews with both parents in inter-racial families. These interviews were conducted to remedy the methodological and theoretical deficits identified in the first part of the study. By the time they began, in 1993, new concepts of anti-racism and of identity had become available, though not in the social work literature. Writers such as Paul Gilroy, Philip Cohen and Stuart Hall had re-

examined current concepts of 'race' in the light of post-modernist theory. They developed notions of race which were wider than simply a response to racism, which itself was seen as a multi faceted phenomenon rather than a total phenomenon in society. Identity was seen as the process by which individuals and families made sense of their own situation, rather than as the acquisition of characteristics and traits. Class, culture and gender were therefore seen as integral components of identity rather than being added on to a core positive or negative racial identity. Identity was seen as based on 'difference' rather than 'race'. The concepts 'white' and 'black' were seen as constructions, developed in particular historical and social circumstances, rather than as essential types.

This set of interviews therefore introduced a new methodology and a new set of theoretical assumptions. The methodology was aimed at opening up the interviews so that parents would be able to provide their own narrative of how the family and children had come to where they were, how they constructed issues around identity and development, and how they made sense of their current situation. The narratives were treated as stories or 'texts' rather than more or less accurate accounts of individual histories. The technique used was the 'biographical' approach of unstructured interviewing. These interviews were aimed at exploring common and contrasting themes, rather than developing an over-arching theory of development.

The interviews confirmed the enormous diversity in the way inter-racial families make sense of issues of race and culture, and how these issues changed according to family circumstances. The children's identity development was seen to be equally diverse, discontinuous and dependent on many subtle influences, not only mother's behaviour. The father's role was seen as of equal importance in those families where both parents were part of the household and even in those where fathers lived apart. The interactions between the parents were also an integral part of this process.

At the end of the thesis I return to contemporary versions of the original anti-racist theories, and show how inadequate they are in dealing with these complex notions of identity. I develop the notion of 'narrative identity' which seems to provide a much

sounder basis for conceptualising 'racial' identity than the cumulative model provided by psychoanalysis and social work anti-racism.

The thesis as a whole therefore shows the development of my thinking about the question of identity development. In a sense the development of my own thinking has been analogous to that of the children I have studied, and shows how my understanding of the issue revealed many discontinuities and lacunae, but was enriched by the theoretical developments in the anti-racist field.

CHAPTER TWO
THE INTERRACIAL DEBATE

1.   INTRODUCTION

The debate about the role of racial differences and their impact on children's services has been raging in the United States for several decades, but only became a focus of concern in the social services in the United Kingdom during the 1980's. Central to the debate are the experiences of members of inter-racial families where the wider political issues are reflected in intimate personal relationships, and central to those families is the position of very young children whose development is dominated by powerful family forces.

The study aims to:

explore the origins of identity development in mixed-race infants;

consider how the infants' early relationships affect this development;

study some of the effects of parents' background and attitudes on the development of racial identity in children;

consider how identity is constructed within interracial families; and

consider how this relates to the wider social circumstances of the family;

develop a notion of identity which accounts for these processes.

The study also has the **methodological** aims of:

extending the use of infant observation techniques from psychotherapy training to research and evaluating their usefulness for this purpose

exploring the use of unstructured 'biographical' interviews as a tool for studying identity in inter-racial families.

In order to place the current study into context, some of the relevant literature relating to race relations, trans-racial adoption, the development of racial identity, the position of mixed-race people in society and theories of identity development will be discussed. Previous studies on the development of racial awareness and identity will also be considered, and their methodology will be analyzed. Explanations of the methodologies used in the study will be offered. Finally the thesis will present a new conception of how the identity of mixed-race children can be understood.

The term 'mixed-race' is used in this thesis despite the fact that it is not value-free and many people feel that these children should be described as 'black' (Small, 1986; Hayes, 1990). Much of this thesis is devoted to differentiating between the situations of children both of whose parents are black and children from inter-racial families. It would therefore be very confusing to use the term 'black' to describe both. In addition, all anti-racist theorists use the terms 'black', 'white' and 'race' so it seems to me contradictory to see the term 'mixed-race' as illegitimate. 'Children of mixed parentage', which I have also used, is very cumbersome in certain circumstances. 'Mixed-ethnicity' and Mixed-origin', which have also been used by some theorists, are no more satisfactory than 'mixed-race', because of their assumption that 'ethnicity' is somehow more real than 'race'. These terms also have the disadvantage of not being used by the families themselves or by professionals. Terms such as 'mulatto' and 'half-caste' are offensive and not used outside of quotations.

2.   TRANS-RACIAL ADOPTION

Race relations have become increasingly prominent in British society as a whole, and the personal social services in particular. Nowhere are these concerns more highlighted than in the area of child care policy and practice, especially fostering and adoption. These have changed over the years with the changing political and social climate (Gill and Jackson, 1983; Cheetham et al, 1981; Rhodes, 1993).

Before the 1960's, there was very little awareness of racial issues in the personal social services. The generally accepted philosophy was that everybody should be treated equally, and that services should be 'colour blind' (Nanton, 1989). By the mid 1960's it became apparent that there were a large number of black children remaining in institutional care while their white counterparts could be placed in substitute families. As a result of this, the British Adoption Project (B.A.P) was instituted to find homes for black children.

"...When B.A.P was conceived, racial background was considered a major handicap to placement." (Gill and   Jackson, 1983, 7)

The vast majority of the adoptive families were white.

At this time, placing black children with white families was considered to be a progressive step. Social workers felt that placing black children in white families would improve understanding on both sides and would be an example to the wider community that different races can live together. Indeed, subsequent follow-up studies on these children have shown that the adoptions were remarkably successful:

"In terms of what could be regarded as four crucial measures of outcome (relationships within the family, peer group, level of self-esteem and behaviour disorders) the research suggests that only a small number of these adoptions can be considered problematic." (Gill and Jackson, 1983, 131)

Johnson et al, speaking of American research, say:

"Among preschool children, transracially adopted children have been reported to develop a concept of blackness and of themselves that is more positive than that of black children adopted by black parents." (Johnson et al, 1987, 46)

Despite these positive findings, criticisms of trans-racial adoptions began to surface, often voiced by the growing number of black professionals. Small (1986), for example, challenged many of Gill and Jackson's conclusions. The criticisms fall into two interrelated categories:

Political criticisms

Political criticisms are concerned with the historically exploitative relationship between the black and white communities. In this view, children are yet another resource with which the white community enriches itself at the expense of the black community. The black community is thereby deprived of the very essence of its future - its own offspring. These critics point out that trans-racial adoption is a one-way flow of black children into white homes. They are particularly scathing of the 'colour blind' policies of the 1960's and 1970's (Penny and Best, 1990).

Psychological Criticisms

Psychological criticisms are twofold:

Problems of Isolation

It is asserted that growing up in white families will instil in black children a profound sense of separateness, depriving them of the intimate bonds which are essential to psychological well-being. The children are likely to become isolated and withdrawn. This isolation will extend to the extra-familial milieu which will inevitably reflect white social attitudes. Moreover, because they have been brought up in a white environment, the children will be isolated from the black community who would normally be a source of support for them. Thus their sense of isolation will be even further increased.

Identity Problems

It is argued that black children in white families will grow up with confused racial identities. Chestang, (1972) talking of the American experience says:

> "A child reared in a white family will lose contact with the black experience...Having been socialised largely to the white experience, such a child is likely to experience an identity crisis throughout his life; thus he will be truly fragmented." (p103)

In Britain Samuels (1979) has stated that:

> "The transracially adopted child is bound to undergo severe psychological
> and emotional problems of identity. Racially black and culturally white,
> what is his cultural inheritance?" (p238)

Not only will the children be confused, it is argued, but they will also suffer from low self-esteem because their white families will be unable to help them deal with the problems of racism in society.

> "All black children in Britain are constantly at risk of having their self-
> esteem eroded by the image of themselves as black in a society where
> white culture and white values predominate. For the black child brought
> up in a white family, this risk is increased because there are no black role
> models immediately available, and no black family members on hand to
> deal with negative experiences the child may undergo." (Mullender and
> Miller, 1985, 34)

These arguments are backed by a body of anecdotal evidence which shows that children often try to cover up their black skin, for example, by scrubbing the skin to get off the 'dirt' and putting on talcum powder (Mullender and Miller, 1985; Penny and Best, 1990; Maximé, 1993).

Policy Changes

As a result of these criticisms local authorities began to change their practices and by the mid 1980's a policy of same-race placement was adopted in most London Boroughs (Rhodes, 1992).

The political arguments against trans-racial adoption are not amenable to research. Research on the psychological consequences, both in the USA (Johnson et al, 1987) and in Britain (Gill and Jackson, 1983; Tizard and Phoenix, 1989, Bagley, 1993) has not supported the argument that black children in white families are worse off in terms of self-esteem, although they tend to be rather distanced from the black community.

Nevertheless, the arguments against trans-racial adoption are persuasive and are propounded by the majority of professionals (Hayes, 1990; Rhodes, 1992). The research itself has been accused of being imbued with ethnocentric assumptions (Small, 1991). In fact both sides have used research to bolster their arguments (Rhodes, 1992).

3. INTER-RACIAL FAMILIES

The above debate has been formulated mainly in terms of white **adoptive** families. However, many of these arguments apply equally to inter-racial families, especially if the mother is white. Attacks on miscegenation have been made for several centuries and often the children's confused identity has been a major component of the argument (Henriques, 1974; Benson, 1981). These arguments have historically emanated from the 'right', usually whites who fear that their 'superior' race will be tainted by 'inferior' stock.

Inter-racial families have been part of the dynamics of race relations in Britain for many years and were preceded by a long history of colonialism where British men had liaisons with black women outside this country (Henriques, 1974). Inter-racial families form an important part of the overall picture of race relations. As Benson points out:

> "Inter-racial unions are above all else the exceptions that prove the rule of ethnic differentiation, the outcome of deviations from a statistical and cultural norm...To study the everyday lives of inter-racial families then, is to study the nature of British race relations as it impinges on the lives of individuals." (1981, 1)

These families are therefore a microcosm of the larger society's way of dealing with race. They can be seen as examples either of racial harmony, a threat to the British tradition, or as a theft by the dominant culture of minority members (Banks, 1992). These families are 'natural' in the sense that, unlike adoptive families, they occur spontaneously and without the sanction of professionals.

Because race is such an important component of both social relationships and personal identity, racial identity and attitudes are likely to permeate these families in subtle ways

and could affect many of the families' interactions. Milner, (1983) points out that although 'race' is an abstract term denoting a group of people:

> "...Racial attitudes and identity...have their beginnings in the same milieu at the same time...as weaning, toilet training, etc." (p53)

4.   RACIAL ATTITUDES

Psychological Theories of Prejudice

Racial attitudes have been studied for several decades, both in terms of how they develop and the effect they have on individuals and groups. In the 1930's and 1940's the thrust of most of the research was directed at trying to explain the nature of racial prejudice, discrimination and ethnocentricity. Most of the theories developed at this time, using psychodynamic concepts, explained racial discrimination in terms of the psychopathological states of the discriminator (Milner, 1983). The two most prominent of these theories were The Frustration-Aggression Theory developed by Dollard et al (1939), and The Authoritarian Personality, developed by Adorno et al (1950).

Dollard

Dollard et al, writing in the mid 1930s and using the Freudian concept of the dynamic nature of aggression, postulated that when frustration builds up it is expressed by the individual as aggression. When, for some reason, the aggression is not directed at its true object, the cause of the frustration, it is 'displaced' to another object. Thus the day-to-day frustrations of relationships, jobs, etc, become displaced towards an easily identified social group, such as Jews and black people, who are safe objects of aggression in that they are unlikely to retaliate.

The problem with this theory is that, although scapegoating does very commonly occur in human relationships, it cannot explain why racial prejudice is so endemic in society. As Milner (1983) points out, there are problems when this theory is applied to large social groups:

"Firstly there is the issue of masses of people experiencing similar frustrations at the same time. Secondly there is the question of identifying both appropriate and inappropriate targets...While the scapegoat theory can help to account for individual prejudice,...it requires the assistance of a variety of social and cognitive factors, such as ideology and conformity to social norms if it is to explain how these individual reactions are translated into collective, coherent actions." (p27)

Rex (1986) adds that this theory is more likely to explain the behaviour of **oppressed** groups who are likely to be more frustrated than the oppressors.

After the Second World War a number of social scientists sought to explain the phenomena of Nazism and racism. They sought to answer the question of how racism develops in individuals. The most influential of these studies was undertaken by Adorno and his colleagues.

Adorno

Adorno and his colleagues tried to apply Freudian theories of personality and psychopathology to social phenomena.

Adorno hypothesised that:

"...The political, economic and social convictions of an individual often form a broad and coherent pattern, as if bound together by a 'mentality' or 'spirit' and that this pattern is an expression of deep-lying trends in his personality. The major concern was with the potentially fascistic individual." (1950, 1)

Adorno and his co-workers tested this by using a wide range of techniques, including factual questionnaires, opinion-attitude scales, projective questionnaires and in-depth individual and group interviews. They classified the potentially fascistic individual as having an 'Authoritarian Personality'.

Authoritarian personalities were not only likely to be anti-semitic and ethnocentric, they were also likely to be resistant to change; conform strictly to social norms; and idealise

authority figures such as parents and charismatic leaders. Adorno concluded that:

> "The most crucial result of the present study...is the demonstration of a close correspondence in the type of approach and outlook a subject is likely to have in a wide variety of areas, ranging from the most intimate features of family and sex adjustment through relationships to other people in general, to religion and to social and political philosophy." (1950, 971)

Adorno postulated that there is a causal link between certain patterns of parent-child relationships and the development of the authoritarian personality:

> "Thus a basically hierarchical, exploitative, authoritarian parent-child relationship is apt to carry over into a power-oriented, exploitatively dependent attitude towards one's sex partner and one's God, and may well culminate in a political philosophy and social outlook which has no room for anything but strong and disdainful rejection of whatever is relegated to the bottom." (1950, 972)

Adorno's theory is significant in that he goes much further than Dollard in explaining the roots of racist attitudes by seeing those attitudes in the context of a coherent personality. Moreover, he demonstrates that racist attitudes are neither inherent nor an inevitable consequence of frustration. They are largely the result of a complex process of social relationships within the family. The consequences of this are that it is at least theoretically possible for racism to be diminished or even eradicated by a change in child-rearing practices.

Allport however, offers a cautionary note:

> "The basic fact is firmly established - prejudice is more than an incident in many lives; it is often lockstitched into the very fabric of personality...to change it, the whole pattern of life would have to be altered." (1979, 142)

Allport

So far we have been discussing the dominant or majority group and the racial attitudes within it. But what are the psychological consequences of being a victim of prejudice?

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Allport (1979) suggests that there are traits which are characteristic of the victim of racial prejudice. These traits develop because of the need to use **ego-defenses** or ways of defending the psyche against the trauma of abuse and low expectation. The ego-defenses are divided into two categories:

Extropunitive - where the victim blames the outer cause of his handicap, and

Intropunitive - where the victim either blames himself for the situation or at least takes responsibility for adjusting to it.

These traits occur in various ways and combinations in different individuals but not necessarily in every victim. They are, however, widespread and offer a cause for further discrimination because they confirm the preconceptions of the oppressors. Not all the traits are negative, and suffering can lead to moral and spiritual upliftment. Ritchie (1973) confirms that victims of ethnocentrism are not always psychologically adversely affected and he chides contemporary social science for being over-concerned with pathology (see also McAdoo, 1988). He says of psychology that:

> "It has been preoccupied with the sources of prejudice in white society and the observable and measurable effects of it. Research of this kind has merit but needs to be supplemented by more sophisticated and subtle inquiry into...the victim as a person." (p327)

Both Allport and Adorno believe that prejudice is based in harsh and inconsistent parental behaviour, but Allport's theory is silent on the origins of the ego-defenses which characterise the personalities of victims. Little has been written about the development of black or other minority identity in terms of the early parent-child relationship (McAdoo, 1988). Despite this it seems logical to assume that early childhood experiences will influence the development of identity and attitudes as much in black people as in whites.

Social Theories of Prejudice

Comprehensive as they are, psychological theories have severe limitations in explaining racial attitudes. By defining the racist as a deviant Adorno precludes an explanation of large-scale racism as manifested in societies like Nazi Germany or South Africa. In fact, psychological factors can **never** fully account for racist behaviour - the growth and decline of Nazism in Germany was surely not caused by a change of child-rearing practices. Wider social and political forces must be taken into account in any adequate explanation - a point which Adorno concedes (p972).

In another classic study Sherif (1966) demonstrated the social dimension of prejudice. Sherif used as his subjects 'normal' American boys attending a summer camp. He divided them into teams and created a competitive environment between them. Soon the members of the one team behaved towards the other in a manner very reminiscent of racist behaviour, even among members of the other team who had been close friends. He showed that group processes can be very powerful determinants of inter-group attitudes and behaviour. The psycho-social theories indicate that the potential for racist behaviour is evident in any social situation in which groups are differentiated from each other.

In the larger society in Britain and the USA, black people are regularly and systematically discriminated against, even in situations where no overt racism is evident. This has been shown in a number of areas such as housing, employment, education, etc. These situations are defined by Rex (1986) as instances of 'institutional racism'. Institutional racism has several meanings, but the one I will concentrate on here is so-called 'unconscious racism'. Rex contrasts this with the 'psychological racism' which is dealt with by Adorno and Dollard, and he claims:

> "Much more important is the racism inherent in the belief system of a society...Even in a society committed to universalism and equality of opportunity, such common-sense knowledge is marked by the use of stereotypes of minority individuals which are derogatory to them or which place them in questionable settings... Even liberal culture in such a society is impregnated with what are in effect racist and paternalist assumptions..." (p110)

Institutional racism therefore permeates the very structures of which Western society is constituted.

Cultural Racism

There is yet a further way in which racism permeates our society. The very language and culture with which we grow up is imbued with racist assumptions and beliefs. At its simplest this is demonstrated by the association in the English language between the words 'black' and 'dark' with evil, mystery and fear. The Shorter Oxford English Dictionary defines 'black' as, amongst other things:

> "...Soiled, dirty. Having dark purposes, malignant; deadly; baneful, disastrous, sinister. Foul, iniquitous, atrocious. Dismal, gloomy, sad ...."

In contrast 'white' is defined as:

> "...morally or spiritually pure or stainless; spotless, innocent. Free from malignity or evil intent; innocent, harmless, esp. as opposed to something characterised as black...Propitious; auspicious, happy..."

These associations do not necessarily mean that racism is caused by the use of the words in the language - 'black' is used in many languages and cultures as a derogatory term (Gergen, 1967). Also, discrimination does not necessarily depend on linguistic negatives, and groups are discriminated against whose names have no pejorative connotation in the language (Harbin and Williams, 1966). Nevertheless, language is a vital channel of communication for children and the ubiquity of the negative connotations of the word 'black' is likely to have some effect on both black and white children. Rex (1986) says that language, as it applies to social objects, is loaded with aesthetic and moral meanings. If society is to rid itself of racism then the language in common use must be reformed.

In English literature, including children's literature, black people are often depicted as either stupid, lazy and subservient or malignant, uncivilised and savage (Milner, 1983).

Overview

In order to give a full picture of the nature of racial prejudice and the effect it has on children, we must take into account the three dimensions discussed above:

> **the psychological dimension** - including the individual personalities of those involved and their antecedent experiences, especially their relationship with their parents;

> **the social dimension** - including the structure of groups, institutions, and the social context in which the people are interacting;

> **the cultural dimension** - including the elements of language, symbolism and belief that make up the fabric of the cultures of those involved.

5. IMPLICATIONS

If early childhood experiences, largely within the family, are central to the development of racial attitudes and identity, and if all white people display some measure of ethnocentric or racist behaviour and attitudes, then it is easy to understand the anxiety of those who disapprove of trans-racial adoption and inter-racial families on the grounds that the children are likely to be given negative self-images by white parents. No matter how egalitarian or even anti-racist the parents' opinions are, they still carry the cultural baggage which comes with being white in a Western society. This means that parents are likely to convey their, often unconscious, attitudes and beliefs in very subtle ways as part of the everyday interactions which make up family life.

Benson (1981), in her study of inter-racial families, considers them to be a microcosm of race relations in contemporary Britain. In any inter-racial family there are likely to be manifestations of the psychological, structural and cultural dimensions of race relations.

The psychological dimension is likely to manifest itself, firstly in the parents' own histories, their reasons for coming together, attitudes towards child care and race, style of parenting and interaction with the child, and secondly, in the child's growing sense of self in relation to parents and the outside world.

The structural dimension is likely to manifest itself in the parents' socio-economic status and in relationships with family, friends, and the different racial groups they come into contact with.

The cultural dimension is likely to manifest itself in the use of language in the family, accents, meanings and connotations to the words 'black', 'white', 'dark', etc, the music listened to, the toys played with, and so on.

The next chapter will consider research into the development of racial awareness and identity, but it must already be clear from the above discussion that the process by which a child develops a racial identity is very complex. Bibby's statement that:

> "Black families are better able to prepare black children for life in what remains a predominantly white society." (Mitchell, 1988, 2)

which is representative of current policy, hides more than it tells us. We should rather ask such questions as:

> Are there really such categories as 'black' and 'white' families?

> How do different black, inter-racial and white families differ in the ways they prepare children for the outside world?

> What are the most important aspects of family life which determine the development of children's identities?

This study aims to highlight some of these issues.

Going beyond statements of political belief allows one to investigate the actual **processes** by which racial identity develops. The simple question of whether a particular type of family is 'good' or 'bad' for black children can be superseded by more complex issues of **how** families affect identity. The situation then becomes less well defined, but perhaps far more interesting and relevant to the lives of children rather than politicians (Thoburn and Rashid, 1992).

The professional debate is characterised by polar oppositions which may hide the real issues for the families concerned. The concepts 'good enough parenting/bad parenting; black/white; positive identity/negative identity are presented as objective entities which can be attributed to children and families. Both sides share this view, so that the only issue becomes **which** families fit the particular criteria. Both sides also see identity as a set of cultural traits and social beliefs which are transmitted from one generation to another, most especially by the mother.

The above discussion shows that this view may be couched much too narrowly - it is entirely possible for children to experience both good and bad parenting, to see themselves as 'black', 'white' or 'mixed-race' in different contexts and to feel both positive and negative about their racial identity. Furthermore, the concepts 'race', 'culture', 'black', 'white', 'identity' and 'racial identity', all of which are taken for granted in the debate, are not self evident, and themselves need to be further unpacked.

This study focuses mainly on infants and very young children, and will consider them mainly in the context of the mother-child relationship, the primary relationship at this time of life.

The study was conducted in three stages:

        close observation of two infants

        interviews with the mothers of the two and three other mothers

All the mothers in the first two stages were white, because it was assumed that the task of a black mother bringing up a black child is very different from that of an equivalent white mother. The third stage, which was undertaken some time after the first two stages was informed by the new 'post-modern' anti-racism, and both parents were interviewed when possible.

Some of the questions dealt with in the first part of the study are:

What, if any, clues are there to the development of racial identity in mixed-race infants, and how do they manifest themselves?

What is the process by which these children develop a sense of racial identity?

How do the conscious and unconscious attitudes of white mothers towards black people affect their children's identities?

What are the familial, social and psychological factors which determine why some white women choose black partners, and how does this choice affect the relationship with their children?

What is the relationship between the development of racial awareness and racial identity?

In the third part the assumptions underlying some of these questions are challenged, most importantly:

> The view that either mother's beliefs or societal norms **determine** either her choice of partner or the identity of the child

> The total centrality of the mother in early identity development

The unified notion of a 'racial' identity

The transmission of cultures, beliefs and identity between generations

The following chapters will focus on some of the theories about development of racial identity in black, white and mixed-race children, and general theories of child development before looking at the present study. In the final chapters the concepts developed will be re-examined in the light of current anti-racist thinking, and the theoretical, methodological and practice implications of the findings will be drawn out.

CHAPTER THREE

RACIAL ATTITUDES AND MARGINALITY

1. INTRODUCTION

The history of research into the racial attitudes of children goes back to the 1930's (Horowitz, 1936), and a long tradition of study has developed in this area. The basic questions which these studies have addressed are:

What racial preferences do children have when they choose potential friends?

How early do these preferences begin?

How do they change as children grow older?

With which racial groups do children identify themselves?

2. THE 'DOLL' STUDIES

Studies of White Childrens' Attitudes

The first major investigations were carried out by the Horowitzes, a husband and wife team, in the southern states of the USA. The Horowitzes (1936, 1939) were interested in looking at the development of racial attitudes in white children. In order to study this phenomenon they developed a technique in which they presented children with photographs of black people and white people and asked them which ones they would prefer to be their friends, take home, etc. Many researchers (eg, Goodman, 1946; Ammons, 1950; Morland, 1962, 1963) followed the Horowitzes'. The body of research which used these methods is referred to collectively as the 'Doll' studies.

Although these studies are methodologically problematic they have produced detailed information on certain aspects of racial identity and their findings have been remarkably consistent in some areas.

The Horowitzes found that, contrary to common conceptions of childhood, children as young as three years were aware of racial differences and, more importantly, they showed signs of racial **preference** at these very young ages.

The importance of the doll studies in relation to white children is that they have shown that:

> children are able to identify racial differences and display racial preferences at a very young age;

> that these preferences change over time; and

> that the kind of parenting they receive is important in determining their attitudes.

The true significance of these studies is only revealed, however, when they are compared with the equivalent findings of studies of black children.

Studies of Black Children

The pioneers in the study of black children's attitudes and identity were Kenneth and Mamie Clark, black Americans who worked in the 30's and 40's (Clark and Clark, 1939, 1947). The Clarks divided racial identity into three categories, racial awareness, racial preference, and self-identification.

After showing the children the black and white dolls, they asked eight questions to elicit the perception of these three variables. The results of these studies were most extraordinary, the more so in that they have been replicated many times by other researchers. They found that black children were:

more racially aware than whites;

more adept than their white counterparts in recognising the colours of the dolls; and

able to discern between the dolls at a younger age and more accurately.

These findings in themselves are not controversial. One might expect children who are subject to racism to be more sensitive to racial stimuli.

The most unexpected results were in the racial preference and self-identification categories. The Clarks found that the majority of black children preferred the **white** dolls, and that a significant number of black children **identified** themselves with the white dolls. To the Clarks this showed that black children at a very young age internalise society's view of them as inferior. By identifying with white dolls, black children are rejecting their own race and demonstrating the results of damaged racial identity:

> "The fact that young Negro children would prefer to be white reflects their knowledge that society prefers white people...It is clear, therefore, that the self-acceptance or self-rejection found so early in the child's developing complex of racial ideas reflects the awareness and acceptance of prevailing racial attitudes in his community." (Clark, 1955, in Wilson, 1987, 44)

The Clarks found no difference between children from different areas, but older children tended to mis-identify less, and lighter skinned children tended to identify more as whites. The Clarks did not differentiate between children from black families and children from inter-racial families, but relied purely on skin colour.

Since the Clarks conducted their pioneering investigations, many other researchers have followed. (Brand et al, 1974; Aboud and Skerry, 1984) The methods have been refined, for example, by matching dolls with subjects in terms of sex and by modifying facial features. More variables such as socio-economic status, inter-racial contact and area of residence have been controlled. Wilson (1987) identifies five main influences on black children's racial identity; sex, age, skin colour, socio-economic status, and parental

attitude - positive parental attitude towards blackness tended to foster a stronger black identity.

None of these factors tended to have overwhelming significance, and there is no consensus amongst researchers about their significance. They added to rather than challenged the Clarks' findings. An important development has been that, since the 1960s, there has been a noticeable decrease in the proportion of children who mis-identify. By the beginning of the 1970's, researchers such as Hraba and Grant (1970), and Fox and Jordan (1973), were discovering a reversal of the previous patterns in the research.

Milner (1983) explains the change by the emergence of black consciousness as a political and social phenomenon. This has allowed black children to feel more comfortable in identifying with black heroes, and concomitantly, to identify with black dolls. Milner and the researchers he quotes do not, however, provide an explanation for the mechanisms by which this change may have taken place.

The doll studies have been criticised methodologically on many grounds (See Chapter 4). The problems with this line of research are not, however, only methodological. Implicit in both the construction of these studies and the explanation of the results are assumptions which seriously undermine their value in giving a comprehensive picture of racial identity and its development:

The first assumption is that misidentification has a direct link with low self-esteem. The second, more fundamental assumption, is that an equivalence between 'identity' and 'identification' is assumed.

As regards the first assumption, Tizard and Phoenix (1989) point out:

> "Self-esteem and mental health do not appear to be necessarily tied to attitudes to race...The belief that there is a 'positive black identity' which must be acquired by black children is over-simplified and presumptive."
> (p435)

Even if it was found that black children do have lower self-esteem than white children (as may be likely) this still would not establish the link. Only if it was found that black children who mis-identify have a lower self-esteem than those who identify correctly would some sort of link be shown. Other recent research has confirmed the lack of a relationship between the degree of identification with racial groups and level of self-esteem (Milner, 1983; Spencer, 1984; Jackson et al 1988). As it is, none of the doll studies has tried to establish a more global picture of the individual mis-identifiers and their families. Such a project would point at some of the more subtle aspects of identity and the equally subtle influences on it.

If racial identity is made up of many subtle components, then the doll studies are very blunt instruments with which to measure it. Admittedly, identification with a group must play a large part in identity, but it surely cannot be the only, or even the defining variable (Aboud and Skerry, 1984). Racial identity must then be part of the child's global personal identity and is not a discrete set of ideas or behaviours. Identification is only one of the mechanisms by which identity is built up.

None of the classic doll studies has directly addressed the racial identity of children of mixed parentage. Where they were mentioned, they were usually considered to be halfway between black and white children in their identifications (Wilson, 1987).
Despite all these drawbacks, the body of knowledge gained from the considerable number of doll studies has enabled researchers to learn much about the way children identify with social groups and how their own social conditions determine the way this is carried out.

The doll studies were essentially 'snapshots' of children's preferences at a particular time. But what are the mechanisms by which racial identity develops over time?

3.   THEORIES OF RACIAL IDENTITY DEVELOPMENT

Goodman
According to Goodman's (1952) three stage formulation of the development of racial attitudes, the child first learns about race and how to differentiate between the races. This

is followed by the affective or emotional concomitants to this knowledge which are finally elaborated into adult-like prejudices, stereotypes and discriminatory behaviour. These stages are not to be considered as completely discrete and there is a definite interaction between them.

This was the first attempt at a developmental approach to racial attitude, but the problem with this theory is that it is too sketchy to be of much use. It is silent on how children become racially aware and how this awareness develops into feelings and behaviour about race. It is also probably wrong. Clark (1955) says:

> "The child's first awareness of racial difference is...associated with some rudimentary evaluation of these differences...the child cannot learn what racial group he belongs to without being involved in a larger pattern of emotions, conflicts and desires which are part of his growing knowledge about what society thinks of his race." (in Milner, 1983, 109)

Katz

A more comprehensive schema is proposed by Katz (1976). Katz's schema involves eight overlapping stages, starting with early observation of racial cues before age three and ending with attitude crystallisation, in which the child's attitudes become stable and consistent with his environment.

Katz's model provides a more elaborate view of the development of attitudes than does Goodman's, but it is heavily biased towards cognitive development and more or less ignores the emotional and familial factors which have been highlighted by Adorno and others. He also emphasises the later stages and is rather less concerned with the earliest manifestations of racial awareness. Katz's model is a linear model of development and there is little room for attitudes to change or to be modified - they simply become more complex and crystallised.

Aboud and Skerry

Aboud and Skerry (1984) contend is that racial attitudes develop as part of the general

socio-cognitive developmental processes responsible for children's attitudes. Their model postulates three interacting domains of development: the affective, the perceptual and the cognitive.

According to this theory, racial awareness begins at about age four. The sequence of development is:

> attitude towards own group;

> perceived similarity of self to own-group;

> perceived similarity/dissimilarity towards others;

> cognitive response of classifying/labelling others;

Own-group attitude development is first dominated by the affective domain, but both affective and perceptual domains are necessary in the development of own-group attitudes. At first the focus is egocentric and other group members are only seen as different from the self, but are not themselves differentiated. They are largely related to in terms of how well they meet the child's needs.

As affective differentiation declines, perceptual differentiation increases in the form of own-group/other-group distinctions, and the child now sees himself as a group member, different from members of the other-group:

> "In this way other-group distancing may be seen as a consequence of the development of own-group affiliation, first in the affective, and then in the perceptual and cognitive domains." (1984, 22)

The focus therefore progresses from the self to the own-group to the other-group. At the same time the differentiation progresses from the affective to the perceptual to the cognitive domain. This model is different from those previously discussed in that it does not postulate a linear growth of racial awareness, attitude and identity. Racial attitudes

are seen to be part of a whole constellation of factors which influence children and their relationship to the world and to other people.

Discussion

A common factor of these theories is that they are theories of racial **awareness** and **attitude** rather than racial **identity**. Awareness and attitude are essential components of racial identity but, as with identification, they are only part of a larger whole. Because research in this area was precipitated by psychologists and sociologists wanting to know more about the nature of racial prejudice, they tended to focus on the aspects of identity which were most obvious in situations of inter-racial conflict. This gives the research a peculiar bias in that black identity is usually portrayed as only a reaction to white prejudice. The result of this is that the positive aspects of black children's experiences are often passed over. Another reason why awareness and attitude may have been favoured is that they are methodologically easier to quantify than identity, and are therefore more attractive for researchers to study.

By not focusing on identity these researchers miss out on an important dimension of the inter-racial situation, ie how black children **experience** their situation. Identity represents the interface between self-perception and attitudes towards others.

None of the theories discussed in this chapter refer to the development of mixed-race children, and how this may differ from black or white children.

4.   MARGINAL THEORY

What kind of person would we expect the child from an inter-racial family to become? Since the late 1930's sociologists and psychologists have been pondering this question. The first to do so was Park who proposed the theory of the 'Marginal Man'. This theory was first applied to Jews and other immigrant groups in the United States who were seen as being caught between two cultures - their original culture, and the indigenous culture of the United States. The theory was soon extended to native Americans who were the

products of two different **races** rather than cultures. Americans of mixed parentage were seen as sharing a similar condition to immigrants.

Park

According to Park's theory, people who are placed in a 'marginal' situation by society share not only similar social status, but also tend to have similar psychological responses to it. They therefore display characteristic personality traits which distinguish them from the general population. Park was arguing against contemporary theories and beliefs that racial characteristics are due to inherent differences in 'blood lines'. He accepted that different races have different traits, and even that 'mulattoes' are superior in intelligence to negroes, but he said:

> "I am convinced...that what I call the mentality of the racial hybrid...is very largely due to the situation in which his mixed origin inevitably puts him. He is biologically the product of divergent racial stocks, but just because of that fact he is, at the same time, the cultural product of two distinct traditions. He is, so to speak, a cultural as well as a racial hybrid." (1964, 382)

Park attributed the mulattoes' higher intelligence to the increased 'stimulus' to which they are subjected by their role in society and the internal conflict it engenders. He went on to discuss the 'moral qualities' or personality of mulattoes:

> "They are...more enterprising than the Negroes, more restless, aggressive, and ambitious...The mulatto and the mixed blood are often sensitive and self-conscious to an extraordinary degree." (1964, 387)

Park believed that people of mixed parentage display both positive and negative sides to their personality. They are intelligent and sensitive, but also aggressive and socially isolated. They tend to be obsessed by their condition and their ambivalent feelings toward the dominant population whose values and culture they share, but from whose ranks they have been excluded. People of mixed parentage who are marginalised by society display 'neurotic' personality traits. These traits, he says, are due to internal conflict. Every person needs to act in consistency with other people and, according to

social rules, when this is not possible, for instance, when different rules conflict, the individual feels unease and internal conflict which is acted out in neurotic behaviour.

> "The psychoanalysts are probably right when they say that 'neurosis is one of many ways of meeting various difficulties in his relations with his fellow man', and that the study of these pathological conditions in the individual cannot be undertaken without throwing light also on the inner nature and meaning of the social institutions themselves in regard to which the difficulties have arisen." (Park, 1964, 362)

The most important of these institutions is the family, whose influence on personality development is paramount. Wider societal norms are also important, especially as they often determine the structure and mode of functioning of the family. Because the marginal man originates in a family in which there are likely to be conflicting, or often confused, mores and child-rearing patterns, he is likely to develop pathological personality traits. In the urban, cosmopolitan milieu in which much of the racial hybridisation takes place, social mores are indeed poorly defined and confused and thus the inner city becomes fertile ground for the development of marginal men who manifest pathological personalities.

Stonequist

Stonequist went even further than Park in emphasising the negative and painful sides of the marginal condition. According to Stonequist the marginal condition is only one of the three stages in the life cycle of people in marginal situations.

The Pre-marginal Stage

Children of mixed parentage initially identify with the dominant white group whom they admire and to whom they hope to belong. Unfortunately, this phase is short-lived and the children quickly discover that they are not accepted by white society. This leads to a crisis of rejection where the children suddenly realise that their hopes are bound to be frustrated and this crisis leads to a sense of confusion, disarray and feelings of being overwhelmed. This crisis is the transition from the first to the second phase.

The Marginal Stage

This phase is characterised by intense feelings of ambivalence. Having been rejected by white society, children of mixed parentage identify strongly with the black population. They are still, however, unable to shake off their underlying longing to be part of the dominant group and they see themselves from two conflicting points of view. Their attitude towards the white group alternates between idealisation and denigration and the black community, by contrast, is seen either as a safe family who shares the discrimination against them, or as a hated prison from which they cannot escape. The marginal phase, according to Stonequist, can persist throughout their lives, but it can equally be a short transition to equilibrium.

The Stage of Adjustment

The final phase in the lives of people of mixed parentage comes about when there is some sort of assimilation or accommodation to their condition. This can take one of three forms:

assimilation into the dominant group;

assimilation into the subordinate group; or

accommodation between the two.

Of these the first is obviously the most difficult and can require a degree of deception. One way of assimilating into the black community is to become an advocate and leader in black politics so that the internal conflict is resolved by splitting off the hated and envied 'white' part of themselves and identifying only with the black part. Another way is for people of mixed parentage to become mediators between the two communities. These people are able to sublimate the internal conflict and, while identifying with the black community, they use their knowledge of the white community to effect reconciliation.

Discussion

Park and Stonequist, and the other marginality theorists who followed them, have made an important contribution to the study of race relations. They have shown how the conflicts in the wider society can be reflected in the internal psychological conflicts which affect the most intimate aspects of the personality and personal relationships. They also point to the family as the primary forum in which these conflicts are acted out.

Stonequist's contribution is particularly interesting because he postulates a developmental cycle of the marginal condition. Unfortunately there are few, if any, longitudinal studies of children of mixed parentage which may have corroborated his thesis. It remains unclear when, why and under what conditions, the transitions to the different stages take place. It is possible that the transition from the first to the second stage occurs when the perceptual and cognitive modes take over from the purely affective mode in Aboud and Skerry's (1984) model or the transition from the **pre-operational** to the **concrete operational** stages of Piaget's (1953) theory. The crisis would then occur when the child is able to categorise racial groups. However it is clear from Stonequist's writings that the crisis occurs in adolescence or even early adulthood and is related to the child leaving home and attaining an adult identity, corresponding to Erikson's (1977) stage of **Identity vs Role Confusion.**

The theory of marginality is important in another way - it differentiates the psychological effects of being a member of **both** the dominant and subordinate groups from those of being a member of an oppressed minority. Contrast Elkins' (1959) description of southern slaves in America, as described in Simpson and Yinger (1985):

> "...There is good evidence that the 'Sambo' of fable and story is not wholly a figment of the imagination. In North American (sic) there were strong elements of docility, irresponsibility, laziness, and childish dependence among the slaves."[1] (p113)

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[1] Simpson and Yinger describe 2 categories for this phenomenon: those which emphasise the effects of oppression on victims, and those which emphasise the individual and collective ability to resist the effects of oppression. This is similar to the different foci of Park and

with Park's neurotic, hyper-sensitive and intelligent marginal man. Essentially the difference seems to be that minority group members deal with their anger by repressing or introjecting it (Allport, 1979) whereas marginal people deal with anger by acting out ambivalence or sublimating it to other activities (Park, 1964).

The marginal theory has many critics and the above conclusions are by no means supported by all the researchers.

The first criticism is that the personalities described are ideal types. Many of the personality traits ascribed to 'marginal men' are equally applicable to members of oppressed minorities. Johnson and Nagoshi, for instance conclude that:

> "Stigma is the biggest factor in maladjustment of offspring of inter-racial marriages...Other variables - psychiatric problems of parents, more conflict, identity problems, cultural marginality, that have been claimed to exist...are not significant in Hawaii."[2] (1986, 283)

It is very difficult to separate a marginal person from a member of an oppressed group, or even a majority group member who is somehow alienated from the mainstream or torn between different social pressures. Additionally, the term 'marginality' has been applied to many types of individuals and groups. Stonequist himself described various groups, including Europeanised Africans, westernised orientals, American negroes, immigrants, etc, as marginal people, and Mann says:

> "...More and more individuals and kinds of people have been brought forward to swell a throng that was already dense when Stonequist wrote his book." (1973, 216)

The second criticism is that of subjective/objective confusion. It is unclear whether

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Stonequist regarding marginality.

[2]Johnson and Nagoshi claim that there is no stigma attached to interracial marriage in Hawaii, and are therefore controlling for this variable in their study.

marginality is defined objectively as applying to all immigrants from different cultures or children of inter-racial unions, etc, or whether it applies to those people who **feel** torn between two cultures or races. Similarly, as Simpson and Yinger point out:

> "Discussions of marginality do not always distinguish between measures that are used to define the condition and measures that are presumed consequences of it." (1985, 123)

Individuals may avoid the consequences, for example, by identifying totally with one group, but are they still marginal?

A third qualification of the theory is that it confuses individual and group marginality. There must be a difference between someone who is, for instance, the only Chinese person in a small English village, and someone who is a member of the Bengali community in Tower Hamlets. Both are 'marginal men' as the term is defined, but their experience of culture conflict must be very different. In order to deal with this problem some theorists have proposed the concept of a 'marginal culture', ie, a social structure in which marginality itself becomes a social norm. Gordon says that if the individual is conditioned from birth into the marginal situation; shares the marginal experience with a large number of other similar individuals; and is socialised to expect a marginal position in society, then:

> "...He is not a true 'marginal' individual, in the defined sense, but a participant member of a **marginal culture,** every bit as real and complete to him as is the nonmarginal culture to the nonmarginal man." (1978, 271)

The fourth criticism of the theory is more general, and is based on the assumptions which it accepts about race relations. Marginal theory accepted contemporary prevailing racist attitudes, ie the 'superiority' of 'mulattoes', but attributed this to social rather than genetic forces. Moreover, as Wilson says:

> "Marginality, like the whole 'problem' view of mixed race children, appeals to sociologists' sense of the tensions which exist between the individual and society." (1987, 20)

Sociologists, she believes, assume that macrocosmic tensions must be reflected in the individual microcosm. The internal conflict which is seen as the result of social tensions is therefore an assumption of the sociologists rather than a finding of their research. It may be the case that it is relatively easy for an individual to live in the 'marginal area' of group relations and not necessarily suffer severe internal conflict. If both identities are valued and embraced, the conflict between them may be minimalised, but this would probably be possible only in societies which are relatively tolerant of minorities and differences.

Despite all these severe criticisms of the marginality theory, it remains a powerful conceptual tool and seems intuitively to make sense. It would be hard to imagine that someone who is subject to contradictory social expectations and identities would not have **some** difficulties in resolving them, although this need not necessarily lead to a 'marginal personality'. This theory has been borne out in several studies and is also the basis for one of the criticisms of trans-racial adoption which was discussed in Chapter 1.

The marginality theory is largely a theory about internal conflict and its psychological effects as it applies to adults. In this respect it can only show what will eventually be the consequences for children of mixed parentage when they grow up. Very little has been written about marginality in young children. Only Stonequist has taken a developmental stance regarding the theory and according to his version young children of mixed parentage identify exclusively as whites and experience little conflict until much later when they realise that this identification is illusory.

Research has been quoted above which shows that many young black children identify themselves as being similar to white dolls. Unlike Stonequist, however researchers such as Clark and Clark (1955) interpreted these findings as indicating **identity conflict** rather than its precursor. This need not be fatal for the theory, though - it may simply mean that the 'crisis' occurs at a younger age than Stonequist realised. Young children may have the cognitive skills to enable them to understand that they are somehow different from others or different from what they want to be. It seems likely that the 'crisis' is more metaphorical than literal and that the awareness of difference from the majority, and

the internal conflict which ensues, is part of a complex process rather than a single event. Aboud and Skerry's theory postulates three processes which interact in the development of racial awareness.

The theory of marginality and the research into the development of racial preference still fail to clarify whether young children of mixed parentage are in a special category, and whether their identity development is significantly different from black children who are similar in other respects. On the basis of the marginality theory it seems logical to hypothesise that it is, and that this difference is mainly due to early parental influence[3]. This study cannot test this hypothesis as it does not employ a control group. However, some light will be shed on this subject, and the special condition of children of mixed parentage will be explored.

5. INTERRACIAL LIAISONS

One area which marginality theory fails to address is the motivation of people who choose to form relationships with others of a different race. The theory begs the following questions:

> Why is it that people from different racial groups form the liaisons which produce children of mixed parentage, given the antagonism between races? and

> What are the interpersonal dynamics in such liaisons?

Several different explanations have presented themselves:

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[3]Recent research has shown that in some ways children of mixed parentage do differ from black children. For example they are much more likely to be received into care than black children (Tizard and Phoenix, 1989)

'Random Selection'

It has been previously argued by Adorno and others that there are varying degrees of prejudice in the dominant community and that some people, because of early interpersonal experiences, are less prejudiced than the norm. This hypothesis asserts that if these people come across potential partners who are of a different race, they are as likely to fall in love with them with white people, and race would have little bearing on these relationships other than an external pressure. This hypothesis would conform with the liberal 'melting pot' view of race relations.

'Love Thy Neighbour'

According to this hypothesis there are likely to be a number of people in the community whose liaisons across the colour bar are primarily a political statement. Liaisons of this type are largely confined to politically active middle-class people, and were a feature of radical political movements of the late sixties (Benson, 1981).

'Love The One You're With'

Historically, white-black sexual liaisons in colonial situations were almost exclusively between white men and local black women. Benson says of these:

> "...such relations ranged from simple commercial transactions to durable
> concubinage. Indeed by the eighteenth century relationships of this nature
> were accepted as being a customary aspect of life on the coast, albeit one
> which occasioned the disapproval of some visitors from Europe." (1981,
> 2)

These relationships took place, according to this explanation, largely out of expediency because there were very few white women available for these traders. In the United Kingdom, however, liaisons have historically been between black men and white women because the initial wave of black immigrants consisted largely of black men. When a large number of black women joined them in this country, the proportion of inter-racial couples decreased.

These demographic or social explanations do shed some light on the reasons for inter-racial liaisons occurring, but they still cannot answer why **some** individuals choose to enter into these relationships and others do not. They also shed little light on the possible outcome for the children.

In order to do so, the role of sex in black-white relations must be considered. In this respect, James Weldon Johnson, quoted in Henriques (1974) asserts that:

> "...in the core of the heart of the American race problem the sex factor is rooted; rooted so deeply that it is not always recognised when it shows at the surface...Taken alone, it furnishes a sufficient mainspring for the rationalisation of all the complexes of white superiority...its strength and bitterness are magnified and intensified by the white man's perception, more or less, of the Negro complex of sexual superiority." (1941, 80)

The 'complex of negro superiority' is the belief by white people that black people's **intellectual** inferiority is accompanied by a concomitant superiority in their **sexual** abilities. Black women have been seen as having increased lubricity, and an unbounded and indiscriminate sexual appetite. Black men were also seen as having increased sexual appetite. The most central aspect of this myth is the belief that black men have enormous penises.

The consequence of this myth are that black people are not only seen as an economic threat, but the threat is much more personalised and the feelings engendered are more intense. The myth portrays white women as chaste and virginal and white men as their protectors against the corrupting influence of the licentiousness of black men. Black men themselves cannot control their bestial sexual impulses and white women are unable to resist their advances. In contrast black women are seen as seductresses, using their sexual abilities to trap white men into bed. Once white women succumb to black men's advances, they are seen as corrupted. They are then seen as part of the black race, to be feared and reviled.

The result of this myth is that historically white men have not only treated black men with contempt, but also with fear (that they will steal white women from them) and envy

of their superior sexuality. White women, however, are seen as innocent victims and have no choice; they will belong to whichever man is the stronger and more potent.

The myth is not only held by white males. Black men's sexuality is also informed by its strictures. Fanon has eloquently expressed black feelings in this regard:

> "I wish to be acknowledged not as **black** but as **white.**
>
> Now...who but a white woman could do this for me? By loving she proves that I am worthy of white love. I am loved like a white man.
>
> I am a white man.
>
> I marry white culture, white beauty, white whiteness.
>
> When my restless hands caress those white breasts, they grasp white civilisation and dignity and make them mine..." (p91)

There is also an element of revenge, so that by possessing a white woman they are punishing white men and whiteness generally. These feelings are very close to the general effects of oppression described by Allport and others, and sexual relations then become a microcosm of the broader dynamics of race relations.

Interestingly, although a fair amount has been written about black and white men's fears and fantasies around this myth, the women's perspective on the subject is absent. Women are seen merely as objects of fantasy and not as subjects able to make their own choices. This study assumes that this is not the case and that the choice of partner is mutual. If the myth is all-pervasive in inter-racial sexual encounters, as has been suggested, white women must also be influenced by it. This means that the 'random' theory of mate selection cannot be an adequate explanation of white women's choices.

What form will this myth, as held by white women, take? One explanation could be that women associate 'blackness' with 'badness' and that these women have low self-esteem (Holland and Holland, 1984). Feeling that they are not good enough for white men they turn to black men as their only alternative. Once they have made the choice they then become intensely ambivalent towards white men in a similar way to that described by the

marginality theory. Another way of coping with the consequences of the choice is for the women to reject white society and culture altogether and to take on the mannerisms and attitudes of their partners' culture.

Women may be so low in self-esteem that they choose black partners because they 'know' that black men will take revenge in the sexual encounter and so will fulfil their need to be punished.

Another possibility is that the choice of a black partner is a positive choice. The myth casts white women in the role of chaste, virginal creatures, and in order to break out of this they may choose black men who represent the uninhibited sexual part of them that cannot be expressed with a white man.

There may be many more explanations for a choice of black sexual partner. The common factor in all of these possibilities is that the choice of a black partner is not random, and therefore that the race of the partner is in all cases a significant factor in women's choices. Race and sexuality combine in powerful ways so that in many inter-racial partnerships the interpersonal relationship reflects aspects of the macrocosmic dynamics of race relations: they become **racialised**. These dynamics can be played out by both partners in unconscious ways so that what is at one level seen as personal conflicts or weaknesses, can be traced back to early childhood experiences and ultimately to unconscious prejudices and beliefs acquired very early in life.

Another complicating factor in this dynamic is that the whole process can work the other way around. In these cases problems that are ultimately personal are projected into the racial sphere. For example, a woman's anger at her partner's infidelity may take a racist form, eg, "That is typical of a black man!" In some of the inter-racial couples described by Benson, many of the conflicts were attributed by the couples to racial differences when in fact they were probably largely personal. It therefore becomes very difficult to separate the personal from the racial elements in these relationships.

Fanon, (1968); Hendriques, (1974); Benson (1981) and others have shown that

relationships between black men and white women are imbued with unconscious and conscious ideas and beliefs about race which are projected onto the partner. The children produced from these liaisons are black like their fathers, or are considered by society to be black or 'half-caste'. To what extent are unconscious beliefs likely to influence the relationships of mothers towards these children? More importantly, what unconscious messages about themselves will the children pick up from their mothers?

Stonequist's answer to these questions is that as infants they will identify totally with the mother and her race, at least until they have the intellectual capacity to understand that **society** does not accept their own definition of their identity. The studies of the development of black racial identity also postulate a period, albeit a much shorter one, in which race is not part of the children's identity.

All the theories place enormous emphasis on the mother's influence on children, and most assert that this influence begins in the cradle. Perhaps then, the mother's unconscious attitudes act as a kind of precursor to the children's later development of identity. If so, how does this operate? To seek answers to these questions it is necessary to consider some theories of early intellectual, emotional and identity development, which can provide a framework in which to study the precursors of racial identity development.

CHAPTER FOUR

THEORIES OF IDENTITY DEVELOPMENT

1.   RACIAL AND PERSONAL IDENTITY

The theories about the development of racial identity all postulate that racial identity formation begins between ages three and four. Adorno, (1950); Allport, (1979); Aboud and Skerry (1984) and others, have proposed that racial identity is part of a more global personal identity.   Many theories of personal identity development state that such development begins long before this, in infancy. In this chapter some theories of the development of personal identity will be further explored. There are an enormous number of theories of child development and it will be possible to consider only a small proportion of them. The chapter will focus on those theories which are particularly useful in relation to the discussion of racial identity, especially considering the mother's role in child development.

In the light of these theories this chapter presents further argument that racial identity is inseparable from personal identity. In contrast to the arguments about racial identity in the theories which have been discussed, it is proposed here that identity development may start very early in a child's life.   In the earlier theories, children were portrayed as victims or passive recipients of parental and societal attitudes and behaviours. This chapter presents a different picture, in which infants play an active role in constructing their sense of identity. This challenges the simple dichotomous 'black and white' view of identity and poses a view which sees identity development and identity conflict as complex phenomena, dependent on many interrelated factors. It will also be argued that children's **identity** development precedes their development of **awareness** of social categories.

To achieve this the following issues were examined:

the internal mechanisms by which children develop an identity;

how children take in elements of the outside world and use them in the developmental process;

how society influences the identity development of its new members;

how identity conflict develops; and

at what point in a child's life racial identity development begins.

The theories discussed in this chapter were used to develop a theoretical background for the first two parts of this study of identity. Post-modernism, on which the third part of the study was based, will be used to show that the conception of 'identity' first developed is too narrow, even though it goes much further than that used for the doll studies or current social work anti-racist Literature.

2. SUMMARY OF THEORIES

The main theories examined in this chapter are:

Berger and Luckmanns' sociology of knowledge, which considers identity in the light of social institutions and roles and shows the relationship between the formation of individual identity and social forces;

Piaget's Genetic Epistemology, which focuses on the way in which children develop knowledge of themselves in relation to the external environment;

Erikson's model of development, which is grounded in Freudian psychoanalytic theory, and extends Freud's stages to incorporate the whole life span and considers the social influences on intra-psychic development; and

Winnicott's formulation of the psychoanalytic Object Relations theory, which shows how personal identity develops through the mother-infant relationship.

These theories are then critiqued by post-modernist theory, mainly that of Lyotard and Lacan, and the post-modernist anti racists Cohen, Gilroy and Rattansi.

3.   BERGER AND LUCKMANN

Berger and Luckmann's (1966) **sociological** theory tackles the problem of how individuals become members of a collectivity, and how society affects individuals' knowledge of themselves and the world.

This theory starts off with the belief that humans are qualitatively different from animals. This is, as Glover and Strawbridge summarise, because:

> "...neither their biological make-up nor their environment predetermines the form this (their life) will take." (1985, 21)

Human beings live in an inherently social world and in order to do so the groups they live in must share a common or commonsense reality of which all members have knowledge.

The authors contend that although this everyday 'reality' is **seen** by all humans as objective, it is, in fact, socially constructed. There is no such thing as a separate, objective, reality. All we have are shared meanings and ways of making things explicable to others.

Social phenomena are seen to be just as real for humans as are natural phenomena. Because there are different societies there are different realities which can even be mutually exclusive. This reality is manifested in individuals in two ways:

> society is seen as taking on an **objective** reality, and is treated as part of the

everyday world; in the same way as we expect the sun to rise tomorrow, we expect the English language to exist; and

society becomes internalised into a **subjective** reality and its values, language and beliefs become part of the psychological make-up of its members.

Berger and Luckmann set out to answer why this is so and how societies create reality for their members.

Institutions and Roles

Human beings need to live in a predictable and ordered reality because without order the world becomes meaningless. Institutions are created by groups of people to regulate the society and make it meaningful to individual members. Institutions are understood by all members of the society, although not in the same way by everyone. They set the limits of control, and they channel social experience. For example, although not everybody in western society gets married, sexual relationships are all defined to some extent by the institution of marriage. Similarly racist beliefs are institutionalised and become part of the social fabric, as has been discussed in Chapters 2 and 3.

Because institutions do **not** have an existence separate from human action, they require ways in which they can be explained and justified or **legitimised**. Legitimation is the set of values, beliefs and norms surrounding all institutions which places them into a larger social order by relating them to other institutions. Legitimation strengthens the normative power of institutions, thus providing:

the 'knowledge' of the institution (eg, To what race do I belong?); and

the value surrounding the institution (eg, Is it wrong to marry a member of another race?).

The major legitimising factor in all institutions is language.

Institutions are all-pervasive in human knowledge, action and belief. All social action is performed according to **roles** which are defined by the institutions. Roles are expressions of the relationship between individuals and the relevant institutions. They are not idiosyncratic to the individual performing them.

Although roles consist of the actions of individual people, there is an interchangeability between actors and roles; on the one hand, I am one of many people with the role of 'father' and on the other hand, acting as a father is only part of my self. A part of the self is **objectified** as the performer of various roles and this part of the self is called the **social self**, which is not the same as the self in totality. The social self perceives others performing roles and as performers these people are experienced as **types** rather than individuals.

The relationship between institutions and roles, therefore, is that when people act in accordance with the rules of institutions, they are acting in roles. Institutions are also:

> "...embodied in individual experience by means of roles. The roles, objectified linguistically, are an essential ingredient of the objectively available world of any society. By playing roles, the individual participates in a social world. By internalising these roles the same world becomes subjectively real to him." (p74)

Thus roles and institutions are not only seen as parts of the objective reality, they are also part of people's understanding of themselves and their subjective relations to the world. They are part of the identity. The process by which objective social reality is internalised and becomes subjective is called **socialisation.**

Socialisation and Identity Formation

Socialisation is defined as:

> "The comprehensive and consistent induction of an individual into the objective world of a society or a sector of it." (p130)

Socialisation takes place largely as a result of **internalisation,** which is the process by

which the **objectivated** social world is re-assimilated into individual consciousness. In this way actions of others become meaningful to the self as part of the knowable, predictable world. There are two stages of socialisation:

Primary Socialisation

This first stage starts at birth, and usually takes place within a family context. During this stage, the parents or 'significant others' present the objective social world to the child, mediated through their own perception of it. The parents' view of the world is not seen by the child as one of various world views she can choose, it is seen as **the** world. The child internalises the parents' reality by (cognitively) learning about it and by (emotionally) identifying with the parents' roles and attitudes. The process of identification is a dialectical one between self and others; externalisation and internalisation; and individual and society. Primary socialisation is the process by which a child's identity is formed. Identity is not merely a subjective internalisation of, or identification with, others - it takes on the world of others:

> "Indeed, identity is objectively defined as location in a certain world, and
> can be subjectively appropriated only **along with** that world." (p132)

The archetypal primary socialisation is language, which is also the mechanism by which the individual links the objectified external world with the internal subjective world. Children have no choice but to learn the language of their parents (or significant others) and therefore take on their linguistic community. Other significant roles such as gender roles, class roles, etc, are also the subject of primary socialisation. In primary socialisation there is no 'problem of identification' and although children may differ in their reactions and feelings about parents and roles, they cannot choose alternatives.

Secondary Socialisation

This follows primary socialisation and is:

> "The internalisation of   institutional or institution-based...(or) the
> acquisition of role-specific knowledge." (p138)

Although it is essential for full participation in society, secondary socialisation is overlaid on an already existing self and is taught or 'brought home' rather than being presented as **the world.** Thus reading and writing have to be learned in a way that learning to talk is not - one can, at least in theory, decide not to learn to read or write, but one cannot decide not to learn language.

The result of socialisation is a self which is:

> "...experienced...as a subjectively and objectively recognisable identity."
> (p50)

This identity is formed by the **dialectical** relationship between the biological organism, the internal reality, the objectivated external world, and societal roles and institutions; Biology creates human beings. Society is a human product. Society is an objective reality. Humans are social products. When socialisation has been successful the external and internal identities are symmetrical and complementary but there is always some discrepancy between the internal and external reality. When socialisation has not been successful then there is a 'problem of identity'. Successful socialisation does not imply happiness: A slave may be desperately unhappy with his lot, but that does not mean that he sees any alternative for himself.

Identity Conflict

When socialisation is unsuccessful the identity problems take three forms:

Egregious Individuals

Individual members of society are labelled and stigmatised because of individual biological or extra-ordinary social circumstances, such as bastards, cripples, etc. In societies in which these individuals are highly stigmatised, they are trapped into the socially predetermined roles to which they have been assigned. Thus the 'cripple', like the slave, may rail against her fate, but there are no alternative identities available to her.

This situation can only change when a sub-group of cripples (or bastards, etc) forms and the members begin to see the possibility of a different identity-type for themselves. (eg, as 'leader of the cripples' or 'valued by cripples') In these situations identity conflict begins to emerge.

Unsuccessful Primary Socialisation

Separate and/or conflicting realities are presented during primary socialisation.

> "When acutely discrepant worlds are mediated in primary socialisation, the individual is presented with a choice of profiled identities apprehended by him as genuine biographical possibilities." (p170)

These situations range along a continuum. On one extreme are hidden part-identities, eg, when a child secretly identifies with a nanny's culture. At the other end of the continuum are irreconcilable primary identity splits in which two (or more) incompatible identities have been socialised, both having equal reality to the individual. It is these situations which render the individual most vulnerable to psychological damage.

Conflicts between Primary and Secondary Identity

When primary socialisation is at odds with secondary socialisation a third kind of identity conflict occurs. The individual has already been socialised into an identity, but is presented with alternative identities as options for identification. Although the individual already has an identity these situations can have profound consequences.

In these cases, the secondary identity becomes a 'fantasy identity' which is experienced as the true identity, but never acted out. For example, an adopted person may believe that she is really an aristocrat despite her humble upbringing. Even if she learns about aristocratic mores and manners and mixes with the aristocracy, her **identity** will always be working-class and she is bound to suffer from internal conflict.

Differing roles under the individual's control

There are situations where internalisation of separate realities are not accomplished through identification with significant others, but where roles and identities are internalised without being 'part' of the individual. In these cases the different roles and identities are experienced as being under control and the individual is able to put on different 'masks' in different situations.

Identity conflict therefore covers a large number of different types of situations and simply saying of an individual that he has an 'identity conflict', tells us very little about him.

Although individual identities are the result of a dialectic between the person and the society, **identity types** are determined by society. Identity types are seen as part of the larger 'cosmology' of society in general, and fit into the commonsense view which individuals have of the world. This implies that stereotyping is an inevitable consequence of socialisation because 'typification' is the necessary precondition for the formation of roles and institutions.

Discussion

Berger and Luckmann offer an important sociological analysis of personal and group identity. Their model goes some way towards explaining the relationship between the microcosm of individual identity development and the macrocosmic social structure. Because they were trying to explain how societies perpetuate each other, their theory is basically a conservative one, which sees society as a stable structure which socialises individuals so that they can perpetuate its functions and structures.

The basis of their theory is the dialectical relationship between the individual and society: society is created by people, who are in turn products of society. Identity is not seen as a static, constant and unified aspect of the self, but rather as a collection of different selves which are made up of different roles used in different social contexts, and the subjective response to those roles. These roles are sometimes in harmony and sometimes in conflict and the personal identity is an abstraction of the collection of roles. Individual

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humans outside of a social context are meaningless entities and cannot be understood.

Essential to this model is a view of human nature in which 'nature' plays a small part. Biological drives, instincts and traits are seen as playing a minimal role in the psychological make-up of human beings, while social forces take on the 'massive' reality of physical phenomena and are the prerequisite for individual development.

This theoretical basis contrasts with previously discussed theories with regard to the formation of group identity. Adorno, (1950) and Park, (1964) for example, take as their basis the assumption that in-group/out-group hostility is a **biological** rather than a social trait. It also contrasts with some aspects of the psychoanalytic theories considered below, which also tend to place more emphasis on biological instincts.

The relationship between socialisation and identity as construed by this theory is illuminating when considering the development of racial identity, especially that of children of mixed parentage. Berger and Luckmann confirm that the early identifications, which make up primary socialisation, take place between the infant and the 'significant others' - usually parents - within the family, and that it is these identifications that are responsible for the core identity. Secondary socialisation which takes place outside the family is less important for identity formation. This is again in accordance with all the major developmental theories have discussed so far, such as Clark and Clark, (1955); Milner, (1983) and Stonequist, (1937). This theory goes further in emphasising the two-way nature of the relationship and does not see the child as a mere recipient of socialisation, but as a **participant** in the development and continuation of societal institutions. Each member of society contributes toward that society's construction of its particular reality. Each individual also participates in constructing an individual reality which is a version of the larger societal reality.

The discussion on identity conflict is particularly salient, but also illustrates some of the limitations of the theory. Berger and Luckmann demonstrate that identity conflict is an almost inevitable consequence of socialisation because of the inescapable discrepancy between subjective and objective realities. However, the degree of conflict differs greatly

between individuals, depending on such variables as temperament, parental attitudes, early experience, social mores and the distribution of knowledge. This implies that it is not enough to refer to children of mixed parentage as having 'identity conflict', or as being 'marginal'. These statements beg the question "What kind of conflict?".

The difficulty here is that, although they have hypothesised a number of types of conflict, it is unclear how they can be differentiated in practice. Is mixed-race identity an identity 'type' as has been defined, and as Park (1964) has asserted, or is it a conflict between two identities? How can we tell which is the 'real' and which the 'false'? What part of the identity was acquired during primary and what part during secondary socialisation? The role of parents during primary socialisation is seen here as mediators of societal norms and values. The theory does not explore how the child's relationship with parents affects the way these values are presented to the child and how the child responds.

The emphasis placed on consciousness as a determinant of reality means that the concept of **unconscious** conflict sits very uneasily within the theory. Unconscious conflict is an essential part of the theory of marginality and most other theories about racial relations. It is difficult to see how socialisation can be fully conscious as many of the assumptions we make about the world are not consciously made, and many human actions are influenced by factors to which there is no conscious access. For example some white women may prefer relationships with black men because of their own early childhood experiences. It is unlikely that they would all be able to consciously make this link.

The role of language in primary socialisation is also contentious. Language is given the most important place in the process of socialisation:

> "Language...constitutes both the most important content and the most important instrument of socialisation." (p133)

This view is concordant with theories of socialisation in racial identity development as explicated by Milner and others and is also the thinking behind many of the studies on racial identity development. Language, however only begins in the second year of life and is preceded by other forms of symbolisation. However, both Piagetian and

psychoanalytic theories of development are based on the proposition that much of the core of identity development occurs in the first and second year, before language becomes the major symbolic instrument. It may be, therefore, that pre-linguistic and extra-linguistic forms of symbolisation are more important in socialisation than Berger and Luckmann give them credit for.

Although the theory does provide a comprehensive sociological perspective on identity development, it does not attempt to deal with the actual process of socialisation itself. The theory does not address such questions as:

what does the child learn about the world?

how does the child learn about the world?

exactly what part do 'significant others' play in socialisation? and

what is the process of identity formation?

To answer these questions we must leave the realms of sociology and enter into those of psychology.

4. PIAGET

Piaget's theory of 'Genetic Epistemology' attempts to grapple with the questions of how humans develop knowledge of themselves and the world. Like Berger and Luckmann, Piaget believes that the ideas, beliefs and actions of human beings are not genetically predetermined. Humans are born with certain mental structures which interact with the world in the course of development.

Piaget believes that humans have a basic and innate tendency toward maintaining **equilibrium** - a state in which the organism is in dynamic harmony with its environment. As the internal or external conditions change (eg, by physical growth) the organism

changes and reaches a new equilibrium. Thus there is a continuous dialectal relationship between the organism and the environment. To maintain equilibrium humans use two complementary, fundamental processes: **organisation** - a tendency to classify and make the environment predictable, and **adaptation** - the process by which the organism changes in response to the environment. Adaptation is, in turn, made up of two complementary processes: **accommodation** - by which the structures are changed to fit in with the environment, and **assimilation** - in which the external phenomena are incorporated into the organism's structures.

Human knowledge is organised into **schemas** which are abstractions of acts, objects, etc. Every act of learning involves both processes, but in different ratios. Thus imitation is mainly an accommodative process because it involves changing according to the person being imitated. Imaginative play, on the other hand, involves mainly assimilation because the external object (eg, a plank) can be incorporated into a number of schemas (eg, ship, bridge, bat) without much regard to its objective features.[4]

Discussion

There is a striking similarity between Piaget's and Berger and Luckmann's views on human nature and development. Both theories assert the primacy of organisation as an underlying and necessary condition for human thought. They both also posit a dialectical relationship between human beings and their environment in the process of thought and development and, most importantly, they both hold as a basic tenet that human beings are active participants in constructing their own real world rather than passive recipients of teaching, biological maturation, or other external phenomena.

The nature of the dialectic is different in the two theories and, although tempting, it is not possible to reduce one to the other. Berger and Luckmann see humans as creating society mainly in the collective sense. In Piaget's theory the dialectic is in the

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[4]For a fuller account of Piaget's theories read Pulaski, (1980); Ginsburg and Opper, (1979) or Boden (1979).

relationship to the inanimate world and also between internal processes. He does not deal in any depth with interpersonal relationships nor with the relationship between individual and society, concentrating more on human **intelligence** or capacity for understanding the world (Piaget and Inhelder, 1973). Nevertheless, if Berger and Luckmann are correct and the social world for children is equivalent to the physical world (in that social laws are as real as physical laws) then Piaget's theories on the development of logico-mathematical intelligence should be valid for social intelligence as well (Butterworth, 1982). Indeed, Piaget conducted some of his experiments on the topic of children's concept of nations. (Piaget and Weil, 1951) It seems reasonable to believe, therefore, that although they are talking about different levels of the dialectic, they are complementary.

Another crucial similarity is the weight both theories place on the role of abstraction, representation and classification (typification). Schemas, on the one hand, and institutions on the other are both built up out of abstractions from phenomena or actions which have been classified and ordered according to a certain 'logic'. Both are ultimately derived from Kantian notions of **categories.**

Piaget's contribution to the discussion of how humans actively create their own reality is that he extends the dialectic to the psychological level and also adds a closely worked out developmental theory. According to Piaget, development of knowledge takes place in four well-defined stages: The **Sensori-motor** stage from birth to about two years. The **Pre-operational** stage from two to seven. The **Concrete operational** stage from seven to 12. The **Formal operational** through adolescence (Ginsburg and Opper, 1979). Each stage builds on the capacities gained in previous stages and each is characterised by a qualitatively more complex intelligence ordered into schemas which are qualitatively more abstract. Thought develops from being purely **egocentric** and concrete to being **decentered** and abstract.

During the sensori-motor stage, which is essentially the preverbal era, infants develop understanding of how their senses and actions affect, and are affected by, the immediate outside world, eg that an object hidden under a cloth can be found by pulling off the

cloth. Piaget shows that this 'simple' deduction is in fact the result of complex thought processes which have to be acquired over time. Thought in this phase is 'egocentric' because the child initially has no concept of 'object-constancy'. When an object is removed from its immediate sensory environment the child has no way of knowing that it still exists - its world consists of the immediate moment and location. By the time language is acquired in the second year, the child already has a sophisticated knowledge of its place in the immediate world and an ability to 'represent' - to classify and remember objects in the environment.

For Piaget, unlike Berger and Luckmann, language plays a relatively minor role in the development of knowledge. Language is only one, rather late, form of representation. Piaget does believe, however, that representation itself only begins in the second year, a view which has been hotly contested by other theorists. Some fairly sophisticated representations of the self may manifest in a pre- or non-linguistic fashion. This has major implications for the study of racial identity where all the investigations have assumed some degree of verbal sophistication preceding any development of racial identity. Much of the early primary socialisation is not necessarily verbal and the rudiments of the later, more sophisticated notions about racial groups, may begin very early.

There are other ways in which Piaget diverges from Berger and Luckmann. He places much more emphasis on the biological, as opposed to social, contribution to development than they do. For Piaget, the **content** of knowledge is totally variable, but the **structure** and pattern of development is not socially determined. Social influences affect the **rate** of development, but not its course, which is biologically determined (Piaget, 1972). Piaget also de-emphasises the role of culture, believing that the patterns of thought characteristic of the different stages are universal and not culture-bound.

Piaget does not deal directly with the development of identity. He does, however, deal with the development of knowledge of the self and its relationship to the world which is a major and necessary component of identity. The notion of development from almost total egocentrism, in which the infant has no sense of a separate self, to decentred modes

of thought is certainly crucial in any discussion of identity development.

The theory of **genetic epistemology** is generally recognised as the most comprehensive existing theory of intellectual development (Donaldson, 1978). Despite this there have been a number of severe criticisms of it. The basic concept that development progresses in defined and invariant stages, has been challenged. Many of the capacities which Piaget assumes occur only towards the end of the sensori-motor period have been found to occur much earlier. One example is imitation, which Piaget regards as a relatively sophisticated process (Piaget, 1951), but which has been shown to occur within weeks of birth (Meltzoff and Moore, 1983). Cognitive development has also been shown to differ between cultures (Donaldson, 1978). The notion that infantile intelligence is necessarily of a sensori-motor nature has also been disputed.

The challenge to Piaget with which this thesis is most concerned is that he places very little emphasis on the role of emotions and relationships in the process of human development. Although Piaget acknowledges that these factors have a bearing on development, he differs from Berger and Luckmann who stress the central role of 'significant others' and the child's identification with them in the process of development.[5] In Piaget's theory other people are often portrayed as objects of knowledge for infants, not very different in principle to inanimate objects.

Piaget's defenders have pointed out that because he is primarily addressing philosophical questions of epistemology, the psychological importance of parents and others is of peripheral importance. In the discussions of development of racial awareness, however, the **concepts** and **emotions** surrounding race were shown to be inseparable; both areas of knowledge are gained simultaneously and are interdependent (Aboud and Skerry, 1984). At the very least children are likely to be interested in subjects which are emotionally charged in the family, and to gain more knowledge about them.

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[5]There is some irony here, because Piaget's initial subjects were his own children, and his descriptions clearly show how closely he was involved in their development.

In order to complete the picture of how identity develops in children, the area of emotional development must be tackled.

The theories most associated with emotional development and the development of relationships are the psychoanalytic theories. Although psychoanalysis contains an enormous body of knowledge, there is relatively little written specifically about identity development. The probable reasons for this are that personal identity is by definition a largely conscious phenomenon and many of the psychoanalytic schools are concerned mainly with unconscious processes. Psychoanalysts addressed themselves mainly to the development of psycho-pathology, not to normal healthy individuals, and in the classic psychoanalytic theories the relation of the individual to the wider society was less important than 'inner reality'.

5.   ERIKSON

One of the most important psychoanalytic theories of the development of identity was that of Erikson. Erikson's theory is basically Freudian, but unlike Freud he believed that development of the personality does not end after the Oedipus Complex has been resolved. He felt that each of the eight stages of life, from birth to old age, presents a crisis for the individual which has to be resolved. Each stage must be lived through and its particular crisis resolved before the next stage can be successfully reached. Erikson believed that identity development is finally achieved (or not achieved) during adolescence, but that the prototype of identity is already discernible during the first two stages - **basic trust vs mistrust** and **autonomy vs shame and guilt.**

During the first stage, which corresponds to the Freudian 'oral' stage, an infant's world is dominated totally by bodily needs and satisfaction of these by the mother. The infant has to be able to develop a sense of trust in its mother so that it can continue to function when the mother is absent.

> "Mothers create a sense of trust in their children by the kind of administration which in its quality combines sensitive care of the baby's individual needs and a personal sense of trustworthiness within the trusted

framework of their culture's life-style. This forms a basis in the child for a sense of identity which will later combine a sense of being 'all right', of being oneself, and of becoming what other people trust one will become." (1977, 224)

This version of the oral stage differs from Freud's in that it is not simply the erotic satisfaction of oral needs that is important. The oral needs engender responses from the mother to create the relationship which becomes central to emotional development. This is much closer to the model that we have been discussing, because of the social dimension, and because the child is **actively** involved in creating a basic trust in the world. The dialectical relationship between individual and society is a vital part of Erikson's view of identity:

"From a genetic point of view, then, the process of identity formation emerges as a process of **evolving configuration** - a configuration which is gradually established by successive ego syntheses and re-syntheses throughout childhood; it is a configuration gradually integrating **constitutional givens, idiosyncratic libidinal needs, favoured capacities, significant identifications, effective defences, successful sublimation and constituent roles.**" (1980, 125)

This dialectic is repeated in all eight stages, with the individual's contribution becoming more and more significant until adulthood is reached. The dialectic between the individual and the outside world is a backdrop to the internal tensions and conflicts which must be resolved at each stage if the individual is to maintain psychological growth. Erikson is similar to Piaget in that he sees most of the real impetus for growth in these internal conflicts and their resolution.

Erikson's formulation of the origins of identity encapsulates the notion that a mother's patterns of care, even during the earliest stage of life, are carried out within a cultural context. Furthermore, the personal identity or sense of self which emerges as a result of the pattern of mothering is seen as a **social** as well as a **personal** construct, and it cannot be understood outside the sociocultural milieu of the family. This is very close to the spirit of Berger and Luckmann's idea of the social construction of identity. The basic sense of identity precedes knowledge, or even awareness, of the societal influences which determine a mother's actions and with which the child will interact to form an adult

identity. This may mean that the development of a child's racial identity begins as soon as the child becomes aware of herself as a social being, and certainly long before any awareness of racial differences is possible.

6.   WINNICOTT

Although Erikson acknowledges the role of the mother in the first stage as the primary provider of both physical and emotional nurturing and as the primary object of the child's identifications, he views development primarily as an internal struggle between opposing forces within the child. In this respect he is true to the Freudian tradition from which he came. The **Object Relations** school of psychoanalytic thinking which was developed by Melanie Klein, challenges some of these basic Freudian assumptions about human development (Segal, 1979). Klein and her followers placed much more emphasis than Freud on the child's development in the first year of life and contend that much of the basic personality structures are in place by the second year long before the resolution of the oedipus complex which Freud considered to be the major determinant of development. Because of this, object-relations theorists place much more emphasis on the mother's role in development than do Freudians. In classical Kleinian theory the real mother is relatively unimportant as the child's emotions are largely directed towards the internal fantasised 'object mother'. One object-relations theorist who stressed the importance of the real mother, was D.W. Winnicott.

Winnicott started off his theory with the dictum:

> "There is no such thing as a baby". (1975, 99)

By this he meant that during the first part of an infant's life, she cannot exist without the mother, either physically or emotionally. The infant is in a state of complete dependence on the mother. The physical fusion of mother and child before birth extends after birth to a psychological fusion in the first months after birth. The child cannot be fully understood either emotionally, psychologically or even physically, without reference to the mother. The process of identity development or development of the self is the process

by which the infant slowly moves away from absolute dependence, through relative dependence towards independence.

Winnicott maintains that normally, during the last few weeks of pregnancy and the first months after birth, the mother is in a state of **primary maternal preoccupation**. This means that she is 'given over' to the needs and wishes of her child. In this state the mother has an almost supernatural sensitivity to the child's needs and is able to satisfy virtually all of them. The mother provides a **facilitating environment** for the infant which allows her innate capacity for psychological growth to realise itself. During the first months the mother is not only part of the environment, she is both the inner and outer environment. At this stage the father's role is to support the mother who, because of her close identification with the child, is in a particularly vulnerable state.

During this phase the infant is in a state of **unintegration** - there is no differentiation between the 'me' and 'not me'; the inner and outer world, self and mother, or even parts of the self.[6]

> "...cohesion of the various sensori-motor elements belongs to the fact that the mother holds the infant, sometimes physically, and all the time figuratively. Periodically the infant's gesture gives expression to a spontaneous impulse; the source of the gesture is the **True Self**, and the gesture indicates the existence of a potential True Self." (Winnicott, 1965, 145)

Development of the self therefore starts even at this very early stage, although in the very beginning the True Self is a potential. The True Self is the infant's sense of aliveness which is the precursor of the sense of creativity, the hallmark of successful development. The infant experiences a sense of **omnipotence** because all her desires and fantasies are being satisfied. She is not aware of any outside limits. If all is well, the infant is **going-**

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[6]The state of unintegration must be differentiated from **disintegration** which can occur only after a degree of integration has been achieved. The fear of disintegration is experienced as a nameless dread, and it is to defend the self against disintegration that many of the most primitive defences are formulated.

on-being "A kind of blueprint for existentialism." This going-on being constitutes the most primitive precursor of identity.

The going-on-being depends on the mother adapting the environment to meet the infant's needs. If this is done satisfactorily, the mother prevents impingements from interfering with the sense of omnipotence and the True Self can develop relatively unimpeded. In this case, the mother is a **good enough mother.** If the mother is not 'good enough' and is unable to meet the needs of her infant, the going-on-being is disrupted by impingements. The sense of omnipotence is thwarted and the True Self is threatened. The most damaging kind of mother is one who, through inconsistency, tantalises the infant by developing an expectation of care which is not fulfilled. The infant feels 'let down' and in extreme cases the True Self is disintegrated. In order to protect the True Self from impingement, a False Self begins to develop. The main characteristics of the False Self are compliance, lack of creativity and a sense of not being 'alive'. Winnicott proposes a classification of False Self organisations.

There are five categories in the classification:

the individual presents as normal, but there is always 'something lacking';

the False Self defends the True Self, which only has a 'secret life';

the False Self searches for conditions in which the True Self can survive;

the False Self is built on identifications with others (eg, a nanny); and

the False Self represents a social attitude, and protects the privacy of the True Self which is available to the individual (Winnicott, 1965).

When the infant's going-on-being is strengthened by many repetitions of needs being met, the inevitable impingements do not destroy the self, but they force the infant to become aware of the environment. With this awareness comes the second stage ie, **relative**

dependence. The mother, who hitherto has not been differentiated from the self, has been a **subjective object.** The infant becomes aware of her caring and she becomes an **object, objectively perceived** - she begins to be a separate self. The infant is now able to have a capacity for **concern** and with this a capacity for real object relations. If all the infant's needs are met at this stage, omnipotence continues and the infant will be unable to develop object relations. Thus frustration is a necessary part of development.

The third stage is the stage of transition 'towards independence'. This is the stage in which the infant develops a capacity to be alone (ie, separate) in the mother's presence. The mother has to be available when necessary, but let go when this is required. The concept of **transition** is crucial for Winnicott, and transitional phenomena include play, language, culture and **transitional objects.** The use of transitional phenomena represents the infant's struggle to:

> "... relate subjective reality to shared reality which can be objectively perceived." (Phillips 1988, 117)

In play the objects, although they exist independently, are created by the infant to suit its needs. Similarly, although words have an objective and intersubjective meaning, they are used to convey a purely subjective reality. Transitional objects are toys, blankets, etc, which have a special meaning and attachment for the infant which, as soon as they are shared, become meaningless. The special meaning slowly recedes as the child becomes more independent.[7]

The third phase is never fully completed, but when the development is successful the individual is able to reach maturity and be successfully socialised. The healthy individual:

> "...is able to identify with society without too great a sacrifice of personal

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[7]For a fuller description of transitional objects and the role of play see Winnicott (1974), especially the summary on p60.

spontaneity; or, the other way round, the adult is able to attend to his or her own personal needs without being antisocial, and indeed, without a failure to take some responsibility for the maintenance or the modification of society as it is found." (1965, 83-84)

Winnicott's theory of early development is not dissimilar to Erikson's, despite coming from a different school of psychoanalytic thought. They both, with Piaget, postulate an innate drive towards creativity and spontaneity which is at variance with both Freud and Klein's theories.[8] Winnicott, though, lacks Erikson's sociocultural dimension and his theories are very culture-bound in their assumptions about gender and family roles. Nevertheless, Winnicott's great contribution to the understanding of the origins of identity development is his rich description of the centrality of the early mother - infant relationship and its vicissitudes. He has been accused of over-emphasising the mother's role at the expense of the father's because he does not see fathers as having any direct role in early development.[9]

Winnicott's description of the state of unintegration and the development towards integration is similar to Piaget's move from egocentric to decentred modes of thought. In both formulations the neonate has no boundary between the self and the world, and object relations only develop when the child has a symbolic representation of the object available. For Piaget object- constancy is only fully developed in the second year towards the end of the sensori-motor stage when memory has formed and language begins. For Winnicott, object relations is a relatively early phenomenon and begins with the capacity for concern around the sixth month. Piaget, of course, does not even contemplate the role of **part-object relations** which is a crucial factor for Winnicott and begins even earlier in life. Part-object relations are in some ways similar to Berger and Luckmann's definition of **roles**, because the relationship is not with a **person**, but with one aspect of that person's behaviour. In early infancy the nurturing mother is seen as separate from the withholding mother, and even earlier the relationship is with the

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[8]Freud believed that growth is a result of resolution of conflict between instincts. Klein believed in the primacy of envy and reparation. Creativity for Freud is a sublimation of id drives, whereas for Klein it is a reparative activity (Segal, 1979).

[9]But see Clancier and Kalmanovitch, (1987) who dispute this point.

nipple, which is separated into the 'good breast' and the 'bad breast'.

The similarities are nevertheless more striking than the differences. Take for example the transition from relative dependency towards independence on the one hand, and from the sensori-motor to the pre-operational stage on the other. In both descriptions the capacity for play is central, firstly because play demonstrates the ability to use objects as symbols or representations of other things, and secondly, because play is one of the first signs of creative thinking in which the world can be 'taken in' in a non-threatening way. In his discussion of play, Winnicott (1971) also acknowledges Erikson's contribution, saying that the capacity to play is contingent on basic trust.

Another crucial factor is imitation, which is part of identification. For Piaget this is the prime example of the infant's accommodation to the environment and is the complement of play. For Winnicott identification is a two-way process between mother and child which enables the mother to meet the child's needs and the child to 'take in' parts of the maternal object.

The work of Winnicott focuses on emotional rather than cognitive development, and adds the dimension of the mother-infant relationship in the consideration of identity development. This goes some way towards explaining the infant's motivation in the development of identity - the area with which Piaget has most difficulty.

Winnicott's contribution to psychoanalytic theory was formulated to re-introduce the importance of the real mother in development. The role he gives her is, however, a relatively passive one, at least from the infant's point of view. He de-emphasises the infant's adaptation to the mother, while emphasising her adaptation to the infant. Thus, although he shares the view that infants create or construct their worlds, he tackles in very broad terms the world's (ie, the mother's) role in constructing the infant. What he does give us - the concept of the 'good enough mother' - provides a framework for considering the different ways mothering can influence identity development. In reality there cannot be a rigid delineation between a good enough and not good enough mother, and a mother's individual style must be as influential on development as whether or not

she is good enough.

From the infant's point of view, mothering influences formation of the False Self. The idea of 'degree of False Self' closely parallels Berger and Luckmann's continuum of identity conflict, and confirms that it begins very early. Interestingly Winnicott does not postulate a condition in which there can be two 'True Selves' which vie for ascendancy in the individual. In fact, Winnicott sees the relationship between the True and False selves as complementary rather than a conflicting, perhaps because his theory was a reaction to the paramountcy of internal conflict in the theories of Freud and Klein.

7. BION

Although Winnicott does not consider in depth the development of thinking, one of his contemporaries, Bion, has written extensively on the subject. Bion (1984a, 1984b) proposes two main **elements** of thinking ie, processes by which thoughts are handled by the psyche. These are, ♀♂ (container and contained) and PS↔D (The relationship between the paranoid-schizoid and depressive positions). These elements bear a remarkable similarity to Piaget's notions of accommodation and assimilation. Bion shares with Piaget the dialectical view of development. Essentially, Bion claims that thinking begins with the projection and introjection of raw feelings and impressions (**beta elements**) which impact on the infant. The infant, with the help of the mother, learns to transform these into **alpha elements**, which have meaning. Thus over time the infant is able to build up a capacity for thinking - ie, containing thoughts. Bion proposes that thought begins with a **preconception** ie, an innate expectation of the breast. Then:

> "On the one hand a **preconception** mates with a **realisation** giving birth
> to a **conception.** When the preconception is not found in the breast there
> is a combination of a preconception and a **frustration.**" (Grinberg et al,
> 1985, 38)

For Bion, as for Winnicott, the frustration of the infant's expectations of the mother and the containment of powerful feelings are essential complementary elements in development.

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8.   STERN

Stern (1985) claims that the **self** is the most important organising factor in development. Stern's theory is an attempt to integrate the psychoanalytic and the experimental views of the development of interpersonal relationships (see also Brazelton and Cramer (1991) for a more recent and perhaps more cogent synthesis). He believes that there are no stages of development as such, but that the infant moves through **domains of relatedness** which are characterised by **senses of self**. Stern believes that although the domains arise sequentially, the infant, and even the adult, can move from one domain to another. Stern's senses of self are:

the sense of **Emergent** self;

the sense of the **Core** self;

the sense of the **Interpersonal** self; and

the sense of the **Verbal** self.

Stern believes that an important part of development is the infant's temperament, which is genetically determined. The infant's temperament interacts with the mother's and the resultant **fit** or **contouring**, has a crucial affect on the pattern of their relationship and ultimately the infant's sense of self. A pattern of largely unconscious mismatches between the infant's temperamental capacity for stimulation and the mother's expectations can lead to serious and damaging psychopathology in later life.   The point is that the sense of self is built up during everyday interactions with others, and not through any exceptional or traumatic events in her life. This implies that the mother's own experiences in infancy, her own sense of self and her feelings and expectations about the child, subtly influence her responses. Her responses may be more sensitive in one domain of relatedness than another, as may the infant's, and the mismatches may be wholly unconscious or misunderstood. All this means that the mother's personality and her attitude towards the child are crucial to the dynamic of the child's development, and

that the mother is not simply providing a good enough environment for the infant's natural capacities to develop.

Stern extends Winnicott's view of the mother-infant relationship to include the inner world of the mother and the biological predispositions of the infant. He also shows that it is possible for both the objective and subjective aspects of development to be taken into account by the theoretical framework.

9.   THE STRUCTURAL-DEVELOPMENTAL THEORY

Reductionism

Before discussing the theories themselves, it is necessary to give a caveat about the danger of **reductionism.** None of the theories presented here can, on its own, answer the questions about identity development. Even when combined they can only point to the kind of theory which would have to be developed to give a really comprehensive picture of the subject.

One difficulty in trying to make a composite theory is the problem of reductionism. It would be tempting to reduce sociological theories to psychological or biological ones and vice versa, and to conclude that the different theorists are really saying the same thing, or that one level of discourse can explain the other. **Institutions** and **schemas** are both organising structures, but it does not follow that schemas are really internalised institutions. Similarly, although it might seem logical, it is incorrect to assume that the police are society's superego, or that societies go through eight stages of growth. The problem is greatly compounded when discussing identity because it is inherently both a psychological and a sociological phenomenon. This is illustrated by Berger and Luckmann's differentiation between individual identities and collective identities. White racists are an identity type, sharing many social attributes; they are also individuals with personal histories and motives. Depending on what stance the observer takes, the type

or the individual will be more salient.[10]

In Chapter 2 it was argued that 'psychoanalytic' theories of racism, such as those of Dollard and Adorno, are flawed because they reduce the sociological argument about racism to a psychological argument about racists. The intention here is to see how these theories complement each other, rather than to reduce them all to a sociological or psychological level of discourse.

A Combination of the Theories

Although the theories discussed above are on various levels of discourse and arise out of different academic traditions, they share a remarkable number of assumptions and conclusions about human nature and identity development. Even if it is not possible to create one composite 'psycho-social' theory, it should be possible to dovetail these theories to provide a more holistic theoretical background for the study of the early development of personal and racial identity.

Definition of Identity

There is no common definition of identity which encapsulates all these theories. However, a working definition may look something like this:

The ongoing interaction between, and the sum total of:

the biological make-up of individuals, including their physical attributes, particular abilities and temperament;

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[10]For a further discussion of reductionism see Devereux, (1978). Devereux argues that all facts about humans can be explained fully either psychologically or sociologically. These explanations are complementary and not contradictory, but they can never be **simultaneous** - there cannot be a coherent psycho-social explanation of human behaviour.

their conscious and unconscious beliefs, opinions and ideas about themselves;

their relationships to significant other people and groups; and

the roles and status afforded them by these people and groups.

This 'structural-developmental' definition takes into account the sociological, psychological and biological levels, as well as the role of unconscious processes. It shows identity as a dynamic process capable of change and development.

Development of Structures

All the theorists considered above believe that identity formation involves the establishment and elaboration of internal structures which enable the infant to develop an increasingly complex ability to make meaningful the internal and external world. Humans are born with a number of innate mental structures such as rudimentary schemas of sucking and the capacity for behaving socially. Other structures, such as internal mirror-images of roles and institutions which infants encounter, for example, the internalised **object mother,** are developed later. Each child is born with a unique set of capacities and a unique, innate temperament (Stern, 1985) and into a unique environment. Thus although there are some structures common to all humans, and some to particular cultures, each person's structures have different **content.** People take in parts of the world which are then fitted into the structures, which in turn are affected by new material. The structures are determined by meta-structures. Roles are determined by institutions, schemas by adaptation, and object mothers by introjection.

Identification

Identification is one of the primary means by which an infant takes in parts of the outside world. By identifying with people, roles, actions, attitudes, beliefs, etc, an infant slowly develops a sense of itself as a separate being who can relate to other people and their actions and ideas. Psychoanalytic theories claim that identification with other people is

preceded by **projective identification,**[11] which involves part-object relationships.

The Mother's Role

All the theories considered here assert the mother's paramount importance as a social object in the life of the infant. In the first few months she is, for all intents and purposes, her child's social world. She is the first and most important object of identification for her child and thus the focus of early socialisation.

The mother is not merely an **object,** however, she is also a **subject.** The way the infant presents herself to the mother affects in turn the mother's parenting. From a sociological perspective the mother is seen as the mediator of social knowledge who filters social facts to present them to her child, thus perpetuating the social order. From a psychological point of view this means that the mother brings her own experiences of being parented and both conscious and unconscious beliefs and attitudes into the relationship. These beliefs and attitudes begin to form with the mother's own experiences of parenting, and are shaped by cultural attitudes and individual experience of pregnancy and childbirth. A mother, therefore, does not simply respond to her infant's behaviour. Her response is mediated by the social context and by elements which she **projects** onto her child.

The infant also brings into the relationship her own temperament and disposition and this in turn affects how the mother responds. Thus primary socialisation is not simply a matter of transferring attitudes from one generation to the next. Socialisation consists of a series of complex interactions which are characterised by **reciprocal** projection.

The Dialectical Nature of Development

The way in which the mother and the infant project and introject parts of each other constitutes a **dialectic:** The mother projects fantasies about how she believes her child

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[11]See Laplanche and Pontalis (1983) and Klein (1955) for definitions and further discussions of projective identification.

is (or should be) and acts according to her projections. The infant in turn can react by either **introjecting** the fantasy and responding accordingly, and/or by projecting feelings back onto the mother who in turn introjects them. This dialectic between unconscious internal structures and social interaction is only one level on which the dialectic operates. There are also dialectical relationships between the individual and groups, such as the family, and society (Berger and Luckmann), between internal objects and structures (Bion), and between those structures and the physical environment (Piaget).

Through continuous interaction with the environment the infant develops an increasingly sophisticated sense of her own place in the physical and social cosmos. This sense is the precursor to full identity development.

The Active role of the Infant in Identity Formation

All the theories postulate the infant as actively participating in the construction of her own reality. Although the parents, especially the mother, present their own constructions of reality to the infant, the infant filters this reality in the process of internalising and acts upon it. A human baby is more than a **tabula rasa** on which society paints an identity or a mere collection of animal instincts.

Identity is partly a social construct, but it is also inherently subjective, and to fully understand it the subjective quality must be taken into account. To say to someone "You are a black man." is coherent. To say "You have a black identity." is not.

Identity and the Social Context

Personal identity and its development is only meaningful within the sociocultural context within which it takes place. In the first months, society is represented to the infant by the mother. Much of identity development consists of internalising the roles and institutions of the society so that the society becomes a subjective reality for the growing infant. The process by which a person becomes part of the society is **socialisation** and, when successful, the subjective world of the individual; "Who am I?" corresponds with

his objective place in society: "Who are you?". The process of socialisation begins at birth and continues throughout life.

Preverbal Experience

The first two years are enormously important in identity development. During this time the basic structures of the personality are formed and the basis of later identity structure, ie, the separation between **me** and **not me**, (Winnicott, 1988) is normally achieved. There is a conflict, however, between the Piagetian and the psychoanalytic views regarding the development of the capacity for **representation.** Piaget believes that the infant's ability to represent absent objects is usually achieved in the second year, when the child has demonstrated **object constancy.** Object relations theorists believe that representation, eg, of the nipple, occurs at a very much younger age, possibly even at birth.[12] Despite this disagreement the theorists all agree that representation and symbol formation is a pre-linguistic achievement and therefore that some kind of abstraction of a **self** occurs by the end of the second year.

Identity Conflict

Identity conflict and identity diffusion result from a failure of socialisation. No socialisation is completely successful and all humans have some identity conflicts. Identity conflict becomes pathological when it severely restricts people's ability to relate to others or to fulfil their potential as fully adult in society. Identity conflict ranges over two continua:

Firstly, there are conflicts between different structures within individuals.

Infants who are given **good enough** parenting in their first years will tend to see themselves as separate individuals who have a stable 'inner core' or **True Self.**

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[12]See Bentovim ((1979), Lichtenberg (1983) and Stern (1985) for a fuller discussion of this debate.

(Winnicott) Their relationships with the rest of the world will be characterised by **basic trust** (Erikson), and the different aspects and identifications in their personalities will tend to be integrated. Conversely, those who are not given good enough parenting will tend to have a diffuse sense of being separate and autonomous. They are likely to fail in developing a coherent sense of self and may find difficulty integrating the different parts of their personality. They will constantly be confronted with the fear of **disintegration** (Winnicott). They will tend to over-identify with others or be unable to make appropriate identifications. Their personality will be characterised by **False Self** organisation and their relationships by a basic sense of **mistrust.** When their identity is put under stress or conflict later in life, these people will need to use extreme measures to defend themselves from disintegration. They may repress whole aspects of their personality, or act out the conflict by destructive or self-destructive behaviour. They may even regress into psychosis.

Secondly there are degrees of conflict between the view people have of themselves and society's view of them.

This corresponds to Berger and Luckmann's conflicts of secondary socialisation. Even if people have achieved a coherent sense of self, their self-concept may be challenged by society. These situations can also have severe consequences for identity development, but they are unlikely to lead to disintegration. It is possible for individuals to play different, and even sometimes contradictory, roles if their primary identity or true self is intact.

10. RACIAL IDENTITY

The ideas about Self, in particular of False Self organisation of the psyche, are crucial to the discussion about mixed-race identity development. They confirm that the pathological identity dysfunction in children can begin long before any truly racial or sociocultural factors become part of consciousness. If early mothering is adequate and the child develops a largely True Self sense of identity then later racism need not lead to fragmentation or breakdown. However, racism may be one of many social, psychological and interpersonal forces which confront the child, and there are therefore many

opportunities for the child to form both positive and negative identifications with the mother or with other people. The concept of False Self is consistent with the analysis of the marginal theorists who portray the marginal individual as having an inner core which is 'white', but who is forced to live the life of a black person. One interesting difference though, is that Park proposes that the marginal man's creativity derives from internal **conflict,** whereas Winnicott sees creativity as deriving from psychological **health.** He would probably see marginal people as less creative than those who attain 'maturity' and whose inner and outer selves do not conflict. Another difference is that the False Self organisation is typified by compliance, which is claimed by Park to be the trait of 'fully' black rather than marginal people of mixed-race. It may be that compliance is linked to low self-esteem rather than identity conflict, or that it is a response to political or individual oppression. It may be that there is not a rigid definition between 'true' and 'false' aspects of the self, and that what is true or false may depend on the political, social or interpersonal context in which individuals see themselves.

The implications of the views of Berger and Luckmann and Winnicott on identity conflict are that it becomes very difficult to make generalised statements about any group's reaction to identity conflict. Even if all mixed-race people are categorised in the same way by society, their reaction to this must be determined to a large extent by their early parenting and by the meaning which they attach to these racist actions. Thus both those theorists who claim that mixed-race people are bound to suffer from severe identity conflict (Park, 1964; Stonequist, 1937; Benson, 1981) and who claim that they do not (Wilson, 1987), are generalising. Unless it can be demonstrated that a group of children of mixed parentage have received a similar pattern of parenting, and attach similar meanings to the racialised aspects of their environment, these generalisations are invalid. They are also focusing on one aspect of a multi-factorial phenomenon.

If the multi-factorial nature of identity development is accepted then all theories which view racial identity and its development as an essentially unidimensional process must be questioned. Even theories which acknowledge complexity, but see development as a more-or-less straightforward process by which feelings and beliefs become more

complex and mature, cannot do real justice to the heterogeneous nature of identity. Recent theoretical developments in sociological theory based on post-modernism would therefore seem to provide a more adequate basis for investigating the identity of mixed-race children.

The third part of the study was based partly on the findings of the first two parts and partly on advances in anti-racist theory and research methodology informed by post-modern philosophy. The changes in theory and methodology reflected an acknowledgement of the diversity of parenting styles as they relate not only to race, but other constructs such as class, gender and culture which were fundamentally important in structuring the way mixed-race children are brought up. These innovations also led to a new formulation of identity and identity development.

11.   POST-MODERNISM

Although there is much controversy over the definition of post-modernism, (Bernstein, 1991; Steuerman, 1992), it is a way of seeing the world which has entered the discourses of many disciplines such as architecture, art, literature, philosophy and sociology but has limited influence in social work (Rojek et al, 1988). In this thesis I will focus on the philosophical and sociological implications. Post-modernism should not be seen as an 'age' or 'era' (Lyotard, 1984). Rather it can be seen as a way of considering reality. It is a reaction to Pre-modernism in which reality is revealed (by God, magic, religion) and Modernism in which reality is discovered (by science, Psychoanalysis, Marxism). In Post-modernism 'reality' is created (by social interaction, writing, interpretation).

The most commonly used definition is provided by Lyotard, who defined the post-modern as:

> "... incredulity towards metanarratives." (1984, xxiv)

Harland contrasts (Modernist) Structuralism with Post-Structuralism:
> "Post-Structuralism does not counter superficial social conformity by

invoking deeper necessities of biological nature, nor does it counter external social impositions by invoking a free will that comes from within...Post-Structuralists distinguish between two possible modes of functioning for the Sign. On the one hand there is the conventional mode where the sign works rigidly and despotically... On the other there is the unconventional mode where the Sign works creatively, anarchically and irresponsibly. This is the mode that represents the real being of the Sign."
(1987, 123-124)

Using these notions I would like to return to the original theoretical basis of this thesis, ie the Marginal theorists, Berger and Luckmann, Erikson, Piaget, Winnicott and Bion, the Doll studies and social work anti-racists such as Small and Dominelli. I will argue that these very different theories are all 'modernist' social and psychological accounts, and that they provide limited insights about racial identity development.

I would like to focus on particular elements of the post-modernism analysis. Using the above definitions I will focus on the meta-narratives of development, maturity and anti-racism. The 'Signs' I will be concentrating on are 'Race', 'Culture', 'Ethnicity' and 'Parenthood'.

'Modernism' is viewed by post-modernists as the theories, philosophies and political beliefs which are the legacy of the Enlightenment. Enlightenment is a way of seeing the world which is characterised by 'grand-narratives' or 'meta-narratives'. These are explanations of the world which try to unify and explain all human experience, look for political systems which will liberate all humans from oppression or which will explain all scientific and natural truths. These meta-narratives include the philosophies of humanism, Marxism, positivism, and Christianity (Lyotard, 1991). Although these theories are very different they share some things in common:

Totalization - they are holistic, and attempt to explain the whole human condition or the condition of whole societies either philosophically, psychologically or socially. They emphasise 'sameness' rather than 'difference'.

Teleology - they see societies, individuals and theories progressing towards an ultimate goal such as liberation, emancipation or maturity. Modern theories all

see individuals and/or society as starting from some form of primitive existence and progressing through stages to a higher level of being.

Essentialism - the belief that people, cultures, and society as well as natural phenomena have an "essence" or true nature which, with the right theoretical and practical tools is, in principle, able to be discovered by "Science".

Logocentrism - the belief that scientific rationality provides the absolute truth about the world, and that reason (ie western thinking) is the highest form of knowledge and understanding[13]

Post-modernism and post-structural theorists attack these related tenets of modernism.

Firstly totalisation is seen to have a 'hidden agenda' of terrorism or totalitarianism. According to post-modernist theory Stalinism and Nazism are not aberrations or retreats from modernism. They are the consequences of a view of the world which can easily move from describing people's similarities to forcing people to be the same. Lyotard (1991) says:

"The Enlightenment died at Auschwitz."

Totalisation is therefore seen as operating in two ways, either by incorporating "the other" into the "the self" or by excluding "the other" from "the self". Western philosophy, especially Humanism, is attacked because of its assumption that humans are all basically the same (Barthes, 1973; Young, 1992). All humanist philosophies have a hidden implication that people who are not part of the 'good society' become identified with 'the other' and therefore become dehumanised. Derrida says:

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[13]**Logocentrism** is equated by post-modernists such as Derrida with **Phonocentrism** - the belief that the spoken word is the ultimate communication and **Phallocentrism** - the belief that male ways of viewing the world are primary, and that the phallus stands for male reason and knowledge. (See Kearney, 1986)

"The respect for the other *as what it is:* other. Without this acknowledgement, which is not a knowledge, or let us say without this 'letting be' of an existent (other) as something existing outside me in the essence of what is first in its alterity, no ethics would be possible." (1978, 138, in Bernstein, 1991, 184-185)

Instead of celebrating sameness and unity, the post-modernists celebrate difference. Teleologies are attacked by post-modernists because of their tendency to totalise. All teleological theories aim at a future in which human beings will all be the same, and their essence revealed, whether the goal or *telos* is the liberation of man, the coming of the Messiah, the dawning of a new socialist age or a society in which people can all be mature and rational. Teleological theories view the past as acting merely as a precursor for the inevitable historical achievement of the telos. The problem is that each telos, and the totality it implies, is seen as the only truth and the right way forward. In modern thinking the goal has usually been the reproduction of western, Bourgeois, logocentric and phallocentric ideals. Those with different ideals are seen as resisting the inevitable advance of history and of being irrational, immature or marginal. They become part of the dehumanised 'other' who needs to be resisted, routed out and eliminated.

Essentialism is attacked for similar reasons. According to post-modernism, modern theories of the truth or essence of human beings, society or nature all rely on a view of truth which claims to be universal, and everlasting. However, post-modern theorists such as Derrida, Lyotard and Foucault believe that this version of 'truth' is a construction of western society, which is imposed by violence on other cultures or dissenters. In modernist western thought the biological is seen as prior to and more fundamental than the social, the individual is valued over the collective, and the conscious 'self' is valued over the unconscious or the group. Post-modernists see truth as bound by culture, time, and place, and accuse modernist beliefs of legitimating the Eurocentric, logocentric power relationships in society.

Post-modernism views societies and cultures as conflictual, irrational and changing. Their development is contradictory, discontinuous, and agonistic. The totalising beliefs which hold societies, cultures, individuals and families together are seen as myths and meta-narratives which need to constantly be deconstructed in order that their role in

legitimating power structures should be uncovered. Bhabha (1990c) contrasts this post-modernist notion of 'difference' with the modernist notion of 'diversity' - the liberal view which exalts the diversity of cultures, but sees culture as a superficial addition to essential human nature. Post-structuralists deny that there is such a thing as human nature. All discourse about humans, including the idea of human nature, is seen as being socially constructed. Thus human nature is seen as a product of culture, rather than cultures being different ways of expressing human nature.

This view of difference is carried into the post-structuralist critique of social science. Post-structuralists attack both absolutism and relativism as false dichotomies created by modernist philosophy. Lather (1992) is particularly scathing:

> "Fears of relativism and its seeming attendant, nihilism or Nietzschean anger, seem to me an implosion of western, white male class privileged arrogance - if we cannot know everything, then we can know nothing."
> (100)

This brief overview of post-modernism begins to point to some of the criticisms which may be levelled at the theories which were used to underpin the original part of the study. The theories of Berger and Luckmann, Erikson, Winnicott, and Piaget which formed the theoretical basis of this study can be seen as archetypal modernist theories which are subject to all the post-modernist critiques mentioned above. For example Erikson's theory is based on a teleological view of identity development. Consider his concept of identity:

> "The creation of a sense of sameness; a unity of personality now felt by the individual and recognised by others as having consistency in time; of being, as it were, an irreversible historical fact." (Erikson 1963, 11, quoted in Banks, 1992a, 22).

His use of eight stages, each dependent on the successful completion of the previous one demonstrates his conception of identity as essentially continuous, individual, progressive and aimed at the ultimate goal of a 'maturity' which involves a homeostasis between inner and outer reality. Erikson envisages each stage as being resolved by a struggle between two forces eg basic trust/mistrust, one of which must prevail. Like Erikson,

Winnicott's view is of a child moving from dependency to independence and the process of identity formation being that of a struggle for autonomy. Both these views and those of Berger and Luckmann see successful identity development or socialisation as the production of an individual who is happy, productive, has high self-esteem, is mature and viewed with respect by members of the community. A positive identity is seen as a stable entity in which the internal and external realities of the individual are matched or complementary.

This position has been attacked by Lacan (1977) and post-structuralist thinkers such as Foucault (1987). Lacan does not criticise Erikson himself, but critiques the ego psychology of Hartmann, Kris and other American Ego Analysts who share Erikson's basic tenets. Lacan's criticism is essentially that this view of development and maturity as autonomy is narcissistic, and culture bound. It is dependent on a specifically Anglo-American conception of adulthood, in which the 'good citizen' is seen as productive and conforming. The ego psychologists' view of society is that it is basically benevolent and nurturing, and the task of individual development is to successfully integrate into culture or society. This view sees society, socialisation and therefore the super-ego as something added on after the basic individual has been constructed. Lacan claims that this view, too, is culture bound:

> ".....in the grand old Anglo-Saxon tradition, what's basic is what's individual....but in the unconscious.....society and the 'other' have already preceded individuality and the self. Far from being a healthy growth or natural extension, individual selfhood is thus a meconnaissance, imposed and extraneous. A paranoid construct....something to be overcome". Harland (1987) 37-38.

Foucault attacks the modernist notion of (philosophical) maturity which:

> "Identifies maturity with the acceptance of universal structures of human existence revealed by western philosophy and so rules out dialogue on equal terms with other ways of being human until they reach maturity by acknowledging that these conditions are universal" (Dreyfus and Rabinow, 1986 111).

Instead for Foucault:

> "Maturity would consist in at least being willing to face the possibility that

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action cannot be grounded in universal, historical theories of the individual subject and of writing or in the conditions of community and speaking, and that, in fact, such attempts promote what all parties agree is most troubling in our current situation." (Dreyfus and Rabinow, 1986 118).

Walkerdine, (1986) using concepts derived from Lacan and Foucault attacks psychoanalytic (ie Winnicottian and Object Relations) views of education and parenting which she claims:

> ".....aim to produce citizens who would accept the null order by choice and free will rather than either by coercion or through overt acceptance and covert resistance....... (Central to those theories) is the idea of an autonomous agent, who attributes feelings to him or herself and does not feel an excess of passion or conflict. Such an agent is a citizen who, as in the humanist dream, sees all relations as personal relations, in which power, struggle, conflict and desire are displaced and dissipated". (206-207)

I have quoted these attacks on ego psychology because the ego psychological view of identity is so entrenched in our conception of human beings that it seems to be natural and common sense rather than a social construction, and these assumptions were not questioned in the first part of the study.

As well as Erikson, Berger and Luckmann's and Winnicott's theories were used to inform the first two parts of the study as the basis of the social dimension of identity development. As structuralists in the Levi-Strauss tradition, Berger and Luckmann anticipate many of the post-modernist arguments, especially the primacy of society over biology in constructing human nature, the role of legitimation in maintaining society, the view of ideology as being determined by everyday knowledge and the primary role of language in the construction of reality. Their denial of a unitary 'self' in favour of a collection of 'selves' constituted of externally validated social roles anticipates the 'decentering of the subject', especially if the psychoanalytic emphasis on unconscious processes is added to the role of consciousness in their theory. This 'decentering' is a core post-modernist tenet. Nevertheless there are some crucial differences which are important in the discussion of racial identity.

The first difference is that Berger and Luckmann conceive of societies as autonomous

entities which evolve slowly over time. Power relationships are maintained through mutually re-enforcing and legitimating institutions which similarly are relatively stable, monolithic and coherent. But post-modern societies are characterised by conflicting institutions which may undermine as well as re-enforce each other. Furthermore, the relationship between the signifier (language) and the signified (the institution) is 'slippery'. For example the institution 'race' need not imply a set of fixed concepts (or 'markers') shared by all members of a society, nor a set of fixed social (power) relationships which position all members of the society.

Another aspect of the contrasting views of institutions are the different conceptions of the relationship between social groupings. Berger and Luckmann adopt an essentially Marxist stance, which sees the primary groupings in terms of class hierarchies. Post-modernists see power in a much more diffuse way than simply as class, gender or racial hierarchies. They regard power in terms of a 'network' or as being 'fractured' across race, class and gender. This difference is extended to the views about identity and socialisation. Post-modernists would deny that identity formation is a continuous process starting with primary socialisation, moving onto secondary socialisation and then developing a more or less stable adult identity. They see identity as being continuously reconstructed and re-evaluated like a text being re-read or a story being re-told.

This poses a problem for the notions of 'primary' and 'secondary socialisation on which Berger and Luckmann's model of identity development is based. These notions are based on the same basically conservative view of identity which is adopted by Erikson and Winnicott. If identity is seen more as an ever-changing and sometimes conflictual process then the concepts of 'primary' and 'secondary' socialisation, and of 'true' and 'false' self become contextual rather than essential. This means that parents are not seen as 'filters' or 'mediators' of pre-existing societal norms and values, rather they are involved with their children in continually negotiating the meanings of societal forces, and reconstructing and re-interpreting these institutions. Parents responses to their children would not therefore be seen as a reflection of social values, but themselves as a process by which parents create meanings for their own lives. This process is informed by how the parent is positioned in terms of class, race, gender and culture.

In the case of racial or ethnic identity this means that an adult may well re-interpret not only his identity in the light of current situations, but may also reinterpret the relationships on which the identity is supposedly based. This does not deny the fundamental importance of early parenting. The post-modernist view of identity would not challenge Adorno's view that racial identity and attitudes are formed as part of family functioning, but it would claim that this functioning itself is an interpretation informed by current social theories and ideologies, rather than an ahistorical fact. It also means that early parenting and attachments do not create or determine later identity in a simple cause-effect relationship; early parenting may be a creation of later 'identity' rather than 'identity' being the product of parenting patterns.

In summary, post-modernism argues against conventional modernist and psychoanalytic views of racial identity because:

They all tend to totalise, seeing all 'black' people as having the same concerns. They also see society as a monolithic structure which is 'internalised' by infants

They share a teleology which sees identity development as a linear process in which set structures are developed in a similar way for all individuals, and determined by early experience. The ultimate aim is a conventional notion of 'maturity'

They essentialise racial identity, seeing it as a 'core' identity, formed at an early age, and separable in principle from other aspects of personal identity. Those aspects of the self which develop earlier are seen as the most fundamental and immutable parts of identity. This makes them confuse the description of the way individuals construct their identity with the prescription of a pre-decided 'positive' racial identity to which individuals are expected to conform. 'Positive racial identity' is part of a conventional and prescriptive view of maturity in which the basic structures of society are not challenged.

It is this structural-developmental understanding of identity and identity development that

informed the third part of the study, and eventually led to the development of the notion of 'narrative identity' (discussed more fully in Chapter 11) as an alternative to the 'structural-developmental' view.

CHAPTER FIVE
METHODOLOGY

1. INTRODUCTION

The theory which was developed in the previous chapter moves some way towards providing a framework for the study of early development of racial identity. In this chapter the methodologies used by previous studies in this area are described and a methodology is developed to study some of the questions generated by the theory.

Previous studies of the development of racial identity have relied mainly on the methods of the 'doll' studies, with some variations and developments. In Chapter 3 I discussed these studies and their conclusions. In this chapter I will return to these studies to look specifically at some of the **methodological** problems they pose. In the light of this discussion the methods used by the child development theorists will be further explored. In considering these methods I will develop a methodology for this study. The difficulties which are encountered in this sort of study are considerable, and some of these will be presented and discussed.

2. AIMS

The aims of this chapter are to:

further discuss the methodology of previous studies of

the development of racial identity;

look at the methodology of some of the major studies of
early child development;

develop a methodology germane to the study of

the early development of racial identity, in the light
of the theory adumbrated in Chapter 4;

discuss some of the difficulties of this methodology;

describe how this methodology has been adapted to this

study; and

set out some of the practical difficulties which
were encountered while carrying out this study.

3.   METHODOLOGY OF PREVIOUS STUDIES

Many studies have been carried out on racial attitudes, awareness and identification.
Virtually all of them have used the 'doll' technique which was discussed in Chapter 3,
or a variation of it (Brand, Ruiz and Padilla, 1974; Milner, 1983). To recapitulate, this
technique involves showing a sample of children from age three upwards a black and a
white doll, drawing or photograph. The children are then asked three basic questions:

what colour are the dolls (photographs, etc)? (racial **awareness**);

which doll do you prefer? (racial **preference**); and

which doll is more like you? (racial **identification**).

The findings of the researchers were fairly consistent, the most important being that
racial awareness begins at about age three; that black children tended to prefer the white
doll and to claim to be most like the white doll.

Reliability

The above findings were reliably reported in many studies over a long period of time with differing samples (Brand, Ruiz and Padilla, 1974, Wilson, 1987), although they were not universal (Hraba and Grant, 1970; Banks, 1976; Milner, 1983). It seems that misidentification is a widespread phenomenon amongst young black children. Hraba and Grant (1970) point out, however, that this tendency has lessened since the 1960's. They conclude that reliability is a function of socio-historical factors and has changed because black children are now more secure in their identity as a result of the black consciousness movement. Gergen et al (1990) believe that historical change affects the reliability of **all** child development studies.

Validity

Although the doll studies have been relatively reliable, there are serious questions about their validity. The basic assumption of all these studies is that the stimuli presented to the children represent real people and that the choices they make therefore represent the kind of choices that they would make in real life situations. Brand, Ruiz and Padilla (1974) point out, however, that observational studies of trans-racial choice of playmates in young children show little correlation between real choices and preferences expressed in the stimulus selection. Other criticisms have been made of the stimuli, especially of dolls. Black dolls, for instance, are unfamiliar to most children and could account for the discrepancy.

The above criticisms apply to children's racial **choices** and preferences. These studies purport to go further, and to be a measure of racial **identity**, thus concluding that misidentification represents a deep malaise in the identity of black children. The malaise is a result of the introjection of negative societal images of black people (Clark, 1965). These claims depend even more heavily on the validity of the test materials.

Further criticism has been made of this methodology, eg, that presenting only two dolls, one white and the other black, restricts the responses (Greenwald and Oppenheim, 1968). Providing a 'brown' doll does not solve the problem, though, because it can be argued that black children are still choosing a lighter, though admittedly more accurate stimulus.

The race of the tester (Dreger and Miller, 1968) has also been considered significant, but this finding has not been consistent (Sattler, 1973). The reliability of the findings suggests that black children have tended to misidentify and that misidentification decreases with age.

Identity and Identification

Despite their reliability the studies have a limited value in the explanation of the development of racial identity. This is mainly because of the difficulty in extrapolating conclusions about **identity** from measurements of **identification.**

This problem is highlighted when the third question "Which doll is more like you?" is considered. Assuming that black children know the difference between black and white people, and that they prefer whites, there are three possible interpretations of a wrong answer to this question:

> black children would like to be white;

> black children are confused about their identification and do not really know whether they want to be black or white; or

> black children literally believe they are white.

The first interpretation implies a degree of identification with whites by black children, but not necessarily a problem with identity. The second implies some degree of ambivalence about being black. The third interpretation is very strong, and implies a significant degree of cognitive dissonance and identity disturbance. Taken to its conclusion this interpretation would mean that black children look into the mirror and see a white person.

In fact the conclusions reached have not been as strong as this. They have centred around negative self-esteem rather than cognitive disturbance. This means that the third question

is not necessarily a valid measure of identity but can be seen as an extension of the question about racial preference and ideal types. Milner says:

> "...when the literal question "Which one looks most like you?", with its 'requirement' of accuracy is supplemented by a pure preference question, "Which one would you rather be?" a substantially greater amount of white orientation emerged - almost as though in the first question it was there, but deterred by the implicit demand for a correct answer." (1983, 153)

Clearly Milner is not claiming that black children literally think they are white. He and the authors he quotes are using the word 'identification' in the sense of **preference** rather than **identity**. Claims that mis-identification in doll tests betrays a deeper confusion in early identity may have to be regarded with a degree of caution.

The Subjective Point of View

The doll studies attempt to provide an **objective** measurement for a phenomenon which is largely **subjective**. The method does not address itself to the question of what it means to a child to say "I am more like this doll than that one".

Lack of a Developmental Perspective

Children from age three upwards have been tested using the 'doll' method. From these tests theorists have developed a formulation about the development of awareness and identity. There have been no longitudinal studies of development, however, and each study provides a 'snapshot' of a particular sample. It is difficult from this method to know how some children change from mis-identifying to correctly identifying, and why others do not change; or even why some may have identified correctly at age three and incorrectly at age seven. This casts some doubt on whether this method is sufficient in itself to develop a theory about the development of racial attitudes, and even more so, racial identity.

Racial Identity as a Separate Construct

In Chapter 3 I discussed the problems of investigating racial identity as a separate factor not linked with other personality traits. There are very few studies which link racial identity confusion or misidentification with other evidence of identity problems, Ward and Braun's (1972) study being a rare exception. Even if there is a link, there is no evidence as to whether these problems cause, or are caused by, other problems of identity.

Relevance of Parents

Despite the powerful evidence shown in Chapters 3 and 4 that parents play a central role in the early development of attitudes and identity, there are few studies which relate misidentification with either parental attitudes or child rearing practices. The nine independent variables given by Brand, Ruiz and Padilla (1974), and the six by Wilson (1987), do not include parental attitude or child rearing practices. This is doubly ironic because of the many studies eg, Adorno et al (1950), Bagley et al (1972) which link **prejudice** to parental behaviour. This may be because gross measures such as sex, age, socio-economic status, etc, are more easily measured than subtle parental influences.

Common Themes

The lack of longitudinal studies; the reduction to simple choices; the lack of a subjective perspective; the reliance on verbal responses; the lack of a parental dimension and the isolation of racial identity as a separate variable, all have a common methodological theme - the use of a simple quantitative methodology. All these studies provide an overview of a sample of children at a particular moment and relate their responses to various gross social factors. This methodology is useful for predicting responses of groups of people to various social forces, but is less powerful a tool for investigating the meaning of race to individual children.

One way of tackling these methodological problems is by employing a more qualitative methodology, concentrating on fewer subjects, but providing more information about them. This approach would enable the researcher to view children in their social and familial context, and move towards a subjective perspective.

Other than Wilson's (1987) study, no other study could be found which considers the identity of mixed-race children. Neither Wilson nor any of the major literature reviews quote studies either partially or fully conducted with mixed-race children. Some studies have discussed the skin colour of the children as an independent variable, eg, Gitter, Mostowski and Satow (1972) and Greenwald and Oppenheim (1968). However, the findings of these studies are contradictory. Even if there were clear findings it is very difficult to extrapolate from results obtained from light-skinned children both of whose parents are black, to mixed-race children. This is because mixed-race children are likely to have a much greater involvement with white culture. For them identification with white dolls could represent identification with real family members who are white. Thus interpretations of these results would be more difficult to make and the doll method on its own is even less valid.

4. ALTERNATIVE METHODOLOGIES

In order to go further and look at the subjective experiences and intimate relationships of very young children, one must turn again to developmental psychology and psychoanalysis, and the methodologies of some of the theorists discussed in Chapter 4.

Stern

Stern (1985) contrasts the two main methodological paradigms used for the investigation of child development, ie, developmental psychology and psychoanalysis. Stern's contention is that these two approaches provide different pictures of the infant. These pictures are sometimes complementary and sometimes contradictory. In many ways these two methodologies are on different levels of discourse: they use different technical languages; describe different phenomena; publish in different journals and seldom refer to each other. Stern contends though, that most of the findings can be compared and a synthesis developed.

Developmental Psychology

According to Stern's formulation, developmental psychology provides a picture of the **observed infant.** The methods used by developmental psychologists consist of direct observations of infants by trained personnel. These observations are conducted in a wide range of settings, ranging from highly clinical experimental settings to naturalistic observations. The methods employed vary considerably and can involve classical experimental situations using quantitative methodology, but they sometimes also use qualitative methodologies (Brazelton and Cramer, 1991). Often videos have been used and sometimes measures of physical changes, such as electrical resistance in the skin, have been employed. Most of these studies have as their subject matter the development of physical and cognitive capacities of children at different ages, but recently Stern and others have used this methodology to study more social and subjective phenomena. Developmental psychology is the basis of much of our contemporary knowledge about identity development, and its methods have provided both reliable and valid results. These methods do have limitations when the subjective viewpoint is sought. Stern says:

> "...at best, the observations of an infant's available capacities can only help to define the limits of subjective experience. To render a full account of the experience, we require insights from clinical life, and a second approach is needed for the task." (1985, 14)

Psychoanalysis

Psychoanalysis is the second paradigm used to study infants and provides the picture of the subjective or **clinical infant.** In contrast to developmental psychology, the methods used by psychoanalysts have been remarkably consistent, although their theoretical explanations of the material have differed considerably. The basic method employed by psychoanalysts is the **clinical reconstruction** of infantile experiences. This method is always conducted in the course of a series of clinical consultations. Patients, usually adults, are encouraged to **free associate,** that is, to say whatever comes into their minds, and the analyst offers interpretations which enable the patients to make sense of their experiences. In the course of free associating, patients provide material about their childhood and also relate to the analyst in infantile ways. The patients **transfer** some of

the primal feelings which were held towards their parents on to the analyst. By using a combination of the patients' recollections and transferences the analysts are able to use their theoretical training as well as their own **counter transferences** to construct a picture of the patients' infantile emotional development.[14]

The point about this process is that it is not an **objective** way of quantifying **subjective** experiences of infants, but a mutually constructed dialogue between two people informed by the particular theoretical stance of the analyst. The method is not based on any 'objective' observations of the patients and no verification of what is reported in the sessions is undertaken. Distortions of the truth, and inconsistencies, are seen as simply adding a further dynamic to the dialogue rather than undermining the analysts' reconstructions.

Psychoanalytic reconstructions of infants have been criticised because they are very difficult to confirm or deny in any normally accepted scientific way and they do not generate hypotheses which are refutable. Philosophers of science such as Popper (1972) label this methodology as **metaphysical** rather than scientific because different psychoanalysts can also make different interpretations of the same material.[15] The validity of this method has also been criticised by behaviourists who argue that inferences about subjective states cannot be made from observations of behaviour (Eysenck, 1986).

Wolfenstein (1991) argues that clinical and applied psychoanalytic methodologies have different epistemic statuses, and both are different from natural or social sciences.

Despite its critics, psychoanalysis has few rivals regarding either its substance or

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[14]For a fuller account of the clinical psychoanalytic process see Klein, Heimann and Money-Kyrle, (eds) (1955), Racker (1968), Sandler, Dare and Holder (1973).

[15]Popper (1972) provides a cogent though rather polemical attack on psychoanalysis, and especially the use of 'clinical observations'. He claims that since both Freud and Adler are able to provide irrefutable, though different, explanations for every human action, their claim to scientific status must be specious.

methodology in providing the subjective view of an infant's inner life. It may be the case that there is no 'scientific' method (in the Popperian sense) which can provide such subjective data.

Piaget

In the course of his very long academic career, Piaget employed many different techniques. He often used classic experimental designs, eg, in his work on memory. (Piaget and Inhelder, 1973) During the 1920's and 1930's when he was formulating his basic theories, Piaget relied heavily on naturalistic and quasi-experimental observations of his own three children. Piaget carefully noted down the behaviour of the children as it unfolded and conducted informal experiments to confirm or illustrate particular points. Piaget has been severely criticised because of the small size of his sample, the lack of corroboration, the difficulty of demonstrating cause-effect relationships from naturalistic observations, and the known unreliability of parents as observers. (Ginsburg and Opper, 1979; Maier, 1969) Piaget is subject to many of the criticisms levelled against psychoanalysis, especially in his assumption that a detailed analysis of a small sample will provide universal information.

> "Furthermore, he assumes that the reliability of any findings is directly
> related to the completeness of the data furnished by the informant. He
> measures validity by the degree of inner consistency his findings hold with
> his theoretical propositions. In other words, Piaget sees empirical research
> as a tool to substantiate or refute facts which were previously established
> by logic." (Maier, 1969, 91)

Despite these criticisms this method does have very powerful advantages. Ginsburg and Opper (1979) list six advantages:

Piaget was an exceedingly sensitive observer of children;

his closeness to his subjects allowed him to discover things he may have missed in a laboratory situation;

his intimate relationship to his subjects allowed him to resolve sensitive problems of interpretation;

he was able to observe his subjects often and over a long period;

his intention was to generate hypotheses which could possibly be quantified and tested later; and

He compensated for some of the problems of naturalistic observation by conducting informal experiments.

Piaget's theory is one of the most influential in developmental psychology and has generated hundreds of studies both by Pigetians and opponents. The criticism that his methods are unscientific can only be made by employing a very restrictive view of science. Nevertheless, Popper's criticism of Freud can equally apply to Piaget. A psychoanalyst could give a perfectly adequate explanation of the quoted observation in terms of the infant reaching for a symbolic nipple. Similarly, Piaget could interpret any infant behaviour in terms of developing or exercising schemas. Given the explanatory power of both theories it may be that Popper is being too restrictive. Perhaps a Kuhnian model of paradigms would be more appropriate (Kuhn, 1962).

Winnicott

Although Winnicott's theories were mainly built up through clinical reconstructions, (Winnicott, 1971, 1977) he was, like Piaget, a very acute observer of children's behaviour, and these observations were combined with his clinical work in the development of his theory. Indeed, it was partly the use of observations that set Winnicott's 'Middle Group' apart from the classical Freudian and Kleinian schools of psychoanalysis.[16]

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[16]See Phillips (1988) for a fuller account of the 'Middle Group' and its philosophies.

Unlike Piaget, Winnicott did not develop a method of observation nor did he give any clear statement about the exact nature of his technique. Many of his observations were conducted in the context of psychoanalytic sessions and were combined with clinical interpretations of patients' actions. At other times he used the 'set situation' of a paediatric consultation and sometimes he even based his interpretation on the reports of observations made by others. Three of Winnicott's papers were based on direct observation, (1941; 1951 and 1957) and in these papers he gave only a sketchy outline of the techniques he used. Although he claims to have taken detailed notes, he only quoted one example:

> "I stood up a right-angled spatula on the table and the child was immediately interested, looked at it, looked at me and gave me a long regard with big eyes and sighed. For five minutes this continued, the child being unable to make up her mind to take the spatula. When at length she took it, she was at first unable to make up her mind to put it in her mouth, although she quite clearly wanted to do so. After a time she found she was able to take it, as if gradually getting reassured from our staying as we were. On her taking it to herself I noted the usual flow of saliva, and then followed several minutes of enjoyment of the mouth experience." (1941, 57)

There are several important things to note about this observation:

> The observation was conducted in a set situation. Winnicott set up the spatula in a way that the child was likely to take hold of it. This was similar to Piaget's informal experiments.

> Winnicott took into account the interactions between the people present in the room. This is different from Piaget who seldom acknowledged the human interactions in his observations.
> The observation is less detailed than those of Piaget, and Winnicott used more of his own interpretations and used affective rather than descriptive language. Piaget would have described this sequence in terms of developing a grasping and mouthing schema.

> Winnicott's observations are, on the whole, 'snapshots' and at most describe a

series of snapshots. They are not systematic longitudinal observations of individuals.

Despite his rather haphazard methodology, Winnicott must take the credit for being one of the few psychoanalysts who seriously regarded direct observation as a valid investigative tool. Combined with his insistence on taking case histories (which gave him a perspective on the context in which problems developed) this technique allowed him to transcend the **clinical infant** as the sole source of his theorising. Winnicott said of the role of direct observation:

> "...psychoanalysts were liable to say things which were true in analysis and yet untrue when applied in a crude way to the psychology of childhood." (1957, 112)

and

> "It will always be the direct observers who are telling the analysts that they have made too early an application of their theories. The analysts will continue to tell the direct observers that there is much more in human nature than can be observed directly." (1957, 113-114)

Winnicott here demonstrated that the debate between psychoanalysis and developmental psychology is not new, and that a dialectical relationship is possible, with each building on the other's findings.

Other Syntheses

There have been other attempts to combine the two methodologies which use a more systematic approach than Winnicott's, but rely heavily on psychoanalytic insights for their conclusions (Stern, 1977; Escalona, 1968; Bentovim, 1979; Lichtenberg, 1983 and Brazelton and Cramer, 1991). The most celebrated study of this nature was conducted by Mahler and her associates during the 1960's. (Mahler, 1975) Although Mahler used a set situation and employed trained observers who cross-checked their observations, the methodology used was very different from quantitative studies of development. The methodological aim of the study was:

"...to find a way of working that seemed to us to strike a balance between free-floating psychoanalytic observation and pre-fixed experimental design." (1975, 17)

Over the ten-year period in which the study was conducted, the methodology developed **organically**. This meant that the setting, methods of data collection and methods of data analysis changed as the research lead the team into different areas of enquiry.

Mahler's approach to methodology was both original and creative and offers an avenue for exploring child development which has seldom been followed.[17] Only Piaget has matched Mahler in the breadth of his methods. For the individual researcher, however, this methodology is impossible to follow because of the enormous financial, staffing, equipment and time resources which Mahler could command. A more modest method of observation had to be found for this study.

Ethnography

One perspective on the problem of obtaining data about the internal states of preverbal infants is to conceive of the problem **ethnographically**. This means that infants are perceived almost as if they were members of a 'tribe' whose language is not understood. Ethnographers placed in such a situation become participant observers in the tribe's social life. The ethnographers would have to rely on acute observation of behaviour patterns and the accounts of people who did speak their language and had some knowledge of the subject. They would also have to be aware of their own experiences and feelings during the participant observation and extrapolate from these to the experiences of the subjects.

Ethnographic research is in a different tradition from psychoanalysis or developmental psychology, and yet the methodology combines many aspects of both. Many ethnographic studies use a similar 'organic' approach to Mahler's, employing a basic methodology but using different techniques as and when they are appropriate to the data (Hammersley and Atkinson, 1983). Devereux (1978) believes that psychoanalysis and

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[17]Mahler's conclusions, though, have been severely criticised, especially by Stern (1985).

anthropology are 'complementary frames of reference' and believes that the two disciplines inform each other, although he has not investigated infants in this way.[18]

In this study I have attempted to keep this analogy and loosely follow an 'ethnographic' methodology, informed by psychoanalysis and to some extent by developmental psychology. By doing so I hope to get as close to infants' experiences, and mothers' experiences of them, as possible. Rather than inventing a methodology I have based this study around an existing psychoanalytic technique.

5. INFANT OBSERVATION

Although direct observation has only occasionally been used by psychoanalysts as a method of research, infant observation has been used since 1948 as a part of psychoanalytic **training**. Every trainee analyst and psychoanalytic psychotherapist must observe an infant for one or two years. The current method of infant observation was pioneered by Esther Bick.

Bick's method

Bick (1964, 558) describes the basis of her method:

> "The child psychotherapy students visit the family once a week up to about the end of the second year of the child's life, each observation normally lasting about an hour...(the observer is able) to compare and contrast his observations with those of his fellow students in the weekly seminars."

Bick believes that this method enables students to have an insight into the intensity of the infant's experience and behaviour, the mother's feelings and the relationship between them.

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[18]Freud (eg 1913; 1930) certainly believed that psychoanalytic thought had relevance for sociology.

This method is different from those of Winnicott, Mahler or any of the developmental psychologists (except Piaget) in that it is much more **naturalistic**. The observations are held in the home of the parents and the observer is offered a weekly 'slice' of the infant's development. Sometimes the infant will be sleeping, other times alert, sometimes alone and other times with people. The mother is encouraged to carry on as far as possible with whatever she would have been doing anyway.

The observer does not take notes during the session because it interferes with **free floating attention** and prevents the observer from responding to the emotional demands of the mother. For the same reasons tape recorders, video cameras and other technical equipment are not used.

The observer is in fact a **participant observer**, and should:

> "...feel himself sufficiently inside the family to experience the emotional impact, but not committed to act out any roles thrust upon him, such as giving advice or registering approval or disapproval." (1964, 559)

This balance is not easy to maintain. Mother-infant relationships are intensely powerful and it is all too easy for an observer to be sucked into the family dynamics. On the other hand, it is precisely these emotions and dynamics that are being studied and too much detachment will prevent the observer from understanding the quality of the relationships. The observer must be very sensitive to the mother and allow her to fit him into the household in her own way.

The most powerful feelings as far as the observer is concerned are the **transferential** feelings of the mother towards him, and his own **counter-transferential** responses. Bick warns observers to resist being drawn into roles involving transference, especially during a mother's post-natal depression. I will discuss transference and counter-transference in more depth below.

Other than this short adumbration of her method, Bick wrote nothing further about it. Her one other publication (1968), is based on this method, but does not explain it further. Of the few other studies I have found which are explicitly based on this method, eg, Call

(1964), Piontelli (1985), Hering (1986), Talberg et al (1988), only Miller et al (1989)[19] provide any details of the method or discussion of it. There is also no discussion of the method as a part of training even though it has been very widely used for so long. This means that there is no way of knowing how the method varies between different training courses, how systematic it is, nor what aspects are more or less useful for different purposes. The following account of the method in operation and the discussion of it is therefore of necessity based largely on my personal experiences and on discussions with others who have used it.

The Method in Operation

My experience of this method has been gained exclusively at the Tavistock Institute and people associated with it. At the Tavistock Institute, infant observation is normally carried out over two years, starting as close to birth as possible. One infant is observed by each observer.

Subjects

Observers are expected to find their own subjects, either before the seminars start or shortly afterwards. Subjects are usually found through local health visitors, G.P.'s or the National Childbirth Trust. Observers are encouraged to find a mother who has already had children. It is considered less threatening for a mother to be observed if she has already coped with babies. Despite Bick's assertion that mothers usually welcome the attention given them by the observer, being observed can be very difficult at times for a mother, especially one who already has major difficulties. Because of this observers usually select 'normal' families, ie those in which the mother seems to be relatively stable and mature, and where the baby is expected to be normal. Inevitably appearances can be deceptive and sometimes major pathology becomes evident during the observation. The families also tend to be middle-class and white.

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[19]Rustin (1987) discusses the method but does not use it himself for research.

Seminars

The seminars usually consist of five to seven observers and a seminar leader. They meet weekly during the academic year. The sessions last between one-and-a-half and two hours. The observers take turns in presenting observations to the group and another observer takes notes of the discussion. The notes of the previous discussion of the case are read out before the presentation.

The seminar leader focuses attention on relevant aspects of the situation and offers support and advice to the observers when necessary. Examples of this are when particularly strong feelings are being expressed by mothers, or when the observers find themselves out of role, caring for the infant or a sibling. The discussion sometimes ranges over the whole presentation and sometimes the focus is on a particular sequence of actions or interactions.

Role of the Observer

The observer's task is to be able to experience and memorise as much as possible during the observation, with as little effect on the mother and infant as possible. This involves not only an awareness of the sequence of events, but also the emotional 'flavour' of the interactions, as well as his own emotional responses. The observer must be friendly and accommodating, while maintaining a distance. This means giving the minimum of personal information and telling as little as possible about the observation and the theory behind it. The observer does not initiate conversation other than bland everyday talk such as "How was your holiday?". Generally the observer will remain passive, and will only respond when directly addressed. The observer avoids taking care of the infant, especially when mother is out of the room. If the infant is in a different room from the mother, the observer will try to go in with the infant rather than stay with the mother. Mother's wishes must be complied with, though, and if she prefers the observer to be with her, the observer will go along with this. Generally the observer will act as a 'privileged guest' and tries to disrupt the daily pattern of life as little as possible.

Timing of Observations

Ideally the weekly observations should take place at a set time, preferably when the infant is feeding or otherwise active, and when the mother is present. Sometimes observations will take place while the infant is asleep, and in this case the observer will continue to observe the sleeping infant.

Recording

No notes are taken during the sessions, but the observer will write as full an account of the session as is as possible, after it finishes. Typically this record will include the date, time and location of the session, who was present and the age of the infant. A detailed account will then be given, concentrating on the activity of the infant and the interaction between infant and mother, and also the observer's own responses to specific events. In order to preserve confidentiality, initials, first names or simply 'mother', 'baby', etc, are used.

The record does **not** contain a theoretical explanation of the behaviour. According to this method, an observer is encouraged not to go into observations with any preconceived theoretical framework. The idea is that during the sessions the observer should try to have as immediate an experience as possible, and that awareness of theory during the observation would hinder this. Theoretical explanations are given at the seminars after the record has been completed. After each year of the observation the observer presents a summary of the observation to the seminar. In this account the patterns of development are pointed out and an attempt is made to relate observation to theory.

Transference and Counter-transference

Bick (1964) warned observers about the difficulties of becoming overwhelmed by transference and counter-transference during the observation. Greenson (1967) provides a good definition of transference:

"The experiencing of feelings, drives, attitudes, fantasies and defences towards a person in the present which do not befit that person but are a repetition of reactions originating with regard to significant persons of early childhood, unconsciously displaced on to figures in the present." (in Mattinson 1975, 33)

In the context of observation this would involve mother responding to the observer as if he or she was a punitive, judgmental parent looking for her to make mistakes in child care or, conversely, a helpful and nurturing parent or expert who will tell her how to look after her child and relieve her of the anxiety. She may act as if the observer was a competitive sibling vying for her infant's attention.

It is often difficult to separate the real concern of the mother (who is, after all, going through a pretty exhausting time) from transference reactions. Part of the observer's job is to recognise transference and to deal with it appropriately. This does not mean interpreting it as an analyst would do, but it can mean acknowledging it or changing behaviour to lessen the transference. Transference reactions by the parents can be useful data for the observer, because they can reveal things about their relationships with others which they would not otherwise report.

Counter-transference is a less discussed, and more controversial topic in psychoanalysis than transference. Laplanche and Pontalis (1983) define counter-transference as:

"The whole of the analyst's unconscious reactions to the individual analysand - especially to the analysand's own transference." (p92)

The main debates about the term revolve around its **extent** and its **helpfulness** in the analytic process.

The debate about the extent of counter-transference is stated in the above definition: Is it confined to the analyst's unconscious responses to the patient's transference, or does counter-transference extend to all the analyst's unconscious reactions? Laplanche and Pontalis take the more restricted view, but many authors such as Racker (1968) and Mattinson (1975) believe that a much wider definition is appropriate and that counter-transference should refer to all the unconscious and irrational responses to the patient.

Racker (1968), Mattinson (1975) and Sandler et al (1973) also agree on the usefulness of counter-transference. They acknowledge that Freud (1910) saw counter-transference as a hindrance to therapy because it is the result of the analyst's own unresolved conflicts. On the other hand Heimann (1950) and others see counter-transference as a manifestation of a deep communication between the unconscious of patient and analyst and therefore the essence of the analysis. In the middle is a slightly more mundane view, ie, that counter-transference is an inevitable part of any intensely emotional relationship, and that by being aware of their own unconscious responses analysts can learn a great deal about their patients. In order to do so (at least until they are very experienced) they need support and 'reflection', ie, a forum where the counter-transference can be explored. This is part of the purpose of seminars in infant observations.

This debate is reflected in the social sciences, but is couched in terms of reliability and validity of data. Counter-transference is seen as the effect of the experimenter's personality or beliefs on the outcome (the 'halo effect') and is countered by means of double-blind and other methods which attempt to exclude this as a variable in order to increase the validity of the results. On the other hand, ethnographers and other more 'naturalistic' methods acknowledge the experimenter as a factor and try to understand the effect on the subjects rather than neutralise it. Devereux (1978) goes much further and has asserted that:

> "The counter-transference of the observer is the fundamental datum of the
> behavioural sciences." (p95)

By this Devereux means that an observer has no access to any **objective** facts about subjects. Every observer formulates a unique conceptual schema regarding the subject by establishing a **functional nexus** between the subject's several modes of behaviour. An observer makes sense of his perceptions in idiosyncratic ways which are a result of his own counter-transferential responses to subjects.

This assertion of the importance of counter-transference in the social sciences is resonant of Piaget's view of the formation of schemas and is indeed couched in similar language. It implies that counter-transference is a dynamic and dialectical process between observer

and subject, and that acknowledgement of the counter-transference is essential in any social scientific endeavour.[20] Devereux's view implies an even wider definition of counter-transference than Racker's or Mattinson's, in that it could include all idiosyncratic responses of the observer (see also Hunt, 1989). Despite these controversies, Devereux's argument seems to show that the usefulness of counter-transference extends beyond the context of the patient/analyst relationship.

Validity

Using the observer's counter-transference as part of the observation process rather than attempting to neutralise it, poses problems of validity - How do we know that a particular account does not tell more about the observer than the subject? This question underlies much of the criticisms of psychoanalysis mentioned above. The answer must be that it is only through the observer that we know the subject, and there need not be a conflict between subjectivity and validity. Validity in this context depends on the extent to which the observer is able to give an accurate account of the events and the process of thinking about what happened. It is the observer's ability to **think** creatively and to convey these thoughts that ensures the validity of the account.

This formulation is based on Bion's (1984a & b) theory of thinking. Barker (1982) gives a good account of this theory. The point about Bion's theory as it relates to infant observation is that he believes that learning from **experience** is the most valid form of knowledge, rather than applying 'facts' to a preconceived theoretical framework. He also believes that lines of creative thought should be followed through even if they are later proved wrong by experience. It is clear from Bick's (1964) writing that her insistence that the observer excludes theory in order to experience the intensity of the situation derives in large part from Bion's methods of learning from experience, ie **knowing** and **knowing about** something, but she does not acknowledge his influence.

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[20]Mead's (1979) attempt to rebut this assertion is only partially successful and she eventually concludes that counter- transference is a very important source of data.

For the account to be valid a record of the observer's responses must be kept. This must be supplemented by a statement of the observer's point of view and the factors which have influenced it. An observer must show how this rather than that event was noticed, and how the conclusion was reached from the observation. According to this method, any pretence at 'scientific' objectivity is itself a distortion of the validity of the information because it denies a vital component in the dynamic of the observation.

Isaacs (1952) offers three methodological principles by which the validity of infant observation is enhanced. They are:

attention to details;

observation of context; and

the study of genetic continuity.

If **attention to the observer's counter-transference** is added to this list, I believe there is a good argument for the validity, and even reliability, of infant observation as a viable method of developmental research.

Problems

Having pointed out the usefulness of Bick's method of infant observation for research into child development, I believe that there are a number of criticisms which must be made of it. These criticisms will concentrate on this method in particular, rather than the whole methodology of naturalistic observation which has many critics in its own right. The following comments are again based on my own experience of the method because of the lack of discussion in the literature.

Difficulty with the Seminars

In my experience, Isaacs' third principle of genetic continuity was not adhered to very

tightly. Interpretations of behaviour tended to be made irrespective of the age of the infant. For example, a grasping motion by the infant would invariably be interpreted as a symbolic holding on to the nipple. At one level this may be correct, but it misses the point of how the representation of the nipple changes from a neonate to a toddler.

Restrictiveness of the Method

The passive stance of the observer is intended to ensure maximum free-floating attention and to minimalise counter-transference. It reflects the stance of psychotherapists who only respond to what is brought into the session and not the 'reality' outside. I believe that this stance restricts the observer somewhat and prevents pertinent questions being asked and other sources of data being obtained. The result can be a very unrepresentative view of the infant-mother relationship. For teaching purposes this may not be important, but for the purposes of this research it was important to incorporate as much of the context as possible.

Ethical Considerations

One of the principles of this method is that observers reveal as little as possible about themselves and the purpose of the observation as possible. This is a valid stance in one respect; that it does not burden mother with the **observer's** agenda. It decreases the chance that the data will be influenced by the mother acting in a way she thinks the observer would like. On the other hand, not telling a mother the real purpose of the observation could be seen as misleading or observing under false pretences.

6.   METHODOLOGY OF THE PRESENT STUDY

Despite these reservations, and the limitations of participant observation, I believe that the method offers a new and potentially fruitful way of exploring the development of racial identity in infants. I have pointed out the deficiencies of the doll studies and other methods which have been used to study racial identity in children. This method also has limitations and disadvantages - mainly that it sacrifices many of the safeguards of

reliability for the sake of greater **validity**. Like the other methods it also has advantages. It needs to be seen as part of an ongoing struggle to find better ways of obtaining data about, and accounting for, very complex phenomena.

The spirit in which this study was undertaken was influenced by Bion and his theory of thinking. Bion believed that one should take an idea, use it, think about it and take it as far as it is useful. The idea can be modified or rejected in the light of experience. The important thing is that one should not be afraid of **thinking** creatively because of one's own or others' ideas about the correct way things should be done.

Modifications

In this study two infant observations were undertaken. The methods used in these observations did deviate in some respects from Bick's method. The main differences were:

Age

Because racial identity is a social phenomenon, I believed that it would be more cost effective to begin the observations when the infant became really social, and therefore attempted to start the observations at about six months, when the 'age of concern' (Winnicott, 1985,1988) and the 'domain of intersubjective relatedness' (Stern, 1985) are reported to start. In the event, only the first observation started when the infant was this age. The second one began when the infant was six weeks old.

Information

Both mothers were informed of the broad outlines of the study during the early stages of the observations.

The observations were supplemented by semi-structured interviews with the mothers after the observations had been completed.

With the exception of these minor changes, I followed Bick's method as far as possible.

Access

The main practical problem in this project was gaining access to suitable subjects. As a social worker I had encountered a number of clients from inter-racial families, but I believed that it was ethically and methodologically wrong to use clients as subjects. I therefore had to rely on other professionals, mainly health visitors, to ask their clients whether they would be willing to be subjects. This second-hand way of doing things proved to be rather difficult. Although the health visitors claimed that they knew many suitable families, the reality was that there were few suitable subjects. The criteria for suitability were:

> mothers had to be white, preferably British, and fathers black;

> the infants had to be between birth and nine months old, preferably around six months old;

> the families had to be reasonably stable, ie, not in a state of crisis or have major chronic problems (at least in the health visitor's estimation);

> the families had to be in a position to be observed weekly over a period of time;

> the families should not have been current cases of the social services department; and

> mothers had to agree to the observations.

White mothers were chosen because mothers are the primary caregivers, and the inter-racial debate is couched invariably in terms of white families with black children. Black mothers raising black children would not face the same conflicts as white women, because they have experienced being parented by a black mother themselves. I also

believed that my presence as a white observer would be less complex and would have less effect on the mothers' responses if they were also white.

It took six months of intensive lobbying to find the first family, and another six months of lobbying to find the second. This involved talking to personal contacts and writing letters to health visitor managers in two Inner London boroughs to ask for assistance.

I was offered three families by one of the health visitors. The first mother refused to see me, the second child was on the child abuse register of the local authority, and the third was a 17-year-old girl living with her parents. It was only on the fourth attempt that I finally found a family that seemed suitable and a mother who was willing to go through with the observation.

Further difficulties arose over how exactly I would approach the mothers. I expected that my being a white male could make it more difficult for the mothers to accept me into their homes to observe and talk about very intimate subjects.[21] I felt that, for ethical reasons, it would be wrong for me to approach mothers directly and that it would be wrong to expect professionals to hand out names of their clients without the client's prior knowledge. I therefore adopted the following method:

I first briefed the health visitor who then discussed the observation with the mother. If the mother was agreeable I then contacted her myself (either by telephone or writing) and discussed the observation. As is customary in this kind of observation, I gave the minimum amount of information about myself and the purpose of the observation. I told them that I was a student looking into child development in mixed-race infants and that I would like to observe them once a week for an hour over a period of a year. I gave

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[21]This is because women who have chosen black partners may have done so because they had unconsciously or consciously rejected white men, or had felt rejected by them. - See Chapter 3. Also, as men are often excluded from the intimate details of child care such as breast feeding, some women find it difficult to share these things with them, especially when they are alone with a virtual stranger. The women's partners could also feel jealous and excluded.

them my work and home telephone numbers in case they had to cancel at short notice.

7.   INTERVIEWS

The second element of this study was based upon more conventional methodological lines. I conducted fairly lengthy semi-structured interviews with both mothers, as well as three other mothers of mixed-race infants.

Purpose

The purpose of these interviews was to try to explore what it is that a mother brings into the relationship with a child of a different race. More specifically they were intended to explore the relationship between the mother's past family history and her feelings about race, relationships and child care and to relate these to her ideas about the racial identity of her children.

In the case of the two subjects of observation, these responses were contrasted with the results of the observations themselves. I hoped that by studying both the infants' development and the mothers' attitudes and histories, I would have a wider picture of the infants' identities, encompassing the subjective, the intersubjective and the social context in which the identities were developing.

In the cases of the mothers whose infants had not been observed, this full picture could not be obtained. Nevertheless, the information supplied by them was also important in elucidating some of the relationships between mothers' attitudes and responses to their infants, and the infants' identity development.

Another purpose for supplementing the observations with interviews was to act as a validity check. Kirk and Miller (1986) argue that validity is increased by **triangulation**, ie using a number of different methods to obtain data, each with its own characteristic strengths and weaknesses. Different methods are able to complement each other.

This check on validity is particularly important in studies such as the present one, where only one person is collecting the data, and is therefore unable to cross-check data with a fellow observer.

Semi-structured Interviews

Semi-structured interviews were used for the first set of interviews to test out the initial assumptions and hypotheses. The semi-structured format allows for free expression on the part of the subjects, while at the same time allowing the interviewer to concentrate on particular areas of importance (Bernard, 1988; Patton, 1990; Sudman and Bradburn, 1982). The idea here was to enable the mothers to talk as freely as possible about themselves. The questions were posed chronologically, starting with the family of origin and the relationships within it, and moving on to friends and sexual relationships. Finally their ideas and relationship to the infants were explored. Within each question, the **funnelling** technique was used; questions were posed in a broad fashion and then specific answers were probed for (Sudman and Bradburn, 1982) The questions were not asked in strict order and, in the course of the conversations, mothers often returned to previous topics or pre-empted questions.

The semi-structured format was used because it is the most germane for obtaining sensitive information and disclosures, while at the same time focusing on specific areas of interest generated by the theory. Structured interview schedules, although they produce more reliable results, can only elicit responses to pre-set stimuli, and do not allow for spontaneity. In this study each interview was subtly different from the previous one. This was in response to the individual responding to the questions. Some of the mothers found it much easier to talk about certain topics than others, and so different information was gathered from their responses.

A factor which contributed to differing responses was my own reaction to the mothers and theirs to me. All the interviews took place in different contexts and this must have influenced the way the questions were framed and the responses elicited. Another factor was that, as they progressed, I tended to stress certain aspects which seemed to be likely

to provide the information I was looking for. The interview schedule was used 'organically' (in Mahler's sense) and evolved over a period of time in response to the information given.

The Biographical Method

Although the first set of interviews provided much information about mothers' histories and their attitudes toward their children, it was felt on reflection that the semi-structured approach had been too restrictive in some respects. Briefly their main limitations were:

> The attempt to provide causal links between mothers' early experiences of being parented and their own parenting style proved impossible.

> The first interviews confirmed that identity was probably a much wider phenomenon than the 'racial identity' whose character the observations and interviews set out to discover. It was felt that the real issue was how families dealt with 'difference' rather than how they dealt with 'race'.

> Pre-set topics, even in a semi-structured interview, tended to 'frame' the interviews so that the information gained was determined too much by the interviewer's assumptions, and not enough by the mothers' own constructions of their reality.

> The restriction of the interviews to mothers only meant that the 'black' perspective was given third hand. The observations and interviews showed that fathers played a crucial role in the identity of their children, and it was therefore felt that the next set of interviews should include both parents where this was possible. It was also decided to include families with a black mother and white father to see if the issues were very different.

The second set of interviews were therefore based on a method which was somewhat different from the first. Fortunately, recent developments in social research, based on

the 'oral history' movement had developed which were designed to elicit how individuals and families make sense of their lives, and how this relates to their social and cultural context. This approach is called the 'life history' or 'biographical' approach (Bertaux, 1981; Denzin, 1983). The methodology used was unstructured interviews with both parents when possible and one parent where there was no partner in the house or the partner refused to be interviewed.

The biographical approach was used so that parents could give their own account of their lives and tell their life stories spontaneously with the minimum of prompting. The biographical approach is concerned with obtaining stories from people about their experiences and identifying themes which run through those stories. It does not look for causal links between earlier and later events, rather it tries to identify the continuities and discontinuities in peoples accounts of their lives, and to uncover the 'scripts' or 'myths' by which they live.

It was felt that this method (described in more detail in Chapter 8) would provide both the relevant material and the appropriate analysis to broaden and deepen the findings in the first two phases of the study.

Nine sets of parents were interviewed in the third phase. The 'ethnic' breakdown of the families was:

three families where the father was Asian and the mother English

one family where the mother was Jewish and the father Ghanaian

one family where the mother was a New Zealander and the father was a South African Muslim

one family where the mother was Afro-Caribbean and the father American

one family where the mother was English and the father Afro-Caribbean (father

not interviewed)

one family where the mother was Norwegian and the father (not in the household) was half Afro-American, but adopted by a white English couple

one couple where the mother was Ghanaian and the father English.

The youngest children in the families ranged from four months to almost four years.

8.   CONCLUSION

The spirit behind both the observations and the interviews was to try out the methods and to see how well they would provide the information I was looking for. It was in this spirit that the methods developed over time, and were able to provide a 'feel' for how these families functioned and dealt with the issues around identity development. The methods were informed by the theoretical basis on which the thesis was established. The methods themselves, and the information derived from the various components of the fieldwork, served in turn to adapt the theory. These methods complement quantitative approaches such as the doll studies. They were certainly not seen as the only 'right' methods for studying racial identity development. This study can be seen as an exploration of how much light these methods throw on the subject, perhaps providing a glimpse of how future research may be able to address the issues.

CHAPTER SIX
THE A FAMILY

1. INTRODUCTION

In this and the following chapter I will present the results of the two infant observations which were undertaken for this study.

The two families were observed concurrently in 1986 and 1987. There were altogether 63 observations, 37 for the A family and 26 for the B family. These observations generated large amounts of raw data and, in presenting the results, I will try to give a picture of the infants and their environments and to examine the clues the observations provided to an understanding of the development of their racial identity.

My observations of the A family formed the major part of this study. The family composition was:

Mother (Tracy)	age: 25 yrs	
Father (Norman)	age: 26 yrs	
Sister (Roberta)	age: 3 yrs	D.O.B 1/1983
Subject (Aud)	age: 7 months	D.O.B 7/1985

The family were described to me by their health visitor as being "Rough and ready and very warm." She said that when she had approached the mother she had asked whether Norman would mind about the observations and Tracy had replied "It's none of his business." She also told me that although they were not married, the couple intended to marry soon, and that they had a 3-year-old daughter as well as the baby. Other than this I had no information.

Perhaps the best way of providing an initial description is to quote my observations after the first visit. (25/2/86)

Physical environment

<u>The Flat</u>: "The C's live in a small ground floor flat in a large housing estate. The block was probably built in the early part of this century and is typical of this rather deprived inner London area which has a high proportion of people from ethnic minorities, notably of West Indian and Moroccan origin.

The flat consists of a small living room, a kitchen, bathroom and 2 small bedrooms. The living room has a sofa, an armchair and an upright chair. A large black and white television sits on a trunk against the wall. There is a thick pile carpet on the floor. The furniture is rather tattered, and the room has an atmosphere of untidiness and cosiness, but also of poverty. I particularly noted that the curtains were almost fully drawn though it was mid-afternoon. There were many toys scattered around in the room, both hard and cuddly, and some children's books (but no adult ones). The room is heated by a single gas fire.

The parents' bedroom leads off the living room, and is separated from it by a curtain, as is the tiny kitchen. The children's bedroom leads off the hall, and has 2 beds, 2 cupboards and a chest of drawers, with room for very little else. Generally the flat seems rather grubby and there is a noticeable smell from the family's two dogs."

The physical environment became an important part of the observation. The family were very unhappy in the flat and during the course of the observations they changed the layout of the living room several times, buying and selling furniture, televisions and other equipment. One constant factor was that the curtains were almost always half shut.

Family Descriptions

<u>Baby</u> <u>(Aud)</u>: "Aud is a coffee-coloured girl of 7 months. She is rather chubby and has black, wavy, wispy hair. Her largish ears are adorned by gold earrings. She has a habit of staring intently for minutes at a time with her black and slightly squinty eyes. She seems to be a calm baby who does not cry a lot, and who is responsive to her mother's attention.

Aud enjoys playing with toys, especially cuddly ones, and can sometimes become quite immersed in this. Mother also told me that Aud has recently started eating the same food as the family and she that she really enjoys her food. Aud sleeps in a bed because when she was smaller she got her hand caught in a cot. She shares a room with Roberta, and has no difficulty sleeping through the night. All her milestones are normal, but she is slow to begin crawling."

<u>Mother (Tracy)</u>: "Tracy is a tall, plump woman in her early thirties. She has shoulder-

length black hair in an untidy style, and a round, pale face with small brown eyes. Her nose is straight and sharp and she has a small mouth with a mole just above her upper lip. Tracy speaks in a quick staccato manner with a working-class London accent. Her manner is seemingly relaxed and outgoing, but at times she becomes tense and ill-at-ease.

During this visit she wore old grey trousers and a cardigan over her white cotton blouse. Tracy spoke confidently about her mothering, and gave the impression of being in control of the children, but not rigidly controlling them."

Father (Norman): "I only saw Norman very briefly during this visit. He is a tall thin black man with his hair in dreadlocks. He looks to be in his late twenties. He speaks with a pronounced West Indian accent. He seems slightly to resent my visit. Tracy told me he has just started 'shift work.'"

Sister (Roberta): "Roberta is a 4-year-old girl who has similar features to Aud, but is skinny for her age. She also has much curlier hair in an 'afro' style. Roberta is a very lively girl who likes to be the centre of attraction. During this visit she constantly tried to distract my attention from Aud, whom she ignored most of the time, concentrating her attention on the adults and the 2 dogs."

Although these notes are first impressions, they preface many patterns which later emerged in the observations. Examples are:

Tracy's casual and rather grubby dress;

Aud's tendency to stare fixidly for long periods;

Aud's ability to immerse herself in repetitive play;

Norman's hostility towards me;

Tracy's wavering from relaxation to tension; and

Roberta's constant struggle to divert my attention from Aud to herself.

2. FAMILY HISTORY

I learned the history of this family during the course of the observations, mainly from

Tracy.

Tracy comes from a working-class Irish background. Her parents moved to London before she was born and she grew up on a West London council estate. She has two sisters and a brother, and described her childhood as "happy enough". She was close to her parents, but as a teenager became rebellious and independent. When she was younger she thought she was attractive and had had several boyfriends, all of them white, and Norman was her first black boyfriend. Her mother was at first very disapproving of the relationship but later accepted Norman into the family. Tracy continues to have close links with her family. Having come from the neighbourhood, and being a gregarious person, Tracy has many friends locally who offer her support.

Norman was born in the West Indies and came to London while still a young child. He comes from a large family and is the eldest of five siblings and half siblings. He grew up in an estate near the one that Tracy grew up in. Norman described his upbringing as being very strict and his mother 'ruled the roost'. Norman lost contact with his father when he was in his teens, but still maintains contact with his mother and siblings. He, too, has had many girlfriends, some of them white, but Tracy was his first long-term relationship.

The couple met at a party and began living together soon afterwards. They moved to a flat in East London, but were evicted before Roberta was born. After the birth Tracy was placed in a mother and baby home for a few weeks and Norman was not allowed to stay overnight. They were then offered their current flat by a housing association, and took it because they were desperate. They do not like the flat because it is cold and small and on a rough estate.

Children's Histories

The two children had very different births: Tracy told me that her labour with Roberta was five days long, and very painful. Nevertheless she described it as a "wonderful experience". Norman was not present at the birth. By contrast, her labour during Aud's birth had only been three hours long but she described it as "agony." She had to have

an epidural and was so sedated that she was hardly aware of the birth, which made her feel disappointed and bitter. Norman had been present at Aud's birth. Tracy had given birth to stillborn twins between Roberta and Aud's births, after which she and Norman quickly tried for another child to make up for the loss.

Tracy said that she had found it relatively easy to bond with Roberta because they had been alone in the mother and baby unit after her birth, without distractions. Since then Roberta has been 'her' baby and they are very close (Obs 2). Because Norman was at Aud's birth, she believes he has always been closer to her. Tracy described how, after Aud's birth, she had given her to Norman and said "Take her, she's yours." Tracy feels that she was not able to bond well with Aud because of the traumatic birth and also because she did not want a girl.[22] Another factor was that she did not breast-feed Aud because Aud would not take her milk. She did say to me that by the time I had started observing their relationship had improved, but Aud was still Norman's baby (Obs 1). Tracy also expressed some irritation at Aud's slow progress. Aud had been a small, five pound baby, and had reached all her milestones late. Thus mother's first descriptions to me of her relationship to Aud were mainly negative. In summary they were:

the difficult pregnancy;

the traumatic birth;

the lack of a settled home in the first weeks;

Aud's refusal to take breast milk;

her wanting a boy;

Aud was a small baby; and

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[22]Her only explanation for wanting a girl was that the council would only rehouse them if they had children of different sexes.

Aud's slow development.

Other negative aspects of Tracy's expectations may have been present, although Tracy did not articulate them. They were:

Aud was born very soon after Tracy had lost the twins;[23] and

Tracy gained a lot of weight during the pregnancy and did not lose it again after the birth.

3.   CONTEXT AND PATTERNS

The following are some of the major patterns that occurred during the course of my observations of the A family. This list refers to the environmental **context** of the observations rather than their **content**. I will deal more specifically with the patterns of behaviour and relationships which emerged during the observations at a later stage. The context is important for two reasons:

the physical environment was important in the A family's relationships and Aud's development; and

the context of the observation affects the observer's own feelings and therefore the outcome of the study.

Patterns

The observations quickly developed a character of their own, and patterns emerged which were to become typical of my encounters with the A family. The most important of the patterns were:

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[23]See Bourne & Lewis, (1984) for an account of the effects of perinatal death in families.

The regularity with which the family were absent when I arrived for the observation. At times this was a result of mother not being able to contact me (they had no phone), but very often they simply forgot I was coming. Even when they were present, I was often greeted with a surprised look, or confronted with the family about to go shopping. This despite the fact that the times of the observation were fixed.

Mother and Father never learned my name, despite my repeating it very often, and even writing it in notes. I became known as 'Aud's friend'.

Observations were made difficult by constant distractions:

there were often people coming in and out of the flat;

the TV and/or stereo was usually on;

Aud was often taken out of out of the room; and

Roberta constantly tried to attract my attention.

The furniture and layout of the living room was changed every few weeks. During the months I visited the family acquired three different TV sets, two sofas and several other pieces of furniture, which were rearranged almost every week. The flat was kept in semi-darkness for many of the observations. The living room curtains were virtually always drawn, sometimes the light was on, but at other times the light was off.

The flat was not kept in a good state of repair. For example, the door was broken around the time of my 6th observation,[24] but was not mended in the

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[24]Norman had broken in while Tracy was out, having lost his own key.

whole time I visited. As the observations progressed, it became more evident that the lack of **physical** boundaries (doors) within the flat reflected the lack of **psychological** boundaries within the family. The flat was often not very clean, although there were times when it was spotless.

Information

Although both parents were reasonably articulate and there were some things about which they were very candid (for example, Norman telling me about his feelings on race and his relationship with Tracy in observations 3 and 20), there were other major family events about which they were very reticent and which I could only guess at. The two main ones were:

> Tracy's miscarriage, which happened towards the end of Aud's 2nd year; and Norman's leaving the home, which followed shortly afterwards. Tracy hinted that Norman had been forced to leave by the Social Services because he had been 'molesting' Roberta and also hinted that he hadn't left altogether.

Both these events were obviously traumatic for the family, but I could only infer what their effects were in terms of the family dynamics.

The overall context of my observations of the family was one of very little regularity or predictability. Sometimes a pattern would develop for a few weeks, for example, when one of the parents found a job, but this soon changed and the job would be lost or given up and the family's pattern would change again. In fact the chaotic nature of the family life became the most predictable and characteristic aspect of the observation.

My observations of Aud took on a rather chaotic character from the beginning, and remained so throughout. In fact, the whole project was almost ended after the first observation. The second time I visited I was greeted by a very hostile father who questioned me about what I was doing and insisted that I bring him my notes. (Obs 2)

Against normal procedure in infant observation I conceded,[25] and after a cursory glance at them he gave them back. After that he was relatively friendly towards me. Tracy also showed some ambivalence towards me. Although she was never overtly hostile, the way she organised the observations (eg, by not being there) made me feel unwelcome. She was often rather offhand with me which added to the feeling.

Cultural Patterns

In the A family culture was not generally talked about. There were, however, many signs of cultural influences on the family.

Music

Very often there was music playing when I was observing. The music was almost invariably 'Black', either Reggae or Rap. Norman said that he occasionally played drums in a Reggae band, and he had a large old set of amplifiers and speakers in the bedroom which had 'Black man music' painted on them. Tracy also listened to and enjoyed this music.

Food

The food eaten in the household was almost exclusively what I expected a white working-class family to eat, eg, fish fingers, sausage and chips, lots of Coke, etc. There was no evidence that the children were given any 'ethnic' Jamaican food at home.

Decoration and Contents of the Flat

There was a map of Jamaica in the hall, but otherwise there were no pictures in the

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[25]This was largely because of my desperation at trying to find a suitable family. Having found one I did not want to lose them at this early stage. Also, I felt that they had a moral right to inspect my material despite the fact that it is against normal practice.

house. There were a number of photographs of the family in various parts of the flat. One striking thing about the flat was that there was a complete absence of adult books, but I often saw a tabloid newspaper. In contrast to this there was a bookcase in the children's room which was full of children's books. Tracy was very proud of this and pointed it out to me on the first observation.

Language

Father spoke with a West Indian accent and used some West Indian terms. Mother had a London accent. Roberta spoke similarly to mother, but with a slight inflection of father's accent. Generally the accents and expressions used in the family were typical of working-class people in London.

Parents' Identities

Mother considered herself to be "English from an Irish background." and father told me that:

> "...Even though I was born in this country I don't think of myself as English. I've visited Jamaica several times, but I also don't think of myself as West Indian." (Obs 4)

Generally there was a mixture of 'black' and 'white' cultural influences in the household. There seemed to be no conscious decision on the part of the parents to present the children with cultural input from either culture, both of which formed a backcloth to daily family life.

Discussion

I am aware that this description is written from a white, male, middle-class perspective, and therefore may be misrepresenting the true picture. I do know that I made some mistakes in my perceptions of the cultural environment, and I presume there were more mistakes that were not subsequently corrected. An example of this was something I wrote towards the beginning of the observations:

"...they seem to be very integrated into the local community. Very often I have seen Tracy or Norman outside talking to the neighbours, and often there are people popping in and out of the flat..." (Jul '86)

Much later on Norman complained to me that he felt isolated in the estate because there are too few black people, and he doesn't get on with the neighbours. (Obs 20)

Racial Issues

Although **culture** was not often explicitly mentioned in this family, **race** and **colour** were often alluded to and were a constant factor of the family dynamic.

Parental Conflict

Already by the sixth observation I had witnessed an argument between the parents in which the conflict was couched in terms of race. Father had disciplined Roberta for some misdemeanour and Mother told him to leave her alone. She turned to me and said that Norman is too strict with Roberta and that he won't let her play with toys. He treats her like a woman not a

child. Norman then exploded saying to Roberta:

You are a woman, aren't you?"

Then turning to me he said:

"We have different ways of bringing up kids. I bring my children up like a black parent, very strictly. If it was up to Tracy the kids would be running around doing what they want."

Tracy retorted:

"My daughter isn't black, she's half-caste."

This interaction illustrates two of the ongoing themes within the family in which race became part of the dynamic:

Firstly Conflict was often **racialised**, ie. it was couched in racial terms. This argument

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could have taken place without reference to race, and was essentially about parenting style, but the parents (or at least father) saw the issue as a clash of cultures.

Secondly Mother's ambivalence about her children's blackness. In this instance Mother seemed to be denying that Roberta is a black person, but later we will see that there were times when she did acknowledge their blackness.

Mother's preoccupation with Colour

In virtually all my observations in the first year there are references to Mother discussing Aud's colour and how it changed. Aud was apparently born with a very light skin, and Mother told me that when Roberta first saw Aud she had said that Aud couldn't be her sister because she was too light. Later Aud darkened and Tracy monitored this process very closely, often asking me "Do you think she's darker this week?"

There was always an element of anxiety in these questions and it was clear that she hoped Aud would stay as light as possible.[26]

Racist Language

Tracy often made racist remarks to and about her children. These were usually couched in a joking tone of voice and ranged from offhand comments like:

"She sure has a wide enough nose to pinch." (Obs 11)

to calling Roberta a "Black bitch!" when she was naughty (Obs 6).

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[26]My perception of Aud was that she was coffee-coloured, that her colour remained constant, and that, judging from the photographs, any changes since her birth were minimal. She was also similar in colour to Roberta. This may have been due to an ethnocentric inability on my part to differentiate between different nuances of colour. On the other hand, it could have been a reflection of Tracy's preoccupation with colour and her need to try to convince herself that her children were not really black.

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Tracy's explanation of this behaviour was that the children would suffer racial abuse when they got to school and that she was preparing them for it. I was not convinced that this was Tracy's real motive, because these remarks were said spontaneously and were never followed up by explanations or warnings about racism. I suspect that she gave me the explanation because she felt self-conscious with me present and needed to justify her remarks. This was my 'gut response' to Tracy's action, and it may not be accurate - there may have been real concern in her actions.

Parents' Relationship

During the time I observed this family the marital relationship went through different stages. The parents did not often talk to me directly about their relationship, so much of what I say about it has been inferred or deduced from their behaviour or conversation. There were, however, several occasions when they made critical remarks about each other to me in a half-serious tone of voice, or as part of the banter which characterised much of their interaction.

Tracy and Norman very seldom expressed any positive feelings towards each other. Instead their conversation was couched in a constant 'cheeky' banter, often with sexual overtones. When they demonstrated closeness by hugging or kissing it was always in a playful rather than tender way. Generally their interactions were competitive.

In contrast to their awkwardness in expressing tenderness, Tracy and Norman expressed anger towards each other very easily and often had arguments in my presence. The arguments were always short and equanimity was restored fairly quickly. Despite the air of competition and conflict, the couple did have a commitment to each other and neither of them expressed regret about the relationship.

There were certain issues which caused constant difficulties in the relationship and these centred largely around Norman's irresponsibility. He had a tendency to disappear without warning, sometimes for several days, and he did not keep the house clean. Tracy also suspected him of having affairs, but he denied this to me during a private

conversation. (Obs 20) Norman acknowledged that he did go off with his friends, but felt that it was a man's right to do so.

The parents' ability to work as a partnership varied from time to time, and although Norman was willing to change nappies, bath the children, etc, my impression was that he only carried out these tasks when he wanted to. Certainly it was Tracy who took primary responsibility for the children and the house. Although she complained about Norman a great deal, Tracy seemed to be rather passive in the relationship and rarely challenged him openly about his behaviour.[27] The parents' relationship operated on several different levels: Verbally they were usually very aggressive towards each other and seldom gave each other support as parents. They sometimes tended to have a stereotyped image of the children (eg, Aud was invariably seen as Norman's favourite) and of each other, and they related according to those stereotypes rather than to the real, changing person.

On another level they worked quite well together.   Norman's irresponsibility and absences gave Tracy the control over the children and the flat that she desired most of the time. She did not, for instance, feel it necessary to tell him beforehand about my impending observations. This meant that although Norman was the more powerful character, Tracy had more power in her own domain. There were times when the couple displayed genuine affection and despite their mutual aggression neither of them expressed a wish to leave the other permanently. They certainly had been through many testing periods together and their relationship was strong enough not to have broken up.

On yet another level their relationship seemed to lack intimacy. From what I could gather they seldom discussed their feelings or their relationship, often keeping secrets from each other about important matters. They seemed to lead very different lives and, for both of them, their life-style suited their difficulty in closeness and commitment. It is ironic,

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[27]All this is true for the first 15 months of the observation. After that Norman's presence in the home became much more peripheral. Indeed, he officially moved out of the home, probably on the instructions of social services. However, he moved back towards the very end of the observations.

but not unexpected, that their relationship deteriorated **after** they were married, eventually leading to Norman leaving the home. It may be that the commitment marriage symbolises was too much for them to live up to.

In general there was a volatile quality about the relationship which was exacerbated by external factors such as accommodation, financial worries and Tracy's depression. The relationship was a complex one and there were many facets which were hidden from me. I did feel that the vicissitudes of the marital relationship played a key role in Aud's identity development.

4. AUD'S PATTERNS OF DEVELOPMENT

The rest of this chapter will concentrate on Aud herself and describe some of her patterns of behaviour, how they developed over time, and how they moulded her identity development. I will also concentrate on her developing relationship with her mother and will describe some aspects of her general identity development. This will be related to racial issues as they were explicitly addressed by the family and I will attempt to weave the racial element into the larger picture of Aud's identity.

I have already described my first contact with Aud, and her behaviour in that session. It is remarkable how many of the actions which were evident in that single observation became evidence of patterns which developed over time. By the time I started the observations Aud had already developed some very distinctive ways of interacting. Some of these disappeared, but others elaborated and became more complex as Aud grew older.

5. AUD AT SEVEN TO TWELVE MONTHS

When I began observing Aud she was seven months old. She was just beginning to sit on her own, and she could move about on her tummy, but could not crawl properly.

Perhaps the most striking thing about Aud's behaviour in the first months of the observations was her pattern of moving from a state of intense concentration to a state

of distractedness when she seemed hardly to be aware of her surroundings. This was evident in the second observation (Aud at 8 months):

"Tracy stuck her tongue out at Aud who first looked blankly and then made an attempt to mimic her, slightly and slowly protruding her tongue. Tracy carried on talking to her, making faces and putting out her tongue, but Aud's attention drifted to me and she stared at me with a long squinty stare. Tracy commented that Aud was fascinated by me.

Aud began to put her thumb, index finger and forefinger together and Tracy took this up, clicking her fingers. Aud responded to this by hesitantly making a click-like motion with her right hand. She repeated the action again and again, each time approximating a click better. While doing this she brought her fingers closer to her mouth until they were almost inside it.

Tracy then got up to make the coffee leaving Aud propped up on the chair. Aud looked around sleepily and began moving her arms around, spreading the fingers of her left hand and continuing to 'click' slowly with her right hand. She didn't focus on anything and she made no sound.

Tracy gave Aud a brief cuddle and then brought some paper which she gave to Aud. She told me that Aud loved to tear paper. Aud grabbed the paper in a jerky movement and started to crumple it, still with a distracted look on her face. She made as if to tear it with short, sharp, pulling motions, but the paper didn't tear. She let the paper drop and Tracy gave it back. Aud still didn't tear it, but dropped it and turned away. Tracy then gave her the rag doll and Aud again fingered it, turning the doll around."

In this excerpt Aud demonstrated her three most common 'states' of attention. At different times she showed:

concentrated and exclusive focus on particular people or objects (eg, her focusing on me);

repetitive and 'ritualistic' behaviour when she seemed almost in a trance (eg, tearing the paper); and

distractedness when she seemed hardly to be aware of what was going on around her.

In all three 'states' there was an air of slow deliberateness about Aud's demeanour. She did not verbalise very much and when she did so, did not seem to be expressing any intense emotion. This lack of emotional intensity was another pattern which was characteristic of Aud at this time. Although she responded to her mother and to me in this sequence, she didn't smile, frown or demonstrate any apparent emotion. Her emotional state was more **implicit** in the way she acted than explicitly shown.

In this observation Tracy showed that she could be responsive to Aud. She both initiated interaction (by sticking out her tongue) and responded to Aud's actions (by imitating Aud's clicking). On the other hand, her interaction with Aud did have a stop-start quality about it and she did not follow through the interactions she had started. Tracy and Aud's habitual ways of interacting at this time were:

Tracy starts an interaction (sticks out her tongue);

Aud responds to her (imitates mother's action);

Tracy responds again (repeats action with variations);

Aud loses interest (looks away from mother);

Tracy loses interest (makes coffee).

and

Aud starts an **action**[28] ('clicking' her fingers);

Tracy imitates her;

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[28]Here I am differentiating between an **action** and an **interaction**. For these purposes an action is a meaningful behaviour whereas an interaction is an action that initiates or responds to another person's action, ie, it is part of a **relationship.**

Aud continues her action (looking at mother);

Tracy responds again;

Aud loses interest;

Tracy loses interest.

It is interesting that in this period (8 - 10 months) I could not find any record which shows Aud actually initiating an interaction with her mother, nor of mother terminating the interaction. Aud seemed to be able to tolerate only a certain amount of stimulation from her mother before reacting to her as if she were an **impingement** (see Winnicott, 1965).

Aud's demeanour at this stage had a quality about it which suggested **holding things together**. This quality is hard to extract from mere descriptions of her behaviour, but the following extract from Obs 5 (Aud at 9 months) illustrates this aspect of her identity:

"Tracy gave Aud a bottle of orange juice and put it on her chest saying "You can hold it yourself". Aud sat with her fists clenched and looked at Tracy. She gave a short cry, screwing up her face, but relaxed almost immediately. Tracy went up to her and put the bottle in her mouth and Aud sucked on it a few times but then let it drop. She again started making noises, going "ah" and straining almost as if she were constipated. Tracy put the bottle in yet again, but Aud again took a few sips and let the bottle drop, going "ah" as she did so. Her arms were at her sides with her hands next to her head, her fists clenched. Her feet were held away from her body and she pointed her toes toward the ground. She tapped her right foot on the ground, at first softly but then more loudly...(The sequence with the bottle was repeated a few more times)...

Tracy then said that Aud was letting the bottle go because I was there and that now she normally held the bottle. Tracy stood back, while Aud looked at her, and took a daffodil from a vase...and waved it in front of Aud. Aud responded by following its path 2 or 3 times but soon stared in front of her without focusing."

This extract shows another typical interaction between mother and daughter. Here was a graphic illustration of the passive resistance with which Aud dealt with the impingements of the outside world. She did not fight against the bottle being repeatedly put in her mouth, nor did she succumb to her mother's insistence or cry or show her distress; her way was to accept the bottle and then, after her mother turned away, spit it out (or let it fall out) showing little overt emotion. Only her body language gave the clues as to what was really happening. She clenched her fist, tapped her feet rhythmically and tightened her muscles. I felt that she was saying "I won't let anything in!".[29] Aud's controlled behaviour was in stark contrast to the chaotic nature of her environment, and may have been a way of resisting its effects.

This was not Aud's only way of responding. She sometimes responded enthusiastically to Tracy's advances. Nevertheless her typical way of responding was to resist passively as in the above description.

Tracy interacted with Aud in certain typical ways during this phase of development. She continuously tried to get Aud to perform for me and was usually disappointed by Aud, who seldom acted the way Tracy wanted. When this happened Tracy either lost interest or persisted until Aud made some response. Thus in Obs 3 (Aud at 9 months):

> "Tracy told me that Aud has a new trick - blowing raspberries. She blew a raspberry at Aud, but there was no response and Aud continued to hold her fists tightly clenched. Tracy said "Come on stinky pops!", screwed up her face and stuck out her tongue at Aud who responded by slightly protruding her tongue. Tracy then repeated the action, but this time there was no response from Aud who looked away towards the fire. Tracy then

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[29]This interpretation of A's actions is of necessity partly based on my 'gut feelings' or counter-transferential responses. Tracy gives her own explanation "She's only doing it because you're here". It is also quite possible that this is Aud's way of attracting her mother's attention. Even if this is so she does it in a way that is not overt enough to gain Tracy's full attention, and she certainly does not respond for very long when she does get Tracy's attention.

Taken in conjunction with other sequences it does seem as if Aud is **defending** herself against her mother's intrusions, although she could also be seeking attention.

made a "brrr" sound and blew strongly on Aud's neck. Aud made a flapping movement with her arms and legs. Tracy said in a baby voice "I don't want to play." and then to me "She plays all day, but when she needs to, she won't."

As in the previous excerpt, Tracy was here showing her desperate need for Aud to perform. In some ways this need gave an impetus to the relationship; these interactions were some of the most intense occurring at this stage of Aud's development. On the other hand Tracy's style of relating often did not take Aud's needs into account. Tracy seldom took the cue from Aud; it was usually she who decided when and how Aud should behave and Aud was expected to respond accordingly. It seemed that Tracy needed affirmation from Aud to prove that she was a good mother who was able to produce a daughter who performed well.

Tracy's need may have stemmed from her own feelings of depression and low self-esteem. Perhaps her self-esteem was vicariously improved by having a child who was 'good'. When Aud did not meet these needs Tracy may have felt that this was not a reflection on Aud, but that Aud was punishing her, making her feel even worse.

On a more immediate level it was clear that the 'performances' were aimed at me. Tracy's anxiety during the first few observations may have been fuelled by her belief that I was an expert in child development who had come to assess how well she was doing as a parent.[30] Her persistence in relating to Aud in this way over a long time, and the frequency with which it occurred, made me feel that this was a deep-rooted response which probably occurred outside of the observations.

Tracy's use of the phrase "Come on stinky pops!" was another typical pattern in her relationship with her children and Tracy often used phrases which referred to Aud as

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[30]This fear was expressed openly by both Tracy and Norman in the early weeks of the observations and nearly led to them being curtailed. (See discussion of this matter in previous chapter) Not only was I an observer who had come to look at them, I was a white, middle-class male who represented the mainstream society from which they were so conspicuously excluded.

being smelly or dirty. (In contrast, references to Roberta were usually about her being naughty or nasty) These references to the children hid a complex web of emotions. They were always said in a flippant tone of voice, but they seemed to hide deeper aggressive feelings and there was often a note of exasperation about them. On the other hand, this was also Tracy's way of showing herself and her children that she could be endearing, but the joking manner protected her from having to reveal her true tenderness. Perhaps she felt too vulnerable to face the possibility of rejection by Aud if she overtly demonstrated her feelings.

It is interesting to note that at this stage of Aud's development her relationship to her father was very different from that to her mother. During these early observations Norman was present for at least some of the time during the sessions and I was able to see many of their interactions. Norman tended to relate to Aud in a far more overtly physical way than Tracy. He would pick her up with a "whoop", turn her over and throw her into the air. He also had more eye contact with Aud than Tracy did. His interactions tended to be short, intense and playful.

Aud's responses were also different - she frequently smiled when she saw him, and often squirmed and giggled when he played with her. Aud hardly ever went to him when she was distressed and used Tracy to comfort her, but she obviously relaxed in his presence. This excerpt gives some indication of their relationship:

> "Norman sat on the sofa, still cradling Aud who looked into his eyes and blew a raspberry at him. We all chuckled at this and Tracy remarked that we had been sitting for several minutes, but that Aud had done nothing.
>
> Aud became more active, holding onto Norman's dressing gown and then looking inside to see his chest. She made the 'clicking' motion again, and extended and clenched the fingers of her left hand. At the same time she blew one or two more raspberries and made an "ahh" sound, and then repeated this...Norman said that he could understand her talking, and Tracy told of a program she had seen on TV in which a mentally handicapped child's voice had been slowed down on tape and he could then be understood." (Obs 3, A at 9 months)

This vignette followed one of the episodes when Aud didn't hold her bottle as Tracy

wanted her to. It illustrates not only Aud's different response to Norman, but how the parents' responses differed, with Tracy comparing Aud to a handicapped child and saying she had done nothing, whereas Norman talked of understanding Aud and cradling her in his arms.

The relationship between the siblings was also noteworthy. Aud seemed to derive endless pleasure from watching her sister play and talk, even when Roberta totally ignored her. She was beginning to imitate some of Roberta's behaviour. When Roberta did interact with her Aud's face would light up and she would grunt appreciatively. Roberta, on the other hand, seemed to resent Aud's presence and often behaved angrily towards her. She would imitate many of the flippant remarks that Tracy made to Aud, but with a much more aggressive tone. She often 'punished' her dolls when she was playing at looking after them. On the other hand she seemed to enjoy looking after Aud and often fed her and helped Tracy care for her:

> "Aud and Roberta sat on the sofa. Aud looked at Roberta and slowly put her hand onto the strap of Roberta's dress. Roberta angrily brushed her away, saying "Leave me alone, you!" but then she happily gave Aud a biscuit, putting it gently into her hand, but Aud dropped it. Tracy put her head into the room and told her to put it into Aud's mouth. Roberta did so, but said "Ow!", pretending that Aud had bitten her." (Obs 5, Aud at 9 months)

This short excerpt was part of a sequence of events in this observation in which Roberta changed rapidly from being almost motherly towards Aud, to being angry and resentful. Certainly she competed with Aud for my attention and found it hard that I focused on Aud. Sometimes she was protective of her sister.

Roberta's volatile relationship with Aud was in total contrast to Tracy's somewhat inexpressive mode of relating. I believe that Roberta acted out for her mother many of the feelings towards Aud which were suppressed and which she was unable to acknowledge herself. Thus both Tracy's intensely destructive and tender vulnerable sides were given expression by Roberta. Roberta herself was in a position where she sometimes competed with Tracy's mothering, but also competed with Aud's babyhood.

Summary

In the second half of her first year Aud had already developed a unique way of responding to the world. At a basic level Aud had evolved many individual patterns and sequences in her actions. Some of these were:

'clicking' with her fingers;

staring intently;

looking around vaguely;

clenching her fists;

tearing paper methodically;

closely following Roberta's movements;

a slow and deliberate way of moving;

dropping things or letting them slip; and

avoiding eye contact while responding to physical contact.

Aud had developed several well-defined roles within the family (eg, 'daddy's favourite', 'well behaved'). These roles arose both out of her distinctive ways of interacting with other family members and out of the labels she had been given by them. Some of these labels were assigned before she was born, (eg, 'younger sibling', 'child from a difficult pregnancy') and some were given because of the way she presented herself (eg, 'slow developer'). Yet others were assigned to her without much reference to how she actually behaved (eg, 'naughty baby').

Some of these patterns eg, dropping things rather than fighting, seemed to demonstrate Aud's **defences** against her mother's intrusiveness on the one hand, and lack of emotional involvement on the other. She also seemed to defend herself against the chaos of the household by methodically controlling her own movements.

Aud was also developing her cognitive **schemas**. Some of her patterns showed her increasing ability to perceive and manipulate elements of her environment, for instance her ability to look for biscuits she had dropped earlier.

Finally, Aud was moving into the **domain of interpersonal relatedness**, building the sense of interpersonal self. This was demonstrated when she pointed at objects she wanted, and especially when she imitated Tracy or Roberta, as she was beginning to do during this period.

It was the interaction of these higher order processes which constituted the development of Aud's identity. They combined in a unique and coherent way to form her embryonic sense of self and her place in society.

It would be a mistake to assume that all Aud's roles within the family were entrenched and inflexible. The relationships were dynamic and changing and Aud's behaviour often differed from her typical patterns. In the following extract from Obs 10 (Aud at 10 months), for example, Aud shows an unusual degree of activity and emotion:

> "Aud was now rocking and rattling furiously; rocking herself in the bouncer and banging the rattle hard on it and onto her thigh. Her feet were banging in unison on the floor and she made a "mmm" sound. She had a very intense, almost angry look on her face, frowning and pursing her lips."

Only when these individual interaction sequences are placed in the context of Aud's overall patterns do they make sense. Some sequences which were rare at this stage developed into characteristic patterns later. This shows the difficulty of establishing what is a pattern, a temporary sequence or a one-off action.

6. AUD AT 12 TO 24 MONTHS

In the first half of Aud's second year, the family situation changed. In June, two weeks before Aud's first birthday, Norman and Tracy were married. This seemed temporarily to take some of the pressure off them and Tracy's depression seemed to be less severe. There was still a great deal of upheaval in the family and during this period both Norman and Tracy held jobs for short periods of time.

Aud's development remained very slow. She could only crawl properly at 14 months and she was still not walking by 18 months. Her talking was also slow and she did not say any words other than "mum" and "da", although she seemed to understand most of what was said to her.

It is interesting to note the way some of the patterns which were described in the previous section developed during this phase. Some of Aud's habitual patterns occurred less and less often and simply died out. A good example of this was her particular way of 'clicking' her fingers by bringing her thumb on to her index and fore fingers and rubbing them together. This pattern persisted until about 17 months, but then disappeared. During this time it remained almost the same and did not become more elaborate.

In contrast to this, her pattern of dropping things took a very different course. By 14 months Aud was regularly throwing things on the ground as well as simply letting them slip:

> "Norman came in, gave me my coffee and then returned to the kitchen. Aud looked at the spoon and I gave it to her. She took it in her left hand and looked at it, turning it around. Then she threw it on the ground, just as Tracy was coming into the room with a bottle of Coke for her. Aud took the bottle, sucked once or twice from it, then seemed to lose interest in drinking and started playing with the bottle. She took it out of her mouth and looked at it, held it by the neck, waved it around, then brought it down quite forcibly on to the settee and spilled some Coke."
> (Obs 15, Aud at 13 months)

This pattern was one whose changes showed that Aud was beginning to engage much more with her environment and that some of her methods of controlling what was happening to her were becoming more active. During this period the pattern itself

developed so that by 15 months Aud was not only throwing things on the ground, but picking them up as well.

> "Aud resumed sucking the chicken bone which she had found again. She put it in her mouth with her left hand and sucked powerfully. Then, smacking her lips loudly, she lifted her hand above her head and threw the bone on to the floor. She picked it up off the carpet and put it back in her mouth and continued to suck. Then she repeated the action and threw the bone with an "uh" sound and made a sort of giggle. The dog picked up her bone and Aud made a crying face, but no noise. Mother took the bone from the dog saying "you dirty sod" and gave the bone back to Aud, who sucked it again." (Obs 18, Aud at 15 months)

Soon afterwards Aud was not only throwing things and picking them up, but was also looking for things that had rolled under the furniture, etc. (Obs 19, Aud at 15 months)

This particular pattern of throwing things was ubiquitous at this phase of Aud's development. Many of the observations around her 15th and 16th month record her doing little else. Tracy was concerned about this, but reassured me that Roberta at this age had bitten people all the time and had grown out of it, and so would Aud. The pattern had many interesting variations which seemed to represent various different states of mind. Among them were:

> Anger - At times it seemed as if Aud was repeatedly banging things as a way of acting out her inner frustration or anger. This may have been a way of projecting or externalising her inner feelings of persecution.

> Attention seeking - At other times Aud seemed to throw things on the ground in order to keep attention focused on her. When she threw things someone inevitably picked them up and the way Aud looked at them illustrated that she was enjoying the interaction. Later on during this period Aud would often play this game.

> Auto-eroticism - Aud developed a habit of exclaiming "uh" while she was throwing things on the ground. Her exclamation sounded as if it had an

expulsive meaning, almost like a constipated person expelling faeces, and at times it even seemed even orgasmic. She sounded as if the experience of throwing was physically pleasurable. Aud had a similar pattern of repeatedly banging her thigh with her bottle which seemed to give her great sensual pleasure and could have been another way of using her own body.

Exploring her body - Throwing things may have provided Aud with a pleasurable way of using her body. Perhaps the pleasure was even related to her being able to see herself as an agent able to cause things to move in the world.

Aud's relationships were also taking on a different dimension. By her first birthday she was beginning to imitate some of the behaviour of the others:

> "Roberta then got down on the floor and put another 'fag' (sweet cigarette) into her mouth. Aud crawled towards her and reached for the 'fag', trying to get it out of Roberta's mouth. Roberta moved anti-clockwise about a foot and Aud moved after her grabbing at the 'fag' again. Roberta giggled and moved again, and again Aud crawled after her, smiling and reaching for the sweet. Finally Roberta gave Aud one of the 'fags'. Aud was now leaning on her elbows and had the sweet in her mouth sticking out in exactly the same posture and expression as Roberta." (Obs 13, Aud at 11 months)

This excerpt shows the first example of true imitation I witnessed. It also shows Aud engaging with Roberta in a much more active way than she had previously done. Whereas previously she had cried for or looked at something she wanted, she was now grabbing for things and pursuing Roberta to get them.

Aud was also beginning to play real games involving other people and in which she took control of the situation. In her first year Aud had only been able to play 'peek a boo' and then with difficulty. At 15 months she had become much more sophisticated:

> "Aud was on the ground playing with a crumpled photograph. Mother said "Oh, is that what you think of your dad?" She reached out to take the photo, saying "Give that here!" Aud reached out as if to give it to Mother, but at the last moment she pulled the photo away. Mother held out her hand and said "ta" a bit more insistently. Aud looked at her and kept still

for a while and then again held the photo out in her left hand as if to give it to Mother. She again pulled away just as Mother was about to grab it. The next time mother quickly grabbed the photo. Aud tugged a bit, again without any expression, but Mother took it out of her hands. Aud looked at her but didn't move. Mother said "Got it". Aud flailed her arms around a bit and crawled towards me." (Obs 18, Aud at 15 months)

In this observation Aud had clearly taken the initiative in the interaction and for a while she controlled the situation and her mother's response. Tracy was aware of the change and several times during this phase she commented that Aud never stayed still and moved around all the time. According to Tracy the change came about more or less when Aud began to move on her own, just before she was a year old.

Despite this qualitative change in Aud's behaviour, she still seemed to have a core of passivity in her interactions. This can be seen in the above excerpt where Aud showed little excitement in her facial expression and also failed to respond when Tracy finally took the photo away from her. In the same observation there is another example of Aud's passivity:

"The puppy licked Aud's face, and Roberta admonished him, saying "Leave my sister alone!" Aud winced slightly, but otherwise didn't react. Then Roberta went out and while she was away the puppy ran up to Aud and licked her face. Aud grimaced but made no real effort to protect herself and I called the dog away."[31]

Aud maintained her tendency to suddenly stare at an object or person for a long time and her deliberate, slow way of moving and eating remained.

Tracy's responses to Aud showed a parallel change during this period. She continued to push Aud to do things and became quite upset when Aud did not perform. She also seemed to feel persecuted when Aud did not respond the way she intended. Several times between her 13th and 16th month Aud said "Da da da da da" to which Tracy would respond "No, it's ma ma ma ma!" When Aud was eventually learning to walk, at around 16 months, both parents tried desperately to get her to do so even when she seemed to

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[31]Aud may have enjoyed the puppy's licking her, but I did not get that impression. Rather, she seemed to be slow to react to it.

be quite unhappy:

> "Norman said he wanted me to see how well Aud walked. He knelt on the ground, held her upright, and said "Come on girl." and Aud fell on her bottom at his feet. She started crying and he said gently "Give us a good cry." He picked her up again and Tracy also knelt on the ground. Aud looked at Tracy, let out a large "ah" sound and tottered over to her. Tracy caught her and said "Good girl!". I looked at Roberta and she was also smiling at the proceedings. Only Aud was not smiling, but looked rather dazed and bewildered." (Obs 20, Aud at 17 months)

This way of interacting with Aud had been a feature of their relationship since my observations started. Yet in the same observation Tracy displayed a new tenderness in her relationship:

> "Aud sat next to Tracy and put her arms around Tracy's neck. Tracy jiggled her up and down and said "Ah, that's nice." Aud responded by kissing Tracy on the cheek and Tracy responded by saying "What a sweet baby."...Again she sat on Tracy's right side, this time laying her head on Tracy's shoulder, smiling at her all the time. Tracy turned around and kissed Aud, who let out an appreciative "ah" and again slipped down onto the ground."

This scene is both striking and unusual in that Tracy was able to show affection for Aud without using irony or flippancy. Aud was also showing her newly-acquired facility for initiating interaction with her mother and both were able to respond appropriately to each other. It would be wrong to infer a complete change in their relationship from this one observation especially since it was not followed up by similar incidents. The importance was in their **capacity** to relate in a new way.

During this period there were some changes in Roberta's relationship to Aud. The dynamics were essentially similar to those in Aud's first year, ie, Aud followed and imitated Roberta and Roberta competed for attention with Aud and was either aggressive towards her or ignored her. On the other hand, Roberta sometimes became quite protective towards Aud and she would fend the dog and other dangers away from her. She also continued to feed her, especially with sweets. A further development was that she sometimes interpreted Aud's behaviour when Tracy could not grasp what Aud wanted, such as getting out of her chair.

Aud's relationship with me changed considerably during this period. Whereas in the first few months she would stare at me intently, come to me and sit on my lap or even smile at me, she now became much more suspicious and refused to let me hold her. Often she would ignore me for a whole observation even if I tried to attract her attention. This attitude coincided with a more general mistrust of strangers which often occurs around the 9 to 18 month period, (Stern 1985) but I felt that there was something more to her actions than being timid, because she obviously knew who I was. It is possible that she was becoming aware that I was white and that differentiated me from other men in her circle. Alternatively she may have reacted to my observing her as another impingement and felt that she needed to protect herself. Another possible explanation is that Aud was acting out her mother's unexpressed hostility towards me, just as Roberta may have done towards her earlier on.

Despite the qualitative changes that Aud had achieved in her interactions with her family, she still needed to 'hold things together' as she had done in her first year. Her responses to people and events were still slow, and her facial expressions and actions were often muted. Aud was not easily aroused by things around her and she seemed to be happiest just crawling around the room and putting things in her mouth or throwing them on the floor. When she was aroused she very easily went 'over the top' and her laughter would become 'hysterical' before turning to tears. This indicated that when she **did** express her emotions they could easily overwhelm her and therefore she did not do so very often.

It is clear that in the first half of her second year Aud was beginning to develop two distinctive characteristic ways of interacting with the world around her:

> a passive, withdrawn and slow manner, which included repetitive, ritualistic actions; and

> a lively, spontaneous and engaging manner, which was characterised by close encounters with members of her family.

In the following section I shall go on to describe how these patterns developed in the next

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phase of Aud's life.

The period from 18 to 24 months was a much more turbulent one for Aud than the previous six months had been. During this period my observations were less frequent because the family were often out when I arrived. Towards the end of this period the marital relationship seemed to deteriorate and I seldom saw Norman at this time. Although I did see the family five times after Aud's second birthday, the observations effectively stopped when she was two. This was also the time when Tracy became pregnant and then lost the baby after 10 weeks, a few weeks before Aud's second birthday. None of the family talked about this very much, but it obviously affected them, especially Tracy.[32]

Aud was still fairly slow in achieving her milestones and although she was walking by 18 months, her vocabulary was very small - I did not observe her saying more than "mum" and "dada" before her second birthday. Nevertheless there were many significant developments in this time.

Perhaps the best way of illustrating Aud's development would be to continue following her pattern of throwing things on the ground. A good example of this is the following excerpt from Obs 24 (Aud at 19 months):

> "...the ball of socks became a weapon, mother and father playfully throwing it between themselves as part of the argument. In the meantime Aud had picked up 2 batteries. She held them in each hand then lifted her right hand, ran a short distance, and with a loud "ah" sound threw the battery on the floor. She then picked it up and with a broad smile on her face repeated the action. After that she faced me and threw the battery halfway between me and father on the settee. Having done this she then picked up a ball of socks and lifting her right hand high above her, threw it into my lap with a gleeful look on her face."

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[32]During these last few months of the observation my wife was also pregnant. Tracy knew this and the fact that she lost her baby while I did not, must have affected the observations during the last weeks.

In this scene Aud was continuing the pattern of throwing things on the floor, and the sequence bore all the hallmarks of her previous actions: repetition, self-absorption and verbal ejaculation. She had also developed in three principal ways:

she was now able to seek actively for an object to throw;

she was able to pick the object up again after she had thrown it - the ritual was more elaborate and more flexible, with each throw being slightly different; and

she was able to relate her activity to events and people around her, throwing the battery on the settee was clearly an attempt to engage me and throwing the ball of socks seemed to have a connection with her parents who had just used it.

These additions to the pattern conformed with the new, more active and interactive side of her personality. It was as if she was now not only throwing off the bad feelings she could not contain, but was getting real pleasure from throwing and was seeking it out.

At other times Aud's throwing was more reminiscent of her early months and was done in a distracted and self-absorbed manner, rather than an excited one:

"...Another game started, this time with a roll of masking tape. Aud picked up the tape and threw it down in front of her, then she picked it up, ran a few steps and dropped it again. She passed the tape from hand to hand a few times and then ran along the floor into the bedroom. She lifted the tape above her head and with a loud "uh" threw it on the ground in front of her with a distracted look on her face. This time she didn't retrieve it, and walked out of the bedroom smiling." (Obs 27, Aud at 20 months)

Aud developed many more variations on this sort of game, not always involving throwing things, but always repeating variations of the same action several times.

Most of these games now included linking into others around her:

"Aud toddled over to the gas fire, took a mug off it and, holding it at arms length, gestured to me coming up and looking at me straight in the

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eyes with an intense expression. I took it from her and held it out for her to take back. Aud just stared at me, her hands at her sides and a slight frown on her face. I then put the mug on the armrest and she picked it up but immediately gave it back to me. I repeated the action and she took the mug and drank from it, slowly lifting it to her lips. Then she held it out for me again, this time with two hands. I said "No thanks," and shook my head, but she came up to me and held it out, so I took it." (Obs 23, Aud at 19 months)

This vignette illustrates an interesting development which began around Aud's 18th month that is, a habit of offering things to people. Although she had occasionally done so before this period, she now incorporated handing over into many of her games and used this as a way of linking with people.

In contrast to the slow and deliberate demeanour she displayed during these 'handing over' games, Aud was always animated when she played 'peek-a-boo', which she often did with me and her family. At first these games were initiated by her parents, but she soon began to start them herself and they became an habitual part of the observations during this period. Both these types of games were also associated with Aud's developing physical skills. Her sense of balance and her motor skills in such areas as opening containers and manipulating toys were very far in advance of her limited verbal ability. Perhaps this was her way of gaining control over her environment without losing her special role as a baby in the family -an environment in which there was enormous pressure for her to 'grow up'.

The events surrounding Tracy's pregnancy and loss of the baby seemed to have a profound effect on the family as a whole, and specifically on Tracy's relationship with Aud. From her 18th to about her 21st month Aud continued to be much more linked into her father than her mother. After Tracy lost the baby the relationship changed.

The pregnancy was announced to me very casually. Tracy simply mentioned it as part of a general conversation about moving house and did not mention it again until she told me that she had lost the baby. When she told me about losing the baby, Tracy was very matter-of-fact and only mentioned it in a throwaway comment (Obs 31, Aud at 23 months). Her demeanour following this event was even more flat and unexpressive than

usual. In contrast, Norman kept up his happy-go-lucky facade, but spent even more time outside the family. Throughout that observation Aud was very fragile and broke down three times for no apparent reason. For her part Tracy responded to Aud in an unusually tender manner, giving their interactions a very
different feel:

> Mother (who was holding Aud) sat down on a chair next to Father and coo'd at Aud who was now looking at father. Aud's hands slowly rose and she moved them over mother's body upwards over her side, her shoulders and then round her neck and let them drop to her side again. She whimpered and mother said "Dear dear!" and kissed the top of her head. Aud was still looking at father who ignored her and was watching TV. Mother said "Do you want to go to dad?" and lifted her onto father's lap. Father snapped at mother "Don't treat her like a baby." Mother picked her up and put her next to me on the settee." (Obs 31, Aud at 23 months)

Aud seemed to become much more sensitive towards Tracy's emotional state and sometimes appeared to act out the emotions that Tracy could not express. This was a role that had previously been played by Roberta. These dynamics continued after Aud's second birthday. The relationship had improved over the previous months, but at this point it seemed to be **qualitatively** different.

By contrast her relationship with Norman grew more distant. He continued to provide stimulation and laughter, but he had lost the instinctive knowledge of Aud's needs that he had previously. His remark in the above scene is illustrative of his growing impatience with Aud. This attitude towards Aud heralded a new phase in the family's life when Norman would move out of home and would see the children much less frequently. Roberta continued to express some of Tracy's feelings, but they tended to be the more maternal ones. Roberta was now much less competitive with Aud and acted in a more protective and motherly fashion:

> "Aud turned around and walked to Roberta, holding the pencil case in her hand. Roberta was lying on the floor drawing. "Come on Aud, do this." said Roberta. She made a squiggle on the paper. Aud looked, walked closer and looked again interestedly, but didn't draw. Roberta encouraged her further and eventually she squatted next to the paper and clumsily made a squiggle on it." (Obs 31, Aud at 23 months)

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Perhaps this was Roberta's reaction to the loss of the baby. She felt unable to express her feelings of anger towards babies because these feelings were too overwhelming so instead she took on the role of the helpful older sister. This would also be in line with father's expectations of her, which were that she should not behave in a 'childish' manner.

Aud's behaviour at this time represented a change in her relationship with me. In the previous six months she had virtually ignored me and became very anxious if I was alone with her; she now seemed to be trying to make a link between us and was making more eye contact, giving me food and objects, and even 'talking' to me. She also appeared to be making links between me and her mother by taking things from Tracy and giving them to me. In several of the observations between Aud's 17th and 22nd months, Aud would take food from her mother (usually a chocolate or biscuit) and give it to me. Sometimes she would turn this into a game by taking it back and then handing it back again and at other times she would just look at me when I tried to hand it back. She seldom took things from me to her mother. She would still not let me touch her and she was still far more reserved towards me than Roberta was, perhaps because I represented a new and intrusive element into the family, which she needed to defend herself against.

7.   AUD AT 24 TO 28 MONTHS

After Aud's second birthday I observed the family only four more times[33] and so do not have a truly coherent picture of Aud's development during this period.

This four month period was a very traumatic one for the family and despite Tracy's

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[33]This was because of a number of factors: Firstly, my own child was born shortly after A's second birthday and my visits were severely interrupted by this. Secondly, the family turmoil meant that there were times when there was no-one at home when I arrived. Thirdly, I believe that the family was now finding my visits burdensome and resisted my coming. In retrospect I believe that it was wrong of me to have visited after Aud's second birthday and I probably did so more out of curiosity and an inability to 'let go' than out of methodological rigour.

reluctance to talk about the events, I was able to piece some of them together. It seems that Norman was accused of 'interfering' with Roberta and the family was referred to the social services. Norman was told to leave the family home and only to maintain telephone contact. He went to live with his mother. Tracy was told to attend a family centre with the children. In reality Tracy seemed to have quite a lot of contact with Norman and she only attended the centre for a few weeks. No statutory action was taken and, from what I could gather, Norman was back in the family after about three months. I had no way of verifying what the allegations were or whether they were substantiated.

From Aud's development, this seemed to be a period of consolidation. By my last visit she was still only saying "mum" and "dad". Her dexterity improved, though, and she was able to manipulate quite fine objects and almost to catch things:

> "...Norman picked up a peg, but Aud ignored him. Then he shoved the
> peg in her direction and she squeezed it so that it opened and then handed
> it back. Norman then pushed it back to Aud who smiled. He then picked
> up the peg and threw it to her. She almost caught it, picked it up, and
> threw it back." (Obs 36, Aud at 27 months)

Her patterns of interaction continued to manifest themselves in two distinctive ways, one passive, and the other more robust. Generally she behaved in a more outgoing manner than she had previously done. She still liked to throw things on the ground while exclaiming "uh". She loved to play peek-a-boo, and her skill at this developed considerably. Her other favourite game was to hand things to others and then take them back. Aud showed an aggressive side to her behaviour when she played with the kitten which the family acquired after her birthday. She would pull its tail and squeeze it until Tracy took it away from her.

Norman's absence from the family's daily life brought Aud closer to her mother and Tracy made more comments about Aud being 'sweet' or 'lovely' (although she still quite often called her 'toe rag' or other names). Aud in turn hugged Tracy and made more eye contact with her.

Tracy herself seemed to be more depressed than she had been since the early

observations. She now seldom dressed herself and the flat was in perpetual half darkness with the curtains drawn. Her demeanour was flat and she talked in a resigned offhand tone. She complained continuously about the flat and how desperate she was to move out.

The relationship between the sisters continued to be competitive, although they now played together more often. In some respects the competition was more keen because Aud was now able to move and do most of the things Roberta was able to do, albeit rather more slowly. Roberta now had to compete on other grounds. A remark she made during my last visit (Obs 38, Aud at 28 months) was a telling comment on their relationship and on the racial aspects of the family:

> "Look at that horrible brown balloon - I'm going to change to white, but
> Aud will stay brown."

No longer able to rely purely on her size and her ability to walk and talk, Roberta had to find something else about Aud to deride. She picked on Aud's supposedly darker colour which she clearly understood to be a negative quality.

This was one of the very few remarks explicitly about colour that were made by Roberta, but it illustrates her association of white with good and brown with ugly. If, as alleged she had been abused by her father, she might then have associated 'brown' with 'bad'. She also could have been responding to the subtle messages which she had picked up within the family and/or outside it.

8.   SUMMARY AND DISCUSSION

This chapter has described Aud's development from the age of eight months to two years, with some additional remarks about the four months after her second birthday. By her eighth month Aud had already developed some distinctive patterns of behaviour which were becoming part of her characteristic ways of interacting. Thus Aud had already developed an embryonic identity. At this stage Aud's most characteristic stance towards the environment was the **self-contained** mode, which was defined by her habit of being

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either distracted and seemingly unaware of her environment, or of focusing exclusively on one aspect of it. The patterns of behaviour which made up this stance continued throughout the time I observed her and many of them became, over time, very elaborate and complex. Others faded away as Aud grew older.

Soon after her first birthday Aud began to develop a very different set of characteristics which functioned alongside the self-contained mode - these made up the **robust** mode of interaction. The robust mode was defined by a more outgoing and aggressive attitude combined with an ability to accept and receive affection from others. This mode slowly became more prominent so that by her second birthday she displayed this mode almost as often as the other. According to the theory of development proposed in Chapter 3, the course of Aud's identity development should have been determined by three main interlocking factors:

her psychological predispositions;

her physical and intellectual development; and

her external environment, especially her relationship with her mother.

It is very difficult to infer direct causal links between these different constituents of her development from the information obtained through observation, but it is possible to give plausible explanations for a particular course of development having taken place. One example of this would be an explanation of the discrepancy between Aud's verbal and non-verbal abilities.

Tracy's hostile feelings towards Aud were augmented by Aud's smallness and Tracy's perception of her as dark skinned. These aggressive feelings were originally generated by her reactions to the circumstances around her pregnancy and Aud's birth. It is very likely that Tracy's own childhood and her early experiences of being parented predisposed her to respond in this manner.

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Tracy's feelings were exacerbated by Aud's slowness to reach her milestones. By the time Aud had reached her eighth month Tracy was feeling not only hostile, but also inadequate and guilty. Her response to Aud was to try to force her to develop more quickly by trying to get her to do things like walking and talking. When Aud did respond in the way Tracy urged her to, it made Tracy feel like a good parent. This meant that Tracy was depending on Aud to provide psychological nourishment rather than providing it for Aud.

Aud reacted to these feelings and actions as impingements on her inner world. By now she had introjected many of the hostile feelings, so that she was also threatened by attacks from her **internalised** mother. In order for her to survive psychologically she had to develop defences against them. These defences consisted predominantly of ways of splitting off the outside world by concentrating on her inner reality, or on one part of the outside world to exclude the rest of it (eg, by repetitively throwing objects on the ground). The dominant theme in Aud's life at this time was the struggle to maintain control of her inner self having relinquished control over her environment. Perhaps the passive and withdrawn aspect of Aud's emerging identity was also a way of defending herself against the chaotic nature of the household and the intrusiveness of her mother's interactions with her. By keeping her body rigid, her movements slow and regular and her responses to the world muted, she ensured that there was **some** regularity in her life. It is also possible that this response to the world was a contributing factor to her slowness in attaining her milestones. She could not allow herself to experiment and 'play' with her environment for fear of fragmenting and becoming as chaotic as the rest of the family.[34] These are inferences made about the inner world of an infant which are based on psycho-analytic framing of observations. It is difficult prove that these connections were actually made in Aud's unconscious and pre-verbal psyche.

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[34]It is worthwhile noting the contributions of Winnicott (1974); Piaget, (1951) and Stern, (1985) who all stress the importance of play in developing a sense of autonomy. Winnicott associates play with spontaneity, Piaget considers repetition to be part of the process of adaptation. (But the repetitions must change) and Stern notes the importance of the fit between mother and infant.

Tracy was unable to empathise with Aud and perceived her actions as a personal rebuff. She responded in turn by feeling even more rejected. Thus a cycle of interaction developed in which mother and daughter became increasingly out of touch with each other's emotions.

Parallel to this cycle, and in some ways paradoxical to it, another was developing. At around 13 months Aud began to show signs of animation and interest in her environment which she had previously lacked. Perhaps this was due for the most part to her developing into the 'domain of interpersonal relationships', or to her relationship with her father which had always been more animated than that with her mother. Aud developed new ways of interacting with other people, most significantly her mother, and there were now times where the cycle was reversed and became mutually nourishing.

The new cycle also affected the way she played with objects; she continued to throw them, but now she often displayed a new sense of enjoyment and zest. Her co-ordination improved considerably with this and she became proficient at handling objects, opening containers, etc, which gave her more and more control over her environment.

Her verbal ability and her ability to walk did not improve in line with this coordinative ability. This may have been because of a combination of factors, especially that her innate constitutional verbal ability may have been limited, her rivalry with Roberta may have meant that she had an investment in being the baby of the family or the loss of the baby may have increased her investment in being the baby because she engendered maternal feelings in both her mother and sister. Her reluctance to walk and talk may have been ways of avoiding having to deal with the harsh wider environment, allowing her to continue dealing with the relatively controllable known environment, and her slowness and lack of mobility may have been an identification with Tracy's depression. Additionally, her relationship with her mother may have still been too fragile for her to feel secure enough to explore further.

Some, or all of these factors, combined to affect the development of Aud's verbal ability and caused the discrepancy with her ability to manipulate objects.

The above is a speculative account of the development of one of many patterns which in turn combined to form her identity. It is only a sketchy illustration of a really far more complicated process which would become even more complicated as Aud became aware of herself and of the reactions of others to her slowness to speak. It does highlight the interaction of Aud's two characteristic strands of interpersonal relations.

The account also illustrates a further important point, that is, that although both of these modes of interaction were originally generated by Aud's defences against hostile inner and outer **bad objects**, they both had potential for developing in either self-destructive or self-enhancing ways. Thus the robust mode, although it enabled Aud to make relationships and compete with her sister, involved a degree of aggression and hostility to others. In the self-contained mode Aud was able to survive without needing very much mothering and it enabled her to maintain a degree of equilibrium in chaotic surroundings. Conversely, when in this mode, her ability to relate to her mother was impaired and she became generally withdrawn from the outside world and passive in her relations towards people.

This potential for different outcomes becomes an important consideration in the discussion about Aud's identity development beyond her second year. It means that her future psychological make-up is very difficult to predict from observations of her first two years because, depending on **external** environmental factors, different defences would be mobilised and her identity would develop differently.

The self-contained mode had many of the components of the **False Self** psychic organisation described by Winnicott, (see Chapter 3) especially with regard to the passive and ritualistic defences which they share. Aud may not have developed a fully blown false self-organisation (it is too early to tell at this stage) but certainly the potential for such a response was evident in these observations. Similarly it seems clear that Aud's position in her family and her response to it constituted a **primary role confusion** in Berger and Luckmann's sense. Again it is too early to tell, and it may be that the robust mode will develop enough to allow Aud to develop a truly integrated rather than fragmented identity. The signs are, though, that the chaotic nature of her family life did

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not provide a firm foundation for integrated identity development no matter what her constitutional disposition was.

Both of the basic components of Aud's identity development had been well established by her second year. Future developments would build on the foundations laid down in this period.

It could be that Aud was continuing to act out patterns which were established in the family before she was born, but which changed in the course of the family's life. In the A family, fortune always seemed to follow adversity; for example Roberta's birth was followed by homelessness. The acquisition of a new home was followed by miscarriage, the marriage was followed by Norman's leaving the family etc. Thus the family itself went through successive periods of activity followed by withdrawal. Similarly, the boundaries between the family and the world were a combination of rigidity and diffuseness; the hole in the door was offset by the drawn curtains, Norman's going out with friends was balanced by Tracy's increasing withdrawal into the home. It is possible that Aud's development of the 'selves' was acting out different aspects of the family myth, and was not merely an individual response to the family's chaotic nature. If this is the case, it may account for her changing relationship with Tracy when Dennis was no longer permanently in the family - the family itself was changing as well as Aud developing new capacities. Without Norman present Tracy was able to externalise some of her problems to factors outside the family, and internal family conflict was reduced.

Racial Identity Development

In the above discussion of Aud's development, I have deliberately avoided explicitly discussing the racial component other than where it was overtly part of the interaction. This was because:

> race was mainly an **implicit**, though ubiquitous, factor in the family's day to day life. (The subtle racial and cultural influences on the family were discussed above); and

Aud's racial identity was an integral part of her global identity. (Her development has been considered in this chapter on this global level.)

From the discussion of the global identity development it is possible to consider in more depth the genesis of her racial identity.

Racialisation

Although Aud's racial identity was only one of the components of her overall identity, it certainly was an all-pervasive part of the family milieu and the interactions within it. I will try to show that, because so many aspects of the family's interactions had become **racialised**, Aud had in turn developed a potential for responding to racial situations in a way that reflected the fundamental aspects of her identity differentiation.

Racialisation is a term which is used here to describe the dynamic within the family which occurs when conflicts or other interactions and behaviours are attributed to race rather than being personalised. Several instances of this have been described above. Because race is such an emotionally charged issue in the family, it permeated many of the day to day interactions and feelings in the family. Aud was seen as darker, and therefore more like Norman and was seen by Tracy to be blacker than Roberta.

The basic contention I would like to make is that Aud's fundamental **psychological** modes of being had the potential to become associated with the **racial** components of her make-up. Specifically this means that Aud had developed a potential for her self-contained self to be associated with her 'black' aspects and the robust self to be associated with the 'white' side. Race in the A family was very often associated with conflict, and was always highly emotionally charged. Aud's different selves were a response to the different emotional situations she confronted in the family. Thus it would be a small psychological step for Aud to begin to associate different ways of being with different

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racial environments.[35]

The consequences of this are that Aud would associate being black with being passive, threatened and possibly even disturbed, so that she would find it difficult to make positive identification with black people or black culture. Faced with situations where she was confronted with her blackness, she would have a low self-esteem.

These associations are in some ways paradoxical - it was Aud's spontaneously joyful relationship with her black father that initiated her robust mode of relating. Her relationship with her father changed, however, and this, combined with messages from within and outside the family about the negativity of blackness, would produce an association between blackness and her self-contained, passive self.

The rationale for this contention is that the defences which Aud built up to deal with psychologically damaging impingements from her internal and familial environments, would be used later to defend her against social impingements. If the marginal and racial theorists discussed in this thesis are correct, the most important psychological threat to Aud will be of a racial nature. This could either take the form of mixed racial messages being given from different quarters (role confusion), or of direct racist threats to her because she is seen as being black. The observations have shown that race was very often associated with conflict in this family and that Aud's defences were developed in large measure to deal with this conflict. In either case therefore she would be likely to revert to her early defences.

It is interesting, however to note the different perspectives of the two parents regarding race and culture. Tracy was mainly concerned about the physical appearance of her children and their developmental achievement. Norman was also concerned with what he saw as the cultural aspects, and he was more concerned than Tracy about the issue of racism. Aud was therefore not subject to only one conception of race and racism. It is

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[35]A similar dynamic is evident in Stonequist (1937), although he was describing the experiences of adults.

therefore very difficult to predict how she will integrate these different versions of race and culture when she grows up. This is especially true because of the increasingly peripheral role her father was playing in her day to day care. Although he was associated with the initial development of the 'robust' mode, her identifications with him are very difficult to detect. Nevertheless, Roberta, who was much closer to Tracy, and who may have even been developing racist attitudes, was able to identify with many of the cultural factors which Norman introduced into the household. Aud, who had been 'daddy's girl' may well be able to make some positive identifications.

Future Identity Development

It is difficult to predict exactly how Aud's 'selves' would manifest themselves at a later date, because they would need to develop over time, and the circumstances of Aud's post- observation life are unpredictable. According to both marginal and prevailing social work theory, the real crisis for Aud will come when she is a teenager and is rejected by white society, forcing her to acknowledge that she is black. This study cannot predict whether such an event will actually occur to Aud, nor how she would respond if and when it does. What these observations have revealed are the kinds of defences Aud has available to use in the future. They have also shown that Aud experienced racial conflict at a very young age and it is unlikely that there will be a single traumatic event in her life which will precipitate a crisis of identity.

The most likely scenario would be that Aud will respond to racial snubs or attacks initially by asserting herself (robust mode), but if she continues to be threatened and this does not work, she will withdraw into inward looking or ritualistic behaviour as a last defence against fragmentation.[36]

Although race was associated with conflict on the intrapsychic and interpersonal levels in Aud's early life, there was much more integration on the cultural level, where the

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[36]This accords with the theories of Winnicott and Erikson who assert that the ego will use the most primitive defenses when under the most stress.

milieu consisted of influences from both parents' cultures. There was little conflict about food, music or other cultural elements in the household. Thus at this stage Aud and Roberta had elements of both cultures available with which to form identifications. Because father's role in the family became tenuous, this availability seemed less secure by the end of the observations, but it still was evident. Yet again, this study did not produce enough evidence to make secure predictions about Aud's likely identifications in the future. It may well be that whatever happens, Aud will be able to integrate positive identifications with her father, even if this is in a fantasised form. The important thing for Aud may be how she herself perceives the issues of race and culture, and whether she is able to hang onto the 'good bits' from both her parents, rather than simply the series of events which occur in her life. This may well be an unconscious as well as a conscious process.

9. CONCLUSIONS

These observations could not provide a complete picture of Aud's development, but they were able to show how patterns of behaviour developed over time, how these patterns were affected by Aud's relationships, and how her patterns in turn affected the relationships. These processes gave some indications about how Aud's identity was developing over time.

The information gathered from these observations provides tentative evidence for some assertions about Aud's racial identity development. The most important assertions are:

Aud's early identity development was determined by four main factors:

> her constitutional make-up, especially her size, colour and slowness to reach milestones to reach milestones;

> her mother's changing relationship with her;

> her father's relationship with her which also changed; and

the chaotic nature of the family.

These factors interacted in very complex ways to form specific patterns of behaviour and defences.

Tracy's relationship with Aud was related to:

her own early experiences as a child (although little of this was revealed);

her conscious and unconscious feelings about race and reasons for choosing a black partner;

her experiences before her pregnancy, especially the loss of her twins, and her failure to mourn adequately for the loss;

her feelings of inadequacy as a person and a parent; and

her perceptions of Aud's attributes, especially her perception of Aud as especially dark, and her frustration about Aud's slowness

her relationship with Norman and the degree to which this became racialised from time to time

the social and physical milieu and her feelings about this, especially relating to the flat and the difficulty with moving, but also the support she obtained from her own family and friends.

In the A family, family life had always been associated with marital conflict, financial struggle and adverse physical environments. Conflict was often racialised as it occurred between the parents and between mother and the children and later between the siblings.

The environment was seen as threatening and this threat was racialised by Tracy. Aud's future identity may depend on the degree to which the environment changes or her mother is able to reduce her racialised view of the threat.

Aud developed two main **selves** or ways of interacting with other people and the world. These selves developed as different ways for Aud to control her internal and external environment. They were:

> the **self-contained** or **passive** self, which started very early and which was developed as a defence against her mother's intrusive interactions, and also the chaotic nature of the family lifestyle; and

> the **robust** or **active** self, which began to manifest itself around her first birthday, and developed as a way of asserting herself within the family.

The selves coexisted as complementary ways of being in the world, and were constantly developing and changing.

These selves had the potential to become associated with the different racial components of Aud's make-up. The **self-contained** self could become associated with being **black**, thereby associating being black with being passive, withdrawn, etc; and the **robust** self could become associated with being **white**, thereby associating whiteness with being active, aggressive, etc.

Aud will be subjected to institutional and personal racism as she grows up, and may often be forced to see herself as black. Therefore there is a potential for her to become psychologically damaged, reverting to very primitive defences in order to survive.

There is also potential for her to be assertive and creative, depending on how her relationship with her parents develops in the next few years and on the other identifications she is able to make.

The above hypotheses are all tentative and the ones concerning race are even more tentative than the others. This is because they depend on extracting one component from a complex web of interactions, and because they rely on projections into the future which are very difficult to make.

CHAPTER SEVEN
THE B FAMILY

1.   INTRODUCTION

In this chapter I will describe my observations of the B family, the second of the two families observed as part of this study. This description will not be as detailed as that of the A family. This is because the observations only took place over one year, and because Wilf was younger than Aud, and therefore his identity was less developed than Aud's had been.

There were 24 observations, which took place between September 1986, shortly after Wilf's birth, and August 1987.

The reason for choosing a neonate was purely pragmatic - there simply were no suitable six-month-old infants available. I decided to go ahead anyway, and in the event the decision paid off in a rather unexpected way. By observing a very young infant I was able to gain much more insight into the process by which the **mother** brings her fantasies into the relationship, and how these are shaped by the real infant. These factors were highlighted in this family not only because of the age of the infant, but because he was the first-born child and because this mother was a single parent. These observations serve to supplement and provide a contrast to some of the information gleaned from the A family.

I was introduced to the B family by their health visitor who had asked Rose, the mother, whether she would be amenable to the observations. The health visitor described her as "A very nice lady" but other than that I knew nothing about her at all. I telephoned and arranged an initial meeting, which took place six weeks after Wilf's birth.

THE B FAMILY

Mother   (Rose)   age: 28 yrs
Subject (Wilf)   age: 4 weeks

2.   DESCRIPTION

The family lived in a two-bedroomed flat in an inner London area. The area had been working-class, but was in the process of 'gentrification' and many middle-class families were moving there. Despite this the area still maintained a working-class atmosphere and there was also a substantial ethnic minority population.

The flat was on the first floor of a Victorian terraced house which had been recently converted into four flats. Rose had bought the flat about 18 months before Wilf's birth because of the cosmopolitan area and its proximity to her work. She shared the flat with a lodger[37] whose rent enabled her to pay the mortgage.

The two bedrooms, the living room and bathroom led off the hall, and the kitchen was a kind of annexe to the living room. The flat was small, well-furnished and very clean. The living room, where most of the observations took place, was a long room with a high ceiling. It was furnished with a sofa-bed covered in brown corduroy and a sofa covered with a white lace cover. There were two bookcases, a round table, and a television on a low stand. The bookcases contained mostly reference books about music and the arts, with some novels. The room was painted magnolia and had a light brown berber carpet. On the walls were posters which advertised art exhibitions and classical concerts, and there was one large and several small pot plants. The room was always clean and neat and there were never toys or other objects scattered around. Rose obviously spent a lot of time keeping it that way.

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[37]While I was observing the lodger was a white man in his late twenties whose job entailed a lot of travelling. I only met him once, briefly, and he seemed to spend little time in the flat, using it mainly to sleep in. He seemed to have very little to do with Wilf.

There were no visible signs of any black cultural influences such as pictures or books in the flat, and the decoration was suggestive of a 'white middle-class home'.

Rose herself was a tall woman, with straight shoulder-length dark brown hair. She had a pale complexion, a long turned-up nose, brown eyes and a thin mouth. She normally dressed informally in jeans and a sweatshirt. She was softly spoken, with a high-pitched voice and an English middle-class accent. Her movements were slow and angular and her general demeanour was relaxed and calm.

Wilf was a large six-week-old when I met him. He was a light brown colour and had wavy black hair, a flattish nose and a small mouth. He looked like a mixed-race baby, having elements of both Caucasian and Negroid features. He was active and very alert for his age and seemed content, only crying when he was hungry, cold, or needing a nappy change.

3.   OBSERVATION PATTERNS

Timing

From the outset, the arrangements for observing this family were difficult because of timing. The observations were undertaken mainly at night, usually starting at 6.30 or 7.30 pm, and often later. This sometimes caused difficulties, especially when Rose or Wilf were tired after a long day. Occasionally Wilf was asleep during the observation. Rose did make an effort to be available at this time, but there were occasional hiccoughs. The observations were more regular than with the A family, though, and Rose always cancelled if she was not going to be available.

Attitude to Observation

Rose was ambivalent about the observation from the beginning. She often asked me

about the thesis and was dissatisfied with the vague responses I gave to her.[38]   On the other hand she was always very hospitable and divulged a lot of intimate details about her life and her feelings. She also allowed me to observe intimate details of her life, for example, breast-feeding. I believe that she found the observations very intrusive, but also comforting, in that I was a non-judgmental and reliable presence. This was in contrast to most of her family and friends who did not offer her consistent support.

Position of Observer

My position as an observer in this family was very different from that of the A family. Because this family was so small and isolated, I could not just go into the household and be part of the general family hubbub. Wilf's age was also important. Because he was so small when I started, it was months before he was able to move around or really interact with me separately. There were also no siblings to distract me and mother, and the television was always switched off. The consequence of this was that I became a much more intrusive presence in the family and my interactions with both Rose and Wilf were more intense.

4.   HISTORY

Mother's Background

Rose came from a middle-class English family. She was the youngest of three children, having two brothers who were both several years older. Her father was the vicar of a rural parish and her mother was a teacher. Although they were a well-educated and culturally aware family, they had a very spartan life-style, as both parents earned very little. They lived in a large but cold vicarage with no central heating. Both parents were very fond of art and music which was very important in the family life. Rose described

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[38]I found out at the end of the observations that she suspected some hidden motive for my observing her and that my passivity and quietness during the sessions she made her feel very uncomfortable.

her parents as 'liberal minded people who were concerned with various social issues'.

Her relationship with her parents was close, especially that with her father. Her mother was rather domineering but her father was a much gentler person. She remembered her mother being the major decision-maker in the family. Her parents encouraged her to achieve academically and wanted her to pursue a career in music. Her mother had wanted to do so herself, but had not had the opportunity.

As the 'baby' of the family (she was 10 years younger than the next brother) Rose was indulged by her siblings whom she adored, but she was kept out of their games and activities:

> "I was obsessed by my older brother 'J'. I idolised him, but he would never let me join in his games and he always teased me, so I got cross. I guess that since then I've always had a feeling of being excluded."
> (Interview)

Because of this her adulation later turned to ambivalence, and as a teenager she struggled with her need to be like her brother and her need to express her anger with him. Rose was a shy and awkward girl who found it hard to make friends and she grew up rather isolated. She went to the local grammar school and achieved good results. On leaving school she went to college and obtained an arts degree. She moved to London and, after several temporary jobs, started working in the music area where she still worked when Wilf was born.

Father's Background

Wilf's father (Paul) was a Martiniquan living in France. He came from a middle-class background and was the youngest of seven children. His own father left home when he was young and he was brought up by his mother. He came to France with his family at the age of seven or eight. Rose met him while he was attending a language school in London. She had a short and stormy relationship with him before he returned to France. When she knew that she was pregnant she telephoned him and when Wilf was born she sent him a card, but other than that they had no further contact.

The Pregnancy

Although the pregnancy was totally unplanned and Rose's initial response was shock and dismay, she soon came to terms with it. The pregnancy was normal and she did not suffer very much from morning sickness or other physical problems. She continued to work until three weeks before the due date. The pregnancy was a time of great emotional volatility. On the one hand Rose experienced feelings of intense pleasure and fulfilment at becoming pregnant, but on the other hand she felt fear and panic about losing her career and with it her identity. She was also worried about being isolated and was concerned that she would not able to cope with a child on her own. While she was pregnant she decided that she was going to breast-feed the baby.

5.   FEELINGS AND FANTASIES ABOUT MOTHERHOOD

Before she became pregnant Rose had had little experience of pregnancy or children. None of her family or friends had young children and she had not had younger siblings. She also did not have a partner with whom she could talk intimately about her hopes and expectations of having a child. Possibly as a result of this she developed a number of intricate fantasies which anticipated the infant's arrival. The fantasies fell into the following categories.

Fantasies concerning what she was going to give the Infant

These fantasies were mainly associated with things that she had not had as a child and which she associated with the deprivation of her childhood. They included such things as central heating and living in a friendly area, eg:

> "I don't want him to have to go through the kinds of things I had as a
> little girl.   I'm determined that he will be more comfortable!"
> (Introductory meeting, Wilf aged 6 weeks)

Nurturing the Infant and Influencing its Development

Rose was desperate to have someone to love and she saw the infant as an object for these feelings. Sometimes her fantasies took on an almost an omnipotent character when she spoke as if her love could create the kind of child she intended to produce, eg:

> "When I was pregnant I loved to sit quietly and think about the kind of child I would have...he's turned out exactly as I had imagined." (Obs 1, Wilf aged 6 weeks)

What the Infant would give to Her

Rose was also desperate to be loved and she saw the infant as the source of uncritical positive regard for her. She was staking her own self-esteem on the infant's responses to her.

Being Consumed or Overwhelmed by the Infant

Rose was terrified of the responsibility which looking after an infant would bring, and the potential of destroying her life-style and her fragile identity. At times these fantasies became unbearable and she seemed almost to fear being literally consumed by the demands of motherhood:

> I was afraid that by having a baby I would lose my profession, and that I would be nothing. I rely on my job and it makes me feel like I have an identity - it's not about money; I suppose its about status or something." (Obs 1, Wilf at 6 weeks)

With regard to the **racial** issue her fantasies were:

Making up for her own Deficiencies and Stiltedness

Rose had a very deep belief in the differences between black people and white people. She saw whites as being intellectually orientated with little ability for emotional expression or sensuality. In contrast she saw black people as being sensuous, spontaneous and passionate. She saw herself as being typically white and despised her own lack of spontaneity. By having a black child she felt that she could enter the

sensuous world of black people which otherwise would be denied to her:

> "When I walk down the high road black people often stop me and look at Wilf. I feel close to them....I sometimes wish that I had been black, black people seem to appreciate life so much more than whites. The ones (whites) I meet in the music business are all so straight-laced. I don't want Wilf to grow up like that..I play soul music on the radio to him."
> (Obs 2, Wilf at 7 weeks)

Rose was very aware of the racial component of her relationship with Wilf and she 'racialised' some of Wilf's characteristics in a way similar to that of Tracy. Thus when Wilf responded to music by 'dancing' she attributed this to his black genes despite her own interest and concern with music.

Being Accepted by a Group of People

Rose had always been marginalised, first within her family and later by choosing friends who were very different from her peer group. As a teenager she had chosen friends much older than herself and later she had chosen gay men. Her lovers had all been black. None of these groups fully accepted her and she felt that by having a black child she would be welcomed into the black culture and would no longer have to be peripheral.

Proving her Credentials as a 'Liberal'

Having a mixed-race child drew Rose closer to her family because in their eyes she acted out in a concrete way their moral and political beliefs about the equality of humanity. Many of the deep-seated ideas she held about black people seem to have been shared by her parents.

Confirming her Sense of Alienation and Low Self-worth

Despite bringing her closer to her family and the black community, there was a paradoxical effect for Rose in having a mixed-race baby. She became more alienated from her peer group and white society generally and saw herself even more as a loner. In some ways her rejection of white men and idealisation of black men arose out of fear

and envy for whites and white culture from which she had always felt excluded.

Rose's fantasies expressed the ambivalent and contradictory aspects of her racial attitudes. On the one hand her mixed-race baby opened up windows of opportunity for her. She could now see herself as part of a new group which possessed the human qualities she had always longed for but which had eluded her. On the other hand she was confirming her marginal status and was also denying an important part of her own identity. These attitudes clearly derived from her own experiences as a child. They reflected the low self-esteem and isolation, as well as the tendency to idealise the unobtainable, which had been part of her character since she was very young.

For Rose the birth of a mixed-race child confirmed contradictory aspects of her life story. On the one hand she had always seen herself as 'different' from both her family and her peer group, and had actively sought out different friends. On the other hand she had a strong need for continuity with her family, and this was evidenced in her choice of occupation. The birth of a child continued both these themes, so that it confirmed her separation fro the mainstream of society, but strengthened her links with her mother, who was very supportive around the time of the birth. These themes of continuity and difference were to become important in the way she patented Wilf, and in turn the way he responded.

6. WILF FROM BIRTH TO SIX MONTHS

Wilf was born one day overdue, at the local hospital. There were no complications during the birth and he weighed 9 lb 1 oz, which is on the 97th percentile. Rose stayed in hospital for two days and her mother came to help for a few days when she returned home.

According to Rose, Wilf was a happy and contented baby from birth. He soon developed a fairly regular sleeping pattern and only cried when he needed a nappy change, a feed or when he felt cold. She was amazed at how quickly he learned to focus, and he began smiling at about five weeks. Wilf developed eczema on his neck at about four weeks,

which caused some disruption to his schedule, making him wake up in a distressed state from time to time. Rose attempted to deal with the eczema by using various creams and preparations and later on by strictly controlling his diet, but she was largely unsuccessful and it did not clear up throughout the observations. The psychological implications of the eczema will be discussed below.

Patterns

The interactions between Wilf and Rose soon developed into observable patterns. During the first observations the relationship had not yet had time to solidify into a fixed configuration and I was able to see some patterns emerge long before they had become entrenched. The early patterns fell into the following categories:

Feeding

As she had decided when she was pregnant, Rose went ahead with breast-feeding Wilf. When the observations began she was feeding him four times during the day and once or twice at night. Rose was very committed to breast-feeding and it became a central part of her relationship with Wilf.

From the first few weeks Wilf responded to the breast by becoming much more acquiescent and relaxed. Even seeing the nipple was often enough to pacify him when he was distressed. On the other hand he found feeding difficult at first and often became distressed during the process. Rose seemed to be able to take this in her stride:

> "Wilf seemed unhappy, making "uh" noises...Mother said in a concerned way, "Oh! Maybe you're hungry". She quickly pulled back her blouse, exposing her left breast, and laid Wilf across her lap, placing his head next to the breast. Wilf immediately found the nipple and started sucking powerfully. His whole body relaxed and he seemed to 'melt' into Rose's shape. Even his hand, which up to now had been clenched, relaxed and unclenched. He extended his fingers and slowly moved his left hand so that it was near his face. He slowly stroked the breast and then held onto the blouse with his thumb and forefinger.
>
> Wilf's breathing became more and more laboured and he suddenly started

spluttering. He pulled his mouth away from the breast, kicking his feet simultaneously...he began sucking again almost immediately, but only sucked once more before he pulled away again. He repeated the sequence, moving up towards Rose's left and she gently pulled him back to the breast. "Poor Wilf, it is difficult." she said, as she stroked his head. She moved him to the other breast, but again after three or four sucks he became fitful and spluttery." (Obs 4, Wilf at 10 weeks)

This scene illustrates how Wilf immediately relaxed when offered the breast, but became fitful after a few sucks. This was a common pattern during the first few months of Wilf's life and he seemed to find it difficult to gain comfort from the breast for very long. He appeared to almost melt into Rose's body and then suddenly break the rhythm and the closeness, almost as if he was being overwhelmed by the breast.

At other times, however, Wilf became relaxed and sleepy when offered the breast and did not become agitated or distressed. During Observation 6, Rose used the nipple to put him to sleep. Wilf used the feeding time as an opportunity to develop his sensual experiences and he always explored Rose's breasts and clothes with his hands while feeding. Feeding for Wilf was generally an **active** process of taking things in. Whether he was pulling away or feeding hungrily, he did not give the impression of passively accepting the breast from Rose, and I felt that there was always part of him which needed to control the feeding experience.

Rose in turn was able to contain Wilf during these feeding experiences. Despite the difficulty he had at first, she persisted with breast-feeding. Although she found it very difficult when he 'rejected' her by not feeding well or by bringing up his feed, she generally did not take this personally. Rather she tried different ways or feeding positions. This was in contrast to her response to other parenting problems she encountered, for example when she returned to work she felt very unsure of herself, and experienced Wilf's tearful behaviour as a personal rebuff.

Feeding seemed to provide her with the reassurance that she was needed by Wilf, and also with a degree of closeness which she found exhilarating, but sometimes also frightening, admitting at one stage that:

" I am sometimes scared that he will become too close to me because I am breast-feeding him, and because I am a single parent and he hasn't really got another adult to relate to." (Obs 3, Wilf at 2 months)

In general this feeling that there was someone who depended on her was an important factor in her enthusiasm for motherhood. It was underlined by her ambivalent reaction to Wilf eating solid food. On the one hand she was proud of his development (he was relatively adept at picking up food with his hands) but on the other hand she found the mess very difficult to cope with in the small flat and often seemed quite wistful when talking about his rapid development which was making him more independent of her:

"Look at how he's trying to feed himself! He's growing so quickly that I feel I need to remember every moment of when he is a small baby."
(Obs 10, Wilf at 6 months)

It was noticeable that Wilf seemed to prefer the right breast and mostly became agitated when he was at the left breast. Perhaps the way Rose held him at the right breast was more comfortable for him. As he grew older, Wilf's feeding settled and by his six month he was breast-feeding easily and confidently.

Arousal

Wilf was generally responsive and he often focused his attention on objects in his environment, chatting to flowers, pictures, etc.

There were two specific triggers which habitually stimulated Wilf to become very aroused. They were:

looking in the mirror; and

having his nappy changed.

Whenever he saw his reflection in the mirror he produced a barrage of lively 'conversation' and became physically very animated:

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"As soon as he saw himself in the mirror his eyes suddenly sprang wide open and he stared with a look of complete amazement at the reflection. He smiled broadly and started making a chattering noise. He stuck his tongue out, pulled it back and stuck it out again. He moved his arms in an animated way, jerking his hands up and down. Mother said "Oh there's your little friend, Wilf." Wilf continued his fascinated stare at the reflection and chatted away at it. Rose turned to go out of the room and as soon as he lost sight of the reflection he calmed down and became almost silent. Rose commented that he was more fascinated by his own reflection than by other people." (Obs 5, Wilf at 3 months)

Rose was aware of Wilf's liveliness and was very proud of it as it confirmed that Wilf was contented and therefore that she was a good parent. It also confirmed her conviction that the black element in Wilf's nature made him physically very demonstrative.

Nappy changing elicited a similar response in Wilf to mirror-gazing, and he seemed to gain a great deal of sensual pleasure
from the experience:

While she was changing him, Wilf's expression changed. At first he still looked tetchy...but as soon as his nappy was off his expression relaxed. He looked around to face me and then focused on the light. The jerky movements of his arms and legs became less noticeable and smoother and his hands moved randomly in a sort of circle. His fists were still clenched and he kicked vigorously, opening and closing his mouth. He let out a long "ah" sound and smiled brightly at me. He then looked at Rose and gurgled. Rose said "That's better, Wilf" as she put on the new nappy. She picked him up and held him so that he was looking at me over her right shoulder. He was still smiling and gurgling..." (Obs 8, Wilf at 5 months)

When his nappy was being changed, Wilf became animated in a manner similar to when he looked in the mirror. It was also a time when he was able to see his body and move it around freely.[39] On the other hand, this was a time when he had both eye and bodily contact with his mother. Possibly he was reacting to her delight at being able to do something for him and his faeces may have been perceived as a 'gift' to her. In any case, having his nappy changed was a time of special significance for him. For her part,

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[39]I expected a similar reaction when he bathed, but did not see him in the bath during this period.

Rose certainly seemed to feel that changing Wilf's nappy brought him much closer to her. She once told me:

> "I now feel that my needs are the same as his. Getting up at night to change his nappy is just like getting up to make myself a cup of coffee."
> (Obs 3, Wilf at 2 months)

This statement dramatically highlighted Rose's response to Wilf during his first few weeks. It showed how completely she had identified herself with Wilf after his birth. She seemed to revel in this inter-dependence and she had moved from being highly ambivalent about motherhood during her pregnancy, to being completely absorbed by it after the birth. The humdrum daily routine of mothering a new baby had completely submerged her concerns about career, finances and relationships, but it presaged later problems.

These patterns of Wilf's were manifestations of a characteristic trait which began when he was very young, perhaps even pre-natally, and continued to develop throughout the year of the observations. Wilf seemed to be developing into a child who was normally self-contained, even-tempered and not volatile. He was normally not a particularly sensual infant. From time to time, though, something would trigger an outburst of animated and sensual actions which would last for some minutes and then fade as the stimulus was removed.

Eczema

Wilf's eczema appeared very early on, during his first month. The eczema was never very severe, but it did not go away. It was normally confined to the rolls of skin around his neck, but sometimes other areas would flare up, especially where the skin was folded over. This happened especially when he was ill or otherwise under stress (eg, when he had his vaccinations). Rose was most concerned, and tried to control it by limiting Wilf's diet, but she often had to resort to steroid creams. On one level the eczema was merely a minor skin complaint. However, it may have had a more significant symbolic

meaning for both Rose and Wilf, relating to his temperament and their relationship.[40]

Response to Child Minder

Rose always considered Wilf to be an easy baby to look after and from an early age he developed regular patterns of sleeping and feeding. These habits evolved and changed over time They were interrupted when he was ill or when they went away, and it took some time for regular patterns to resume. This was particularly noticeable when they spent a week with Rose's parents over Easter, when Wilf was seven months old. For several weeks after this he would not go to sleep at his usual time and Rose reported that she was exhausted.

The daily routine was determined mainly by Wilf's own rhythms, so that he was allowed to feed and sleep on demand. This picture changed as external pressures began to impinge on their family life.

According to Rose, the major external pressure on the family life was her financial situation. Rose had a large mortgage to pay and the expense of having a child was far greater than she had anticipated. This meant that she had to return to work sooner than she would have liked and that Wilf had to go to a child-minder.

The decision to go back to work was a complex one for Rose. Before Wilf was born she had decided that she would return to work after three months and she was determined that the baby would not affect her career. After the birth her priorities changed and she had far more of herself invested in being Wilf's mother than in her career. She was therefore initially extremely reluctant to return to work. Slowly other factors began to encroach on her:

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[40]See, eg Leach (1979), who relates eczema to infants' stress.

the financial situation became acute and she was forced to consider the practical steps which needed to be taken;

she began to feel guilty about her colleagues who were covering for her; and

her anxiety about her career began to re-emerge.

When Wilf was four months old she decided to return to work part-time and Wilf went to a childminder near to her workplace. This arrangement meant that Wilf had to change many of his regular patterns. He had to learn to drink milk formula from a bottle and to change his sleeping and eating patterns and learn to be in a new environment without his mother. At first Rose reported that Wilf couldn't settle, but he soon seemed to get used to going and Rose said that he was responding well because there were older children to whom he could relate.

Wilf's response at home to these changes was subtle rather than dramatic. For three or four weeks his sleep patterns were disrupted. On the days that Rose worked she came home at about 6 pm with him. She then had to feed and bathe him, and she also wanted time to play with him. He therefore went to sleep at 8 pm. The problem with this was that both felt very tired and often Wilf would cry before going to bed. Otherwise Wilf seemed to adjust well to his new circumstances.

The new arrangement also affected Rose in several different ways. On the one hand she was relieved to get back to work and to see that she still retained her skills, and on the other hand she felt very guilty about leaving Wilf behind. She was also suspicious of the childminder whom she suspected of giving Wilf forbidden foods, not changing him often enough, and other minor misdemeanours. She was jealous that the childminder had Wilf's attention when he was most alert and she felt threatened that Wilf could trust another adult. Later on in the year, when Wilf was eight months old, she returned to work full-time. By this time her anxieties were fewer, and the only real problem for Rose was the amount of 'quality time' she could spend with him.

This sequence of events demonstrates how Wilf's characteristic patterns and habits changed over time as a response to the external environment, ie, Rose's need to return to work, and her feelings about this. The responses were not only in one direction though, as Rose was eventually able to come to terms with her guilt and loss on returning to work partly because Wilf seemed to settle down well at the childminder. Wilf may have picked up Rose's more relaxed attitude when he went to the child-minder for a full day and he was able to trust her enough not to feel too abandoned by her. Rose in turn was able to move away from her initial position of being totally preoccupied with Wilf and with finding difficulty in separating her needs from his. By the end of the year she was clearly able to see what her needs were, and to take responsibility for them, although she remained very ambivalent about returning to work.

Changes in Rose's responses

Earlier in this chapter I described some of the ambivalent feelings about being a parent which Rose reported having experienced during pregnancy, and how some of these changed after Wilf was born. Rose's feelings about being a parent, and especially about being the single parent of a black child, continued to change and develop throughout this period.

The process of change was particularly evident in the way she linked her feelings and ideas about the **real** Wilf with the **fantasy** baby of her pregnancy. There was also a noticeable process of change in her responses to Wilf which became more attuned to the real infant rather than the idealised one. This process bears strongly on the question of Wilf's racial identity development because many of her fantasies were about having a black child. Although the racial element was therefore inextricably bound up with her feelings about parenthood generally, it is sensible to try and disentangle them for the purposes of this study.

The result of these fantasies for Rose as a new parent, was that she spent a great deal of energy during the first six months of Wilf's life in the process of separating the fantasy from the real child. In many instances it was very painful for her to let go of the

idealised infant and she held on to her picture of Wilf as a spontaneous, easy-going and relaxed infant, despite all the evidence to the contrary. Rose also tended to 'racialise' some of Wilf's behaviour in a way similar to the way that behaviour had been 'racialised' in the A family of the previous observation. One example of this (Obs 20, Wilf aged 11 months) was attributing his moving in time to music as being because of his 'black genes'. This despite the fact that music was **her** career. This tendency to 'racialise' was another example of Rose's need to experience Wilf as an extension of herself.

Wilf found it difficult to express intense emotion. Perhaps this was because the process of separation from Rose was painful, and was achieved at some cost to him, and his pain had to be expressed somatically. Nevertheless, their relationship was healthy enough for both of them to negotiate these difficulties reasonably successfully and Wilf's development seemed not to be jeopardised at this stage.

7.   WILF AT SIX MONTHS TO TWELVE MONTHS

Wilf's second six months were dominated by the continuation of the process, which had started when he was four months old, of separating from his mother during the day. The major single event during this period occurred when he was eight months old when Wilf and Rose visited his paternal grandmother in France. This event proved to be significant, especially for Rose, although they did not see Wilf's father. Rose was very impressed by Wilf's grandmother who was very warm towards her and accepting of Wilf. Wilf apparently responded very well to her and loved the attention of all his aunts and cousins. The grandmother had warned Rose not to have anything to do with Paul, Wilf's father, but after the visit Rose sent him a picture of Wilf and herself. Some of her fantasies about the family were allayed and she became much less frightened that Paul would come and snatch Wilf from her, believing that his mother would stop him from doing so.

Wilf's patterns and characteristics continued to develop during this time, and he became much more active in his relationships with his mother and others.

The most marked patterns which I observed were:

milestones;

response to strangers; and

play.

Some of the patterns which were very apparent in the first six months seemed to diminish in importance during this time, the two most marked being his response to mirrors, which declined, and his eating patterns, which became much less fraught and difficult.

Milestones

Wilf continued to reach his milestones early. By eight months he was crawling, and he had begun to take some steps by his first year. He was also able to say "mum, mum". He was relatively dextrous and was able to do rudimentary shape sorting, with help, by his first birthday. (Obs 20, Wilf at 11 months) He did not excel in any particular skill or ability, nor did any one ability lag significantly behind the others. His weight and length remained at about the 97th percentile, and he was a good eater. Rose's response to this was that she continued to gain satisfaction from his progress, but she was concerned that he would become a fat child. She consoled herself that when he was walking properly he would lose weight. In fact this did happen to a certain extent.

Response to Strangers

At around eight or nine months Wilf's responses to me changed and he became more diffident towards me.[41] He shied away from touching me for the first part of several

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[41]Part of the explanation for this may have been that there had been a 3-week break in the observations over Easter and so I was less familiar to him than I had previously been. On the other hand one cannot discount the possibility that my colour played a part in Wilf's response. Perhaps he was unconsciously picking up a message from his mother. Another

sessions. During this time Rose also reported that Wilf was responding differently to black strangers than to white strangers, especially men. He was apparently much more interested in black men than white men and was more willing to be picked up by them. It is difficult to know how strong this preference was and I did not observe it personally.

Play

In his second six months Wilf developed distinctive patterns of playing which became more marked as he developed. The most distinctive aspects of his play were:

Ability to play on his Own

Wilf had only a small number of toys; blocks, a trolley, a caterpillar to pull, a wooden snake, etc, (He had no battery toys.) and a confined space to play in. For several sessions he spent most of the time playing on his own on the floor, only occasionally going to his mother to show her something. His favourite activities were building towers and knocking them down, and sorting shapes. He had a habit of pulling the books off the bookshelves, but other than this he did not play with the furniture or equipment in the flat, and ignored the drawers, radio, etc.

Neatness

Wilf's toys were kept in a toy box which was stored under the settee. He habitually put his toys back into the box after taking them out. He also gathered them whenever they were spread out over the floor. Rose commented several times on how neat he was. My impressions confirmed this: he made less mess than any other infant of his age I had come across, and hardly ever became dirty or grubby in the course of his play.

Lack of Aggressive Play

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possible factor affecting his behaviour was his going full-time to the childminder, which could have made him temporarily anxious about strangers.

The controlled nature of Wilf's play extended to his expression of emotion. Although he often babbled happily to himself or Rose while playing, and occasionally chuckled with delight, he seldom showed intense emotion. His play typically consisted of putting things into containers and taking them out, and he did not seem to show any destructive or aggressive aspects. He never had the tendency to throw things which many children of his age have, and which was such a central feature of Aud's play, nor did he deliberately knock things over or tear pages out of books.

> "Wilf takes out a pink bear from the box and says 'ng'. He takes out a red bus and puts the pink bear back inside...Then he takes a small plastic man from the box and turns it over in the fingers of his right hand, concentrating on his hand. He then picks up the box and throws it on the floor with an almost gentle movement. He picks up the man and puts him into a red plastic cylinder. He takes the man out, puts the cylinder on the floor and tries again, but this time he can't do it. He tries three or four times and then, frustrated puts the cylinder down again. His face slowly crumples and tears begin to well up in his eyes. He starts crying quietly. Rose picks him up and puts him to the breast, he lies across her and sucks, and his body relaxes quickly." (Obs 13, Wilf at 7 months)

Generally Wilf's play had a strange, rather self-controlled flavour. Although he seemed to be happy and relaxed most of the time, and cooed to himself while playing, his body movements were generally somewhat stiff and deliberate. He often held his fists tightly and seldom moved quickly from one place to another, as infants of this age often do. He confined himself to a small area in which he felt secure.

Although the patterns described above emerged after six months, they were manifestations of characteristics which emerged much earlier in Wilf's life. Wilf was always a rather self-contained child and this self-containment developed throughout his first year. As he grew older the patterns became more sophisticated. From the beginning Wilf showed contradictory sides of his identity and the more sophisticated the patterns became, the more contradictory they seemed. On the one hand he was an outgoing, friendly and relaxed child who developed relationships easily and was interested in the world around him. On the other hand he was restrained in his movements, wary of strangers, and lacking in spontaneity.

8. DISCUSSION

The common theme running through these observations was the unfolding of two distinctive modes of interacting with the world, and the development of two 'selves'.

The 'defined' self

The defined self arose out of Wilf's need to control his environment. By carefully defining his actions and by ensuring that his environment was under control Wilf was able to maintain a degree of equanimity. This pattern was evident from a very early age when Wilf began to show definite preferences. The first instance was his preference for the right over the left breast. This pattern continued with regard to his food, for which he had definite likes and dislikes (and had a regimented diet imposed on him). He also demonstrated a need to define a certain area to play in and he was careful to put his toys in the right place. Later this pattern emerged in the social domain when he showed a preference for black rather than white strangers. All this points to a developing characteristic of Wilf's which showed a need to categorise and control aspects of his world. The development of his play also points to an increasing ability to suppress the angry and destructive elements of his personality. Wilf was able to establish good relationships with others and in many ways seemed relaxed socially if not physically. He was also able to adapt to new situations and routines, if sometimes with difficulty. Certainly he was not a disturbed infant in any usual sense of the word. So his need to control did not lead to a rigid and inflexible response to the world or an intolerance of new stimuli as in some of the infants described by Stern (1985).

The 'fused' self

The controlled or 'defined' mode of interaction did not prevail in all Wilf's social intercourse. One of Wilf's characteristic patterns was that his self-controlled demeanour would break down and he would become very excited or distressed for short periods of time. He showed a reluctance to fall asleep on his own and needed to be cuddled, and he became very clingy towards Rose especially when his routine was disturbed.

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It is very possible that Wilf's eczema was a somatic manifestation of this characteristic. Eczema is known to be related to psychological stress (Leach, 1979). Bick (1968) has written about the particular significance of skin as a **psychic container**. According to this theory skin is very important in early psychological development. Very young infants use their skin (which is the **physical** barrier between themselves and the world and is also the 'container' of their physical bodies) as a **psychological** container for their powerful emotions. This enables them to develop a **psychological skin** which protects them from threatening projections and introjections, and contains their powerful impulses.

Sometimes the emotions are too strong to be contained, and they break through the psychological skin. This can show itself in various forms of behavioural outbursts or disturbances. At other times the psychological skin remains intact, but the outbreak is symbolically manifested by the physical skin. Thus the infant will seem to be relatively placid and contained, but will actually be subject to almost uncontainable projections and introjections.

In some ways Wilf fitted this pattern very well. He certainly seemed to be a relatively placid and self-contained infant and yet he could become very volatile at times. The tension between separateness and psychological union was apparent in his relationship with Rose. In some ways their relationship was very contained and the psychological barriers between them were quite strong. For example their daily routine was fairly regular without being rigid. In other ways there was psychological fusion.

It may therefore be that Wilf's eczema was a physical manifestation of an internal psychological conflict in which Wilf was struggling with his sense of separateness. The eczema, which was a breach of the physical barrier between him and the world, represented a psychological breach between the **me** and the **not me** (Winnicott, 1988). This hypothesis, although tenuous, is supported by many of Rose's statements such as the one quoted above regarding nappy changing, in which she clearly points out her own difficulty in psychologically separating from Wilf. Rose's response to changing the nappy was very typical of Winnicott's **primary maternal preoccupation**, and she certainly

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experienced their relationship as one of psychological fusion.

There may have been a further symbolic role for the eczema. It is possible that Wilf was able to perceive the difference in colour between his own skin and that of his mother, and the eruption on his skin represented an attempt to break through this barrier. This is an even more tenuous hypothesis, but throws an interesting light on how an infant's perception of colour differences may begin to develop. It may be that the difference in skin colour is recognised by the infant (see Wilf's response to the mirror above) and is unconsciously experienced, even at this early pre-verbal age, as a barrier between himself and his mother. Depending on the infant's temperament, he may be frightened, angry, or rejected by this, or may even see it as a source of comfort. The infant's response would also be determined to some extent by his mother's own feelings about his skin colour.

In Wilf's case, his mother was certainly preoccupied by his skin colour and he could have been aware of some of this anxiety. This, and his constitutional propensity to psychologically 'erupt', could have combined with his natural susceptibility to cause his eczema.

A similar dynamic may have been operating when Wilf responded so dramatically to his image in the mirror. At that age Wilf was much too young to recognise himself in his reflection, (Piaget, 1951) but something about his reflection continuously triggered his interest. Could it be that he recognised a person of the same colour as himself or, at least, different from his mother? This is impossible to prove one way or the other, but it is an interesting hypothesis that some embryonic awareness of colour was present even at this early age. If this is so, then his response may have contained an element of reaching out to that part of himself which was individual and different.[42]

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[42]Wilf differed from Rose not only in race, of course, but also gender. However, he responded to his image when his nappy was on as well as off, and so it is unlikely that the above hypothesis could apply to the development of his sexual identity.

Why did Wilf develop these different selves? In some ways Wilf was very like the child Rose expected to produce. He was friendly and easy-going, seemed to enjoy music, etc. It would therefore seem plausible to speculate that Wilf's patterns of behaviour were at least partly moulded by his mother's needs and expectations. On another level though, Wilf was reticent and wary of people and needed to be in control of his environment. This reticence, and the way he carried himself physically, mirrored his mother's own characteristics rather than her expectations of him to display the kinds of traits which she lacked.

These traits may have developed because of Wilf's constitutional predispositions, but there must be a question regarding the extent to which Wilf was acting out his mother's fantasies about her child. There are three hypotheses which may explain this apparent contradiction in Wilf's characteristic traits:

Wilf acted out Rose's conscious fantasies, but unconsciously separated from her

According to this hypothesis the 'relaxed' aspects of Wilf's personality were only superficial attempts to conform with his mother's expectations. His need to control the external environment, however, was an outward manifestation of a deeper need to control the inner psychological environment in which the boundaries between himself and his mother were so blurred. In order to do so he had to control the powerful internal and external forces which impinged on his psychological 'skin'. His controlling and controlled behaviour would then be seen as an unconscious attempt to separate from his mother. Thus he seemed to be acting out in a concrete way his need to create a separate and distinct identity for himself. This dynamic also manifested itself somatically in his eczema.

Wilf acted out Rose's fantasies at both the conscious and unconscious level, but Rose's fantasies themselves were contradictory and ambivalent.

According to this hypothesis Rose's stereotyped ideas about children and black people represented only one aspect of the full picture. Rose certainly saw herself as a stilted and

unspontaneous white person and she had a low self-esteem. She also seemed not to be able to acknowledge the side of Wilf's character which mirrored her own, preferring to see him as a spontaneous, relaxed, and sensual representative of 'black' people. At another level though, she may have resented and envied this aspect of Wilf. In addition, Wilf's obvious physical difference from her made her feel less able to 'own' him than she would have liked and she sometimes told me that she felt that he did not rightfully belong to her, but to the black community. Unconsciously, therefore, she may have needed Wilf to be like her, both in order for him to improve her self-esteem, and also to allow her to feel that she had a right to him.

Wilf's personality developed independently from his relationship to Rose

It may have been that Wilf's development was constitutionally rather than environmentally determined. It is possible that he just happened to turn out to be an infant who demonstrated both a defined and a fused mode of interacting with his environment.

These three hypotheses are not mutually exclusive. In reality elements of all these processes were probably operating in the formation of Wilf's identity.

It is difficult to pin-point how the different aspects of his identity intermeshed and to determine which were the most powerful forces operating in his identity formation. This is partly because of the complex nature of the dynamics which operated and also because Wilf was only one year old by the end of my observations and these patterns and characteristics were still in an embryonic stage of development at this time. It is hard to say whether the 'relaxed' or the 'controlled' aspects of his identity were more fundamental. From the observations and discussions with Rose it is clear that both these modes of interaction were present very early on in Wilf's life, if not at birth. This means that they were either genetically determined, or that Wilf developed his characteristic defences within a very short time after his birth.

Perhaps the most plausible explanation is that Wilf was endowed with the **potential** for

responding to the world in both a defined and a fused manner. His early development would then have been driven by the realisation of these potentialities as he confronted the world outside, principally through interacting with his mother. He was also born physically robust, with an ability for quick physical and intellectual development.

Rose's response to these attributes of Wilf's was evident on several different psychological levels. The healthy, adult part of her was able to nurture and care for him and to contain his frightening projections. The immature part of her felt threatened and overwhelmed by him and could only respond to the idealised infant of her prenatal fantasies. Wilf, in turn, had quickly to develop defences against the uncontained aspects of his mother, while at the same time he had to be able to relate to her healthy side in an undefended manner. His psyche therefore had to develop both a relaxed way of interacting, which corresponded to Rose's healthy side, and the controlled way, which corresponded to her uncontained side. In this way the biological make-up and the social environment combined in Wilf to begin the process of identity formation.

Rose's Responses

For Rose, the major task of this period was to re-establish her identity and to allow Wilf to establish his own. The above discussion about Wilf's struggle for separation has assumed that Rose's stance towards him was static and constant. In fact her responses changed considerably. Over time she generally became more and more able to see Wilf as separate, and to acknowledge his individual needs and characteristics. (Examples of this are given above with regard to feeding, play and leaving him with other carers.) Thus although Wilf's fundamental modes of interaction with the world were already set by the first year, the emotional conditions under which they were determined had already changed considerably by this time.

Even this does not give the whole picture as there were many areas in which little change had occurred since Wilf's birth. One example of this was the ability to express anger. Rose was never able to express irritation or to conflict with Wilf. The only anger I saw was when she occasionally said "Oh Wilf!" when he messed his food or pulled a book

out of the bookshelf. She never reached the point where she felt confident enough in her relationship with Wilf to express anger without feeling that she would destroy him, or at least irreparably damage their relationship. Wilf also showed very little overt aggression, either directly towards Rose or in his play.

There is a further consideration which may be important in the discussion of Rose's mothering of Wilf, and that is that she may have been repeating a pattern which she had experienced herself as a child. Rose was the youngest child of her parents, and the only daughter. Her parents encouraged her to take up a career in music, which her mother had wanted for herself, but had never achieved. Thus to some extent Rose was acting out a fantasy of her own mother. It could be that her career was not the only area in which she acted things out for her mother, and that this was a pattern which had been passed on from one generation to another in the family. In order to confirm this, though, one would have to study her relationship with her mother in depth.

Future Identity Development

Although the observations were undertaken when Wilf was very young, it is possible to make some hypotheses about the possible future courses that Wilf's racial identity development could take.

Cultural Issues

The environment in which Wilf grows up is likely to have a profound effect on his future identity. Wilf had quite a lot of contact with black people in the area and had some contact with his father's family. Rose tried to introduce an element of black culture into the household by playing 'black' music and buying books with black people in them. She also sought out black friends for Wilf and chose the childminder partly because there was another black child being minded by her. Wilf's immediate family and social life were, however, essentially white. The attempts by Rose to introduce black culture into the household were somewhat forced and self-conscious, and they did not form an integral part of Wilf's life in the same way that black culture had been part of the life-style of the

A family in the previous observation.

When Wilf becomes old enough to choose friends, he may choose black children and this may give him a more immediate experience of black culture than he had during the observation. If this does not happen then Wilf's experience of black culture is likely to remain second-hand and he could grow to idealise or despise it as a subject of fantasy, as Rose had done.

Boundary Issues

It is likely that Wilf's tendency towards maintaining well-defined boundaries will continue as he grows up. This tendency was evident very early on and continued to be a significant part of his nature throughout the observations. It would not be a great psychological step for Wilf to begin to discriminate between individuals and groups of people on the basis of what aspects of his identity they represent, and to project into them some of the feelings associated with those internal constructs. This process could extend to his relationships with members of different racial groups who could come to represent the more controlled or more relaxed part of himself. Thus black people may come to represent the relaxed aspect of himself, and whites the controlled aspect, and he would then choose to associate largely with black people. By his 10th month Wilf apparently showed a preference for black rather than white strangers, illustrating that this process may have begun.

The above is only one of a number of possible outcomes for Wilf, even given the fact that his basic social environment remains the same. The evolution of Wilf's tendency to create clear boundaries does not necessarily imply that he will continue to favour black people, nor that he will identify himself as a black person. His particular identifications will arise out of his experiences at school and in the community, as well as those at home.

This suggests that although it is not possible to predict whether he will see himself as primarily a black, white or mixed-race person, he is unlikely to be able to tolerate having

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a blurred identity and will strongly identify with one or another group. The other aspects of his identity will be suppressed and will only become overt when he is under stress.

In some ways the dynamics described here are similar to those which determined Aud's identity development. Wilf's responses were also typified by two distinct modes of social interaction, one of which could develop into a superficial or **false self** and the other which seemed more of a **true self**. In Wilf's case it is more difficult to predict how these 'selves' will turn out. This is because Wilf was much younger at the end of the observations and his identity was less developed. Secondly, in Wilf's case the two modes of interaction arose at the same time, whereas Aud's robust mode was only evident in her second year. Because neither of Wilf's characteristics chronologically preceded the other, neither was intrinsically more fundamental. Thirdly, Wilf's relationship with his mother was more fluid than Aud's with hers, and Rose showed more of a capacity to change and adapt to her child's needs. This means that it is quite likely that she would eventually develop the capacity to acknowledge and contain Wilf's pain and accept his need for separation.

At the time of the observations, Wilf's preferences and categorisations were unself-conscious and spontaneous. As he becomes more self-conscious it is likely that he will evolve intellectual justifications and defences for these emotional reactions. They will become part of his own self-concept and thus integral to his identity.

Conclusions

These observations provide some indication of the ways that Wilf's identity was developing, and the major internal and external factors which influenced that development. Briefly these were:

Wilf's constitutional attributes, especially his large size, his skin colour, his tendency to reach his milestones quickly, and possibly his tendency towards self-containment and towards somatising his internal psychological conflicts;

the particular circumstances in which he was born being the first born child of a white single middle-class woman;

the way these interacted with Rose's preconceptions, fantasies and personality, especially her view of herself as 'different' and her idealisation of 'black' people and culture;

the influence of the above factors on Rose's attitudes and behaviour towards Wilf;

the mother-infant relationship, and Wilf's struggle to psychologically separate from Rose;

Wilf's development of two complementary **selves**, the Defined and the Fused, as ways of defending himself.

Summary

This chapter has described the observations of Wilf and his mother which took place during the first year of his life. It has discussed Wilf's development during this time, especially the development of his racial identity. It has attempted to show the link between Wilf's identity development and his relationship with his mother, which in turn were influenced by his constitution on the one hand, and her attitudes and beliefs on the other. These attitudes were traced back to her own experiences as a child. Finally some tentative predictions were made about the possible directions of his future identity development.

CHAPTER EIGHT
THE FIRST SET OF INTERVIEWS

1.   INTRODUCTION

The previous two chapters have considered racial identity development through the close observation of two children. In this chapter I will look at the one-off interviews which were carried out with the mothers of the two children and with three other mothers. The information gathered from the interviews supplemented the observations and provided more systematic information about the background of the mothers and their current circumstances, and how these impacted on their children's identity development. In the case of the two observed infants the interviews also acted as a validity check, providing another instrument for studying the family.

I will give a brief sketch of each mother's and father's background and the current family situation. I will then try to isolate some of the common aspects and differences of mothers backgrounds and relationships. Fuller accounts of the interviews and individual discussions are provided in Appendix 1.

The initial proposal was to interview five mothers as well as the two observed, but it was very difficult to find more subjects despite intensive enquiries at local nurseries, health visitors and play groups. The three mothers were found through personal contacts, each giving me the name of another. By the third interview the 'trail went dead'.

The interviews were conducted with mothers alone in their own homes. They lasted for approximately two hours and were tape recorded.   Before the interviews started I explained to the mothers that I was doing a thesis on the development of racial identity and that I would like to spend some time asking them about themselves and their families. I asked whether they would object to the interview being recorded and explained that information would be kept confidential and anonymity would be maintained in the thesis. I assured them that they were free not to answer any of the questions and could stop the

interview at any time. At the end of the interview they were invited to feed back about the experience.

The questionnaire was constructed in order to reflect the following structural needs:

> ensuring a chronological progression from the mother's own childhood to the current situation and thoughts about the future;

> progressing from less to more sensitive material; and

> uncovering links between past experiences and current mothering practices.

These needs did not usually conflict. The mothers seemed to relax as the interview progressed and often returned to previous topics to elaborate on them. This required some cross-referencing during the transcription, but enabled them to cover more sensitive material when they were more relaxed and confident.

2. ISSUES RAISED IN THE INTERVIEWS

Many of the issues raised by these interviews were similar to those raised in the observations. Briefly they were:

Attitudes towards the Interview

The attitude of the mothers varied considerably, but they were generally accepting of the process. Despite the fact that very personal questions were being asked, the mothers soon relaxed and all were willing to answer all the questions. There was far less resistance to the interviews than had been shown in the initial stages of the observations. This was probably because:

> the interviews involved less of a time commitment than the observations;

interviews are more culturally accepted than observations; and

the purpose and structure of the interviews was much clearer than the observations.

Of the two mothers who had experienced both, Rose said that it had been a relief to talk openly about her condition and feelings and that she appreciated the discursive nature of the interview. It was also an opportunity for her to check out all the fantasies she had about what I was really looking for.[43] Similarly Tracy used the interview to ask me what I was **really** looking for and questioned me about what I had found.

The feedback given at the end of the interviews was uniformly positive, although Tracy, Ruth and Lucy queried why they had to be seen alone.

The Structure of the Interviews and the Role of the Interviewer

The basic structure of the interview was determined by the interview schedule. The mothers were guided through the questions which were asked in the order they appear on the schedule. The process was very loosely defined, however, and mothers were encouraged to answer in whatever way they saw fit, taking their own time. Interesting or important leads were followed up even if they did not appear on the schedule.

Sometimes they did not answer a question and it had to be repeated. If there was still no answer after the second attempt, I did not pursue the point.

The role of the interviewer was therefore much more active than that of the observer. The structured nature of the interview made it easier for the mothers to talk about themselves than had been possible during the unstructured observations. However, in the

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[43]Although I had outlined the purpose of the observations to her before they started, she had 'forgotten' and assumed that I was checking out her adequacy as a mother. She also experienced my reticence as being very judgemental.

more active role of interviewer I was less able to pick up nuances of meaning than I was able to do as observer.

Transference and Counter-transference in the Interviews

Despite their less sensitive nature, the interviews were all highly emotionally charged, and the intimate nature of the material meant that both mothers and I experienced strong feelings. Transferential and counter-transferential feelings were indubitably present during the interviews and played an important part of the process. Each interview took on its own nature, part of which was reflected in a tacit collusion between myself and the subject. Only after the interview, while listening to the recordings, was I able to discover some of these collusive patterns. Examples of this process are:

> The interview with Rose took on the nature of a mutual confession. It began with me 'coming clean' about the true nature of the thesis. At this point I desperately needed Rose to see that I was a bona fide researcher and not simply a nosy and intrusive person. This response was partly generated by my need to hide the part of me that was inquisitive about her and that was attracted to her. She, in turn, responded by revealing intimate details about her life in a manner which suggested a need to 'reveal all' in trying to uncover the hidden reasons for her attraction to men.

> In contrast to this, the interview with Lucy was more like an interrogation. In this case, although she was overtly pleasant and hospitable, she spent the whole interview denying in various ways that race was an issue for her. My questions became unconsciously more and more aggressive as I tried to establish some link between what she was saying and my own experiences.

The result of these dynamics was that, because of the unconscious collusion, some important information was not picked up.

Consideration of transference and counter-transference did provide some information in

itself, giving some additional clues, in particular about the feelings of the mothers and their attitudes toward race and their children.

Although transference and counter-transference are powerful forces, it must be recognised that there were all sorts of other factors better known to research which may have biased the answers. These were:

> questions may have been phrased in a way that led to irrelevant or distorted answers (construct validity);

> there was no independent corroboration of the answers, especially in the case of the three mothers whose infants were not observed (triangulation);

> mothers consciously avoided questions because they were uncomfortable or difficult to answer;

> my own political or other biases; and

> the fact that I am a white male. (the halo effect).

Many of these overt biases interacted with the more covert transferential influences, and so the picture is in fact very complex. For example, my race and gender may have biased the answers by making the mothers feel more ill at ease and defensive than they might otherwise have done. Similarly these factors may have made me less sensitive to some of the cultural nuances. Additionally, white maleness could unconsciously represent to the mother those elements of the family of origin that she had rejected by choosing a black man as a partner. A white man could also represent to the mother the partner she may have had if she had not chosen a black man, or a group of people she felt rejected by. Thus race and gender can operate on various interacting levels to affect how the mothers responded and how these responses have been interpreted. Despite these concerns, I believe that the interviews provided much valuable information about the mothers and children.

I have chosen to present the interviews in a fairly standard format, starting with the parents' backgrounds and ending off with a discussion. This format approximates the format of the interview, but does not do justice to the ebb and flow of the conversation. The material is presented in this way in order to maintain some consistency in the discourse. In presenting this material there is always the conflict between quoting at length in order to do justice to what was said, and paraphrasing for brevity and clarity's sake. Another issue is the anonymity of the subjects. The interviews touched on personal circumstances which were relevant to the discussion and needed to be recorded. I have left out information or changed it slightly where I felt that it was not directly relevant to the discussion.

3.   THE INTERVIEWS

In this section I will try to identify the salient features of the five interviews I conducted. I will concentrate more on the three mothers whose children I did not observe, because I have already given fairly detailed descriptions of the other mothers and of their attitudes, relationships and backgrounds. However, to spare the reader from having to page backwards and forwards I will risk repeating myself by providing some essential details in note form.

4.   THE A FAMILY

Family Structure

Mother	(Tracy) age at interview:	27 yrs
Father	(Norman) age at interview:	28 yrs
Sister	(Roberta) age at interview:	5 yrs
Subject	(Aud) age at interview:	30 mths

Background

Mother

White English/Irish working-class, living on a council estate. Friends and neighbours are mostly white.

Family quite close, Tracy closer to mother than father.

Tracy was a happy, outgoing child. No educational qualifications.

Teenage friends were mostly white, a couple of black boyfriends before Norman, but Norman was her only serious relationship with a black man.

Families were not very happy about the relationship but came to accept it. Now they are closer to her family than Norman's.

Father

Norman was born in Jamaica from a working-class family and parents worked on London Transport. He came to England aged 7, and his childhood milieu was mostly Afro-Caribbean. He left school aged 16, and had no regular occupation, worked in the building trade, cleaning, hotels, etc. Music is his major interest.

This is his first relationship with a white woman, all others being with Afro-Caribbean women.

Present Circumstances

Live in small council flat in inner city multi-racial area.

Father is nominally separated from family, but spends most of his time in the home.

Tracy and Norman work intermittently.

Family want to leave the flat, but there is a long waiting list for accommodation.

Tracy is depressed, blaming her depression on the flat.

There is intense sibling rivalry between the sisters.

The milestones of both children were late. Aud was especially late at talking.

Suspicion of sexual abuse against father, but no legal action.

5.   THE B FAMILY

Family Structure

Mother   (Rose) age at interview: 34 yrs

Father (Paul) age at interview: 25 yrs lived abroad

Subject   (Wilf) age at interview: 15 months

Background

Mother

Rose is the youngest child of a clerical family.   Her brothers being much older, she grew up as an only child and was given a lot of attention. Her father was a gentle man but her mother was rather domineering. The family were very liberal. She had few friends as a child. Her parents always wanted her to take up a career in music so after school she moved to London to read music. In London she became more gregarious and had a few relationships. At this time she was friendly with a group of gay men, then had several black lovers. She met Wilf's father while he was on holiday in the UK, when she conceived Wilf. She has had no contact with him since the holiday other than a postcard.

Father

Paul is a European of Afro-Caribbean origin. Family came to Europe before he was born. Comes from a large, lower middle- class, matriarchal family and is the youngest of seven siblings. He is described by his mother as the 'black sheep' of the family, and as 'happy go lucky' by Rose. Seems to take little interest in Rose or Wilf now and what contact he has maintained is through pressure from his mother.

Present Circumstances

Rose and Wilf live in a small flat in an inner London area. Rose works full-time and Wilf attends a childminder near her place of work. She is not involved with anyone at present, but has had some suitors since Wilf's birth. She keeps contact with her parents, but is fairly isolated. She and Wilf have visited Paul's family for a few days, but did not see Paul. She is generally content to be a single mother.

6. THE C FAMILY

Family Structure

Mother	(Ruth)	age 39 yrs
Father	(Jai)	age 36 yrs
Infant	(Seree)	age 1 yr

Background

Mother

Ruth was born and spent the first seven years of her life in central London. The family then moved out to north London where she spent the rest of her childhood and adolescence, and where she now lives. At that time the area was predominantly a middle- class Jewish area, but more and more Asian families were moving in. Now it is fairly cosmopolitan, but still with a strong Jewish and Asian presence.

Both Ruth's parents were born in Europe and came to the UK several years before her birth. Ruth's father was an artisan and the family struggled financially through most of Ruth's early life. Throughout this time there were lodgers living with the family. Ruth's mother insisted on having black lodgers because they found it so difficult to get lodgings in London.

Ruth is the elder of two sisters and she describes the family life as "very close and intense". Her parents were concerned with the children's education and introduced arts

and music into the home. Ruth was closest to her father. Ruth's family are Jewish and, although there was very little religious input into the family, she was taught to be proud of her Jewishness. In most ways her upbringing and environment were very similar to the mainstream, yet she always felt different from the other children around her:

> "I never felt completely English; there is a lot of continental stuff in my background."

Politics played a very important role in the family. Ruth's parents were committed socialists and they instilled in the children a strong sense of fairness, justice and support for the underdog. Political discussion was very much part of family life:

> "There were always books and newspapers and people having arguments."

Ruth's parents were also a lot freer and more open than those of her friends, even the Jewish ones. They treated the children as responsible people.

Ruth felt different from her contemporaries because she was Jewish and culturally different from the 'English' children around her, she was relatively economically more disadvantaged than many of her schoolmates, and her political beliefs were different from the mainstream of society and from her contemporaries.

These feelings of being different, and her father's socialist ideology, were to become driving forces in her life.[44]

After leaving home Ruth went to college and studied social sciences. She spent some time in France during the student uprising of 1968 which she found very exciting and formative. Her experiences there confirmed her political beliefs and she began to be more outgoing and to mix with people from all over the world. She returned to London,

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[44]It is interesting to note here that, unlike Ruth, her younger sister returned to the mainstream and grew up to be a conventional middle-class Jewish woman.

completed her studies, and then pursued a career in education where she has done very well.

She met Jai while they were both students at the university. They mixed in the same circle of friends and knew each other for several years before eventually becoming lovers.

Father

Jai was born in India and moved to London with his family when he was seven years old. He is the elder of two children. His family are middle-class and lived very near to Ruth's family in north London, although they didn't meet until they were adults. Jai's family spoke Bengali at home, and mixed with a community of Indian people locally. They were not very religious, though, and Jai grew up absorbing both Indian and English culture. He always had a wide range of friends from different cultures. Both he and his sister chose white partners.

After leaving school Jai went to college and has pursued a career in the arts.

7.   THE D FAMILY

Family Structure

Mother	(Jenny)	age 35 yrs
Father	(Tony)	age 36 yrs
Daughter	(Maddie)	age 2 yrs

Background

Mother

Jenny is the eldest of five children. She comes from a professional family and was

brought up in a small town in the north of England. Jenny describes her childhood as being reasonably happy. The family were very close and although the siblings 'fought like cat and dog', they were very fond of one another and still remain close. Jenny was close to both parents, but she feared her father who had an explosive temper. Although the family were well known in the community and her mother was active in various committees, her parents did not have any close friends and the family relied mostly on one another for social contact.

In the early years of Jenny's life, her paternal grandmother lived with the family and there was some conflict between her and Jenny's mother. The family situation was very supportive and secure for Jenny, but she also found life to be very restrictive. The family's values were very middle-class and rather conformist. In retrospect she feels that she led a rather cloistered life until she left home. As the eldest child she had extra responsibilities in the home and this further restricted her contact with the outside world.

When she was 18, Jenny left home and spent a year in London working in a school for severely handicapped children prior to going on to college. This year was very significant for her. It was the first time that she had been exposed to people who were different from her own background, with different ideas and perspectives. She found it very hard to come to terms with the gross physical disability and extreme dependence of the pupils, but eventually she was able to see them as individuals. Jenny feels that this experience enabled her to cope with college life because she was used to looking after herself, coping with her emotions, and relating to a wide range of people. She also became more gregarious and for the first time mixed with a group of fellow students. She met Tony in the first term of college and soon started going out with him. They married after they qualified. Tony went on to do a further degree, and she has just completed a Masters degree.

Father

Tony was born in Jamaica and came to London with his parents at the age of four. He is an only child, but is part of a fairly large extended family. Tony's father worked for

London Transport and his mother was a nurse. Like many West Indians of their generation they were concerned that their son should be well educated and 'have a better chance in life than they had' and they pushed him hard to achieve. They were a close family but Tony became culturally more and more distant from his parents and now, according to Jenny:

"He has more in common with my parents than with his own."

Nevertheless he remains emotionally close to them. Tony's parents returned to Jamaica in the early 80's after they retired. The family have gone to see them once and intend to return within the next year.

Tony grew up in a multi-racial area and at school had a number of friends from different backgrounds. After leaving he lost contact with his school friends and now his friends are largely from college and work, and are all white.

After leaving college Tony went on to work for a bank and has done very well in this profession, reaching a managerial position. He is virtually the only black person in the higher ranks of the organisation.

8.   THE E FAMILY

Family Structure

Mother	(Lucy)	age 39 yrs
Father	(George)	age 40 yrs
Daughter	(Pippa)	age 7 yrs
Son	(Gary)	age 18 mths

Background

Mother

Lucy described her background as 'very English'. She was born and brought up in a middle-class family in a town in the Home Counties. She is the younger of two sisters and her parents are both professionals. Family life for Lucy was 'very happy' and she can remember no major crises in her youth. The family were very close to one another, having no close relatives and few family friends.

Despite this warm and supportive background, Lucy was an anxious child and had very little self-confidence. She was quiet and shy and, although she had many acquaintances, she had few close friends. As a teenager she never had a close boyfriend. By the time she was a teenager Lucy also found her family situation restrictive and her parents over-protective. They gave her very little freedom and would not allow her to leave home. She carried on living at home until she was 25, when she left to do a degree.

For Lucy, leaving home was a liberating experience. She became much more gregarious and began to enjoy life. She met George during the first month of college and they had quite a wide circle of friends, mainly white. After college she and George got married. She worked until their first child was born.

Father

George was born to a wealthy family in Singapore. His mother was Chinese and his father Indian; he has two natural siblings. When he was very young he was adopted by an Indian woman. He moved to England with his adoptive family when he was seven and has lived in England ever since. George went to a good school and went on to college. He was a successful student and is successful in his career. He is an outgoing person who makes friends very easily.

George's family had become anglicised and he grew up speaking English and eating a mixture of English and Indian food. The family did not practice any religion, although they retained elements of Singaporian culture. George has a large extended family which is racially very mixed. His adoptive mother's sister married a white man and his adoptive siblings have also intermarried.

9. DISCUSSION OF INTERVIEWS

Introduction

This discussion of the interviews will attempt to point out some of the similarities and differences between the families. It will discuss some of the issues which the interviews have highlighted and will consider how the information collected relates to the data gathered during the observations. The intention is not to draw general conclusions from the data, because the sample of mothers interviewed is far too small and unrepresentative for any generalisations to be valid. The tables in Appendix 2 give a brief overview of the mothers' answers to the questions.

Background

The most striking thing about the backgrounds of these five mothers, is how similar they were, except for Tracy, whose background was very different. The others all came from middle-class homes which were stable, two-parent, nuclear families. Tracy came from a stable working-class nuclear family. None of the families was overtly 'abnormal' and all the mothers and their siblings grew up without experiencing major social problems. All had reasonably happy childhoods, and although there were various degrees of closeness in their families, they all maintained ties with their families into adulthood. Rose, Jenny and Lucy came from small towns and their parents were professionals. All described their childhoods as being happy, but found their parents very restrictive during adolescence. They experienced leaving home and coming to London as an exciting and liberating time in their lives. All the mothers, bar Tracy, had obtained degrees and had done well professionally before having children.

The apparent similarity between these families disappears when one looks more closely at the dynamics within them, specifically the roles these women took on when they were children. Their attitudes towards their families, and their parents' responses to them also differed in many important respects. An example of this is the difference between Rose and Jenny's relationships with their siblings. Jenny was the eldest and she took some

responsibility for looking after her siblings when her parents were busy. Her first job when she left home was caring for severely handicapped people. She seemed to rather enjoy the role of eldest sister and as an adult her siblings still came to her for advice and help. Her relationship with her siblings was close and relatively uncomplicated both as a child and an adult. She also had a relaxed attitude towards bringing up her own child, possibly because she was happy in the nurturing role. Rose, on the other hand, being by far the youngest member of the family, always felt excluded by her siblings and although rather indulged by her parents, always felt deprived. As an adult, Rose continued to feel left out. She struggled with her own sense of identity and had a much more difficult task in the role of a parent.

These differences were probably influenced by several factors, amongst which would be the women's congenital differences - Rose may have been born with a disposition to be more anxious, and their circumstances as an adult - Rose was a single parent. It is clear, though, that the early experiences of these women and the subtle dynamics within their families, played a large part in fashioning their future as mothers. These interviews have only been able to provide a hint about how these forces have operated. In order to find out more one would have to have a much more in-depth knowledge of how the women were parented themselves, especially about their early relationship with their own mothers, and also some of the other influences on their early lives. The interviews do show that seemingly similar families can produce very different mothers.

Racial Contacts

None of the mothers had any close social contact with black people when they were children. Ruth had some contact with adult black lodgers, but none had black school friends and only Ruth and Tracy, who were brought up in London, had any black peers as teenagers. It was only after leaving home that any of them began to mix socially with black people. In the case of Jenny and Lucy it was only through their partners that they made other black social contacts.

Like the similarities in their backgrounds, these apparent similarities hid very different

ways in which the women approached their interactions with black people. Both Ruth and Rose felt that there was an element of inevitability in their forming liaisons with black men, and that as teenagers they knew that they would never have a white or English partner. Tracy said that she was physically attracted to black men, but didn't like black culture. Jenny and Lucy, while acknowledging that their partners' colour added to their attractiveness, maintained that it was pure chance which led them to having a black partner.

It is interesting to relate the mothers' relationships with black people to their families' attitudes. Both Jenny and Lucy declared that in their family of origin race was never discussed and it did not arise as an issue. These families were also apolitical, generally, and were mainly concerned with internal family matters. In Ruth and Rose's families, social issues were often discussed and race often came up in family discussions. In both families black people were seen as victims of racism, but black culture also represented an exotic alternative to the dull reality of English life. Tracy's family had contact with black people and occasionally made racist comments. Thus in each case the choice of a black partner contained an element of the family culture. The way the women viewed their partners was very much in line with how they had learned to relate to the world as young children.

This is not to say that they were simply acting out their families' wishes. On another level their choices were a reaction against their families and part of the difficult process of separating from the family. The point here is that their early family experiences were very important determinants of their choices, not only on the level of who they chose, but also how they related to the racial and cultural origins of their partners. It is also worth repeating here that the partners' racial backgrounds were not the only important attributes in the choice. Their personalities, physical appearance, socio-economic status, intelligence, etc, were also very important factors, and each would merit as minute an analysis as race. Race, however, because of its key social and emotional significance in our society, was a significant factor in all these partnerships.

Identities of Mothers

All the mothers in this study considered themselves to be essentially English, although there were varying degrees of commitment to their Englishness. Lucy was perhaps the one who most strongly identified with being English and considered it to be very important that her family felt English. Ruth only grudgingly conceded her Englishness, preferring to be identified as Jewish, although she did not mix in a Jewish milieu. Rose was ambivalent about English culture, seeing it as restrictive, but also living a very English life-style. Tracy considered herself English, but valued her Irish roots. Jenny enjoyed having some access to another culture, but was essentially English.

Despite their English identities, the mothers, perhaps with the exception of Ruth, had a much more cosmopolitan life-style than their family of origin. For the three mothers who came from small towns (Rose, Lucy and Jenny) their decision to leave and come to London was a conscious decision to break away from the restrictions of their families and also to some extent from the limited cultural diversity offered by small towns. The decision preceded their involvement with black people.

Although each of these five women were rooted in the mainstream of English culture and their identities were essentially English, they had made a conscious decision to broaden their horizons before they met their black partners. This was either as a reaction to their family of origin, or because they were encouraged to do so.[45] It may also be that, having taken one risk in leaving home, they were prepared to take another risk in forming a relationship with a black man. For all the mothers, meeting and forming a relationship with a black man was part of a larger pattern in their lives and not a completely random event.

The mothers' class backgrounds formed a major part of their identity. Each of these women chose a partner of a different race, but of the same class, even Rose, who only had a short relationship with Paul. Jenny and Lucy explicitly stated that they could not

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[45] It may be that for some of them, leaving home was both a reaction to the family and an unconscious acting out of their parents' wishes. This has been discussed in relation to both Rose and Ruth, but may have applied to the others as well.

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have chosen a partner from a different class and for Tracy it was not conceivable that her partner could be anything other than working-class. This consistency shows that in a fairly permissive and multi-racial environment, class may be a far greater determinant in choosing partners than race. In some cases class may also be as fundamental as race in identity development. Gender is another fundamental building block of identity which appears to have had an important effect on their parenting.

In summary, the mothers had different views about their own cultural identities and these views were brought into their respective relationships with their partners and their children. Their own identities were formed though a process which started when they were young children and developed over the years until adulthood. Cultural issues interacted with other influences such as gender, self-esteem, politics and class to form their identities. As mothers of mixed-race children, part of whose culture they did not share, they all had a far more complex task than their own parents had tackled.

The mothers in this study did not represent the range of identities which mothers of mixed-race children could display, nevertheless there was a wide variation in how they saw themselves, the influences on their choice of partner, and the way they mothered their children.

Choice of Partner

Four points have already been made about the mothers' choice of partner:

> race was a factor in all their choices, but it varied in importance among other factors such as, education, culture and class;

> their choices were to some extent a response to and determined by their family of origin;

> they all made a decision to widen their social horizons; and

the fathers' blackness was attractive to them either physically or because it represented something to them.

Thus the general statement that can be made about their choice of partner is that they were chosen **because** they were black rather than **despite** it, but that their blackness was not the only factor in their choice.

The two extremes of the continuum of attitudes in this sample were represented by Rose on the one hand, who said that she could not have sexual relations with a white man, and Lucy on the other, who said that race was not very important in her choice.

It is interesting to relate this variation in the women's choices to the reasons given in Chapter 3 for inter-racial partnerships. None of the women fit neatly into any of the categories stated. In all cases their choices were far more complex than this simple typology allows for. This confirms that those categories may explain variations in patterns of choice within a population, but cannot explain the choices made by individuals. Similarly all the women received parenting which would be low on Adorno's Authoritarian Scale, yet only Rose and Ruth came from households which positively viewed people from other races and cultures. The choices made by this sample of women are in line with Adorno's theory, but one could not have used the theory to predict their choices.

This study has not found any convincing evidence that there are any specific precipitating factors which influence women to choose black partners, nor that women who make such choices fall into definite types. This may be because:

> the methods employed in the study were too 'blunt' to measure the subtle influences of their early childhood;

> the sample employed was too small to identify any patterns; or

> there are no such patterns because choice of partner is dependent on so many

factors that no single attribute such as race is predictable.

The study did show that individual mothers experienced specific early influences which were important determinants of their choices. In addition, their circumstances as adults, particularly at the time they met their partners, were also important.

In the discussion so far, the women and their own backgrounds and attitudes have been discussed. The following sections will concentrate on what the interviews revealed about them as mothers, and about their children.

Preconceptions during Pregnancy

The interviews did not reveal very much about the mothers' preconceptions prior to the children's birth. Most of the information I obtained from Rose and Tracy about their pregnancy was given during the course of the observations rather than during their interviews, and has already been discussed. The others limited their comments to what they expected the children to look like rather than what sort of children they expected. They revealed little about their feelings during pregnancy. This could be due to the time which had elapsed since the pregnancy, or that they had not had definite conscious preconceptions.

Ruth, Lucy and Jenny said that they had expected their children to be dark, to have curly black hair, and to look like the fathers rather than themselves. All had experience of young children, either their own or of close relatives, and they therefore knew how different in temperament children can be.

All the pregnancies and births were normal and there were no major traumas during this time, although Aud's birth was very difficult.

Physical Appearance

The physical appearance of the fathers was an important factor in their being chosen as

partners. How did the mothers' responses to colour translate to the children?

All the mothers were to a greater or lesser extent preoccupied by the physical appearance of their children, especially their colour. All of them commented on how much lighter their children were at birth than they had expected and how, excepting Seree, who stayed very light, they darkened later on. Several of the mothers also commented that their children's skin was not the coffee colour one would expect of a mixed-race child, but was 'honey' (Maddie) 'light' (Seree) 'oriental' (Wilf). They seemed slightly surprised and delighted that their children looked as much like them as like the father.

Jenny, Lucy and Rose described their children as being exceptionally attractive. These statements seemed to indicate more than a natural maternal tendency to see their children as beautiful. They either implicitly or explicitly meant to suggest that physical attractiveness 'made up' for a dark skin so that the children would be less likely to suffer abuse and more likely to be liked by others (or perhaps themselves). These mothers seemed to derive some comfort from this attractiveness.

The mothers' preoccupation with the colour of their children tended to be greater when the children were very young, and was part of the process of integrating the new arrival into the family and learning to relate to the real infant rather than the fantasy infant of the pregnancy. The mothers' responses may indicate that they needed to deny their children's darkness at some level, but I would not like to make too much of this point because virtually every parent wants their children to look like themselves, and it could be argued that if they did not want this then it would demonstrate a degree of pathology. Having said this, it is interesting that in Aud's case, for instance, it was her father who put oil on her skin and hair, accentuating her dark colour, and her mother who said that this was messy and a waste of time.

Culture and Class in the Home

All the mothers interviewed in this study had made some effort to bring an element of the father's culture into the home. All the homes were very 'English' in their decoration

and apart from a few pictures they did not have the feel of the fathers' home cultures. The home that had most evidence of 'ethnic' influences was Aud's family. In this home Reggae music was often played, maps and pictures of Jamaica were on the wall, and black people were often in or around the flat. In this family, though, the black influences all came from the father and Tracy made very little effort to encourage them. In all the other families the mothers made a conscious effort to bring black culture into the house, encouraging their children to eat different foods, watch black programmes on television, etc.

Despite their obvious commitment to bringing the father's culture into their homes, all the mothers felt distant from that culture themselves. They related to the minority culture with interest and sympathy rather than feeling strong identification with the culture itself. This feeling of distance from black culture was a fundamental element in the dynamics which determined how children's identities were formed within the family.

The mothers felt to varying degrees that their own, as opposed to the father's attempts to bring black culture into the home were self-conscious rather than being a spontaneous part of their parenting. This in turn meant that the mothers had to make a special effort to introduce these cultural elements into the home and this was not always a very high priority. The mothers', sometimes unconscious, ambivalence towards black culture may have also been picked up by the children, hampering their own attempts towards identification.

The fathers themselves had varying degrees of commitment to their cultures of origin. In some cases fathers were quite conscientious in this respect, eg, Jai, who kept close contact with his extended family. Others like Tony and George confined their activity to occasionally cooking 'ethnic' meals. (The fathers themselves were not interviewed and their commitment had to be inferred from the mothers' reports.)

The mothers tended to hold the major responsibility in the home for matters such as diet, furnishing and other cultural aspects. This area of family life is a traditional area of responsibility for mothers and in this respect the families were merely following western

convention. On the more subtle level of family structure and family dynamics, the families also conformed to English models. One example of this is that in all the families studied the role of the father was more like that of the host culture than of their culture of origin. All the mothers felt that their partners were engaged in the day-to-day child care to a much greater extent than their counterparts in their original cultures. This may have been partly because of the fathers' own socialisation into mainstream English culture, but was also a response to the mothers' own expectations of a father's role. Another example, the nuclear nature of the family structure has been discussed above.

None of this implies that the mothers were unable to introduce black culture into the home, nor that the children were bound to reject their fathers' cultures of origin, still less that they would be unable to see themselves positively as black or mixed-race people. What it does signify is that the task of mothering black children requires thought and planning and is not a 'natural' or spontaneous component of the mothering role.

It is illustrative to contrast how the dynamics concerning race and culture in these families differed from those of class. The importance of class issues in the choice of partner and in the mothers' own identities has been discussed above, but class also played a crucial role in the parenting of the children. This manifested itself in various ways:

In every family the physical environment of the home, such as the furniture, equipment, decoration, books, etc, reflected the educational and class background of the parents. More importantly, these were all part of the 'natural environment'. The mothers did not have to ask themselves "How am I going to make this house into a typical middle or working class home?" - their taste and their budgets ensured that this happened.

The social environment of the children invariably reflected the class make-up of their family. Thus Aud's parents lived on a council estate and their friends and neighbours all came from working-class backgrounds. Jenny and Lucy said in their interviews that most of their friends came from middle-class backgrounds like their own, despite living in areas with mixed classes.

Not **all** the social contacts in the families had the same class background, and class was not a rigid and uncrossable boundary - Tony, for example came from a working-class background, but through education had achieved a middle-class life-style.

The patterns of parenting also reflected the class of the parents in terms of the family structure, the parental roles and their attitude to child care.

The main point is that for both parents, rearing their children to be members of the same class as themselves was an unself- conscious process which was part of the backcloth of their daily existence. For the mothers and even some fathers, parenting children to be a different race was a deliberate process in which conscious and sometimes difficult choices had to be made.

Mothers' perceptions of Children's Identity

There was a great deal of unanimity between the mothers about their children's racial identity. All of the mothers said that their child should have a positive mixed-race identity. All agreed that the children should be subjected to both white and black cultural influences and that they should be encouraged to mix with both white and black people. None of them considered the children to be either black or white.

This seeming consensus hid a wider range of opinions and the mothers really had quite different ways of perceiving their children's identity and dealing with identity issues in child- care.

On the one extreme was Lucy, who saw her children as essentially 'English', but with dark skins and an interesting background. She introduced eastern culture to her children as something interesting and important, but not necessarily something they 'owned' themselves.

On the other extreme was Rose, who saw Wilf more as a black person, on whom she had only a partial claim, than as white. Rose's feelings towards those of her friends who

insisted that Wilf was black were, however, tinged with some degree of resentment and she often felt that Wilf was being taken from her.

Tracy also had mixed feelings about her children's identity. She considered them to be 'half-cast', not black or white. They lived in a home with many Afro-Caribbean cultural influences, and she herself had a number of black friends, yet she often teased them about their flat noses and called them 'silly black cow' and other names. This was ostensibly to make them get used to racial abuse which she was sure they would endure, but came close to being abusive in itself.

There was a clear relationship between the mothers' perceptions of their children's identity and their views about the possible effects of racism. Tracy was the only mother who believed that racism would be a significant factor in her children's lives. It is no coincidence that her family was the only one which experienced racism to any degree as part of their day-to-day existence. Norman certainly felt discriminated against in the neighbourhood and this was one of the reasons he wanted to move out. This family also racialised many of the marital and parent- child conflicts. However, as discussed above, Tracy's way of dealing with the potential of racist attacks was to tease her children with racial jibes. This was a counter-productive tactic in that Roberta began to mimic Tracy and abuse Aud in a similar fashion. In addition, Tracy's justification for these actions may have hidden the fact that she was expressing her own racial prejudice while pretending to joke. This would be a similar process to the way she expressed other aggressive feelings. Thus, although Tracy recognised the potential for racism and took steps to help her children, the steps she took did not seem to be appropriate measures for combating its effects.

The other mothers, however showed very similar attitudes and tactics regarding racism. Essentially they argued:

> If I give my children a positive view of themselves by giving them the advantages of a loving home with good education, a high standard of living and a positive view of their father's culture of origin, then they will develop into stable people

who will be able to resist racism. I will also bring them up in an environment where racism is less likely to occur.

None of these mothers saw racism as a real threat to their children and none of them, or their partners, experienced racism as part of their everyday lives.

It is beyond the scope of this study to evaluate the effectiveness of this strategy. Unlike Aud's family, I had no evidence from the interviews as to how successful the children of the others would be in facing up to racism. The important issue here is that the parents' ways of bringing up their children were determined by their own backgrounds and feelings. The middle-class mothers, all of whom had been socialised into an environment where education, high self-esteem and achievement were paths to successful class identity, extended these beliefs into the domain of race.

In summary the mothers all saw their children as needing to develop a positive mixed-race identity, although their views of this identity differed considerably. All of them consciously worked out strategies to ensure that their children would see themselves positively. The mothers' views of their children, and the strategies they used, were influenced by their own upbringing. The strategies fell into two main categories which seem to have been determined by class. No wider generalisations can be made from this small study, but the influence of class on racial identity should be studied further.

Children's own Racial Identity

Because the children in this study were pre-verbal, there were only two ways of ascertaining whether they had any sense of racial identity:

observation and interpretation of their behaviour by the observer; and

interpretation of mothers' reports about the children's behaviour.

In order to demonstrate that an infant has developed even an embryonic sense of racial

identity one would have to show that:

> the infant could tell black people from white people; and

> the infant had some sense of identification or recognition of him/herself as being black or white.

The observations have been discussed in Chapters 6 and 7 of this study.

It is difficult to draw conclusions from the statements of the mothers about the children's responses to black and white people as these were second-hand accounts. Also, as I have mentioned above, sex rather than race seems to have been the most important factor in these children's responses to strange adults. Despite this there are some interesting issues arising from the mothers' reports.

It is striking that the only mother who definitely believed that her child expressed a preference between black and white people was Rose, who also felt insecure about Wilf 'belonging' to black people rather than to herself, and who was the only mother who acknowledged race as an emotionally charged issue in her relationship with her child. The other mothers did not share this attitude and felt that their children expressed no preference.

What is really extraordinary about the difference between Wilf and the others, is that Wilf was the only child whose father was not part of the household and who had little or no intimate contact with black people. Rose's explanation for Wilf's behaviour was that he was demonstrating his identification with black culture and people. Unless he had an innate ability to identify with black people it is difficult to see how he could have had enough experience of them to form strong identifications. One is therefore bound to look for alternative explanations such as:

> Wilf was acting out subtle messages from Rose who unconsciously encouraged him to respond differently to black men. (Rose acknowledged that she saw black

men as less threatening than white men.); and

Wilf did not respond differently at all, but Rose experienced him as responding differently because of her own feelings about his identity.

Both these explanations take into account that the child's responses seem to be a function of the **mother's** feelings about race.

These reservations about Rose's explanations of Wilf's behaviour and the fact that I never observed these responses myself, mean that it cannot be safely concluded that Wilf provides a clear example of racial preference beginning in the first year.

Despite the lack of evidence for early racial preference, it does seem plausible that pre-verbal children have some awareness of race. Jenny's description of Maddie mistaking other black men for her father clearly indicates that she had some notion of blackness, and provides much stronger evidence than the much vaguer descriptions of Wilf's preferences. Roberta's remarks about Aud, reported in Chapter 7, although made when Roberta was three years old, indicate that well- entrenched attitudes have emerged soon after she developed verbal skills.

It is probably safe to surmise that some children do develop an awareness of racial differences at a pre-verbal (sensori- motor) stage. This development is possibly analogous to the way infants develop different responses to people of different sexes, although sex is a much more emotionally charged issue for infants. Thus race, especially the racialisation of emotional conflict, can also be a very potent factor in family life, and there is some evidence from the above that infants may become aware of race at an earlier stage in situations where race is a powerful conscious or unconscious factor in the emotional interactions within the family.

This conclusion would support the findings of the doll studies which found that black children became ethnically aware earlier than whites because race was a more salient factor in their lives (Milner, 1985, Wilson, 1987), although it would push the age of

initial awareness from the fourth to the second or even the first year.

Unfortunately, because of their third-hand nature, the interviews were not a sensitive enough research tool to really get to grips with this issue. For example, it could be argued that those infants who did not show any overt racial awareness or preferences, were developing the positive mixed-race identity that their mothers were hoping for, relating equally to both black people and white people. These issues will have to await further research, perhaps in a setting where the infants are interacting with others outside the family.

In summary, the conclusions about the children's own sense of identity are tentative and ringed with caveats. Nevertheless, some interesting hypotheses can be drawn from them. Briefly they are:

> an embryonic sense of racial identity may begin as early as the first year;

> racial preference may also manifest itself in the first year but may recede later when the infant learns to relate to individuals rather than classes of people; and

> the degree of racial awareness and preference is related to the emotional significance of race and the degree of racialisation within the family.

10. SUMMARY

The purpose of the interviews was to add to the understanding of the development of racial identity by placing the development in the context of the mothers' background, attitudes and relationships. In addition, further information was gleaned about the children's own behaviour which supplemented that obtained in the observations.

The interviews uncovered both similarities and differences in the way that the mothers dealt with the racial issue in their families, especially in choosing a black partner; giving birth to a child of mixed parentage; and their responses to the threat of racism.

Shared Similarities

The main similarities shared by all the mothers were:

They came from families in which there was no major pathology or family breakdown and all continued to be in contact with their parents;

Choice of a black partner was not purely random - in each case both the experiences and personality of the mother predisposed her to some extent to form a partnership with a black man, although the degree of inevitability differed;

Race was not the only factor in the choice - class played as important a role.

Blackness represented a counterbalance to conformist white mainstream English society. This was in each case an attractive aspect of their partner.

Each mother felt ambivalent about having a black partner, but the degree of ambivalence varied greatly - they felt attracted to another culture and way of life but felt their own culture being threatened.

None of the mothers had experienced outright hostility to their choice of a black partner, although there was a range of responses. All the mothers' parents accepted their grandchildren.

The families all lived in multi-racial-racial areas of London, but they varied in their degree of cross-cultural contact. In all the families there were more contacts with white people than with black.

The children were seen as having a positive mixed-race identity and not as white or black.

The mothers' ways of dealing with their children's upbringing (especially as it

related to self-esteem and coping with the threat of racism) was determined to a large extent by their own backgrounds, most importantly their own family and class.

The mothers all found the task of bringing black culture into the home very complex. They all sympathised and supported the children's interest in black culture, but in themselves felt one step removed from it.

Other Similarities

Some responses were shared by most mothers, but not all:

Some mothers established a clear link between early experiences and their later choice of a black partner. Others felt that the choice was a response to events in their lives at the time they met their partner.

Some mothers had some social contact with black people before they met the fathers, but for others the father was their first significant black contact.

Some mothers were 'marginalised' in some way as children, and always felt like outsiders while others were well integrated into their families and society.

Some mothers accepted that race was an issue for them and their children. Others denied that race played any significant role in the family's life.

Some mothers denied that their infants showed any racial preferences or awareness, but others believed that these were apparent.

Early Experiences

There were no common factors discernible in the mothers' early relationships and experiences. Certainly none of the mothers reported having a particularly difficult

relationship with her parents. Some of the mothers felt that their parents had been overly protective of them as children, but this was not a universal factor.

Children's Identity

Within the overall statement that the children would have a positive mixed-race identity, there were a number of views as to what this identity should be. The views ranged from considering the children to be English with race being a secondary factor, to being essentially part of black society but with a white culture. There was some evidence that mothers themselves changed their views as the children's circumstances changed.

Class

The mothers' class seemed to have a strong correlation with the values and attitudes they brought to bear on their children, especially regarding the relationship between education, achievement, self-esteem and racism.

Fathers

Mothers said that fathers all felt more at home with their culture of origin, but they differed in the degree to which they brought their own culture into the home. The fathers were also reported to differ in their own identifications with their cultures. Most of the fathers were born in the UK or had come as young children. Their culture of origin was a composite of British and other influences, and differed from that of their parents, in some cases (eg Tony) quite considerably. Their culture, like the mother's was also intimately bound up with their class status. In all cases it was the mother who had the primary responsibility for 'culture' in the home.

11.   CONCLUSIONS

In this chapter I have sought to add to the longitudinal information collected in the observations by providing a 'snapshot' of several mothers. The objective was to add

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more depth to the model of the child's racial identity development by placing the development in the context of the mother's own background, culture and experiences. The observations were designed primarily to generate an understanding of the meaning of identity for the infant. The interviews were aimed at generating an understanding of the mother's reality, ie how she understood the racial dynamics in her relationships, and to relate this to her perceptions of her own identity and her infant's development.

The important similarities and differences between the mothers are set out in Section 4 above. What general conclusions can be drawn from these findings?

Perhaps the most significant conclusion has been the confirmation of the link between the mothers' past experiences and their relationships with their children. The interviews provided a great deal of evidence that the mothers' backgrounds had some effect on their parenting patterns. In itself this is not surprising and would be predicted by the theories discussed in Chapter 4. The interviews added substance to this finding, showing how every mother entered into the relationship with her new-born child with a host of feelings, ideas and fantasies. These centred around parenting in general, and also around race, gender and other individual characteristics of their children. The feelings were generated by the mothers' own responses to past experiences and their own personalities. The responses were sometimes conscious and sometimes unconscious and became part of the fabric of their parenting relationships.

The interviews did not indicate any common patterns between past experience and partner selection or mothering styles. They do not provide any basis for making predictions or generalisations about what factors in a woman's past are likely to engender particular types of parenting or attitudes towards racial identity. Rather they trace an individual pattern of development in each mother, in which early experiences, later chance events and current circumstances all played a significant role. It is interesting for example that the interviews seemed to show a closer relationship between attitudes and gross social indicators, such as class, than to more personal factors such as their relationships with their fathers.

The interviews were able to provide some information about the development of the children, but because this information was based on the mother's observations and was therefore third-hand, the conclusions to be drawn must be tentative.

All the mothers adapted to their children after the birth and began to relate to the 'real' rather than the 'fantasised' infant. However this process was different in every case, and depended on many other factors, especially the role of the father, the marital relationship and class issues. In general it seemed that the women who saw race as a more superficial issue were able to relate more easily to the individual child rather than the child's race. On the other hand they were less able to acknowledge the possible significance of racism for their children, and were less emotionally involved in the issues surrounding race.

There are several important issues arising from these observations.

Firstly it is not possible to discuss these mothers in terms of overtly racist behaviour. Each one of the mothers brought race into the interactions in her own way, and none considered herself to be racist. On the other hand they all had a degree of ambivalence about having mixed-race children. They all faced similar difficult choices in bringing up their children, and all were aware of the potential conflicts for children of mixed parentage.

Secondly there were no correct solutions to these dilemmas. The choices were made in response to the mothers' own circumstances and their mothering style, and there was a price to pay for every choice. For example, the mothers generally felt that if they over emphasised the threat of racism, then their children would feel vulnerable and threatened and would develop a negative view of their blackness. If they did not acknowledge racism the children would have no resources to counteract the threat.

Thirdly the mothers did not operate in a social vacuum. They were constantly being given feedback from the infants, and also from their partners and other black and white adults. This meant that their attitudes and behaviour were flexible rather than rigid, and were capable of shifting in response to events. Their responses accorded very well with

the model presented above; their basic attitudes and feelings were mediated by the meaning they gave to current events. This meant that it was not possible to establish a causal link between past experiences and mother's parenting styles - the links were complex and dynamic rather than linear.

Because of the emotive nature of race, their sensitivity to other people's responses to racial issues was perhaps greater than to other issues concerned with their parenting. Race was very different issue from class and gender in that our society has many role models for parenting children of particular class and for gender. Black families deal with the issue of race as part of the parenting process in the same relatively unconscious way as class and gender are dealt with in white families (Peters, 1988). Yet all of the mothers in this study (and perhaps many other white mothers of black children) had few if any role models of white mothers with black children. On a personal level none had more than one friend or relative in the same situation as themselves. Most had not confronted the issue of racism until adulthood, and their early experiences gave them little guidance about how to bring up children of a different race. In addition there are very few references to their situation in the media. The few references to inter-racial families are usually around trans-racial or inter-country adoption. They are often hostile and always present the situation as a problem. It is not surprising that with the lack of role models the mothers often adopted the attitude that they would take things as they came, because they had little indication of the real possibilities for them and their children. The parenting of the mothers was also perhaps more fluid and less rigid because their role was less well defined.

The uncertainty of the role of white mothers in inter-racial families highlights an intriguing question about the relationship between gender and racial identity as consequences of the mother-infant relationship. Some feminist psychoanalytic writers such as Chodorow, (1978); Oakley (1981); Eichenbaum and Orbach, (1983); and Boyd, (1989), have considered the mother's role in passing on the accepted submissive feminine role to her daughters. According to these theorists, daughters learn how to be women by identifying with their mothers. Mothers unconsciously pass on messages to their daughters to be the same as themselves, that is to act out the nurturing, caring and

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submissive role expected of women in patriarchal societies. Mothers also mother their daughters to mother their own daughters like themselves.

In contrast the messages mothers give to their sons are to be different; to be active, assertive, and to expect to be cared for. Thus mothers mother their daughters for sameness and their sons for difference. The daughters' struggle to psychologically separate from their mothers is the major task in their process of maturation towards adulthood.

The crux of this feminist psychoanalytic argument is that early mothering experiences are a fundamentally important factor in the development of gender identity in children. This is a reiteration of the views expressed by Winnicott and the Object Relations theorists. However the feminist psychoanalysts add a new dimension, because they claim that mothers affect an area of identity which is commonly held to be largely genetically determined. If mothers are able to affect their children's gender identity so profoundly, are they also able to affect their racial identity at an early age? In discussing mothering for gender identity they differentiate between mothering for sameness and mothering for difference. They also differentiate between mothering for power and mothering for submission. In the case of gender identity, these two factors coincide; sameness equals submission and difference equals power.

The question is whether mothers keep to this formula when mothering children of the same and different race, and the interaction between race and gender. This study has not provided answers to this question. Some mothers (eg Ruth) were as concerned that their daughter did not develop a submissive gender identity as they were that they should develop pride in their racial identity. Others were less explicit, or tacitly accepted the traditional gender differences (eg Jenny). There seem to be close parallels between the two aspects of identity, in that the mother brings into the relationship conscious and unconscious elements from her own past which give subtle messages to the child about what sort of person she is. The study has noted the relationship between race, culture and class in the way the mothers talked about themselves and their parenting. This points to the conclusion that identity and its development cannot legitimately be conceived or

analyzed as a separate entity. Race must be seen in the context of difference and how the issues around difference have been dealt with in these families.

The discussion about race and gender points to another issue regarding the role of the mother. The feminist psychoanalysts, along with Attachment and the Object Relations theorists, believe that early parenting determines the future course of development. This view is not universally accepted, however, and it is now accepted that mother's own parenting is mediated by later events and by mothers' own interpretations (Brazelton and Cramer, 1992). In reality it is impossible to predict an individual's identity development because of two interrelated factors:

The importance of later events and experiences on early structures.

I have already discussed in this chapter the relationship between mothers' early experiences and their later feelings, beliefs and actions. A similar point applies with regard to the children. Later events will mediate their early developmental experiences.

The subjectivity of meaning.

Early experiences are reinterpreted later in the light of intervening events, and current events are interpreted in relation to early experience. This means that predicting how a child will bring meaning to her world in the future is well nigh impossible. Similarly it may be possible to construct a chain of meaning from the present to the past through such techniques as psychoanalysis, but the past will always be interpreted in the light of the present.

This discussion points to some of the methodological and conceptual gaps which informed the original hypothesising for the thesis, and which determined the methodology used. The original theory posited a fairly set movement from primary to secondary socialisation which depended on the infant's relationship with her mother. This in turn was seen as determined by mother's early experiences. Thus the model was basically cumulative in

nature, and depended on a series of cause-effect relationships. Neither the observations nor the interviews were able to uncover these set relationships, nor could they point to any real generalisations which could lead to a general theory of racial identity development in mixed-race children. Perhaps this is because there are no general rules, because as post-modern theory states, identity and its development are contingent and contextual, rather than essential characteristics of individuals.

Another problem is that although the fathers have been seen to be crucial in their children's development, they have not been interviewed, and their perspective is lacking from these accounts. The focus on the mother-infant relationship was aimed at establishing linear connections between past events, mothering and identity, albeit that these relationships were mediated by mothers' subjective interpretations. But fathers themselves may have interpretations, and they may influence mothers'. It seems clear that the analytical gap here is to examine how families make sense of issues around sameness and difference, and how the parent's responses to these issues effect their children's concepts of themselves.

The interviews described in next chapter were aimed to remedy some of these deficits, using a different technique, and based on new developments in identity theory described in Chapter 4.

CHAPTER NINE
SECOND SET OF INTERVIEWS

1.   INTRODUCTION

Following the completion of the first part of this study, a further set of interviews was undertaken. These interviews were intended not only to gather more material, but to address some of the theoretical and methodological problems raised in the previous chapters. This entailed the use of a new method which changed both the content and structure of the interviews.

This phase of the research involved interviewing the parents in nine inter-racial families. It also involved reading three bodies of inter-related theoretical texts; contemporary anti-racist theory, the biographical approach to interviewing and post-structuralist theories of human action and society. The structure of this section will be:

> an account of the methodology used for the interviews

> an account of the interviews themselves drawing out important themes and narratives

> a discussion of the meaning of these accounts in the light of the new theory

In Chapter 10 I will return to the findings of the original study in the light of these new theories and discuss the findings as a whole. It must be remembered that these interviews were the only part of the study which were carried out with the explicit intention of testing out post-modern theory, and that the first two phases took place before this theory was available to me.

2. THE BIOGRAPHICAL APPROACH

The nine interviews conducted during this part of the study differed in several respects from the interviews which constituted the second phase of the study. In the second phase a semi-structured interview approach was taken, in which the interview questions were based on the theoretical underpinning of the thesis. In the current phase a "life history" or "biographical" approach was adopted.

The life history approach is not a rigid method for obtaining information from subjects. Rather it is a constellation of methods which is aimed at obtaining a narrative or life story from the subject (Bertaux, 1981). Within this approach various methods can be used, eg document analysis, unstructured interviewing, structured interviewing, observation. Some life histories focus on one individual and try to obtain very detailed accounts of that person's life. Others involve more limited accounts from larger numbers of people (Bertaux, 1981; Denzin, 1983; Plummer, 1983).

The purpose for obtaining narratives of people's lives is to enable the researcher to try and make sense of the ways in which they view themselves in relation to their culture or society. Thus the life history approach is ultimately based on similar epistemology to the 'grounded theory' method of Glaser and Strauss (1987). It can also be seen as allied with the infant observation techniques used in the first part of the study, because it is based on subjectivity. It is also similar in that the information is gathered in as unstructured and atheoretical a way possible, but it is then subjected to rigorous scrutiny to identify patterns and themes, both those consciously recognised by the interviewees and also less conscious ones.

The point of these methods is to obtain an account which is closest to the subjects' own views of the world rather than fit their accounts into a pre-existing theoretical stance. In this study the method used was the unstructured interview in which the interviewer prompted and probed, but did not use predetermined questions. The pace, style and content of the interview were determined as far as possible by the subjects.

When someone gives an account of their life it is not seen as the 'true story'. Each account is provided by a person talking about past and present 'selves' to another person at a particular point in their life and in a particular context. All these factors are very important in understanding and analysing the story.

It is particularly important to note that the life history approach views the account or narrative as being separate from the narrator. The autobiography is seen as a 'text' which is open to study and interpretation by others as well as the narrator. Thus the narrative, although subjective, is seen as **an** account of the individual's life rather than the objective account. The narrative also serves a function for the narrator ie. to make sense of his or her life. This approach assumes that life is contradictory, discontinuous, conflictual and problematic. Narrative provides continuity, justification, explanation and legitimation. In the process of narration the narrator is making a 'text' of his or her life. In this formulation it is not only the individual's life that makes the text. In many ways the text also makes the life:

> "We assume that life produces the autobiography as an act produces its consequences, but can we not suggest, with equal justice, that the autobiographical project may itself produce and determine the life, and that whatever the writer does is in fact governed by the technical demand of self-portraiture and thus determined, in all its aspects, by the resources of its medium." (de Man, 1984, 69)

Narratives can be compared between narrators. This can be done either by comparing the **content**, the **structure** or the **function** of the story. For example in this study many of the respondents discussed what happened to them when they first arrived in England. It is possible to view these stories in three ways. Firstly one could consider the content of the story; ie how they came to the country, why they came, what happened after they arrived and how they felt about it. Some felt relieved, some overawed, and others frightened, and many felt a combination of these. Secondly it is possible to look at the structure of the narrative; was it a long or short story, was it told in a continuous way or in 'bits and pieces', were there things left out, or irrelevant things put in and how did the story relate to other stories which the person told eg about their childhood. Thirdly the function of the story can be considered in terms of:

Why is this person telling me this at this time?

Who is the audience for the story?

What purpose does this story serve in building up a picture of the person? etc.

What are the social, personal and cultural contexts in which the story is being told? (see Denzin, 1989)

The biographical approach is not only confined only to analysing stories which people tell. This approach can use a further level of analysis; the 'meta-narrative' The meta-narrative refers to the way the individual 'totalises' his or her life story so that it makes sense as a coherent whole. The meta narrative also 'legitimates' the narrative by justifying how and why he or she has that particular story. Meta-narratives can apply to individual life stories or to his-stories of nations, cultures or societies. In all cases they:

> "...are second order narratives which seek to narratively articulate and legitimate some concrete first order practices or narratives. Typically a grand (ie meta-) narrative will make reference to some ultimate *telos*; it will seek to place existing practices in a position of progress towards or regress from the originating principle or ultimate end." (J Bernstein 1991, 102)

According to Plummer, (1983) stories are always given a teleological colouring by the narrator and these can be divided into 'happy stories' and 'sad stories' which refer to the subject's conception of life in which he or she either eventually feels in control and able to effect outcomes or feels a victim of the circumstances which have brought life to this point. The researcher's task is to try and look for acknowledged and unacknowledged continuities and patterns, and to try and uncover the underlying discontinuities and conflicts which the narrative addresses.

Another dimension of narrative study is the interview itself. The subject remembers events, feelings, people, opinions, scenes etc which are strung together as a narrative. In the interview, the researcher is presented with fragments of these fragments, and like

the subject must make sense out of them. The thesis itself presents fragments of the fragment of the fragment. Each time the story is told it is mediated by the narrator, and adapted to the audience.

Mishler, (1986) points out that mainstream social science attempts to standardize interview techniques and thus undermines the narrative nature of interviews with the consequent loss of richness and depth of data. He proposes a form of narrative interview similar to Bertaux and Denzin and further proposes that the interview itself can be seen as a story with narrative qualities. Mishler's account of a narrative method of interviewing claims that this method allows people to speak in 'their own voice' and is also a method for empowering the respondent and breaking down the traditional hierarchy between the research interview and the subject. Thus there are ethical as well as methodological advantages in the biographical approach as opposed to other more traditional research methodologies.

This study as a whole can be seen as a narrative. It too has a 'life story' which contains its own 'beginning' and 'end', It contains contradictions and discontinuities, but also a 'plot' and a 'goal'.

In this study I was not only concerned with individual narratives of parents. It was also important to obtain a view of the family narrative, with questions such as:

How much do the partners share the narrative?

How different are the two narratives from each other?

How do narratives reflect the power relationships within the family, and between the family and the wider community?

What stories do the parents tell about the identity development of their children?

Another area of concern was the differences in narratives between types of respondents.

Are there typical male stories, female stories, black stories, white stories, and what other similarities will emergefrom the accounts?

3.   INTERVIEWS IN THIS PHASE

In the light of the methodological concerns mentioned above, the interviews were adapted for this phase of the research:

The interviews were extended to include both mothers and fathers.

In the original study, interviews were confined to mothers because of the psychoanalytic theory base which maintained that the infant's primary attachment is with the mother and therefore the mother is the primary determinant of socialisation and identity development in early years. However, from the mothers accounts it was clear that the fathers, even those who were not present in the household were an important factor in the child's development and certainly in the mother's conception of herself as a parent and a woman. Where fathers were present their influence on the child's identity development was arguably almost as important as the mother's, and it was therefore unfair to omit the father's perspective.

The second reason for not interviewing fathers had been my reluctance to research 'black' people because of the hostility of some social work academics eg Small (1986) towards white people researching black people. However, the result of not interviewing black parents was to deny them a voice with respect to their children's identity and also meant that I could only comment on their perspective at third hand. I therefore felt that it was important to extend the interviews and allow the fathers' to talk. In addition I extended the range of families so that it would include families where the mother is black and the father white. This was partly to provide a contrast to the other families, to see whether there are differences, and partly for the ethical reasons mentioned above ie to enable black women and white men to have a say in the study.

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The interviews did not follow any predetermined pattern.

No interview schedule was used, but some prompts were provided to begin the discussion. Typically the interview would start of with a question such as "How does being a parent remind you of how you were parented?". This then led to discussion of their own childhoods and began their account of their life story. The interviews reviewed the lives of both parents and then went on to talk about their lives together, their children and how they saw the future. As far as possible they were encouraged to tell stories about various phases of their lives or things that happened to them. Prompts that I used included such things as "Can you tell me what happened after that?", "Please tell me a story about what happened then?" etc. Some interviews began with the prompt "Tell me a story which shows what kind of person you were as a child".

In fact, I found that the parents found it very difficult simply to tell a story, it was easier for them if I asked questions such as "Can you tell me what sort of childhood you had?", "What kind of family did you come from?" to begin. When they began talking it was then possible to ask for examples of particular events or people.

The interviews were recorded on tape. They started off with a brief explanation of the thesis, the fact that I did not have a pre-set questionnaire, issues of confidentiality, the right not to answer questions etc. At the end of the interview I asked for feedback from the parents about how they felt, and also whether they had any questions for me. Like the previous interviews, these interviews took place in the homes of the respondents.

The interviews lasted between three to six hours. They were normally held in two sessions of two to three hours. Where I was interviewing only one parent the interviews were shorter, lasting between two to three hours. After one difficult interview in which children were present, I tried to arrange the times of the interviews so that children

would not be present. Appendix 2 is a verbatim transcript of the first of these interviews.

4. THE SAMPLE

The sample for this phase of the research consisted of nine families. These families were all located by friends and work colleagues of mine. All the parents were asked whether they had friends who would be prepared to participate but only one of these materialised. The parents knew the broad outline of the research before I visited, but none had any real idea of the study. The interviews were all conducted between March and August 1993.

The full sample for this study is therefore fourteen families. These families were selected because of their availability and willingness to participate in the research. They are in no way intended to be a 'representative sample' of inter-racial families in London today. They are overwhelmingly 'middle class' with professional, well-educated parents. It will become apparent later that class factors were very important in determining many of their responses to the interview. Some of the parents are actively involved in anti-racist work themselves or have read anti-racist literature. This has also affected some of their responses, and shows the reflexive nature of social theory which is meant to describe behaviour but also influences that behaviour.

Despite these caveats the families represent a wide range of cultures and backgrounds and it is their diversity rather than their homogeneity which is striking. This is turn leads in to the question of what would comprise a representative sample of inter-racial families. It is unclear what a representative sample of inter-racial families would consist of. No statistics exist as to the racial make-up of inter-racial families, nor is it apparent what the class, cultural or ethnic makeup of a representative sample would be. Within this sample there are obvious gaps, mainly in the under-representation of white fathers and black mothers. In addition none of the black parents was born in Britain and three of the white parents are also not British. This may have been pure chance or may represent a genuine factor in the population of inter-racial families as a whole.

Presentation of Data

In the previous phase fairly detailed accounts of each interview were provided (see Chapter 7). However, in this phase I will summarise the information obtained about each family and briefly describe the interview. The bulk of this section, will be devoted to drawing out themes from individual narratives and drawing comparisons with other narratives.

Because of the volume of material, ie over 40 hours of tapes it is obviously very difficult to choose the most important themes. Even when 'irrelevant' material is excluded, there is an almost inexhaustible amount which could be analyzed in various different ways. Inevitably, therefore, the choice of material is determined by my own interests and concerns (see Denzin, (1989) on this point). It may be that many important patterns have been missed and other patterns have been constructed by me to meet my own ends. However, I do not see any way of objectively determining what is important material and how this should be interpreted. Even the categories such as class and ethnic background which are used in Table 1 to describe families are problematic and subject to interpretation. Nevertheless, it is important to order the material in some way and therefore what follows is one construction of the interviews.

5.   THE FAMILIES

The F Family

Mother: Linda, 38
Father: Ezekiel, 36
Children: Angela, 3½, Max, 18 mths

Mother's Story:

Linda was born to a secular Jewish family in North London, and has lived virtually all her life in the same area. Her childhood was relatively happy and she was close to her

whole family, especially her father. She was brought up in a fair degree of physical comfort and did reasonably well at school. As an adolescent she was quiet and retiring and not very gregarious. She began having relationships with boys at 16 years old. After studying she went on a long overseas trip with a friend and this was a watershed in her life. She began to take risks in relationships with other people and became much more assertive and outgoing.

Linda met Ezekiel when she was working in a summer job at London Zoo and he was working there as well. She had some relationships, but no long term relationships previously. Linda had always known that she would not marry a Jewish man. She was immediately attracted to Ezekiel and pursued him. Their relationship was initially quite difficult but after an overseas trip she came back and decided that she would settle down with him. She worked as social worker and since having the children has now gone back to work part-time. She is still in very close contact with her own family who she sees daily.

Father's Story:

Ezekiel comes from a large, reasonably well-off family in Ghana. He is the youngest child of his father's senior wife (His father had four wives and he has nine half siblings). Although Ezekiel was indulged by his parents and had a good relationship with both of them, he did not feel very close to his siblings and there was some rivalry between them.

Ezekiel was a natural leader at school and did reasonably well academically. After school he went into banking in Accra and stayed with a relative of the family. Later he decided to come to London to study banking. At first Ezekiel found London very difficult to manage. He was lonely and had few friends. He stayed with relatives but he only had two cousins in London. He later gave up banking and obtained a well-paid job as a printer. Despite some racism at work he was promoted to a senior post. However, he had a serious injury at work and was off sick for several months, and later he was made redundant. He is now trying to set up a business. If it succeeds the family will move to Ghana.

The G Family

Mother: Joan, 36

Father: Hari, 35

Children: Ravinder, 4½, Jabeer 18 months

Mother' Story: Joan was born to a lower middle class family in a small town in the north of England. The family were very well established in the town. Joan was an only child until she was ten when her sister was born. Although she had a reasonably happy childhood she describes her mother as rather cold and distant and she was closer to her father. At age 17 Joan began to become politically aware and started taking part in political activity such as CND etc. This distanced her from her family and she felt very restricted by life in the town. As soon as she obtained her A Levels Joan went to live in Paris for a time. This time was very important for her development. She became independent, assertive, and more able to relate to people from different cultures and backgrounds. She returned to England and studied psychology, later becoming a psychotherapist. Joan had several boyfriends and was involved in a long term relationship before she decided to split up with her partner and have a relationship with Hari. The family first lived together in South London and have now moved to North London and Joan is still practising as a psychotherapist.

Father's Story:

Hari was born into a Sikh family in India. His childhood was generally happy and he was very close to his mother. At age 10 Hari came to England with his mother and sister. His father had preceded to study here. They moved to a small town in the Wales where his father had acquired a job. Hari was the only child in his school who was not white. He had a difficult time as a teenager, suffering racist abuse at school and also having conflicts in the home because he wanted to become 'westernised' and this was strongly resisted by his parents. When he was 18 Hari's mother was killed in a motor accident and a year later he left home. His relationship with his family was very poor and he saw very little of them. He became a social worker and then an academic. He

is involved in anti racist work.

Both sets of parents were resistant to their relationship. Since having the children both Hari and Joan have become closer to their own families but this has been and continues to be a difficult process.

The H Family

Mother: Theresa, 33
Father: Sanjay, 37
Children: Matthew Suchdev, 6, Carly Amrit 3½, Mia Sunita 11 months.

Mother's Story:

Theresa comes from a working class family in a small village in the North of England. She is the eldest of four children and the only girl. The family are strict Catholics. Theresa's mother was the dominant person in the family and the family generally were very close when she was a child. Theresa left home after obtaining A Levels, feeling that life in the village was very restrictive. She went travelling and worked in Wales for a time. She then went to university to study social science. Theresa found leaving home very liberating and she began to make friends with people from very different backgrounds. She met Sanjay at university. They were friends for some time and then became closer and closer. Both her and Sanjay's parents were very opposed to the relationship and when they got married it was in secret without either of the parents being present. They moved to London because Sanjay couldn't find a job in the north. Theresa is now employed as a social worker working with under eights.

Father's Story:

Sanjay comes from a half Punjabi, half Hindu family. His father was a self-made man who made and then lost a great deal of money. Sanjay has two sisters and a brother and he is the oldest son. His childhood was quite happy and he was part of a fairly large

extended family. Sanjay came to England at 21 to study Engineering, intending to return to India and get married in a traditional arranged marriage. In Britain, however, his ideas began to change, and he began socialising with people from different cultures. After he met Theresa they both resisted developing their relationship but then realised their love for each other was too strong and they decided to marry. His family were originally very hostile but later became more accepting of the situation. Sanjay got a job as a computer programmer but has recently taken voluntary redundancy and is now working as a freelance programmer. The family live in a very Asian area and most of their immediate neighbours are Asian. The children also have a number of Asian friends, although they attend the local Catholic school where most of the pupils are white. They eat a mixture of English and Indian food and the children attend church and occasionally Hindu temples. Sanjay has a sister living in east London and the children are close to their cousins.

The I Family

Mother: Michelle, 39
Father: Salman, 36
Children: Farida 7, Abel 5, Phillip 1

Mother's Story:

Michelle comes from a farming family in New Zealand. The family was a happy normal family and she has very fond memories of her life on the farm. She was always a shy, intellectual person who did not enjoy parties but preferred her studies and did well at school. After school Michelle travelled for sometime and came to England to work as many New Zealand young people do. She worked in a dentists office where she met Salman. She had not had any long term relationships before and she and Salman became more and more friendly. Since they have been married Michelle has become more involved with Salman's culture and has now converted to Islam. There was no adverse response from her family to the relationship and she still keeps closely in touch with her family and visits New Zealand every two years.

Father's Story:

Salman was born in South Africa of moslem Indian family. He came to United Kingdom at age three and has no memories of life in South Africa. He has never returned there. Salman had a happy family life and his mother is an outgoing and gregarious person. For most of his life he has lived in the same area of west London. At school Salman was the only child who was not English but he never experienced racism and had a wide range of friends. He was very sports orientated, and played for the school cricket team. As a teenager Salman noticed the area becoming more multi-racial and white people being racist to other children but he himself did not experience this. Salman's family were liberal Moslems, and although they never drank alcohol or ate non-halal meat they were not very religious. Salman became a dental technician and has continued to work in that profession.

Current Situation:

The family live in the same part of London where Salman grew up. His mother lives nearby and they have a lot of contact with her and his siblings. The area is now more multi-racial and the children have friends from different cultures. The family observes Moslem custom and the children go to Islamic school at the weekend. However they are not regular mosque attenders, and other than in their religion the family have an English middle class life-style.

The J Family

Mother: Agneta 32
Father: Tom 38 (Not living with Agneta)
Child: Otis, 3

Mother's Story:

Agneta was born in Norway, the youngest of three children. She had a difficult

childhood and her parents split up when she was a child. She lived with her mother who remarried and then divorced again after having another daughter when Agneta was a teenager. At age 15 Agneta's father died in an accident. She had been very close to him and was very traumatised by this event. Agneta was always a shy girl and her father's death caused a great deal of difficulty for her at school and for her health. Her relationship with her mother deteriorated and she eventually moved out of home while still at school. Later Agneta studied Law but dropped out because of her health . She managed a flower shop which she inherited from her father and then travelled to Spain where she had a relationship with an older man. She then came to England and worked firstly as a singer and then as a waitress. She was briefly married to a musician but this lasted only a year. She then met Tom at work. They had a short courtship and then lived together for some time before Otis was born. After the birth Tom left home but still has regular contact with her and Otis whom he sees several times a week when he is in town. Tom wants to marry Agneta and settle down, but she feels that this isn't realistic at present.

Father's Story:

Tom was born in Manchester of a Welsh mother and an Afro-American father. He was adopted as a baby into a white family and grew up in a white area. Most of his friends are white, but he has some interest in black culture, especially soul music. Tom works as a martial arts instructor. His relationship with Agneta deteriorated after Otis' birth presently because he away so often but also because there were personal difficulties and he moved out. He was not interviewed for this study.

Current Situation:

Agneta now lives in a rented flat with Otis. She is not currently working. The area they live in is multi-racial and she has friends from different cultures and is establishing a network of Scandinavian people. She has some contact with her own family but does not feel particularly close to any of them.

The K Family

Mother: Flo 33, Artist

Father: Derek, 36, Artist

Children: Peter and Ben (Twins), 3

Mother's story:

Flo was born in England but spent a lot of her childhood in the Middle East, returning to England as an adolescent. As a teenager she was quite rebellious but achieved well at school. She then went to art school where she met Derek who was also an art student. Derek obtained a scholarship and they lived in America for several years before returning to Britain. Since having the twins Flo now works part-time as an artist and Derek works as an artist and art lecturer.

Father's Story:

Derek was born in Jamaica and came to England at age seven. His mother died when he was young and he grew up in Liverpool. He was a good artist and went to art school in London. He continues to have contact with his father and brother but this is sporadic as they live in Liverpool and his relationship with his father is not very good. Derek is involved in anti-racist politics. He was not interviewed as part of this study because he was unavailable when the interview took place.

Current Situation:

The family in their own house in a multi-racial part of north London. They have a wide range of friends including other inter-racial families, and within the family there are Afro-Caribbean and English cultural influences.

They have contact with both extended families but much more so with Flo's family. The boys are aware of their colour and have discussed it with Flo.

The L Family

Mother: Shirley, 30

Father: Dick, 50

Children: Angie, 5, Josie, 18 months

Mother's Story:

Shirley was born in Guyana. When she was a young child her father came to the United Kingdom leaving her mother with the children. Later when Shirley was six her mother followed leaving her sister and brother with her grandmother and aunt. Shirley was very close to her siblings but distant from her parents. Shirley later joined her parents in England but her father then got a job in West Africa and the children went to boarding school. Although she was the only black child in the school she was outgoing and generally happy but did feel different, and she encountered some racism. She went to university and studied languages then changed to psychology and went on to become a psychotherapist.

Shirley originally met Dick when she was an undergraduate and they became very friendly. However she married someone else, but because her husband refused to have children the marriage broke up. She went back to Dick with whom she had continued to retain contact. Her husband was very bitter and caused problems for her, and her parents were at first ambivalent but later supportive of the relationship.

Father's Story:

Dick was born in a small city in the USA. He is the only child from a 'patrician southern family'. He described his mother as a difficult, neurotic and manipulative person and his father was more easy-going. Dick did very well at school and obtained a scholarship to go to Harvard where he studied philosophy. He found it very liberating to be away from his restrictive family situation. He married very young and came to England to pursue his studies. Dick had two girls by his first marriage. After his

marriage broke up he became involved with Shirley, and later he had a long-term relationship with another woman which lasted several years. Eventually that relationship broke up when he decided that his relationship with Shirley was the more important.

Dick's parents, especially his mother had a very adverse response to their relationship including being hospitalised and disinheriting him.

Current Situation:

Their relationship has now improved to some extent, but there is still difficulty between Dick's parents and Shirley. His parents adore the children but there is still a racial edge to their relationship. Shirley's parents still live in Africa but visit from time to time. They too were also slightly resistant to the relationship but get on very well with both the children and with Dick.

The family live in a predominantly white area of north London. Angie attends a school where most of the children are white. Shirley and Dick are a gregarious couple who have a large number of friends, mostly white.

The M Family

Mother:	Harriet, 32
Father:	Pargat, 37
Children:	Shanti, 6 and Nusrat, 3

Mother's Story:

Harriet came from a lower middle class family in the West Midlands. She is the younger of two girls and had, what she referred to as a very conventional upbringing. Her mother was a teacher and rather strict. Her father was less strict but the family was not very close and she did not confide in other members. After leaving school Harriet went to university. She became involved, firstly, with volunteer work and then more

politically in anti-racist work. It was at university that she met Pargat who was also involved. Although their relationship was intense Pargat returned to his home country and Harriet eventually followed for a holiday. Later Pargat came back and they were married. They lived abroad for three years where Shanti was born and then returned to London. Harriet worked as a probation officer but has now given this up and is working for Pargat's company writing reports on foreign countries.

Father's Story:

Pargat was born to a Punjabi family in Malaysia. The family was quite religious and traditional, and he had a fairly large extended family. Pargat went to school originally in Malaysia and then in India. He intended to study medicine in India but then came to England to study, intending to return to Malaysia. When he came here he began to be involved in politics, never having being 'political' before. He became particularly involved in anti-racist politics. After he finished his undergraduate degree he returned to Malaysia. He had already started his relationship with Harriet but made the decision to return home. Harriet followed 'as his friend' but then returned to England. Subsequently Pargat also came back and they were married. When he completed his MBA they eventually moved to London where Pargat was offered a job in housing. Later they left England and lived in Malaysia for some time but found it difficult to get on with the extended family. They then moved to Hong Kong before returning to London. Pargat's family were very opposed to the relationship at first and put enormous pressure on him to marry another Punjabi. However they have now come to terms with the situation and relationships are better. Anne's family were also resistant, but again relationships have now been restored to a certain extent. Pargat now has a senior position in a multi-national company and spends a lot of time travelling around the world.

Current Situation:

The family live in a multi-racial part of east London. They are both still actively involved in anti-racist politics and are very involved with the local community. The children's friends are mainly Asian, but they have a wide range of contacts. Shanti did

attend a state school but the education was considered to be very poor and she is now in a Church of England School which has a large number of Asian pupils. The family are considering moving to Malaysia at some point in the future.

The N Family

Mother: Kathy 28
Father: Victor 29
Child: Nora 9 months.

Mother's story:

Kathy was born and brought up in Accra in Ghana. She has one younger sister and two half-sisters and a brother. When she was young Kathy's mother and father split up. Her mother was from a poor family but her father from one which was well-off. Kathy stayed with her father who then had three other wives in turn who looked after her as step mothers. She had very little contact with her mother until she was a teenager and even then her contact has been sporadic. Kathy attended boarding school for both primary and high school education eventually obtaining her GCE 'O' Levels. She intended to study to become a bi-lingual Secretary and after leaving school and spending two years in Ghana she came to England to further her studies. She qualified as a secretary and has worked in London every since. She had one long term relationship with a Ghanaian man but soon after this broke up she met Victor. After a year she became pregnant and just before Nora was born Victor moved in and they are now living together.

Father's Story:

Victor was born and brought up in north London. He was the youngest of three children. His family life was fairly happy although he described his mother as a difficult person and he was much closer to his father who shares his interest in sport. After obtaining his GCE 'A' Levels, Victor worked in various jobs in the civil service and spent some

time in America. He eventually returned and began working for social services and he continues to work as a residential social worker. Kathy is Victor's first long-term relationship but he has always been attracted to black women and Kathy and he met through a friend of a friend. Victor's mother initially disapproved of his liking of black women but apart from some 'digs' has not shown a lot of resistance to the current relationship. Kathy's family were not resistant to the relationship at all.

Current Situation:

The family currently live in a small flat in west London and intend to move soon. Kathy maintains contact with a large number of Ghanaians as well as other people. Victor's friends are mainly white.

6. SUMMARY

These short sketches, which are inevitably selective, show the diversity of family types and structures from which the parents originated and the different situations included they now find themselves. They all live in more or less cosmopolitan areas of London and all maintain a fairly wide range of social and professional contacts. In the next section I will draw out some themes from some of the stories to examine, in more detail, the issues confronting individuals involved in inter-racial families.

In the next sections I will sketch out in more detail some aspects of the accounts which were provided in the interviews in order to consider the similarities and differences of identity and family life within the families. In some instances I will look in more detail at the accounts themselves to see what can be learnt from them.

7. THE F FAMILY

(the transcript of this interview is provided in Appendix A).
A notable factor in this interview was that for the first three quarters of an hour, I spoke to Linda alone. During this time she talked about her own background, and mentioned

issues such as her own sexual experiences and some of the difficult feelings she had about her relationship with Ezekiel:

Linda:

"I remember having a boyfriend who went to school with my brother."

IK

"Right"

Linda

"Not anything in particular or specific event except he used to like put me on a pedestal and I felt really uncomfortable about it, so I was really nervous about boys."

IK

"Do you remember anything..."

Linda

"...well it was like..."

IK

"about what you did together?"

Linda

"He lived in Birmingham and he was down in London and we went to a party and I just like got up and left I think and left him there. I remember doing that to him. I treated him really badly. I think I was dead scared about getting into some clinch with him. I don't know how old I must have been, 14/15 I think."

....

IK

"OK, if you bring it then further, I mean you've talked about sort of 15/16 to after school. Is there anything around that time which you think was important to you."

Linda

"After, I suppose my first, after school, when I left school my first sexual experience, that sort of thing, I remember, I remember that I think. I remembered something like, I had this boyfriend, I must have been about 19 or something and then we both got into bed and I kept all my clothes on. Things like that I remember, sort of with my jumper on and feeling like really really hot. I remember that sort of thing."

IK

"Were there things about that you remember, was there a particular event or something that actually happened that was important for you as a person?"

Linda

"Well, I think, you know, my first, when I first had sex with him, when I first had intercourse, I mean that was quite significant. I remember thinking, feeling quite different, because I think I was really very scared of having any sexual relationship then, so yeh that was quite something."

IK

"Do you remember that sort of quite vividly still?"

Linda

"I think, I think just how I felt afterwards, because I think he was at University and I think I was travelling home and I actually felt as if I looked quite different. I remember feeling that....I don't remember the actual happening actually."

IK

"In what ways did you feel different?"

Linda

"I think in terms of having been through an.. you know, its like, how did I feel different, I think may be feeling grown up more, sort of more mature and knowing I had this knowledge now or I'd had this experience so I knew more than other people. I think maybe I felt a bit more confident, I think it must have been a really big thing for me, that it actually happened. I felt much more relaxed."

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I wonder whether these issues would have been disclosed in the same way if Ezekiel had been present? Certainly when he came it took some time for the interview to return to the personal and intense level which it had developed during this first period.

One notable issue in this interview was that the stories Linda told about herself contained two fairly consistent themes; power and transition. For example, the story Linda told when I asked her to talk about an experience in her childhood, was an account of leaving her brother at boarding school and returning home and feeling sorry. The story she told about being an adolescent was about having her first boyfriend, and then ending the relationship. He was very upset by this and she felt guilty but free. The third story was about a trip to the Far East when she was a young adult. Linda described how for the first time she spontaneously went up to a stranger and started chatting to him and then ending the relationship without having any sexual experience.

The themes of these three stories were complex but seemed to relate to Linda feeling increasingly powerful in relation to men, exercising that power and (in the first two cases) feeling guilty about this. In the third case she did not feel guilty but prevented the relationship from reaching a point where ending it would have any consequences.

Linda described herself as being very shy and lacking in confidence as a child and as an adolescent, but gaining confidence as an adult. She now sees herself as quite gregarious and outgoing in contrast to her childhood. The trip overseas which she described was the watershed in her life and seems to have engendered a major shift in the way she viewed herself and her relationship with others. It was seen by her as a moment of 'transition' in which she saw herself as powerful and in control. It also enabled her to engage with difference, especially people from other backgrounds and cultures. It was this 'new' Linda who met Ezekiel when they were working together on a temporary basis. Linda took the initiative in arranging a meeting and it was she who initiated the relationship. Later she felt ambivalent about it and went on an overseas trip. When she returned Ezekiel took the initiative and they then decided to live together and get married. Within their relationship Linda also sees herself as being the dominant partner in the sense that she makes most decisions about their lives and the children etc. At the

moment Ezekiel is unemployed and she is working part-time but she still takes the major responsibility for the children and arranges for their day care etc.

Ezekiel's stories show a complete contrast to Linda's. Although he describes himself as fairly quiet as a child, he saw himself as a 'leader' and his stories about childhood referred to him leading other children to do things at home and at school. Ezekiel talked very happily about his own childhood and showed none of Linda's insecurity. For Ezekiel the watershed came when he arrived in Britain. He found London very cold and uninviting and at first struggled to survive here. He had come to further his studies in banking but decided to change course when he arrived and eventually became a printer. This was a lucrative job and he did well, being promoted despite experiencing racism at work. However, he was severely injured and then made redundant when the company restructured. He is now attempting to change course again and become a businessman. Thus, for Ezekiel a smooth and relatively easy lifestyle was interrupted by coming to England and his career, which had been very promising, was (hopefully temporarily) in a state of hiatus when he was interviewed.

After meeting and marrying Linda, Ezekiel broke off most of his ties with other Ghanaians in London and has become isolated from his own 'roots'. An important issue for this couple was the way that difference and sameness were managed in the relationship. For example Linda first found Ezekiel attractive because he was so different from the English men that she know. She told me that she always knew that she would never marry a Jewish man and that what she immediately liked about Ezekiel was his unselfconsciousness and easy-going attitude towards life. However, aspects of this attitude became frustrating for her. The couple talked about Ghanaian trait of being very casual about arrangements, a particular example being that Ezekiel's cousin came very late to their wedding and disrupted proceedings. Several such examples were given by both of them to illustrate the difference in the way Ghanaians view punctuality.

Linda's attitude during the recounting of these stories was one of resignation mixed with anger, while Ezekiel was in turn amused and defensive. Linda now finds Ezekiel's lack of introspection and his fatalistic attitude towards his life difficult to cope with at times

and she sometimes resents having to take all the responsibility for the children and the home.

It was Linda who pointed out to me that Ezekiel's career had been affected by racism. He himself insisted that racism had never bothered him and downplayed the significance of the racism at work. From his point of view the difficulties are purely cultural and have nothing to do with colour or race at all. On the other hand Ezekiel was concerned about racism in the media. He talked about having to protect the children from seeing black people either as victims or criminals on television and looking for positive image of Ghana for the children. Thus, although he did not acknowledge the effect of racism on him personally he was concerned about the effects on the children.

Linda was concerned about her own racism. She described to me her responses now that the family are under a great deal of stress and how she often shouts at the children and at Ezekiel. She said:

> "Yeh, I think so. I suppose, there's also, I'm trying to think, there are things, I mean I roar at him, I really shriek, I didn't used to, I think with my kids around I do. I'm much more uptight. And I sometimes, you know, I get concerned, God, would I shout at somebody English. He tends to let it bounce off him and sometimes God I don't know. If it was somebody else would he let me roar, you know, like I do it?........ I don't know what I've done to him that sort of thing I think and the other thing is that he is very much at home with us, he spends a lot of time at home, he's actually had an accident to his hand which has made it, that is a different dynamic to the whole thing and so I felt gosh he's dependent on this family, particularly me, and here I am treating him like he has to jump up when I, God you know. Why don't I just let him relax. So those, and that is, I think, that is sometimes a cultural issue I think."

IK

> "In what way do you think that particular, lets take that particular example...."

Linda

> "Well its really difficult I sort of sometimes think well is he subservient? I don't think he is or do I assert myself because I'm a white person, treat him like shit, because he is black, you know, that often goes through my

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head and is it just, or I would be like this with anybody. Maybe I would, I don't know."

Linda had not previously shared these feelings with Ezekiel and later in the interview when she talked about it, he completely denied any racial element in the relationship. He said that Linda was shouting because she was under so much stress, and that he just accepted that this was the way she is. He sometimes feels angry towards her but has never attributed either his or her feelings to a difference in race.

The interesting thing about this account of conflict within the relationship is that the themes, ie Linda being powerful over another man and feeling guilty about it, are similar to the stories she told about herself as a child and adolescent. They show her feelings of power and ambivalence towards men. However, in those cases the account was not racialised in the way it had been with Ezekiel. In addition, from my own experience of other Jewish women, her behaviour and feelings are similar to other Jewish women who are married to both Jewish and non-Jewish men. Thus the question emerges whether Linda's choice of stories for me was unconsciously coloured by her current relationships and experiences. This may have also been, in part, her response to the interview situation, in which she was telling her story to a white Jewish (But not English) man. In some ways I represented the type of man she had explicitly rejected as a potential partner, but who, in fantasy she saw as possessing the strength to respond to her anger.

Linda's ambivalence may lead to the enacting of a pattern with Ezekiel which is part of her life from an early age. However, in this case she is attributing her actions to a racial difference, when in fact, it is something about herself. The point about this account is that it is very difficult to extricate what are issues of personal identity and ways of being in the world for Linda and Ezekiel which are 'cultural influences' on their relationship and where race or racism enter into the relationship. Is Ezekiel denying race as a way of coping with painful relationships, or as a way of maintaining his male power? Is Linda using her guilt about racism as a way of avoiding personal responsibility for her actions or is her guilt preventing her from asserting her power as a woman?

This dynamic can also be seen as a gender rather than a race issue. Linda has been forced

to take the initiative in many areas of family life which are outside her conventional role as a mother. Ezekiel, despite being unemployed has not taken responsibility for the children and other domestic activities. Linda's anger, and her guilt about expressing it may have been in response to this situation, which she sees partly as a clash of cultures rather than a gender issue.

I do not believe that any of these questions can be answered directly and some of the themes mentioned above will re-emerge in the accounts of other families. This family intends to go to live in Ghana. If they do it will be interesting to see how the relationships and dynamics change and how the couple reconstruct their own life histories in the light of their experiences.

Interestingly, Ezekiel found Linda's extended family very congenial. It provided an experience which was familiar to him and he felt very comfortable in that sort of family situation. Linda's family has become almost a substitute for his own.

Ezekiel

> "And that has actually, I think that side has made, I think, made our marriage quite easy for me, because you see your family quite a lot, and if I were not to be used to that sort of family life, I think I would have found it difficult. I think if you were to marry an English man, I think now, well, a sticking point you know."

The current life-style of the family is completely "British" in the sense that their family structure is basically nuclear, the food they eat etc and all other cultural influences are British. Ezekiel has made very little attempt to bring Ghanaian influences into the home but they do have some pictures, and occasionally relatives bring Ghanaian food.

Ezekiel said, however, that families in Ghana itself are also changing. His contemporaries also have less contact with their own families and certainly do not practice polygamy. His experience of a polygamous situation was not very positive and although he and his full siblings got on well, his half-siblings were viewed with hostility. Ezekiel is now the head of the family and has some contact with them through letters in

which they ask his advice. When he returns to Ghana he will have to take on this role more actively. There was a hint in Ezekiel's account of a big difference between his 'Ghanaian self' which is active, responsible etc and his 'English self' which is passive, fatalistic and accepting.

8. THE G FAMILY

I have chosen this family to study in some detail because they provide another example of personal and racial conflict which emerged in a very different way from Linda and Ezekiel. They also provide another interesting insight in how the story of the interview itself becomes part of the process.

This interview with Joan and Hari was one which was done over two sessions, two weeks apart. The nature of the discussion was radically different in the two interviews.

In the first interview I was presented with a picture of a couple who were actively exploring the ideas of sameness and difference in a warm and tolerant facilitating environment which was being menaced continually by outside racist forces which threatened to disrupt it. I was struck by the fact that, although, Hari and Joan come from very different backgrounds, there were parallels in their life stories which provided them with a sense of symmetry and sharing. Hari said of Joan:

> "In many ways she's like my mum. She's very warm and she loves Jabeer the way mum loved me."

Joan however saw her relationship with her daughter as a contrast to her own mothering:

> "My mum doesn't express her feelings at all easily, and can't cope with loss, and just gets on edge when there's any depth of emotion. I remember when Ravinder asked about some disaster on the news she was given the brush off."

Hari

> "She told her not to bother."

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Joan

> "Yes, but in an offhand way that made Ravinder feel she was angry."

> "I can remember the disaster at Aberfan, and being upset about the news, and not being given any space to talk about it."

Hari

> "It was the archetypal 'Mummy do you love me?" "Yes I do". "Don't I buy you nice dresses sort of thing."

This was contrasted to Joan's relationship with Ravinder, which was seen as very open and expressive. Both Joan and Hari described their families as avoiding emotion:

Joan

> "They were typical of a kind of Northern English 'get on with it, don't think about it in any depth as long as you're all right' sort of family."

Hari

> "That's very similar to my family in some ways; you do things, you do it thoroughly and you get on with it. It's interesting in the sense that we assume cultural things when they're universal, and universal things when they're cultural."

In this interview then, the couple saw their own family as capturing the good elements of both families, especially Hari's, but providing a contrast to both families' inability to express emotion.

The couple themselves pointed out that they both came from backgrounds in which their childhoods were very happy, but where adolescence was extremely traumatic. Both fathers were cold and uninvolved with them, but very concerned about their academic progress. They both 'escaped' from their families in their late teens, and rejected their families' values. When they met they both had little contact with their families.

Hari's story about his teenage years was very significant. After moving to a small town in England at age ten, he felt very isolated. He said:

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"We were different not only because we were the only black family but because we were the only Sikh family. And I decided when I was sixteen or so after a lot of trauma that I was going to get my hair cut, and the sense of belonging and unbelonging was very powerful. So I needed to make a detachment from one aspect of my life in order to belong to another. So I wanted to play rugby and go swimming, you know. For a few months before my sixteenth birthday communication broke down completely so that we communicated by letter. The letters consisted of 'I am going to do it.' 'No you're not, if you do we'll disown you.' Until with my sister's help I had it cut, at the barber who did it roughly. I remember vividly my mum coming in, my sister catching her and saying 'He's done it.', My mum running wailing upstairs, my dad coming in and staring, completely speechless, and not knowing what to do..where to hide, and feeling that this wasn't viable. Didn't know what to do."

IK

"What were your feelings?"

Hari

"Suicidal....The people who were attacking me weren't immediately inviting, understandably, but the family who were protecting me now rejected me."

The second interview provided a very different picture of this family. The narrative themes of two people who had both experiences symmetrical experiences in childhood and painful adolescence was replaced by a narrative which was asymmetrical, agonistic and conflictual, in which the family, rather than being seen as a safe haven in which difference could be celebrated, was portrayed as a forum of painful exploration of difficult conflicts, some of them irresolvable. Despite these conflicts, though, the couple always portrayed the family as a coherent and continuing unit.

Early in their relationship the couple were able to explore their cultural differences in a safe relationship. They went to India where Joan met many of Hari's family. This trip was a watershed for both of them. For Hari it produced very ambivalent feelings:

Hari

"It felt very strange you know, on the one hand it felt very familiar, the smells, the sights. Everything looked familiar and yet very strange It seemed much smaller than I remembered, I suppose because my memories were as a child. But I also felt like a foreigner I was aware that my

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command of the language was pretty basic. I was overwhelmed by the friendliness of the family..."

Joan

"It was a very important experience and ... for the first time I felt like Hari must feel, except of course there weren't the same, you know, power relationships. I was the only white person, I remember looking in the mirror and getting a shock, seeing how different, white I looked."

The interview started, therefore with a narrative which described a seemingly shared experience. But the painful aspects of their relationship became apparent when I asked:

IK

"How does being from different races affect your relationship?"

Hari

"It's terribly hard, you know, sometimes I feel that it's intolerable, and I just want to flee. I think to myself that as an anti-racist, why am I married to a white person? Is it because I feel badly about myself, low self esteem. Is no way out of the dilemma, and I wonder what it's going to be like for the children, I wonder if it will be much harder for them than it is for us."

Joan (rather desperately)

"It's very difficult, but we both know that whatever happens, we will both be there for the children, and in some way for each other."

Hari

"At first we thought that we could resolve these issues, that it would be OK in the end, but now we just have to live with the uncertainty. Sometimes it's better, and other times it's worse."

IK

"And for you, Joan, what is it like being in this family?"

Joan

"I don't have any difficulty being in a family - being in this family when it's just the four of us. That feels very positive, I love the kind of things we do and the things we eat and the way we think about India... What I experience as difficult .... is to do with your feelings about it. It makes me feel quite helpless that I sort of feel what can I do to make this

experience feel more, feel easier for you. I don't feel I've made the wrong decision. When I go outside the family when I go to my family up North then it is hard to mix, that when my parents come here they don't eat the food we eat and they do make awful comments. That makes me feel quite despairing.

Dealing with Hari's family is gratifying and energising. Dealing with half of the family anyway. I don't get on very well with his father and stepmother."

Hari agonized over his motives and felt torn between his love for Joan as a person and what this represented in terms of his own identity as a black person and as an anti-racist. Joan on the other hand felt completely powerless and impotent in this situation. While Hari was talking her expression became more and more concerned, expressing both sadness and frustration. Her attempt to mollify Hari and replace some certainty into the relationship was rebuffed, and she then sat in silence. Hari's interpretation was that as a victim of racism, he had to deal with painful feelings for himself and the marital relationship was being used to explore these feelings. They both said that they felt the constant raw exposure of feelings was positive, and constituted a working through of difficulties, although Hari saw no ultimate resolution to the problems.

"We just have to live with the undecidability."

Joan however, hoped for something more resolved.

Another interpretation of this narrative was that of a man who was exercising enormous power over a woman. By implicating Joan as a white person, Hari effectively prevented her from taking any active part in this exchange. He was no longer talking about his relationship with Joan as a person but was dealing with an inner conflict in which Joan became a symbol of white racism and was held to account for this. Thus, although Hari was portraying himself as a victim, in fact, within this exchange he was very powerful and Joan was dehumanised. Hari could be seen to be acting out the patriarchal relationship in which the man places the woman in the position of 'the other', where she is unable to challenge or play an active part in the exchange. Her role in this context is a container for Hari's inner conflict, almost a maternal figure who was expected to

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nurture him by containing his denigration.

But why did Hari do this? Why could he not assert himself directly as a man and as a black person, preferring to use his victim status as a source of strength? Perhaps this **was** because of the racism which he had previously experienced. Racism may have had a different effect on Hari from that which he acknowledged. The true effect may have been to force him to use his victimisation as a source of power in relation to white women. It may have been easier for Hari to acknowledge his own low self esteem, caused by racism and family pressure than to acknowledge his need for power and control. It is interesting to contrast this exchange with Hari's story of his own childhood. His memory was of himself of going to school and waving goodbye to his mother:

> "I felt so close to her that I had to do something bad so that she would be cross, and then I would leave in a huff, but underneath we both knew that we loved each other."

In some ways this exchange acted out the same themes of abandonment, ambivalence and power. Also, Hari talked of language, saying that his experience of racism had made him want to master the English language, to become articulate and powerful. It is possible that language was not the only arena in which he acted out his desire for power.

It was clear from Joan's point of view that she also saw herself as a victim. She felt unable to help Hari because it was not her as a person that he was responding to, but her as a white woman. On the other hand Joan was disappointed that her initial expectation of celebrating difference within the relationship had been undermined. Joan's life story was presented as a move from stifling 'sameness' to liberating 'difference' but in Hari's life story difference was always seen as a threat. It could be that Joan was able to value difference and diversity so much **because** she is white and living in a white society and therefore is not threatened by difference.

This exchange illustrates how complex the association can be between personal feelings, gender, and ethnic differences, and how they are acted out within relationships. This relationship, as did the previous one, contained painful issues of power, but the power was dealt with differently. Some of this was acknowledged but most of it was not

acknowledged. It is also important to note that although their relationship was characterised by conflict and difficulty, most of what they said about it was also positive: The conflict itself was seen as ultimately a liberating force for them. This exchange was the most concrete expression of conflict I encountered in all the interviews. Most of the couples, while acknowledging similar external difficulties, especially the racism of the extended family, described their relationship in much more positive terms.

Another interesting point was that in this relationship, the difficulties were presented in racial terms. There was no conflict of values or ideas about the family or each other such as between Linda and Ezekiel; it was not a cultural conflict in which different conceptions of family life were being explored, the difficulties were presented purely in terms of what each partner represented for each other as a member of a different race. It is perhaps because of this that Hari saw the problem as irresolvable and perpetual. Contrast this with Theresa's account of conflicts with Sanjay. Theresa said:

> "Yes we do have conflicts. Sanjay is much too concerned with his own family and this comes from his Indian culture, for example, we were about to redecorate our house - you can see what a state it is in now - when Sanjay's brother got into trouble and he felt that we should give our money to him."

Sanjay

> "Yes if you don't help your family then who is going to help you, I think it is very important to help your siblings."

Theresa

> "yes but at the expense of your own home?"

Sanjay

> "Well the house is not so bad is it."

This was a conflict which, although severe, was seen by Theresa and Sanjay as resolvable and not threatening to their relationship. The difference between these two accounts is clear. Theresa and Sanjay saw their conflict as a difference of opinion between two people in which a compromise could be reached. Joan and Hari's conflict was not

negotiable in the same way. It is what they represented to each other not what they did that mattered. Another difference was that, in general, Theresa expressed very positive feelings about Indian culture and Indian people, so that this conflict did not symbolise a global personality or culture conflict. Theresa and Sanjay were typical of most of the couples, who said they had little conflict at all over race or culture, but faced racism from the extended family and society as a whole.

There were other aspects of the interview with this family which were interesting. One of them was the way Hari viewed his own identity. During the interview I noticed that Hari had described himself in different contexts as Punjabi, Indian and black and asked I him how he viewed himself. He said:

> "It depends - when I'm with other Indian people I see myself as Punjabi. I like mixing with other Punjabi people and enjoy their company, even though I don't speak the language very well. 'Indian' is a kind of shorthand for other people in Britain so in this country I usually describe myself as 'Indian'. I see myself as 'black' in terms of a political anti-racist struggle and feel that I share a history of colonialism and racism with other black people in this country."

So for Hari, Punjabi and, to a lesser extent, Indian was the identity which he felt had the most content, ie. was associated with a language, certain cultural practices and with people and places with whom he felt comfortable. Indian was a shorthand and black was used in a specific context in relation to white society and was an expression of solidarity rather than identity as such. Asian was a term that he never used to describe himself and he did not refer to it.

Another interesting issue arising in this interview was Hari's description of an incident with Ravinder. One day he had gone upstairs to call Ravinder down for supper:

> "She's upstairs the other night, and she's going to bed, I was cooking downstairs, and I came upstairs and she said 'Papa is that Indian food?' and I said 'yes', and the way that she said it was, 'well it smells funny'. She noted how I responded to her behaviour and she said, 'Yum yum', I ought to eat some."

You see what I mean, she's extremely sensitive. I'm not saying its a very good thing, sometimes she's a bit of a sponge the way she's able to pick up the nuances of behaviour, but for her, there was something she didn't like, saw my behaviour and tried to make me feel better. I think the capacity is brilliant, as long as it's not overdone."

IK

"The messages that she picks up about being indian are very subtle."

Joan

"She has had some exposure to the notion that black is worse than white...

Hari

"She asked 'Is Sharon racist?' We try not to tell her overtly that racism is bad or that black people are wonderful."

Joan

"A year ago she got racism and sexism confused, and we realised that we were pushing it too hard."

Hari

"She knows about where people are from, but she has no value to it."

Joan

"She has got an idea of Englishness in Northam and Englishness in London."

Hari used this example to show the subtlety of cultural influences on the family and how the children received subtle messages from him which changed their responses. A closer look at this exchange shows that Ravinder was using the word "Indian" to describe the food (she was similarly reported by Joan to describe herself as half-Indian) Ravinder was using the shorthand or public expression which Hari used to describe himself rather than the more private 'Punjabi'. It may be therefore that 'Indianness' has also become a kind of icon in the family, representing for them a whole series of emotions to do with conflict and control.

Joan's whole account of her childhood and adolescence was peppered with phrases like

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"I felt different" or "I was a loner". She portrayed her life as a journey from 'sameness' to 'difference', seeing sameness as equivalent to restriction, conformity and oppression, whereas difference represents to her power, individuality and rebellion. For Hari the picture was in some ways reversed. His stories were about how different he was forced to feel. Thus difference for Hari is portrayed as threatening, overwhelmingly and painful. Hari's myth therefore is one of trying to be the same as the society he found himself in, being almost successful to the extent of marrying and having children with a white person (who herself came from a very integrated family) but then finding that complete integration was impossible and part of him therefore withdrawing and trying to be the same as his 'roots'.[46]

Hari's inner turmoil can therefore be seen as a conflict between his need to integrate into white culture and the need for sameness with his own origins, which he yearns for, but is unable to recapture. Both his family of origin and his current family are seen as safe havens from outside pressures, but also as antagonistic and threatening. His position in both families is as a victim of family norms, but a victim who constantly threatens to fragment the family by putting his own needs before theirs. Is he unconsciously playing out the universal role of minority communities through the ages?

But for both Hari and Joan the question must remain whether their accounts of these developments are reconstructions of past events in the light of their current situation or whether these events truly 'caused' them to be the kind of people they are and be involved in the kind of relationship they now have. Another notable pattern in these accounts are the minor but perhaps important inconsistencies. For example Joan described herself as a 'loner' in adolescence, but soon after she had left home:

"within a week made three friends when she went to Paris".

This portrays either a radical discontinuity or an inconsistency in her account.

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[46] Is Ravi in the "immersion - emersion" stage of racial identity development described by Maxime' (1993)? Maxime's phases are, however, supposed to refer to identity development in young children!

Another example; Hari and Joan had complained about Joan's parents providing conditional love, both for Joan as a child and also for Ravinder. Both sets of grandparents were seen to be providing subtle but unacknowledged clues to their disapproval of the relationship by such remarks as the 'Delhi belly' occasion and excluding Joan from photographs. This was contrasted with their own relationship with the children which was portrayed as direct, unconditional and open. However, Hari's account of Ravinder's response in the 'Indian food incident' shows that at least some of their interactions were different, reproducing the unacknowledged and conditional nature of their own parenting. There is another clue to this. Hari's story about his own childhood in which he saw himself leaving to go to school was that he and his mother had to become angry with each other in order to tolerate him leaving the home because of the intensity of their attachment for each other. Hari portrayed this as an indication of how close he was to his mother, but this incident too contained an element of unacknowledged and collusive feeling between his mother and himself. It also has reverberations in his own relationship with Joan in which intense attachment is combined with a need to argue things out and acknowledge anger in order to maintain separateness. The point here is that Hari and Joan's family replicated their own families of origin but in ways that they did not acknowledge (at least in the interview) as well as ways which they were conscious about. Their family myth or meta-narrative contains both conscious and unconscious elements.

I have shown some of the conflicts, tensions and difficulties within this family, and am aware that this does not represent the whole story. Both parents felt that the family is a stable unit and that the children are growing up in a positive and nurturing environment, despite the conflicts and difficulties which have been presented. They feel that it is important to deal openly with the difficulties rather than hide them and pretend they do not exist. Their account of mixed-race relationship is similar to that of Eleana Thomas Gifford and Tony Gifford as presented by Alibhai-Brown and Montague (1992). For example Eleana is quoted as saying:

> "....in a black/white relationship, despite whatever deep feelings bond the two together, the relationship is being tested almost on a daily basis.... Tony's and my relationship could not survive and will not survive unless we are totally honest with each other on all the really fundamental things."

9. OTHER STORIES

But are all black/white relationships like this? Harriet and Pargat whose backgrounds are in some ways similar to that of Hari and Joan have handled their situation very differently. Like Hari, Pargat is a Punjabi although he grew up in Malaysia, not in India or England. He did spend some time in the Punjab itself at secondary school and later came to England to study. In some ways his family was quite similar to Hari's, in that his father was obsessed with the idea of education and he was close to his mother who was much more expressive. Both families were fairly traditional in their religious beliefs and Pargat, like Hari, became a fairly rebellious teenager. Pargat also wore a turban and was also teased for it by his school mates in Malaysia. Both men have become active anti-racists as adults. When Pargat came to England, aged 18, he stopped wearing the turban and cut his hair, in a similar gesture to that of Hari. However, the meaning of the gesture as he described it now was totally different. Describing how he felt at the time he said:

> "I felt good....I wanted to be like the rest of the people and I knew I would come to England and cut my hair. It wasn't something really important."

Anne

> "Probably a teenage thing"

Pargat

> "Yes I guess so."

For both Hari and Pargat cutting their hair was a symbol of rejecting their restrictive family demands and an expression of individuality. For Hari this gesture was fraught with feelings of guilt, betrayal and self-doubt, whereas for Pargat it was a step along the way to a more self-confident and assertive identity. Paradoxically, Pargat is much more culturally bound by his 'roots', in that he speaks Malaysian and Punjabi, knows more about the religion, and is closer to his family, even though they live in Malaysia. Perhaps it was **because** he basically felt secure in his identity that Pargat was able to cut his hair

with so little ambivalence. In terms of the narrative of his life story this event had little salience for Pargat, and coming to study in England was much more important. In the interview it was I who pushed him to talk about it because of its similarity to Hari's story.[47]

The precursor to the cutting of the hair also offers a contrast. Although both Hari and Pargat had been teased about wearing a turban Pargat dismissed this lightly as:

> "... it was just something you expected from the children. I didn't take it very seriously."

Hari however saw the teasing as a severe form of racism which threatened his own identity and his family stability. This may have been, in part because Pargat was part of a minority community in Malaysia, whereas Hari was the only Asian at his school.

After completing his course at university he returned to Malaysia, and then came back to England to be with Anne. Harriet also initially went to Malaysia but could not find work and returned to England. Like Joan and Hari they both spent a period of time early in their relationship where they went to the man's country of origin. In Pargat and Anne's case they later returned to Malaysia as a couple but again left, this time because Harriet found the extended family situation too difficult to cope with. They then lived in Hong Kong for some time and later returned to England because they felt much more involved in the community in London. They are now very active anti-racists. Their friends and contacts are mainly in the Asian community, and although Nusrat attends a Church of England School, they often go to the local Sikh temple and they eat mainly Malaysian food in the home. They describe their relationship as very positive and secure. Pargat talked about how many of the black anti-racists with whom they work are very surprised that he can have a good relationship with a white woman, and some are openly hostile.

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[47]Phoenix, (1987) and Dominelli (1988) make the point that the so called 'gender gap' in Asian families - in which Asian girls are supposedly torn between western notions of partner choice and arranged marriage - is a pathologisation of the Asian family, and that these conflicts are 'normal' teenage rebellion. These stories show that neither is the case. The degree of pathology depends on the **meaning** attached to the act, not the act itself.

Harriet and Pargat faced very strong hostility from both sets of parents towards their relationship. Pargat's mother had "gone on hunger strike" when she found out about it and his parents had insisted that he return to Malaysia. He was put under incredible pressure to stay in Malaysia and almost had to escape from the family in order to return to England to be with Anne. Anne's family, although less overt, were equally opposed and her mother had made various remarks about "those Indians". Despite this there was not the same 'siege mentality' from this couple as there was from Joan and Hari and they now maintain equable relationships with both sets of parents. In fact, they intend to return to Malaysia or somewhere else in the far east at some point in the future. Interestingly, although Pargat is ethnically Punjabi he sees himself much more as a Malaysian despite the fact that Malaysia is a strongly Moslem state. In many ways Pargat's story is also similar to that of Sanjay's. Both came over at a similar age as students from their home countries, both experienced great hostility to their relationship with a white woman and both stayed on in this country despite that hostility. They both maintained close relationships with the extended family and both their children are growing up in a predominantly Asian environment while going to a Christian school. For both these families the extended family is a reality with positive and negative aspects. Another interesting contrast between Theresa and Sanjay and Joan and Hari is in terms of their accents. Theresa and Joan come from adjacent areas of North England and left home at a similar age. Although Theresa is from a slightly lower social status they both come from lower/middle class families, yet Joan now speaks in a 'posh' southern accent whereas Theresa has a pronounced Northern accent.

Similarly Hari speaks with a southern middle class accent whereas Sanjay speaks with a distinct Indian accent. Hari attributed his change of accent to the racism which he experienced. He felt that the had to develop the linguistic ability to counter racism and this has made him articulate and English in his speech.

I would like to now turn to more general themes which came out of the interviews. Some issues were repeated in many of the interviews and became recurring themes.

For many of the parents, coming together with a black or white partner was described

as the culmination of a process which had begun in adolescence. The common theme seemed to be that the individual had a restrictive, idyllic childhood, often in a small town or an extended family. As soon as they could, they left the home and experienced a new environment; often coming to London or leaving the country of origin. Once in London they were able to explore a large number of different cultures and people and revelled in the idea of exploring difference. This ultimately led to a relationship with a person of a different race. Once the children were born, however, the story changed again and they began to reestablish links with their family and/or cultures of origin and needed to provide the children with an experience of the positive aspects of their life. Parenting was seen by many of these parents especially the mothers as a contrast to their own parenting and very many of them described their own mothers as 'cold', 'withdrawn' or 'distant'. The exceptions were Salman and Hari, whose mothers were warm and affectionate. Dick whose mother was neurotic and manipulative and Pargat whose mother was loving but shouted a lot. Thus virtually all the woman saw their mothers as distant whereas many of the men saw their mothers as close and involved with them and some commented that they had chosen their partners because of similar qualities.

10.   FAMILY MYTHS AND NARRATIVES

But what do these stories mean? Are they an indication of the kinds of people who are likely to become involved in inter-racial relationships, or are they reconstructions of the past which make their current situation understandable to them? Possibly there is an element of both, ie. that individuals first have to develop ways of handling difference before they engage in a long-term relationship with someone from a different race. Many of the parents, both white and black, said spontaneously that if they had stayed in their original situation they would never have had the relationship with the person they did. Most of these families had experienced enormous hostility from parents to their marriage or partnership and this was seen as a way of testing their relationship. In most situations it had cemented their own relationship and provided an element of solidarity against adversity within the family.

These accounts of life-stories fed into the 'family myth' the family myth's had both

diachronic and synchronic elements to it in every case. The diachronic refers to the myth of how the family got to where it is now.

The diachronic element of the family myth involves an 'archaeology' - a view of the family in terms of its origins and the origins of family members and how they came to be the way they are. It also has a 'teleology' - a view of how the family and its members will be in the future. The synchronic element of the myth involves an explanation of why we are like we are now and refers to current relationships within the family and relationships between the family, the extended family and the outside world as a whole. Both synchronic and diachronic elements contain both conscious components which are acknowledged and discussed, and unconscious components.

In this study there was a remarkable similarity between many of the accounts given by parents in terms of their diachronic structure. Interestingly the similarities cut through both gender and racial divide. Many of the accounts had the following elements.

The families of origin of many of the parents were themselves 'mixed' but not racially. Kathy, Dick, Theresa and Harriet all came from families in which there were class differences between the parents which had been seen as problematic by their grandparents, and in some cases still caused difficulty. Sanjay's parents came from different communal backgrounds within India as well as having class differences. Agneta's and Kathy's parents split up they were young. Thus the idea of difference was already part of the family culture for many parents. Most of the parents described their own childhood as 'happy' or 'idyllic' albeit with elements and events which were unhappy. Most were also conventional teenagers, but felt different from their families and others around them. They then left home and became exposed to outside influences and differences. These differences were either seen as a natural progression or as a radical discontinuity eg., when they came to London or had some other watershed experience. Meeting a person from a different race and especially having children was a confirmation of this difference and of their liberation from restrictive families. The relationship with a black person or white person was often treated with hostility and anger by their own parents and was seen by these respondents as a period where their

relationship and commitment to each other was put to the test. Having passed this test they then had children which paradoxically brought them closer to their own parents, in some cases resolving some of the original difficulties which they had experienced as teenagers. Despite this the majority were committed to providing a style of parenting which contrasted with their own parenting they had received. It was remarkable how many of these parents, especially the mother described their own mothers as 'cool', 'distant' or 'withdrawn'. Fathers were seen as more open and honest than mothers, but also as rather distant and uninvolved. Both mothers and fathers in this study were invariably committed to providing parenting which was warm, involved, unrestrictive and honest.

The teleological element of the diachronic family myth involves the children growing up with an experience of both parents' and cultures, and of being able to choose their own identity at some future date. The strategy that the parents were using to achieve this differed from family to family, as did the amount of influence from the different cultures. For Shirley and Dick for example the Caribbean culture was only represented by contact with members of Shirley's family. Harriet and Pargat on the other hand were committed to providing a high level of cultural input, specifically Punjabi/Malaysian but also Asian in general. Harriet said:

> "We think that the English culture is so dominant that we don't have to worry about them (the children) getting it, we are much more concerned about them being able to integrate the Asian aspect of their background".

Another teleological factor was the wish of some families to emigrate to a more tolerant or prosperous country.

The synchronic aspects of the family myth refer to how the family view themselves now in terms of the racial/cultural aspect. It refers to how they are currently integrating two cultures or races, how they relate to their families and the community. Relationships to religion and nationality are also included. In contrast to the similarities in the diachronic elements of the myths, the synchronic elements were very different between families. Some of the families saw themselves as being like fortresses against the hostile racism

of both black and white extended families and society as a whole. Others saw themselves as fully integrated into their own families and into the local community and as part of a rich local cultural diversity eg. Salman and Michelle, and Theresa and Sanjay. Still others, for example, Shirley and Dick, Joan and Hari saw themselves as victims of white but not black racism.

Another difference was the relationship between race, culture, religion and nationality and how these were viewed by the families. The common sense view of family relationships which is replicated in many social work text is of an individual surrounded by social systems; an extended family, culture, race etc (Thompson, 1993). However, these families did not view themselves in this concentric circle fashion. For Salman and Michelle, the most important element was religion. Culture in terms of food, music, or language was much less important and they saw themselves as being an ordinary British family. However, the children attend Moslem religious school and the family attend mosque from time to time. Salman and Michelle see themselves as 'liberal' moslems and feel very different culturally from other Moslems at the mosque who are mainly Pakistani or Indian and form cliques of their own. Similarly Salman and Michelle do not regard race as an issue either within the family or for the children generally. Their main concern in the future is that the children will marry other Moslems who are similarly liberal minded and not 'fundamentalist'.

Significantly Michelle is the only one in this sample who has changed religion. In the book The Colour of Love, the only accounts of a change of religion were of people who were partners of Moslems. I was given second hand accounts by Theresa and Harriet of friends of theirs who were partners of moslems and who had converted to Islam.

A similar point applies to colour. It was interesting that Kathy, Shirley, Tracy and Rose in the first study all commented on the colour of their children. These were all women who were themselves either African or Afro-caribbean. None of the 'Asians' or their partners commented on skin colour. Similarly Dennis, Shirley and Kathy all described themselves spontaneously as 'black' and Shirley later qualified this by saying:

"When I say black I mean West Indian."

The Asians did not describe themselves as 'black', except in the restricted context of 'not white' ie as a political fact in the British context, but the term 'black' was used by them as a self conscious expression of solidarity with oppressed people in Britain rather than as a term which described themselves or how they are (see Modood, 1988). It had a similar force to describing themselves as 'Conservative' or 'Feminist'.

It is interesting to look at the nature of the 'choice' that these parents are providing for their children in the future. All the parents said that they would like their children to be able to choose an identity in the future. However, on closer examination the nature of this choice is not quite as open-ended as it may seem. For example the choice is not about values. Each family was committed to a set of liberal values and each set of parents fully expected their children to continue with those values. Similarly they were all committed to a style of parenting which was designed to engender self-esteem in their children and this included a commitment to education, achievement and personal autonomy. Each family belonged to a particular class (most of these families were professional middle class families) and the language, values, and practices of this class were not offered as matters of choice for the children. The children's gender identity was seen as fixed and permanent and again not a matter for choice. What was offered for choice were cultural practices of the minority culture such as food, music, celebrating particular festivals, clothes, stories etc.

There was an interesting teleology in the operation of these choices. The grandparents were seen as bound by the cultural choices of their own indigenous cultures. For them, these foods, music etc were part of a cultural system of signification in which they had meaning way beyond simply being one of many different foods or tunes. They signified the totality of that culture, which included values, religious beliefs etc as well as cultural practices. The parents themselves had mostly rejected these values and many of the other cultural signifiers, often making very painful choices in order to do so. They retained those elements of the culture which did not clash with their new, ie. western value system. They were offering their children the opportunity to make the same choices they

had done, but without the pain which they had experienced.

However, there seemed to be an unconscious element in this. The choices they were offering their children often mirrored their own ambivalence about their culture of origin. The image of their child choosing their own culture of origin sometimes seemed to involve a fantasy which they harboured of returning to their own roots, but which they themselves could not do because of the life choices they had made or their disruptive experience of migration. Similarly a choice to embrace the mainstream British culture represented both a rejection of them and their culture as well as fulfilling their own need to become part of the mainstream which they had been prevented from doing either because of their situation or because of emotional ties which they felt unable to break. Another diachronic element of this myth was that the culture itself was changing even in the country of origin. This point was made by several of the parents and shows that a return to cultural 'roots' was actually an illusion. The roots themselves have changed and evolved over time. What their culture offered was a sense of belonging, and also a sense of continuity to the parent, who could not bear to see his or her culture completely diluted by British mainstream culture.

This picture did have exceptions. Salman and Michelle were providing more cultural input than Salman's parents had done:

> "I never went to religious school. My father used to take me to the Mosque, but I just recited the Koran parrot fashion. Now I resent the fact that I never learned Arabic."

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> "How did you feel when he took you?"

Salman

> "I was angry and bored....But I'm determined that my children will get the education I didn't get...I can understand why my parents never sent me, but sometimes I think they should have forced me."

Another interesting factor in these descriptions of the families' current position was the different accounts of racism. One factor was that the 'black' partner was almost

invariably more aware of racism than the 'white' partner and often surprised the latter with their remarks. Every white partner acknowledge racism and many had experienced it themselves because of their association with a black person. However, the black partner often gave much more significance to particular events than the white partner. For example Shirley said:

> "I never go on the tube, I can see them looking at me because I'm a black woman, and often people will move away from me when they have had to sit next to me".

Then Dick said:

> "Oh I thought you didn't go on the tube because you were claustrophobic."

Shirley said

> "Yes that too."

Thus there was a potential in these relationships for remarks which the white person considered to be casual comments or jokes, to be construed as racist by the black person and be seen as dangerous and threatening. This applied especially to remarks made by grandparents.

Kathy

> "His mother came to the hospital and said. 'You're not going run away and take him back to Ghana are you?' I was really angry and upset."

Victor

> "I think she was just trying to wind you up."

Kathy

> "I know, but it really pissed me off."

Victor saw this as a nasty off-the-cuff remark and a joke but Kathy saw it as semi-serious and a real threat.

Another interesting factor about racism was provided by those parents who had emigrated

to England as adults. Two accounts were particularly interesting. Pargat described the racism of Malays towards Indians in Malaysia in a much less threatening way than British white racism towards black people. When I asked him about this he could not give an explanation but simply said:

> "It just feels different. Its not that threatening, even though Malaysia is a Moslem country and quite repressive it doesn't feel as racist to me".[48]

Kathy, gave different and sometimes conflicting accounts of race in her own country. At different times in the interview she said:

> "...my parents had no problem with Victor, there is no animosity towards white people there and everybody is treated equally."

> "We Ghanaians don't like the Lebanese. A quarter of the population is Lebanese and my parents would definitely not like me to go out with a Lebanese person."

> "I don't think we could bring her up in Ghana - half-caste girls are seen as loose women there, and I wouldn't want that to my little girl."[49]

In these three statements Kathy was firstly not acknowledging racism, secondly claiming racism was less severe in Ghana but thirdly claiming it was more severe, especially for mixed-race children.

Three of the Asian respondents told me that in Asia there is a definite hierarchy of acceptable partners, so that for their parents their marrying a white person was better than if they had married a black person, which in turn was better than marrying a Moslem. Pargat's brother had married a Moslem, Sanjay's married an African, and both these marriages had been more traumatic for their parents than their own.

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[48] This remark particularly struck me because I have a personal acquaintance who is a chinese malaysian, and who 'escaped' from Malaysia to the 'safe-haven' of Britain.

[49] This came at the end of the interview. At the beginning Kathy had said "I feel protective towards her. I don't know why I just do". Could this have been one of the reasons?

Those families who intended to emigrate, for example Linda and Ezekiel and Pargat and Anne, saw British racial categorisation and racism as a transient phase in their lives rather than the only reality. In a similar way their children's racial identity was seen as located in current time and current place. All the families who had discussed leaving the country believed that their children would grow up very differently in terms of their cultural and racial identity from the way that they would grow up in England.[50]

For these families, therefore, racism and racial identity were both contingent rather than being an essential 'reality' with no alternatives. Stopes-Rowe and Cochrane (1990) show that these issues are similar to their own sample of Asians in Britain, and that the wish to emigrate is common, and often a 'defence' against racism.

One interesting perspective on the parent's dealing with identity is the process by which the children were named. In some cases naming was not an issue eg Kathy and Victor named Cassie just because they liked the name. Dick and Shirley and Linda and Ezekiel did not mention naming as an issue. However, naming was mentioned by all the couples with an Asian partner.

Seree was so named because, as Ruth said:

> "We wanted a name that was Indian, but that sounded OK in English. We didn't want people to find the name too strange."

Theresa and Sanjay, after much discussion gave their children both western and Indian names.

Joan and Hari gave their children Indian names, but Joan and the children kept her surname, and this caused a lot of friction with Hari's family.

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[50] The temporary nature of identity was dramatically highlighted to me in a different context by an acquaintance of mine who is a refugee from Bosnia. He has a Moslem father and Croat mother and said "Last year I was Yugoslavian and very proud of it. My identity was Yugoslavian, now I'm told that I'm a Bosnian and there is no such thing as a Yugoslavian, but what does it mean to be a Bosnian?"

Michelle and Salman gave their first child a Moslem name, Farida. The second child, Abel was named after consultations with Salman's extended family in South Africa, who eventually approved it after agreeing that as a biblical name, it would be acceptable. The third child was simply given a name they liked, and they were no longer very concerned about the family's reactions.

Harriet and Pargat named their children after Asian friends whom they admired. The names, however are Moslem, and this has caused friction to Pargat's family who refuse to call one of the girls by her real name, using a similar Punjabi name.

In these families naming was a difficult balancing act in which the parents had sought to positively value both cultures and to take the extended family's views into account. In each family naming the children was a carefully thought out strategy for the child's future identity.

All the parents who had children over three years old confirmed that the children were very aware of identity issues such as race and culture. However, the children too did not have a set view of their own identity. Many of the children were reported to refer to themselves half-Indian or half-Malaysian etc. All the children aged under five seemed to be very aware of both colour and culture and represented this in various ways. Ravinder for example was able to do 'Indian' as well as 'non-Indian' drawing. The twins Ben and Peter said to their mother:

> "Why can't you be brown like us?" (Note: Not "Why can't we be white like you?")

They saw themselves as brown, the father as black and mother as pink. Similarly Nusrat had been ashamed on one occasion of her mother coming to the nursery school where her father was well-known. She didn't want them to see she had a white mother. At different times, Nusrat had drawn herself as white or pink, and as brown and her parents felt that this was a process by which she was testing out different views of herself and through which she would eventually come to terms with her own identity. Chrisopher said to Theresa about his school friends:

"They're just white, but I'm half Indian.".

and Seree:

"I'm half Indian, What are you half?"

The parents saw the children as developing their identities in different ways and described varying degrees of confusion, contentment and happiness around the area of identity. Identity was an issue with which the children were coming to terms over time. Over time they were learning who they were, who was the same and who was different.

At a very young age the children were developing notions of culture, race, gender and nation. These were sometimes confused and conflictual, and the parents reacted with amusement, joy and concern.

One interesting observation about these families is that virtually all the parents themselves had some sort of 'mixed identity'. I have already noted that Ezekiel, for examlple had a 'Ghanaian self' and an 'English self', that Sanjay was mixed Punjabi and Hindi, and that many of the white parents came from mixed class backgrounds. For all the parents who had emigrated to the UK, both black and white, emigration had caused an enormous discontinuity in their identities, and many of the 'givens' of their lives were radically altered. For some, forming a relationship with a British person served to cement these changes and to accentuate the 'otherness' of their culture of origin. This shows that discontinuity and change in identity can occur both because of changes over time and because of contrasting cultural or racial forces. On this basis the notion that families can 'provide' a stable, core identity for their children must be challenged - identity depends on circumstances as much as on family relationships, and in the world today many people will have mixed identities without necessarily suffering catastrophic psychological consequences.

All the families studied, except for the A family were middle class. Most of them, especially the health professionals were very familiar with anti-racist theories. In the interviews they were able to talk fluently about the abstract notions of race, culture, self-esteem etc and to use these notions to reflect on their own lives. This illustrates another

aspect of identity - the reflexive nature of social theory. Anti-racist theory provided many of the parents with the vocabulary to make sense of their own experiences. Others felt threatened by some aspects of anti-racist theory and practice. Virtually all had integrated elements of the theory into their parenting and their life choices.

The way the families made sense of themselves and their current situations - the family myths - grew out of complex relationships within the family and outside. The descriptions of the children's development of identity as well as the identity of the parents themselves is very significant. It shows that development of identity is not a simple progression from non-identity to some fixed identity. The development was often painful, discontinuous, context bound, and fractured by class and gender. Choices were being offered to the children in some areas of their lives but not others, and development of identity was not symmetrical. Whereas the racial and cultural elements were one step removed and were seen as open to negotiation, class, gender, language, family structure and even political beliefs were seen as 'givens' within the family rather than issues which were negotiable between children and parents. Race, as opposed to culture was seen as an issue which related to conflict either within the family or outside. So race was seen in terms of power while culture was seen in terms of desire.

11.   THE INTERVIEW PROCESS

The accounts given by the couples of their histories and current situations were provided in a particular context; the research interview with a white, male South African stranger. In the first part of the thesis I commented on how this may have affected their responses and my interpretation of them. I would like to make some further points. Because most of these interviews were conducted with both partners, the 'audience' for the life stories was different in the second set of interviews. Interestingly, several of the women commented that they had never heard their partners talk about themselves for so long. There were also several comments that it was very positive to take a break from child care and spend time discussing adult topics.

For my own part, I was surprised at how similar some of my own experiences of

emigration had been to many of the respondents, both black and white, and how my own feelings about Britishness and the difficulties of maintaining peripheral culture in Britain were reflected by their accounts. However, accounts of racism were outside of my own experience. An interesting example of this was provided by Pargat. In talking of racism he experienced, he mentioned that canvassers and officials would often ask him where he came from. He interpreted this as them questioning his right to be in the country, and his response is that it is none of their business. Pargat had asked me where I came from at the beginning of the interview, guessing that I was a South African. I had not even remembered this until this discussion. I did not point it out to Pargat. This incident again illustrates how incidents which white people experience as non-threatening or even positive can be experienced by black people as insensitive or attacking. It may also have been a covert or even unconscious message to me (which I did not pick up) about his sensitivity to my questioning him about his background.

12. DISCUSSION

The advantage of seeing the families' views of themselves, their histories, their current situation and their future as 'myths' or as narratives should now be apparent. In the first part of this study the parents' account of development was taken at face value and task of the researcher was to look for commonalities which would show how racial identity in mixed-raced children develops and possibly to develop a typology (Appendix 1 of the original study), of this development and its relationship to the mother's past history. In this phase of the research I have turned the question on its head. Instead of asking "How does the mother's past history affect her current beliefs and actions and in turn the development of her child?" I have asked "Why is it, given the current circumstances, that parents provide this particular account of their own history, their present and their child's future?". I have therefore moved away from the question of providing a truer or more accurate framework of identity development than for example that of Goodman or Katz and instead have began to develop a way of looking at a family which shows how they construct reality rather than how their reality can fit into a framework constructed by a theorist. In the next chapter I will draw together some of the common strands which emerged in the observations and the interviews, and will highlight some of the

differences.

CHAPTER TEN
CONCLUSIONS

1.   INTRODUCTION

This chapter will bring together the main findings of all three phases of the study, and will relate them to the initial questions which I set out to examine; the nature of early racial identity development, and its connections with the infant-mother relationship. In some ways the second set of observations represents a radical break from the first two parts of the study, especially in the expanded notion of 'identity' and the narrative rather than cause-effect nature of development. This phase also led me to challenge some of the assumptions on which the study was originally based. In other ways the conclusions arrived at after the observations and the first interviews anticipated and set the scene for what came later. The 'identity' of the thesis is somewhat analogous to the identity of the subjects I studied, containing both continuity and disjuncture, with a narrative which deepened and broadened my understanding of the phenomenon of identity. In this chapter I would like to draw together some of the common themes between the three parts of the study, and also highlight some of the differences.

2.   SUMMARY OF FINDINGS

This section will summarise the most important findings of the three phases of the study.

Observations

The observations confirmed how important the early relationship between the mothers and infants were in the early development of identity. They showed how mothers brought into the relationships beliefs and feelings from their pasts, and that these affected the way they related to their children. These fantasies and beliefs seemed to change soon after the children were born, when the mothers were faced with a real person. They changed

further as the infants became individualised who not only responded to the mothers, but also developed their own personalities and initiated part of the relationship. In the A family the mother was also changing in response too her partner and her older daughter. Mothers' past experiences were therefore only one element which influenced the way they thought about their infants and their identity.

In both these families 'racial' issues were a central part of the family dynamic, and became part of the context in which the children grew up. For these two families, race was largely based on physical colour, although in both families there were some cultural elements. In the B family Rose made a conscious effort to bring 'black culture' into the home, but the Afro-Caribbean presence in the A family was more immediate because of the physical presence of the father. In the A family conflict was often racialised, and the children received some negative messages about black people from their mother. In contrast, Rose seemed to idealise 'black culture' and black people, who represented spontaneity and freedom.

Both these families were in the process of developing methods of dealing with difference, and negotiating boundaries, not only in the racial and cultural domains, but also gender, generational and interpersonal ones. Each child's development was characterised by a 'theme' or meta-narrative which developed and changed over time. In the case of Aud the theme was her response to the chaos of the family and her mother's initial hostility towards her. For Wilf the theme was his struggle to individuate and separate from his mother. Both infants developed 'selves' which were distinct ways of being in the world. The different 'selves' manifested in different situations, and it was hypothesised that they may become associated with different 'racial' selves, rather than 'interpersonal' selves. However, it was noted that the course of development was very variable and dependent on external events (such as father leaving the home) and children and parents' feelings, so that predictions could not be made,

Semi-Structured Interviews

These interviews found that meeting a 'black' partner was often part of a wider 'meta-

narrative' in the mothers' lives. Most of the mothers had described their background as sheltered or restricted, and they had broken away from this in their teens or early adulthood. Meeting a partner who was 'different' was part of this process. All of them saw this as a positive aspect of the relationship, but all faced challenges integrating the difference into their relationship. The difference was not universal, and the partners were invariably matched in personality, class and educational terms. The 'black' partners had also mostly moved away from their own backgrounds, and several mothers commented that their partners got on better with their family than with their own.

Having children had a paradoxical effect. On the one hand it made them more aware of differences, and the need to bring minority cultures into their day-to-day lives. On the other hand having grandchildren in the family brought together the extended family, and allowed them to overcome some of the emotional distance. Race and culture were dealt with very differently in the different families. In some families conflict was racialised, but culture played little part. In other families culture was more important than 'race' or colour, and some mothers felt that neither of these issues was important. It seemed that class rather than race had played a central role in the family 'culture', and for the parents it was the reproduction of class values such as educational attainment that were most important. These values were often unspoken and accepted, rather than the subject of negotiation within the family. The children were aware of cultural and racial issues from an early age, but most felt positively about them rather than confused or upset.

No general connection could be found between mothers' early life and either their partner choice or parenting style, although each mother was able to relate some connections. These things seemed to have developed as a consequence of later events and mothers' current family life and milieu, and were too individual to develop any 'theory' of identity development or its relationship with mothers' past experiences.

'Life History' Interviews

The second set of interviews revealed an enormous variation in the meaning of 'race', 'culture' and identity' in different families. The interviews confirmed that these issues

were negotiated in all the families from before the children' birth, but every family dealt with them differently. The interviews confirmed the importance of parents' past experiences in allowing them to make sense of their current family situations. However, as the first interviews found, these connections were not generalisable or predictable, and made sense in narrative rather than causal terms. An example of this was that every parent felt that they were giving their children something they had lacked in their own parenting, but were also continuing some of the positive features of their original families. There were both conscious and unconscious narrative connections. Parenting style did not only relate to past experience, however, but also to current concerns within the family and their social context.

All the parents wanted their children to have a positive 'mixed' identity, but the content of this 'identity' was seen as variable and open for the child to choose. All the families self-consciously exposed the children to the 'culture' of the 'black' parent, but the exposure differed - in some the parent him or herself was already rather distant from the culture, while in others the extended family meant easy access to it. The culture itself, however, was not a unified set of sounds, tastes, practices and beliefs, and its nature was being constructed and negotiated continuously in the families. This negotiation of 'sameness' and 'difference' was seen as the fundamental process by which identity was constructed in the families. Thus the future identity of the children was not predictable, and the families saw identity as being contingent on what choices the children make, where the family lives and what particular experiences the children will have.

In summary the three phases of the research confirmed some of the original hypotheses:

the early age at which 'racial' identity begins

the importance of the mother-infant relationship

the importance of past experience

the importance of current social context

the location of racial identity within the broader identity.

However these hypotheses were confirmed only by adopting an expanded view of 'identity' and 'development' and by seeing the connections as narrative rather than causal. Fathers and the 'marital' relationship were found to be almost as important as mothers in this process, not simply as 'role models' but as an integral part of the negotiations around difference. 'Culture' was seen as constructed in families rather than transmitted through generations. The 'self' was similarly seen as an unstable construction rather than a set of characteristics and beliefs. The relationship between 'race' culture, gender and class was seen as interactive 'fractured' and fluid rather than as primary and secondary identities or as coexisting 'selves'.

3.   SAMENESS AND DIFFERENCE

The most striking similarity between all the parents was that, as adults, they all were in a constant process of negotiating difference. In virtually every case (except perhaps that of Salman, where this process had occurred a generation before) the parents had begun to deal with differences between themselves and their families or between themselves and their own societies before they had met a partner from a different ethnic group. They tended to see their childhoods as pleasant but confined, and their adolescence or early adulthood as a time of separation and exploration. This meant that forming a relationship with a 'different' person was more a confirmation of already established themes in their lives, rather than representing a complete break from their past. This was despite the fact that for some of their own parents these liaisons were not accepted, and certainly did rupture their sense of continuity.

Hostility was experienced from some of both the 'black' and 'white' extended families, but the couples themselves tended to experience the 'white' hostility as more threatening. In all these families the birth of the children heralded some form of reconciliation, and reestablished a sense of continuity.

Other than this general point, there were no other identifiable characteristics or

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experiences which all the adults shared. Even those who experienced similar events such as emigration attributed different meanings and importance to them.

The common theme of these stories - a happy but confining childhood, a rupture with that childhood, a relationship with a 'different' person which confirmed the rupture and then a return to the 'roots' after the birth of children - should not be seen in causal terms. It may have been that the parents reconstructed their narratives in similar ways, because they were in an interview situation where they were giving a chronological account of their lives to a stranger. It may also be that these themes apply to many adults in London, where there are large numbers of people who have left their 'roots' for all sorts of reasons, but not all of whom have formed inter-racial families. (My own life history is similar in many ways to that of many of the subjects of this study, but I am married to someone from a very similar background.) The interviews with 'black' parents confirmed that this pattern was not restricted to white women, and both black and white parents who had emigrated had experienced particular issues in dealing with their separation and difference from their parents and their cultural 'roots'.

The second similarity between all the families is that the parents had originated from, or had moved into, similar educational or class situations. This meant that very often the partners were in many ways the kind of people whom they may have been expected to end up with, differing only in that they were from a different 'race'. Thus there were as many similarities and complementarities in the couples' respective backgrounds as differences, and they often perceived symmetries between themselves, sometimes in unexpected areas. This meant that the relationships were not only characterised by 'difference' - 'sameness' played as important a role.

Interestingly, many of the parents, both white and black saw positive opportunities as well as challenges in being part of the margins of conventional ethnicity. Although some parents pointed out their lack of role models and lack of media coverage of inter-racial families, others pointed out that the lack of stereotypes meant that they were able themselves to negotiate culture and ethnicity within the family in a way that they could not have done with a member of their own group. They were almost consciously

constructing a 'post-modernist' identity for their children.

Another important factor in most of these families was that the family contacts invariably transcended national boundaries. All the parents had relatives, sometimes siblings and parents, in other countries. This meant that they did not feel bound by all the categories and assumptions of nation and race which pertain in contemporary Britain, and saw these categorisations as contingent rather than essential. This enabled them to provide their children with choices which further strengthened the fluid 'post-modern' nature of their identities.

Cultural (as opposed to racial) issues played little part in the courtship of these couples, largely because the 'black' partner was invariably somewhat removed from his or her culture of origin, either because of emigration, education or both.

There was a continuum with regard to how inevitable this partnership was perceived as being. Some white men and women were only attracted to black people and had never seriously considered finding a white partner. Others saw their liaison as purely fortuitous. This pattern was similar to the black partners, who also differed greatly in their motivations. Most partners emphasised the personality and physical attractiveness of their partner, rather than any social factors.

In the first set of interviewees there was not a great deal of hostility to the match from the mothers' families. In the second set there was a lot of variation, with some couples experiencing enormous hostility from both 'black' and 'white' families. The arrival of children often brought families closer together, often helping to overcome the differences with their own families, rather than exacerbating them. This meant that although in some families, most notably the A family, the children did come to symbolise racial difference, in other families they represented conciliation and coming together of families. This finding contradicts the assumption of psychoanalysis that 'black' children will inevitably represent the split off 'bad' elements of white mother's personality and will be subject to unconscious racism.

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The third major similarity was that issues of 'race' 'culture' and 'ethnicity' were part of every families' lifestyle, and although there were a very wide range of issues that the families dealt with, all of them had involved their children in these matters from a very young age. In all the families these issues were part of the larger process of negotiating the questions around 'sameness' and 'difference', and were combined with other differences such as age, gender and class. They were also part of the negotiation of family values which was ongoing in all the families. The narrow question of 'racial identity' within the context of black/white identification was not dealt with by all the families, some of whom denied that this was an issue for them at all. In families where race was dealt with directly, this tended to be connected with conflict and power, whereas culture was more associated with desire, memory and a feeling of belonging.

Class was a fundamental factor in all these families, especially in the way the parents perceived their task and were able to talk about it. Although some of the parents had moved in the class hierarchy, the family itself was invariably firmly rooted in a particular class. Class affected the family lifestyle more than race and culture, partly because class norms pervaded the parent's thinking in a much more unconscious (and therefore less challengeable) way than culture or race. Parents never asked themselves 'What aspects of middle class culture should we introduce in the home?' This culture was part of the fabric of their lives. In many cases there was a blurring of culture and class. For example virtually every parent emphasised the value of education (and how their own parents had pushed them educationally). In the case of the 'black' parents this was often attributed to the cultural expectations of Asian, African or Afro-Caribbean parents. But white parents reported similar pressures and did not relate them to culture or ethnicity. Class seemed also to influence the kind of choices which the parents consciously provided for their children. In every middle class family the children were brought up so that they could be free to choose their identifications. In the A family, who were the only working-class (or rather under-class) family the children were not given those choices. It may be that the 'post-modern' identities which these children were being offered, are only really available to middle-class children. This finding would be in line with those of Walkerdine (1985) who found differences in the language used by middle-class and working class mothers to discipline their children. Walkerdine found that middle-class

mothers were much more likely to provide 'choices' to their children. Tizard and Phoenix (1993), however, found no strong relationship between class and racial identification in mixed-race adolescents, although Wilson (1987) found that middle-class children tended to misidentify more than working-class children in the doll tests.

There is, of course, a risk attached to the strategy which the middle-class families adopted. Anti racist and marginal theory predicts that mixed-race children will grow up thinking themselves white, and will have an 'identity crisis' when they discover that society treats them as black. By extension, children who see themselves as 'mixed' or who believe they have choice, may similarly suffer from identity problems when confronted with the polar dichotomy by society into black and white. The theories differ in their predictions about what age this crisis will occur. Maximé (1993) predicts problems in childhood, Small (1986) in adolescence and Stonequist (1937) in early adulthood. Research by Wilson (1987) and Tizard and Phoenix (1993), however, has shown little psychological disturbance or identity problems in mixed race children and adolescents, who are able to develop 'situational ethnicity'. So it seems that this strategy can work, and the parents are not only providing the illusion of choice. Perhaps it is the parents decision to introduce these issues consciously into the family when the children were young that may prevent the 'identity crisis' predicted by so may theories.

Almost all the black parents in the study had suffered some form of racism, although the degree differed. For many racism and the struggle against it was a major issue in their lives. Some white partners had also suffered because of their relationship with a black person, and some couples had suffered discrimination from black people as well. The white partners, however, were rarely aware of how much their partner had suffered from the threat of racism, and some were quite surprised by this.

Nevertheless, the direct causal link between institutional and individual racism, both within the family and from the outside, and identity development was not confirmed. This link was based on anti-racist theories who saw white mothers as the unwitting purveyors of socialised racist beliefs. The interviews and observations showed a wide range of beliefs and attitudes about race. The link between racism and identity sounds

logical enough - if a black person believes that all black people are inferior and she is black, therefore she must be inferior. However this is only true if her primary reference group is 'black' people as a whole. In reality children may identify with their family, friends, the local youth club, their school or many other groups or individuals, which may mitigate the effects of racism on personal identity. In this group of families racism was interpreted in many different ways, and it was the **interpretation** of racism that was important. Incidents that in some families would have caused a major crisis were seen as unimportant in other families. For the children it seems to be important that parents are able to deal with the issues of race and culture in a relaxed though vigilant way and that children should be encouraged to explore these issues for themselves with parental support. The families differed in how they positioned themselves in terms of racism. Some families perceived themselves as a safe haven of tolerance within a hostile sea of racism, while others saw the family itself as a forum for working through racial differences. The parents were all aware of the likelihood of racism being an important factor in the children's future lives, and all had developed strategies to enable the children to deal with racism. These strategies varied according to the class of the families. All the middle-class families felt that education, assertiveness and high self esteem, as well as a positive view of their own mixed identity and the culture of their 'black' parent would be the most effective strategies, while the A family used racial expressions so that the children would get used to and not get too worried by racial taunts which were seen as inevitable.

Despite the extra challenge for the children of being mixed-race, the mothers all felt optimistic about their children's chances of developing a positive mixed-race identity. They all viewed the challenge of parenting mixed-race children positively, pointing out how the access to another culture had broadened their own horizons.

Most of the children who were verbal described themselves as 'mixed' in some way. This does not mean that they were 'mixed up', although some of their understandings were at times confused. The parents saw this as part of a process whereby they were exploring their own identity. Only one child (Roberta) had associated 'black' with 'bad'. Most of the children saw their mixed identity in terms of culture rather than race eg 'half

Indian' rather than 'half white'. Interestingly the exceptions to this were Roberta in the A family, and the twins, who called themselves 'Brown'. In both these families the black partner was Afro-Caribbean. This confirms the finding that for Afro-Caribbeans the term 'black' is used spontaneously to describe themselves, but this is not shared with other 'black' groups such as Asians or even Africans, who tend to use cultural, religious or national descriptions. (see Modood, 1992 for a discussion of this point)

A similar point can be made about the supposed causal link between mothers' early experiences of being parented, their adolescence and their own parenting styles. The first part of the study was aimed to discover these links, but failed to do so. Because of this failure a new approach had to be developed. The second set of interviews confirmed that for some parents, the link was with how they perceived their own parenting, rather than a direct causal link. For many parents the experience of parenthood re-evoked memories of childhood. Others saw themselves as reacting to aspects of their own parenting which they remembered as being lacking - most said that they were more involved emotionally with their children than their parents had been with them. All the parents had carried with them some positive aspects of their own parenting and these were in turn carried over into their own parenting. Sometimes these aspects included cultural elements, but mostly the descriptions of both black and white parents of their own parenting were remarkably similar, and were couched in personal rather than cultural terms.

The second set of interviews, by focusing on themes in the parent's stories, were able to point to more subtle ways in which the parents repeated elements of their own parenting unconsciously. However, the way their own parents had treated them did not cause them to become particular kinds of parents, nor did their early parenting determine their children's specific identities. These were seen to be dependent on a number of different factors, including their relationship with the partner, the child's own personality and dispositions, and the milieu in which they were living at the time. The families all chose to live in multi-racial areas, and all the children had contact with children from a wide range of backgrounds, although the degree of contact varied.

Parenting was found to relate to many other issues than early childhood experience. One

example is that parents often responded to each other's parenting styles, so that they adapted to form complementary styles of parenting for their children. Another important influence was that of contemporary theories (or accepted social ideologies) about parenting, not least anti-racist theories which encouraged some parents to choose multi-racial areas and to consciously introduce children's 'roots' into the home. Only one parent saw her children as essentially 'English' in identity, and none saw their major task as integrating their children into mainstream culture. Rather they saw their task as providing 'choices'. I believe that this stance was informed by contemporary beliefs, and may be restricted to middle-class parents in the early nineties rather than being an a-historical characteristic of inter-racial families.

The finding that there was a narrative rather than a causal relationship between being parented and being a parent raises the question of what the relationship is between early parenting and later identity development in the children. Some of these issues have been addressed, but I believe that the research's findings were somewhat paradoxical. On the one hand it was found that parenting is of fundamental importance in the early development of identity. The observations showed how children organise their personalities into configurations or 'selves' which are formed in the process of interactions with the parents. The interviews confirmed that very subtle interventions by the parents may have profound effects on the children. The interviews also confirmed that 'selves' can persist into later life, and that they can be 'racialised' or 'ethnicised'. Some of the parents felt and behaved differently in different 'racial' situations. But it was not necessarily true that those aspects of the self which developed chronologically prior were those which were experienced as being more authentic or 'true'. It cannot be concluded that these 'selves' will have any direct causal relationship to later identity or even identifications. Again, the relationship is likely to be a narrative link rather than a causal one. I therefore believe that these children's later identifications will depend not only on continuity of parenting, but also on the social context in which they find themselves. For example, they might depend on whether, by the time they are teenagers, the black community in Britain has developed the totalised or synthesised 'black' identity which Gilroy believes it is doing, or whether it develops 'hyphenated identities' such as 'Muslim-British' and 'African-British', which Modood (1992) advocates.

These findings were common to all three phases of the research. However the third phase differed considerably from the first two quite considerably, both methodologically and conceptually. The new methodology (the biographical approach) and the new theory (based on the post-modernist social theories) were used to remedy the lack in the initial phases. The third phase did not produce findings which contradicted the first two phases as shown above, many of the findings were similar. However it questioned some of the basic assumptions which informed the way the questions and hypotheses in the first phases had been formulated, and therefore how some of the findings had been interpreted. In essence it challenged the notions of 'race', 'identity' and 'development' each of which was based on a narrow and conventional set of un-examined assumptions held by both psychoanalytic and anti-racist theories.

Race

In the initial part of the study, 'race' was used to mean exclusively 'black' or 'white'. The cultural, class and gender influences within the families were not dealt with as central issues. The reasons for this were firstly that the prevailing social theories had treated race as a separate dynamic which either was subsumed under the class rubric, or which transcended class barriers. Culture was seen as a sub-category of race. (see Gilroy, 1987 for an explanation of why anti-racist theories took this stance). Secondly, both families I observed saw race in these terms. In the A family, for example the sign on the amplifier was 'Black man music' not ''Jamaican man'. Similarly when Norman argued with Tracy about child rearing, he said "I bring my children up like a black parent.." The racialisation in this family was expressed in terms of colour. Because of this I anticipated that Aud's identifications and her sense of self (or selves) would be experienced in terms of race rather than culture. This pattern was repeated in Family B, where Rose's struggle with dependence and independence was expressed in terms of race - for example her physical attraction to black men, and her view that Wilf preferred black strangers. As discussed above, it may be because in both these families the 'black' element was Afro-Caribbean that they associated racial identity in terms of 'black' and 'white' (although class was noted as an intervening factor even in the observations). The women in the first set of interviews widened the definition of race, and confirmed the

intricate relationship between race, class, culture and gender in the identifications of their children, and in the way they saw themselves and their families.

The interviews therefore confirmed that racial identity could not be seen merely as a set of identifications with set 'racial' aspects of the self or of society. It also became apparent that the children did not have a set of racial or cultural 'roots' which were being transmitted more or less efficiently within each family. Each family was negotiating the issues of race and culture in different ways, both within the family and with the extended family and society as a whole. Thus it was clear that the issue of 'racial' identity was much wider than the issue of racism. The concept of a 'positive identity' was seen as a value judgement rather than a description.

Nevertheless, the semi-structured nature of these interviews, the fact that they were conducted with mothers alone, and the hypotheses they were testing (ie the causal relationships between mother's pasts and children's identities) meant that they were only able to give a limited picture of the family dynamics and the way the family made sense of identity. A good example of this was my own interpretation of Lucy's assertion that race played no significant part in the family's life. I treated this as an example of a denial of racism, and as almost racist in itself[51]. I failed to see that this may well have been my own construction of the situation. Racism is endemic in British society but it does not necessarily affect every person in the same way, and it may well be that for particular families race plays little part.

Although the first interviews confirmed the heterogeneity of identities, they were still based on the notion that there was a 'core' identity which was a fundamental and stable characteristic of the individual, and that the 'core' identity chronologically preceded the other secondary selves which may develop. In the second part this was challenged - the history of the black parents in particular showed that the notion of 'primary' and 'secondary' identity was too narrow, and that these are relative to the current situation

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[51]My response was similar to that of the social worker in the recent case in Norfolk who denied a mixed couple permission to adopt because they were 'racially naive'.

and how it is dealt with. Aud and Wilf's 'selves' were therefore not necessarily permanent structures, but were their ways of making sense and coping with painful, contradictory reality.

In the observations it had already become clear that despite what psychoanalytic theory postulated, the father had played a central role in Aud's identity development. The mother's accounts confirmed the importance of fathers, but were not able to provide the fathers' own perspectives. The interviews in the third stage with black parents and white fathers provided further evidence that my original assumption, that white mothers' task would be fundamentally different from that of black mothers, was erroneous. The interviews with Kathy and Shirley showed that even these two women dealt with their children's identity differently from each other, but both were similar to some of the white mothers. Shirley had been in a white environment most of her life, and for her there were few problems about cultural or racial issues other than her daughters' need to feel positive about themselves and to be protected from racism. Kathy had emigrated to the UK as an adult, and was more concerned about the cultural balance within the family. Both women shared with the white mothers the task of negotiating difference within the family. A similar point can be made about the fathers. All the fathers (except Paul who had no contact with Rose) felt that there were issues around culture, race or gender that were being resolved in the family. They all shared some responsibility for providing their children with cultural input. None of them saw this as the exclusive role of the mother. Having said this, there were variations, and mothers did tend to shoulder most of the burden in some families.

In the second interviews the focus was more on how families perceived and managed difference, and this wider focus provided much richer information, and much clearer links than the narrow focus on race and racism. The second interviews widened the definitions of identity even further than the first, adding religion and nation to the range of issues which interacted with race, gender, class, colour and culture in the process of 'racial' identity formation.

Although some of the families showed a degree of racialisation, and the observations in

particular showed how racialisation can affect family dynamics. Nevertheless, it would be wrong to conclude that these tensions always dominated the relationships in the families, and it would be especially wrong to see them as problem families who mirrored the wider problems of racial politics in society. Although researchers and social workers like to seek out pathology, viewing these families only as 'problems' adds to the discrimination against them, not to understanding them more fully. The view of these families as a microcosm is based on a notion of racism which is individualised to the study of 'racists', and also the view that racism is endemic in society and therefore every white is a racist. Post -modern anti-racists have challenged this unidimensional, personalised view of race relations. The pathologisation of these families is unfair, untrue and theoretically invalid.

Identity Development

This study was initially based on the accepted views of psychoanalysts, developmental psychologists and racial preference researchers that racial identity development is a linear, cumulative process in which cognitive and emotional structures are provided with content by the processes of identification with, and internalisation of mother's beliefs and attitudes. The 'self' which was developed was seen as a collection of dispositions, characteristics, behaviours and beliefs which needed to be more or less in tune with 'society's' perceptions of the individual. Identity was originally seen as mediated through parents, who were seen as transmitting accepted social values. This view has now been substantially altered, because it is seen as prescriptive and static, and does not reflect the dynamic and fluid nature of development which has elements of discontinuity, disjuncture and conflict as well as continuity and stability. Now identity development is seen as negotiated within the family, between individuals and the outside world, and between the family and the outside world, which itself is changing and contradictory.

The findings of the thesis were in some ways paradoxical - they confirmed that early parenting plays a crucial role in children's early identity formation, and that this role is subtle and powerful. The children in the observations were shown to develop a sense of self largely as a response to this parenting. On the other hand, parents do not determine

future identity. This means that the analogy used by psychoanalysis and racial identity theory is inaccurate. The family's role is not analogous to a gun shooting a bullet in a predetermined direction. They are more like authors who write the first chapter of a book, leaving the children to write the rest of the story. They set the scene for later development which may constantly refer back to them, but they do not determine the story. If this analogy is accepted, it is in principle impossible to predict future development, and the assumption made when this project began was misplaced. The findings do not, however, confirm the full-blown post-modernist assertion that identity is a fabrication by the individual which is used to paper over the cracks of discontinuous and contradictory experience, with no reference to 'real life'. Later identity was not simply created by the individuals, but was based on earlier experiences. However, these experiences were often reinterpreted by the parents. A good example of this was their accounts of their own early parenting. Many parents said that after they had children, they had reassessed their own parenting in a much more sympathetic way, while others were determined to give their children a better deal than they had.

Identity

Identity is seen by anti-racism and psychoanalysis as essentially a set of stable beliefs, characteristics and behaviours, and an individual's perception of themselves in relation to a unified, established 'society'. The first part of the thesis moved to considering identity as a set of roles combined into 'selves'. Now identity is seen as a set of experiences, memories, selves, which are ever-changing unconnected and conflicting, retold as a story so that the person has a sense of a coherent self, but each telling is different. The 'selves' which were described in the observations can be seen as strategies developed by the infants to deal with 'difference' in their lives by retaining both 'sameness' and 'difference' in their responses to the world. They can be seen as two 'themes' which were emerging in the narrative of the childrens' identity development.

4. METHODOLOGY

In this section I will discuss some of the major methodological points which have arisen

from the present study. In Chapter 4 I have outlined the methods used in the study, the reasons for choosing those methods and the adaptation of the observational method from training to research. Chapters 4 and 7 commented on some of the issues concerning the validity and reliability of the data. These chapters also described some of the practical difficulties which occurred in implementing the methods and the validity of the conclusions I have drawn from the evidence. In this chapter I will confine myself to issues which may have significance for other studies.

The three methods used in this study presented very different issues for data analysis, and I shall discuss them separately.

Observations

The Tavistock model of infant observation stresses the need for the observer to be receptive to the raw experience of the family and his own responses to them - to **know** the family rather than **knowing about** them (Bion, 1984). The model encourages observers to enter into the field with as few theoretical assumptions and constructs as possible. This is so that theoretical preconceptions or categories should not contaminate the emotions experienced and observed. By examining these 'pre-verbal' experiences the observer gains a better understanding of what the baby is experiencing emotionally. In this study the focus on emotional development was supplemented by a focus on intellectual development, so that the observer needed to be sensitive not only to the infant's feelings, but also what the infant was thinking about the world.

Using this model made my task as an observer analogous in many ways to the infants' own task in identity development. This was the case especially in analysing the data which arose from those observations. The model deliberately excluded me from fitting pieces of data into pre-verbal-ordained categories or matrices. Like the infants I entered into an unfamiliar environment and began to receive an overwhelming amount of information which seemed to have little coherence. The task was to identify meaningful patterns and then develop an explanation for the patterns by categorising them.

The analysis consisted of reading and re-reading the accounts of the observations until patterns emerged, and then trying to develop higher order categories to make the patterns meaningful within the context of identity development. Some of the patterns had become clear from a very early stage, and had been discussed in the seminars during the period of observation. An example of this is Aud's tendency to repetition, and its value as a defence against chaos. Most of the explanations, however, arose later sometimes after several readings of the observation transcripts. In some ways the long time lapse between observation and analysis provided the distance from the material which enabled a fresh, and I believe deeper, understanding to be developed. So the narrative of the development of these children went through several revisions before the story presented here was developed. This implies that it is not seen as the only interpretation of these observations, and that further work may reveal new insights and new ways of telling the story.

The transcripts turned out to be a rich source of data, providing excellent basis for the narrative of the children's identity development to be told. Interviews with parents, videos of short interactions and behaviour check lists had seemed to offer a more cost effective way of learning about the infants' development. I believe that the thesis shows that this is not so. No other method would have demonstrated the interactions and their influence on development. The method was extended in this study by the use of interviews. I believe that the Tavistock method of infant observation can be further adapted without losing its essential character. Some researchers have already extended the method, eg Piontelli, (1987) who has pioneered the use of ultrasound to observe foetuses. Further adaptations could be:

the use of video to look at particular interactions in more depth;

the use of interviews with other family members;

observations outside the home; and

observation of older children.

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The observation method may be further strengthened by introducing the 'narrative' nature of development into the analysis of the material, with a greater recognition of the social and cultural context in which the observation is taking place, and the fluid nature of the higher-order structures being developed. In the observation seminars there was a tendency to see a rigid relationship between the 'signifier' and the 'signified'. For example babies who turned toward the light were invariably seen as 'looking to the nipple for reassurance'. Post modernism should warn us against over confidence in interpreting subjective meanings. Both the 'observed infant' and the 'clinical infant' should be seen as adult reconstructions, not necessarily as real entities.

Semi Structured Interviews

Analysis of the material from these interviews was far more straightforward than the observations. This was because the interviews were designed to elicit responses to pre-verbal-set questions which were derived from theory and from experiences in the observations. The method of data analysis was influenced by Miles and Huberman's (1984) model, which involves tabulating the raw data and then noticing patterns which emerge. The idea is to eventually develop higher order classifications to explain patterns of information so that theoretical explanations of the phenomena can be developed.

Not all the original hypotheses were confirmed by these interviews. Some of the patterns elicited in the interviews contradicted the theoretical hypotheses on which the questionnaires were based. An example of this was the expected link between mothers' early experiences and their parenting and attitudes towards race. The responses showed little evidence of my (perhaps naive) expectation of a clear link. It was partly because of these findings that the method was changed for the second set of interviews.

The interviews with the mothers provided a great deal of information, but the restriction to mothers limited the amount of useful information I was able to obtain about the families. The focus on mothers was chosen because of the psychoanalytic theories on which the study is based, and on the mother-infant relationship which is the focus of the observations. It has become clear to me through the course of this study that fathers and

siblings play a crucial role in identity development, and the lack of a paternal perspective undermined the holistic view of development which I would have liked to present. This was one of the motivations for changing the methodology in the third phase.

Biographical Method

Because of the gaps which emerged in the first set of interviews, the second set were conducted using a different methodology based on the biographical method. This method has the advantage of being almost completely unstructured, allowing the parents to develop their own stories rather than responding to my pre-set questions. The emphasis on narrative rather than delving for causes allowed them to give accounts of their lives which showed more clearly the continuity and the differences between past and present. This lead me to modify the psychoanalytic assumption of direct causal links between being parented and parenting, and between parenting and children' identity. Although this method takes much longer than semi-structured interviewing, I believe the results are far more satisfactory. Jointly interviewing both partners gave me a flavour of the family which I could not get from individual interviews. The one interview in this phase conducted with only the mother of a two parent family (the K family) was disappointing in the amount of material it produced.

The biographical method asserts that different life stories may be told in different situations, These interviews with a white, middle class ex South African must surely have influenced the way the stories were told. My version of their stories was also affected by these factors. Nevertheless this approach denies that there is a 'true' story.

By laying open my own position and train of thought through the thesis as clearly as possible I have tried to make the process of theorising as 'transparent' as possible, leaving the reader to further interpret the material. Readers can draw their own conclusions about the accuracy of the inferences I have drawn from the material. Clearly other researchers, especially those from a different social background, would amplify, challenge or add to some of my conclusions. The account given here is intended to be part of a discourse rather than a statement of 'truth'. This is not to say that the findings

of this study are any less significant than those which used quantitative methodology. The huge raft of quantitative studies which have been conducted on racial identification have produced no 'truth' even about the relationship between racial choices and racial identity, let alone the process of identity formation. After 50 years of study there are still calls for more research (Jackson et al, 1988; Tizard and Phoenix, 1989).

Qualitative Methodology

Qualitative methodology is always open to the accusation that it is merely an account of the researchers' opinion and not a legitimate part of social science. The systematic nature of the data collection and interpretation, and its openness to scrutiny means that this study is not simply another anecdotal contribution to the debate. Rustin (1987) argues that psychoanalysis is a legitimate method of scientific enquiry, and that the Tavistock model of infant observation:

> "...lends itself more easily than clinical work to public scrutiny and replication." (p119)

With the modifications suggested above I believe infant observation could develop from being a method primarily of teaching skills to an important qualitative research tool in the study of infant development. It is particularly suitable for studies such as this in which individual aspects of development need to be studied in the context of the unfolding of personal identity and developing relationships. It requires entering the turbulent world of infant-mother relationships with a deliberately theory-free mind, and therefore little guidance as to what to look for, and no guarantee that anything observed will have any bearing on the subject one wishes to study. Nevertheless there are no short cuts to the rich data available from this method.

There is no 'holy grail' for either traditional qualitative or quantitative methods in this field. I believe that the biographical method provides a much more fruitful way forward than the endless attempt to isolate the independent variables which will determine the form of children's racial identity. Research which is based on the notion that identity is like an object which can be studied is bound to lose the most important aspect of identity;

its fluid, changing and contextual nature. Perhaps it is the story of search itself that is important rather than the elusive 'truth' which it hopes to uncover (Semin and Gergen, 1990). The scientific 'truth claims' of psychoanalysis in this search must be limited, as Wolfenstein so graphically states:

> "...we commit epistemic suicide when we attempt to make ourselves into Galileos of the mind." (1991, 544)

5.   ETHICS

In a study such as this one where intimate details of peoples' lives are being studied, there are bound to be difficult ethical dilemmas. I will only address the main ones here.

Researcher's Background

The fundamental ethical question in the present study is; "What right has a white, middle-class South African Jew to study this topic?" The point of this challenge is both methodological and ethical. The ethical point is that by studying race and motherhood, white males perpetuate current power relationships; the researcher has a voice, and the objects of study are merely there to further his theory.

To this challenge I can only answer "What right have I to avoid studying the topic?" Certainly my choice of subject and methodology were determined by my own background. The issues of race and culture have been crucial to my political and personal life, and it would be hypocritical to ignore them. If I had done so I would always have felt that I had let myself and my profession down by avoiding difficult issues. I have chosen a group of people whom I believe to be voiceless in the current racial debate, and I hope that this study demonstrates that they have something to say. I would hope that this area will be studied in future by people with different backgrounds and experiences.

There are some important ways in which I would approach future studies such as this

differently. I would provide the 'subjects' with more information about myself and the purpose of my study, and invite them to comment on what I said about them. I would also like to involve subjects in the design of the study. In these ways I would endeavour to lessen the inevitable power differential between social scientists and those they study.

Confidentiality and Consent

To what extent is it justified to enter into a family's private life, observe and ask questions, and then write about those observations? Infant observation is usually part of training, and the write-ups do not go beyond the seminar group and the clinical supervisor. When I conducted the fieldwork for this study I used the accepted informal methods of consent which were used by the other observers at the Tavistock Centre. Now issues around partnership and consent are much more prevalent than when the field work was carried out, (Broom and Steiglitz, 1992) and the shortcomings of this approach are more apparent. The Statement on Professional and Ethical Responsibilities of The Society for Applied Anthropology says:

> "To the people we study we owe disclosure of our research goals, methods and sponsorship. The participation of people in our research activities shall only be on a voluntary and informed basis..." (1983, in Bernard, 1988, 458)

Clearly the practice of withholding information about the purpose of the study is not in the spirit of this statement. I believe that infant observation will need to formalise the method of consent used, especially if the method is to be extended to research.

This chapter has summarised the main findings of the thesis, and has described how the formulation of the original problem changed as a result of the findings in the first part, and also the availability of post-modern theories. In the next chapter, some of the implications of the fluid post-modernist approach to the question of identity will be discussed. Based both on the biographical method and post-modern theories of race, a new formulation of identity is developed which I believe is much more appropriate in describing mixed-race children and inter-racial families in contemporary Britain than the traditional 'structural-developmental' model.

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CHAPTER ELEVEN
REVISITING THE THEORY

This chapter will consider some of the questions relating to inter-racial families and identity development which have arisen out of the fieldwork in the study. It will also revisit some of the theoretical assumptions which were made in the first part of the study about identity and racial identity development and will focus on current social work and psychological anti-racist literature which addresses the question of identity development in black and mixed-race children. These theories of identity and racial identity development will be examined in the light of post-modernist theory, new anti-racist theorising and recent research in the area. The concept of 'Narrative Identity' will be introduced and discussed and it will be argued that this is a much more appropriate framework for addressing racial identity than the 'structural-developmental' theories on which this study was originally based. Some conclusions will be drawn about social services policy and practice in relation to inter-racial families.

1.   NARRATIVE IDENTITY

Chapter three ended with an account of the main tenets of post-modern philosophy as they relate to the issue of identity development. I will very briefly repeat the main thrust of this argument.

Post-modernism denies the basis on which the 'structural-developmental view of identity posited by Berger and Luckmann, Erikson, Piaget and Winnicott. It contends that personal identity is not a fixed set of beliefs or dispositions that develops into a stable structure over time. It denies fixed causal links between past and future, rather focusing on the different constructions of reality which individuals or groups formulate in different circumstances to maintain the fantasy of coherence. Thus it sees the 'self' and personal identity as an unstable and conflicting set of meanings and emotions held together by narratives which cover over the cracks of contradiction and discontinuity. It concentrates particularly on the construction of 'difference' and 'otherness', and abandons the bipolar

notions in favour of multiplicity. Finally, post-modernism abandons the attempt to create teleological meta-theories of development, preferring to focus on the particular and the local.

If the 'structural-developmental' model is abandoned, what alternative can post-modernism offer? One possible alternative is the notion of 'Narrative Identity' offered by Ricoeur (1991, 1992). Ricoeur's concept of narrative identity is based on many post-structuralist assumptions, but he does not go as far as Derrida in seeing identity as being totally contingent or constructed (Bernstein, 1991). At first Ricoeur's concept does not seem a very promising alternative. For one thing it is not a psychological theory of identity development at all. It was designed to deal with the philosophical issues around 'selfhood' and 'sameness'. Ricoeur claims that the answer to the question "who am I?" is really two questions. "What am I the same as?" and "What is mine?"

However narrative identity does provide a way of conceptualising how humans construct their own identity. Ricoeur summarises as follows:

> "It is thus plausible to endorse the following chains of assertions: self knowledge is an interpretation; self interpretation, in its turn finds in narrative, among other signs and symbols, a privileged mediation; this mediation draws on history as much as it does on fiction, turning a story of a life into a fictional story or historical fiction, comparable to those biographies of great men in which history and fiction are intertwined." (1991, 188)

The point about a narrative view of identity is that it accepts that identity is constructed and reconstructed on a continuous basis. The narrative can change and evolve over time and in different contexts. Although the narrative is used to maintain a sense of unity, this unity is used to cover up an underlying discontinuity and conflict.

> ".....all narrative must generate the illusion of an imaginary resolution of real contradiction." (Jameson, 1984, XIX).

Narratives are told by someone about something to someone (in Lyotard's sense a narrative is a language game in which there is a sender (the person who utters the

statement) its addressee (the person who receives it), and its referent (what the statement deals with). The 'self' can be both the sender, the referent or the addressee of a narrative of identity, but it is different 'selves' who take up these different positions. In some ways, therefore, when I talk about myself I am actually talking about someone else. The narrative may also change depending on the addressee so that the construction of the self can be different with different people and in different situations.

The narrative is accompanied by a meta-narrative which 'legitimates' it. The legitimation of the narrative can be in terms of an openly expressed theory, an implicit theory, or a reference to the cultural or societal norm. So the question "Why am I like I am?" is accompanied by a (usually unspoken) question of "Why are there people like me or like us?" The discussion of family myths (which are a kind of meta-narrative) in the preceding chapters shows how pervasive meta-narratives can be.

Although narratives are changeable they exist within a framework and only certain types of narratives are legitimised for particular individuals. When narratives challenge the 'rules of the game' powerful forces may intervene to force the narrative back to an acceptable story. These forces can be internal such as guilt, fear of fragmentation etc, or external such as threat, the withdrawal of information. The meta-narrative especially is effected by the legitimating forces which society operates on the individual's narrative.

An important element of narrative identity (and meta-narratives) is their diachronic and synchronic nature. Narratives have archaeological and teleological elements; they answer the questions "How did I get here?", "What am I doing here?" and "Where am I going?"

Narrative identity does not only operate on the individual level. Families, ethnic groups, cultures and nations can all be seen as having narrative identities, all of which are accompanied by meta-narratives which legitimise them, and all of which contain diachronic and synchronic elements.

It can be seen from the account given by the subjects of this study, that identity on a psychological level can also be treated as a narrative in which the questions become

slightly different. "How do I make sense of myself?", "How do others make sense of me?" and "How did I become the person I am now?"

In this view of identity, the conception of a mature individual or family could be developed analogously to Dreyfus and Rabinow's account of a mature philosophy discussed in Chapter 4. The mature individual would be someone who is willing to face the contradictions and discontinuities in their own lives, to live with the uncertainty and disjuncture of a changing world and who attempts to understand and confront the forces which are involved in 'writing their story'. To extend the analogy, the mature person would be one who can be both 'ironic' and 'serious' in Foucault's sense.

Maturity here is not seen as a stage in identity development but rather as a stance or position which individuals, and also families cultures and societies can take towards themselves, their origins, their current position and their future aspirations.

I believe that the notion of narrative identity is a much more productive and rich way of studying mixed-race children and inter-racial families than a strict psychoanalytic or child development framework. It frees the researcher from having to find the 'essential' nature of inter-racial relationships or mixed-race identity or from having to find some new way of redefining the stages of identity development.

Biography is often used by 'Critical' social science, with the intention of providing a voice for voiceless members of society (see Hammersley, 1993). Some recent social work writings eg Rees (1991) use biography as the starting point of empowerment in social work practice, and this way of thinking can go beyond research and into practice itself.

2. RACE AND RACIAL IDENTITY

Thus far I have confined my argument to a general discussion of identity development and critiques of modernist theories of identity. I would now like to turn to how recent post-modernist theory has influenced the thinking on race, racism and racial identity.

Modernist theories of race are set out above in Chapters one and two, but I will recapitulate briefly the development of modernist anti-racism in order to set the scene for the post-modernist critique.

Modern anti-racism started in the 1960s with the 'colour blind' approach. This approach saw the task of 'black' people as integrating into British society, and the role of social work and other professionals was to help this integration take place. The next phase during the 1970s was multi-culturalism. Multi-culturalism acknowledged that individuals do have different cultures and practices. Instead of creating a melting pot of individuals who would all become English, multi-culturalism envisaged a melting pot of cultures, whose ideal was a society in which people of different cultures would live together and tolerate each other. Thus the task of teachers and social workers was seen as helping individuals to understand and live with each others' cultures.

Anti-racism, in a reaction to this, claims that both these stances left out the oppressive forces which prevail on all black people in British society. From an anti-racist point of view the division of black people into ethnic or cultural groups was seen as a denial of their common historical subjection to colonialism and racism. It was also a denial of the institutional nature of racism in society (Dominelli, 1988, Husband, 1991). Anti-racism views the role of professionals as routing out and challenging racist beliefs and practices in both individuals and institutions within society. More recent anti-discriminatory theory sees racism as one of a number of oppressive forces, eg sexism, disabilism, ageism etc. (Thompson, 1993) Thus the notion of 'multiple oppressions' or hierarchies of oppression was developed, in which black women were seen as more oppressed than black men, black disabled women were more oppressed than black women etc.

At first glance anti-racism itself seems like a post-modernist attack on modernist British liberal ideals. Anti-racism attacks the totality of 'Britishness' and shows that the notions of 'Britishness' are racist (Husband, 1991). The attempt to integrate black people into British society holds an underlying assumption that British culture is better than their own cultures, and that any rational person living in this country would want to become fully ie nationally and culturally 'British'. Similarly, anti-racism attacks the teleology and

essentialism of these notions of Britishness. The anti-racists show how British society and culture has always treated black people as the 'other' and even liberal and radical white activists have excluded them and colluded in their oppression (Dominelli, 1988; Harris, 1991). The notion of 'institutional racism' can be seen as an example of 'decentering of the (British) subject' ie racism is not seen as individual pathology, but is rather part of a web of cultural, political and institutional practices (Ballard, 1989, Husband, 1991)[52]. Finally the notions of 'black identity' and the 'black family' embraced by anti racists are close to the 'incommensurability[53]' of discourses posited by post modernists.

Post-modernist anti-racists such as Rattansi, Cohen, and Gilroy point out, however, that instead of deconstructing racist ideologies and practices, modern social work anti-racists have simply inverted them. Thus instead of there being only one way of being British, there are now two ways of being British, black and white. 'Post-modernist' anti-racists also point out that modernist anti-racism views 'culture' and 'race' in essentialist terms and imposes its own teleology. So for modernist anti-racists, black children have a right to their 'roots' and 'culture' which are given to them by 'the black family'. 'The black family' itself is seen as having strengths which have allowed it to survive through the tests of racism. According to the post-modernist anti-racists, these essentialist notions are a simplification. They note that the relationship between, race, culture, class and gender are complex and fractured, rather than hierarchial (Brah, 1992). Racism too, is seen as a much more complex phenomenon than multi-culturists or modernist anti-racists are prepared to acknowledge. Rather than seeing a totalised, unitary institutional racism which is stitched into society, they see different racisms which are local, context bound, and time limited. Anti-racism, they claim, must therefore address racism on a local and appropriate level (Cohen, 1992). Discussing anti-racism Rattansi (1992) says:

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[52]But contrast Husband's rather unidimensional deconstruction of new right views about race with the much more complex picture provided by Saggar (1993). This contrast illustrates the poverty of the Social Work discourse.

[53]This refers to the notion that different eras (Foucault), Scientific paradigms (Kuhn) or societies (Lyotard) have world views which are radically different from each other, and are closed systems, so that no translation is possible.

"Race can produce simplified interpretations of complex social, economic and cultural relations for anti-racists as well as racists." (29)

Gilroy (1987) points out that anti-racism and racism share the same discourse of totality and exclusion, he shows that the definition of 'black' used in modern anti-racism means that other groups such as Jews, Irish etc are excluded from the anti-racist analysis (see also Alderman, 1993). In addition individual black people are included only in regard to being black; other aspects of their identity are disregarded. Gilroy maintains that rather than having a 'black' identity imposed by anti-racist theorists, black people in Britain should, and are, developing their own common identity through 'street culture' and forms of local political action[54]. Gilroy substitutes the archaeological and synchronic emphasis of the black 'national myth' (ie that what unites black people is their history of colonialism and racism, and their current position in British society) with a teleological emphasis (ie that black people are in the process of developing a 'national' identity but are still far from achieving it).

Gilroy's critique shows some of the difficulties in modernist anti-racism's view of black identity, especially 'positive' black identity. The 'modern' view, although it has largely been superseded in **educational** anti-racist discourses, is still part of social work orthodoxy, both here and in the United States, and has been confirmed by such recent authors as Ahmad, (1991), BAAF (1987), Banks, (1992a, 1992b), Macdonald (1991) McMahon and Allen-Meares (1992) and Maximé, (1993). These modernist accounts continue to see black identity as something which is essential to all black people, including mixed-race children. A positive black identity is seen by these authors as consisting of positive identification, self-esteem and pride. Many of these authors point out, along with Dominelli (1988) that whites are able to, and indeed encouraged to, question, doubt and challenge their own identity. Thus white identity is seen as fragmented, contradictory and contested whereas black identity is proud, unified, and essential. Maximé says

"Racial identity represents the ethnic/biological dimension of the person"

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[54]Ironically, Modood (1988) criticises Gilroy for marginalising Asian Britons, who are seen as possessing 'Black British' identity only in so far as they participate in Afro-Caribbean inspired 'street culture'.

(1993, 177).

This pushes forward modernist view of black identity as an essential, fundamental, and genetic property of black people. A 'positive identity' rather than being descriptive of well adjusted black people becomes prescriptive, and those who they define as 'black' and whose identity differ from their notions of 'positive' are seen as pathological. Her slogan 'Love is not enough', which is intended to show that black children's identity needs nurturing, betrays her own belief that all 'black' parents offer something extra, no matter who they are or what their background. This extra dimension of black parenting remains undefined and therefore unchallengeable. Ironically, Maximé's and Small's (1986) conception of racial identity echo the biologically based racist views of the early twentieth century which Park and Stonequist set out to challenge in their marginality studies. Black people are seen as having a (modern) identity in which meta-narratives are not challenged, where a black 'essence' underlies superficial cultural differences. Whites, in contrast, are privileged with a post-modernist identity which incorporates difference, challenges meta-narratives and disseminates meanings.

It is exactly this totalising view of black identity which is criticised by post-modernist anti-racists. Maximé does not differentiate between the black identity of a child living in a close knit community whose first language is not English and a black British child who lives in a multi-ethnic environment. All black children are seen to have a need the same kind of black identity irrespective of gender, class, culture and family type. Rattansi and Gilroy especially believe that the black community in Britain has reached a point where post-modernist or 'mature' identities are not only possible but essential for black people in this country to understand their own position and confront racism.

3.   'MIXED-RACE' IDENTITY

How does the modernist/post-modernist anti-racist debate impinge on the analysis of mixed-race children and their identity?. Within modernist anti-racist texts, mixed-race children are either ignored, totalised, ie seen as black with the same problems and issues to confront as every 'black' child (BAAF, 1987), or pathologised. The concern for positive black identity pathologises mixed-race identity. Examples of this pathologisation

are provided by the articles by Maximé and Banks (written six years after Gilroy's book!).

Banks's two articles (1992a,1992b) are similar and both illustrate his technique of cognitive ebonisation. In the first, however, this is described as a technique of working with 'mixed ethnicity' children and their mothers. In the second it is described as a technique for direct identity work with black children. So although he makes a distinction between mixed ethnicity and black children in his first article, he does not in fact see a difference at all. He sees his technique as applying universally to black children with 'identity confusion'. Similarly Banks takes an ambivalent stance towards the concept of race. Citing Small (1986), he vigorously denies that race has any 'real' meaning saying:

> ".....the social and biological idea of race represents a collection of pseudo-logical rationalisations based on a confusion of emotions, prejudiced judgements and disordered values.[55] It is for this reason that I prefer the term 'mixed ethnicity' rather than mixed-race to describe children of mixed background."

Even accepting the fact that 'mixed-ethnicity' must surely include Jewish/Irish, English/French, and Punjabi/Jamaican combinations, it is difficult to understand why Banks rejects the term 'race' altogether on the one hand, but on the other hand has developed a therapeutic technique for making children proud of the very entity of which he denies the existence.

Virtually every anti-racist text seems to start off making the point that race is socially constructed and therefore not a biologically valid term. Superstructuralist thought shows that this is a spurious point for three reasons:

> Firstly it is rooted in a biologistic (Anglo-Saxon) assumption that the biological is primary, and that biological differences are more real than social differences.

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[55] But see Rattansi, 1992, on this point.

Secondly it implies that there are other categorisations which are a 'valid' basis for discrimination. But feminists (Walkerdine, 1985; Nice 1992) and disability theorists (Oliver 1990) show that 'biological' differences such as gender and disability are socially constructed.

Thirdly, all theorists agree that it is legitimate to use political beliefs such as Nazism, which are obviously not biologically determined, as bases for judging people. The claim that 'race' does not exist in reality is thus a rhetorical point rather than part of a coherent anti-racist argument.

Banks further asserts that all black people are 'mixed-race' because all have white ancestors, and therefore the group we are discussing are 'directly mixed'. Along with Small (1986) and Maximé he here confuses the **biological** with the **social** meaning of race, resulting in an echoing of eugenicist arguments.

Banks bases his view of identity development on that of Erikson whom he calls the 'pioneer of the concept of identity'. He goes on to challenge Tizard and Phoenix's (1989) view ie that mixed-race children can have a range of identities. He says:

> "The Eurocentric foundation on which (such) psychological perspectives
> are based need a significant perceptual shift to even begin to be relevant
> to considering the identity needs of black children and adolescents.[56]"

Accusations of 'Eurocentrism' against psychological theories are common in modern anti-racist writings (Dominelli, 1988; Ahmad, 1991). However, it is difficult to know what is Eurocentric and what not. Why is it that Tizard and Phoenix's view is considered to be Eurocentric, whereas Erikson's theory is not? There is a double irony here. Erikson's theory is based on Ego Psychology, which has been attacked by European theorists such as Lacan (See Sarup, 1991) and Løvlie, (1993) as being a product of western, and particularly Anglo-Saxon, conceptions of the self and identity. Thus Banks is using an

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[56] This view is based on his research with Afro-Caribbean adolescents of whom 83% rated themselves as black or brown whereas only 8% of white adolescents described themselves as white.

'Anglo-Saxon' theory to challenge the 'Eurocentric' theories of those whom he opposes. 'Eurocentrism' for Banks has become a term with little meaning other than that he disagrees with the theory. It is a form of academic name-calling. Further difficulties become apparent when Banks's technique of Cognitive Ebonisation is considered in detail. Part of this technique, for example, involves:

> "imaginative stories.....which attempt a subliminal reversal of the negative connotations of blackness and hence black people. A brief example would be: 'Basil was a beautiful shiny black beetle. All the other animals wanted to look like him'. 'We love your glossy black coat' said the white pelican. 'I wish I had one as nice as you'. Basil was very proud indeed, no other animal looked as smart as him and he was very happy to be so handsome'. In this example the traditional portrayal of the term 'blackness' as often depicted in children's literature is modified from negative to positive." (1992b, 22).

Quite how subliminal this story is, is open to question, but it is a good example of a modern anti-racist strategy. Although on the surface the story is meant to counteract negative connotations of blackness the narrative contains a 'hidden agenda':

> The most important attribute of people is the colour of their skin.

> People should be judged according to a hierarchy in which skin colour is the main determinant of their position in the hierarchy.

> Skin colour is associated with pride and envy.

Cohen (1989, 1992), Rattansi (1992) and Troyna and Hatcher (1992) have all shown that simple reversals of racism in stories and didactic techniques are largely ineffective in anti-racist teaching. Rattansi says:

> "Both multi-cultural and anti-racist critiques ignore the actual literary and pedagogic devices involved in the construction of subject position for the child/reader in school texts. They neglect **how** texts construct meanings, as opposed to **what** they supposedly mean....too often all the protagonists make some simplistic assumptions about the ease with which subjectivities are produced by racist or anti-racist texts. (1992, 35)

Other aspects of Cognitive Ebonisation involve the use of books with black heros, positive labelling of black features etc. Citing Piaget (another modernist) he advises parents to:

> "...guard against imposing the term black on a child who rejects the word, until the child has reached an appropriate development for understanding of its abstract political meaning....some parents are unaware that rejection of the term 'black' may be due to a child's literal or concrete understanding of colour labels rather than a rejection of group identity or denial of political affinity." (22)

Banks advocates:

> "Blackness as a positive aspirational goal to be achieved can also be useful with statements such as "when you understand more about the world you will like being black" or "when you find out the good things black people have done you will be so happy to be black." (23)

Setting aside the fact that it is rather patronising towards children and may be treated by them with a degree of suspicion and anger, there are major difficulties with this statement. Firstly Banks' use of Piagetian theory to explain the child's misidentification is rather disingenuous. Unless he is talking about very young children, ie under the age of four he is simply mistaken. Even the theories of racial development which were critiqued in the first part of this study such as Goodman (1952) and Katz (1976), acknowledge that children have some sense of racial identity by the age of four. This and other studies have shown that this age could easily be pushed back to three and perhaps even further. Secondly by Banks's own account, some of his teenage subjects talked of themselves as "brown" rather than "black". Brown does not have the same abstract political connotation as black, so is Banks saying that these teenagers had not yet developed an abstract understanding of the term?

By Banks's definition, the children in my sample who described themselves as 'half-Indian' or 'half-Ghanaian' must be suffering from false consciousness, confusion or some other psychopathology, because these half identities are untenable and a sign of racial confusion.

All this points to a simple view of black identity which is possessed by all black children,

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no matter what their background, which needs to be nurtured by an identity worker. Any definitions by the children themselves of themselves which contradict the identity worker's view are seen as either a result of identity confusion or of immaturity. How cultural, gender and class identities interface with this essential black identity is not described by Banks, or Maximé. Presumably these other identities are seen as non-problematic and not in need of an identity worker.

Cognitive Ebonisation and other such therapies can be seen as potentially representing what Lyotard would call 'terror':

> "By terror I mean the efficiency gained by eliminating or threatening to eliminate a player from the language game one shares with him. He (*sic*) is silenced or consents, not because he has been refuted, but because his ability to participate has been threatened (there are many ways to prevent someone from playing). The decision maker's arrogance....says 'adapt your aspirations to our ends - or else!'." (1984, 63-64).

I wonder if Banks would extend his technique into 'Cognitive Feminisation' for girls who wanted to be fire fighters or judges. They could also be told stories about housewife heroines, or told that when they are older they will want to be a secretary and will be shown pictures of beautiful, slim and well-made up animals being envied by scruffy, obese and trousered companions.

The fact is that Banks presents a view of black identity which is the mirror image of a supposedly positive white identity which has been taken from a 'Boys Own' manual complete with heroes, villains etc. It represents exactly the kind of Anti-racist essentialism which Gilroy, Cohen, Rattansi, Modood and Brah wish to transcend.

Owusu-Bempah (1994) critiques all 'identity work'. He claims that the proponents of such intervention are themselves racist, because the basis of this work is the assumption that all black children have a basic wish to be white. He points out the severe consequences which these assumptions can have for social work intervention and decision making, and calls to task not only the social work theorists who advocate these methods, but also the whole tradition of research, including the doll studies, which give scientific

credence to the notion of the inevitability of low self esteem for black children.

My purpose for providing this critique of Banks's and Maximé's theories is not because I think they are wholly wrong or inadequate, (although Banks's papers do seem rather confused). Pride, and positive feelings are surely important for all mature identities. I do believe, however, that prescriptions for healthy identity should not be decreed by 'experts'. I have tried to show the consequences of the modernist view of racial identity and its potential impact on mixed-race children and inter-racial families. From Park and Stonequist onwards, marginality and hybridity have been seen as either pathological states with dire psychological consequences for all those involved or alternatively as a celebration of difference and a sign of breaking down barriers. I believe that neither is the case. This study has shown that inter-racial families do have to deal with specific issues and choices. Different families deal with these issues differently and there is no one 'mixed-race' family in the same way as there is no one 'black' family. Inter-racial families may be harmonious, conflictual or both. When conflict does arise it may be around race, culture, values or it may be a personality clash. It is likely to involve a complex combination of all these factors. Conflict may be open and easily expressed, or subtle and implicit. The degree of damage to children is impossible to predict. When children do show signs of distress this distress is likely to have multiple inter-relating causes, as does most psychological damage to children. It also shows that all the theorists, including Benson and Tizard and Phoenix, who see the inter-racial family as a microcosm of race relations are only seeing one aspect of a multi facetted phenomenon. Race and ethnicity are not monolithic features of society which are reproduced in families, and racism is not reducible to the interactions within families - it is built into the institutions of society as much as being manifested in the psyche's of individual racists.

Gilroy (1987) believes that black people in Britain are moving away from a definition of themselves purely as victims, and are involving themselves in political and cultural activity which is positive and affirming to black people rather than reactive to white culture. Victims are prevented from achieving 'maturity' in the definition which Dreyfus and Rabinow provided. For a victim self-doubt is an indulgence which merely

strengthens the hand of oppressive forces, allowing them to divide and rule. The kind of identity presented by Maximé and Banks is appropriate under certain conditions, but need not be universal. Gilroy and Rattansi claim, and I believe that this study has confirmed, that black and interracial families do not view themselves merely as victims of either black or white hostility, although that hostility is all too present in their lives. They are actively engaged in the process of developing new conceptions of identity which transcend the old totalising categories of race, class and nation.

These families have shown that this is not an easy task. Marginality or "hybridity is not simply a celebration of difference. Real painful choices confront these families and children. The children and parents may go through traumatic phases in which external and internal forces will combine to undermine their stability. As Bhaba says:

> "Cultural difference must not be understood as the free play of polarities and pluralities in the homogeneous empty time of the national community. It addresses the jarring of meanings and values generated in between the variety and diversity associated with cultural plentitude; it represents the process of cultural interpretation formed in the perplexity of living, in the disjunctive, liminal space of national society....In erasing the harmonious totalities of culture, cultural difference articulates the difference between representations of social life without surmounting the space of incommensurable meanings and judgements that are produced within the process of transcultural negotiation." (1990, p316)

and similarly

> "The marginal or minority is not the space of a celebratory or utopian self marginalisation. It is a much more substantial intervention into those justifications of modernity - progress, homogeneity, cultural organicism, the deep nation, the long past - that rationalise the authoritarian 'normalising' tendencies within cultures in the name of the national interest or the ethnic prerogative... the culture boundaries of the nation..... may be acknowledged as containing thresholds of meaning that must be crossed, erased, and translated in the process of cultural production" (ibid p4).

Bhaba here points to perhaps the biggest problem for modernist anti- racism. This is the assumption that what is good for their defined 'black' collectivity must also be good for each 'black' individual. This assumtion explains why all modernist accounts of racial

identity slip into a totalising and prescriptive discourse which imposes their own essentialist view of identity.

4. MOTHERS

Children of mixed race parentage are on the margin of the margins. Their disclosure is marginal to both black and white, and therefore challenges all fixed notions of identity and culture.

Having shown how modern anti-racism deals with mixed-race children, I would like to turn to the portrayal of their mothers. Two views emerge from the literature. On the one hand is the view that these mothers are racist, with the implication that they are the cause of the psychopathology in their children (Banks, 1992a; Maximé, 1993). Some theorists, using a psychoanalytic framework go further to explain their racism in terms of their early relationships with their fathers and their association of 'blackness' with 'badness' (Holland and Holland, 1984, Henriques, 1974). In this view, the mothers' low self esteem is caused by poor bonding with their fathers. They feel unworthy of white men like their idealised father, and the relationship with the black man symbolises their anger with both their fathers and themselves. Children are a concrete symbol of this anger and ambivalence, and so the anger towards the black partner is projected on to the children.

On the other hand, some theorists see the mothers as being 'mature', civilized or rational in their ability to overcome difference. Rustin says:

> "Rationality and the capacity to enjoy differences depend on a continuing developmental struggle within each individual and social group,..." (Rustin 1992,)

This dichotomy reproduces the modern anti-racist debate and its totalising celebration of either homogeneity or heterogeneity.

Neither of these positions acknowledge that both a love of difference and its fear may have motivated the mothers. Holland and Holland, for example see their patients as

depressed women who are rejected by their parents, spouses and children. All white mothers are seen as having similar motivations and pathologies, with similar consequences for themselves and their families. None of these articles shows how a successful interracial relationship might be achieved. They assume that the 'blackness' of their partner is the only significant factor about him, and this is either treated in an idealised or denigrated way. They also deny that a partner or child might symbolise many things other than blackness and badness.[57]

These accounts have an even more disturbing message than mere pathologisation of the inter-racial situation. They imply that the children's problems are solely the mother's responsibility. Fathers, both black and white, are absent from Bank's, Maximé's or Holland and Holland's accounts, except occasionally as 'role models'. The implication here is that fathers, as long as they are present and black, are by definition positive role models for their children. Mothers, on the other hand are subjected to intense scrutiny to discover the 'roots' of their racism. White fathers are not considered important at all because all the theories, and in particular object relations theory, see the mother as the primary carer, and the father is therefore given little responsibility for his children's identity development. Black mothers are assumed to provide adequate parenting - they are nurturing mothers and positive role models, so what more can the child need?

Walkerdine (1985) shows how damaging these assumptions are for women, whose role is seen as producing and nurturing children to facilitate their 'natural' ability to become productive, autonomous, rational and happy adults. Mothers are thereby seen as 'irrational' and their own feelings and desires are suppressed and discounted. This applies especially to working class mothers, whose disciplining style is seen as harmful and pathologenic. This view of motherhood is extended by the modern anti-racists to seeing the mother's role as providing nurturance for the natural 'black identity' of her children

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[57]This point is highlighted by the current television series The Bhudda of Suburbia by Hanif Kureshi which shows an Asian/English family. This is one of the very few portrayals of inter-racial families in the media, and shows how complex race, racism and sexuality can become. However, the mother is still seen as a passive foil to the father and son, so even this programme does not escape stereotyping.

(see especially Maximé on this point). Since the mothers' choice of black partners is already a sign of their pathology, by definition they cannot be 'efficient producers' of children with a positive black identity. Nice (1992) shows how black mothers are similarly pathologised by modern social theories, either by being seen as overbearing or having unlimited capacity to parent with no support.

The accounts provided in this thesis, together with those in Alihbai-Brown and Montague (1992) show that modern anti-racist views of parents in inter-racial families is limited. It is obviously true that some mothers are racist, and most will have some racist beliefs or feelings, but their motivations are complex, sometimes conflicting, and above all variable. Conflict is likely to produce racialisation, but even this connection is not ubiquitous. Over time motivations change, so individuals may have different, perhaps conflicting, motivations and feelings, depending on their situations. To reduce their motivations for partner selection to a single cause is to dehumanise both partners, many of whose choices are probably no different than 'normal' motivations for partner choice; a combination of pathology, irrationality and maturity. All the women in this study, and most in Alihbai-Brown and Montague's book chose partners of similar educational and class background, in this study because they met at university or at work. But why should this choice of 'sameness' be any more natural or rational than the choice of 'difference' in cultural or racial background. Rationality is equated by these authors to their (dare I say it .. Eurocentric) version of 'normality' which is seen as equivalent to 'conformity'. Those who challenge the natural order are seen as pathological. Bhabha (1990, 314) counters this view:

> "Hybridity is the perplexity of the living as it interrupts the representation of the fullness of life; it is an instance of iteration in the minority discourse, of the time of the arbitrary sign...through which all forms of cultural meaning are open to translation because their enunciation resists totalization."

Hybridity challenges orthodox notions of culture, and those who see it as their task to uphold cultural values (ie maintain sameness opposed to difference) seek to pathologise and further marginalise those who cross boundaries. But Bhabha is not merely celebrating difference. This is not a naive 'melting pot', assimilationist or multiculturalist discourse.

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Difference is a form of disjuncture, interruption and fracture, as well as of celebration.

Interestingly, Holland and Holland, as well as Banks refer specifically to working class women. The sample in this study was overwhelmingly middle class, and it may be that social situations and choices are more limited for working class mixed-race children[58]. Nevertheless I still doubt that all working class white women in this situation are racist, or that their racism has a single, common psychological cause. Psychoanalytic accounts of racism tend to see racism as a manifestation of psychotic defenses of splitting and projective identification, so that black people are given the negative 'split off' atributes of the racist (see Young, 1990 for a good account of this process) But if racism is multi faceted, local and context specific, why should it be associated with one particular psychological process?

Another problem with modernist accounts, especially psychoanalytic ones, is that the analytic discourse is aimed at providing an objective picture of the sequence of significant events and interpretations which predate the pathology, and in which cause and effect are determined. Thus Adorno et al, Holland and Holland and Rustin all see the roots of racism in early life, just as Stonequist, Park and Maximé all see the causes of pathology for people of mixed parentage as being in early parenting. What is never considered is that later events, such as becoming a fascist or having a mixed-race child might affect how early family life has been reconstructed, and that the context in which the narrative is given, including who is the 'addressee', also play a part.

Narrative analysis sees causation in a more circular way than does psychoanalysis, so that effects and causes are more difficult to uncouple from each other. If narrative reality takes precedence over 'truth', then psychoanalysis, along with virtually all social science, loses its claim for 'scientific' validity. Psychoanalytic accounts, together with other modernist psychologies can legitimately claim to be meaningful, but cannot claim to provide ultimate truth (Kvale, 1992; Sass, 1992). What is interesting about all the anti-

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[58]Although Maxime (1993) specifically denies this, saying all black children have the same identity issues to face.

racist accounts, even some post-modernist ones, is that their discussions of race and racism contain the metaphors of disease. Like the eugenicist racists and the cultural racists who saw black immigration as a 'disease' affecting the body politic, these anti-racists treat racism as if it is a disease of thought (Dominelli, 1988; Ahmad, 1990) or a form of psychosis (Frosh, 1989; Holland and Holland, 1984; Rustin, 1992; Wolfenstein, 1992). It is this metaphor which leads to the pathologisation of inter-racial families, and leads most authors to take the stance of social 'doctors' whose job it is to cure society of the infection. But Cohen, Gilroy, Troyna and Hatcher and van Dijk show how inadequate this metaphor is, and how misguided it is as a basis for anti-racist action. Foucault and Lyotard also show that 'power' and 'difference' can be seen as much more complicated and multi-faceted phenomena than 'social diseases'.

5.   TRANS-RACIAL FOSTERING AND ADOPTION

This thesis does not directly address trans-racial adoption and fostering. However, as mentioned above in Chapter 1, trans-racial adoption and interracial families have been treated by anti-racists similarly because in both cases black children are being brought up by white parents who are believed to lack the skills to protect their children from racism (Bagley, 1991; Banks, 1992a, 1992b; Small, 1986, 1991; Tizard and Phoenix, 1993). Some anti-racists go further than this, claiming that black and white children live in such different worlds that even the concepts of care and bonding used by western thought are not appropriate for 'black' children. This takes the claim of incommensurability to its extreme, denying even the possibility of meaningful parent-child relationships between black and white people. Harris (1992) says:

> "...the Black child can only experience bonding in a Black family. The phenomenon experienced by Black children in a White family is merely "sham bonding" which soon dissipates once the issue of colour and race becomes a factor for the child." (143)[59]

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[59]Harris does not say whether he considers interracial families to be 'black' or 'white' families. These categories are held to be self evident.

Rose's (1993) recent study of the introduction of 'same-race' placements in an Inner London authority shows the process by which this policy became accepted practice. Barn (1993) studied all black children in care in a similar local authority, and focused on their admission, patterns of placement and outcomes. Both comment that although the authority had 'same-race' placement policies, practice lagged behind the policy. Both of these authors use modernist anti-racism as their theoretical basis, and neither questions her assumptions. Rose points out the facility with which same-race policies were adopted. She sees this as a result of the political skills of the workers who originated the policy. She does not, however, acknowledge that one reason for the ease of implementation may have been the resonance of same race policies with right wing elements prevalent in the eighties, who were similarly trying to break down the hegemony of local government professionals, nor that these policies may have succeeded because they resonate with the long-standing resistance to miscegenation by racists. She uncritically accepts modernist anti-racist definitions of 'blackness' and marginalises children of mixed parentage, citing Small (1986), BAAF (1987) etc.

Barn similarly deals almost exclusively with Afro-Caribbeans, commenting only briefly about the situations of 'mixed-origin' and Asian children. While acknowledging the over-representation of 'mixed-origin' children in care,[60] and pointing out that her sample were almost exclusively from white mothers and black fathers, she offers no explanations as to why this may be. There were no children from Asian-white unions at all. Barn found that trans-racial placements were invariably traumatic and caused identity problems for the children.

Post-modernist anti-racists are less enthusiastic about 'same-race' policies. Gilroy claims that these policies were developed to protect black workers, who are in an untenable position in local authority employment. He strongly challenges the orthodoxy:

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[60]Rowe et al (1989) found in a study of 6 local authorities that children of mixed parentage were far more likely to be in care than either white or black children (Asian children were grossly under represented), and that the patterns of their care differed considerably from both black and white children. Like Barn, they offer no explanation for these findings.

"Same race adoption and fostering for minority ethnics is presented as an unchallenged and seemingly unchallengeable benefit for all concerned. What is most alarming about this is not its inappropriate survivalist tone, the crudity with which racial identity is conceived nor even the sad inability to see beyond the conservation of racial identities to the possibility of their transcendence. It is the extraordinary way in which the pathological imagery has simply been inverted, so that it forms the basis of a pastoral view which asserts the strength and durability of black family life, and in present circumstances retreats from confronting the difficult issues which result in black children arriving in care in the first place. The contents of the racists' pathology and the material circumstances to which it can be made to correspond are thus left untouched. The tentacles of racism are everywhere, except in the safe haven which a nurturing black family provides for delicate, fledgling racial identities." (1992, 58)

Bagley (1993a;1993b) conducted a long term follow up of adopted children in Britain and Canada. The sample contained same-race, inter-country and trans-racially placed children with a control group of natural children. Bagley found no differences in the mental health of adoptive children except for Innuit children adopted by Canadians. With regard to identity problems Bagley found that about 20% of adoptive children develop identity problems, but trans-racial adoption is no more likely to result in identity difficulties by any measurement than in-racially adopted teenagers. Hayes (1993) points out that none of the literature shows any connection between adoptive parent's behaviour or attitudes and identity problems, a point confirmed by Bagley, who says that difficulties occur randomly.

An interesting phenomenon in the studies of identity problems in trans-racial adoption is the range of ages that these problems are deemed to materialise. Banks and Maximé see the problems as occurring in early childhood. BAAF, Barn and Rose see them as manifesting in adolescence, whereas Small (Like Stonequist's 'marginal man') sees them occurring in early adulthood.

Bagley points out that although the evidence that trans-racial and inter-country adoption is successful personally for those concerned, it does threaten minority communities, who see it as an attack on their integrity. Although Bagley and Gilroy disagree with Barn and Rose's conclusions about trans-racial placement, there is consensus that Afro-Caribbean children are over-represented in the care system, children of mixed parentage are even

more over represented and Asian children are under-represented. Similarly, they all note the one-way nature of trans-racial placement. They all point out, as does Ahmad (1991) that it is social worker's inadequacy in assessing and working with natural families that causes this over-representation, and that practice must change.

Despite recent attempts (eg by Lau, 1993; Adcock, 1993; Smith and Berridge, 1994) to formulate a consensus about trans-racial adoption, the two sides of the debate are still far apart (Hayes, 1993; Harris, 1991), and the rhetoric on both sides is still very strong. On 3rd November 1993 Virginia Bottomley introduced an adoption white paper saying:

> "We shall reinforce the general preference of authorities and agencies for recommending married couples as adoptive parents...there should be no place for ideology in adoption. We want common sense judgements, not stereotyping. There are, for example, no good grounds for refusing on principle transracial adoptions..." (Department of Health Press Release, 3/11/93)

Barnardos criticised the white paper for:

> "failing to recognise the right of black children to a black adoptive family." (Dyer, 1993)

So 'common sense' is ranged against 'children's rights', neither acknowledging their own ideological roots. Only Bagley is prepared to face the consequences of the reality that individual success may conflict with communal rights.

We are faced with a classic post-modern dilemma: that trans-racial adoption is successful for individuals, but the institution has resonances of racism and colonialism which make it reproduce unequal power relationships between communities.

The real policy question is not the outcomes for the children concerned, but the extent to which institutions should be focused on individual rather than community need when these are in conflict. By focusing on social processes individual children may suffer, but by focusing on individuals, social relations are not challenged. I believe that the biographical approach, which contextualises individual and group histories, may be a

starting point for a new phase of anti-racist social work practice in this area.

Three further conceptual problems which bear directly on the findings of this thesis cloud the trans-racial adoption debate. Firstly it is assumed by both sides that the interests of all groups of 'black' children are identical. However, all the research shows that the patterns of care for different groups of 'black' children are at least as vriable as the differences between aggregations of 'black' and 'white' children. ('White children are never disaggregated, so it is impossible to tell what the patterns are for different groups of white children.) Secondly the nature of 'race' and ethnicity are seldom examined, and the modenist assumption that a child's race (or ethnicity) is transmitted from one generation to another is used. Ethnicity is not seen as a changing set of meanings and beliefs which each child constructs. This means that the notion of 'same race' or 'same ethnicity' are never examined or are seenas a practical rather than conceptual issue. Both sides confuse the causes and effects of racism with the notions of culture and ethnicity, resulting in convoluted and confusing justifications. The third conceptual problem is that the debate does not acknowledge the reflexive nature of social theory, so that children adopted in the 1960's may have a very different experience from those adopted in the 1990's, because the institution of adoption itself has changed considerably over the years. This means that any research which is a snapshot cannot claim to definitively decide whether trans-racial adoption is 'successful', no matter how comprehensive the research design.

6. CHILDREN

A major study has very recently been published by Tizard and Phoenix (1993) who studied 56 teenagers who had one Afro-Caribbean and one white parent. The subjects were 15 year olds from inner and outer London. They also interviewed 16 parents. The interviews with parents and children were confidential, and they were not able to relate individual parents' attitudes to those of their children.

Tizard and Phoenix found that less than 50% of their subjects considered themselves to be 'black'; most saw themselves as 'mixed-race' or 'brown'. Most had suffered from

racism, and had developed strategies to cope with this. Most of the children had high self-esteem and positive identities, although there were a small number who showed marked identity problems. There was no evidence that having a 'black' identity correlated with it being 'positive' or with high self esteem. Parents had helped with the strategies, but there was no evidence that black parents were more influential that white ones in developing identity or strategies, and the strategies of black and white parents were similar. Interestingly, their sample of parents were much less politicised than those in the present study. Many considered race not to be an issue, and only two couples saw race in political terms.

Despite its different theoretical basis, methodology and sample, Tizard and Phoenix's findings are remarkably similar to those of this study, and those of Wilson (1987). This is particularly interesting because the three studies cover the three age ranges in which identity confusion is deemed to occur, and none has found evidence that this phenomenon is widespread. There is also no evidence that these families show marked pathology or marginality. The three studies show that interracial families sometimes face particular problems, especially hostility from both communities and a lack of role models in the media with which to identify. Nevertheless there is no inter-racial family 'type' and the families are more diverse than similar. Class background and nationhood are the main forces which seem to determine how the families see themselves and cope with their lives.

Other recent research such as that by Back (1993) Bennet et al (1992)[61] and Troyna and Hatcher (1992) confirm that patterns of racism and identity in children and adolescents are not straightforward. They neither conform to modernist anti-racist categories nor are amenable to simple didactic solutions. Like this study they all found that racism is a constant threat to many of their subjects. The painful effects of racism on children of mixed parentage are dramatically highlighted in the video **Coffee Coloured Children**

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[61]Interestingly this study used a modified 'doll study' method, and concluded that young children do have ethnic preferences, but that these ore outweighed by other characteristics. The point is that if you look for preference you will find it, but asking 'how do young children choose friends?' gives a much more complex answer.

(1988) confirming that scrubbing, self mutilation and self hate can occur to mixed-race children in their natural families.

7.   IMPLICATIONS FOR SOCIAL WORK

This thesis is not advocating that modern theories of development, racism and racial identity should be jettisoned in favour of post modern theory.   I believe that there are times when totalisation is absolutely necessary.   At a time when black people are being killed on the streets, Fascist councillors are being elected and social work is under threat for its 'political correctness' (Pinker, 1993) it would be self indulgent and morally unacceptable not to support the anti-racist forces which are attempting to unite black people, and a white person has no right to tell black people how to organize their resistance. However, I believe that solidarity with anti-racism should not be equated with an uncritical and 'knee-jerk' acceptance of social work's anti-discriminatory orthodoxy. I hope that by introducing new concepts from the educational anti-racist debate into the social work discussion that anti-racism will be strengthened rather than weakened. Racisms and racist discourses have an unnerving capacity to evolve, adapt and disseminate to meet the challenges of a changing world. I believe that if anti-racism does not do the same then the anti-racist gains made in social work, already under threat, will be completely reversed (Rooney, 1993). Interestingly there are a few signs that CCETSW's supposed rigid adherence to classic anti-racism is responding to other anti-racisms (see discussion of 'same race' placements' CCETSW, 1991 62-73).

I recognise that this thesis could be taken as being part of a racist rather than an anti-racist discourse. Indeed, post-modernism has been accused by its less sophisticated critics (eg Hoggett, 1989) of celebrating the status quo. Some of the conclusions in the thesis could indeed be used by racists. I think this is a risk worth taking. It is a risk shared by all anti-racist discourses, many of whose arguments are very similar to those who they supposedly oppose. Gilroy's point about this similarity of discourses, quoted above, is graphically highlighted by recent debates about single parenthood, education and crime, in which the traditional 'British family' and 'British culture' are being portrayed as the panacea for all social ills, which is being threatened by alien forces. British family and

culture is described by the new right in virtually identical, almost mystical, terms to social work anti-racist's 'black' families and culture, (Jones and Novak, 1993, Saggar, 1993) leaving little room for variation, and confusing description with prescription. The danger of emphasising 'sameness' which is rightly critiqued by all anti-racists is counterbalanced by the danger of emphasising 'difference' or incommensurability, because it invites the racist's argument that 'different' peoples are 'exotic' and too unlike British people to fit into this society. Thus every deconstruction of racist thinking holds a danger of being deconstructed itself, and there is no right answer. As Hari said, we have to live with the undecidability.

I believe that post-modern discourses can add a depth and richness to many debates in social work, not only anti-racism. Some of these concepts are already being used by a few authors (eg Harris and Timms, 1993; Parton, 1991; Rojek et al, 1988; Sands and Nuccio, 1992) Social work however is developing a culture in which professional judgement is being increasingly devalued. This is a culture where policy makers and academics do the thinking and social workers use checklists, where theories are constantly being simplified into diagrams with concentric circles, ladders, steps, and flow charts, and where good practice is equated with efficiency and economy. Post-modernism provides a potent rebuttal of this approach, as well as to traditional Marxist and Feminist approaches (Rojek et al, 1988; Sands and Nuccio, 1992). It shows that any construction of social situations and problems is contextual, temporary and ideologically framed, that every inclusion is also an exclusion and that opposites can be the same. The potential for informing the debate is staggering. The use of narrative and biography as a tool for empowering practice has already been suggested by Rees (1991) and similarly holds tremendous potential for future exploration, as a counter to the normalising systems approaches which are so prevalent in the profession. Imagine a profession based on Foucault's (1984, xiii-xiv) 'de-individualizing principles':

> "Free political action from all unitary and totalizing paranoia
>
> Develop action, thought and desires by proliferation, juxtaposition and disjunction, and not by subdivision and pyramidal hierarchization
>
> Withdraw allegiance from old categories of the Negative (law, limit, castration, lack, lacuna), which Western thought has so long held sacred

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as a form of power and an access to reality. Prefer what is positive and multiple; difference over uniformity, flows over unities, mobile arrangements over systems. Believe that what is productive is not sedentary but nomadic.

Do not think that one has to be sad to be militant, even though the thing one is fighting is abominable. It is the connection of desire to reality (and not its retreat into forms of representation) that possess revolutionary force.

Do not use thought to ground a political practice in truth; nor political action to discredit, as mere speculation, a line of thought. Use political practice as an intensifier of thought, and analysis as a multiplier of the forms and domains for the intervention of political action.

Do not demand of politics that it restore the 'rights' of the individual, as philosophy has defined them. The individual is the product of power. What is needed is to 'de-individualize' by means of multiplication and displacement, diverse combinations. The group must not be the organic bond uniting hierarchized individuals, but a constant generator of de-individualisation.

Do not become enamoured of power."

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