

## Reviewer

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## Review

*'Not From Round Here – Racial Framing and the Paradox of Choice'*

The author has effectively identified a significant gap in academic research concerning a specific aspect of 'race' and belonging, unique to these islands. Indeed, there are scant academic papers which attempt to engage problematic aspects of this complex subject matter. From a personal reading of the literature, there appears to be one primary reason for this paucity. Evidentially, it is one of embodiment, the perspective of 'being' afforded to the scholar. Notwithstanding, there are few academics sufficiently positioned to be able to engage this particularistic subjectivity (see, Durr, 2021; Njaka, 2021; Njaka, 2022). The authors willingness to engage the subject, alone, marks this work as novel and worthy of regard. Wherein, the piece is worked through the researchers own clearly stated embodiment, which offers alignment to the topic of discussion.

Belonging and identity worked through the lens of race, represent difficult subjects indeed. Confirming feelings of stratified differentiation in the individual, as interrogated in the work. Such feelings simultaneously accompany the (endless) search by the wider polity for a 'clear categorisation' of people(s) – a homogeneous alignment. Characteristically, this searching creates a (mis)alignment, demonstrably clear from the outset via a legitimate and contextually valid form of autoethnography, employed as the primary adopted methodology. Revealingly, autoethnography is one of the few vehicles capable of bridging the divide between the embodied author and the reader (see, Bryan, Dadzie, & Scafe, 1985). Indeed, via this method, the authors exposition is able to explore a long lineage of encounters, whether fleeting or sustained, both private and professional. Such reflections are (predominantly) with non-minorities, who themselves are sufficiently and securely positioned in notions of national identity. The enquirer in such encounters is satisfactorily established and legitimised enough in discourses of belonging, in order to query and question abstract identity, and the authors identity in particular. An identity conceptualised through liminal surfaces of which the author has no control. Indeed, (irrespective of gender), do these queries avail the author, in the search for consensus. Further, a choice is being made, but not by the embodied author – agency and belonging are lost in an instant (see, Fanon, 1986 [1952]). Thereby, being British is not an optionality for the author based upon the reductionist liminality of aesthetics, notions of belonging are disrupted.

An interesting and compelling statement evidenced in the work states, 'no one has ever told me that I am not white enough', a profound and important assertion. This reflection by the author affords us the opportunity to see the nakedness of 'race' and belonging, in direct relation to the excise of power. The genetic logic of his background is subsumed by surface – skin liminality alone, a profound reflection indeed. The prose hinges acceptance into the national body on the mere *communicable* surface of skin dynamics. An assertion which is scaffolded by experience, afforded via autoethnographical recollection and reflexive praxis – this is worked as an effective memory tool.

Using a superbly poised series of arguments, the author transubstantiates the 'logic' of belonging – as advanced by Lord Norman Tebbit and those of a likeminded disposition – to evidentially

demonstrate his legitimacy of belonging, via the use of the same logic. Consequentially, we are treated to a wonderfully evocative familial history, resplendent with profound historical images of lives lived. The seriousness of the fundamental argument here is clear, well mounted, and logically insightful. However, as the paper reminds, supreme acts of service to the state are no guarantee in the transcendence of race. A guarantee of adequate robustness to ensure a durable, visible, and publicly acknowledged sense of belonging, for those who contribute and their descendants.

The piece seeks to problematise the narratives of belonging, in this moment, within the nation. It convincingly achieves this through the complexifying lens of being mixed-heritage, via the assistance of music, which it successfully accomplishes. Further, the insightful use of music is used to describe how the usage of one solitary word (transposed by a music band for another word), conveys discourses of power and legitimacy. Indeed, innocuous selection can be mobilised to serve those privileged, as the dominant group, in a greater service to non-minority discourse. Thus, a characteristically hidden mechanism of consecrating is revealed by the author.

The paper is well balanced, it is not too long, the argument is made succinctly. Namely, society creates a paradox of choice for the subject through the matrix of 'race', belonging and nation. Wherein, this limited optionality of choice is counterbalanced by the author, offering us a second view into the richness of familial life going back many generations. However, the essentialised 'exhibitionist' nature of these personal revelations uniquely falls on those deemed outside of the default sphere of belonging. Exhibiting revelations reveals a double-edged sword of being, embodied in this mixed/dual way – revelatory practice is a mechanism of acquiring belonging. Something the author is fully aware of in referencing and citing of the work of Dyer (2013).

Linguistically, the article uses 'contentious' philological prose, as experienced by the author of the paper. This reviewer is in full agreement with the contextual use of this language, for otherwise we collectively run the risk of revisionism by sanitisation. Wherein, the experiences of those whose recollections the reviewer is in alignment with, are at risk of being rendered void through the employment of less blunt, historically inaccurate terms. Indeed, such terminology was used in abundance during this prior period in our collective national life.

### **Conclusion**

As the ongoing and continuous debate concerning who 'belongs' and who is to be 'excluded' continues to murmur through our contemporary society, this work offers an opportunity to reframe these debates. Such work represents a rare opportunity to gain perspective from lives of the national polity who reside on the margins of belonging. In conclusion, this is a necessary piece of work, vital to widen both scholarly appreciation of who belongs and to afford observing aspects of socio-cultural mechanisms which bestow belonging. Therefore, this academic paper is publishable in principle, it does indeed warrant a further detailed and careful read through, prior to publication by the editor.

### **Critique/Improvement**

A minor reference is made to 'symbolic violence' (Page 5/Line 22), the work of Bourdieu should have at least gained a mention when using this conceptual term. Thereby, providing an additional robust connection to established seminal sociological literature which adequately describes the 'said' and 'unsaid' mechanisms alluded to by the author (see, Bourdieu, 2002 [1991]).

### **Grammatical/Syntax/Structural/Proofing Issues**

Page 3/Line 28	Missing 'of'.
Page 18/Line 31	Past tense should be used, as in 'had' – Lord Tebbit is no longer alive.
Page 4/Line 28	Double spacing is present between 'is a'.

### Reviewers References

Bourdieu, P. (2002 [1991]) *Language and Symbolic Power*. Cambridge: Polity Press.

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Durr, M. (2021) 'Mixed-Race in the US and UK: Comparing the Past, Present, and Future.' *Sociology of Race and Ethnicity*. 7(3), pp.452-453. Available at: <https://doi.org/10.1177/23326492211020212>.

Fanon, F. (1986 [1952]) *Black Skin, White Masks*. London: Pluto Press.

Njaka, C. L. (2021) 'Race and Racism(s): Current Debates in Global and UK Theorisation and Empiricism.' *Sociology*. 55(3), pp.641-645. Available at: <https://doi.org/10.1177/0038038520986053>.

Njaka, C. L. (2022) 'A Dialectic of Race Discourses: The Presence/Absence of Mixed Race at the State, Institution, and Civil Society and Voluntary and Community Sector Levels in the United Kingdom'. *Social Sciences*. 11(2), 86. Available at: <https://doi.org/10.3390/socsci11020086>.