



RETHINKING "MIXED RACE": CONFERENCE PROGRAMME

Friday December 12th 1997. National Institute for Social Work, 5 Tavistock Place London. Organisers: Dr. Miri Song, University of Kent at Canterbury; Dr. David Parker, University of Birmingham.

This conference shows that the issue of "mixed race" remains an important and enduring social issue. A weakness of the conference was that many of the presenters choose to view the mixed race issue as being a recent development, they concentrated on recent intermarriage between "Black" and "White". There was a failure and perhaps reluctance to provide a detailed historical examination of the Anglo-Indians and other similar groups.

It appears that the conference will be held again in December 1998 and I hope to prevail on Dr. Ann Lobo to present her work at the conference. Dr. Lobo has researched the Anglo-Indian situation in London and India and would make a substantial contribution to the conference. In total, the Conference appears to have been a substantial success and I look forward to reporting on its continuing success - Editor.

"It's All in the Mix: Presentations of Metis(se) Subjectivities as Performance and Resistance". Jayne Ifekwunigwe Department of Sociology University of East London.

For the past seven years, I have worked with multiple generations of so-called "mixed race" ("Black" and "White" continental African/British, continental

African/European, or African Caribbean/British) women and men in England - what I refer to as the English-African Diaspora.

Initially, over a two year period, in Bristol, England, I worked with a preliminary group of 25 women (metisse) and men (metis) with "White" British or European mothers and Black continental African or African Caribbean fathers in order to elucidate and illuminate the myriad ways in which these individuals (griottes (f) and griots (m)) sense of place and belonging are both moulded by and resistant to the cultural paradoxes of "race", nation, gender and generation. The primary objectives of this research enterprise are the "normalisation" of me'tis(se) family life, the decentralisation but not the exclusion of "race" in favour of gender, ethnicity, class and generation as alternative and interdependent socio-cultural markers as well as the articulation of me'tis(se)lived realities from the vantage point of agency and empowerment. Buttressed against the homogenising master discourses of nineteenth century "race" science and the fragmenting rhetoric of postmodernist notions of hybridity, the focus of this paper will be dialogic (I myself am metisse, Nigerian-Irish-English-Guyanese) interpretations of personal narratives as both testimonies of resistance and performances of subjectivities.

"Mixed race and class formation in the mirror of the Caribbean". Chris Smaje, Department of Sociology University of Surrey.

Many of our ideas about "race" and "mixed race" are grounded in European intellectual and political traditions in ways that are not always apparent. This paper examines how these ideas have played out socially, politically and intellectually in a different historical setting - the Caribbean republic of Haiti - in order to provide a counterpoint to familiar ways of thinking about race. During both the colonial and the postcolonial period, class formation and class politics in Haiti have been organised through the mirror of a gradation of colour distinctions. The paper both describes these developments and attempts to extract from them a more general theoretical framework for thinking about "mixed race" in relation to class or group formation. Distinguishing between views of race as a property of social groups and as a cultural category which invests claims to collective identity, the paper relates the idea of

"mixed race" to the way that kinship systems conjoin ideologies of social and natural classification. In this respect, it seeks to provide a non-reductionist approach to the concept of race or mixed race which is nevertheless attuned to the way that racial categorisation acts as exclusionary ideology. This material is used to reflect critically upon the manner in which several prevailing currents of sociological theory articulate the relation between race class and nationalism.

"Developing the question on ethnicity for the 2001 Census". John Dixie, Office for National Statistics.

The talk will cover:

- users' requirements for information from the 2001 Census
- The 1991 Ethnic Group Question
- Testing the possible question for 2001, including a category for "Mixed Race"

"Mixed Race' in Official Statistics". Charlie Owen Thomas Coram Research Unit, Institute of Education. University of London.

Statistics are not neutral. They both reflect and construct distinctions within society. The 1991 Census was the first British census to include a question on ethnic group. However, similar questions had previously been included in other official statistics. In particular, the large-scale regular household surveys included such questions, and results from the Labour Force Survey were used, by the Office of Population Censuses and Surveys to estimate Britain's ethnic minority populations.

To be useful for official statistics, any classification must have a small number of distinct categories. The presentation of distinct ethnic groups in official statistics tends to reinforce the notion that ethnic groups are separate and distinct. In practice, life is more complicated. In modern Britain many people have a partner from a different ethnic group to themselves, and their children have an ethnically mixed

parentage. For such people to be forced to choose the ethnic group of one or other parent is often to force a choice which is in conflict with their own identity.

The area of "mixed race" is one where demography and social definitions can clearly be seen to intersect. The growing number of people of "mixed race", particularly young people, has contributed to the emergence of insider-defined 'mixed' categories. This paper will discuss some demographic data from official statistics, and will reflect on the tensions between the demographic categories and the ways people construct their own identities.

"A Confusing Practice." Erika Tan (artist)

Through the use of both personal experiences (anecdotes) and my visual art practice (slides and possibly video clips) I would like to touch upon some of the issues that I feel are of importance to me:

1. Issues of terminology, categorisation and identification.
2. "Mixed race" as a conceptual basis for my art practice.
3. Language: dominant discourse that fixates on binary oppositions or concepts of "balance" in the consideration of mixed race, how to navigate through this to one's own position.
4. Passing: the restrictions and avenues open.

The actual structure of the talk will take the shape of:

- Introduction to my personal history and the particular context of being mixed race in Singapore during the 1970s-80s. The difference between Eurasians and contemporary "Euro-Asians".
- Followed by the disjuncture I experienced in the configuration of "mixed race" on my arrival to Britain i.e. my comparative invisibility now to the visibility I experienced in Singapore.
- At this point I would like to show a series of photographic works that explores in particular my 'Chinese' identity (ambiguity, ambivalence, exclusion/inclusion, absence/presence).

- "Mixed race" as my art practice strategy or conceptual basis for my work. Problematising the location of my work in frameworks that are essentialist in nature.
- Video clip from an installation I made called "Passing", discussion of my personal ability to "slip between the boundaries" and the personal and social limits and restrictions involved.
- Slides of recent work.

"Mixed Race and the Construction of Abnormality". Jill Olumide (University of Surrey).

This paper looks at some of the ways in which (what may be understood as) mixed race or race mixing comes to be understood as abnormal or even pathological. Often abnormality is constructed around family forms and within the family, divisions between male and female, parent and child are prime targets for differentiation and pathologisation. Some might argue - exploitation.

The discourses through which such issues are constructed resonate with earlier discourses of eugenics which stress heredity and notions of "stock". They also link with dominant discourses which construct notions of separate (but equal) groups considered to be races.

The author is engaged in the investigation of the construct and its implications for the lives of those to whom it is applied and is a member of the People in Harmony organisation which seeks to address the impact of racial division in human relationships.

"Vulnerable mixed race children: professional ideologies and parental realities". Margaret Boushel. School for Policy Studies University of Bristol.

In Britain, young mixed race children are more likely to receive state care than any other children. However, their experiences, and the experiences of their parents

have received little research attention. This paper will provide firstly a brief review of existing research in order to highlight some of the main factors which may contribute to the particular vulnerability of this group of children. These factors are identified as the interaction between poverty, racism, locality and structurally reinforced and culturally defined gender roles.

Secondly, I will explore the varying and ambivalent responses to this research within the social work and health visiting professions. Drawing on a range of professional literature and current professional debates, this will be followed by a more general exploration of the ways in which current professional ideologies, particularly in social work, conceptualise the experiences, needs and responsibilities of mixed race children and their parents. I will argue that the complex experiences of these children and their parents are often ignored or conceptualised in a simplistic way. The possible reasons for this lack of rigorous attention and its repercussions for mixed race children will be explored and some areas for further research identified.

"How sociology imagined race mixing". Frank Furedi, Department of Sociology. University of Kent.

Throughout the first half of this century, one of the most prominent themes in the emerging field of race relations was that of mixing. The preoccupation with boundary maintenance took a variety of forms. Monographs on the subject of the mulatto, the half caste, the detribalised native or the Anglo-Indian all stressed the problematic character of hybridity.

This paper argues that concern with those who crossed the boundary or who did not fit into the existing racial categories increased as racial thinking was forced on the defensive. The disproportionate amount of research on this aspect of the problem reflected the difficulty that sociology had with acknowledging the principle of equality. By reexamining this discussion, this paper hopes to illuminate the subsequent post-sixties discussion on this subject.

The paper is based on archival material drawn from Anglo-American foundations, race relations organisations and official bodies. It attempts to explain how the research agenda of social scientists was influenced by the deliberations of these semi-official bodies.

Biographies of Conference Speakers

Miri Song is a lecturer in sociology at the University of Kent at Canterbury. As a Korean-American woman who now lives in Britain, her main research interests include theorizing on 'race', cultural identity, and the intersections of family and work. She has a forthcoming book about children's labour and cultural identities in family-run ethnic businesses (Temple University Press).

David Parker is a lecturer in the Department of Cultural Studies and Sociology, University of Birmingham. His previous research was published as *Through Different Eyes: The Cultural Identities of Young Chinese People in Britain*. He is currently working on issues connected with "mixed race" in British Chinese history.

Jayne O. Ifekwunigwe, is a Nigerian-Irish-English-Guyanese anthropologist by training (Joint Ph.D. Medical Anthropology, University of California, Berkeley/University of California, San Francisco) and a self-taught visual artist (photographic collage) and poet. She lectures in Anthropology and Sociology at the University of East London and has just finished a book *Scattered Be-Longings: Cultural Paradoxes of Race, Nation and Gender* which will be published in 1998 by Routledge.

Chris Smaje teaches sociology at the University of Surrey. As well as researching and publishing on issues of health and ethnicity, he has written on race and social theory and is currently engaged in work on the historical sociology of race and hierarchy in colonial and postcolonial societies.

John Dixie is the Statistician in the Office for National Statistics Census Division responsible for consulting the main Census users about their requirements for information from the 2001 Census, and arranging the programme of testing possible questions and form designs. His previous experience includes working in the steel and gas industries, a Research Fellowship at the University of Strathclyde, a lectureship at Brunel University, and a period at the Civil Service College.

Charlie Owen is a social researcher at the Thomas Coram Research Unit in the Institute of Education, University of London. He has a particular interest in the statistical analysis of large datasets, such as the Census, including questions of ethnicity and of mixed parentage. He is a member of the Radical Statistics Group, concerned with the demystification of social statistics.

Erika Tan is an artist, independent curator, and arts worker at Lambeth Chinese Community Association. Born in Singapore, she migrated to England at the age of 18 and has studied Anthropology and then Fine Art, Film and Video.

Jill Olumide is working at the Department of Continuing Education, University of Surrey on a European Social Fund Project investigating advice and guidance to refugees and asylum seekers in the UK. Her research interests are education, and conceptualisations of "mixed race". She is a member of People in Harmony, an organisation offering support to "mixed race" individuals and families.

Margaret Boushel is a Lecturer in Social Work at the School for Policy Studies at the University of Bristol. Her main research is in the field of child and family welfare, with a particular interest in gender, race and cross-cultural perspective's in family support and child protection services and parental protective strategies. She has had many years' experience as a social worker, team manager and policy adviser in London and Scotland.

Frank Furedi is a Reader in Sociology at the University of Kent. He has published widely in the area of nationalism and racial thinking. This summer he has published a book which deals with the subject of racial thinking and competitive fertility. His main research project - a study of the history of the sociology of race relations - will be published next year, under the title *Silent Race War*.