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Racialisation of central and east European migrants in Herefordshire

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Abstract

European enlargement has led to a well-documented increase in immigration from the new Europe to rural and semi-rural areas of the United Kingdom. The publication of two major reports in early 2007 - by the Audit Commission and by the Commission for Rural Communities - on migrant workers in rural Britain, also points to increased interest in this area by policy makers. While academic researchers have recently begun to study migration to rural areas and migrant agricultural work, they have focused mainly on the labour process, on exploitation and on the economic structures which have created the need for migrant labour (Rogaly, 2006; Stenning, 2006; McKay et al, 2006, Portes and French, 2005; Anderson et al, 2006), rather than on the interface between migrants and local communities.

Introduction

This working paper builds on work conducted by the author for the Diocese of Hereford Council for Social Responsibility in 2007. The research had the aim of co-

Although this is not considered at length, the complex articulations of race and class do need to be addressed with regard to the local situation, since most migrants in Herefordshire, as low paid, manual workers, are members of the working class. Popular constructions of A8 migrant workers as "hard workers" (Rogaly, 2006; Stenning, 2006) and working practices of migrants, or their agency employers, may also lead to preferential hiring of migrants and destabilise hard-earned labour rights of British workers. Further research could elaborate whether there is a perceived threat of a "new kind" of worker, more flexible and responsive to the needs of capital, able to earn less by minimising outgoings and putting pressure on wages as a result, and if so, how this perceived threat is articulated discursively.

Academic Context

The problematic status of the migrant is discussed by the anthropologist Paul Silverstein in terms of the contradictions within a global capitalist system between the "demands of capital for socially disunited "abstract labour" and the demands of states for culturally unified "abstract citizens." (Silverstein 2005:364) Mobility problematises social relations as much as it aids economic development, as new patterns of mobility call into question and destabilise traditional constructions of class, gender and identity.

Rural geographers have recently applied theories of othering to an understanding of the social construction of rurality, showing how tensions can arise between imagined, culturally homogenous and timeless geographies of rurality and the contemporary reality of rural change which is more heterogeneous and multicultural (Cloke and Little, 1997; Neal and Agyeman, 2006). The presence of "others", for example Gypsies and Travellers (Sibley, 1995; Halfacree, 2003) and asylum seekers (Hubbard, 2005) – is often contested, as the constructions of an imaginary "pure" rural space involves setting socio-cultural boundaries which exclude others and reinforce dominant constructions of identity.

Previously I have argued (Dawney, 2003) that the English countryside exists as a dominant signifier in the popular imaginary for a specific and excluding form of nationalism through its representation as a space of purity in opposition to the city: These ideas are mirrored in David Sibley's work:

The countryside, as it is represented by those who have a privileged place within it, is the essence of Englishness, so those who are excluded from this purified space are also, in as sense, un-English...it is those parts of national territory that are pictured as stable, culturally homogeneous historically unchanging which are taken to represent the nation in nationalistic discourse. These are generally rural areas which stand in opposition to cosmopolitan cities (Sibley 1995:108)

While the imagined English countryside (which may, of course be imagined from the metropolitan centre – c.f. Williams, 1977) is clearly very different from the reality of living in rural areas, I suggest that it is drawn upon as a cultural resource when defining and articulating identities in rural England. The presence of the non-white other, as a signifier of immigration and postcolonialism in the white consciousness, indicates that old stabilities have been eroded and leads to anxiety. The countryside holds the place stereotype of "old England", yet the black or Asian is stereotypically urban, representing "new England". The place and person stereotypes do not match, hence the black presence in the countryside is "out of place", does not belong (Tolia-Kelly, 2006). The notion of belonging or of being discrepant is closely tied to the stereotypical categories by which we order place and matter.

Empirical research on ethnic relations in rural areas of the UK has focused on the experiences of visible ethnic minorities, and has also dealt with the specificity of rural racism in terms of the isolation felt by ethnic minorities in the absence of a minority ethnic community (Robinson and

Gardner, 2004; Jay, 1992; Agyeman and Spooner, 1997; De Lima, 1999, Dhalech 1999). Herefordshire's situation differs from this model, as the county is increasingly attracting white, Christian migrants from the new A8 European member states, as well as large numbers of seasonal agricultural workers from former Soviet states. This has already led to the establishment of community networks of recent migrants. Isolation from others with shared experience of migration and racism is therefore less relevant to an understanding of many migrants' experiences in Herefordshire.

Another recurring theme of literature on rural racism is its characterisation as racism borne out of ignorance rather than familiarity. The scarcity of visible ethnic minorities in rural communities means long-term residents' ideas about ethnic minorities may be based on third party information, from the media and from other people, rather than from contact with ethnic minorities themselves. Generalisations and sweeping stereotypical and untrue statements indicate that racism in rural areas is articulated largely in ways that suggest lack of contact and ignorance rather than direct experience of different cultures (e.g. Jay 1992).

Writers on rural racism have also discussed the "invisibility of racism" in rural areas (Derbyshire, 1994; de Lima, 2001; Dhalech, 1999) – the existence of a "no problem here" point of view, leading to complacency and inactivity on behalf of agencies, local authorities and employers. De Lima (2001) writes of "Invisible Communities" in her study of ethnic minority communities living in rural Scotland where denial of race-relations problems was endemic. My previous research in rural Worcestershire (Dawney, 2003) also drew attention to the denial of racism in schools, and the assumption made by institutions that the existence of racism entails the presence of ethnic minorities, which of course problematises the presence of minorities, since they are seen to be the source of a "racism problem", creating disruption where previously there had been none. This imagined construction of non-racism in formal discourse may enter the popular imagination and structure others' perceptions. This underlying acceptance of racist points of view found in rural communities also means that the majority of incidents go unreported and unpunished. Racist attitudes are ignored or tolerated by many members of the community. The "invisibility of racism" is such that, in rural areas, many racist acts are not recognised as antisocial or problematic (de Lima, 2001).

The substantive aspects of much rural racism, then, are shaped by the lack of ethnic minorities in rural areas. A lack of familiarity with people from ethnic minorities means that racism in rural areas is also much more clearly connected with ignorance than in areas where there is a significant ethnic minority population. For example, one of Jay's interviewees described being

> "looked at like I'm something from another planet every time I go out" (Jay 1992:23)

Racism involves social boundary demarcation, and a hierarchical ordering of human beings according to phenotypical difference, creating an "us" and a "them". Racism also involves the conflation of physical difference with cultural difference, and with certain cultural characteristics. Robert Miles defines racism as

An ideology which signifies some real or alleged biological characteristic as a criterion of other group membership and which also attributes that group with other, negatively evaluated characteristics (Miles 1993:60)

The conflation of racism and nationalism in recent times is central to Martin Barker's (1981) theory of the "new racism." This, Barker writes, has emerged in right-wing political discourse replacing the biological racism of the colonial period. The new racism was seen as a culturally rather than biologically based, focusing on "living with one's own". He links the protection of

national homogeneity with fear of contamination, writing of the new racism:

It is a theory in which people's feelings about their essential unity and individuality are so central that they are not even just seen as by-products of the way they live together. Rather they constitute their way of life. If it were not for feelings of belonging, of sharing traditions, customs, beliefs, language - in a word, culture - there could be no society...This theory allows a redefinition of racial prejudice. (Barker 1981:17)

Gilroy writes that the "new" racism has a

> Capacity to link discourses of patriotism, nationalism, xenophobia, Englishness, Britishness, militarism and gender difference into a complex situation which gives "race" its contemporary meaning (Gilroy 1987:43)

In the literature of the new racism we find tropes of inclusion and exclusion, accompanied by the assertion that racism no longer needs to be based on imputed phenotypic or physical differences. The new racism can be applied to cultural and linguistic differences – and for the purpose of this paper I am using the term racism to apply to any manifestations of exclusion or hostility based on an assumption of cultural difference. In this way, we can understand attitudes towards the arrival of white, Christian migrants in terms of racialised boundary formation.

It is impossible to analyse racist discourse and practice outside of the social relations and actions through which they are created and sustained. The new racism involves the construction of identities and of boundaries between self and other, through a dialectic of inclusion and exclusion. Ethnic relations can only be understood in terms of perceived difference. In other words, boundaries are defined constantly through a process of giving meaning through action by those involved. Differences can be mobilised and used to define "us" from "them". Encounters across socially constructed boundaries have, for Sandra Wallman (1982) an "identity" and an "interface" aspect. Here she refers to the active construction of an internal identity and an external "other", both of which are mutually determining. In terms of discourses of "race" and "nation", it follows that the construction of a homogeneous notion of Britain and a coherent sense of national identity can only be achieved through recognition of who "us" and "them" actually are. National identity, then, needs an "other," a boundary point in order to strengthen its sense of self. The movement of people, particularly in the context of mass migration, presents a problem for a story of nation-ness that relies on a seamless and long-lived sense of historical continuity, as well as for a sense of cultural homogeneity "binding together" the nation. Faced with this problematic, individuals and groups create and reinforce boundaries inside nation-state borders, through the active recognition and mobilisation of difference.

Migrant/long-term resident interactions in Herefordshire can be elucidated through the concept of racialisation. Although definitions of racialisation differ, a consensus lies in the notion of racialisation as a representational process – a means of categorisation and delineation of group boundaries. Hence Silverstein describes how "racialisation indexes the historical transformation of fluid categories of difference into fixed species of otherness", through the construction of boundary marking categories that homogenise and fix. The process of racialisation is further complicated by the fact that different groups have unequal power to define – meaning that others can be constructed by a dominant group as a

> "screen...on which the nation projects a series of condensed, complicated anxieties regarding external and internal threats to the mutable coherence of the national body." (Lowe, 1996 quoted in Silverstein, 2005: 366)

Silverstein, drawing on the work of Trouillot, argues that the racialisation of immigrants

arable crops towards soft fruit production, and also due to EU expansion in 2004.

Large numbers of seasonal workers now work in the soft fruit farms of Herefordshire in the summer months, as part of the Seasonal Agricultural Workers' Scheme (SAWS), and EU expansion has led to the arrival of A8 nationals seeking employment in the area. Many of these A8 nationals work on smaller farms, and often arrived in the country initially as seasonal workers for the larger fruit farms. A significant amount of A8 migrants work in production and processing in local factories. Often these are recruited in their homeland by employment agencies, or by employers using the Internet. The majority have come as a result of word of mouth, with networks of migrants enabling new arrivals to find places to live, work and study.

According to Stenning's (2006) analysis of Home Office datasets, Herefordshire Local Authority area has the tenth highest location quotient for workers registered on the WRS in the UK, and the highest concentration of A8 migrants in the West Midlands and South West of England2. The Accession Monitoring Report (Home Office and DWP, 2006) shows the Marches area as having a relatively high level of WRS applications (in the top 25% of the UK as a whole) as percentage of population. Despite the fact that Herefordshire has a high proportion of SAWS workers and A8 migrants, the West of England has largely been left out of research on the impact of these most recent waves of migration, which has focused mainly on the East and South of England.

The idea that migrants may pose a significant threat to the stability of local communities does not feature in existing research on rural racism, since it has been mostly concerned with the isolation felt by people from ethnic minorities living in rural areas. Long-term residents in Herefordshire, however, have expressed their concern about migrants in terms of numbers of migrants perceived to be living in the area.

Local research has estimated that there were between 6,000 and 20,000 migrant workers in Herefordshire during 2005. (Herefordshire Council, 2006) The 20,000 figure, however, is highly problematic – as well as being improbable (the population of Hereford city is only 50,000). It is in fact an aggregate figure based on research undertaken by West Mercia police on workers who will pass through Herefordshire throughout the year. Given the high turnover of seasonal workers, (many only come for a part of the season) this figure does not take into account those who have left the county, and it also double counts people who stay longer than a month. It is this 20,000 figure, however, which has been picked up by the local press, has entered the popular imagination, and is often used to support concern over numbers of migrants, often articulated through the notion of pressure on public services. I have witnessed widespread use of hyperbolic metaphors such as "swamping," "influx" and "flooding" entering local popular discourse on migrants. For example, a senior staff member of the college where I worked recently asked a question about how the college should deal with the "influx" of Eastern European migrants. An acquaintance told me that she would not shop in the local supermarket when seasonal workers are nearby, as they "take over" the supermarket.

Contrary to the evidence in the literature about isolation in small communities, one interviewee felt that it was easier to integrate into small communities than larger towns. In Herefordshire, small farmers may often employ one or two migrants, and there is a tendency for many farm units to employ small numbers of migrants (who may be joined by larger numbers of seasonal workers at particular

[2] It is worth noting that the statistics here back up the evidence by other researchers that A8 migrants are living and working in rural and small town areas, rather than settling in cities as former flows of migrants have done. The study suggests that migrants from A8 countries are attracted to areas where there are "middling employment rates" and availability of low paid jobs – a description which fits the county's profile.

times). The interviewee, a Polish farm worker, who is well known in the village near where he lives, spoke of the importance of his employment as a key factor in his being "accepted" into village life.

One Polish interviewee, who had lived in Herefordshire prior to and after EU expansion, discussed how EU expansion, and the resulting increase in migrants from new EU countries, had made long-term residents of the area less welcoming towards migrants. He reported that he noticed a difference in the way he was treated before and after larger numbers of migrants arrived in Herefordshire, and felt that this was to do with demographic change happening too fast, meaning that local residents were less willing to welcome migrants and more likely to respond negatively.

This section has argued that fear of large numbers of migrants seems to be a key concern to local residents, and that this fear can affect the types of interactions that migrants and long-term residents have. It also sheds light on the complex way in which boundary demarcation can be constructed – for example through residence, employment status and perceived numbers of migrants.

The invisibility of racism

West Mercia Police have received very little self-reported incidents of racism and discriminatory behaviour through their "true vision" self-reporting scheme. This may of course be due to a lack of awareness by migrants of the existence of such a scheme, although one police officer I interviewed was very surprised that I had not heard of this scheme. The lack of racist incidents reported to the police have led to a perception among police that Herefordshire does not have a problem with racism, and moreover, that the police are doing as much as they can to prevent racist incidents from occurring. The low take-up of the self-reporting scheme has been taken by the Police as evidence that there is no problem with racism in the county.

Of course, the low levels of reporting may be due to a number of factors: a lack of linguistic competence, a reluctance to take such incidents further, a mistrust of the police by some migrants or a lack of knowledge of the law. Migrants may not construe verbal harassment as a criminal matter. Despite these low levels of recorded racist incidents, every migrant interviewed recounted evidence of hostility towards them by British people. This took the form of one or other of:

- Verbal abuse in the street
- Verbal abuse in bars and pubs
- Being refused service in shops and agencies
- People pretending not to understand
- Patronising/condescending behaviour
- Deliberate unhelpfulness and rudeness

The evidence from this research, then, points to the opposite situation – rather than there being "no problem here," there clearly is a major problem with small, low-level, but often repeated acts of racism and discrimination. These incidents are unlikely to be reported to the police. Their prevalence is perhaps of most concern here – this "low-level" private sphere racist language and interaction is possibly the most insidious form of racism, and hardest to combat. It is highly probable that some perpetrators of these actions are not aware that their actions are racist and illegal.

The evidence gained from the above example corresponds with other rural racism literature on the invisibility of racism. I suggest that formal institutions such as the local police have constructed an imaginary of "racism" which involves major, perhaps violent acts, and what we might term "low-level" racist acts do not lie within that imaginary. As an institution involved in the construction of formal discourse and holding high levels of social power, this may have a significant part to play in the tacit acceptance of low-level racism in areas like Herefordshire. Dominic

Malcolm's analysis of the experiences of ethnic minorities in Norfolk (Malcolm, 2004) also reported similar experiences of low-level racism.

Overt racism by children

Evidence from interviews and focus groups pointed to children and young people as the most vociferous and aggressively racist. The following example from a focus group provides evidence of racism by children in the form of taunting or bullying:

Holly3 on the bus I've experienced that before (.) there was a little boy who got on em on the 492 bus I was going home (.) em (.) the driver was Polish (.) and he came on the bus and he was sticking his fingers up at him and he was going [silly voice] 'but but ding ding yah yah wah wah you don't understand us' (.) and he was being really horrible to him

Mod1 How old was the boy?

Holly He was about ten (.) so I don't know why he wasn't at school (.) but em

? [laughter]

Paul These kids they're going to grow up too [\/\/\] you can't (.) you think that the generation of people being like racist are dying out now, but it's not it's just (.) if you've got ten twelve year olds doing it it's not going to stop it's just going to keep going on//

Nearly all incidents of overt racism mentioned in focus groups were perpetrated by children and teenagers. While the participants were themselves teenagers, and this may have meant they were more likely to be around other teenagers (e.g. on the bus) this evidence indicates that there is much unchallenged low-level racist bullying by young people, something perhaps needing further exploration.

One British interviewee recounted a conversation with migrants too scared to go out in Hereford city centre at night because of aggression by teenagers, and another reported incidents of seasonal workers being repeatedly subject to harassment and bullying in supermarkets by teenage customers. All students involved in the focus groups had witnessed some form of taunting or harassment, and in nearly all of these cases the perpetrators were children and teenagers.

Walking through Hereford city centre I regularly heard young local schoolchildren insult each other using the term "You Polish". This term has now been adopted by local youth as a term of abuse, used against other British people. The term "Polish", in this context, has become detached from its original referent of a generic Eastern European migrant, to taken on a generalised pejorative meaning in the language of local schoolchildren. This is an example of clearly racist language use which occurs regularly and goes largely unchallenged.

While researching housing issues in Hereford I approached a local estate agent, who (secretly) indicated that he would speak to me out of work time. He was very concerned that the content of the interview would not get back to his employer, since it contained very sensitive information regarding the level of discrimination against migrants by local estate agents. When we met he informed me, in a two hour long interview session, of the various strategies that were used by estate agents in order to detract migrants from attempting to rent with them. He stated that on one occasion local letting agents had met to discuss barriers that could be put in place to make

[3] All names in this article have been changed.

it difficult for migrants to rent from them. This included having one years' UK credit history. The estate agent told me that often migrants would come in to the agency and fill in a form and that colleagues of his would throw them straight in the bin. When questioned about the reasons for agents not wanting to rent to migrants, he spoke of the wishes of landlords, and how there was a hierarchy of "types of people" favoured by landlords, where migrants fell marginally higher than unemployed people. At the top of the hierarchy were couples, followed by women. He implied that agents judged people a great deal by appearances and had in their minds an "ideal tenant" who they wished to find for their landlords.

> "In a town this small it's all about reputation. We don't want to be seen to be the agency that rents to migrants. If we get that reputation, they'll all come here and then no landlords will want to use us. At the end of the day, we're a quality agency and we want to get quality landlords. If we rent to the Eastern Europeans this won't happen".

The agent estimated that around 25% of requests for rental accommodation came from migrants, while very few had actually been offered accommodation.

Interviews with migrants supported this evidence, and all migrants interviewed confirmed that it is very difficult to rent houses or flats from letting agents, as many ask for one years' UK credit history or 6 months' rent in advance. It was generally felt that agencies are not interested in letting to migrants. One Polish interviewee felt that an agent was "looking for holes" in her application, and this mirrors a rather negative impression of local estate agencies by migrants. As a result most migrants rent in the private sector, responding to advertisements in the local press. Some migrant interviewees had already been told by friends and acquaintances not to bother with letting agencies, but simply to rent privately. This of course limits migrants' choice of rental accommodation and illustrates the difficulty faced by migrants in finding good quality housing.

This example gives us real insight on the level of discrimination occurring in Herefordshire. The fact that the estate agent was concerned about confidentiality and about meeting away from his workplace indicated that while estate agent are reportedly involved in conscious discriminatory practices, they are also aware of the illegality of these practices. I was fortuitous enough to meet with one agent who found these practices unacceptable, and, moreover, who had thought about them in enough detail to give me some valuable and considered information about the reasons why they occur.

It would appear that while many people are happy for migrants to be living and working in the area, they do not necessarily want to rent their houses to them. This corresponds with an interview with a member of the Leominster Friendship Group, which was set up to support and welcome seasonal workers, and who regretted many group members' reluctance to actually offer hospitality to workers in their own homes. The Community Cohesion Panel recognises that resentment and opposition to migration happens more among communities where migrants are perceived as being in competition with local residents for jobs, school places and housing. Hence tolerance towards migrants may be eased through distance and lack of perceived threat to a "way of life". On the other hand, when the migrant presence comes too close - as migrants become potential neighbours, tenants, guests - long-term residents may become less welcoming.

Talking about racism

Political correctness and the desire to "say the right thing" was a recurring feature in focus groups and interviews. During one of the focus groups, I noticed that there was a shift in register when tape recorder was switched on, as participants began off-tape by joking that the Polish delicatessen in

Talking about racism

Many of the middle class British interviewees and focus group participants bemoaned the treatment of migrants by others. Implicit was an assumption that racism and discrimination was undertaken by working-class local residents, and moreover that those who were most discriminatory were "Herefordians": local people rather than supposedly more cosmopolitan in-migrants from other part of the UK. Many of those interviewed spoke of how Herefordshire in particular was an insular place, not particularly welcoming to migrants from anywhere. There was a definite trend in the focus groups towards participants distancing themselves from those who were seen to be racist, and it was clear that boundaries were being drawn along the lines of social class. Migrants were being used, then, as a means of demarcating other boundaries within long-term residents – to assert particular identities based on class background, education and cosmopolitan-ness, as well as to communicate a specific relationship with place. In one of the focus groups, two of the participants, who lived in very rural areas of Herefordshire, had fairly recently moved to the county from other parts the country (the South-East of England). These two participants became co-operative in constructing themselves as separate from "locals" who had little experience of multicultural communities, constructing a joint identity for themselves as sophisticated, urbane outsiders, asserting cultural superiority against supposedly racist and insular "locals".

In the extract below, however, class is again used in identity formation and boundary construction, however in this case the (middle-class, rural teenage) participant is using his disapproval as a means of distancing himself from well-off, rural teenagers whom he is defining himself in opposition to.

Rich I hate to be stereotypical myself but it's just all the like all the kids from out in the country with rich parents with big houses like saying like saying so you're a foreign bus driver//

Mod2 //so perhaps it's to do with a feeling of economic superiority rather than racial? Do you think that's true?

Holly Yeah probably

Rich Yeah

So racism, having been accepted within the context of the focus group as being universally unacceptable, now becomes projected upon any group a participant wishes to define him/herself against. Racists, too, have become others in the construction of a positive self-identity. The figure of the migrant takes on a symbolic significance – the migrant becomes a means for others to assert their own identity and difference. Migrants are vessels to be filled with meaning in the ongoing identity construction of long-term residents – as abstract victims of racism, and as means to assert one's politics, one's humanity, one's "incomer" status or one's class identity.

Interestingly, the discussion of migrants turned in the focus groups to a discussion of others who are perceived as not "fitting in" – another example of others being created to assert a specific identity position. Here, Beth is referring to incomers to Herefordshire from other parts of the UK:

Beth I'm not saying that everyone who moves out is of that opinion (.) but well if you move out to the country because (.) you want to isolate yourself and be away from everyone else (.) fair enough (.) but people who sort of come and just ignore the whole sort of (.) community spirit and just like (.) just [\/\/\/] sort of drive too fast up (.) tiny country lanes when you want to walk up them (.) then [laughs] I don't like it.

Beth is here asserting her own identity as a long-term resident of Herefordshire, as someone from this area, who "knows how to behave" in the countryside. In this way she is suggesting that others who do not know how to behave do not belong in the same way as she does, nor are they particularly welcome. There is also a veiled reference in here to migrants, since an earlier conversation had focused on their driving habits.

Talking about migrants

One way in which migrants have been constructed in opposition to local people is in terms of their labour. Migrants were often referred to as hardworking individuals, constructed in direct opposition to the British working class, who are "too lazy to do it themselves." In this way they take on a role of a "noble savage", placed on a moral pedestal in order to highlight all that is wrong with the British working class. Again, then, the image of the migrant is being used in order to demarcate boundaries between British people.

Discussions with agencies by and large referred to "migrant workers" rather than "migrants". Many locals' constructions of migrants were indeed based on their identities as "workers". Their status as workers defined them, gave them a reason for living in the country in the minds of long-term residents and also was used as evidence for a) why they are a positive addition to the local area or b) why they are a threat to the employment of local people.

The following focus group extract provides evidence for the way in which migrants are constructed as workers in direct opposition to an imagined "lazy" British working class.

Beth

you into their circles". (interview quoted in Spencer et al 2007:58)

In the focus group discussions, participants emphasised the similarities between the migrants and themselves, drawing on notions of European identity and youth (focus groups were conducted with local college students). Despite this, very few focus group participants had had any interactions with migrants, and where they had this was mainly at work. One participant had made friends with a young Polish man who was working for an agency in his market town, and he expressed a desire to visit him in Poland. This was seen as unusual, however. In focus groups participants all discussed these migrants' reputation as hardworking. Focus groups all defined migrants in terms of their work – discussing work as their motivation for being in the area and also their willingness to work hard and for long hours.

The other key aspect of racialisation, as defined in the earlier section, is the hierarchical ordering of categories of self and other. Whilst working with the diocese and with agencies connected with the church, I noticed that many individuals were motivated by a need to "help" or to "do something for the migrant workers". Indeed the diocese of Hereford and other agencies referred to migrant and seasonal workers as "M&S". This homogenisation indicates the demarcation of a specific group of people perceived to be "in need". While this is of course based on humanitarian, genuine concern, there is a clear sense in which use of this type of terminology can be seen as constructing migrants as passive victims needing help, and implying a power relation between local residents and migrants. In a similar way the term "plight" was used on a number of occasions to describe the situation of the seasonal strawberry pickers. This term in itself indicates that migrants were perceived to be victims of structures beyond their control. This attitude towards migrants can also be traced in the academic literature. In his review of immigrant racialisation, Silverstein discusses how some radical scholars constructed migrants as "uprooted victims" – with migration as the "ultimate violence of capitalist accumulation inflicted upon the poorest of populations 4 2" (Silverstein 2005:372). The process of homogenisation is thus accompanied by a hierarchical ordering of power and need.

Similarly, the participants in one of the focus groups applied a hierarchical ordering to the relationship between themselves and migrants – this time using the symbolic language of style to assert a cultural superiority: some participants clearly felt that the migrants were somehow less

own ethnic group – particularly along lines of class. The figure of the migrant, then, becomes a foil – a distorted mirror on which to project and reflect long-term residents' images of themselves and of each other.

This paper has attempted to show examples of the way in which interactions between locals and migrants have been racialised, and also how locals construct migrants in opposition to themselves in a constant process of boundary maintenance. I maintain that while there are similarities between the Herefordshire example and some of the earlier research on rural racism, there are some significant differences tied to migration histories in the county. In particular, differences have arisen as a result of larger numbers of migrants in the area, and from their ethnic backgrounds as white Christians. I have also highlighted the existence and persistence of low-level racist words and acts, their acceptability in many social fora (and not in others) and the denial of racism in formal discourse. Importantly, this paper highlights the need for further research into the articulation of boundaries of identity and interface in the practice of everyday life, and how "others" are constructed and used as "distorted mirrors" in interaction situations on which to project meaning to assert social and group boundaries within the dominant group.

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