

INSIDE THE BOX

ETHNIC CHANGE FOR MIXED PEOPLE IN THE UK



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UK CONTEXT: BEING 'MIXED'

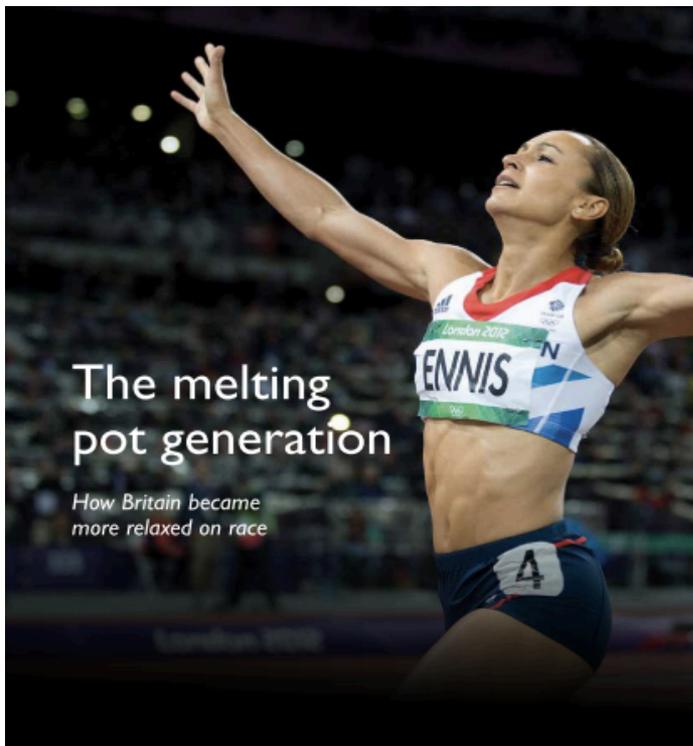
- High rate of interethnic partnering (for Europe anyway).
- Direct ethnic question in England & Wales Census only since **1991**
 - Single-tick
 - Racial & ethnic terms
 - 'Mixed' boxes since 2001
- Little research on ethnic mobility, ethnic attrition, or the 'hidden' population with multiple ethnic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



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

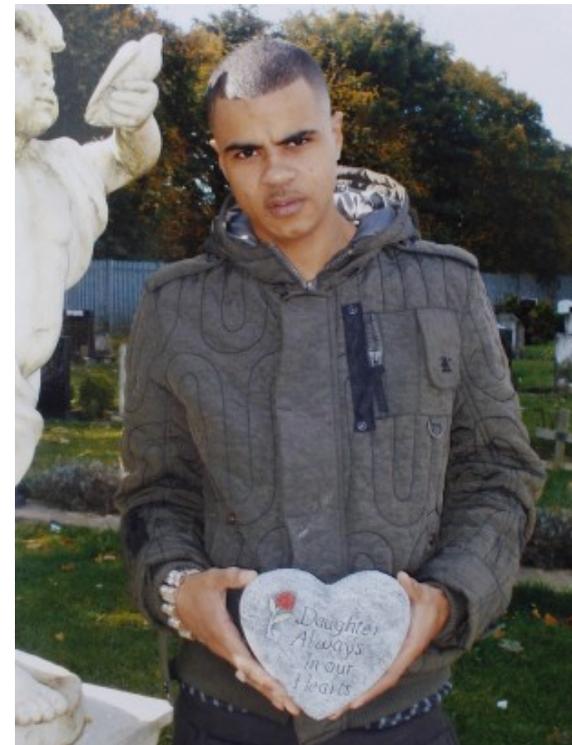
MOTIVATION: WILL THE MELTING POT SAVE US FROM RACISM?

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

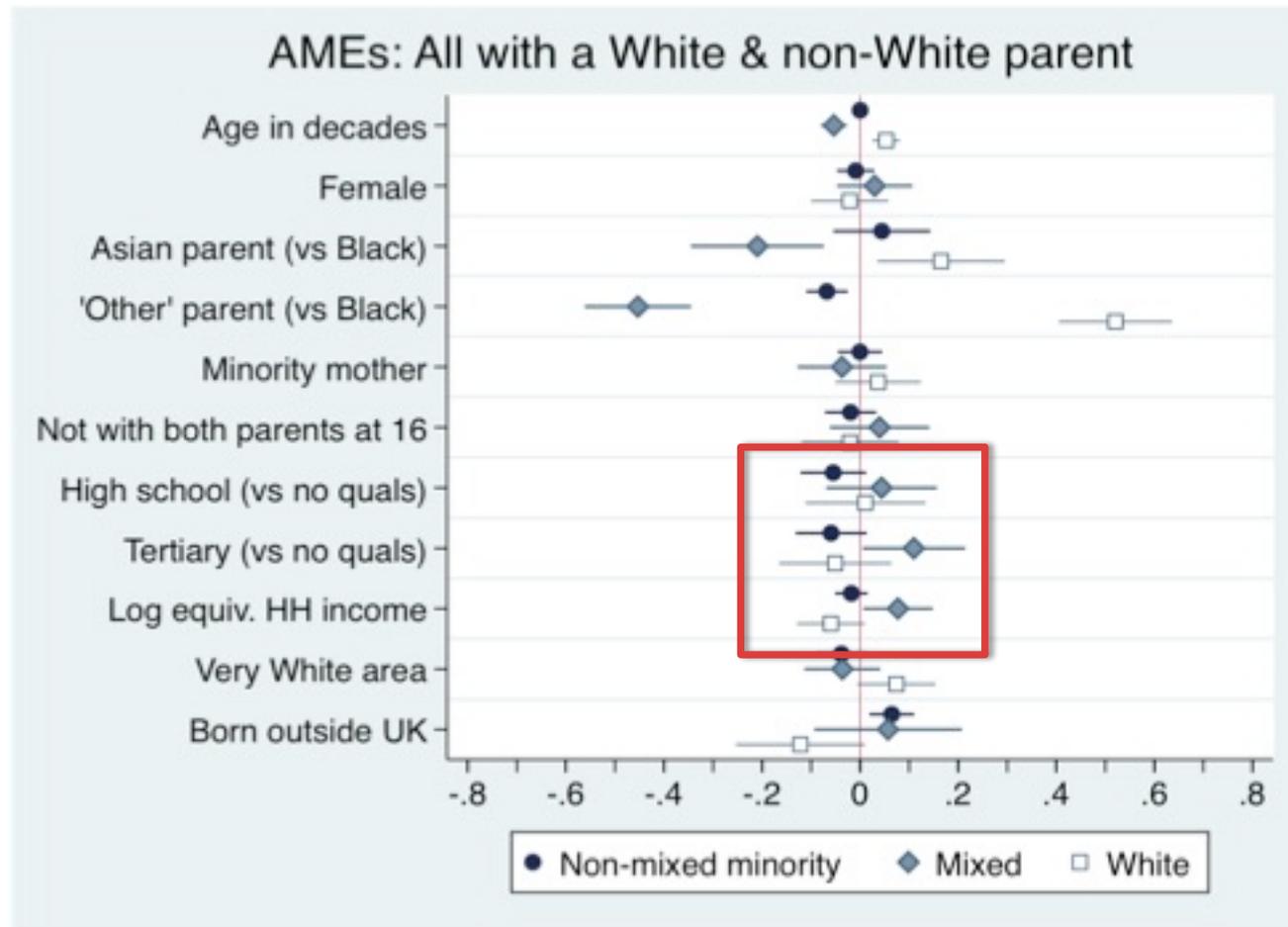
identities: 'Achieved' identity, acculturation theory, life courses & destabilisation (*Phinney 1990, Berry 1995, Carter et.al. 2009, Didham 2017*)

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

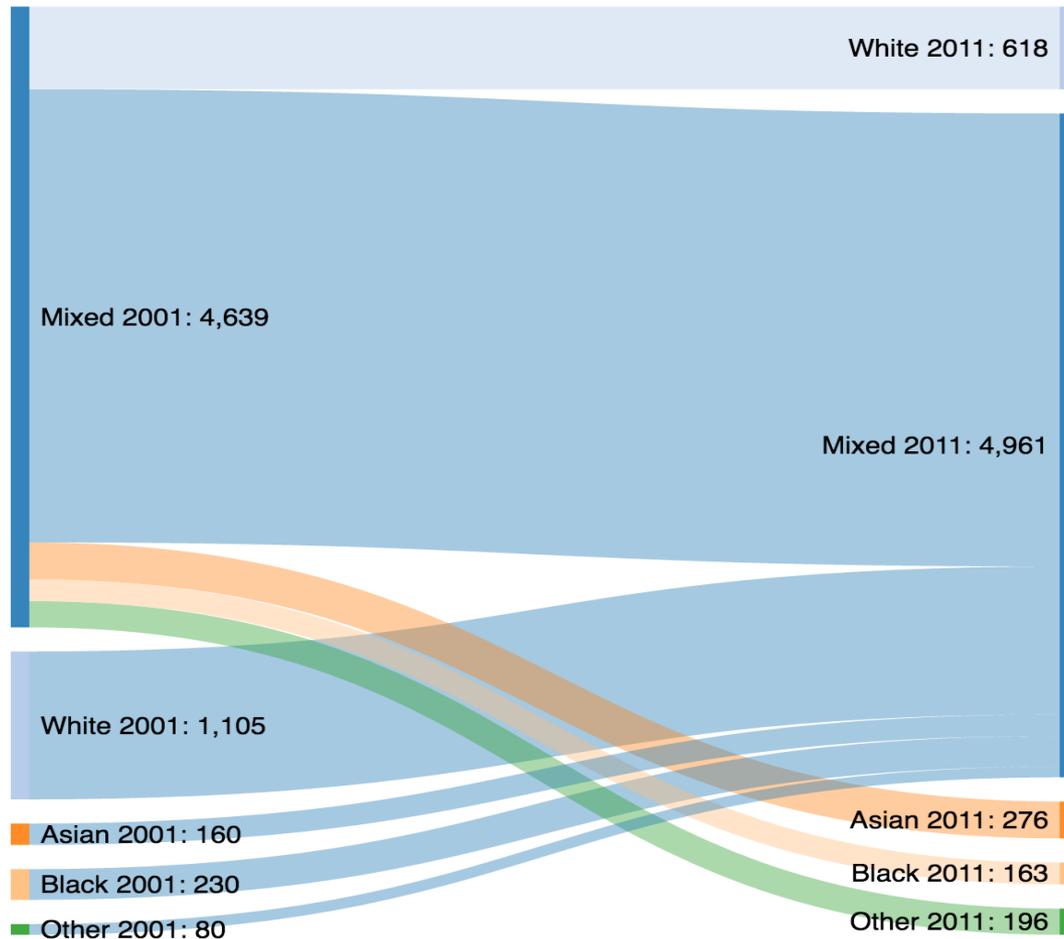
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E Other ethnic group

- 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.

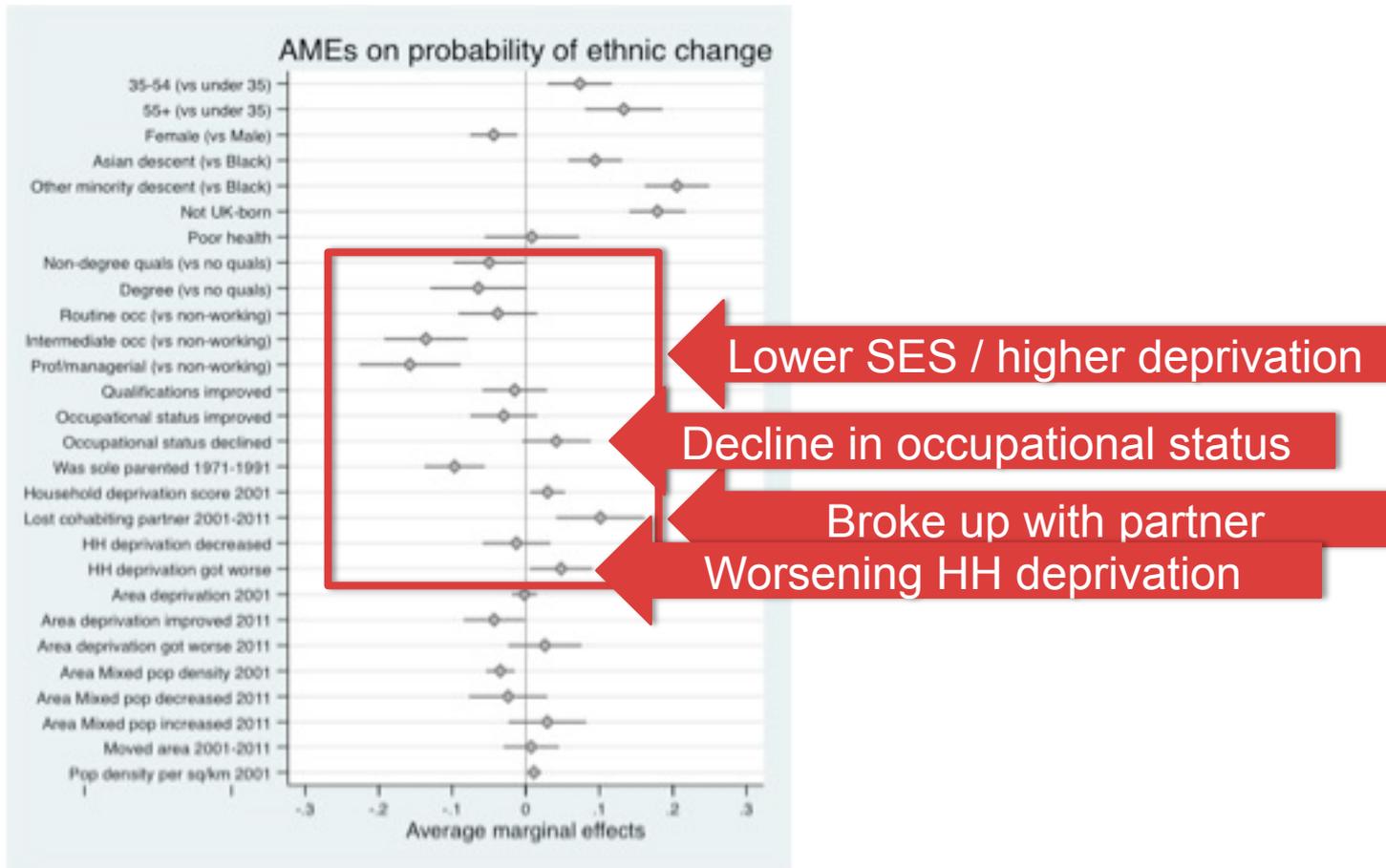
Dependent variables

M1: Material insecurity/life transitions predict ethnic change?

M2: Success predicts 'Whitening'?

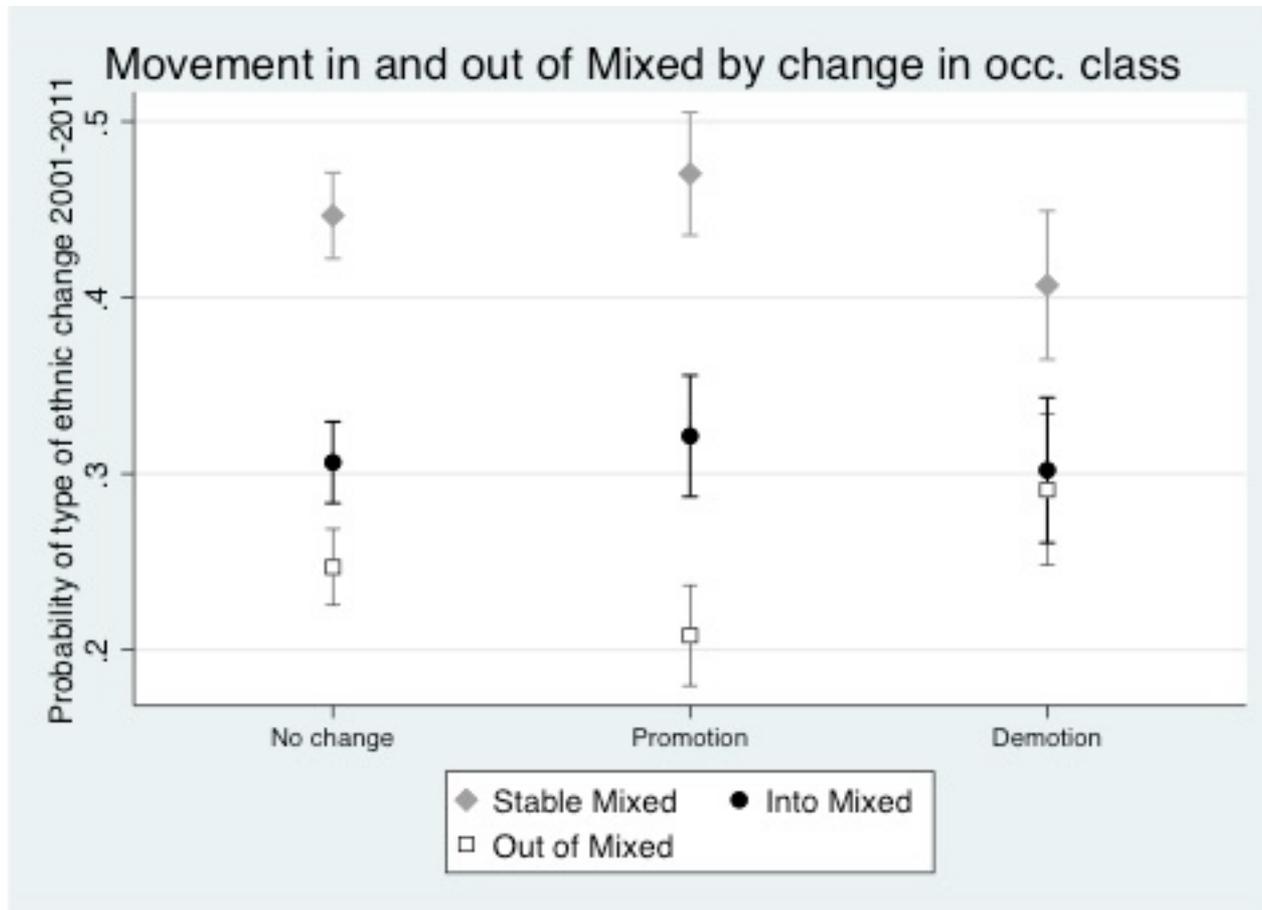
M3: Success predicts moving into the mixed category?

PREDICTORS OF ETHNIC CHANGE



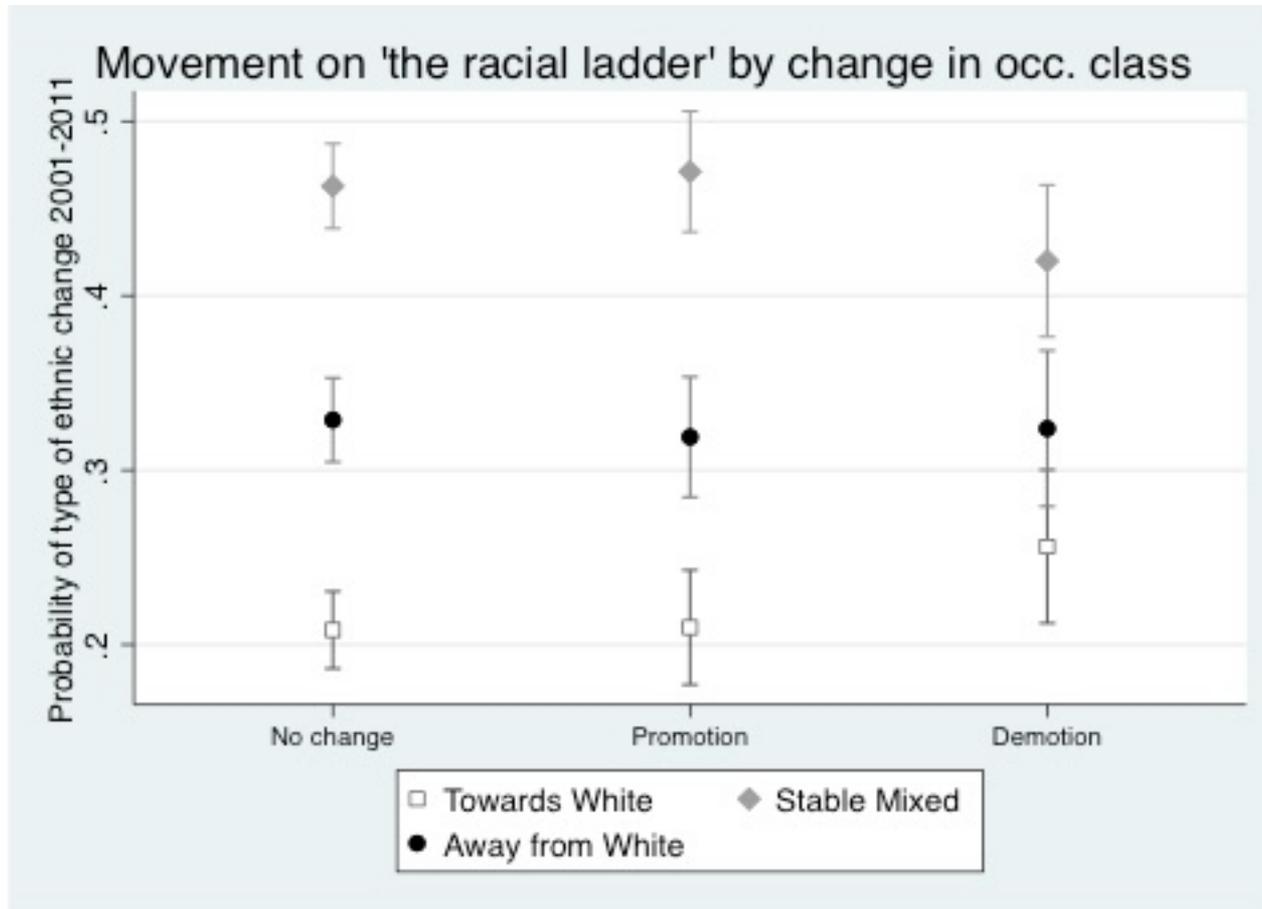
Source: ONS Longitudinal Study

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

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Full working paper and other related papers here:

www.tzemingmok.com/research

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