

**Race and the Symbolic Boundaries of Teenagers in London and New
York City**

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What are the symbolic boundaries and valuation processes among teenagers in multiethnic schools? Previous research on peer status markers has focused largely on middle class adolescent populations (Adler & Adler, 1995, 1998; Eder, 1985; Eder & Kinney, 1995; Merten, 1997; Milner, 2004). This research has suggested that athletics, success with the opposite sex, style, beauty, music tastes, and demonstrations of masculinity/femininity lead to peer status (Adler & Adler, 1995, 1998; Coleman, 1961; Eder & Kinney, 1995; Milner, 2004). Research in urban multiethnic schools resonates with some of these factors—namely, the roles of style and gender expectations; however, in these contexts authenticity in terms of race, class, and congruence of self-presentation matters, as well (Warikoo, 2005). The different criteria for determining peer status lead to different symbolic boundaries in urban multiethnic schools. In order to address the question of how disadvantage and diversity affect symbolic boundaries and peer status, in this paper I analyze the status hierarchies and social groups of teenagers in two public high schools, one in London and one in New York City. I draw upon ethnographic data, 120 in-depth interviews with students in both schools, and a survey of 191 students in the two schools.

The paper will demonstrate the strong salience of ethnicity and race in the group boundaries and peer status hierarchies of teenagers in New York City multiethnic public high schools, in contrast to similar schools in London, where race and ethnicity matter much less. Structural influences outside the school—US residential segregation, and historical processes of racial formation—along with school structural causes—organizational structure of the school—led to the continuing significance of race in terms of social boundaries among the New York

student population, in spite of the super-diversity in their school, and in contrast to the low salience of race and ethnicity in London. New Yorkers described their school's social groups most frequently in terms of race/ethnicity; they described popular and unpopular students in terms of race/ethnicity; and they were less likely than Londoners to have friends of other race groups or to be open to dating outside their ethnic/racial groups. Race and ethnicity of course mattered in London as well, but not nearly as much as they did in New York.

Methodology

A multi-method approach triangulates this research: ethnographic observations, a random survey with 190 teenagers, and 80 in-depth interviews with the ethnic groups mentioned above. I spent one semester in each of two schools, one in London and one in New York. In the schools I shadowed teachers and students and wrote detailed field notes. Surveys were conducted with random groups of students in school during 4 heterogeneous classes (by ethnicity/race, gender, skills) in each site; they gave a sense of overall interests, attitudes, identities and backgrounds in the schools.¹ 65% of survey respondents in London were second generation (UK-born or arrived by age 5 with foreign-born mother), as were 48% in New York. Another 33% in New York were first or 1.5 generation, as were an additional 7% in London (see Table 1). Survey responses provided an overview of student backgrounds and attitudes in each school, facilitating the New York-London comparison.

Table 1 about here

Finally, in-depth interviews elicited explanations for social status and school groups. Interviews were conducted with two ethnic groups in both cities: second generation Afro-Caribbeans and second generation Indians. In addition, in London I interviewed native white students, and in New York second generation Indo-Caribbeans. There were twenty students of each ethnic group in each city (half girls and half boys), for a total of 120 in-depth interviews (see Table 2). In both cities, interviews lasted from 40 minutes to 90 minutes, and were subsequently transcribed. Transcripts were coded using ATLAS.ti, and then analyzed by reviewing the quotes listed under different codes, and by using the matrix method of Miles and Huberman (1984) to examine gender, ethnic, and national differences in the interview data.

Table 2 about here

The London school, Long Meadow Comprehensive School, sits in the northwest borough of Brent.² Over 60% of Brent's population is of non-British origin, which is the highest percentage of minorities in all of Britain's boroughs (2001 UK Census Key Statistics). Brent is not the poorest London borough, but it includes a range of classes, from quite poor to quite wealthy. Its unemployment rate is almost 50% greater than all of England's (2001 UK Census). Long Meadow's 1,100 students reflect the ethnic and racial diversity of the borough. No ethnic group predominates, and there is also a significant "mixed race" population. The largest ethno-racial groups are white British students (17%), Indians (16%), and Afro-Caribbeans (15%); still, these groups together comprise less than half the student

¹ Although students could opt out of the survey, none in either city chose to do so.

² I have changed the names of the schools, my respondents, and teachers in the interest of confidentiality.

population. One-third of Long Meadow's students are eligible for free student lunches. In terms of educational outcomes, in 2003 43% of Long Meadow 11th grade students attained 5 grades of C or above on the General Certificate of Secondary Education (GCSE) exams (The national average is 52%) (2003 OFSTED Report) (see Table 3).³

The New York school, York High School, lies on the border of Brooklyn and Queens. Median household income is \$40,900 (zip code area), which is 3% below the US median (US Census, Summary File 3). As with many urban areas (and the Brent neighborhood), the better off population of the neighborhood sends its children to parochial, private, and specialized public schools, and students from neighboring less wealthy neighborhoods commonly come by bus or subway to attend the school.⁴

Like Long Meadow, York High is quite diverse. Hispanics (42%) and Asians (about 37%⁵) are the largest groups at the school, but the statistics mask the internal diversity of the groups. Hispanics include significant numbers of Puerto Ricans and Dominicans as well as other Latino origin groups in smaller numbers. Asians include significant numbers of Indians, Indo-Caribbeans, and Pakistanis. Black students make up 14% of the school population, and this includes African Americans and Afro-Caribbeans. Lastly, whites are 7% of the school population.

³ The GCSE exams are the exit exams for schooling in the UK, taken at age 16. 5 C or above GCSE grades (one grade is awarded for each subject) is the minimum requirement for entering most British universities, and 5 A-G grades is the minimum standard for saying one has finished school "with qualifications".

⁴Of students who attend school in New York City, over 20% attend either private or parochial schools (correspondence with New York State Education Department, 2005). In the 3-digit zip code area of York High School, 14.2% of K-12 students attended private or parochial schools (US Census Summary File 3). Others attend alternative public high schools that have admissions criteria, such as passing an entrance exam or high grades in a particular subject.

⁵ Because school statistics count Asians together with those in the "other" category, this figure may be slightly high.

As at Long Meadow, there is no majority ethnic group at York High School. York High is about three times the size of Long Meadow, housing over 3,000 students. Similar to Long Meadow, one-third of students are eligible for free student lunches. Finally, in the 2003-2004 school year at York, 55% of students who took the Regents English exam passed it, in comparison to 66% of students citywide, and in Math A (first of 2 math exams), 64% of students passed, in comparison to 68% of students citywide (NYC Department of Education School Report Cards 2004).⁶ The school's official graduation rate is 44%, although a group of 1,100 9th grade students in 2002 dwindled to 400 12th grade students by 2004 (see Table 3).

Table 3 about here

Because I found that the majority of black students at York High were African American with US-born parents, I approached a neighboring school in the same Board of Education Region, a school I call Harrison High School, to complete interviews with Afro-Caribbeans. Although not ideal, because the schools are demographically similar, this did not affect my findings. Harrison High School lies less than 2 miles from York High School, and no other high schools lie between the two. Harrison High School's student body in 2003-2004 was quite similar to York High School's: 9% non-Hispanic white, 26% non-Hispanic black, 37% Hispanic, and 33% Asian and others (NYC Department of Education School Report Cards 2004). 49% of Harrison's over 3,500 students were eligible for free school lunches⁷. A

⁶ Students in New York State are required to attain a minimum score on the Regents math and English exams in order to graduate high school, in addition to passing the required classes.

⁷A school administrator at York High School explained to me that because many students do not have a lunch period at her school, many do not bring in their free/reduced lunch form. She estimated that closer to 50% or more of York students would be eligible for free lunches, if they brought their forms in to school. She cited Harrison High School as a school with similar students but one where administrators pushed students to bring in lunch forms in order to get enough low-income forms to

school administrator at York High called Harrison their “sister school”. Many students at Harrison reported having friends at York, and vice versa.

Findings

In what follows I first analyze the nature of social groups in both schools. I then move on to the peer status hierarchy in both cities. Next I turn to the causes of this difference between the US and Britain in terms of group boundaries and the influence of race on status, in spite of many teens in both cities seeing themselves as fluid in their group boundaries or expressing a preference for weak boundaries between ethnic groups (see also Dolby, 2001). Unlike previous research on youth social status in the US that focused on largely middle class adolescent populations (Adler & Adler, 1995, 1998; Eder, 1985; Eder & Kinney, 1995; Merten, 1997), this research focused on low-income urban minority youth in multiethnic high schools, and consequently my findings on the salience of race and ethnicity differ significantly from previous studies. No major previous study has looked beyond extracurricular activities, looks, and wealth in trying to understand the elements of youth culture that lead to peer status, and the influence of race on peer status.

Social Groups and their Symbolic Boundaries

Lamont and Molnar (2002) define symbolic boundaries as “conceptual distinctions made by social actors to categorize objects, people, practices, and even time and space,” (page 168). Here I present the variables of difference that youth in

qualify for Title I federal school funding, which goes to the most disadvantaged schools. As a result in that year the eligibility shot up to 49%, from 28% the previous year (NYC Department of Education,

London and New York used to categorize each other. Rather than assume a salient boundary marker such as ethnicity, I asked youth themselves about the social groups at their schools, to elicit what boundaries they themselves see (Lamont 1992).

66% of students in New York described *race* groups when asked to describe the social groups at their school, in contrast to just 20% in London. In addition to using race categories to describe their school's social groups, students in New York also described the social groups by level of popularity (16%) and taste groups (16%), such as punks, hip-hop listeners, etc.⁸ Although the New York City Board of Education compiles school statistics according to race and ethnicity categories commonly used by US social scientists, students defined their race and ethnicity categories quite differently from official statistics. They called themselves and each other black, African American, Punjabi, West Indian, Guyanese (sometimes "Guyanese and Trini"), Indian, Spanish, Puerto Rican, and white (sometimes known as Italian).⁹ Black meant African American and Afro-Caribbean; Guyanese or Guyanese/Trini meant Indo-Caribbean (Trini being short for Trinidadian); Indian could mean parents or ancestors (in the case of Indo-Caribbeans) from India; and Spanish meant Hispanic. When I asked students to describe the different social groups at school, these were the labels they most frequently used. They said things similar to Sanjay, when asked to describe the social groups at their school:

Q: If you had to describe what the different social groups are at school, what would you say they are? Who hangs out with whom?

2004).

⁸ Many students listed more than one type of social group, and others described groups not listed here; hence, the percentages do not add up to 100%.

⁹ As mentioned in Chapter 2, York High's population is 7% white, 14% black, 42% Hispanic, and 38% Asian and other, according to school statistics.

R: It depends. Some Punjabi people hang out with Punjabi, blacks with blacks, Spanish with Spanish. I like hanging out with mixed, not like all Punjabis, but all others.... [Sanjay, Indian male]

Like many of his peers, Sanjay interpreted a question about social groups to be about ethnicity, suggesting that ethnicity was the most salient group boundary in New York.

Teens in London organized themselves around three main categories: (1) gender; (2) proximate groups--their form classes and what they did during lunchtime; and (3) consumption groups—tastes in music and style. 24% of London interview respondents named gender groups when asked about their school's social groups.

When I began my research in London the gender segregation in students' social patterns struck me. When they could choose seats, inevitably boys would end on one side of the room, and girls on the other. Even students who insisted that their school didn't have social groups that separate said that students did separate by gender. For example, Vimal told me,

N: If you had to describe the different social groups in this school, what would you say they are? Who hangs out with who?

R: Everyone hangs out with each other like, but mostly separated by, boys hang out with mostly boys and girls with girls.

Perhaps this separation resulted from their social groups developing at an early age in Year 7, when the class first comes together (age 11).

In addition to gender, one-third of London students described Form Classes as social groups. Form Classes, as described in Chapter 2, spend their whole school days together until Year 10, when science classes become tracked and students begin to take electives. Even after year 10 students spend most of the day with peers from the Form Class, and year 11 students had English class with their Form Classes,

which most have known since Year 7, age 11.¹⁰ Hence, most Form Classes grew to be quite close and fond of each other, even if the occasional inevitable fights developed. One Year 11 Indian girl, Angela, explained how close her Form Class was:

My class is like, I think it's the only class that love each other. I mean really tight. I don't know we just click. All of us just click with each other....When we are in trouble, our class always...stick up for us.

This closeness formed after being together for five consecutive years. Later, Angela told me that she was going to be very sad at the end of the school year, because her form class would be breaking up and everyone would be going their separate ways—some to Sixth Form at other schools, some to work, and some to college.

When asked to describe the school's social groups, some used Form Classes as the unit of division, and others relayed within-class social groups. For example, Frank, a white year 10 student, said this:

N: If you had to describe the different social groups at school, like who hangs out with who, what would you say?

R: ...I don't know really don't how to explain it, but you know Jason?

N: Yeah.

R: Yeah his table sit like at the back. And then you got my table sitting like right next to his.

N: This is in maths class?

R: Yeah. And then we got all the like people who—geeks, sort of. [They] sit along near the window, near the front of the board.

N: Who would that be?

R: Peter, Jagdish, Bupesh, Sunil and Amarjit. And then we have got the girls' tables there, and then, like Lucy, Habiba, and Lisa would sit in the middle.

¹⁰ In addition, tracked classes had about one-third of the pupils from students' form classes, and gym classes have all their same-gender Form Class peers.

N: And all the other girls at the other tables, right?

R: Yeah.

N: How would you describe those groups? Like how would you describe your group?

R: My group is just the people who play football....Depends what classroom it is. Say if it's in maths. I will probably sit with the people who play football, like Derek and John and Vimal. But if I was in a different class, like sociology, I would sit next to Jason.

Frank's description shows that his social world at school is his Form Class. Frank bases his social group on his lunchtime activity (football), but when he sits in an elective class and all his classmates are not with him (sociology) he sits with the one student who *is* from his Form Class, Jason. I observed this seating arrangement in many elective classes—students usually sat with peers from their own Form Classes, regardless of taste preferences or ethnicity/race.

In addition to identifying with their Form Classes, students in London broke off into social groups during breaks, according to their activities during those times—20% described lunch activities when defining the school's social groups. The entire school had two breaks during the school day, during which time all students were free to eat, play in the large school yard, sit in the library, or roam the school's hallways, since no classes were in session. Students' activities during breaks determined their social groups; hence one's activity during breaks was quite important to defining one's school identity.

Finally, students described taste groups at school (24%). Abe, a 17-year old white Sixth Form student who had moved to London from the north of England a few years prior, described the school's social groups in terms of music:

N: If you had to describe the different social groups at school, what would you say they are?

R: You have got like... I would say you could almost separate it with like music. You have got like people that are like more Americanized music like hip-hop and stuff like that. Then you have got people that like garage, proper English garage. And then you have got people who like rock music and like couple of people that like classical music. And you can probably could go to the different groups because you can obviously, you can see them even when they are wearing uniform you can still see them. People would—there is one girl I see and she wears like big boots and she has got pink hair, stuff like that. She likes rock music and there is like kind of people who wear their trousers a bit baggy even if it's uniform and stuff like that, you can see. So I'd say that's how you could separate it.

Abe points out the congruence in London between style of dress, music tastes, and social groups. After Form Class groups, taste groupings were the most common (along with gender) groups described by London youth in interviews.

Table 4 about here

Race was significant in London in two ways. First, as in New York, some students named race groups (20%). Second, race was a part of the taste categories named by 24% of London youth, in that groups based on taste preferences were often racialized. For example, although many white and Indian students listened to hip-hop music (like Abe), hip-hop and R&B were seen as “black” music, for their African American origins. On the other hand, rock or grunge music was seen as “white” music, because it started with white bands. Grace, a Year 11 student who lives with her Nigerian mother and English stepfather but spends a lot of time in the US with her Afro-Caribbean father, told me this:

N: So if you had to describe the different school groups at school, what are the different groups here?

R: It's like, there is all black in my group...There is one mixed race person and there is one white person, but the white person...she is more, like, you know, black. The way she behaves is like a black person, and she likes black things....And then you have the all white girls group. It's a mixed—it's got, oh you might get a one black girl in

it. She behaves like more like a white girl....But then you can get white people that act like black people, black people act like white people....

N: And what about the Asians? Where do they fit into all that?

R: I don't really—I have one Asian friend, but then again she behaves like a black person. So it's like the Asian have their little section, like we have our little section, the white kids have their little section, so it's just crazy.

In other words, students defined racial categories in terms of taste and behaviors, rather than by the race of individuals in the group. These socially-defined groups are labeled “black”, and “white” *because of the cultural heritage of the genre’s contents* rather than because of the members of that group, in contrast to New York, where groups were defined *by the ethnicity of individuals in them*. I gathered that the “black” behaviors Grace alludes to are aspects of popular youth culture, including tastes, speech patterns, and interactional styles. Probably because Asians did not have high status in the school and blacks did, non-Asians engaging with Asian culture were much less common (although I encountered some) than non-blacks engaging with black culture.¹¹

Symbolic Boundaries in Comparison

Strong ethno-racial boundaries led New Yorkers to generally associate more with peers of their same ethnicity or race, in comparison to London youth. This was not just true of how students described school social groups. Race and ethnicity were

¹¹ Popular culture trends in Great Britain suggest that this may be changing. A few months after completing my research in London I attended a music festival that included, among other things, a stage focused on “Asian” or South Asian popular music. Juggy D, a British Asian singer, sang his pop hit song, “Got my Eye on You” to an diverse audience with South Asian, black, and white adolescent girls screaming at the front. Far from simply mimicking R&B and white pop singers, Juggy D’s music had a distinctive Indian sound, in addition to its R&B and pop influences.

more likely to be a barrier to social interaction among peers in New York compared to London: 42% of New York youth said they “agree a lot with the statement *In my school, students feel comfortable talking with students of other racial and ethnic groups*. In contrast, 74% of their London counterparts agreed a lot. In addition, New York students were more likely to have close friends of their own ethnicity: when I asked students in interviews to name their closest friends, 82% of those named in New York were of the same ethnic group, compared to 68% of those named by London interview respondents.¹² Dating preferences also illustrated New York youth’s stronger ethnic and racial boundaries: 54% listed their own race or ethnicity in response to an open-ended question asking students to write which race or ethnicity they would prefer to date, in contrast to just 35% in London listing coethnics as a preference for dating.

Table 5 about here

The greater salience of ethnicity in New York led to same-ethnicity couples in New York who had quite distinct styles and music tastes but shared an ethnic background. For example, in New York Indo-Guyanese Tina wore pink and black converse sneakers to school every day, and black and hot pink jelly bracelets and nail polish to match, signaling her taste for punk and rock music as well as skateboarding, all of which she described to me in her interview. I sometimes saw Tina in the hallway with her boyfriend, who wore baggy jeans in a hip-hop style. During her

¹² Individuals were equalized, so that a student who listed 3 best friends was weighted the same as those who listed 1 best friend. Because students in New York identified Indo-Caribbeans and Indians as separate social groups but African Americans and Afro-Caribbeans as one, for this analysis Afro-Caribbean-African American friendships were seen as an in-group friendship, but Indian-Indo-Caribbean friendships were counted as out-group friendships. The results are similar if Afro-Caribbeans are separated from African Americans, or if Indo-Caribbeans are grouped with Indians.

interview, I asked Tina about the boy I often saw her with, and found out that he is Indo-Guyanese, like she is. She told me that she likes “punk” and “rock” music, and dislikes “ghetto” music, in contrast to him, who she identified as her boyfriend. I asked Tina why she preferred rock:

N: And so what specifically do you like about rock?

R: I like the beat and I like that it doesn't talk about, like you know the ghetto music, rap, it talks about killing and about girls, and they use girls in a negative way. In rock music they don't do that....I don't really like rap and hip-hop and all that stuff....

Although Tina felt strongly about the portrayal of women in rap music, it didn't seem to matter to Tina that her partner had different taste in music:

N: And so is your boyfriend into punk and everything, too?

R: He is half....He is like, he is like both. He is both, a mixture like ghetto and punk....He is like half punk and half ghetto. Like he listens to rap, but he listens to rock.

Tina's connection to her boyfriend goes beyond their taste preferences, and she shares her ethnicity rather than her taste preferences with her boyfriend.

When it came to ethnic markers, however, New Yorkers had to demonstrate authenticity and not fluidity. For example, Renee, a second generation Barbadian in New York, told me that those around her sanctioned her displays that seemed to contradict her “real” ethnic identity as a Barbadian:

N: And so do you feel like anyone ever misunderstands you based on what you are wearing?

R: ...People ask why I have to wear the certain things I wear that, um like, I was on the street buying a soda, and this guy ask me why I'm wearing, why am I wearing a Puerto Rico shirt, if I am not from Puerto Rico.

N: So he knew you weren't Puerto Rican?

R: Yeah.

N: How did he know that?

R: He used to see me around the way and he knows my mother. He used to go out with my cousin actually. And she said nobody from my family is from Puerto Rico except one person my uncle is about to marry.

This sanctioning demonstrates the salience of ethnicity in Renee's environs, where showing signs of an ethnicity other than one's own is seen as inauthentic, even if someone in the family has that heritage.

Having discussed the group boundary formations of youth in both cities, I now turn to peer social status, for another angle on the symbolic boundaries in the two cities.

Social Status

Aside from group boundaries, another way to understand the symbolic boundaries in different contexts is through the status hierarchy. The difference between London's and New York's peer status hierarchies further illuminates the subtle difference in the salience of ethnicity between the two cities. In what follows I describe the status hierarchies of students in New York and London.

What is a good measure of peer status? Max Weber defined status in mainstream society as *prestige* or *social honor*, and he differentiated status groups from class groups by status groups sharing a *lifestyle* (Weber, 1968). Peer social status among youth has been defined in myriad ways. Eder and Kinney (1995) define two types of status among youth: popularity and peer status. They operationalize peer status by the question, "If you could choose any students in your grade to hang around with at school who would they be?" (page 303); and popularity by who students define as popular. However, youth equate the two. They define popularity

as recognition and friendship desirability as well as status. For example, Merten (1997) found that girls define popularity as having the recognition of classmates and being “sought after as a friend” by peers. Milner (2004) also found that youth define status as popularity. In Milner’s study of the status systems of high school students, he asked college students to recount the status systems of their high schools; when they did so, many operationalized status as popularity, indicating that popularity is synonymous with status in more lay terminology among youth. For example, one boy from Massachusetts in Milner’s research said:

The social scene...was split broadly into two extreme groups commonly called the ‘jocks’ and the ‘freaks’...The jocks were not necessarily all athletes...rather they were the ‘cooler’ and more popular students...Although the different cliques were not openly ranked, most people would agree that the jocks were the more prestigious, popular, and ‘cooler’ students by the traditional high school standards.... (Milner, 2004).

Because I was concerned with youth’s perceptions of status among peers, I asked students about popularity. In interviews I asked students to describe the most popular and least popular groups at school, and to explain to me why those groups were popular/unpopular. Many used the language of “respect” in response to this as well as other questions about peers, as in those who are respected by peers are popular, and vice versa. This sometimes meant that popular students were perceived as troublesome, in spite of their status.¹³ In addition, I use questions about

¹³ Milner points out that the relationship between visibility (“being known” as youth in my study called it), popularity, and status is complicated (Milner, 2004). Visibility is necessary for status, in order for others to recognize one’s status. However, the recognition could be negative, as in a peer who is overly aggressive. Also, high positive status can lead to undercutting of status via jealousy and gossip (Eder, 1985; Eder & Kinney, 1995; Merten, 1997). Those with low status may critique the status of high status peers such as “preppies” and the measure of self-worth via popularity altogether (Milner, 2004). This observation resonates with Lamont’s research with working class men, in which she documents the ways in which working class men define their moral boundaries in opposition to those

discrimination in my analysis to further understand who was *unpopular*. My findings diverge with those of previous scholars who have written on the influences on status among youth, who suggest that participation in sports for boys and cheerleading for girls play an important role in popularity and peer status (Eder & Kinney, 1995; Merten, 1997; Milner, 2004). This divergence is likely due to extracurriculars in Britain being less common than in the US; school overcrowding in the New York school leading to staggered scheduling and hence much difficulty in scheduling afterschool activities; and the great ethnic and racial diversity in both schools of my research.

Social Hierarchy in New York

Milner (2004) suggests that large, racially diverse high schools have more pluralistic and less hierarchical social organization. Moreover, he suggests that black and white students in a mixed high school will develop parallel status hierarchies. In the large, multiethnic high school of my research in New York, I found neither to be the case. Perhaps the number of different ethnic and racial groups prevented sub-hierarchies from forming. At York High School, a definitive status hierarchy that encompasses all ethnic and racial groups existed. A combination of race and nondominant cultural capital determined the status hierarchy. Black students who prioritized maintaining self-pride and being tough occupied the top of the status hierarchy, according to all ethno-racial groups and both boys and girls. This resonates with research demonstrating the role of black racial identity in

of upper class, high status men (Michèle Lamont, 2000; Milner, 2004). Although peers may recognize popular students' status, they don't always approve of them or even like them.

demonstrations of authenticity among peers—because the popular culture of contemporary urban youth, hip-hop, is rooted in a black tradition, black students are more likely both to be seen as authentic and also as popular (Warikoo, 2005).

My respondents explained the relationship between status and race as related to some black students' toughness, and the common perception that black students defended their pride more than others. David, an Indo-Guyanese student who came to New York at age 9, told me that the popular boys are the ones who everyone fears, and that those boys tend to be black:

N: And which group is most popular at school?

R: The groups? The gang bangers [gang members].

N: And what makes them popular?

R: I mean their status. Nobody is going to mess around with them or stuff like that, you know. To get in trouble with them, so.

N: And are there gang members of all races or they are mostly one race?

R: Mostly one race.

N: What's that?

R: African Americans.

David defines popularity as status, and status comes from an individual earning enough respect from peers that no one troubles him. When I asked New York students in interviews about who was popular in their school, 43% used race as a signifier of popularity, and the majority of those responses named black students the most popular, followed by Hispanics.

Black identity also had privileged status among girls. Nicki, a ninth grade student whose African American mother is from the south and whose father is Afro-Trinidadian, told me that the social groups at school were the “popular group”,

“middle group” and “unpopular group”. Although Nicki placed herself in the “middle” group, she described the behaviors of the popular group to me, for girls:

N: What's like a typical behavior of the popular group?

R: They're disrespectful. Like if they see you in the hallway, and they don't like you they will push you. Or if they just see you, they will still push you no matter what. Or sometimes like, say you bought something before them [the latest sneakers, etc.] they will fight you. Or it's like, if you sit near them on the bus, they will be like, "Oh, she mad [very] ugly!"

N: What race do they tend to be?

R: Oh, mostly black.

Both David and Nicki imply that most of the popular students are black, not that most black students are in the popular group. Many students—like David and Nicki—put a negative spin on their description of the popular students at school. This perhaps is due to popularity and status being defined not by who peers *like*, but who they *respect*.¹⁴ These youth have the power to enforce conformity to nondominant cultural norms through, for example, not befriending those perceived as wearing uncool clothes or not comporting themselves in a “cool” way.

“Spanish” (Hispanic) students fell just below blacks in the status hierarchy.

Simone, a Jamaican student, explained the groups and the relationship to ethnicity and status succinctly:

N: If you had to describe the different social groups at school, who hangs out with who, who would you say they are?

R: It would be the popular group, non-popular group and like in-between.

¹⁴ The same is true of suburban schools, at least in the popular imagination. A recent film, *Mean Girls*, takes place in a suburban Chicago school and portrays the mean ways of the most popular girls in the school. Rather than being black, the popular girls in the film embody an older image of popularity and status—white, and mostly blonde. An older film, *Heathers*, plays on similar themes about popularity among the wealthy. Finally, the recent film *Thirteen* portrays the most popular girl at school as manipulative and deeply troubled.

N: So in which one of those are you in?

R: In-between.

N: So what's a typical behavior of the popular group?

R: Most likely popular group always behave like bullies and stuff.

N: Is that what makes them popular?

R: I guess so.

N: And what's a typical behavior of the unpopular group?

R: It's always doing your work, always doing the right thing.

N: Would you say, like most of the white kids are in one of the groups or most of the Indian kids are in another group...

R: Oh yeah, it is.... Well most of them, Indian.

N: Indians are where, in which group?

R: Like the non-popular group.

N: And what about the African Americans kids?

R: Yeah they would be like in the popular group.

N: And the Spanish kids?

R: They will probably, probably be in-between.

Here, Simone places the categories of Indian, Spanish, and African American in a clear status hierarchy. Although she is Afro-Caribbean, she describes herself as being in the middle group, rather than the popular group she dismisses as 'bullies'.

When I asked students in New York to describe the *unpopular* students in their school, 46% mentioned race groups, and of those the majority mentioned Indians or Punjabis—this was over half of the students who gave a specific answer to the question (besides “I don’t know” or “no one is unpopular”).¹⁵ The other group mentioned more than once (but half as much as Indians) was whites. Questions on discrimination made the low peer social status of Indians clearer. When I asked if he

¹⁵ From the contexts of each of the respondents who said “Indian” I gathered that they meant Punjabi Indians, not Indo-Caribbeans.

ever experienced or witnessed racial discrimination, Khaleed, an Indo-Guyanese student, told me this:

N: Do you ever experience racial or ethnic discrimination?

R: No.

N: Do you ever see any against others?

R: Oh yes. Right in school, right here the Punjabi kids, the Indian one that who respect their culture and are abiding by it and wearing whatever they are wearing, they are being discriminated, which I think is a very sad thing.

N: Is that mostly the boys because they wear like the turban?

R: The boys and girls--really sad.

N: And who is mostly picking on them?

R: You find a lot of kids like ignorant kids. You find from all different races background, all different. You find a Spanish kid, you will find some Africans and even some Indian kids who know about the culture, they would pick on them, which is really sad. Because I always said I never want to disown my culture. I don't know why somebody should be forced because that is definitely being forced to disown your culture, yeah.

As Khaleed says, I did hear some Indians expressing disdain for those who wore turbans, perhaps because they felt it led to discrimination that affected all Indians. For example, Abbas, mentioned earlier, bullied Punjabi (Sikh) Indians. Abbas was the only Muslim Indian student I met in New York. He told me about his connections to black and Spanish gangs. When I first met him, I asked Abbas if he had second generation Indian friends who I could also approach to interview. He quickly told me that he doesn't socialize with Indians. Abbas then said, "I can get you Spanish people, black people, but not Indians." During his interview, Abbas told me about incidents in which he and his friends would encounter a lone Punjabi in the street, wearing a turban—Abbas would tell his friends he wanted to beat the boy up, which they did willingly with him. Milner (2004) describes the ways in which youth in

other parts of the country also use bullying—albeit not always along ethnic lines—to vie for status. Status being a “zero-sum” commodity, youth gain status by bringing down the status of others through put-downs and insults (Milner, 2004).

More commonly, both South Asian and black students reported that discrimination towards Indians came from black and Spanish students. Luther, a Jamaican New Yorker, explained it well:

N: Do you see any racial discrimination against other groups?

R: I mean, yeah.

N: Who do you see?

R: Against Indians. Like well, since they, you know Indians. Like, you know I don't know if it's like because [they're] Indian or because they just want to beat them up or something like that.

N: And so who would be doing that?

R: Black people. I saw black people before.

N: Indians, like West Indian Indians?

R: No, not West Indian. Like, Talibans, so those who---

N: Like Sikhs?

R: Yeah.

N: ... The ones who wear turbans?

R: Yeah.

N: And do you have a sense of why that is? Did that start like after September 11th or has it always been like that?

R: It was both. It was like that before.

N: And do you have a sense of why they are getting picked on?

*R: Oh because, I think because **they think they not gon' do nothing back.** [my emphasis].*

When a student is not willing to fight back and defend his pride, he faces continued discrimination. Students commonly perceived Indians to embody this lack of defending self-pride.

Sasha, an 11th grade 1.5-generation Indo-Caribbean student, cited the dress and speech styles of nondominant culture to explain discrimination toward Punjabis:

N: Do you ever experience racial discrimination?

R: No.

N: Do you ever see any against other people?

R: Well, some like some people just don't like they don't like Punjabi people maybe so---

N: People make fun of the Punjabis?

R: Yeah. They don't like them. I don't know. Because they think they smell, so.

N: ...And why do you think they get singled out?

R: I don't know, really. Just because some of them do smell and that's probably why. And the way they dress. I don't know, or the way they speak sometimes. They can't speak really good English. So that's why they pick on them.

Sasha's explanation—language, clothing style, and self-presentation (smell)—has to do with style. Smells probably associate Indians with foreignness, in spite of most Indians in the school being either second or 1.5 generation.¹⁶

In addition to race, 23% of New York students described the unpopular students as those who don't speak much, who don't have friends, or who do not socialize outside of school hours. As with popularity, this behavior was racialized by some, in this case as Indian. For example, Gwen, an Afro-Caribbean girl in New York, told me that Indians are unpopular at her school, because they leave right after school and don't participate in afterschool activities:

N: And is there any group that's, which is very unpopular?

¹⁶ Some students from Asian countries (including East Asia and South Asia) had a faint smell of spices on their body, due perhaps to living in close quarters with little ventilation and spicy food cooked at home. In addition, some recently-arrived Indian immigrants wore sweet-smelling hair oil, a common practice in India. These cultural influences were not the kind that peers took up or appreciated, like other cultural practices such as henna tattoos. Cultural practices needed popular icons to make them acceptable and even hip—for example, Madonna's use of henna tattoos (Warikoo 2005).

R: Yeah, Indian group. They are not that popular. Because they kinda like keep to themselves. They don't really become involved in sports and stuff and they, like after school's done they are out of here. They are not involved in anything.

Gwen told me that many of her friends are Indian, and she didn't have many black friends. During a different part of her interview, Gwen mentioned that she runs on the varsity track team and that many of her friends are athletes and also are popular. This apparent contradiction illustrates the dynamism of social groups, and the degree to which students racialized groups yet saw individuals as exceptions to the patterns they saw. That is, Gwen may have seen the unpopular group as mostly Indians, even if she thought that not *all* Indians were in the unpopular group.

Descriptions of popularity and unpopularity in New York illustrate the interplay of race and peer culture in determining peer social status. For example, peers might assume an Indian student does not socialize outside of class and hence label her unpopular, unless she demonstrates otherwise. This is the converse of the mechanism for *popularity*, where black students were stereotyped as having the toughness and correct interactional style to earn high peer status, unless they demonstrated otherwise. Students in London, as we will see, had a similar interaction between race and other aspects of nondominant culture. However, as with the drawing of group boundaries, race mattered less in London.

Social Hierarchy in London

Students in London attributed popularity, or status, to individuals in their Form Classes; students known overall in school; and taste and toughness. 27% of students named specific peers in their Form Classes as the most popular, and 23%

simply said that the popular students were those who were “known” in school. Race was related to tastes, in that hip-hop style had high status, and hip-hop was associated with blacks.

Table 6 about here

However, taste was more salient than race and ethnicity, as it was for social groups in London. For example, Terry, an Afro-Caribbean year 10 student, told me this:

*N: If you had to describe the popular kids, what makes them popular?
R: That they are getting with the trend. They know about things. They know about the latest music. They know about the latest clothes. Well, they know about the latest trainers. They know about slang. Just the way they---it's mainly about what they wear, and the way they act. Just like people might know more slang. People might dress more slick...*

Terry identified the popular tastes, language, and behavior—NDCC—as leading to popularity. I then asked Terry about how race factors into popularity. He was in two minds:

*N: Do those kids tend to be a particular—do they tend to be white, black, mixed, Asian?
R: I'm not sure....Tend to be, because there is some that are white and—no, I think—I am not sure. I think black, I think black, because most people in this school, most people I know that seem to be popular, they are black. Jason [mixed race student] is, yeah popular. But Chris is popular, and he is white. So there is some people that are white and popular too.*

In other words, the popular students tend to be black, but race does not determine one's level of popularity. Rather, the mechanism by which most (but, crucially, not all) popular students are black is the greater propensity of black students to consume hip-hop style, due to hip-hop's black identity.

In terms of low status, students in London most frequently described unpopular students as loners—36% of students said that the unpopular students at

school were the *quiet* ones and/or the students who are *alone* most of the time. Aside from these responses, “grungies” (students preferring grunge, rock, and/or punk music and their style) were cited by 9%. London students here, also, placed less emphasis on race than did their New York counterparts: only 2 students in London (4%) mentioned an ethnic group when asked to describe the unpopular groups at school, in contrast to 46% in New York:

Table 7 about here

Although I didn’t often hear of as much racial targeting and fights in London as I did in New York, race influenced low social status in London, as well. Indian students were frequently the target of bullying (see also Modood, 1997; Modood, 2005). Kumar, a tall, quiet year 11 Indian student, explained bullying towards Asian students as resulting from their lack of defending their pride:

N: Have you ever experienced any kind of racial discrimination?

R: No

N: Have you ever seen any?

R: Yeah.

N: Tell me about what you have seen.

R: Like white kids bullying black kids. Sometimes the other way around, black kids bullying white kids, yeah.

N: What about Asians?

R: Asians get bullied by both, both of them!

N: And why do you think that is? Why is it like that?

R: ...Probably because we are weak or something.

N: Where does that idea come from, that Asians are weak?

R: Just hard work. They just study all the time.

When asked about racial discrimination, Kumar first points out that all groups experience some kind of discrimination, but that Asians face it from both whites and

blacks. He explains this with the explanation of how they spend their time—“just studying all the time”—presumably instead of playing soccer and socializing.

In this section I have outlined the status hierarchies in New York and London, as defined by students’ perceptions of popularity and discrimination. As with symbolic boundaries and groups, I found that ethnicity and race were more salient in New York compared to in London. Black students were identified with popular tastes through hip-hop’s African American roots and hence had higher status via taste preferences. However, race was the salient marker in New York, while a taste for “black” music (hip-hop) mattered more in London.

Given these stark differences between London and New York symbolic boundaries, what explains them? I turn to this question next.

Influences on Symbolic Boundaries and Status Boundaries

A combination of American racial formation processes; US residential segregation; the anonymous structure of York High School (similar to most urban public high schools in the United States); and the relative recency of arrival of immigrant families at York High School compared to Long Meadow, led students in New York to identify their social groups more racially and ethnically. In what follows I unpack each of these factors.

Racialization in US Society

The nature of race in the US versus Britain influences the local dynamics of group boundary formation in peer culture among youth in New York and London.

Previous scholars have documented the degree to which the US society is racialized, in contrast to Britain, where class defines social groups and even political mobilization more than race and ethnicity do (Gates, 1997; Katznelson, 1973; Modood, 1996). Gates points out that in Britain, for example, an Oxford University education can lead to a posh life and mutes the stigma of being black, unlike in the US, where racial stigma trumps class (Gates, 1997).

The United States' preoccupation with race dates back hundreds of years, to a system of slavery that racialized blacks as intellectually and otherwise inferior in order to justify their use as objects in society rather than as individuals with free agency. Even after slavery ended, racial segregation, especially in the south, continued until just 40 years ago, and school segregation was deemed illegal by the US Supreme Court just 50 years ago in the *Brown vs. Board of Education* decision. The legacy of slavery and subsequently segregation (which continues today in the form of housing discrimination and concentrated poverty among some urban African Americans) has led to distinct traditions, identities, and perceptions for black and white Americans. Omi and Winant (1986) describe processes of *racial formation* that give meanings to *race*, which operates as “an autonomous field of social conflict, political organization, and cultural/ideological meaning” in the US .

Although Britain's colonial history preceded the immigration of South Asians and West Indians to Britain, and black identity has been excluded from British national identity (Gilroy, 1987), the legacy of racialization is weaker in Britain. For example, racial intermarriage among blacks is much more common in Britain. Over 20% of married Afro-Caribbeans (any generation) in Britain have non-black spouses

(UK Census 2001, Focus on Ethnicity and Identity, Inter-ethnic Marriage); in contrast, of all married blacks in the US, less than 7% are married to non-blacks (US Census 2000, PHC-T-19: Hispanic Origin and Race of Coupled Households). Furthermore, Model and Fisher (2002) find that second generation Afro-Caribbean men in Britain are four times as likely to marry whites compared to their US counterparts, and second generation Afro-Caribbean women in Britain are three times as likely to marry whites compared to their US counterparts.

The black-white divide is also greater in terms of public opinion and voting in the US. For example, blacks in the US are 60% more likely than whites to support greater government assistance for the poor; in Britain, Indians are less than 1% more likely to support greater government assistance compared to whites, and Afro-Caribbeans are just 7% more likely than whites to do so (National Election Study and Saggar (2000), in Fortner, 2005). Race also influences voting patterns among blacks in US presidential elections much more so than blacks in British national elections (Fortner, 2005). Because African Americans have the longest history in the US among racialized groups today, and until recently blacks were the largest minority group in the US, these dynamics have shaped US society and discourses around race overall.

In contrast to blacks, Asian Indians are slightly more integrated in the US compared to Britain: 8% of married Asian Indian women and 10% of married Asian Indian men in the US are married to non-Asians, as are 6% of married Indians overall in the UK (UK Census 2001, Focus on Ethnicity and Identity, Inter-ethnic Marriage; Lee, 2005). Also, Indians in Britain live in more segregated neighborhoods than do

Afro-Caribbeans in the US; however, neighborhoods with high proportions of Indians in Britain tend to be middle class enclaves, rather than poor (Peach, 1996).

The weaker salience overall of race and ethnicity in London compared to New York resonates with official statistics in both cities. In the US, race and ethnicity data are standardized across government and private organizations, and the major race categories of the national Census are standard. In London, however, no single measure of race and ethnicity exists, and many reports use categories different from the census categories. For example, while browsing the Office for Standards in Education (OFSTED—the inspection agency of Britain’s schools) reports, I found that some school reports gave race and ethnicity statistics, and some did not. Also, reports used nonuniform race categories. For example, one school report discussed the percentage of “African, Asian, and Caribbean” students in comparison to the percentage of refugee (“including Somali and Sri Lankan”) students. Another used UK Census categories: Indian, Pakistani, African, Afro-Caribbean, white, and not classified. The same agency, OFSTED, compiled all these reports. On the other hand, most statistics in the reports separated students by gender and by grade level, similar to how students themselves separate. These blurred ethnic and racial classification system speaks to the lack of emphasis on ethnicity and race in British society as a whole, in comparison to US society.

Residential Segregation

There is an increasing preponderance of multi-ethnic neighborhoods in certain urban areas of the US, such as New York City, Los Angeles, and Miami (Alba et al

1995; Frey and Farley 1996). Alba et al (1995) found that in 1990, 60% of New Yorkers lived in a census tract including significant numbers of whites, Asians, and Hispanics. Public schools in urban America, especially in immigrant receiving cities such as New York and Los Angeles, serve an increasingly diverse student body. Orfield and Yun (1999) report an increase in the number of schools with three or more racial groups, and that students of color attend increasingly diverse schools. Despite these changes, however, urban American continues to show residential segregation significantly more than London's racial segregation, especially for blacks (Gates, 1997; Peach, 1996). For example, the highest percentage of Afro-Caribbeans in a single British Ward is 30% (Peach, 1996).¹⁷ In schools, the percentage of blacks at schools at the 95th percentile in terms of percentage of blacks is just 20%; for Asians the figure is 30% (Burgess & Wilson, 2004). This weaker segregation in London relative to New York means that the neighborhood lives of youth in New York are more likely to be with mostly coethnics even if their schools are ethnically diverse. Ellen, an 11th grade Indo-Caribbean New Yorker, told me that her diverse school meant that students mingled across ethnic boundaries at school, yet outside of school they socialized with their own ethnic groups, because ethnic groups more or less lived in coethnic neighborhoods:

N: If you had to describe the different social groups at school like who hangs out with whom, what would you say they are?

R: Well it's like, well everybody, like different races hang out with different people. But like mostly you get like your own race hanging out with your own race. And not because like, because like when you walk around the school you say like, "Oh I won't talk to this person," like of the different race. But like after school and stuff you just see like one group....I guess because, it's like the different areas that you

¹⁷ This Ward is in the catchment area for Long Meadow Community School.

go to, it's where you hang out. I think that if [my neighborhood] had different kinds of people then we would all hang out with different people. It depends like where you live.

Ellen attributes the post-school ethnic segregation to living in different neighborhoods. This, combined with little time for social interaction in school in New York, led to a situation in which students spent little time, even at school, with individuals of other ethnic groups; not enough time, it seems, to form close friendships and for ethnic boundaries to decline in salience. Not surprisingly, residential segregation patterns correlate with intermarriage rates, described above as more integrated in Britain, especially for blacks.

In addition to London's lower level of segregation and greater intermarriage between blacks and whites, the nature of segregation in the two cities is quite distinct. In London, Asians are significantly more segregated than blacks, both in their areas of residence as well as in children's schooling (Burgess & Wilson, 2004; Peach, 1996). In spite of their higher levels of segregation relative to Afro-Caribbeans, Indians live in less disadvantaged areas; many British neighborhoods of high Indian concentration are middle class (Peach, 1996). The students in my research mirrored the aggregate levels in the country and in London: over one-half of Indians I interviewed in London lived in a single Ward (geographic area, subdivision of Local Authority), which was a fairly quiet, working to lower middle class area with small, single family homes. This Ward held the median level of deprivation for the Wards for all students interviewed, as measured by multiple indices of deprivation, including income, employment, health, education, and housing (2001 UK Census). Hence, in London racial concentration doesn't imply poverty, as it usually does in the US.

British Indian students' spatial concentration contrasted with their Afro-Caribbean and white peers, who were much more spread out—the modal neighborhoods for both housed less than 1/4th of their respective student populations. Black and white working class students often lived in the same neighborhoods, especially on council estates (government housing). Just as residential segregation may have led New York youth to socialize more *within* ethnic groups, in London neighborhood of residence led black and white students to interact *more*, but less so with Indians. As a consequence, some students described South Asians as the one group at school who hung out in a same race group, in contrast to non-Asian peers.

One-half of Indian students interviewed in London reported either that most of their friends were Indian, or that many Indians tended to socialize amongst themselves, in contrast to other ethnic/racial groups. Many non-Indian students also observed that Indian students tended to have social groups based on race, unlike their peers. For example, I asked Kim if students segregate themselves by race at her school, and she suggested that only Asians do:

N: What about in terms of race? Would you say kids hang out with the same race or ethnic group?

R: I think, probably you know the Asian people, because they have big family so a lot of them are related anyway, cousins and stuff. They hang out around a lot with each other, yeah. That's why. Everyone else just sort of hangs around with anyone. [Kim, white female, London]

Kim attributes this segregation to a distinct Asian culture, unlike other ethnic groups at school. Asian social groups, however, were not necessarily based on family and cultural connections. One Indian student told me about the soccer league he plays for on the weekends. When I asked further questions, I learned that not only his team,

but the entire league is made up of South Asians. Many Indian students also reported attending a social night at the local Hindu temple on Friday evenings. Far from religious classes, youth played sports and socialized there. Indian segregation in London was more self-determined rather than forced by discrimination and school structure, as segregation for blacks is in New York.

Because working class white and black students in London generally lived in more racially integrated areas than did Indians, Indian students were less visible outside of school. Still, residential segregation is significantly higher in the US, even when comparing British Indians with black Americans. Specifically, in New York City segregation is higher and race more prominent compared to London (Burgess & Wilson, 2004; Peach, 1996), and hence the status hierarchy was defined by ethnicity much more than in London.

School Structures

The structure of traditional urban public high schools in the US like York High School leads to anonymity. The large size (recall that York has over 3,000 students); class structure that mixes students up every period for 7 periods, and again every September and February; no homeroom time; and limited lunch breaks, if any, create a situation in which students have little opportunity to develop close relationships with peers who they don't immediately identify with. Some recent immigrants from India I met at York High explained to me that when they arrived in the school other Punjabi students noticed them and approached them in the hallway, asking many questions and befriending them—it was an attempt to show them the

ropes, perhaps because they knew the student would find little guidance on his or her own. In this anonymous environment, not only immigrants but also US-born students gravitated towards what felt most familiar—their own ethnic and racial groups.

In contrast, in London, as described earlier in this chapter, students developed close ties to Form Class peers with whom they shared all classes during multiple years. These ties bridged ethnic lines. Nathan, a middle class white student, explained that racial separation happened only in the early years, before students got to know peers of other groups:

N: Would you say there are certain groups that are most popular?

R: Nope, not at all. I'd just say it's by personality. People, sometimes people do gang together with skin color. Though I don't really find that the case very much. That's only in Year 7 when people are just getting to know each other. So in this school, you quickly learn to become friends with all, all nationalities. Or you begin to go into the group which has very few friends.

As Nathan describes, once students have a chance to form close relationships within their Form Classes, they no longer feel the urge to cling to same-race peers. Nathan's description contrasts with the New York context, in which students never have the chance to form those close bonds within a Form Class and hence more often stayed in same-race or same-ethnicity groups.

These findings contrast with previous theorists who suggest that urbanization and industrialization lead to the breakup of traditional ties of birth membership (e.g., religion, ethnicity, family) and consequently lead to projects of self-realization as an individual process, achieved through consumerism (Zukin and Maguire 2004). In fact, I found that the more atomized, bureaucratic school system in New York led to a stronger salience of ethnicity.

Patterns of Migration

A greater percentage of New York City's population is immigrants compared to London's (36% versus 27%). The parent populations at my research sites reflected this difference. At Long Meadow in London, 72% of survey respondents' mothers were foreign-born, in contrast to 81% of mothers of York High students in New York. Although most mothers in both cities were foreign-born, just 6% of London respondents were first or 1.5 generation (born abroad and came to Britain after age 6), in contrast to 27% in New York. This relative recency might account for the greater salience of ethnicity in New York, assuming that over time, all things being equal, ethnicity's salience will decrease for an ethnic community. Many scholars have found that, for example, native language usage drops sharply between the first and second generation (Portes & Rumbaut, 2001; Rumbaut, 2004; Zhou & Bankston, 1998). Also, age of arrival matters, even among individuals of the same generation (Rumbaut, 2004). Portes and Rumbaut (Portes & Rumbaut, 2001; Rumbaut, 2004), in a study of children of immigrants in San Diego, found that immigrant children's age of arrival (and age of arrival of parents of US-born children of immigrants) influences English and native language proficiency; identification with country of origin; and experiences with the criminal justice system. They also found that youth identifying as "American" or Hyphenated American (e.g., Indian American) had spent longer in the US in comparison to youth identifying with their parents' countries of origin or a panethnic label (e.g., Hispanic) (Portes & Rumbaut, 2001; Rumbaut, 2004). Similarly, US-born youth and US citizens in Portes and Rumbaut's

study were more likely to call themselves some form of American or ethnic American, in contrast to their foreign-born and foreign-national peers, who were more likely to define their ethnic identities through their (foreign) nationality, or a pan-ethnic label. Hence, the relative recency of arrival for ethnic communities in the York High School area in contrast to the Long Meadow community may partly explain the greater salience of ethnicity and race among students in New York in contrast to students in London.

Conclusion

In this paper I have demonstrated the continuing significance of race and ethnicity in the urban American school context, even in multiethnic schools in which no ethnic or racial group predominates. The contrast with a similar schooling context in London suggests four major influences on the symbolic boundaries in the two schools: processes of racial formation; the degree of residential segregation; school structures; and patterns of migration. Future research should further disentangle the roles of school structures from broader social structures—that is, could a different school structure in New York lead to a more racially and ethnically integrated student population, or do macro-social structures have too great an influence? These variables could be disentangled through a study of schools in more racially polarized parts of Britain (for example, Oldham or Birmingham), large schools in London (perhaps the colleges for students aged 16-18), or smaller alternative schools in New York City.

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Table 1: Survey Respondents

| | New York | | London | |
|-----------------------------------|-----------------|------------|---------------|------------|
| Mean age | 15.8 years | | 15.1 years | |
| | | | | |
| Gender | Number | Percentage | Number | Percentage |
| Boys | 33 | 42% | 64 | 58% |
| Girls | 46 | 58% | 46 | 42% |
| | | | | |
| Mother's birthplace | | | | |
| West Indies | 30 | 38% | 12 | 11% |
| India | 4 | 5% | 27 | 24% |
| East Africa (Kenya, Uganda) | 0 | | 7 | 6% |
| Dominican Republic, Puerto Rico | 10 | 13% | 0 | |
| Morocco | 0 | | 7 | 6% |
| Pakistan | 0 | | 7 | 6% |
| US/Britain | 14 | 18% | 31 | 28% |
| Other | 17 | 21% | 19 | 17% |
| No Answer | 5 | 6% | 1 | 1% |
| | | | | |
| Second Generation * | | 48% | | 65% |
| First or 1.5 Generation ** | | 33% | | 7% |
| Total | 80 | | 111 | |

*Second generation defined as US/UK-born children with foreign-born mothers, or foreign-born children who arrived at or before age 5.

** First or 1.5 generation defined as foreign-born children arriving after age 5.

Table 2: In-Depth Interview Subjects

| | | London | New York |
|--|-------|---------------|-----------------|
| 2nd Generation Indians | Boys | 10 | 10 |
| | Girls | 10 | 10 |
| 2nd Generation Afro-Caribbeans | Boys | 10 | 10 |
| | Girls | 10 | 10 |
| UK-born whites with UK-born parents | Boys | 10 | |
| | Girls | 10 | |
| 2nd Generation Indo-Caribbeans | Boys | | 10 |
| | Girls | | 10 |
| Total: 120 Interviews | | 60 | 60 |

Table 3: The Schools in Comparison

| | | London: Long Meadow Community School | | New York: York High School |
|--------------------------------|------------------------------|---|--|-----------------------------------|
| Free Lunch Eligibility | | 33% | | 34% |
| Racial Makeup | Afro-Caribbean | 15% | Black (includes Afro-Caribbean, African American) | 14% |
| | Indian | 16% | Asian and Others (includes Indian, Indo-Caribbean, other Asians, Mixed, Native American) | 37% |
| | White | 17% | White | 7% |
| | Mixed, Other, or Unspecified | 25% | Hispanic | 42% |
| Number of Students | | 1,180 | | 3,100 |
| Exam/Graduation Results | At least 5 A-C GCSEs | 43% | graduation rate | 44% |

Sources: UK Office of Standards in Education School Reports, 1998, 2004; NYC Department of Education School Report Card, 2003-2004 School Year

Table 4: Categories listed by interview respondents regarding school social groups¹

| | <i>Social Groups</i> |
|----------|---|
| London | Form Class Divisions (33%) Gender (24%) Taste (24%) Lunchtime Activities (20%) Race/ethnicity (20%) |
| New York | Race (66%) Popularity (16%) Taste (16%) |

Source: Interview data, n=86²

Table 5: Symbolic Boundaries in Comparison

| | <i>Social Groups</i> | <i>“In my school, students feel comfortable talking with students of other racial and ethnic groups”</i> | <i>Percentage of closest friends being same ethnicity</i> | <i>Dating Preference, by Ethnicity/Race</i> |
|----------|---|--|---|---|
| London | Gender (24%) Taste (24%) Lunchtime Activities (20%) Race/ethnicity (20%) | Agree a Lot: 74% | 68% | Own Race : 35% |
| New York | Race (66%) Mixed (22%) Popularity (16%) Taste (16%) | Agree a Lot: 42% | 82% | Own Race: 54% |

Sources: Survey data (n=191) and Interview data (n=86)

¹ Percentages add up to greater than 100%, because many students mentioned more than one kind of group.

² Although there were 120 interview respondents, due to time constraints some were not asked the questions on social groups and popularity, because preliminary interviews with a range of students addressed questions regarding school social groups and peer hierarchies. I did not include preliminary interview data in the final results.

Table 6: Popularity, as defined by interview respondents

| | |
|----------|--|
| London | Within Form class (27%) Known (23%) Taste (18%) Misbehavior (18%) |
| New York | Race (43%) Misbehavior (23%) |

Source: Interview data, n=86

Table 7: Descriptions of Unpopular Students in London and New York

| | |
|----------|---|
| London | Quiet, Loners (36%) There are none (28%) Don't Know (19%) Grungies (9%) |
| New York | Race (46%): <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 38% (of total responses) said Asian group • 19% said Whites (1 Russian) Quiet, Loner, no Socializing (23%) Don't Know (19%) |

Source: Interview data, n=73³

³ As described earlier, not all students were asked the core questions on status and social groups at school. Furthermore, those who said "I don't know" in response to who was popular at school were not asked about who was unpopular. Hence, I show data from just 73 students here.