

# INSIDE THE BOX

## ETHNIC CHANGE FOR MIXED PEOPLE IN THE UK



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# UK CONTEXT: BEING 'MIXED'

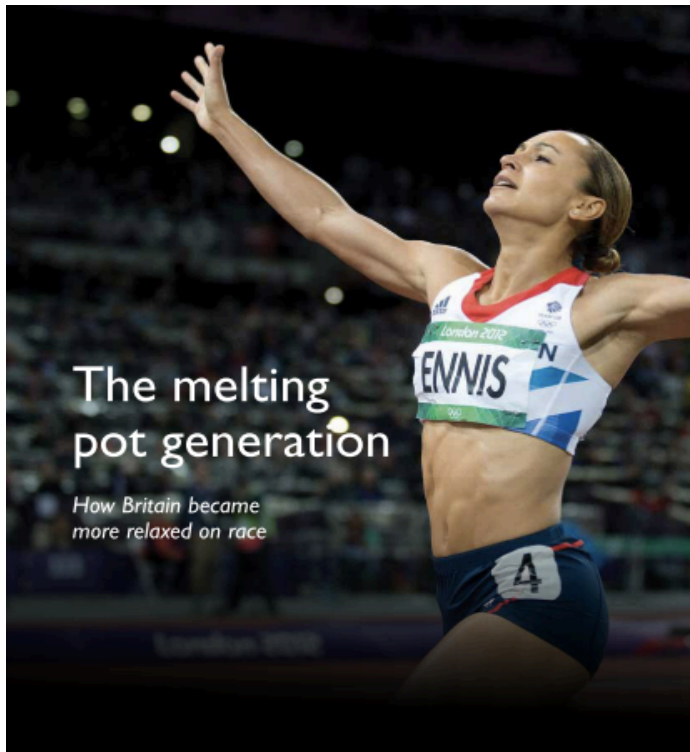
- High rate of interethnic partnering (for Europe anyway).
- Direct ethnic question in England & Wales Census only since **1991**
  - Single-tick
  - Racial & ethnic terms
  - 'Mixed' boxes since 2001
- Little research on ethnic mobility, ethnic attrition, or the 'hidden' population with multiple ethnic ancestry
- Limited mainstream & institutional reflection on legacy of colonial racism



*Couple with a baby, 2019  
(photo credit: Getty)*

# MOTIVATION: WILL THE MELTING POT SAVE US FROM RACISM?

Inevitable progress via diversifying demography?



*Olympic athlete Jessica Ennis, in a Christ-like pose on cover of report (Ford et.al. 2012) for the think-tank British Future*

Racial hierarchies reproducing via e.g. segmented assimilation?



*Tottenham man Mark Duggan whose killing by police sparked the UK riots of 2011 (photo credit: Duggan Family)*

# LITERATURE



## 1. Horizontal/relational choices between

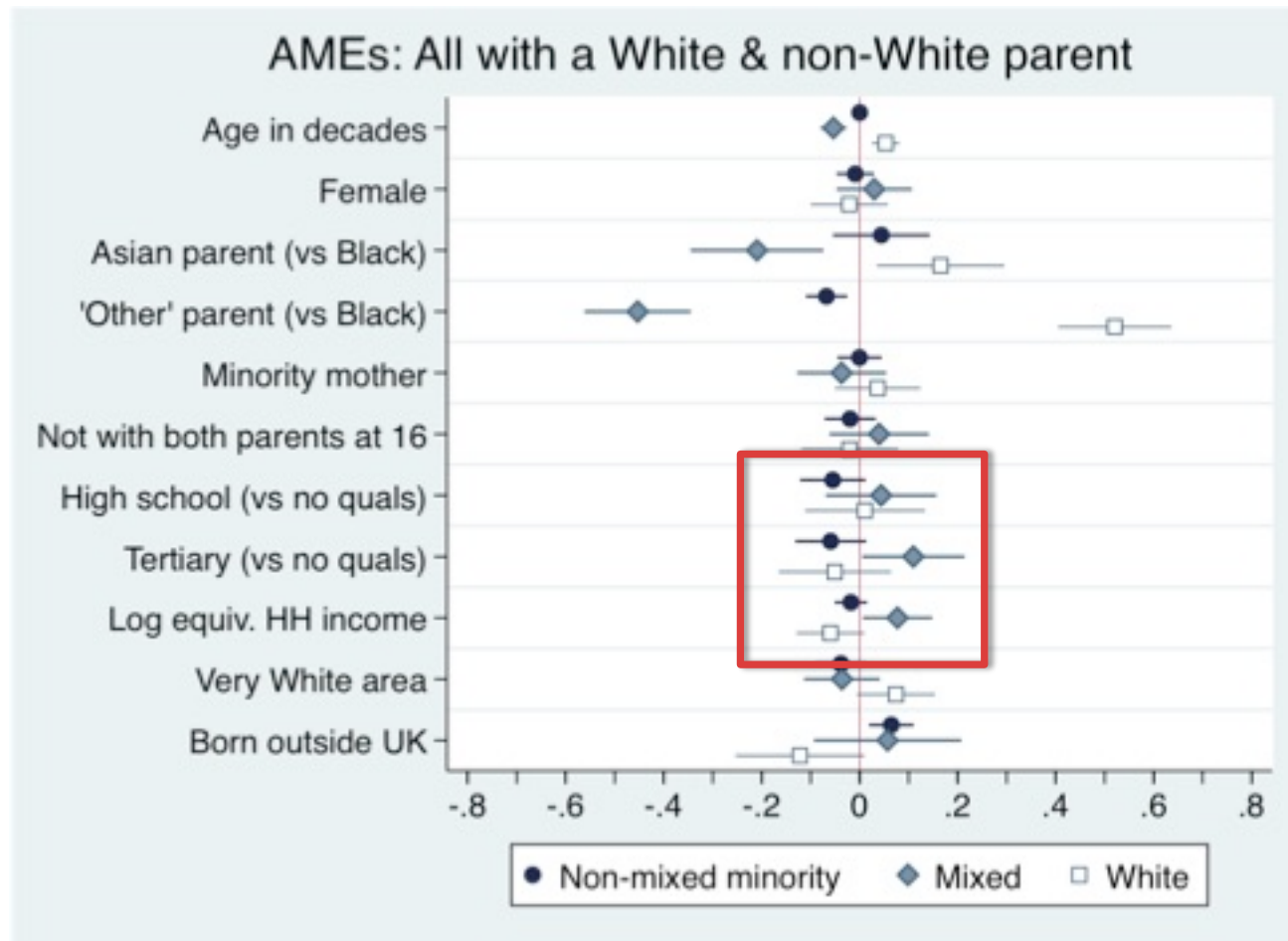
**identities:** 'Achieved' identity, acculturation theory, life courses & destabilisation (*Phinney 1990, Berry 1995, Carter et.al. 2009, Didham 2017*)

## 2. Vertical/hierarchical choices about status:

Strategic/aspirational 'whitening', ('passing', ethnic attrition) vs 'mixed privilege' theories (*Alba 2016, Emeka & Vallejo 2014, Townsend et.al 2012, Telles, 2014, Mok 2018*)



# RELATED UK RESEARCH: 'MIXED PRIVILEGE'/LOW-STATUS WHITE CHOICES



Source: UK Household Longitudinal Study, from Mok, T.M. (2018) *Low status, White choices: Predictors of ethnic choice*, working paper presented at PAA 2018

# RESEARCH QUESTION

**What are the predictors of individual ethnic mobility for mixed people in the UK?**

- Stabilisation over time?
- Instability/deprivation associated with random fluctuation?
- 'Aspirational' moves towards whiteness?
- Middle-class moves towards 'unique', postmaterialist mixedness?

# DATA

**ONS Longitudinal Study ('The LS')** contains linked Census and life events data for a 1% sample of the population of England and Wales. UK's largest longitudinal study.

*Researcher access administered by CeLSIUS at UCL <https://www.ucl.ac.uk/celsius>*

*The permission of the Office for National Statistics to use the Longitudinal Study is gratefully acknowledged, as is the help provided by staff of the Centre for Longitudinal Study Information & User Support (CeLSIUS). CeLSIUS is supported by the ESRC Census of Population Programme (Award Ref: ES/K000365/1). The authors alone are responsible for the interpretation of the data.*

# ETHNIC QUESTION IN ENGLAND & WALES CENSUS

## 16 What is your ethnic group?

Choose **one** section from A to E, then tick **one** box to best describe your ethnic group or background

### A White

- English/Welsh/Scottish/Northern Irish/British
- Irish
- Gypsy or Irish Traveller
- Any other White background, write in

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### B Mixed/multiple ethnic groups

- White and Black Caribbean
- White and Black African
- White and Asian
- Any other Mixed/multiple ethnic background, write in

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### C Asian/Asian British

- Indian
- Pakistani
- Bangladeshi
- Chinese
- Any other Asian background, write in

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### D Black/African/Caribbean/Black British

- African
- Caribbean
- Any other Black/African/Caribbean background, write in

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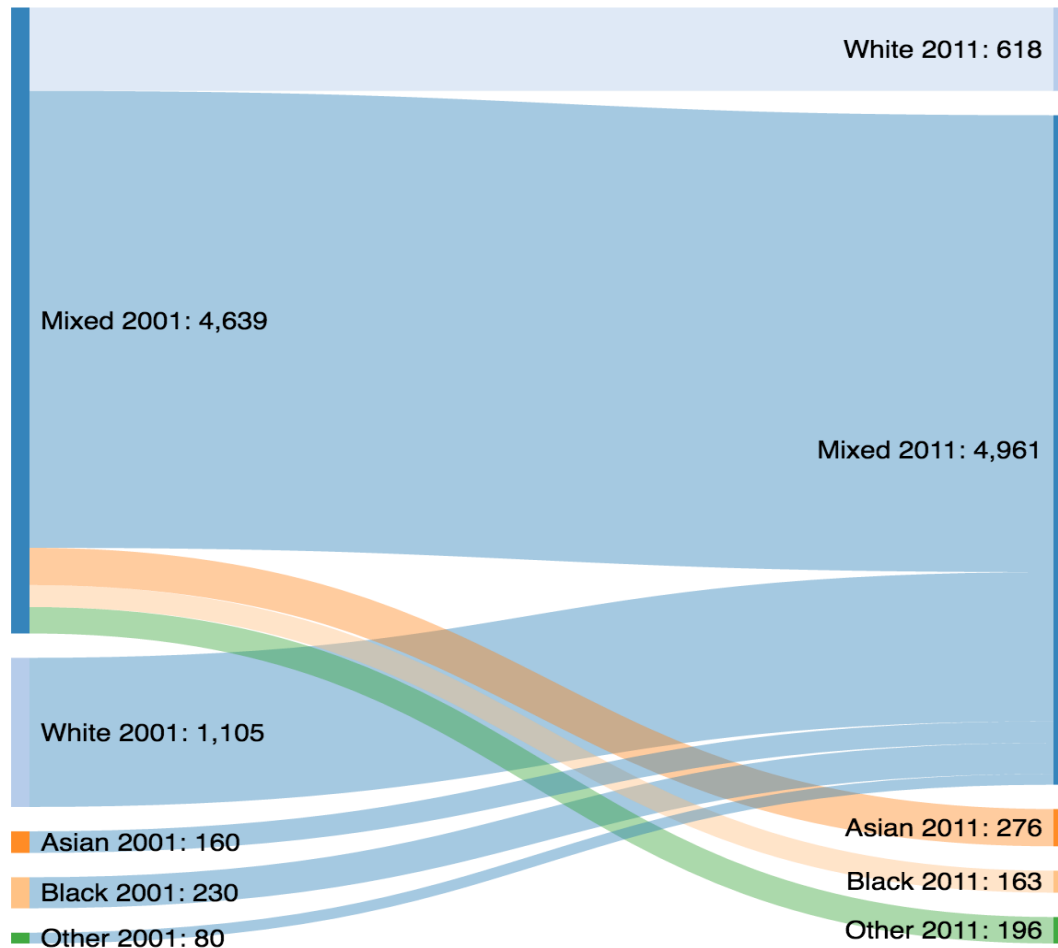
### E Other ethnic group

- Arab
- Any other ethnic group, write in

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# CHURN IN AND OUT OF 'MIXED', ONS LS 2001-2011



Source: ONS Longitudinal Study

# METHODOLOGY

**Binary & multiple logistic regression** exploiting repeated measures of ethnic group in two linked waves of a 1% sample of the Census.

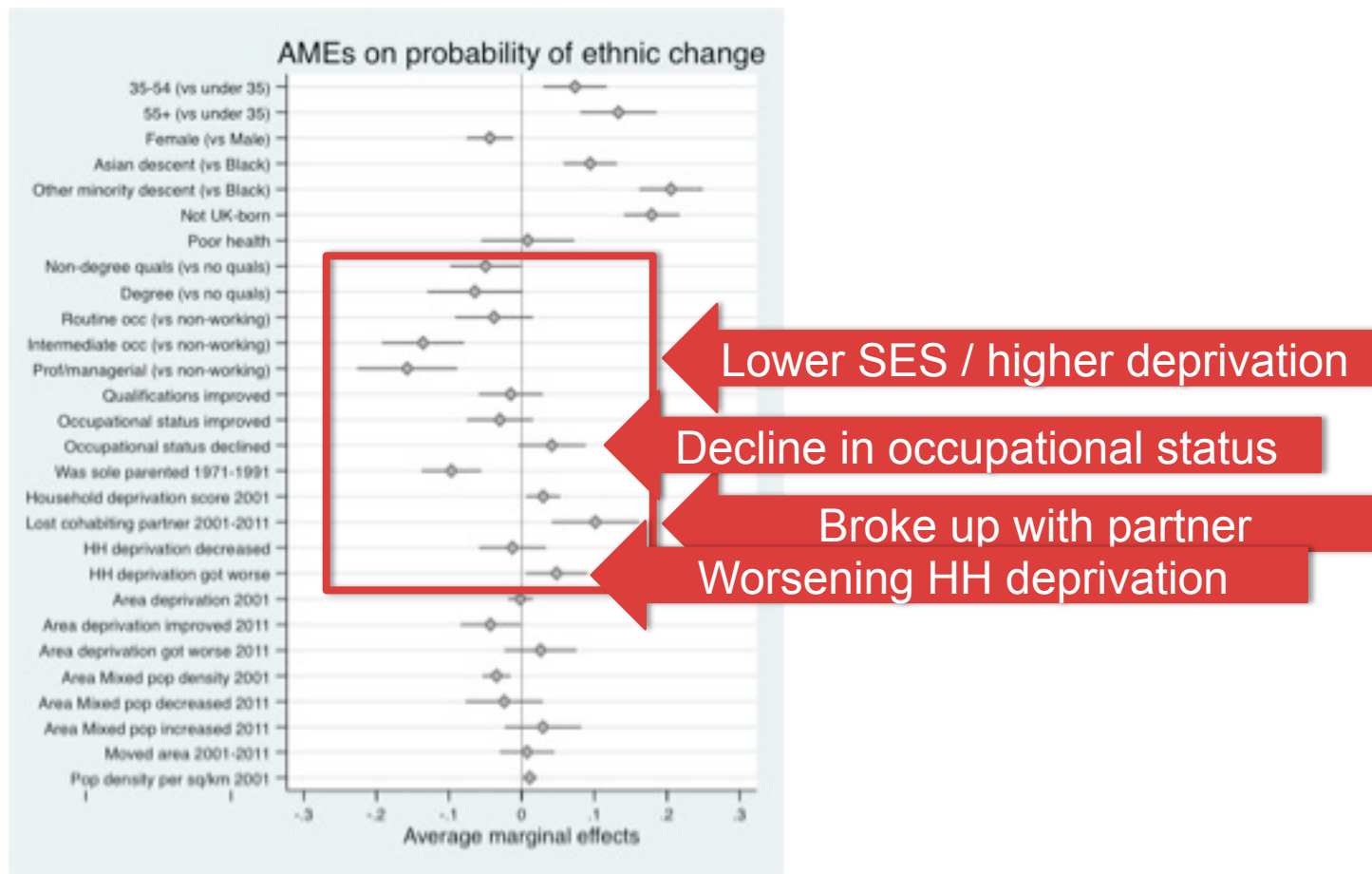
## Dependent variables

*M1: Material insecurity/life transitions predict ethnic change?*

*M2: Success predicts 'Whitening'?*

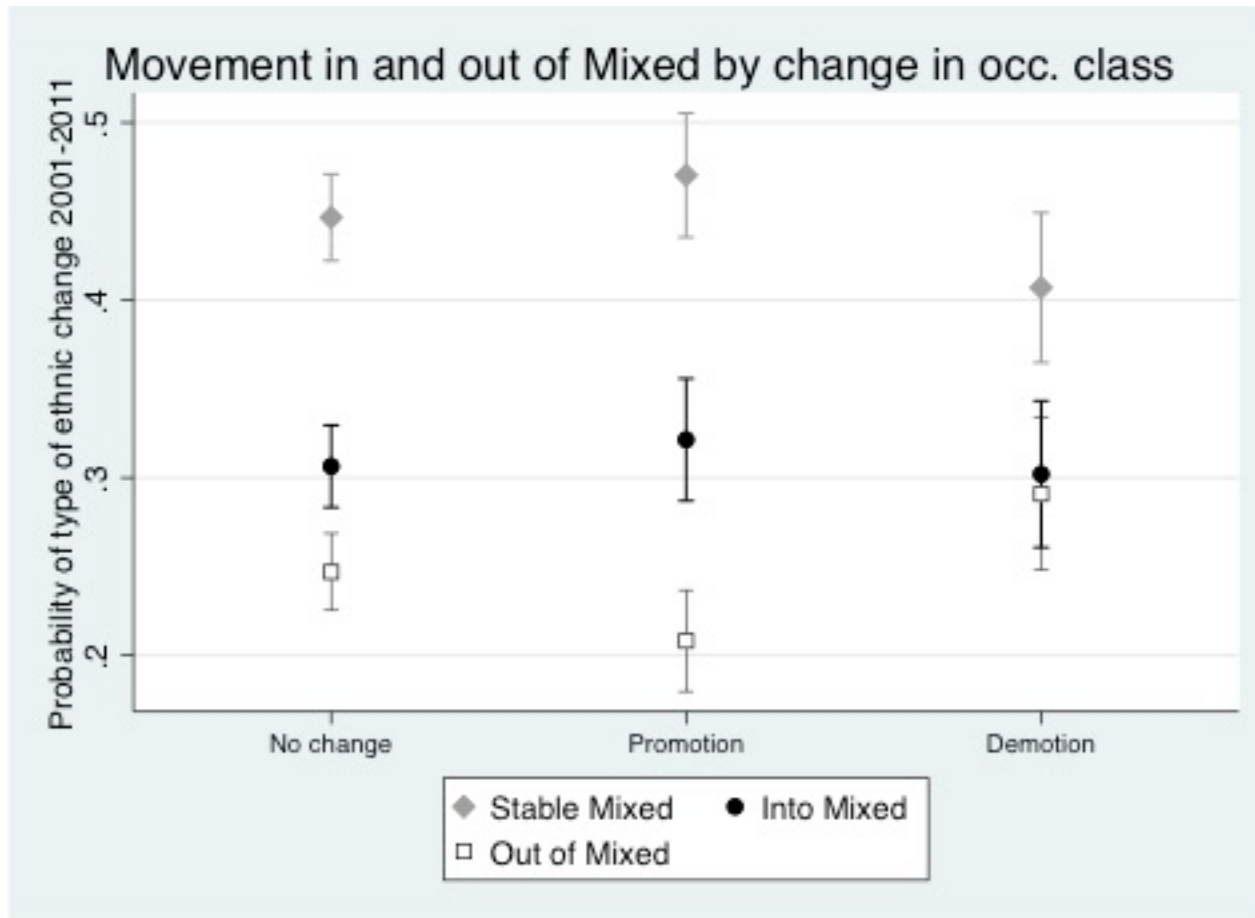
*M3: Success predicts moving into the mixed category?*

# PREDICTORS OF ETHNIC CHANGE



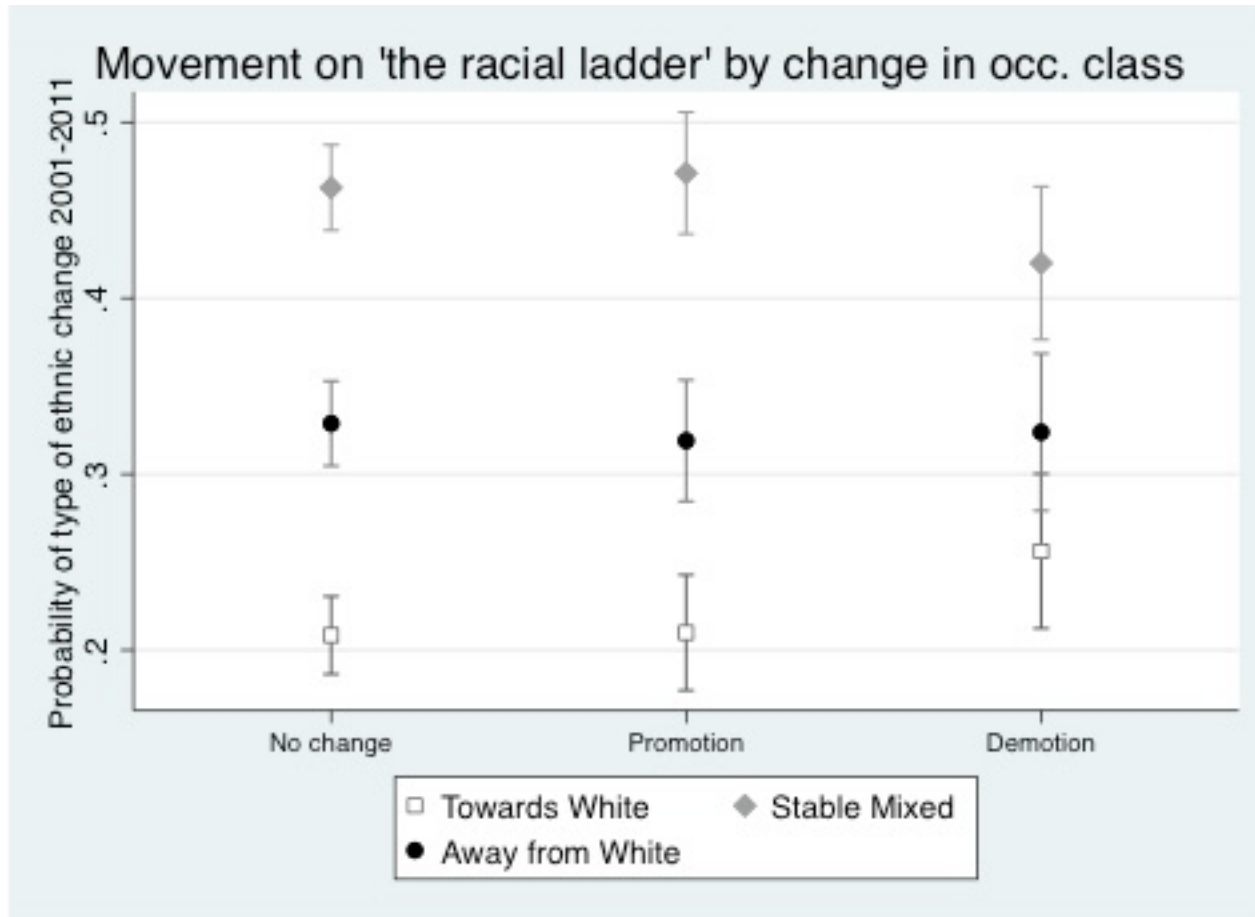
Source: ONS Longitudinal Study

# PREDICTED 'DIRECTIONAL' CHANGE



Source: ONS Longitudinal Study

# PREDICTED 'DIRECTIONAL' CHANGE



Source: ONS Longitudinal Study

# IMPLICATIONS & EXPLANATIONS (FROM QUALITATIVE RESEARCH)

- **‘Aspirational’ whitening among those with low status?**
  - Seeking inclusion/access to protective resources of whiteness
- **‘Mixed privilege’?**
  - Reflecting secure inclusion/access to resources – material or cultural - which provide resilience to racism
- **Change as instability or evolution?**
  - Ethnic change can reflect both hypervigilant contextual ‘instability’ OR consolidating identity journeys
- **Reproduction of racialised hierarchies**
  - Not only through ethnic attrition but ideological reproduction

# NGĀ MIHINUI

Full working paper and other related papers here:

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