

**'I had a hard time actually trying to catch the essence of Englishness':
participant photography and the racialised construction of place and
belonging in a South London suburb.**

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This article draws on findings from a study conducted in a South London suburb that employed photograph participation methods alongside semi-structured qualitative interviews in order to explore the extent to which identifications as English are racialised. While initial data analysis utilised a somewhat reductive photo-elicitation approach, this article presents findings from a reanalysis in which the photographic data were approached on an equal footing with verbal constructions of Englishness. It will be demonstrated that the mobility and movement within space reflexively discussed and captured by participants provides important new perspectives on the ways in which associations between Englishness, whiteness and a sense of belonging are stabilised and destabilised in relation to racialised, gendered and classed interpretations of place. However, whilst these findings are valuable, the reanalysis also raises serious questions about the hugely difficult, even futile, task requested of participants – that of 'representing Englishness' – during the photography stage of the methodology. The article will conclude by arguing that studies such as these should ideally try to enable 'messier' and more socially positive outcomes to emerge.

Key words: Englishness; visual methods; whiteness; race; place

Introduction: Englishness, place, race and belonging

This article draws on findings from a study conducted in a South London suburb that employed participant photograph methods alongside semi-structured qualitative interviews in order to explore the extent to which identifications as English are racialised. The research presented here thus builds upon studies looking at the association between racism and national identities within Britain and England (Gilroy 1987; Haseler 1996) and more recent studies exploring twenty-first century Englishness and its historical and ongoing associations with discourses of whiteness (Mann 2011; Skey 2011; Leddy-Owen 2012). The present article particularly focuses on the ways in which identifications as English are racialised in relation to constructions of place, and on how these identifications relate to ideas surrounding 'home' and belonging. The article thus draws on an international literature exploring how the geographies and 'micropolitics of everyday social contact and encounter' (Amin 2002: 959) interrelate with the discourses of race and nation that both frame and are formed by local interactions. This literature encompasses a wide variety of studies seeking to enmesh global, national and local perspectives, and the article is particularly influenced by research exploring the residues and continued influence of (post)colonial histories and transnational networks in local constructions of 'race' and belonging (Hutnyk 1998; Tyler 2012), as well as studies exploring the localisation and intimate, material experience of national and geopolitical difference and boundaries (Datta 2008; Nelson 2008; Sundberg 2008). The article will also draw upon approaches critically exploring the ways in which

constructions of the category 'home' can include and exclude in complex ways (Brickell 2012).

In the context of England, as Dwyer and Bressey (2008) demonstrate, imaginative geographies have historically been, and remain to this day, central to constructions and interpretations of place, race and nation. The figuring of England's cities and towns as racialised and fearful spaces is evident in Booth's notorious analogy comparing the Victorian East End slums of 'Darkest England' to the swamps of 'Darkest Africa' (1890). More recently, similar figurations have been found in post-Windrush, (post)colonial fears surrounding unruly Black urban populations in England's inner cities (Gilroy 1987), and in the suspicions and hostility held towards purportedly self-segregating outsiders of an alien, Islamic culture (Phillips 2006). These perspectives on urban, multiethnic challenges to English norms can be contrasted to constructions of an authentic, rural England, an explicit or implicit characteristic of which is its demographic and cultural 'whiteness' (Neal 2002).

It is thus perhaps no surprise that it is in multiethnic urban areas of England, particularly London, that influential studies exploring race and belonging in Britain have found evidence for emerging 'cultural syncretism' among multiracial working-class youth (Back 1996: 123), or evidence for 'convivial' cultures in which urban 'processes of cohabitation and interaction...have made multicultural an ordinary feature of social life' (Gilroy 2004: xi; also Keith 2004: 265). These studies therefore suggest that in urban, and also suburban (Huq 2008), areas racialised associations between whiteness, constructions of place and a sense of legitimate belonging within England are being problematised.

At the same time, however, the same studies also demonstrate the ways in which white Englishness is drawn on in multiethnic urban areas as part of a hostile reaction to multiethnicity (Back 1996: 135; Gilroy 2004; Hewitt 2005). Reviewing the literature on multiethnic 'contact', Askins and Pain suggest that 'diverse communities may often be geographically integrated – sharing streets, schools, and local facilities – but with minority groups still experiencing a high level of prejudice' (Askins & Pain 2011, 805). Evidence has also been found for high levels of anti-migrant feeling among many, white *and* not white, within multiethnic urban populations in England, suggesting 'a multiplicity of understandings of difference and sameness' (Ray et al 2008: 132; see also Back 1996: 63-68). Away from English cities, further studies demonstrate the ways in which overwhelmingly white, non-urban settings, whilst often a site of white racism (Moore 2013), can also be the location for reflexive challenges to these patterns (Tyler 2004). The complexities of the interrelationships between race, nation, belonging and place sketched out here therefore suggest that ultimately these interrelationships can only effectively be explained by 'site-specific circumstances and social relations' (Amin 2002: 976) rather than any formula involving a particular type of space and demographic, ethnic 'mix'.

The following section will set the scene for the 'site-specific circumstances' to be discussed in the present article, introducing the suburban South London area in which the study was conducted and the particular methodological approach taken.

The study location and the participant photography methods used

The study was undertaken in 2010 and 2011 in a highly ethnically diverse suburb of South London, here anonymised as 'Southton', the population of which is approximately fifty

thousand. Southton has many common features with the general landscape of South London suburbia situated within the first five concentric transport 'zones' spreading outward from the city's centre. Much of the area is characterised by Victorian terraced housing and blocks of flats, many of the latter constructed for social housing accommodation between the 1950s and 1970s. Southton is dotted throughout with religious institutions, most prominently the many Victorian churches of different denominations, but also newer Muslim and evangelical Christian places of worship, and there are several small and large parks within and surrounding the area. Central to Southton is a high street which includes a typical collection of 'English' retail units – Boots, WH Smiths, Sainsbury's, pubs, and so on – as well as a variety of 'ethnic' shops catering for local populations.

The population of London might be described as 'superdiverse' due to the ways in which historical and emerging global 'patterns and conditions' are impacting upon the 'proliferation of migrant channels...immigrant legal statuses...[and increasingly] [m]ultiple dimensions of differentiation' within the city (2007: 1028). Southton's ethnic diversity is substantial even by the standards of London, though the 2011 census (Office for National Statistics 2012) suggests that around forty per cent of the population of Southton identifies with the category 'White British', a number that no other category comes close to matching. In terms of the area's class composition, many people spending time on the main high street might consider the many low rent retail units and boarded up shops as a sign that Southton is economically troubled; and evidence indeed suggests that the areas of Southton dominated by social housing are significantly deprived by national standards. At ward level – the smallest administrative subdivision for local government in the UK – government

indicators have placed over half of Southton within the bracket of the twenty per cent most deprived areas in England and Wales, with over seventy per cent of Southton falling within the most deprived third (Communities and Local Government 2007). However, there also remains a significant streak of affluence in Southton, as is suggested by the increasing gentrification of the local retail options – such as the introduction in recent years of a handful of ‘gastropubs’ – and by the area’s intimidating house prices which, according to a housing price website (Home.co.uk), have risen by an average of over fifty per cent since 2006; part of what Watt terms London’s ‘hyper-inflated, hyper-competitive...home-ownership market’ which is evident ‘even in...“unfashionable” areas of the city (2010: 155).

As in much of London, this affluence and deprivation exists side by side. Research undertaken by central government suggests that part of one Southton ward falls within the most deprived five percent of areas in England and Wales in terms of income deprivation affecting children (Communities and Local Government 2007), whilst another document produced by local government – not referenced here in order to ensure the area’s anonymity – suggests that close to half of the same ward’s ‘households are high social class with a disposable income and ability to change lifestyle’.

What Southton as an area provides, therefore, is a site in which all of the manifestations of Englishness discussed in the introduction might potentially emerge. By speaking to people in Southton the study aimed to explore whether and how English identities are constructed among a population that is diverse in terms of ethnicity and race and in terms of other stratifications and dimensions of identity, particularly class. In a superdiverse city and locality, the dominant, racialised narratives of Englishness might be disrupted, resignified or

rejected in favour of convivial cultures and identities; but, at the same time, Englishness in Southton may be constructed in relation to normative whiteness or through multiethnic modes of local and national exclusion. The study thus seeks to explore these possibilities within the context of this particular suburb, exploring the ways in which the 'site specific circumstances and social relations' of this area (Amin 2002: 976) might increase our understanding of the ways in which constructions of Englishness and place interrelate with discourses of race, nation and belonging in contemporary England.

Recruitment was carried out through ethnographic involvement in a variety of community organisations and through subsequent 'snowballing'. The final sample represents a suitably wide and varied cross-section of backgrounds in terms of class, gender, generation and sexuality, though there was a particular focus on recruiting people who identified as both white and English due to the associations between Englishness and whiteness discussed in the literature. Forty-one participants took part in the research, twenty-five of whom identified as white. During interviews questions were asked about whether the participant felt English and whether they thought 'anyone' could be English. Initial interviews were followed up in as many cases as possible by a second stage in which participants were given disposable cameras and asked to take photographs of what 'represents Englishness' to them prior to a second interview in which the photographs were discussed and some further questions asked influenced by preliminary analysis of the first interview. Eighteen participants took part in these later stages and a total of two-hundred-and-thirteen photographs were taken, with some participants taking only a few – one participant took just two photographs – and others the full twenty-six possible with the disposable camera.

In previous articles produced in relation to this study (Leddy-Owen 2012; 2013; 2014) the focus of analysis has overwhelmingly been on the textual data produced during the qualitative interviews. For these articles, the use of photographic methods and the subsequent analysis of the transcribed data relied on a photo-elicitation approach in which participants were asked to 'provide "information" in "response" to the content of images' (Pink 2001: 68) with the photographic images and practices themselves essentially relegated to the status of illustration (Chaplin 2004: 1.21). The absence of an engagement with the photographic data was remarked upon by a number of colleagues who read the written-up research and expressed their frustration that so much visual data was lying fallow.

This article therefore draws on a reanalysis of the data following a closer engagement with the literature on race, nation, place and belonging discussed in the introduction, as well as the literature looking at visual methods (Pink 2001; Chaplin 2004) and literature specifically exploring participant photography. Participant photography methods are becoming increasingly common in studies of race, nation, place and belonging. In their most common form, they see research participants encouraged 'to visually document their social landscapes through photography and reflect on their photos to produce personal narratives' (Allen 2012: 443). In this way a greater sense of control and agency in relation to the research is enabled with less danger of the research process merely leading to the production of 'content and meaning imposed by the researcher' (Johnsen et al 2008: 196). In studying race and racism such an approach has been particularly employed in relation to participants associated with dominated perspectives, with minority ethnic or migrant individuals asked to produce images and construct narratives surrounding issues of culture, identity and belonging (Back 2007; Tremlett 2012) or to produce photographic narratives

relating to specific social contexts and places where they may feel marginalised (Douglas 1998; Allen 2012).

The critical and reflexive perspectives on issues of race, ethnicity and belonging enabled by these methods are a central aim for many who advocate visual methods, not only in relation to the researcher's capacity for critique (through the production of 'better' data enabling more nuanced and potentially critical findings to emerge) but in relation to the reflexive, critical practices of the research *participant*. Twine describes how discussions surrounding a participant's family photographs 'provided a reflexive space' (2006: 506) for researcher and participant to discuss the ways in which the photographs' content seemed to problematise the participant's verbal accounts of 'racial consciousness' and racism in her family life. Askins and Pain similarly discuss how the employment of visual methods can enable the co-production of 'messy, uncontrollable, and unpredictable' outcomes that match the equally 'messy' complexities of the social world (2011: 809). Further still, Askins and Pain suggest that through 'participatory action research' involving visual methods it may be possible to destabilise 'dominant discourses and social hierarchies' among researcher and participants alike, and thus to take practical steps towards 'positive social change' (2011: 806). This politically progressive ambition can therefore be seen to chime with Frankenberg's suggestion that methodologies exploring racism should avoid complicity with racialised hierarchies and instead 'develop strategies to explicitly address and subvert' them (1993: 30).

Prior to presenting the findings from the reanalysis, the following section will discuss the ways in which the reanalysis was undertaken and the ways in which the present study fits, and does not fit, into the methodological literature just reviewed.

Reanalysing the data and reappraising the methodology

The original project findings suggest that whiteness remains central to constructions of English identities, both from the perspectives of non-white participants, a large majority of whom felt excluded from Englishness to different degrees, and from the perspectives of a large majority of white participants, for whom English identities were taken-for-granted, and for whom associations between whiteness and Englishness were sincerely rejected *in principle* but then tacitly constructed *in practice*. These findings are discussed in detail in further articles drawn from the same study (Leddy-Owen 2012; 2014). Whilst visual data were key for the reanalysis undertaken, I stopped short of attempting to analyse the images *independently* of the verbal data. As Howarth suggests, ‘without some verbal qualitative data, the images...would only be interpreted through [the researcher’s] eyes’ (2011: 244), something that would clearly jar with the agency-privileging aims of participant photography. As such, the visual data analysis undertaken for this article is still somewhat reliant on the verbal interview data relating to the photograph(s) in question, and on the perspectives on Englishness provided by the participant verbally and analysed in the project’s earlier stage.

Where the analytical focus really shifted was firstly in relation to an analysis of the process of photographic production as this pertained to participants’ discussion of their movement within space, and secondly in relation to the framing and exclusion captured by the

photographs themselves. These two interrelated elements were analysed in relation to each other and together, and on an equal footing to the hitherto analysed verbal constructions of Englishness, with the aim being to avoid falling into the trap of subsuming the visual to the verbal. For some participants, the visual *did* appear to illustrate their verbally expressed perspectives to a large extent. However, it soon became clear from the analysis of participants' photographs and a re-analysis of the accompanying verbal data, individually and in aggregate, that the process of photographic production, and the movement in space that this process involved and which the photographs recorded, revealed important nuances relating to participant constructions of place, whiteness and Englishness that verbal analysis alone had and perhaps could not.

Though I was open to the potential for the original findings to be contradicted, on re-approaching the data with a focus on the photographic element, most of the core patterns were confirmed and, crucially, strengthened in important ways thanks to the depth and nuance provided by the participant photography data. In particular, the structure of the methodology combined with the reflexive work of the participants led to some of the key aims of participant photography methods being very effectively exercised beneath the radar of my initial approach to the data. As will be demonstrated in subsequent sections of this article, the participant photography methods employed encouraged participants to reflexively construct Englishness within space, to map places of belonging in relation to discourses of race, gender and class, and particularly in relation to the sense of normative whiteness that is associated with Englishness. To this extent, therefore, the methodology was successful in encouraging the production of some valuable findings that significantly added to the analytical depth of the original project.

However, one of the most interesting and troubling outcomes emerging from the reanalysis is precisely this relative *neatness* between the original and more recent analyses. Whilst more nuanced than the previous analysis, the new findings were not in most cases ‘messy, uncontrollable, and unpredictable’ (Askins and Pain 2011: 809). They were, rather, for nearly all participants – and crucially for *all* white participants – more or less in line with the verbal accounts in which they closely intertwined their identifications as English, and sense of belonging in place, with a normative whiteness. Rather than encouraging the critical reflexivity that might have led to some degree of ‘positive social change’ (Askins and Pain 2011: 806), or at the very least ‘messier’ outcomes, the methodology seems to have encouraged the production of increasingly nuanced but nonetheless essentialised perspectives enframed by dominant discourses and categories. This suggests that the photography task to some extent ‘called’ dominant constructions of Englishness ‘into being’ (Brubaker 2002: 166) for the purposes of analysis, a pattern that could even be viewed as problematic in terms of research ethics. The empirical sections of this article will therefore discuss the broader findings on Englishness, race and belonging alongside the implications arising from these methodological concerns.

In what follows, three participants’ sets of photographs will be analysed in depth. These findings are not fully representative of the hugely varying and complex constructions of Englishness produced by all eighteen of the participants who took photographs. Nevertheless, the findings presented here demonstrate the three ‘exemplary case studies’ (Gorman-Murray 2011: 215) that represent the core patterns emerging from the reanalysis which help to extend our understanding of the essentialised relationship between

Englishness, whiteness, belonging and place, as well as illustrating the methodological questions that arose. All participants' names have been changed.

Capturing the essence of Englishness.

Most white participants felt that they could, and to some extent would, be able to capture *the* essence of Englishness in a set of photographs. Their ambitions thus reflected the long-standing relationship between positivist perspectives and the purported ability of camera technology to capture 'type or genres of humankind' (Lury 1998: 3). Despite this widely agreed upon ideal, however, no one found the task of representing Englishness an easy one, with each participant suggesting that they dedicated a great deal of thought and reflection to the task.

One such participant is John. John is in his forties, identifies as middle-class and works as a manager in the public sector. He was one of the large majority of participants identifying as white who argued passionately and seemingly with great conviction in favour of the principle that English identities should be open to anyone, whilst in practice tacitly constructing an Englishness in relation to a normative whiteness. John felt confident that the essence of Englishness could be captured photographically, but he also described how 'the more he thought about it the harder it became to actually take a photograph of something which represented Englishness'. Finally, John took four photographs which he suggested 'spoke for' him and represented not just Englishness but 'the core of who [he is] in a lot of respects'.

Figure One about here

Figure One was taken on the pavement immediately outside the house owned by John and his wife in Southton. As with many white participants, rural notions of Englishness are prominent in John's discussion of his photographs, though this association would be far from apparent if analysing this image of terraced housing by itself. John describes the road on which he lives as having a 'feel of community' similar to that found historically in English 'mediaeval villages', and despite its location in what John refers to on several occasions as 'Central London', John describes the noise levels as lower than that found at his parents' house in a rural village. This terraced, suburban street is thus portrayed as more ideal-typical English-rural than rural England itself. The rural theme continues with a photograph of a hedge John has recently planted in the front garden of his house which he describes as a 'classic piece of rural England brought into the...city centre'.

This pattern of finding representations of pseudo-rural Englishness in suburbia was found among several further participants in relation to parks, woodlands and churchyards in Southton or nearby areas of South London. Such associations between Southton and rural England were thus enabled by a suburban landscape open to interpretation in relation to a particular national and racialised imaginary in a way that would not be the case (for most) with an inner-city area or another suburb with less classically 'English' characteristics. These suburban, pseudo-rural representations are associated by John and other participants, usually tacitly, with constructions of normatively white English places which are contrasted to the less English or non-English urban environments which they associate with non-white populations. Such an association is demonstrated by John's views on Southton which immediately followed his discussion of the two photographs.

One of the things that I find myself getting really, really, really irritated about is going to a shop and the person who's serving in the shop can't speak English... But you go [into a rural area] and there is still a village shop...the old dears who have run it for twenty years and their father who ran it for twenty years before that and his father ran it for twenty years before that, and it's just lovely... [Then] I have to...come back to multicultural Southton and...I'm the only white face in [my workplace (also in Southton)]... I just do what I can and just wave the banner and wave the [English] flag as and when I can without hopefully upsetting too many people.

The people who John constructs as being potentially upset by his flag-waving are only implicitly identified. However, in discussing a 'lovely' rural England of continuity and whiteness in direct comparison to 'multicultural Southton' where none of his colleagues are white and where his flag-waving might be deemed offensive, the implication is that it is in 'multicultural Southton' that John feels frustrated that the expression of his Englishness is being constrained; an implication supported by a passage in his first interview in which John states that 'when you go for a walk' in a particular part of Southton's main high street, identified by some local residents with a particular non-white population (not named here in order to protect the identity of the area), 'there actually is no Englishness down there'. John therefore seems to feel that associations between white Englishness and place have been disrupted in parts of urban Southton and that this process makes him uncomfortable, though he nevertheless constructs a more secure sense of Englishness in relation to the immediate locality of his house, an area he feels able to construct in relation to the imagery and feel of rural England.

Analysis of John's further two photographs help to further elaborate the contours of his perspective on Englishness, race, place and belonging. One is a photograph of John's shed, which represents Englishness and 'the classic male retreat', where he practises woodwork on the workman's bench he made himself, and in relation to which he contributes to an internet message board dedicated to sheds: 'what could be more English...than men sitting on the internet...talking about their sheds?', he asks. John's remaining photograph was taken by his wife from the front doorstep and is a picture of John cleaning his car, 'the second most expensive purchase...that people will make after their house'.

Each photograph is taken *from* the house *of* the outside, portraying elements of the house itself and its boundaries or further property of John's. John's photographs are all therefore either delimited by or taken on the edges of his house within a particular, localised part of Southton which he associates with a sense of security and community. The photographs remain rooted in John's home but specifically represent the masculine sphere of the home's exterior (the shed, the car, the garden), excluding the feminised, domestic interior (Morley 2000: 21). John's focus on, and exclusion of, the home in his photographs is thus emblematic of the enduring, seemingly contradictory yet fundamental, relationship between English masculinities and notions of domesticity, which has been evident since the Victorian era (Tosh 1999: 7-8). This gendered perspective, furthermore, intersects with a classed portrayal of Englishness associated with self-determining, 'possessive individualism' (Skeggs 2004: 6-7), with John's Englishness and broader sense of self constructed in relation to his identification with the property he owns and has invested in (the shed, the expensive car) as well as this property's boundaries (the hedge he has planted). John, who discusses,

as we have seen, his discomfort in the workplace in relation to the ethnic diversity of his colleagues, and also elsewhere in his interview portrays an overall sense of job dissatisfaction, perhaps also here echoes Gorman-Murray's findings from an Australian context of middle-class masculinities drawing increasingly on the notion and location of home as 'a site of emotional attachment and personal...development' in contrast to the twenty-first century Western workplace where the male sense of self is increasingly alienated (2011: 215). And each of these classed and gendered perspectives on the home, and John's identification with these perspectives, are crucially, through his portrayal of an idealised, pseudo-rural English community unsullied by migration, bound up with discourses of nation and race.

As a middle-class, heterosexual, white male, John's reflections thus suggest a tension between a relatively dominant, privileged perspective on society and feelings of 'social and spatial uncertainty' (Brickell 2012: 227); and in the above discussion of Englishness it is a racialised sense of uncertainty that John particularly foregrounds. When John encounters his multiethnic colleagues at work and when he travels beyond the privatised space he portrays in his discussion of the photographs he is unable to exclude multiethnicity from his everyday life and sense of place. In this environment, amongst this population, John's apparent reliance on the idealised construction of a normatively white population and place for a sense of security, homeliness and belonging is therefore inevitably disrupted in relation to the realities of ethnic and racial diversity. He cannot exclude multiethnicity from everyday encounters and from his surroundings in the way that he can exclude multiethnicity from an idealised perspective of an English place or from the frame of his photographs. For John, the 'ordinary' (white person and place) is seemingly perceived to be

under threat thanks to the transgression into public space of the racialised 'other'; a perception which allows John to position himself as something akin to a victim (Ahmed 2004 cited in Ehrkamp 2008: 129). John's discussion and photographs thus illustrate the limits and futility of a racialised imaginative geography premised on a normatively white society and territory in a multiethnic area such as Southton and, by extension, in a multiethnic territory such as England.

Although John's perspective on place and Englishness emerges from analysis of the verbal data alone, it is through the analysis of the data, visual and verbal, produced through John's reflections on the photography stage of the fieldwork that the construction of a privatised, classed and gendered self in relation to a sense of place is revealed as so central to his construction of a racialised Englishness; a pattern repeated in different forms among the other white participants who took part in the photography stage. The importance and contours of these intersecting dimensions of identity in relation to place was lacking from the original analysis of the verbal data and was particularly revealed in John's case through an analysis of the images themselves as a set, their perspective and content, alongside the reflexive practice of John and his movement within space during the process of photographic production.

However, at the same time, these new findings can also be seen as somewhat restrictive and problematic in scope. Participants were instructed to consider Englishness as a given social reality and then isolate photographic representations, instructions that therefore reinforced the reification of nationalist discourse (Brubaker 2002: 167). These instructions provided participants with, as John and others commented, a very difficult task; and it was

not a participatory task that necessarily leant itself to the kinds of reflexive practice that might have challenged the reproduction of dominant perspectives on place, race, nation and belonging. The aim widely associated with participant photography methods of preventing 'content and meaning [being] imposed by the researcher' (Johnsen et al 2008: 196) through participatory research was here, to some extent, undermined; and by involving a predominantly white sample in this methodological approach rather than the more usual pattern found in participant photography methods of involving those who are positioned as *dominated*, it could be argued that the designer of this somewhat restrictive methodology was complicit in the ethically questionable process of encouraging the reproduction of dominant associations between Englishness and whiteness, and between racialised national discourses and constructions of place. Ultimately, although richer data was co-produced thanks to John's reflexive involvement in the project, perspectives delimited by dominant understandings of Englishness were thus to some extent encouraged for the benefit of my research.

The following two sections consider further key examples of the ways in which the participant photography process revealed the nuances of the relationship between Englishness, race and a sense of belonging, demonstrating the ways by which reflexive perspectives on Englishness, whiteness and place were both enabled and constrained in important ways by participants' negotiation of the methodology.

White Englishness in an alien landscape.

Figure Two about here

Nearly all of the white participants involved in the study, whether or not they took photographs, portrayed an essentialised Englishness which, whilst routinely bound up with questions about its characteristics and boundaries, was nevertheless something with which they felt able to unquestionably identify. A smaller number of white participants who had either lived for long periods of time outside of England or were from ethnic or national backgrounds which they described as non-English, adopted more ambiguous and precarious perspectives on their identification as English (Leddy-Owen 2012). Jody, who is in her early forties and identifies as English and as white, is one of the latter participants. Jody grew up in South Africa and describes her mother as English and her father as South African. Jody migrated to the UK and Southton three years ago, after marrying a UK citizen, and regularly identified herself in both interviews as English. However, as will be demonstrated, this identification was negotiated in complex ways during the process of photographic production. Jody took fifteen photographs inclusive of pictures of 'typical English food', English gardens, and several of a local park in Southton. Figure Two was taken in this park whilst Jody was walking her and her husband's dog.

In Afrikaans, England is called *moddereiland*, it's called mud island... It really is...unusual when you first come across it [laughing]. You might take it for granted, but it's not something that I'm used to, and it seems to be very English.

Jody does identify as English and elsewhere in her interviews very much disidentifies with Afrikaner South Africa. However, in her discussion of Figure Two Jody seems to take the perspective of an outsider. The mud in the local park and across the nation might be taken for granted, she suggests, by me and others familiar with the weather and landscape of

England, but because of Jody's South African upbringing she finds it unusual. During the discussion of this photograph and further photographs taken in Southton Jody continuously refers to 'the English' as 'they', suggesting that these photographs are representative of a place and people that she feels are somewhat foreign to her and with which she cannot identify unproblematically.

The pattern of associating England and Englishness with a somewhat alien, damp climate was found in further participants' verbal and photographic accounts of Englishness, particularly among those who grew up in other former British colonies in the Caribbean or South Asia. However, another photograph taken in the same park, Figure Three, and the discussion surrounding it, demonstrates the ways in which Jody's relationship with Englishness and place is also very different from many other participants who migrated to England.

Figure Three about here

It looks like...Red Indians have come past and scalped a few people, because there are these hair extensions hanging in the trees... For me that was a symbol of how things are different here. Normally Black ladies wear hair extensions, and here they are stuck in the trees, and it gives you a sense...that there's another culture in the vicinity that's a bit out of the ordinary... It's a reminder that we live amongst other cultures.

Here Jody discusses difference, 'the ordinary' and 'other cultures' in a way that draws a clear association between her and the normative position of the majority ethnic culture. The

non-normative, 'different', non-white 'other' is represented by the hair extensions of 'Black ladies' hanging in the tree, and the first-person plural pronoun, thus far avoided by Jody in relation to Englishness, is for the first time voiced in relation to what she characterises as a 'reminder that we live amongst other cultures'. It is not precisely clear who this 'we' is inclusive of; it may refer to 'the English', to 'white' people – like Jody and I – or to Jody and her white husband. Whatever the case, Jody is constructing a 'we' in which Blackness is differentiated from herself and other white people. However, as Jody does identify as English, and as she, at different points in our conversation, demonstrated a varying sense of legitimacy in making this identification, I would suggest that the discussion surrounding this photograph marks a transition in the interview in terms of her portrayal of the images from an *outsider* status towards the construction, as part of the photographic process itself, of a sense of *inclusion* within the identity category English based on a shared identification with whiteness.

The racialised underpinnings of Jody's identification as English and her sense of normative belonging in place become particularly clear through close analysis of her suggestion that 'things are different here' due to the presence of Black people. In the interview Jody goes onto discuss her feelings of 'shock' and discomfort when she first arrived in Southton three years ago, as she felt it was 'obvious that [she] was quite different' in a 'completely Black' area in which she 'didn't see a white face on the streets'. Jody previously lived in South Africa, which has a Black population of eighty per cent (Statistics South Africa 2010), and her last place of residence was Johannesburg, a city which, as Murray (2011) has demonstrated, is acutely racially segregated. Therefore, for Jody, due to differing racialised arrangements of population and space, whilst majority Blackness was rendered partially invisible to her in

South Africa, minority Blackness in Southton, London and England is rendered hypervisible despite a far smaller (respectively around twenty, thirteen and three per cent [ONS 2012]) yet far less segregated Black population.

To some extent it can be argued that Jody's marking of Blackness in Southton in this way is understandable given her life history and socialisation in the very different South African context. However, a crucial element of this context is that the racialised organisation of space and population in which Jody lived in South Africa has the same colonial root as the constructions of difference through which she constructs an 'other' and a sense of belonging in relation to England and Englishness. In the above excerpt, and in relation to strongly expressed anti-immigration attitudes voiced throughout her interviews – specifically aimed at African Muslim 'immigrants' in Southton – Jody's own (post)colonial, white migration is positioned as unremarkable in contrast to the extraordinary settlement within the UK of Black people (Hesse 1993), echoing further studies' findings suggesting that those with a 'white' migration history have relatively straightforward opportunities to 'blend in', or 'pass', as English (Mann 2011: 119; Leddy-Owen 2012). It is from this colonial root that Jody portrays Blackness, in both South Africa and Southton, as 'other', as having a potential to 'shock', and as being implicitly threatening to a sense of security and identification with place which is grounded in the surrounding population's shared whiteness. Indeed, without wanting to overanalyse her interpretation of the photograph in question, the evocation of the colonial and Hollywood fantasy threat of the 'Red Indian' is somewhat suggestive of the ways by which Jody interprets space through globalised, racialised visualisations of the imagined, threatening 'other'.

This pattern can, furthermore, be contrasted to other, 'non-white' participants' perspectives on Englishness and belonging. As the following section's discussion of Sajid will demonstrate, for those who, like Jody, also identify their heritage with former British colonies but who do *not* identify as white, their perspectives on Englishness are more clearly and definitively framed as those of an outsider. Jody's constructions of Englishness, which initially seem to take the perspective of an outsider, can thus be seen to resemble in crucial ways those of other white participants such as John. Although the muddy landscape may seem alien to her and although Jody may feel separated from the climate and topography of England to some extent, detritus associated with the racialised 'other' found in the margins of this otherwise alien environment help her to construct a sense of inclusion as English – as indigenous – through a shared whiteness. Like John and other white participants, it is suburban imagery, away from the inner-city and away from the more obviously multiethnic areas of Southton itself, that helps to enable this construction; and as with John it is particularly through the process of photographic production, through Jody's movement around Southton and her reflexive enframing and interpretation of place, that the patterns discussed in this section emerged, particularly their global, colonial and racialised dimensions.

However, again as with John, although the account analysed above is illuminating, it can be argued that the methodology, by setting a task in which the production of representations of a historically normative white identity is enabled, merely encourages Jody, as a white person from a particular background, to construct and reproduce a dominant, (post)colonial, racialised perspective on society and space. The conclusion will discuss the implications of this in further detail. However, it is first important to explore another

participant's reflexive approach to the photography task in which the associations between Englishness, whiteness and place are critiqued not only in the analysis after the event but as an essential part of the *participant's* reflections on the task at hand.

Embedded in England and Englishness...but not English.

Sajid provides perspectives on Englishness and place that are similar yet also very different from Jody's. Sajid is in his thirties, has lived in London for all of his life and in Southton for five years. He is a graduate who works for a large gambling company, and with his wife has recently bought a house in Southton where they live with their recently born child. Sajid's parents migrated to London from Pakistan before he was born. He does not identify as white or as English and considers the latter category to be very closely associated with the former, a pattern found to varying extents with all of the participants in the study who did not identify as white (Leddy-Owen 2012).

Figure Four about here

At the start of the discussion of the photographs he has taken, Sajid recounts, in a manner similar to John's, how he 'had a hard time actually trying to catch the essence of Englishness'. As such, he took seven photographs of some 'typical' English things. Figure Four's portrayal of live television coverage of 2011's royal wedding is described by Sajid as 'quintessentially English...in every way'. This portrayal of upper-class Englishness is accompanied by two photographs that aimed to represent white working-class Englishness. For Sajid a public house, such as that photographed in Figure Five, is an 'institution' that he 'naturally associate[s] with the English', as is another photograph he takes of a bookmakers.

In the 'predominantly working-class' and white area of London in which Sajid grew up, and in which he experienced a considerable amount of racism in his youth, these establishments, he explains, were both associated in his mind with 'Anglo-Saxon working-class...types'.

Figure Five about here

However, Sajid then suggests that the photographed pub, situated in an affluent area of West London near where he works, is 'actually...rather trendy' and thus not as 'traditional' as the working-class establishment he aimed to capture. He also notes how the Southton bookmakers which he photographed, and other bookmakers in other areas of London with relatively large ethnic minority populations, might not have the same predominance of white clientele as similar establishments in areas with larger white populations such as the area in which he grew up. Furthermore, Sajid describes his own employment in a gambling company as 'ironic' given that this photograph is supposed to represent whiteness. Sajid suggests that prior to his employment there he 'would've automatically linked that [gambling or bookmakers' establishments] to being English' but that such an association was now unsettled.

Although Figures Four and Five present images of commercial, public spaces, Sajid's reflections on Englishness and buildings within London were not limited to these. He also discusses how he considered photographing Victorian terraced housing to represent white Englishness before changing his mind, as 'everyone kind of lives in Victorian houses' regardless of ethnic heritage, by which Sajid seemed to be referring to the house which he and his wife recently purchased and in which the interview was taking place. In the

following excerpt Sajid reflects on these scuppered attempts at capturing the essence of Englishness.

[During the photography process] I found out that there wasn't much of a distinction between myself or maybe anybody [in England]...[and] Englishness... Actually, I feel [that my identity] it's more linked to England than it has been before [the photography exercise], because I struggled [to find an appropriate photograph]... The colour of my skin, my ethnic heritage, [encouraged me to feel] that I was so far away from being embedded in this [English] culture when actually I'm complete-, very much embedded in this culture...I just didn't know to what degree.

Sajid has lived for all of his life in England and in London and feels 'very much embedded' within a local culture he associates with Englishness, thus suggesting that 'maybe anybody', regardless of their ethnicity, could feel the same. Sajid's reflexivity during the photography exercise thus brings to light 'the processes of cohabitation and interaction that have made multiculturalism an ordinary feature of social life in Britain's urban areas' (Gilroy 2004: xi), and these ordinary features, which Sajid in another place and time had associated with a normatively white urban landscape, are instead understood as ethnically heterogeneous. His various classed and racialised assumptions are unsettled in relation to multiethnic populations and places – what was a white or working-class symbol or place where he grew up is not so working-class or white in other areas of London – and in relation to his own life experiences, specifically his employment for a bookmakers and his ownership of a suburban Victorian terraced house.

At each turn in Southton and elsewhere in London the essence of a white Englishness that Sajid aims to capture with the camera is thus undone by the extent of the city's diversity and by the urban spaces and social practices shared by whites and non-whites. Whilst John, Jody and other white participants draw on a suburbia in which parks, churchyards and pseudo-rural imaginaries help to construct a normatively white Englishness and sense of belonging, for Sajid a different interpretation of the city and suburbia emerges in which place and places are constructed as *inclusive* of the wider population of Southton, London and England rather than in ways that interrelate with discourses of normative whiteness. For Sajid, the ethnic diversity of the city, and here, as Huq has elsewhere shown, specifically the suburbs, calls 'into question received notions of Englishness' (2008: 50).

However, unlike Jody, this apparent transition towards an insider perspective and an identification with what Sajid considers to be English only goes so far, something reflected towards the end of the previous excerpt when he seemingly stops short of stating that he feels 'completely' embedded in English culture. While Sajid may identify with aspects of English culture, at no stage does he identify *as* English or suggest that someone who is not white could ever do so, and he elsewhere furthermore suggests that he does not feel that his infant daughter will identify or be identified as English. For Sajid, regardless of the extent to which he feels embedded in the local environment and culture, white skin remains the key boundary of Englishness, one that he feels ultimately forecloses an identification as English.

The role of class as well as 'race' in this construction of an at once inclusive yet exclusionary Englishness is crucial. In the following excerpt Sajid suggests that *the* 'essence' of

Englishness would be most effectively represented in a photograph of a middle-class white person.

Sajid: The one photo really missing which I wish I had taken but I felt almost awkward going up to somebody and saying can I take picture of you [laughing] because you're a white Englishman [laughing]. I don't know how they would've taken it, but...that's probably what's missing from the pack, but it's very hard other than [that] [...]

Author: What sort of person would you have stopped in the street?

Sajid: [pause] The ideal person?

Author: Yeah.

Sajid: Anglo Saxon, middle class [laughs].

Later in the interview Sajid's wife Upala, who is of Bengali heritage and also took part in the project but did not take photographs, suggests that the 'white mummies' she sees 'on the Northcote Road' in Clapham (an area of South London associated by some with young middle-class people) who 'look down their noses' at her would have been the ideal photograph representing Englishness. This centrality of white middle-class Englishness to both Sajid and Upala's accounts helps to further illuminate the analysis of the photographs that *were* taken. Sajid has taken photographs representing elitist, upper-class Englishness (Figure Four) and of what he originally aims to be representative of working-class

Englishness (Figure Five and the photograph of the bookmakers), but in the latter excerpt he suggests that *middle-class* Englishness would be the most appropriate representation of an essentialised white Englishness. However, he has apparently been unable to think of a representation of middle-class whiteness other than the potential photograph of a middle-class white *person*. This is perhaps because middle-class institutions, establishments or symbols are seen as difficult to capture photographically due to the ‘institutionalised, legitimated and well established’ position of middle-classness and consequently its seeming ‘invisibility’ (Skeggs 1997: 7). Furthermore, because Sajid describes how he feels particularly culturally ‘embedded’ within a specifically middle-class sense of Englishness (Figure Four’s depiction of a large flat-screen television in a newly bought Victorian house in the process of renovation provides a representation of this), this will have made the task of finding a representation of white English middle-classness from which he felt *distinct* somewhat difficult.

Sajid’s apparent inability to distinguish himself culturally from white middle-class Englishness thus echoes findings from previous studies suggesting that a dominant classed perspective can, in some circumstances and places, some of the time, unmark the racialised perspectives of those more generally positioned as ‘other’ within hegemonic understandings of racialised difference (Twine 1996; Hage 1998). However, whilst this is the case to some extent with a property owning, suburban based person such as Sajid, such a finding might not have been repeated among working-class participants from non-white ethnic backgrounds for whom symbols and places associated with middle-classness might have been both more identifiable and more closely allied to whiteness (though further studies suggest that *working-class*, multiethnic, ‘syncretic’ cultures also emerge convivially

in urban environments [e.g. Back 1996]). This pattern may also have not occurred had the fieldwork taken place in a less ethnically heterogeneous part of England or London (such as the area where Sajid grew up).

But while white middle-class *culture* is perhaps unrepresentable or too close to Sajid's sense of self to be represented as distinct from the culture with which he identifies, the inscribed, embodied difference that comes with being identified as white or not white remains an effectively exclusionary binary in relation to English identification. The normativity of middle-class English culture and Sajid's feelings of proximity to this culture, when figured together, suggest to him that it is only a white *person* – so white skin itself – that can effectively represent exclusion from the category English. As Hage finds in an Australian context, therefore, regardless of the amount of 'national capital' that may be accumulated, and regardless of the extent to which a sense of belonging is felt, ultimately Sajid feels that skin colour and a categorisation as non-white means that he can only be considered as 'like' the white English rather than 'naturally' white English (1998: 61). It may be that in choosing white middle class people, who Sajid feels close to culturally, as the core representatives of this sense of exclusion from Englishness, he is describing how the very cultural proximity he seems to feel in relation to these middle class people *clarifies* a sense of racialised exclusion from white Englishness. A specifically middle class Englishness is thus close to his sense of self yet no more open to him as an identity.

It is, again, through the reflexivity of the participant's approach to the very difficult task set by the methodology that these findings emerged. In a way that was not the case during the interview process alone, the photographic element and the movement in space this

encouraged saw Sajid reflexively demonstrate how he felt at once an insider in relation to Englishness and the multiethnicity of English culture within the urban and suburban landscape and in relation to his middle-classness, and at the same time how he felt excluded from the *category* English in relation to his skin colour. In clear contrast to Jody, for whom almost the opposite pattern applies, a familiarity with and attachment to place, and feelings of belonging in relation to that place, have no bearing on the extent to which Sajid feels able to identify *as* English due to the constraints he experiences in relation to colonial distinctions and racialised subjectivities. When it comes to identifying as English, regardless of the extent to which an individual can construct and experience a sense of belonging in relation to England or a part of England, it would seem therefore that the crudely visual effects of the association between Englishness and normative whiteness remain. Here, as with Jody, the old, yet seemingly ever present, colonial boundaries remain highly salient.

Analysis of Sajid's interviews again suggests the futility of the task set by the research methodology of representing such a contradictory and complex concept as Englishness. However, Sajid's positioning as 'other' within discourses of Englishness perhaps helped to enable a far more critical engagement than was seen with John and Jody. The conclusion will explore the implications of this greater degree of critical reflexivity in relation to the overall critique of the methodology that has been discussed throughout this article.

Conclusion

As has been demonstrated, the photographic fieldwork saw participants capture and construct particular representations of 'English' places that, in different ways, were bound up with representations of the South London suburbia in which they were situated and with

a whiteness they positioned as racially normative in relation to Englishness. Participants constructed a sense of home that was neither straightforwardly positive or negative in character (Brickell 2012: 238), premised on important notions of security and belonging but also in part underpinned by racially exclusionary discourses which were further differentiated along lines of gender and class. The almost complete absence of direct representations of the human figure from the photographs reprinted above is partly due to editing for reasons of participant anonymity, but is more generally due to an absence of the human figure from the majority of photographs taken. John and Jody in particular took photographs of places that were quiet and relatively unpopulated and in John's case associated with private rather than public space. This was perhaps to some extent a result of reticence but also, I would suggest, because neither considered – or both avoided – taking photographs of places that might be associated with non-whiteness; most notably the busy, unquestionably multiethnically populated, high street situated a few hundred metres from John's house and which Jody will have been unable to avoid on her way to the park where most of her photographs were taken.

Sajid's photographs were similarly lacking in direct human representation. However, in contrast to John and Jody, Sajid, although originally planning to take photographs representing whiteness, discussed how he (unintentionally), through photographs of public, commercial buildings, represented precisely the kinds of cohabited multiethnic areas of Southton and London absent from John's and Jody's photographs. Even Sajid's projected but untaken photograph of Victorian terraced housing can be usefully contrasted to John's photograph of the terraced street on which he lives (Figure One), as Sajid's discussion of the lived multiethnicity within these houses, which thus precluded the usefulness of this

representation for capturing his view of a normatively white Englishness, is clearly distinct from John's portrayal of a road representative of pseudo-rural white (would-be) isolation within the city. Sajid's pictures and his discussions surrounding them demonstrate how, despite his continued sense of separation from an English identity, the lived realities of multiethnic urban areas, and the constructions of lives within them, can lead to the resignification of places and symbols hitherto associated with exclusionary national categories and dominant racialised norms. This is suggestive of the ways by which urban and suburban spaces in England are, to the discomfort of some white people such as John, becoming more ethnically plural in meaning for many in England, though it is important to recall that constructions of place and a sense of belonging also involve the negotiation of classed, gendered and sexualised discourses and landscapes.

Therefore, while the enabling and constraining effects of racialised subjectivities on English *identification* remain salient for all of the participants discussed in this article, the data also demonstrate that associations between a normatively white Englishness and a sense of legitimate *belonging* in relation to place and population in England are being unsettled by the challenges to these associations emerging within a multiethnic, multiracial society. For participants in this study, in different ways and from different perspectives, discussions surrounding Englishness demonstrate how long-standing colonial associations between the nation, whiteness and belonging can unravel in multiethnic areas; though equally clear is the potential for racialised backlash among those, such as John and Jody, for whom associations between belonging, place and whiteness remain salient.

The constructions of place and belonging in relation to English identities and discourses of 'race' discussed in this article were enabled by the reflexivity of participants in the context of the mobility within space encouraged and captured by the participant photography methodology. However, as has also been argued, the photography methodology itself helped set up the construction of the kinds of restrictive, racialised and nationalist discourses associated in the literature with Englishness and confirmed in the analysis. As Brubaker argues, if comprehensive and nuanced perspectives are to emerge from our research then studies of nationalism should 'avoid...doubling or reinforcing the reification of ethnic groups...with a reification of such groups in social analysis' (2002: 167). Furthermore, to a large extent, the more ambitious ideals of visual methods and critical race studies more generally, in particular the aims of encouraging 'positive social change' (Askins and Pain 2011), were not achieved. This was certainly the case in relation to white participants, such as John and Jody, for whom the exercise seemed to encourage the production of reflexive and more nuanced yet relatively uncritical associations between Englishness, whiteness and belonging.

At the same time, however, it is important not to exaggerate the restrictive power of this methodological approach or, more importantly, to underestimate the potential for critical reflexivity on the part of research participants. Regardless of the ways in which the methodology may have encouraged particular perspectives to be produced, discursive space was always available during the process of data production for critical reflection and the destabilising of dominant discourses. I would argue that the enduring relationship between colonial power-relations, whiteness, Englishness and place, among participants who demonstrated considerable degrees of self-conscious reflexivity, was ultimately a more

significant pattern emerging from the analysis than was the evidence for the power of the researcher to call Englishness and this relationship 'into being'. This seems particularly the case when, as found with Sajid, some 'non-white' participants critiqued and undermined the dominant racialised associations between Englishness and constructions of place and belonging. The design of the methodology could thus to some extent be justly criticised in the absence of 'messy' or progressive outcomes, and for enabling a reproduction of dominant, essentialised understandings; and overall, I would agree with those such as Brubaker (2002) or Fox and Jones (2013) who advocate a more nuanced approach in which a national or ethnic 'lens' is discarded, as much as is possible, methodologically and analytically. However, at the same time, whilst the 'content and meaning' (Johnsen et al 2008: 196) of participants' responses were imposed by the researcher to a significant extent, participants, in different ways, ultimately drew this content and meaning from long embedded and powerful racialised frameworks for interpreting society and space.

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Figure Three: Jody's photograph of hair extensions in the trees.

Figure Four: Sajid's photograph of the royal wedding.

Figure Five: Sajid's photograph of a pub.