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Mixing and Mobility: the cultural transformation of 'urban children' in a London academy

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abstract
This paper will explore how the creation of a socially and culturally mixed student body relates to upward mobility within the context of Beaumont Academy. This highly disciplinarian secondary school based in a predominantly economically deprived, ethnic-minority area of inner London actively seeks to culturally transform its students. In 2004 Beaumont Academy opened with the ethos 'structure liberates.' With its regimented routines and outstanding GCSE results, the school has been heralded as a blueprint for educational reform by all major parties, yet the cultural implications underlying this approach remain unexamined. This paper will first describe how the ethos pathologises the surrounding area; through essentialising a dysfunctional outside, Beaumont essentialises itself as an 'oasis in the desert' liberating students through discipline.

Beaumont self-consciously trains students how to access mobility by reforming their personal affects. Coupled with the achievement of qualifications, students can transcend raced and classed family deficiencies. This paper will examine how the school purports to apply class and colour-blind structures in order to equalise the student body and create uniformity and neutrality. A mixed student body is seen to dissolve differences, as several teachers comment that a mixture of ethnicities automatically alleviates racism. Uncritical celebrations of the mixed-ness of spaces conceals issues of structural inequality and social stratification lingering beneath the rhetoric of happy multiculturalism and aspirational citizenship.

Through reflecting on student and teacher narratives and longitudinal ethnographic fieldwork, the paper will explore how students move differently through the mixed social spaces created. The circulation or fixedness of bodies in playground spaces reflects how a complex range of raced and classed positions are being produced and negotiated. The paper will conclude by examining what immobilises or mobilises students by looking at the positive value attributed to mobility and social mixing, whereby a cosmopolitan self is created who is moving towards future happiness (Ahmed 2010).

introduction

This research centres around Beaumont Academy[1], a celebrated secondary school based in a poor and ethnically-mixed inner London borough. The New Labour government opened over 200 academies as part of their public-private finance initiative for secondary education, while the new coalition Government is vastly expanding the programme by inviting all secondary schools to apply for academy status. Beaumont opened in 2004 and its 'structure liberates' ethos aims to free children from a culture of poverty through discipline and routine. Academies were originally created to 'break the cycle of underachievement in areas of social and economic deprivation' by 'establishing a culture of ambition to replace the poverty of aspiration' (DFCS) (Adonis 2008). New Labour's continuous framing of poverty as a cultural rather than a structural issue attributed educational

[1] The name of the school, the borough, students, teachers and parents have been changed to provide anonymity.

underachievement to 'cultures of low aspiration.' Academies would create aspirational cultures through a robust ethos 'underpinned by positive values and aspiration' (Adonis 2008). These schools have been criticised for their exemption from local authority control, the national curriculum, and standard pay and conditions.

Beaumont has dazzled politicians with its exam results and the revolving door of visitors keen to discover the magic recipe has gathered speed. This accumulation of accolades against the odds is the stuff of Hollywood films. Surveying its largely proud student body, one cannot help but be pleased to see children who might have endured a crumbling school with substandard expectations experience a sense of achievement and potentially gain access to a slice of the 'good life'. But what this uplifting tale ignores are the more complicated stories underlying the glossy veneer of unbounded success. Beaumont's road to a brighter future is paved with the soaring rhetoric of the self-made citizen, however this road and the demands made along it are never questioned, but positioned as an unexamined social and cultural good. My research will explore the social and cultural dimensions of equipping students with 'suitable' forms of capital, however in this paper I will more narrowly focus on how students negotiate mixing and mobility.

First I will outline how the 'structure liberates' ethos is applied through spatial and temporal practices, how it constructs the ideal student and grafts capital onto the body, before exploring how students discuss social mixing and mobility through reflecting on ethnographic fieldwork[2] and teacher interviews. This paper will suggest how social mobility and mixing is embodied by students and the altercations or eliminations necessary to achieve it. These adjustments both produce and bring raced and classed positions into focus, highlighting who needs to 'do' work on themselves to accrue value.

the institution

'We'll spread the message of Beaumont to other schools. Beaumont will become an empire.' - Mr Stanton, principal

Beaumont Academy is located in a London borough where unemployment is twice the national average and half of housing is socially rented; forty percent of students receive free school meals. Over 100 different languages are spoken, as two-thirds of Beaumont students come from ethnic minority backgrounds with black African, black Caribbean, Turkish, Bangladeshi and Indian students comprising the largest groups. These statistics attesting both to poverty and ethnic diversity are frequently juxtaposed with the school's outstanding test scores; in 2010, 83% of

[2] Please note that I am still conducting fieldwork until the end of July, making this the very rough draft of an eventual chapter.

Beaumont's students received five A* to C grades at GCSE level, including Maths and English, compared to just 54% of students nationally. This level of achievement has continued through the 6th form, with 12 A-level students receiving conditional offers from Cambridge and 70 from the elite Russell Group.

Beaumont's multimillion-pound three storey timber and glass building was erected on the site of notoriously 'failing' school. The building was designed by a renowned architectural firm in the shape of a 'V.' The 'V' creates two wings opening onto the playground, while the backside of the 'V' is solid concrete and inaccessible, except for those students who have been sent to one of the grey Learning Support Unit Porta Cabins to work in silence. The front of the 'V' is entirely glass, placing all classrooms and teacher office areas on display. Mr Buell remarks, 'there is nowhere in this school where anyone can hide...because there is literally transparency in the building.' Built-in visibility is not coincidental, but an intentional design decision[3] reflecting Beaumont's 'organisational approach'. Teacher's descriptions of the building as a prison, factory and 'like being in a science experiment' reflect Foucault's (1977) concept of the Panopticon as a laboratory where experiments in behavioural training and correction of individuals can take place. The building induces 'a state of consciousness and permanent visibility that assures the automatic functioning of power' (Foucault, 1977: 201). Students assemble three times per day in alphabetised silent lines before being led to class. The uniform is meticulously inspected during these line ups: top buttons must be done, shirts tucked in and seven stripes must be visible on the tie. Shouting and public chastisement of disobedient students is commonplace. Every tier of the stairwell is monitored by teachers and after-school patrols by foot and car ensure students go home without visiting shops or congregating on pavements. A physical and cognitive disciplining and regulation of the body through space and time is applied whilst the institution seeks to distribute 'cultural capital' via qualifications and supplementary training which endows students with particular sensibilities and methods of acting (Bourdieu, 1977).

'structure liberates': the architect's vision

'I aspire to maintain a clear mind, a calm disposition and an attentive ear so that in this class and in all classes I can fulfil my true potential'. - the academy reflection, recited before each lesson

Upon entering his office, Mr Stanton was sitting in his leather executive chair, thoroughly relaxed and displaying none of the unease that several of his subordinates did when interviewed. Stanton does not casually banter in corridors with students or staff; appointments are made through his

[3] There is also no staff room. Banishing communal space is seen to promote productivity and prevent staff 'whining' about their employment conditions.

secretary as a position of supreme, removed authority is assumed. He sets the fundamental parameters of the institution, delegating daily tasks to the SMT[4] and reserving his direct participation for assemblies, staff briefings, and special occasions. Stanton's leadership is clear as he routinely paces up and down the corridors, momentarily pausing in doorways to scrutinise lessons.

Stanton described his two-part vision of the 'structure liberates' ethos as resting on a philosophy which altruistically seeks to provide poor children with the same opportunities that wealthier children enjoy in order 'to show that poor kids, working-class kids can do as well as middle-class kids do.' He then describes his second vision:

> *The second one is the belief that children who come from unstructured backgrounds, as many of our children do, and often very unhappy ones, should be given more structure in their lives...if they come from unstructured backgrounds where anything goes and rules and boundaries are not clear in their home, we need to ensure that they're clear here.*

Stanton's ethos places the desire for working-class kids to have the educational advantages automatically afforded to the wealthy alongside assertions that these students come from unstructured, unhappy families. This corrective approach self-consciously hinges on applying rituals and routines which provide the structure Stanton feels is absent from the home. Yet not all children require this cultural intervention. Stanton goes on to clearly differentiate between those who need structure and those who have structure built-in:

> *...you need more structure rather than less through experience in dealing with urban children...you can be a lot more relaxed and free and easy in a nice, leafy middle-class area where the ground rules are clear before they come in, where children go home to lots of books and stuff like that. You need lots of rituals and routines...*

The term 'urban children' or 'Redwood[5] children' is used by several teachers to describe a largely ethnic minority and working-class student body. A raced and classed urban child is produced and contrasted with the leafy suburb's middle-class and predominantly white child. Stanton feels routines are not necessary when dealing with these children because they already come from disciplined homes with 'lots of books'. Stanton ties unstructured backgrounds to unhappiness before

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4 The senior management team consists of 13 teachers who meet thrice weekly at 7am and manage the institution.

5 'Redwood' is the fictitious name of the borough. Several teachers and students used the phrase 'Redwood children' to describe a working class, ethnic minority cohort who was seen to be more indigenous or 'typical' (as Poppy later describes) of the borough than the white, middle-class children.

moving on to make this unstructured unhappiness synonymous with the working-class, ethnic minority 'urban child'. The tight structures and boundaries implemented at Beaumont are seen to aid the urban child by instigating academic success which also creates happiness. Sara Ahmed's (2010) re-description of empire's civilising mission as a happiness mission, where 'human happiness is increased through the courts (law/justice), knowledge (reason), and manners (culture, habits)' where 'Empire becomes a gift that cannot be refused, a forced gift' illuminates Stanton's assumptions linking urban children to unhappiness (124-125). Ahmed outlines how the unhappy other provides the premise of action, where 'colonial knowledges constitute the other as...being unhappy, as lacking the qualities or attributes required for a happier state of existence' (125). Beaumont's mission functions as a gift to unstructured unhappy students, forcing them become less ethnic and more middle-class so they can move toward happy futures.

While poverty is briefly mentioned, Stanton's concern centres around creating opportunity and parenting practices. He carries on by singling out class, not race or ethnicity, as the single biggest hurdle to students achieving academic success:

> *I think class would be the biggest issue. A child going home to a home which doesn't value education, doesn't support their child, where there are no books, where there is no experience of higher education...that's the bigger problem.*

Class is the 'problem'. More specifically, working-class parents are the problem, as they create a barrier to educational achievement through their detrimental parenting practices and misplaced values. This 'problem' can be remedied by teachers assuming responsibility. Stanton describes how Beaumont 'becomes a sort of surrogate parent to the child and the child will only succeed if the philosophy of the school is that we will in many ways substitute and take over when necessary.' Class is therefore a malleable position that can be shifted and augmented by the individual's adoption of aspirational attitudes. Students can invest in new ways of thinking about themselves by 'building a belief system,' where it is not about having money, but having the right outlook that counts. Cultural transformation becomes a moral question of augmenting values, bodies and dispositions. Aspiration becomes a key ingredient, allowing subjects to reflexively change their social conditions as theorised by Labour advisor Anthony Giddens among others (Beck, Giddens and Lash, 1994).

Feminist research has also emphasised, albeit with extremely different value judgements, the cultural significance of class. Steph Lawler outlines how cultural and symbolic mechanisms make

social class 'real,' suggesting that economics may not be the most meaningful way to discuss class, although class cannot be reduced to cultural mechanisms or located outside of politics (1999: 5). Her research on women of working-class origin who now occupy middle-class positions indicates class is not achieved through economics alone, but through an array of cultural practices that mark the subject as working or middle class. Beaumont seeks to shift the student from a working-class to a more middle-class culture, where 'the neo-liberal subject is the autonomous liberal subject made in the image of the middle class' (Walkerdine 2003: 239). Through a coercive institutionalised programme of training, Beaumont seeks to liberate students through structure to discover their middle-class selves. However, as Lawler's research indicates, the transformation and occupation of a middle-class self is never complete and often painful, even after after overcoming their supposed lack of 'taste'. Hierarchies of 'taste' easily depicted as simple preferences connect to wider inequality where the personal pain that class inequality engenders through relations of superiority/inferiority or judgement/shame are 'the manifestation of political inequalities' (Lawler, 1999: 5). As Bourdieu reminds us, 'nothing classifies somebody more than the way he or she classifies' (1989: 18). Beaumont is presented ‘as an oasis in the desert' while the surrounding area is essentialised as a zone of pathological urban chaos. Through the creation of an ideal, practices falling outside of it are othered and difference is created.

making the 'right' subjects: pathologising and equalising

Isaac is a jovial, rotund and articulate Afro-Caribbean young man in year 10 who initially rejected the idea of attending the Beaumont sixth form, yet appreciated the grades he has achieved from 'being pushed.' He says Beaumont is 'like a metaphorical Chitty-Chitty Bang Bang Child Catcher machine, but in a good way.' The sinister Child Catcher is a character who drives his brightly coloured carriage into a village square, ringing a bell and singing to children that he has free cakes, ice cream and lollipops. When enthusiastic children are lured into his carriage, the cheerful trappings disappear to reveal they are locked in a steel cage. Isaac explains how many Beaumont kids were 'quite wild' and 'a bit rough,' although he adds this may not be their fault. Yet instead of children (and parents) being unknowingly tricked by the Child Catcher, Beaumont's promise of good GCSEs makes the stringent discipline worthwhile. Isaac thinks Beaumont 'trains' wild students so they can get along; it's not about where you come from or what you are like, but your 'physical capacity to be intelligent.' Isaac feels this makes people 'equal,' because it's not just the middle-class kids who 'get along.' Isaac's metaphor highlights the contradictions of an institution that simultaneously pathologies while attempting to equalise its students.

Urban culture is not only achieved through high grades, but through cultivating sensibilities and

behavioural norms. Mr Buell details the important non-academic attributes taught at Beaumont which are seen as a prerequisite for learning: '...your manners, the respect you have, your telephone manner, the way you are punctual, you attend school, you don't try to dodge out of responsibilities, you present yourself well, you can mix with other people. All of that we can do here because we immerse them in this high class culture. It rubs off on them.' Acquiring the hallmarks of 'high class culture' means 'acquiring good habits' and an 'affective disposition' where 'you learn to be affected in the right way by the right things' (Ahmed, 2010: 129). Many students see themselves as being 'made better' by cultivating these practices. Sixth form student Ashley says: 'I don't really mind that much, like going through what I did go through with all the rules and stuff. I know it's for a reason and obviously it's like helped to shape me and form me into something great.' Year 10 student Taylor reflects on leaving the strict confines of Beaumont for less structured environments, concluding that they had learned the difference between right and wrong and 'knew how they were supposed to act in certain situations, so they would probably do what they where supposed to and know how to act like this or not like this'. Despite continual complaints about strictness, students feel the grades are worth it. Following Bourdieu's concept of habitus as an unconscious history we carry around which frames our present action, it might be suggested that Beaumont 'works' through working on the habitus, as students develop dispositions which allow them to modulate their behaviour across different contexts.

Beaumont's academic success means many middle-class children attend Beaumont instead of private school, creating a comprehensive environment largely absent from inner London schools. Teachers like Ms Cinnamon suggest this social mix is made possible through discipline. Some parents think it has made their child 'much better behaved...and that has knock-on effects at home,' and 'some parents, tends to be the middle-class parents actually, tolerate the behaviour system and the discipline because they know that on a whole school level it's good. They may not necessarily think that their child needs it, but they can see that it *allows their child* to go to a comprehensive urban school.' Disciplining the potentially dangerous, classed and racialised bodies of 'urban children' allows for social mixing. While 'urban children' benefit from this training, the middle-class children tolerate it to partake in a free, top quality education.

'accidental' divisions

The vast majority of teachers and students discuss the ethnic diversity of the student body as an unproblematic, positive aspect of the school and explain playground divisions by ethnicity and class through style, interest and background. Taylor finds this separation 'just natural and more comfortable,' while other students like Shanice and Kelsey think it is an accident. Poppy says it's

'definitely not about race because that would just be nasty' and Duane says it may look like it's about ethnicity, but it's more about clothing brands. The fervent disavowal of ethnicity as a structuring factor of social relationships and students' persistent attribution of division to other factors shows how 'race' cannot be seen to matter. This is off-limits; these young people are well-versed in the discourse of colour-blindness and have unknowingly taken up a simplistic version of post-racial theory. Although students deny the effects of ethnicity on social relationships, their actions and social formations speak differently. Culture, background, style, and interests all function to alleviate the messy mention of ethnicity or class and points to the need acknowledge the 'real effects' of ideological categories regardless of their constructed-ness where 'racism is a regime of power that damages our ability to sense and make sense' (Leonardo, 2007: 275; Back, 2009: 465). Subsumed under a language of choice and detached from power and structural inequality, social divisions become the result of individual preference.

Social and ethnic inequalities are bleached from the story as diversity is seen to dissolve difference and banish racism. Mr Buell adds, "It's not a deprived environment. It's got so many different facets of culture to it that it's almost like a little, a little view under a world microscope. It's a very mixed environment. But if you are of one ethnic group and you come here you are enriched by other ethnic groups being there.' Nirmal Puwar's (2004) shows how the physical presence of ethnic minority bodies is meant to create racial equality, where 'race' resides in non-white bodies and multiculturalism infers that more bodies of colour must amount to diversity and equality (32). These uncritical celebrations of mixed-ness conceals the unequal nature of student mobility. I will now examine how different students negotiate this socially mixed urban space through alterations and negotiations to the self.

the consequences of staying still

Year 9 students Gazi and Poppy each stay with their respective social groups in the playground and do not attempt to circulate, yet they are fixed in very different social positions. Poppy was born and raised in the borough, yet describes her social group as 'not typical Redwood kids' because they are conscious of being 'very middle-class.' Poppy describes herself as white British, lives with her professional parents in a Victorian house and is in set one for all of her lessons. Poppy is rarely in trouble, despite admitting to talking during lessons - something I have frequently observed. Although she is careful to point out that she does not mean she is middle-class in a 'snobby way,' Poppy refers to the students outside of the 'skinny jean crowd' as 'street kids.' Diane Reay's research on white middle-class families who send their children to comprehensives highlights how their commitment to multi-ethnic spaces exists in tension with the defence of middle-class privilege and

a 'belief in the 'specialness' of white middle-class children,' referred to by one mother as her child's 'extraness' (Reay et al 2007, 1043). Poppy similarly describes her and her friends as 'special' or 'weird,' drawing boundaries between herself and those students who are more ordinary or 'typical.' She continually stresses her individuality, describing her group as 'very fashion-conscious, very particular about their clothes and their look,' adding they could be called 'trendies' or 'hipsters.' She has her hair cut in boutique salons and routinely frequents a fashionably gritty area of London.

Poppy says there are divisions in the playground and people she never speaks to, adding that some people can move between groups and she is not one of them. When she first arrived at Beaumont, Poppy was short with enormous black glasses and spoke very properly, however she quickly toned down her accent, realising 'it was a bit much.' Like many students, she thinks group divisions correspond to speaking style. She recounts trying to speak slang once, amusingly contorting her mouth in an uncomfortable shape before announcing 'it didn't suit me' and 'just sounded wrong'. When I ask her to describe the other social group, her initially diplomatic response of 'I don't like to put labels on things,' moves on to an admission of calling them chavs, although this is not a nice term. She adds that some of them refer to her group as nerds or geeks. While she says her group is generally middle-class, any reference to ethnicity playing a role in group formation is emphatically rejected.

Meanwhile Gazi sits at the opposite end of the social spectrum. He is an exuberantly energetic young man whose planner is routinely littered with detentions, mostly for laughing and 'immaturity' in his set 3 and 4 lessons. He often complains about the hectic pace of Beaumont which leaves little time to relax. Gazi is part Turkish Cypriot and Irish and lives on a council estate with his mother and three younger siblings. His mother works in a restaurant and makes 'good money.' Gazi likes Maths, food technology, and sport. While giving a tour of the school, Gazi pointed to a circular bench, calling it the 'blond nerd area.' He recalls being introduced to them when he was new and they did not understand what he was saying, but stared at him blankly. He says they speak English, but I point out he speaks English too. He says no, it was different - they speak posh English, they are posh people who he does not 'get' and who aren't 'normal people'.

Gazi thinks the nerds are boring goody-goodies who never have any fun and always follow the rules. After the disclaimer 'not to be rude or nothing,' Gazi goes on to describe how they have 'no style' because they work all night, listen to horrible rock music and cut themselves. He thinks the nerds hang out in parks, eat roast dinners and play in rock bands, while he likes to go to the cinema, listen to rap and eat chicken and chips. He speculates that the nerds probably call him a chav, but

he is not. After his passionate diatribe, Gazi pauses and admits he is prejudiced against them because he does not actually know what they are like. He considers what would happen if he grew long hair, listened to rock and started saying 'dude,' suggests that some of them might wear the clothes, but how they were did not match their appearance. Ultimately Gazi thinks being a 'bad boy' is more fun and, very importantly, more appealing to women.

Poppy and Gazi both make assumptions about one another and display a reluctance to modulate their speech and self-presentation enough to move between social groups. This indifference verging on repulsion may appear evenly sided, however their respective immobility has very different consequences when placed in a wider context. Their respective practices and 'styles' actively make class and carry unequal currency. Bourdieu distinguishes between those who only have to be what they are as opposed to those who are what they do and, therefore, have to constantly prove that they are capable of carrying the signs and capital of national belonging (quoted in Skeggs, 2004: 19). Poppy does not need to learn how to speak slang to acquire value - she is already positioned as the ideal Beaumont student. She is not a 'typical Redwood kid,' but a cosmopolitan hipster who is innately mobile with cultural and economic capital to draw on. Conversely Gazi is continually being pushed to reform his behaviour and self-presentation. His lack of ability to modulate his speech and self-presentation means he lacks the right affective disposition; he is not yet capable of carrying the necessary signs and capital. Gazi *needs* to speak properly, as his social forms are distinctly under-valued and deemed incompatible with success. He is the one who needs to 'move up,' not Poppy, for she has already arrived. While social mixing may be optional for some white, middle-class students like Poppy, I will now consider a few students who describe mixing as necessary for upward mobility.

mixing for mobility: 'not one of those people who just sticks with one group'

Several year 11 black male students feel circulating between ethnic and social groupings is a positive practice. Joshua, a quick witted, high achieving student who describes himself as Nigerian, says he moves from the Afro-Caribbean to the Asian to the 'Caucasian' group, 'having a laugh with each' to be a 'diverse person.' He describes how mixing 'opens you up' and prevents narrow-mindedness because some of the world's worst disasters, including Hitler, were borne of narrow-minded thinking. Joshua thinks you have to interact with and understand a range of people to see and discover the 'true beauty of life.' The capacity to move between ethnic groups was part of becoming a 'dynamic person' because 'being British had changed.' Language features heavily once again, as Joshua describes Britain as a diverse country where you need to know how to talk to different people. He describes telling his black friends that he was going to talk to his white friends

and them replying, 'no, I'm staying over here.' He explains they don't feel comfortable because there were expressions the white kids would not understand; like if he said 'yeah, last night I got beats' to his black friends they would all laugh, whereas if he said this to his white friends they would be confused. Yet Joshua says he has 'achieved' an ethnically varied social group and can go anywhere with relative ease. Samuel, a thoughtful, softly-spoken student who describes himself as black British says he 'is not one of those people who just stuck to one group,' explaining that he moves between groups to know a variety of people, otherwise you are limiting or pigeon-holing yourself.

Isaac relates social mobility to his interest in other people, what they think about things and how they 'get on.' Like Joshua, he feels one should embrace different groups rather than 'try to separate yourself off from others and be afraid of people who are different from you.' He thinks mixing around makes things better and it is what you need to do to get along in life. This mobility has personal benefits, for Isaac adds that he is 'lucky' to circulate with ease and some people got jealous because he could 'get from point a to point b faster' by zipping in and out. By the end of year 11, Isaac had changed his mind and decided to attend the sixth form He insisted his days of 'messing about' were over because he realised this was a competition and some would get 'trampled.' Isaac says he is going to turn it on 'full blast next year' because 'I'm going to be on top.' Part of getting on top involved Isaac shifting his friendship group. He associated hanging out with high achievers with gaining entrance to sixth form head Ms Smith's 'special club' that went on trips to Oxbridge. Isaac felt being seen to be friends with the set one group would get him in Ms Smith's 'good graces' and possibly in the 'private, sly little club' comprised of 'more serious students.' Once in the club, it was not just you trying to get yourself to Oxbridge, but you and Ms Smith would be 'working with each other' to get you there. This shift involves Isaac deliberately moving from a more socially and ethnically-mixed social grouping to a more white, middle-class one in order to accrue benefits; social relations become harnessed to the acquisition of educational advantages.

These boys' narratives highlight a combination of altruistic and self-serving motivations for social mixing. While pointing to the importance of understanding others, circulating also aids the development of a dynamic self free to move across social space. Mixing is related to social mobility, both spatially and culturally. A key element of this mobility is the capacity to modulate speech styles, something these boys have mastered. Mixing becomes a way of resourcing the self, for it is seen as something they will need to navigate post-Beaumont. Mobility becomes an achievement, for they are not 'pigeon-holed,' but unfixed from ethnicity or class and this flexibility allows them to accrue value. Ethnicity becomes a positive descriptor, provided they can effectively perform white middle-class norms as promoted by Beaumont's training.

Ahmed investigates who or what is portrayed as turning bad feelings into good feelings, referring to these bodies or objects as 'conversion points'. These students arguably function as conversion points for their positive social integration promises happiness as social mixing turns bad feelings into good. Un-integrated migrants are converted into integrated migrants and their bodies come to carry the promise of happiness (Ahmed 2010, 45; Ahmed 2008). These young black men, two of whom have been institutionally honoured by being made prefects, are actively converting themselves by taking up the idea of integration and happy multiculturalism. They have converted the threat of the deviant pathological black body found in Beaumont's urban chaos discourse into an exemplary black body capable of modulating the self.

'just because it's ghetto doesn't mean it's bad': what needs to go to get mobile

Tameka, an outspoken and engaging Afro-Caribbean year 10 student who has frequently been in trouble at Beaumont also says she can talk to anyone, however her account of social mixing at Beaumont is more complicated. Tameka discusses how teachers persistently disperse and reprimand her social group more than others and attributes this to racism. Tameka explains that 'just because her friends 'spud' (she demonstrates greeting by touching fists) does not mean they are selling drugs or being violent, it was how they talked and 'just because it's ghetto does not mean that it is bad.' While giving me a tour, we pass a tall, black young man wearing a puffy black parka named Brandon. Tameka points out that someone like Brandon is seen to be a troublemaker because of how he looks, even though he does not actually make trouble[6]. Tameka thinks Beaumont has stereotypical ideas of Redwood as a ghetto where 'all the women are walking around pregnant with prams' and 'every young man has been in prison'. She said if teachers see you cutting up with friends and having a laugh 'they just look at you and think 'oh never mind, they're like that and they'll never get anywhere in life." These bodies become the origin of bad feeling and serve as representations of a pathological self, regardless of actual action or intent.

Tameka occupies a complex position, actively pointing out racialised judgements while simultaneously conceding to Beaumont's demands. When talking about the formal sixth form dress code, Tameka said she probably needs to be 'less street' and that maybe wearing heels and skirts would be 'good practice' and make her more 'lady-like'. Tameka also talks about how black people are trying and 'need time' to move up, but they were showing they could achieve and that you could be both ghetto and intelligent simultaneously. Needing to move up signals not yet arriving and a

[6] I worked at the school from 2004-2010 and did Brandon's target setting, which meant meeting with him and his mother several times over several years to set goals and review marks. Although certainly apathetic at times, Brandon was rarely in trouble and got average grades.

subsequent inadequacy. While Tameka sees a need to change herself, she also resists the idea that her practices are innately wrong. Unlike the young men, racism is alive in her speech as a present-tense condition as Tameka brings up the historical effects of slavery on black people's upward mobility. Joshua says teachers break up ethnic minority student groups more often because black people are seen as more frightening than white people, however he attributes this to black people being louder and fewer in number rather than racism. Like Ahmed's 'melancholy migrant' whose 'fixation with injury is read as an obstacle not only to his own happiness but also to the happiness of the generation to come' where the 'moral task is thus 'to get over it'', Tameka refuses to accept her pathologisation or an easy vision of happy multiculturalism (143-144). Her position is precarious; while she does not fully dispense with her ways of being, she is willing to 'practice' alterations perceived as beneficial.

in closing

Determining and cultivating the ideal subject involves creating distinctions which involves attributing judgements and values through bodily and social orientations. These orientations form the basis of a moral economy, as Beaumont's moral distinctions of worth become social distinctions of value which are negotiated out in the playground (Skeggs 2004). These student negotiations are always implicated in hierarchies of power circulating beyond the school gates. This paper has reflected on the one-way traffic of pathologisation and transformation by exploring how Beaumont constructs the ideal subject and how students negotiate this landscape. While ideal students do not have to move, aspirational ethnic minority students like Joshua need to circulate and accrue value or risk becoming pathologised and immobile: 'just sticking' with one group could get him stuck. Like Poppy, Gazi remains stationary, but with very different consequences. Possessing mobility means possessing value, but mixing for mobility is only a necessary strategy for those who do not inhabit the classed and raced position of ideal student. Underlying this is the inherent assumption that upward mobility leads to happiness.

Ethnographic and interview accounts have highlighted some of the practices and work that *some* bodies have to do to accrue value, however this is not a conclusion but the beginnings of an wider exploration. The significance of gender through these processes, touched upon briefly through Tameka's more complex negotiation of school norms, needs to be examined. The interwoven, complex production of raced and classed positions also requires a more detailed unravelling, as well as the school's presumptions about 'urban children' which ignores the presence of an ethnic minority middle-class in Redwood - an issue recently addressed by Louise Archer (2011). Student accounts also highlight how the neo-liberal ethos of competition and aspirational self-improvement

propagated by Beaumont is taken up and developed by students. This prompts a deeper examination of how students like Isaac adopt a 'me-PLC[7]' attitude and how does this attitude shapes and instrumentalises practices and relationships both at Beaumont and beyond.

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