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Published online: 02 Aug 2017.

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Cultural capital as whiteness? Examining logics of ethno-racial representation and resistance

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ABSTRACT

There is a significant, longstanding tradition in British sociological research that renders cultural capital synonymous with whiteness. This article suggests that one substantive factor that contributes to the enduring relationship between whiteness and cultural capital is the paucity of research on the Black and ethnic minority middle classes. Studies of social class in the United Kingdom frequently render middle-class life synonymous with whiteness and all too often fix ethno-racial identities to the working classes. The article draws on a 14-month comparative ethnography as a case study to provide an asset-based reading of cultural capital among the Black Caribbean middle classes in Britain. The findings suggest that the seemingly exclusive link between whiteness and cultural capital is problematised by Black Caribbean young people, and therefore should be further critiqued in sociological and educational research, especially when developing cultural capital analyses.

Introduction

There is a significant, longstanding tradition in British sociology of education that renders cultural capital synonymous with whiteness (Archer 2011; Reay 2007). For decades, studies of social class in Britain have frequently equated middle-class life to whiteness (Nayak 2007) and all too often confined ethno-racial identities to the working classes (Rollock et al. 2015). This development is almost entirely unintentional, but nonetheless consequential for Black and ethnic minority communities' representation in sociological research. To date, there is surprisingly little known about middle-class Black and ethnic minority young people, and even less is known about how they operationalise cultural capital in schools. The raft of research highlighting the white middle classes as bearers of cultural capital and the dearth of scholarship describing Blacks as capital-carrying subjects inadvertently results in perceptions of a fixed, long-term relationship between whiteness and cultural capital. Contemporary exegeses and current uses of cultural capital therefore necessitate critical interrogation. I ask: is cultural capital inherently and exclusively shaped by whiteness? This article intervenes in the commonplace construction of cultural capital in educational

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research as a configuration of whiteness and interrogates the politics of ethno-racial representation in social class research in the field of education.

I contend that the paucity of research on the Black and ethnic minority middle classes (Meghji 2016; Rollock et al. 2015) contributes to an enduring relationship between whiteness and cultural capital. This factor, among others, contributes to the proliferation of a one-sided 'class imaging' of Black and ethnic minority pupils (Archer 2010). I deploy the term 'class imaging' to signal the limited, and arguably racist, class perceptions frequently associated with Black identities – assumptions that render blackness synonymous with material and cultural poverty. To counter logics of deficiency and acknowledge the complexity of class relations among Black youth, this article draws on a 14-month ethnography as a case study to provide an asset-based reading of cultural capital among Black Caribbean middle-class young people in South London (Wallace 2016). First, I explore Bourdieu's original definition of cultural capital, after which I briefly examine recent scholarship on cultural capital sensitive to ethno-racial differences. I then outline the design of the study and discuss the findings, which illustrate how Black Caribbean middle-class young people in a large state school question the singular 'class imaging' of Blacks in British schools and society. The findings offer insights into the racialisation of cultural capital and underscore why the little-questioned affiliation between whiteness and cultural capital should be challenged in sociological and educational research.

To avoid essentialist and oversimplified renditions of whiteness, I characterise whiteness in broad, dynamic terms, acknowledging its (in)visibility and variability across time and space. Informed by critical whiteness studies, this article defines whiteness as a historical system of thought and action that affords undue structural, material and political privileges that often remains unmarked and unquestioned in contemporary British society (Nayak 2007). More specifically, whiteness is a set of unspoken norms (Gillborn 2005) and a 'category of positional superiority that exists in juxtaposition to "non-whiteness"' (Bablak, Raby, and Pomerantz 2016, 57). The unremarked normalcy of whiteness – as a political and institutional practice – is informed by decades of European colonialism and imperialism (Gillborn 2005) – forms of domination that endure through the current global political order, neoliberal economic arrangements, institutionalised racism in education and hierarchies of difference in everyday life (Ball 2015). To this end, whiteness rests at the foundation of structural inequality in British society and beyond (Rollock et al. 2015). By complicating the role of whiteness in social class research in local settings across Britain, we can better understand the racialisation of class differentiation, division and domination. The subsequent sections critique the use of cultural capital as the exclusive expression of elite and middle-class whiteness.

Cultural capital and ethno-racial dominance

Bourdieu's notion of cultural capital enjoys considerable currency in sociological and educational research. Like his other key concepts, cultural capital has become a buzzword often used without definitional specificity (Moore 2004). But the conceptual purchase of cultural capital as Bourdieu conceived of it cannot be reduced to popular parlance, nor can its theoretical complexities be diminished to common sense (Bennett et al. 2009). Bourdieu defined cultural capital as 'instruments for the appropriation of symbolic wealth socially designated as worthy of being sought and possessed' (1977, 488). Cultural capital

has 'the capacity to reproduce itself, produce profits, expand and contains the tendency to persist' (Bourdieu 1986, 241). Put plainly, Bourdieu conceived of cultural capital as tastes, knowledge and skill sets (re)produced by privileged groups in homes, schools and related institutional fields that influence dispositions and the accumulation of power (Moore 2004).

Bourdieu extended the concept 'capital' beyond classic Marxist understandings of it by proposing cultural capital in three forms: an embodied state, noted as 'long-lasting dispositions of the mind and the body' that are observed through speech, stance and style choices (Bourdieu 1986, 245); an objectified state, represented in the material production of 'art works, galleries, museums, laboratories, scientific instruments, books … [and] artefacts of various kinds' (Moore 2008, 105); and an institutionalised state, reflected in professional credentials and educational qualifications (Moore 2004, 2008). In this respect, cultural capital represents an amendment to the Marxist traditions of social class – a necessarily generative point of departure useful for considering the material and immaterial dimensions of social class (Robbins 2005).

Although Bourdieu offered insights into the composition, mobilisation and transmission of different forms of cultural capital throughout his career (Bourdieu 1977, 1990b; Bourdieu and Passeron 1977), his perspectives on the canonisation and legitimation of racialised expressions of cultural capital warrant further investigation. In the concept, 'cultural capital', whose culture indexed privilege and power? In settings where middle-class white ethnics do not constitute the dominant group, is it their cultures alone that have premium? Bennett and Silva (2011, 430) contend that while Bourdieu's conceptualisation of capital is distinctive, '… the concept of culture … is one that Bourdieu pretty much takes for granted in assuming … that culture is the symbolic plane of collective representations'. But the symbolic plane to which Bennett and Silva (2011) refer is not the sole preserve of any single ethno-racial group (Wacquant 2013). Based on Bourdieu's scholarship, cultural capital does not possess an inherent ethno-racial character. However, empirical engagements with Bourdieu's work suggest the opposite. Research highlighting the white middle classes as bearers of cultural capital and the paucity of scholarship describing Blacks as capital-carrying subjects fortify perceptions of whiteness as an intrinsic feature of cultural capital (Hollingworth and Williams 2009; Reay 2007; Reay et al. 2007; Savage 2015). Cultural capital is not exclusively a resource for Whites. In Bourdieusian terms, cultural capital is fundamentally a class resource that is unequally distributed across social fields through systems of inheritance, informing the habitus and the accumulation of social and economic advantages in social fields. However, as noted in the section that follows, this does not mean that ethnicity and race are not implicated in the formation and expression of cultural capital.

Cultural capital as white property?

The enduring, near-universal premium attributed to white European aesthetics as the dominant markers of cultural capital reinforces the wider historical system of ethno-racial domination. Such a provocation has been the topic of a recent wave of sociological and educational studies (Franceschelli 2014; Modood 2004; Rampersad 2014; Reay 2007), and has led to new formulations of cultural capital sensitive to ethno-racial differences. From multicultural capital (Reay et al. 2007), ethnic capital (Modood 2004) and transnational cultural capital (Ball, Reay, and David 2003) through to Islamic capital (Franceschelli 2014), racialised facilitative capital (Rampersad 2014) and linguistic capital (Yosso 2005), these

new conceptualisations provide heterodox and orthodox approaches to unhinging whiteness and cultural capital. I now offer some attention to the most prominent of these theoretical amendments – specifically, multicultural capital (Reay et al. 2007), ethnic capital (Modood 2004), transnational cultural capital (Ball, Reay, and David 2003) and linguistic capital (Yosso 2005).

Reay et al. (2007) complicate understandings of the relationship between whiteness, middle-class privilege and ethnic minority communities. Based on in-depth interviews with 63 families in London, Reay et al. (2007) suggest that white middle-class families send their children to urban, inner-city state comprehensives to further enrich their middle-class identities. What appears to be 'risky' school choice decisions are in fact strategic social class investments in diversifying or accentuating whiteness through substantive associations with ethno-racial diversity in schools. White middle-class pupils gain added advantages in multiple social fields through the acquisition of 'multicultural capital' – knowledge of and familiarity with ethnic minorities relevant for signalling a mature worldliness in an increasingly diverse Britain. The surplus social profits acquired through multicultural capital allows segments of the white middle classes to distance themselves from the white working classes and differentiate themselves from the traditional white middle classes based on their heightened cross-cultural intelligence. With multicultural capital, Reay et al. contend, white middle-class pupils at inner-city comprehensives represent an emerging contingent of cultural omnivores – 'streetwise, globally knowledgeable, tolerant, inclusive' (2007, 1052). In their formulation of multicultural capital, Reay et al. (2007) gesture towards an ethnicised cultural capital that serves as a resource for the enhancement of white identities – a transactional good that can be acquired through school choice rather than sheer chance.

Ball, Reay, and David (2003) also extend the conceptual boundaries of cultural capital. In their assessment of the university selection processes and the higher education experiences of ethnic minorities, Ball, Reay, and David spotlight the often unrecognised assets among ethnic minorities from immigrant families. They address the lacuna in the literature on ethnic minorities' university choice decisions by providing more critical optics through which to understand ethnic minorities' higher education experiences. Giving credence to the pre-migration class histories of ethnic minority immigrant families, Ball, Reay, and David propose transnational cultural capital as 'forms of legitimate knowledge that have efficacy within the field of UK higher education' (2003, 345). Although Ball, Reay, and David's (2003) 'rucksack approach' to understanding migrants' cultural capital has been critiqued for its limited understandings of how 'migration-specific cultural capital re-produced intra-migrant differentiations of gender, ethnicity and class' (Erel 2010, 642), transnational cultural capital offers introductory insights into the complex formations of cultural capital among diverse constituencies whose homelands are beyond the shores of the British isles. In this regard, Ball and colleagues illustrate that the white middle classes are not the only ones with the capacity to mobilise and (re)produce cultural capital in Britain. Immigrants from sub-Saharan Africa, the Caribbean, South Asia and elsewhere come to Britain with class resources worth acknowledging and appreciating.

While multicultural capital and transnational cultural capital build upon classic Bourdieusian analyses, ethnic capital represents a departure from traditional Bourdieusian perspectives, drawing instead on Zhou's (2004) rendition of capital, which frames ethnicity as a productive resource with institutional and market implications. Modood (2004) suggests that while Bourdieu's conceptions of cultural capital is useful for explaining educational

achievement disparities between advantaged and disadvantaged classes, cultural capital is often less generative in its explanatory power for elucidating why some groups of disadvantaged classes fare better than expected. Based on qualitative research among second-generation British South Asian and Chinese youth, Modood (2004) proposes ethnic capital to bridge the limits of cultural capital. Modood contends that 'the motor of the British South Asian and Chinese overcoming of disadvantage lies in migrant parents getting their children to internalize high educational ambitions and to enforce appropriate behaviour' (2004, 87). In this context, Modood complicates dominant understandings of group outcomes by spotlighting the traditions and practices deployed by groups of ethno-racial minorities that support their educational and economic advancement in a white-dominated society. This further reinforces the fact that the white middle classes are not the only ones who draw on capitals to foster social and scholastic success.

Although ethnic capital, transnational cultural capital and multicultural capital have provided different extensions of cultural capital, the most popular theoretical extension is Yosso's (2005) critical race theory exposition on community cultural wealth. In her much-celebrated paper – indeed, the most cited piece in the journal *Race, Ethnicity and Education* to date – Yosso (2005, 70) critiques the (mis)uses of Bourdieu's framework that inadvertently promote logics of ethno-racial deficiency. She argues:

> Bourdieu's theoretical insight about how a hierarchical society reproduces itself has often been interpreted as a way to explain why the academic and social outcomes of People of Colour are significantly lower than the outcomes of Whites. The assumption follows that People of Colour 'lack' the social and cultural capital required for social mobility. As a result, schools most often work from this assumption in structuring ways to help 'disadvantaged' students whose race and class background has left them lacking necessary knowledge, social skills, abilities and cultural capital. (Yosso 2005, 70)

To counter representations of cultural capital as profitable assets of which people of colour are deprived, Yosso (2005) proposes six related forms of capital that constitute cultural wealth in communities of colour. Yosso's constellation of capitals include: linguistic capital, varied language and communication skills developed across dominant and non-dominant fields; aspirational capital, the stocks of resilience to pursue goals despite obstacles; social capital, networks of peers and power useful for negotiating local and institutional fields; navigational capital, the skill sets deployed to successfully manoeuvre through institutions historically hostile to People of Colour; resistant capital, counter-cultural knowledge and skills that challenge the presence and perpetuation of inequality; and familial capital, cultural knowledge, memories and pedagogies preserved through varied formations of kinship.

Despite the popularity of Yosso's (2005) capitals scheme, the set of capitals she proposes is increasingly subject to critique, chief among which is the view that Yosso's theoretical amendments are insufficiently Bourdieusian. Crozier (2016), for example, contends that Yosso's work does not mention or engage habitus and field as part of her exposition on the inequality of cultural capital, but instead isolates capital in ways that are counterproductive to a full Bourdieusian analysis of social life. Another significant critique is that Yosso's formulation contributes to the unceasing proliferation of capitals, using the concept to signify valuable resources that are not capitals in a strict Bourdieusian sense (Bennett and Silva 2011). Not all resources, assets or funds of knowledge constitute capitals (Savage, Warde, and Devine 2005). Yet the term 'capital' is frequently used as a synonym for resources – an error that ultimately undermines the explanatory power of the concept as Bourdieu intended.

From a Bourdieusian perspective, goods and resources are not capitals if they do not produce gains in the dominant market. This is not to suggest that assets and resources which do not yield market gains are not socially legitimate or culturally credible. However, works like that by Yosso (2005) which seek to rightfully recognise cultural wealth among communities of colour long deemed culturally and materially impoverished need to showcase the market implications of such assets – in the way traditional Bourdieusian analysis requires.

Although these critiques hold significant merit, Yosso (2005) did not aim to advance a Bourdieusian analysis. She drew on the most robust, critical emancipationist programme on race and racism – Critical Race Theory (CRT) – to offer an epistemological break from ethno-racial deficiencies advanced by those using the range of Bourdieu's conceptual tools. CRT seeks to elucidate and eliminate racism as a formative feature of social life (Gillborn 2005). CRT is sensitive to the construction and consequences of whiteness in law, public policy, education and related spheres (Rollock et al. 2015). From a CRT lens, the wealth of whiteness is directly linked to constructions of poverty and pathology among communities of colour. Yosso (2005) summons CRT not simply to critique the premium placed on the white middle classes, but also to signify the intellectual and political urgency of a different theoretical framework useful for articulating the often-overlooked powers among communities of colour.

Multicultural capital, transnational cultural capital, ethnic capital and linguistic capital are all theoretical amendments to Bourdieu's theorisation of cultural capital. For Reay et al. (2007) and others, Bourdieu's own oeuvre grants some sensitising insights into ethnicity, race and migration that can prove profitable for understanding the ethno-racial elements of class relations, for challenging the forced union between whiteness and cultural capital, and for advancing rigorous analyses on the Black and ethnic minority middle classes. For Modood (2004), Bourdieu's concepts proved beneficial when combined with Zhou's rendition of capital – creating a hybrid cultural–social capital model. Still for others like Yosso (2005), critical theories of race (such as CRT) break away from a dominant white episteme, offering a theoretical source not yet substantively provided by Bourdieusians for disarming prejudicial ethno-racial logics. Despite their varying approaches, the aforementioned conceptual amendments share a common political persuasion worth noting – to challenge the political project of whiteness and the disadvantages it underwrites for communities of colour.

As stated previously, the relationship between cultural capital and whiteness endures in British sociology of education, in part, because of scant attention to the Black and ethnic minority middle classes as capital-carrying subjects. The following section examines the dearth of scholarship on Black middle classes in Britain.

Who holds cultural capital? Research on the Black and ethnic minority middle classes

To date, considerably less is known about the Black and ethnic minority middle classes than about the white middle classes in the United Kingdom. While a decades-old tradition of research on the white middle classes and elites continues with considerable gusto (Bennett et al. 2009; Savage et al. 2013; Savage 2015), the close, critical study of the Black middle classes has long been a neglected area of research. The gap in the literature on the middle classes is an invitation to shift scholarly attention beyond middle-class whiteness to

examine unexplored contingents of the middle classes – including the Black middle classes. Commenting on the formation of the Black middle classes in Britain, Phillips and Sarre (1995, 91) argue that 'if social science has any claims to an emancipatory activity, it should challenge middle class Whiteness as a principle …'. An emerging wave of critical scholarship heeds Phillips and Sarre's (1995) call to interrogate the relationship between whiteness and middle-class identity in ways that have gone unrecognised for decades.

Empirical studies on the Black and ethnic minority middle classes are small scale but significant. The works range between: discussions of the simultaneous experience of class privilege and racial subordination (Archer 2011; Ayling 2015); explorations of ethnic minority parents' engagement with teachers and school leaders (Archer 2010; Vincent et al., 2012); theorisations of a 'triangle of identity' to underscore the fluid racial and class identifications that Britain's Black middle classes negotiate daily (Meghji 2016); and examinations of Black Caribbean middle-class pupils' defence of the Black working classes (Wallace 2016). The largest of all these studies is Rollock et al.'s (2015) *The Colour of Class*.

Rollock et al. (2015) provide the first in-depth study of the heterogeneity of the Black middle classes in Britain. Rollock and her colleagues examine how Black middle-class parents train, monitor and support their children in British schools to ensure their social advancement and academic success. To this end, Rollock et al. (2015) lay bear the limits of single-axis class analyses that ignore the joint operation of race and ethnicity. Based on in-depth interviews with 62 Black Caribbean parents (49 mothers and 13 fathers) in professional and managerial occupations throughout the United Kingdom, Rollock et al. (2015) contend that while middle-class status affords participants some advantages, the challenges of racism are not thwarted by middle-class standing. They report that although Black middle-class mothers and fathers draw on cultural, economic and social capital in and outside of schools, racism constrains receptions of their middle-class identities in ways that are unusual in the experiences of the white middle classes. In response, the Black middle classes often develop strategies to counter white racism and enhance their advantages in wider racialised social fields, of which schools are a part. The wealth of middle-class whiteness, then, is not found in the exclusive ownership of cultural capital, but is located in the 'natural' alignment of one's stock of capitals with the wider racialised social field, the conduciveness of the racialised field to white tastes and styles, and the fruitful affiliation between certain expressions of (cultural) capital and the wider architecture of power relations that typically favours middle-class whiteness.

The scarcity of research illustrating how the Black and ethnic minority middle classes in Britain operationalise cultural capital arguably contributes to the affiliation between whiteness and cultural capital in the popular imaginary. With sustained study of how the white middle classes use cultural capital to enhance their social positions, and the limited representation in academic research of the Black and ethnic minority middle classes utilising dominant cultural capital for social gain, a pernicious class imaging is authorised – a racialised class determinism that equates blackness and other racial minority significations to material and cultural poverty, and whiteness to cultural visibility and social class variation (Archer 2011; Yosso 2005). The details of this study outlined in the following are motivated by a need for additional research on Black and ethnic minority young people's use of dominant cultural capital in inner-city schools. The findings showcased in this article challenge the view that whiteness and cultural capital are inevitably coterminous projects.

Methods and sample

Data presented in this article are drawn from a cross-national ethnography focused on the educational experiences of working-class and middle-class Black Caribbean young people in London and New York City. Seeing that research on the Black Caribbean population in Britain tends to prioritise the experiences of working classes among them, this article focuses on the middle-class participants in the London case to underscore the heterogeneity of Black Caribbeans in Britain. I classify Black Caribbean young people as middle class if their parents self-identified as such (N=5) or if the pupils indicated their family's middle-class standing based on degree attainment (from BA to terminal degrees), home ownership and professional occupation (e.g. The National Statistics Socio-economic Classification 1 and 2), in keeping with the UK's Standard Occupational Classification Manual. Throughout this project, the designation, 'middle class' prioritise educational attainment, as opposed to annual earnings, to underscore the linkages between education, cultural capital and upward social mobility discussed in Bourdieu's work (Bourdieu 1990a, 1990b; Bourdieu and Wacquant 1992).

Participants in the London sample were Year 10 and Year 11 pupils at Newton Secondary – one of the largest state comprehensives in South London. With a long history of serving the white working classes, Newton has witnessed a sharp increase in the number of Black Caribbean, Black African and other ethnic minority pupils enrolling in the school due to demographic changes in the school's catchment area. Between 2012 and 2013, semi-structured open-ended interviews were conducted with 30 second-generation Black Caribbean pupils whose parents consented to their participation in the study. One-on-one interviews were matched by focus group interviews and seven months of ethnographic observation in classrooms, canteens and other campus venues. Core participants included 16 females and 14 males: 17 working-class pupils (based on free school meals eligibility, parents' educational attainment and parents' employment) and 13 middle-class pupils (based on parents' university completion and professional credentials). All of these participants had at least one parent who migrated from Jamaica, Trinidad, Guyana, Barbados, Montserrat, Antigua & Barbuda, Grenada and the Bahamas. This article focuses on 13 in-depth interviews and three focus group interviews with the middle-class participants. In particular, I highlight the comments of participants who self-identified as Black middle class (N=7). The Black middle-class pupils discussed in the following sections were not only clear about their class standing, but also confident in their class position due to consistent discussions at home about Black middle-class families. Individual and focus group interviews lasted between 55 and 85 minutes, exploring topics ranging between cultural authenticity and belonging; peer group relations; urban schooling experiences; and perceptions of teacher expectations; among others. Pseudonyms are used for the site and subjects of the study to maintain the anonymity and protection of participants.

All interviews were recorded, transcribed and analysed carefully to ensure accuracy and precision. Transcripts were uploaded to and analysed through NVivo 8. To allow for inductive and deductive analyses, and transitions between the two, I conducted two rounds of coding. In the first, I labelled the data according to broad themes on racialised class distinctions such as 'cultural advantages and disadvantages' and 'Black tastes and styles'. The second stage included focused coding with categories such as 'being and acting black in school' and 'tensions between class privilege and racial identity'. I refined the coding scheme

while searching for more patterns to deepen the analysis on the racialised class experiences of Black Caribbean young people.

Findings

The findings of this study suggest that Black Caribbean middle-class pupils lament the singular 'class imaging' of Blacks in British schools and society. 'Class imaging' refers to the controlling, largely unquestioned assumptions and stereotypical (mis)representations of Blacks in the popular imaginary that undermine class variation among Blacks, assuming instead a fixed relationship between Black identities and class disadvantage. Black Caribbean middle-class pupils in this study register such perceptions as examples of 'soft' racism (mobilised through recurring misrepresentations) that homogenises Black identities and discredits the gains of the Black middle classes. While it is beyond the scope of this article to present all of the findings from this study, in the following I focus on examples of how Black Caribbean pupils recognise and resist the racialised 'class imaging' they encounter in school through their use of cultural capital.

White 'straight coats' on Black identities?

Black Caribbean identities are complex, contested and contingently constituted (Mirza 2009). Indeed, all ethno-racial identities are. Yet reductionist constructions of Black Caribbean identities in British society prevail to a degree that is disproportionate to the misrepresentations of white identities. Such one-sided 'class imaging' of Blacks are not inconsequential falsehoods, but structured schemes of perception that foreclose multiple ways of being in everyday life and further legitimate mainstream media representations of Black identities throughout Britain. Challenging the prevailing class stereotypes of Blacks in Britain as either definitively poor or working class, the class-confident participants highlighted in this article deploy cultural capital in schools to signal their middle-class standing to their (often) white middle-class teachers and challenge their reductive understandings of blackness. To this end, participants' use of cultural capital in schools is at once a staged act of racial representation and resistance.

Participants in this study are acutely aware of the prevailing class imaging Black Caribbean youth are subjected to that diminishes, denigrates and even denies the full appreciation of their racial and class identities. Joseph, a Year 11 pupil at Newton, for example, takes issue with the static perceptions of blackness common in his school. He reasons:

> There's a really tight straight coat of black identity that my white teachers try to strap onto us …They expect us to fail … they expect us to struggle money wise … they expect us to fight each other … When we challenge or exceed their expectations, it's like they can't even recognise us. You move from being that Black student to that hardworking student that's different. They stop paying attention to our blackness the moment it's not a problem but the reason for your success … but I'm like, that's not on … I'm on to all these games …

Joseph is not alone in his critical summation of the racialised class imaging at work in his school. Chad, a Year 10 student-leader, also comments on how such biased perceptions inform teachers' classroom engagement with Black pupils:

> … Do you know how many times my teachers on a regular day, especially the white one dem, yeah, just assume that me and the rest of the Black students have never been to the Tate

Modern [museum] or to Belgium or even to Oxford, which is in my own country [with tones and volume raised to a shout] … It's not shocking for a white person to do these things here in South London, but it is surprising for a Black person? Because all Black people are the same, right? Either we are what you think we are or we are nothing…When I raise my hand in class and tell my teachers, yeah, [that] I have been here or there, they just fob me off, like, 'oh, that's cause you're a smart boy' … but I'm like, no, my dad is a dentist and my mum's a teacher … We can go anywhere … you can't limit us because we are Black … I learned that long time in Bridge [supplementary] school.

Joseph and Chad's extracts signal the (in)significance of blackness in the white imagination (Rankine 2014). Both Joseph and Chad suggest that in the expressions and behaviour of their white teachers, Black identities are constricted to narratives of struggle, conflict and underachievement. Like their peers, Joseph and Chad testify to the fact that racialised class imaging is not a historical abstraction or simply a mundane feature of the media and its related markets, but a source of daily angst in classrooms that arguably necessitates wider, public representations in predominantly white institutions of the diverse class identities of Black people. In Joseph's view, blackness is legible and legitimate to some white teachers when expressed as a polemic. For Chad, however, the stakes are not necessarily about what blackness is, but how it is perceived and projected by white powerbrokers who comprehend blackness as a construct confined to the working classes. Joseph and Chad indicate that among some white teachers at Newton, blackness is bound to an everyday hegemony – one that links Black identities with compulsory class disadvantage and ignores those that upend such racialised class perceptions.

According to participants in this study, the practice of such racialised class perceptions is illustrated by how some teachers smuggle into classroom experiences a set of negative assumptions about the social and educational experiences of Black pupils, as if pre-determined or fixed based on their racial identities (Picower 2009). In some instances, such perceptions assume little if any access to objectified cultural capital (e.g. visit to the Tate Modern museum, etc.) for Black students like Chad. In a local school context with an all-white middle-class school leadership team, a teaching staff with 92% of its faculty identified as white British and white students comprising the majority of the student population (50.5%), whiteness generally – and white middle-class identities specifically – functions as a structured position of power and privilege, and as the key lens through which blackness is perceived. Whereas the Black middle classes are subjected to unequal representation in British sociology of education relative to the white middle classes, the social and educational experiences of participants like Joseph and Chad are limited by recurring misrepresentations in schools.

Participants suggest that the misrepresentation of their middle-class identities as working class by virtue of being Black is so widespread at Newton that it forms a durable doxa throughout the school (Deer 2008). Joseph contends that:

If the assumptions about being poor or whatnot happened with a few teachers, I could live with it … but you hear it all over the place. Do you know how many times teachers who don't know me, yeah, see me and ask me why I'm not eating during my lunch period because they think I'm getting free school lunch? Even the admin people do it … Sometimes, I just don't feel like eating … These assumptions … these expectations about being poor or disadvantaged because you are Black are straight real … but why would you object really unless you know you're middle class and have never gotten free school lunch?

Similarly, Year 10 pupil Akilah notes the significance of her middle-class identity for criti-quing racialised class essentialism. She explains:

> At a place like Newton, if you're Black, the white teachers just assume you're financially disad-vantaged. I am middle class and I know how racism works in this school … the fact that these teachers assume that Black students are all poor or working class is racist to say the least … But I know how to challenge them. Don't call them racists. If you do they will become your enemy. What I do is tell them about the books I have by [Marcus] Garvey or [Nikki] Giovanni, the places I've been to, the university I want to go to, the languages I speak, the jobs my parents have … It pushes them to think differently about young Black people …

Joseph and Akilah's middle-class confidence allows them to challenge the reach and scope of misrepresentation (through class imaging) as a core doxa in their school. Bourdieu conceived of doxa as a 'set of fundamental beliefs, which does not even need to be asserted in the form of an explicit, self-conscious dogma' (2000, 15). Expounding on Bourdieu's definition of doxa, Deer argues that doxa:

> refers to the misrecognition of forms of social arbitrariness that engenders the unformulated, non-discursive, but internalized and practical recognition of that same social arbitrariness. It contributes to its reproduction in social institutions, structures and relations as well as in the minds and bodies, expectations and behaviours. (2008, 119–120)

Put plainly, doxa refers to the accepted, uncorroborated 'truths', taken-for-granted assump-tions and popular cultural opinions that influence the dispositions and relations in social fields. In an inner-city state comprehensive like Newton, the misrepresentation of Black middle-class identities as working class or poor is arguably based on a doxa that consist-ently codes blackness as a site of inherent class disadvantage. However, it is precisely the middle-class power pupils like Joseph and Akilah are presumed not to have that enables them to recognise and resist class imaging as a protracted form of symbolic domination frequently imposed by white middle-class teachers.

To assert their racial and class identities beyond the perceptual 'straight coats' pinned to Black Caribbean youth at Newton, participants draw on dominant cultural capital in school settings in the company of middle-class white instructors. However, they resist the racist logics that undergird the racialised class imaging they encounter by deliberately racialising cultural capital as Black – in Akilah's case, referencing the institutionally validated books, languages, universities and jobs indicative of her Black middle-class position. Participants like Akilah, Joseph and others hold that the effective use of dominant cultural capital in school life does not necessitate mimicking whiteness. In an increasingly multicultural soci-ety, there is growing appreciation for alternate bodies of knowledge and diverse cultural repertoires (Desmond and Emirbayer 2009). As such, participants maintain that tastes, styles and goods which have traction in the market can be based on multiple ethno-racial traditions. During an interview with Luke, a Year 11 student, for example, he highlighted how changing dynamics in society influence his tastes, trajectory and use of cultural capital. He reasons:

> You don't have to imitate white people to get ahead … my brother and my father work in corporate, and they win over clients with what they know about other parts of the world … because it's different. It's not what all the other blokes know … At Newton, yeah, I can definitely engage in literary criticism of *Hamlet* or, John Steinbeck's *Of Mice & Men*, but most of these teachers don't know anything about Vidiadhar Naipaul [British writer and Nobel Laureate from Trinidad & Tobago] … If you mention *The Enigma of Arrival* or *The Lonely Londoners* they would look at you confused … Black Caribbean people have things that are valuable big

> time across the world … For me, being Black is about knowing Shakespeare, yeah 'cause you have to, but also knowing Sam Selvon, Chinua Achebe, V.S. Naipaul … I have their books … teachers recognise these things … they don't expect this … but, my brother tell[s] me all the time that this is the kind of stuff that would be good in an Oxbridge interview …

The bodies of knowledge and kinds of books Luke draws on are indicative of the stocks of cultural capital racialised as Black and acknowledged in a white mainstream society. For Luke, a critical awareness of Shakespeare's contributions to the literary canon can also be coupled with an acute appreciation of African Caribbean Letters – knowledge that is not only valuable in dominant society, but also perhaps emblematic of one's Black identity and ethno-racial consciousness. At Newton, deep knowledge of Selvon, Achebe and Naipaul (or in Akilah's case, Garvey and Giovanni) can prove profitable among teachers and peers – signalling one's intellectual acuity or deep commitment to learning (to teachers) and one's racial consciousness (to peers). Furthermore, the forms of racialised cultural capital Luke discusses yield more than mere recognition in peer and teacher networks. Racialised cultural capital – or what could be referred to in this instance as a form of Black cultural capital – produces economic returns for his father and brother in the corporate sphere and potentially for Luke too in enhancing his candidacy for admission to elite universities.

The voices of Luke, Akilah and their peers urge us towards new, generative theorisations on the racialisation of cultural capital. Black Caribbean middle-class young people in this study suggest that race generally, and blackness specifically, matters in their operationalisation of cultural capital in their local settings. Furthermore, their comments underscore the core claim of this article: that cultural capital is not tantamount to middle-class whiteness. Contemporary renditions of Black cultural capital by Rollock et al. (2015) and Wallace (2016) note the significant value of the cultural, material and symbolic assets racialised as Black for parents and pupils and legitimated in schools, university admission and in the corporate sphere. In the context of this study, forms of dominant cultural capital racialised as Black provide key means through which participants (re)present their middle-class identities and resist the prevailing class imaging mounted by white middle-class teachers in schools.

But there are significant psycho-social costs for class-confident participants that come with regularly resisting racialised class imaging in a predominantly white institution like Newton. Comments from Devon, a 16-year-old Year 11 student-athlete, underscore the psychological consequences of misrepresentation endured in school. He argues:

> I'm definitely not posh or anything, yeah, but people in my family [have] gone to uni … I guess you could call them successful to a certain extent … I come to school in the same uniform as everybody else and I do pretty well in school. My teachers and footie [football] mates know my background … I know I'm going to a good uni and I'm not ashamed of that. That's the expectation in my family … But, sometimes my mates, like, the white ones, yeah, act like I should be ashamed of my background … like you're only really Black if you're poor. That's straight foolishness, bruv … sometimes, I even question myself, like, should I feel bad? … but I'm not gonna let white people tell me what is Black and what is not …

Devon's comments point to the fact that racialised class imaging is not only a feature of teacher relations, but also an element of peer engagement at Newton that can invoke internal psychological conflicts. Racialised class imaging is at times so significant that it can induce a sense of guilt and self-doubt among civically engaged high-achieving pupils like Devon. Not unlike Devon, Year 10 student Akilah also contends regularly with misrepresentation of her class identity based on her racial identity. Her experiences disrupt the logic of Black

class disadvantage, rendering her at points an uncommon and perhaps incoherent Black subject. She asserts:

> … I get so frustrated when people assume I'm poor because I'm Black or I'm not Black because I'm not poor, working class or whatever. I get it from students, teachers and even some of my friends … I get it from Black people, Asian people, white people … doesn't matter … makes me wonder if I belong here, yeah … Thank God my mother prepared me for all this at home …

As mentioned previously, pupils like Akilah, Joseph, Chad and Devon recognise and resist a doxa of misrepresentation – a well-received and formidable set of 'truths' that 'other' these Black middle-class pupils for differing from stereotypic expectations of Black middle-class young people's class identities. Pupils in this study did not learn to recognise skewed 'class imaging' on their own accord. As Chad and Akilah point out, they are oriented to these prejudicial expectations and representations through their middle-class parents' informal trainings at home and in supplementary schools. Such findings corroborate Rollock et al.'s (2015) claims on the centrality of Black institutions (families and supplementary schools) for the Black middle classes in a white society. With a school curriculum and context that reinforces the normativity of white middle-class identities (Gillborn 2005), pupils like Akilah learn to contend with the psycho-social challenges imposed by 'class imaging' through Black institutions. Additionally, participants forge counter-cultural representations that allow for the variance and visibility of Black middle-class identities seldom recognised in their school and the wider society. They subvert ethno-racial class determinism by persisting with expressions and achievements that confound teachers' and pupils' definitions of blackness. Class-confident participants are empowered to do so based on positive and plural representations of Black middle-class identities at home and in supplementary schools – sites where the institutional habitus aligns with their individual habitus.

In white-led institutions like Newton, ethno-racial class determinism manifests itself in everyday social life as 'acceptable' unconscious assumptions (doxa) about the class standing of Blacks in Britain. 'Class imaging' is not simply an outgrowth of a doxa of racial misrepresentation, but a form of racialised violence of which middle-class participants in this study are acutely aware. 'Class imaging' simultaneously maintains white supremacy and middle-class privilege in ways that displaces those whose identities do not rest at the intersection of whiteness and middle-class identity. What is more, even in a putatively pluralistic, post-racial context, blackness still functions as a somatic signifier of class disadvantage. Commenting on the nature of overt and covert forms of domination, Desmond and Emirbayer argue that:

> Since we are disposed to a world structured by racial domination, we develop racialised dispositions – some conscious, many more unconscious and somatic – that guide our thoughts and behaviors. We may talk slowly to an Asian woman at the farmer's market, unconsciously assuming that she speaks poor English; we may inform a Hispanic man at a corporate party that someone has spilled their punch, unconsciously assuming that he is a janitor; we may ask to change seats if an Arab American man sits next to us on an airplane. Miniature actions such as these have little to do with one's intentional thoughts; they are orchestrated by one's practical sense, one's habitual knowhow … (2009, 345)

In Britain, ethno-racial domination may at times vary from what Desmond and Emirbayer (2009) describe, but can also extend to a set of unspoken assumptive norms that uses blackness as a code word for class disadvantage as part of everyday social awareness. Such doxic misrepresentations of the Black middle classes maintain the positional and status superiority of the white middle classes.

Conclusion

The foregoing discussion has sought to critique the function of ethno-racial class determinism in shaping the perceptions and experiences of Black Caribbean young people at a large state secondary school in South London. I privilege the perspectives of the seven self-identified Black Caribbean middle-class pupils in the London case of the larger cross-national ethnography to illustrate how some young people in multicultural contexts transform the moral and racial meanings associated with cultural capital. Participants report that teachers misrepresent their class identities by virtue of their race and thus heighten their awareness of the racialisation of cultural capital. Little analytical attention has been given to these dynamics in social class research in the United Kingdom. Concentration on these dynamics can spotlight the heterogeneous forms of ethno-racial domination and class misrepresentation at work in state schools.

Participants' commentaries suggest that there are often-ignored ethno-racial logics to the use of cultural capital and the performance of social class in local fields that can be theoretically fruitful to Bourdieusians. Firstly, their interview extracts confirm that Black middle-class pupils are not monocultural actors (Carter 2003). Indeed, they can be hybrid subjects able to recognise dominant cultural capital (e.g. deep knowledge of Shakespeare and the practice of traditional modes of talking) that they racialise as white in urban state schools like Newton, while infusing elements of Black cultural production and aesthetics credentialed as 'high brow' across the world. In this regard, cultural capital need not be culturally homogeneous or geographically constrained.

Secondly, in addition to challenging the forced union between whiteness and cultural capital, this article suggests that Black middle classes experience unequal representation in British sociological and educational research and recurring misrepresentation in state schools. Limited assumptions about their class identities are often imposed on participants based on stereotypes of blackness in British society (Rollock et al. 2015). In white-dominated institutions, the white middle classes and elites often retain the power to undermine the class gains of Black people through misrepresentations and retain the power to (in)validate cultural capital that the Black and ethnic minority middle classes deploy for market return (Wallace 2017; Stahl 2014). More needs to be done theoretically and empirically to shine light on how racism impedes the advancement of the Black and ethnic minority middle-class young people in state comprehensives in spite of their cultural capital.

Thirdly, the proliferation of capitals in sociological research should be regarded as an invitation to all Bourdieusians to re-examine Bourdieu's lesser-known selections for his critical discussions of ethnicity, race and caste – from *The Algerians* (Bourdieu 1962) to *Weight of the World* (Bourdieu 1999) and beyond. Yosso (2005), Modood (2004) and others pose heterodox renditions of capital because orthodox examinations of cultural capital hardly account for the significance of ethnicity and race. Committed Bourdieusians should interrogate and innovate – challenge mis-readings of capital and offer correctives by illustrating how cultural capital is mediated by ethnicity and race according to social fields, all the while keeping to the tradition of Bourdieu's relational analysis. Capacious, race-conscious Bourdieusian perspectives are urgently needed to explore the complexities of Black and ethnic minority young people's class identities.

Lastly, white constructions of blackness offer provocative insights into the complexities of schooling in inner-city educational institutions. In schools like Newton with an

overwhelmingly white teaching force, an all-white leadership team and a national curriculum that offers far more positive renditions of whiteness than it does of racial and ethnic minorities (Picower 2009), Black identities are constrained to a set of polemics, obfuscating their richness and variability. In this regard, the accumulating wealth of whiteness is not found in exclusive ownership of cultural capital, but in the lack of injustices endured through a racialised class determinism that affiliates Blacks and ethnic minorities with cultural and economic poverty and whiteness with cultural visibility and social class diversity. British sociology of education can arguably address the unequal representation and recurring misrepresentation of the Black middle classes by moving beyond whiteness and providing more consistent analyses of the expressions and experiences of all middle-class subjects.

Disclosure statement

Funding

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