A photograph of a wooden pier extending into the ocean at sunset. A dark silhouette of a lighthouse stands on the left end of the pier. The sky is a gradient from orange to blue. The pier's wooden planks lead towards the horizon.

# RACE, PLACE AND THE SEASIDE

POSTCARDS FROM THE EDGE

DANIEL BURDSEY



## Endorsements

“Burdsey masterfully excavates the seaside as a sociological site. His engrossing study of racialisation reveals fluidity and complexity in the ways people identify with, are included in, and excluded from English seaside space.”—Steve Garner, *Birmingham City University, UK*.

“Burdsey’s book offers us grounded sociology in the best sense. It engages with such cultural beliefs and contests the racialisations embedded within them; he offers up instead a social justice critique through his model of ‘coastal liquidity’. Burdsey demonstrates how the seaside can be a place for new voices, and new values. An intelligent and ethical book of interest to all cultural geographers, and those interested in thinking through the pervasive and everyday incarnation of ‘race’.”—Sally Munt, *University of Sussex, UK*.

“Burdsey takes us through a compelling, conceptually and empirically rich sociology, of why the seaside—a local, global, imagined, material, contested, inviting, dangerous, pleasurable, violent and lovely edgeland—is a place where race gets practiced and projected and where belonging and attachment are enacted. Burdsey deftly reminds us of two things: first, the importance of the spatial in the politics of race; and second, why the seaside is significant in social and personal life.”—Sarah Neal, *University of Surrey, UK*.

“Questions of race and racism have often been limited to discussions of Britain’s big cities. However, as Gurinder Chadha pointed out in her film *Bhaji on the Beach* the seaside—at the edge of the political territory—is a rich and evocative place to understand how racism can co-exist with convivial multiculturalism. Like a latter day Orwell, Daniel Burdsey’s sensitive and insightful book offers us a vivid set of sociological postcards from the coast that aids us in understanding the changing cartographies of racism today.”—Les Back, *Goldsmiths, University of London, UK*.

“This is an engaging and insightful exploration of a very ‘British’ place—the seaside. Burdsey’s critical gaze vividly captures the ebb and flow of the seaside as a space of encounter and transition, encompassing processes and experiences of belonging and exclusion, negotiation and fixity, amusement, violence and death. It is ‘our Island story’ told from its edges.”—Claire Alexander, *University of Manchester, UK*.

“Drawing on nearly a decade of rich sociological enquiry, *Race, Place and the Seaside* is a groundbreaking study that highlights the significance of race and ethnicity at the seaside. Daniel Burdsey weaves together multiple perspectives and scales, from lived experience to geopolitics, to present an important alternative reading of the English seaside linked to racialised notions of belonging, exclusion, and identity.”—Alice Mah, *University of Warwick, UK*.

“This is a superbly crafted book exploring racism and ethnicity in coastal areas. Far from being stable and homogenous, English seaside locations are revealed as transnational and thoroughly racialised sites of belonging. Through the idea of ‘coastal liquidity’ Daniel Burdsey finely illustrates how multiculturalism, whiteness and racism ebb and flow, holding out the potential to configure these places anew. The effect is that *Race, Place and the Seaside* will make us approach these leisure spaces differently. It allows us to critically reflect on the prevailing practices of beach culture and begin to see seaside towns as much more than the dilapidated faded English resorts they are often purported to be.”—Anoop Nayak, *Newcastle University, UK*.

# Race, Place and the Seaside



Daniel Burdsey

# Race, Place and the Seaside

Postcards from the Edge

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macmillan

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*For Holly and Alex*

My days at the seaside are always more fun when I am with them.



# Foreword

The seaside is a mysterious place. Even the seemingly bland, everyday, ordinary British seaside, most of us know of and some of us love, holds many secrets hidden from view.

This is despite the proliferation, over the past quarter of a century, of seaside research by varied academic tribes, journalistic reportage, popular general seaside histories, or specific case studies, and increasing attention from government and associated bodies in terms of research, policy formation, and funding.

Sometimes, the problem is with a grand concept or theory that, when first launched, the seaside research community applauds, but that subsequently obscures rather than reveals. On other occasions, influential studies ultimately straightjacket because they are caught in a moment of time or offer a partial, limited analysis of some theme or topic.

As an academic, I've been thinking and writing about the seaside and exploring places betwixt land and sea—on the edge—for four decades. While I've had immense enjoyment and satisfaction from the activity, I have also concluded that while we know a fair amount, and have some fascinating insights about what was or now is, our knowledge and understanding is incomplete and inadequate. Such, perhaps, is our lot when trying to make sense of the real, complicated, changing, varied world on the edge. It is also, however, that we do not have conceptual tools that are good enough to improve our understanding of the seaside.

In this book, Daniel Burdsey makes three outstanding contributions to addressing these and related concerns.

The first is simply the scope of his intellectual endeavour. The book is the product of extraordinarily wide reading and deep thought. Of course, he draws on, and synthesises, the ever-growing literature of what has become known as “seaside studies.” But he also, appropriately and boldly, goes into other arenas and areas of knowledge that have not, before, been applied to the British seaside.

The results are a revelation, especially so when he explores a varied literature and set of ideas around “race, racialisation, and racism,” strangeness, conflict, exclusion and inclusion, dominant and marginalised imaginations, and different types of place and space. Although a sociologist, Daniel understands the intricacies of seaside geographies. For example, there is a fine comparative section on the beach as a site of racial conflict in the USA, Australia, and South Africa, and this is complemented, in his case study of one English resort, by valuable and original insights into how minority ethnic residents use the beach in their home town.

As he argues, the British seaside literature has largely been blind to questions of race and ethnicity. In part, this is because so many academics and other commentators have seen the seaside as essentially white. But, it is also because no one before Daniel has had the wit to pose the questions he asks.

A second contribution that (perhaps, literally) flows from the depth and breadth of his seaside understanding is the concept of “coastal liquidity.” Seaside social relations and spaces are fluid, dynamic, and indefinite. Coastal liquidity, Daniel says, is “a way of challenging, and writing against, static portrayals of the seaside.” The seaside is not stationary or monolithic. Things change, places change, people change, communities change, relationships change: “coastal liquidity encourages us to acknowledge the contested pasts, the messy and unfinished presents, and the uncertain futures of seaside and coastal places.”

Daniel puts coastal liquidity to work in the last three substantial chapters in the book. These present the results of his empirical research on race in one contemporary English south coast resort. Given the fictitious

name “Sunshine Bay,” the resort was first enjoyed by Daniel during childhood day trips three decades before this book was written.

Daniel presents and discusses the testimonies of minority ethnic residents living in Sunshine Bay. These men and women are of differing ages, origins, and backgrounds, and had different ways of journeying to their lives in the town. The individual narratives are compared and contrasted to explore processes such as community formation, notions of exclusion, inclusion and belonging, and the multicultural changes that have occurred in Sunshine Bay over the past decade.

The testimonies are revealing and engrossing, sometimes distressing and sometimes empowering. There are fears and hopes, anxieties and excitements. And through the words and thoughts of the participants in the research, this particular seaside place is revealed in vivid and changing detail. Some of the participants—and this, no doubt, is, in part, down to Daniel’s empathetic and sensitive approach to the interviews—demonstrate their own keen sociological, geographical, and seaside imaginations. But, through his use of the coastal liquidity concept, the sum becomes much more than the individual narratives.

Having read this book, it will be difficult for other researchers and writers to ignore issues of race at the seaside. I’ve started to think about how coastal liquidity, race, and place inform some of my own current seaside interests. For example, in the case of arts and cultural regeneration at the contemporary British seaside, the analysis rarely explores explicitly issues of race. It should do. Again, coastal liquidity can help develop my continuing fascination with the use of exotic representations and motifs at the seaside—best revealed in the use of real and artificial palms in so many exterior and interior resort spaces.

At the end of the book, Daniel writes there is more to be done. He sketches his next ambitious steps in the intellectual project, which is coastal liquidity. I hope others will join him on a journey to understand other seaside towns, and also, in due course, to return to Sunshine Bay.

Fred Gray  
Brighton, UK



# Preface

As a sociologist interested in popular culture, identity, space, and place, and as someone who has lived for so long near the sea, my decision to write a book about the seaside was arguably inevitable. The English seaside is a site, and frequently a sight, with which I am deeply connected: historically, materially, emotionally, affectively, and intellectually. “You can take the boy out of the seaside, but you can’t take the seaside out of the boy,” and all that.

For all but four of my 40 years (during which time I studied at universities in large cities in the English Midlands), I have lived in the seaside town (indeed, since 2000, *city*) of Brighton. Officially, the town became the unitary authority of Brighton and Hove (actually) in 1997; but, as I will attempt to explain to anyone who will listen, the two places are quite distinct, and it is Brighton that I call home. For the past 12 years, my workplace has been the University of Brighton’s campus in Eastbourne, another seaside town approximately 20 miles east along the Sussex coast from where I reside.

Many of my childhood memories revolve around the seaside. I am not sure whether my family simply did a lot of things at the seaside or those memories are just the happiest or most vivid. It is probably a combination of the two. Looking back on family photographs, I certainly look very happy, although as John Urry (2006) points out, it is our cheery experiences at the seaside that we are most likely to commit to photograph (and

now, I would guess, film on a smartphone), rather than our unhappy ones. Various experiences stand out: Summer evenings swimming in the sea and attending crazy golf birthday parties at the King Alfred leisure centre in neighbouring Hove, bracing winter walks under the cliff face at Rottingdean (including the time when I cried because my favourite woollen dungarees with an elephant picture on them got wet and made my legs itch), looking for fossils in Dorset, and a Burdsey-created beach “mini-Olympics” on the Isle of Wight. The edginess of the amusements at the Peter Pan playground and the arcade machines on the Palace Pier in Brighton were a great attraction to me and my older brother—he preferring Kung Fu games and shoot ‘em ups, and I, cars, bikes, and sport contests. In January 1980, the 300-feet Greek merchant ship, *Athina B*, ran aground on Brighton beach close to the Palace Pier. Afternoon trips down to the seafront to gawp at this unlikely intruder on the pebbles were a real treat. Watching my Grandad leave his prosthetic leg (having lost his real one during the Second World War) on the beach in Angmering and hop into the cold Sussex sea was also a source of pride and amazement (and one of amusement too). The historical smells and tastes of the seaside are memorable: the salt water, the sickly sweet candy floss and doughnuts, the suntan cream, the warm plastic of inflatable dinghies (see Dann and Jacobsen 2003, on tourist “smellscapes”). Sometimes, we would get a cone of chips to eat or a bag of pick ‘n’ mix sweets. More often than not, it was (and still is) one of my mum’s legendary picnics (particularly her egg sandwiches and flapjack) that provided sustenance.

During my latter teenage years, the seafront was more about the night-time economy of Brighton’s bars and nightclubs. As an adult, the seafront is now a place to walk and jog. Despite running in some of the world’s most beautiful environments (in my opinion), I still rank the westward plod between Brighton Marina and the pier on a sunny early morning as one of the best routes around. I also enjoy repeating the things I did as a child with my young niece and nephew: looking in rock pools, dropping tuppences into “waterfall” arcade machines, and eating ice-creams. Additionally, there are the “hide and seek” games between and behind the beach huts at Hove: narrow gaps ideal for small people to get between, but too tight for their uncle to follow them down!

Other scholars who have studied the seaside or coast have reflected on how a fascination with the sea or the beach as young people led to their subsequent academic interest (see, e.g., Humberstone 2015, Webb 2003). Neither of these elements really appealed to me. Much to the chagrin of several of my current sea-swimming friends and colleagues, I cannot honestly see myself getting in the sea around Britain again, except for a quick paddle, and I have never enjoyed sitting or lying on the beach (unless it was a cool, cloudy day, or I could find regular respite from the sun). For me, the excitement and interest of the seaside has always been found in the zone behind the sea and the beach, the strip between the latter and the town: the arcades and piers, the leisure facilities and entertainments, the cafés and bars, the rock and souvenir shops, the boardwalks and promenades—the built environment rather than the “natural” one, the edginess, escapism, and nostalgia. Specifically, it was the amusement arcades that I was taken with as a boy—an aspect of seaside leisure that, as Anya Chapman (2013) notes, has been marginalised historically from much of the academic research on this environment.

The seaside pleasures I gained as a young person, and continue to enjoy as an adult, were unashamedly personal and visceral. For much of my life, I have not thought about my enjoyment of these activities and spaces in the critical, analytical manner that I now bring to the issues discussed in this book. As Leone Huntsman (2001: 185) suggests, “the emotional significance of the beach is often private and particular, less often a place where collective meaning is celebrated.” Conversely, throughout my academic career, I have continually thought and reflected, *sociologically*, about the wider structural issues that pertain to the seaside locations in which I live, work, and play: those around identity, power, im/mobility, control, exclusion, and resistance.

In a reflective essay celebrating the contribution of C. Wright Mills to modern sociology, Nicholas Gane and Les Back (2012: 405) remind us of the merits of a sociological imagination:

the value of the sociological imagination is not simply that it can be used to produce an empirical understanding of the world, but also that it can promote a critical sensibility which seeks to link the most intimate personal experiences to wider social forces, and to seek out the public issue or problem contained in the private trouble.

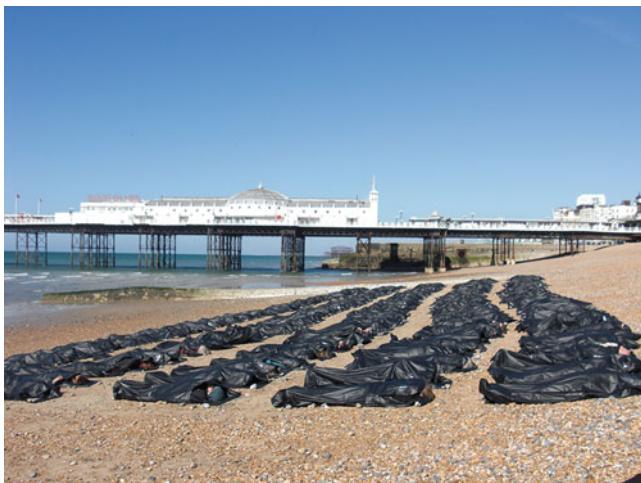
My sociological imagination of/at the seaside is fundamental to this book. It shapes my rationale and interest in approaching the subject, and it guides my analysis of the issues, trends, and topics contained in the following chapters. It also enables me to link the “private troubles” of the participants interviewed for this book (as well as my own) to the wider global forces and “public issues” that influence their (and my) lives. Employing the skills, techniques, and craft of sociology has enabled me to reflect on my life at the seaside, past and present, and to think about what the future might hold.

The main thing that strikes me now about all the experiences I have outlined here was/is the overarching whiteness of it all. I do not recall seeing any minority ethnic people at the seaside when I was growing up, either in Brighton or on holidays to South West England. The one black boy in my class, my friend, moved to another school before our junior years. I appreciate now that the whiteness I encountered in seaside towns was not simply about numbers and types of people though. It was about values and interests, representations and depictions, power and control. Yet, as this book demonstrates, the seaside is a changing scene. This is reflected in my own observations, for I can no longer visit a seaside location without exercising the permanent, critical gaze which becomes part and parcel of the sociological vocation. The faces I see at the seaside are no longer just white ones. The accents I hear are not just English ones. The activities I witness include multiracial “hen” and “stag” parties, British Asian beach picnics, and black African baptism ceremonies in the sea; and the pier in the town where I work, Eastbourne, is now owned by the British Asian Muslim, Sheikh Abid Gulzar.

As will become clear in the chapters that follow, much of the genesis of this book lies in recognition that as much as the seaside has been a place of happiness and fun for me (and millions of others), this is not necessarily the case for many people. Its pleasures are culturally, spatially, and temporarily specific. I have come to understand the precarious nature of being at/of the coast, and the potential vulnerabilities inherent to living beside, or visiting, the seaside. It is on Brighton seafront, directly behind the Brighton Eye Ferris wheel and with masses of tourists only a pebble’s throw away, that I volunteer at a soup kitchen for homeless/houseless people. My participation connects to the themes developed in this book

too. In the 15 years I have been involved with this work, the clients have become more diverse ethnically and nationally, especially with the arrival of Eastern European migrants. I have also become aware that the seaside can be a dangerous, and indeed deadly, place. During the period I was writing this book, a number of young men died in separate incidents on the seafront at Brighton, having drowned in the sea or fallen from the cliff tops to the east of the city.

Employing a sociological imagination also forces me—as a white, middle-class man—to reflect continually on the embodied privileges that I accrue from living by the seaside in England; and those I bring to it in using it as a place for leisure and recreation, and, for the past decade, academic research. These attributes contrast starkly with those people for whom the coast and the beach are places of terror, subjugation, and fear. During this book's preparation in the Spring and Summer of 2015, the coasts of Greece, Italy, Libya, and Malta all made the news regularly. Refugees attempting to cross the Mediterranean Sea from North Africa, in precarious vessels and conditions, were arriving on European beaches and seashores. They were desperate, traumatised, injured, and sometimes dead (Kingsley and Kirchgaessner 2015). Some did not even make it across the water. Disturbances at the northern French port of Calais were also frequent news items. Hundreds of refugees and asylum seekers from Africa, Asia, and the Middle East (including children and young people) attempted to reach Britain via the Eurotunnel (sometimes under the influence of traffickers), or remained in France to face the horrific conditions of the refugee camp near Calais known as 'The Jungle' (Taylor 2015). With travel blockages in Calais caused by striking French dockworkers and increased securitisation of the transport infrastructure, increasing numbers of people sought to reach the UK from Dieppe instead. This led to an increase in the number of asylum seekers (often young people) arriving on the Sussex coast at the port of Newhaven near Brighton (G. Davies 2015). In June 2015, approximately 70 refugees and asylum seekers (including two pregnant women) from Afghanistan, China, Vietnam, and Russia were discovered in four lorries at the port of Harwich in Essex (BBC News 2015). The following month, a gun attack on the beach in front of the Imperial Marhaba hotel in the resort of Port El Kantaoui, Tunisia, saw 38 local residents and tourists killed, many of



**Fig. 1** Amnesty UK protest, Brighton beach, April 2015.

them from the UK (Elgot 2015). These are all seaside and coastal spaces and experiences far removed from the dominant English cultural construction of fun and frivolity—a seaside to escape *from* rather than *to*, as Sally Munt (2015: 6) puts it.

The organisation was pushing the British government towards a more proactive and humanitarian stance in reducing the number of refugees and asylum seekers dying in the Mediterranean. Two hundred black body-bags were laid on the pebbles, into which some activists and volunteers climbed in a gesture of solidarity. Alongside them, a large banner demanded #Don't Let Them Drown (See Fig. 1). The demonstration was a striking reminder of the dangers of the coast across the world, as well as contemporary coastal migration techniques and trajectories. It also brought home powerfully the privileges that I, and many like me, embody in relation to this environment. The contrast between the experiences of these traumatised communities and popular assumptions about the rights of 'the sea-going individualist liberal subject, invariably raced as white and gendered as male, to range across the waves in search of new worlds to conquer' (Perera 2013: 64) was palpable. On a day that I was walking on the beach in Brighton in the sunshine and undertaking research at leisure, in other parts of Europe people were arriving on

a coast either dead or without the friends and relatives with whom they set out, and in places where they could not speak the language.

This reflexivity around racialised (and gendered and classed) privilege is fundamental to the sociological imagination I bring to this book, and my understanding of what the seaside and coast signify to different communities more broadly. It has pushed me to think about what I term a glocal politics of social justice and solidarity at/of the coast—the need to recognise our respective positionalities and to consider how we can help to empower those communities who are not nearly so fortunate in this space. This is a matter, as Deirdre Conlon and Nick Gill (2015: 433) note, of “the formation of alliances, not merely between different groups of migrants but also across labour contexts, social classes, and transnational settings.” I am uncertain what this might look like, but if academic outputs are able to contribute to the achievement of social justice, this book will hopefully play a small part.

*Race, Place and the Seaside: Postcards from the Edge* argues that the English seaside is an important topic for social science research. Making this case persuasively has not always been easy. Research on seaside sites and forms of popular culture has been marginalised in some social science and humanities disciplines. As Rupa Huq (2013a: 3) notes about many other popular cultural forms, seaside studies have “constantly needed justification in academic circles as subjects worthy of being taken seriously.” Indeed, on the seemingly trifling nature of the seaside to many scholars, John Walton (2002: 111) argues that:

notions of triviality are reinforced by the embedded associations which the British seaside has acquired with vulgar aspects of popular culture: the carnivalesque of the comic postcard and fairground, the music-hall rudery of the pier comedian, the sexual associations of undressing and unscheduled bodily display on the liminal zone of the beach, and the assumption that the holiday is dead or suspended time, of no serious historical interest.

Walton (2014) demonstrates that academic snobbery mirrors popular interpretations. The seaside is regarded as something that belongs to all of “us.” Accordingly, it is something that “we” all claim to know about. Critical academic intervention and analysis can be regarded consequently

as an unwelcome trespass onto this element of English national heritage. Like Walton (for instance, 1978, 1983, 1994), this book shows how seemingly frivolous aspects of seaside life matter hugely in terms of their cultural, economic, and social effects. It supports the contention that important sociological observations can be generated by looking closely at those features of everyday life that are rejected routinely as inconsequential (Back 2015c). Fred Gray (2014: v) argues succinctly that “studying and understanding coastal cultures is valuable.” I hope that *Race, Place and the Seaside: Postcards from the Edge* is able to continue this tradition.

Daniel Burdsey  
Brighton, UK

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I am extremely fortunate to have benefited from the input, wisdom, and support of many people while researching and writing this book. My gratitude in the first instance must, of course, go to the participants I interviewed as part of the project's fieldwork. I will never forget how welcome they made me feel in Sunshine Bay: they gave me their time, knowledge, ideas, stories, feedback, friendship, and kept me fed and watered. I am also indebted to Cesar, Mohamed, JC, John, Mandy, Marc, John, Pablo, Prue, and Trevor who assisted my research in immeasurable ways.

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leave in 2015, the company and conversation (and coffee and flapjack) of the Monday walking group were a great source of encouragement, and they provided very welcome breaks away from writing and editing this manuscript.

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this research. Indeed, it was while staying with him and his family of Alena and Jeya in Nashville—ironically a very long way from the nearest coast!—that I came up with the plan for this book. I went out for a run one morning in the cold Tennessee sunshine and, 12 miles later, the rest is history.

A big thanks to Fred Gray for writing the Foreword to this book. Reading Fred's magnificent *Designing the Seaside: Architecture, Society and Nature* (Reaktion Books 2006) was a major factor in my initial interest in the “social aspects” of the English seaside. I am very grateful to Fred for his friendship and collegiality, and our discussions about the seaside in The Basketmakers Arms in Brighton (over a few pints of *Seafarers* ale obviously) continue to be pleasurable and informative in equal measure. Thanks also to Charlie Dannreuther for his support with this book, and his energy and leadership with the incipient Seaside Studies group. Thanks to John Doyle for his assistance with some of the statistical mapping early in this project, encouragement, and friendship (despite his football team). Steve Garner shared information on asylum seekers in Ireland (see Chap. 3) and always offered quiet reassurance and support for the project, while Pete Massey informed me about the debate over plans to renovate the seaside pavilion at Scarborough (see Chap. 4). Thanks also to Jules Boykoff and Aarti Ratna for their enthusiasm around this project, and for teaching me a lot about activist scholarship.

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“Strangers on the shore? Racialized representation, identity and in/visibilities of whiteness at the English seaside,” *Cultural Sociology*, 5, 4: 537–52 (SAGE); and Burdsey, D. (2013) “The foreignness is still quite visible in this town’: multiculture, marginality and prejudice at the English seaside,” *Patterns of Prejudice*, 47, 2: 95–116 (Taylor and Francis).

Sincere apologies to anyone I have forgotten to thank here. Any mistakes, misinterpretations, or inaccuracies are, of course, my responsibility.

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# **Part I**

# 1

## Introduction: Race, Place and the Seaside

### Setting the Scene: Three Vignettes

In August 2014, a photograph was posted on the Twitter social networking site by Nadine Morano, a former French Minister for Families and supporter of ex-President Nicolas Sarkozy. The poorly focused image, taken by Morano at an unnamed seaside resort in France, framed a Muslim woman sitting on the beach, wearing a *hijab*, trousers, and long-sleeved tunic. In the short distance between the woman and the shoreline, a handful of white men and women could be seen sitting, standing, or lying down in various states of un/dress. Alongside the image, Morano proclaimed her disdain for the Muslim woman's behaviour, arguing that residents of France should be obliged to respect the dominant norms and values of "French culture." "The [woman's husband] got into his swimming trunks, showing off his well-made body, while she sat quietly on the sand dressed from head to toe," opined Morano. She added that, "He went off alone towards the sea. Delighted to be having a swim, he waved to his submissive companion as she sat entirely surrounded by people in swimsuits" (cited in Lichfield 2014). Embellishing the ethnic, cultural, religious, and gendered juxtaposition she was trying to create, Morano

uploaded another photograph to the post: a classic image of the white French actor and model, Brigitte Bardot, dressed in a bikini.

That same month, the BBC reported an initiative put in place by the London Borough of Kensington and Chelsea for a section of its local residents. As it had done for the previous decade, the council organised and paid for some older people in the borough to take a short excursion away from the capital. This took place over the Bank Holiday weekend, the three days in August during which the Notting Hill Carnival is held annually in that part of London. Beginning in the mid-1960s, with roots in London's African-Caribbean communities, the event now represents a broader celebration of the city's multiculture, and it has become Europe's largest street festival (Henriques and Ferrara 2014). The destination for the residents' holiday was Eastbourne, a sedate seaside resort on the East Sussex coast with an overwhelmingly white population. Being part of a family that lived for generations in the streets of North Kensington (now subsumed in the popular imagination as part of Notting Hill) through which this vibrant carnival travels, and working currently on a university campus in Eastbourne, I found the dis/connections between the two places in this story to be particularly intriguing. The BBC stated that people living on the carnival route had been given the opportunity to "escape" the crowds, noise, and smells of the carnival, and to "swap sound systems for garden centres and bingo" (BBC News 2014). In the short video that accompanied the online version of the news item, a predominantly white group of smiling pensioners boarded a coach to embark on their trip. A soundtrack of Max Bygraves' songs and Country 'n' Western music was noted as being particularly popular among the passengers.

In early September 2014, I visited Blackpool to undertake some observational fieldwork on the entertainment and amusement facilities in this world-famous seaside resort. Having spent the morning at the Pleasure Beach theme park, located at the town's southern end, I ambled slowly along the sunny Promenade towards the Blackpool Tower. Passing the seemingly endless line of guest houses, bed and breakfasts, pubs, and souvenir shops, I contemplated the town's dominant construction and representation as a white leisure space. I also considered the potential engagements and experiences of minority ethnic communities here. Thus far, my only observations of references to multiculture had been the neo-imperial—and at

times cartoonish—leisure imagery found within the Pleasure Beach's rides and attractions (see Chap. 4 of this book). On the Promenade, however, encountering a handful of fried chicken and chip shops advertising *halal* produce (permissible according to Islamic law), my thinking began to shift. As I approached the Central Pier and the crowds of tourists began to swell, I spotted a minibus pull up on the road in the distance. The doors slid open and a group of about 20 British Asian older women stepped out. Each held a plastic carrier bag, packed to the brim with various items of food and drink. The women strode confidently towards the concrete stepped terraces that sit between Blackpool Tower and the sandy beach, where they settled down to enjoy a picnic lunch. This was an activity, I interpreted, that this group had likely done many times before.

These brief and diverse vignettes are chosen to begin this book because they indicate powerfully many of the issues, themes, trends, experiences, engagements, and incongruities that are developed subsequently within its pages. For instance, the anecdote from France highlights the manner in which the beach and the seaside, more generally, have been constructed as symbolic sites for (re)affirming dominant national, cultural, and ethno-racial identities, facilitating the biopolitical function of citizenship, and (re)producing the racialised “biopower of beauty” (Nguyen 2011) within many countries in the Global North. The seemingly benign, open, and free leisure spaces of the beach are, in fact, contested, regulated, and sometimes exclusionary (see Chaps. 2 and 4 of this book). The beach is, then, one of those “geographic locations where conflicts in the form of opposition, confrontation, subversion, and/or resistance engage actors whose social positions are defined by differential control of resources and access to power” (Low and Lawrence-Zúñiga 2003: 18). It acts as a canvas on which racialised ontological scripts have been imprinted and enacted, historically and contemporarily. This allows hegemonic groups to dictate access, usage, conduct, discourses and images of representation, and modes of authentic belonging. In turn, the beach intensifies a fascination with bodies, determining which types of people are made un/welcome, what clothing those individuals should or should not wear, and how they are expected to behave or perform in those spaces.

A council's decision to pay for its residents to take a seaside holiday is ostensibly a benevolent gesture. A more contextual, critical reading

uncovers a great deal about dominant imaginaries, both popular and academic, regarding the respective landscapes of the city and the seaside (see Chap. 3 of this book). Juxtaposing the Notting Hill Carnival and its vibrant, multicultural, urban location in London W11, with the serene, “traditional” seaside town of Eastbourne places the two types of environment in a social and geographical binary, rather than in a relational, fluid, and dialogic configuration. The largely positive characteristics associated usually with seaside and coastal spaces (which are distinguished in the conceptual mapping undertaken in the next chapter) are differentiated from the often pejorative connotations of the town and city (Huq 2013b; Keith 2005; Williams 1973). A series of dichotomous attributes are created in relation to landscape, bodies, tone, affect, and im/mobility. The BBC report (along with other coverage) about the Eastbourne visit did not hint explicitly towards matters of race, whether in relation to the carnival, the residents, or the respective places. Yet, the suggestion that a trip to the seaside was an opportunity to “get away” from the noise, smells, and crowds of the carnival, and, fundamentally, from a “black” space to a predominantly “white” one made racialisation an implicit feature of this story. The narrative “fixed” or “stuck,” ontologically, certain racialised bodies, cultures, and practices to distinct geographical spaces, rendering their movement outside them extraordinary and transitory.

In addition to illuminating the inveterate, racialised forms of exclusionary social relations of/at the seaside, this book engages critically with the more relative, variable, and unpredictable power dynamics of this environment. The Blackpool example is instructive, speaking to the ambiguities and anomalies, and the intricacies and contradictions, which characterise this book’s analysis of the relationship between race, place and the seaside. Moreover, this vignette highlights the vibrant and indefinite relationship between power, space, bodies, and identities at the coast, through an appreciation of subversion and resistance, as well as domination and control (see later in the text). The British Asian women at Blackpool, unavoidably inviting comparisons with Gurinder Chadha’s 1993 movie, *Bhaji on the Beach* (see Chap. 2 of this book), offered one of several critical moments during my research. These instances forced me to challenge my assumptions and preconceptions about the seaside—to pause, to think again, to reflect *differently* on how the seaside might

be experienced, read, imagined, and felt. In particular, they were points at/from which to appreciate the disjunctions between the ethnographic gaze and those of “ordinary” people—a chance to consider the multiple meanings, uses, histories, memories, futures, and possibilities of the seaside; and the manifold forms of engagement undertaken by consumers, residents, and tourists. These ideas are captured in this book, which disrupts dominant imaginaries, ontologies, and epistemologies about which types of people live and work at the English seaside (and, by association, other types of place). It outlines and explains the reasons underpinning forms of racialised change and mobility (as well as stasis); that is, literally *how* and *why* certain minority ethnic communities have come to live at the coast and why they stay there. For purposes of ontological consistency, this book troubles popular ideas about *what* different groups actually *do* at the seaside as well. Minority ethnic working and leisure practices, the content of their “everyday” lives, and their patterns of community formation and mobilisation are given detailed consideration. These components all contribute to the objective of overcoming the silencing of minority ethnic voices, and the erasure of their bodies, from the seaside landscapes of the popular imagination.

Each of these introductory vignettes offers a particular, personal reading of an ephemeral episode. Yet, the brevity and eclecticism of the examples should not obscure the social significance and historically ingrained nature of the underlying issues, structures, and struggles they illuminate. Taken together, they point to the fact that the seaside is Janus-faced. Many elements of the seaside are rigid, timeless, and resistant to change; however, it is also, in numerous ways, a dynamic, shifting, and unpredictable environment—culturally, economically, politically, socially, and geographically. The seaside represents a locus not only of exclusion and subjugation, but also of conviviality and inter-cultural exchange—attributes that themselves are fluid and contradictory across different times and spaces (see Chaps. 5, 6, and 7 of this book). Coastal spaces have been diverse and inclusive during distinct periods, historically and globally, but have then taken on, or been preceded by, a contrasting role within emergent politics and practices of racial segregation (see Chap. 4 of this book). The seaside is what Caroline Knowles (2003: 96; emphasis in original) refers to as “*a moving landscape with no predictable relationship*

*to race/ethnicity,”* continuously (re)produced by, and (re)producing, the activities that take place there and the people that inhabit it (Lefebvre 1991; Massey 1994). The vignettes also speak to the need to understand the material, representational, symbolic, affective, and emotional elements of the seaside. This is a case of being cognisant of “the embodied geographies of race” (Nayak 2011: 555), and undertaking a “conjoining of the social, cultural and performative that recognises the materiality of forces and the enduring relations of power that make race matter” (*ibid.*: 554). The opening vignettes and discussion point, perhaps, most significantly, not only to the overarching importance of centralising race and racism within analyses of landscape, place, and space but also reveal a pressing need to carry this out in those environments, such as the English seaside, where their effects and affects are routinely unacknowledged, denied, or erased.

## **What’s an Issue Like Race Doing in a Nice Place Like the English Seaside?**

The English seaside has been transformed in all manner of ways, both positive and negative, since its heyday, as a place for health and holidays, in the latter part of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. It has been pronounced “dead” on a number of occasions, with resurrections seemingly following each time. Throughout these periods of ups and downs, the English seaside’s broader importance to the nation has remained steadfast. The total length of England’s coast at mean high water mark is 6261 miles, making it longer than those of Spain, France, or Italy (Local Government Association Coastal Special Interest Group 2014: 8). No one in England lives more than 75 miles from a coast, making it the most maritime place of any major European country. More than one-third of the coast is designated for its scenic or natural beauty, and the contribution of seaside tourism to the national economy has been valued at £17 billion (*ibid.*: 10). Approximately a quarter of a million people work in seaside tourism across more than 150 resorts, contributing an economic benefit of four billion pounds. John Walton (2000: 21) suggests that:

the case for the importance of the British seaside that should command the widest assent, however, is the demographic one: the sheer scale of the phenomenon in terms of numbers of residents, toing and froing of residents and seasonal workers as well as holidaymakers, and numbers of people influenced by the seaside and its shifting images.

In 2013, a total of 18.6 million overnight trips were taken by British residents to the seaside in England, with a further 128 million day visits (Department for Communities and Local Government 2015).

Given the significance of the seaside to England and its population, namely, the number of people who live, work, and play there, the manner in which its activities and spaces permit access to, and normalise and privilege the identities of, some ethnic groups, yet simultaneously mark and marginalise others, has generated surprisingly little attention. This is not to suggest that the politics of identity, difference, and corporeality have not been explored and analysed at the seaside. Rather, it remains the case that socio-economic differentials manifest in class, tone, and behaviour, and, to a lesser extent, factors related to the performance and regulation of gender and sexuality, have all received much greater recognition than issues of race. Academic research on the English seaside and coast has a long, rich history (see Chap. 2 of this book for an overview), while popular accounts (both misty-eyed and irreverent) have brought a wealth of information and insight to our understanding of this landscape. Their commonality lies in the fact that neither bodies of knowledge has given any substantive coverage to the presence and effects of race, racialisation, and racism.

Recent shifts in sociological and cultural geographical scholarship towards explorations of “peripheral” or “marginal” places in the Global North have addressed racial and ethnic issues in rural settings, and in the suburbs of large towns and cities (see Chap. 3 of this book). This work has, so far, largely failed to analyse the significance of race and ethnicity at the seaside and coast. The sizeable historical and cultural studies literatures on seasides and beaches have explored issues of identity, body politics, boundaries, emotion, and affect, and the regulation and disciplining of spaces and people; however, very little of this work has referenced the overwhelming whiteness that characterises these processes,

with some notable exceptions from South Africa, Australasia, and the USA (see Chap. 4 of this book). Contributions from leisure studies have demonstrated the racialisation of recreational spaces beyond the realm of traditional sporting activities. Aside from some important studies on beach swimming, bathing, and surfing in the aforementioned contexts, most of this work again concentrates on alternative forms of outdoor, land-based leisure. It is, perhaps, telling that two recent, comprehensive accounts of modern leisure practices and whiteness (Spracklen 2013) and ethnicity (Stodolska et al. 2014) ignore the seaside completely. To summarise, in the English context at least, race and the seaside are mentioned rarely, if ever, in the same academic article, policy report, popular memoir, or historical photograph book.

During the period of researching and writing this book, I was encouraged by the publication of a handful of excellent monographs examining race in seaside locations (Kahrl 2012b; King 2012; McKibben 2012; Stanonis 2014). These books provide historical, rather than contemporary, accounts though, and so their foci, approaches, and methods, as well as their timeframes, differ considerably from those employed here. Moreover, as North American texts, the extent to which these bygone racial formations and coastal practices translate to the British context, and the idiosyncrasies of the English seaside, is open to question. It is a contemporary *photographic* collection of racialised beach bodies—Wayne Lawrence's (2013) fascinating portrayal of Orchard Beach in New York's The Bronx borough—that speaks in many ways most directly to the themes I develop in this book: space, place, politics, and power at the twenty-first century seaside.

Often cast as peripheral, whimsical, and in transit, minority ethnic seaside communities have been ignored and under-researched. Race, racialisation, and racism have been expunged, or, more correctly, *they have never been written into*, the lived realities and material experiences of seaside and coastal environments. The relative absence of “visible” minority ethnic groups, combined with dominant constructions of whiteness as a deracialised, invisible, and unnamed subjectivity, has rendered the English seaside seemingly irrelevant as a place for studying race (see Chap. 3 of this book). Furthermore, the seaside's associations as a fun and frivolous place mean that it is perceived to be free from the social problems found in urban environments and encounters, such as prejudice, exclusion, and

conflict (see Chap. 2 of this book). The rationale for *Race, Place and the Seaside: Postcards from the Edge* is thus a corrective one. This book presents an alternative reading of the English seaside, one that centralises race, specifically racialised notions of belonging and exclusion, in combination with other pertinent forms of subjectivity. It argues that the seaside represents an illuminating site of racial, ethnic, cultural, national, corporeal, and spatial politics, extending our understanding of how race and whiteness coalesce around dominant discourses of Englishness, multiculturalism, and immigration. Indeed, somewhat paradoxically, it is the systematic or subconscious expurgation of its presence and effects from popular narratives that make the manifestations and repercussion of race at the English seaside so significant. As Michael Keith (2005: 30) writes succinctly about the spatial relations of race, “absence can be as powerful a racialising force as presence.”

The analytical value in investigating race at the seaside derives from more than simply its demographic profile, however; it is as much about the *shifts* and *transformations* in its contemporary spaces, people, and issues. The population of the English seaside is considerably whiter than the rest of the country (Office for National Statistics 2014; see Chap. 3 of this book). Yet, to suggest that the seaside can be regarded in any sense as an *exclusively* “white space” is now a lazy, not to say inaccurate, generalisation. The population is changing quite quickly in certain resorts. Students, visitors, workers, tourists, retirees, refugees and asylum seekers, and a growing cohort of (often multiracial) locally born young people are making these places “less white.” Then there are the power dynamics and iniquitous social relations that destabilise any uncritical, descriptive reliance on statistics. For instance, as Chap. 3 of this book explores, minority ethnic communities are rarely portrayed as organic or “natural” occupants of the seaside in the way that (most) white groups are (Puwar 2004). Their potential to move into, and within, the social spaces of the seaside, and their ontological capacity to be *of* the coast, can be restricted in comparison. Questions arise within this book around the exact meanings, manifestations, and connotations of whiteness at the seaside, with some of the most substantive changes to the ethnic demographics of seaside towns resulting from the migration of “marginal whites” (Garner 2007) from the Accession countries of Eastern Europe (i.e. nations who have joined the European Union since 2004).

## About This Book

### Placing Race at the Seaside

*Race, Place and the Seaside* is the first academic monograph to focus exclusively on issues of race, ethnicity, and multiculture in the particular coastal spaces and places of the English seaside. The overarching purpose of the book is twofold. First, it demonstrates the racialised nature of this environment, an aspect of England's coastal past and present that has been habitually ignored in popular and academic discourses. Second, it argues for the inclusion of the distinctive spaces, places, traditions, and narratives of the seaside and coast within broader analyses of race in contemporary Britain. Race, racialisation, and racism are not factors and processes germane only to Britain's urban areas, and a more expansive spatial lens can extend our understanding of them enormously. Combining these two strands, this book challenges normative assumptions about the seaside as a racially neutral setting in which race is absent, and racialised social structures and relations accordingly do not exist. It highlights—*theoretically, conceptually, and empirically*—the need to progress beyond the dominant urban/rural binary found in many spatial analyses of race and racism towards an exploration of geographical “third spaces” (Catney et al. 2011; Nayak 2010). This book, therefore, addresses significant gaps in the literature, both on race and ethnicity, and on the English seaside and coast.

This text is the culmination of almost a decade of research, embedded in the tradition of attentive and longitudinal sociological enquiry (Back 2007). Over this time, the project has traversed content, direction, and emphasis since my emergent observations and thoughts while walking, running, and taking photographs on Brighton seafront. A couple of years into the research, before any meaningful fieldwork had taken place, I delivered a seminar paper at my institution. I hoped to receive critical feedback on the themes I was contemplating, and to garner some theoretical and methodological advice on how my research objectives could be reflected most effectively and accountably in my empirical data generation. I had already recognised that my research interests around the

seaside were moving, making a conscious decision to situate the project differently —away from a somewhat disembodied semiotic analysis of leisure, entertainment, and amusements, towards a substantive exploration of the lived experiences of minority ethnic seaside residents. I was at the stage where I felt ready to enter the field and spend the best part of a year listening to people's stories about living in a particular English seaside resort.

However, my thoughts were not as clear to others as they were in my own mind. Following my paper, a senior colleague asked, "Is this a study about seaside tourism and leisure or about residents?" "Both," I responded uncertainly, conscious that this was neither what I really wanted the research to be about nor necessarily possible within the conceptual framework I had just presented. I knew I had to refine my focus. So, to be clear, this book is primarily about people who *live* and *work* at the seaside, rather than the touristic and leisure practices of those who visit to play, revel, or consume. This is, of course, an arbitrary distinction; it is not always feasible, or desirable, in understanding constructions and embodied experiences of seaside living. As I have written, with colleagues, elsewhere:

the "coast" [is] a nebulous, ambiguous, multifaceted entity. People travel to it, work and play within it, worry about how to save it, and generally perceive it as a particular kind of location in which social activity takes place. *It is neither exclusively a workplace nor a leisure space.* (Gilchrist et al. 2014: 6; emphasis added)

Many of the theoretical and conceptual issues explored in the next three chapters of this book reference forms of tourism, leisure, and play. Indeed, the whole of Chap. 4 is dedicated to them. These factors influence inexorably the type of (racialised) environment that the seaside has become over the past two centuries, the types of people that visit, and their rationales for doing so. Perhaps, more significantly for our purposes here, they underpin the reasons why some people decide to *live* at the seaside too. As the various narratives in Chap. 5 of this book reveal, many of the participants I spoke with moved to the seaside as a direct consequence of pleasurable excursions they had there as young people.

They continue to be tourists at other seaside resorts and enjoy coastal recreation in their own town. Nonetheless, it is the commonplace lives of seaside residents—the “networks and relations of power, resistance, histories, and the everyday” (McKittrick and Woods 2007: 7) in this particular resort—that represent the principal focus of this book.

In the popular imagination, minority ethnic communities are exterior to the routine, everyday existence of the English seaside. As Katherine McKittrick (2006: xv) theorises:

practices of domination, sustained by a unitary vantage point, naturalize both identity and place, repetitively spatializing where nondominant groups “naturally” belong. This is, for the most part, accomplished through economic, ideological, social, and political processes that see and position the racial-sexual body within what seem like predetermined, or appropriate, places and assume that this arrangement is commonsensical.

*Race, Place and the Seaside* challenges the popular contention that minority ethnic groups are “not of this place,” and it seeks to overcome allegorically their “absented presence” (McKittrick 2006: 33) within the popular seaside imagination (and to contribute, indirectly, to breaking down the tangible barriers that exclude them from seaside spaces). It demonstrates that despite experiencing various types of social marginalisation, being disproportionately disadvantaged by the effects of geographical peripherality, and being habitually written out of the dominant narratives and images of the seaside, their presence in many resorts is actually long established. Minority ethnic groups are not merely day trippers, tourists, or itinerant migrant workers employed in leisure or hospitality sectors, but are resident communities, families, and friendship groups. This book sets out accordingly to “disrupt the affective ‘chaining’ of race to particular bodies, sites, and landscapes” (Nayak 2010: 2371), while rejecting an “understanding [of] both race and place as static entities, as if race is something that can be locked into a particular place” (Mahtani 2014: 361).

Troubling these connections is only part of the task though. There are ontological dangers to be found in simply (re)positioning racialised bodies onto other geographical sites like the seaside, despite the novelty of

those relationships. Tim Cresswell (2003: 280) argues that “the challenge for cultural geographers of landscape is to produce geographies that are lived, embodied, practised; landscapes which are never finished or complete, not easily framed or read” (see also Crouch 2010; Lefebvre 1991; Massey 1994). The intention here is, then, to emphasise the seaside as a place of residence for minority ethnic communities and to show that this landscape is dynamic, where people’s lives are (to relative degrees) fluid, mobile, and characterised by differing material, affective, and emotional engagements. This book demonstrates the multiple reasons why minority ethnic individuals and groups move to the seaside, and subsequently settle, find work, form relationships, and bring up families. It discusses how ideas of place, space, time, and season influence the everyday acts, behaviours, and movements that people engage in or avoid as well. In other words, it interrogates and analyses what we might call *coastal practices*, that is, “the routine, ordinary and repetitive aspects of social life that are pervasive and lived, performed and materialised on the coast” (Gilchrist et al. 2014: 4).

Taking this into account, this book does not propose uniqueness to the spatial dynamics and racial power relationships operating at the English seaside. Careful to avoid falling into any such reductionism or tautology, it does not claim that experiences of marginality and prejudice are always, or necessarily, different from other urban or rural environments. Moving beyond the “spatial determinism” sometimes associated with community studies (Crow 2000: 178), this book rejects the contention that the trends and phenomena contained in its analysis occur simply *because this is the seaside*. As Fred Gray (2014: vi) points out, “some of the cultures by the coast or found on it are not *of* the coast: they may be in evidence anywhere.” This book argues that there is, however, something *distinctive* about the configuration of social, economic, cultural, geographical, and historical factors in particular seaside towns: the physical terrain, the proximity to the sea, types of tourism and forms of employment, narratives and cultural histories, and vernaculars and ways of being, among others. More importantly, it proposes that these can influence, directly or indirectly, dis/engagements with multiculture.

At the same time as foregrounding the distinct nature of the English seaside, this book positions its relationship with the city and the coun-

tryside in dynamic and multiple (rather than static and binary) binds. Comprehension of race, racialisation, and racism at the seaside requires us first to consider the dominant construction and representation of this setting *vis-à-vis* other spaces, places, and types of landscape (Price 2012; Millington 2011; Shields 2014). *Race, Place and the Seaside* employs a relational perspective, demonstrating that these interactions operate on a variety of levels. As Raymond Williams (1973: 7) famously writes about the connections between the city and the countryside, “the relations are not only of ideas and experiences, but of rent and interest, of situation and power; a wider system.” Drawing on Rob Shields’ (1991) conceptual mapping of space, culture, and marginality at the seaside, Gareth Millington (2005: 535) argues that “the notion of ‘marginal place’—the cultural categorization of peripheral spaces—is dependent upon the acceptance of a *cultural* opposition between high/low and *geographical* opposition between centre/margin.” This book, therefore, situates the English seaside firmly within, and in dialogue with, other local, national, global, and transnational contexts, scales, and dynamics (Berg and Sigona 2013; Glick Schiller and Çağlar 2016; Massey 1994). David Delaney (2002: 7) reminds us that:

race and space intersect and condition each other, not only horizontally but “vertically” as well. Like race itself, scale may be an important device for inscribing or effacing difference: that is, the politics of scale may be an important component of the geopolitics of race and racism more generally. Racial identities, for example, may be differentially constructed at various scales, and this process may have political significance.

My relational perspective also requires us to think about the connections between the seaside and the *sea* (Brown 2015; Land 2007; Ryan 2012), as the activities and problems that occur on the land and in the water are often co-constitutive, whether they be matters of industry, leisure, tourism, immigration, or climate change.

The relevance of a relational perspective is underscored most strongly by the empirical material in this book. As Chaps. 5, 6, and 7 illuminate, the ethnic and racial diversity found increasingly at the English seaside cannot be contained within, or explained by, a single process.

As the research participants' testimonies make clear, minority ethnic communities' experiences of, and associations with, coastal living do not revolve purely around the towns in which they currently reside. As Doreen Massey (1994: 169) argues, "a proportion of the social interrelations will be wider than and go beyond the area being referred to in any particular context as a place." The intersections and interactions between space and time are significant here as well (Barabantseva 2016; Massey 1994; Shields 2014), for much of this relationality is underpinned by temporal aspects. As the interview material in this book uncovers, the embodied dis/connections between residents and seaside spaces have developed over time as well as in place. The seaside contains, then, sites and realms of memory (Mah 2014a), highlighting material, emotional, and affective historical affiliations, such as reminiscences of childhood holidays, the impact of study visits as younger people, opportunities generated by previous employment, and tropes drawn from popular culture and literature. To appreciate the diverse and relational experiences of the participants involved in this research, "there is a need to see the larger picture, temporally but also geo-politically, without which it becomes difficult to understand the epistemic work of developing a sociological imagination that moves between personal anxieties to large, impersonal social conditions" (Back and Puwar 2012: 2). This book straddles the concerns of highlighting the "larger picture," yet retaining a focus on the distinctiveness of place, thus "guard[ing] against the provincialism of the particular, while paying local circumstances careful attention" (Back and Keith 2014: 20).

The routinely insular and static aspects of seaside resorts are made apparent in this book. It also demonstrates how migratory processes (domestic and international) are opening them up gradually to novel global influences and perspectives. The seaside is a landscape that, in many instances, is *looking out* as much as in on itself—a coast that is connective and mobile (Ryan 2012). The chapters that follow attempt to tease out the complex and nuanced relations between individuals' place(s) of origin (both within the UK and globally), their journeys, and their current seaside locations. The analysis places the *local* experiences of seaside residents and workers within a *national* and *global* geopolitics of identity, economics, education, post-colonialism, migration, refuge,

and asylum. The biographies of many recent migrants possess particular political significance, given their points of emigration, and the places and processes they have travelled through, and endured, before arriving on the English coast. This book sheds light on the “geometries of power” (Massey 2005) that dictate not just *who* is *where*, but *why* and *how* they got there (Crow 2000; Mahtani 2014; Shabazz 2015). As highlighted in the Preface and Chap. 2 of this book, the significance of the coast—providing pivotal points of departure and arrival on trajectories of global population movement, and influencing forms of travel—was tragically (re)affirmed throughout the period of writing this book, with the deaths of hundreds of migrants on European seas and beaches, and the humanitarian crisis in Calais. While port cities are associated historically with large-scale international movements of people, from voluntary migration to slavery and indentured labour (Mah 2014a), much of the contemporary global movement of vulnerable people involves more clandestine processes (such as trafficking), and it revolves around less developed and less well-known coastal landscapes.

This book’s relational perspective and the various ideas it develops around space, place, and marginality (see Chap. 3 of this book) encourage its subtitle—*Postcards from the Edge*—to be read in a multitude of ways. Notions of the “edge” can be understood as a *geographical* border and perimeter, the edge of the nation, the land next to the sea; a *sociological* concept that explains the experiences of people who are disadvantaged and discriminated against on the basis of ethno-racial identity (in conjunction with other attributes); a range of particular *cultural* activities, behaviours, and rituals undertaken in seaside spaces; an *economic* description of disadvantaged areas and struggling economies; and a place of *political* extremism, with the right-wing United Kingdom Independence Party (UKIP) gaining popularity in many seaside places. In addition, the book speaks between and across the edges or borders of scholarly disciplines. Interdisciplinary and intersectional in its approach, *Race, Place and the Seaside* develops connections between notions of geographical, racial, and social marginality (see Anzaldúa 1987), and, in doing so, engages in broader conversations between the sociology and cultural studies of race, racialisation, and racism and their geographical counterpart (see Mahtani 2014).

## Coastal Liquidity

My emphasis on the fluidity of social relations and spaces, located within wider, relational, sociological, and geographical perspectives, leads to a conceptual approach I refer to as *coastal liquidity*. Drawing inspiration from Zygmunt Bauman's (2000) term "liquid modernity," I employ the idea of coastal liquidity to challenge and write against static portrayals of the seaside: those that containerise it in a particular time period, separate it from other geographical environments, and "fix" particular types of racialised bodies within and outside it. Coastal liquidity is partly a matter of human mobilities, in relation to individual and group movement, and migration patterns and journeys (within the UK and beyond). It embraces the ways that seaside residents move in, out of, and within coastal spaces. Yet, I conceive it as a more encompassing, intersectional concept, one that is as much about spaces and places as it is about people. Coastal liquidity underscores the manner in which spaces, places, community formations, identities, seasons, demographics, inter-cultural relations, political trends, landscapes, seascapes, the built and "natural" environment, tourist infrastructure, and regeneration processes are all themselves dynamic and indefinite. I do not deny the enduring characteristics of the seaside, and the fact that many of its historically ingrained features and cultures have been more resolute than those in other geographical locations (see, for instance, the leisure practices discussed in Chap. 4 of this book). Rather, I argue that during the early decades of the twenty-first century, the seaside was once again opening up to new influences, processes, communities, and modes of being.

As the chapters that follow demonstrate, coastal liquidity requires us to think about the seaside as a shifting environment, in terms of its definitions and meanings, its functions and roles, its contemporaneous significance, its threats and opportunities, its usage patterns, and the people who live and work there at different times and in assorted roles. The interview data introduced in Chaps. 5, 6, and 7 of this book illuminate the notion of coastal liquidity at a micro, personal level. These testimonies demonstrate how minority ethnic residents' relationships with the seaside change over time and in relation to their social status, the various rationales and routes that brought them to live at the coast, and

the substantive repercussions of time and season on their racialised lived experiences. Fundamentally, coastal liquidity encourages an acknowledgement of the contested pasts, the messy and unfinished presents, and the uncertain futures of seaside and coastal places.

There is, however, relativity to the notion of coastal liquidity itself. Some people, places, and processes can be more fluid, viscous, and mobile than others. Those with less coastal liquidity are more likely to be “fixed” or “stuck” in space and/or time (Burrell 2008; Cresswell 2010; Saldanha 2007). As noted earlier, there is something about the seaside that appears to look back as well as forward—certain resorts have struggled to match the progress of others, while nostalgia forms a considerable part of the attraction in many locations (Jarratt 2015). The material markers of race “stick” to the bodies of certain individuals and groups more than others (Ahmed 2000; Nayak 2011; Saldanha 2007). As Patricia Price (2013) notes, economic, demographic, political, and environmental fluidity can occur alongside degrees of fixity in other areas. This, she suggests, “can lead to conflicts but also to dialogues, opportunities, and transformations” (*ibid.*: 583). The spaces and places, people and politics, and cultures and conditions of the seaside (and of the nation-state more broadly) can both limit and enable individuals’ capacities to be mobile and to embrace the opportunities for coastal liquidity. As Sally Munt (2012: 568) writes in relation to the experiences of refugee women in Brighton and Hove:

although some of the women came from victimised tribes, ethnicities, political or religious groups, they all held national passports—and therefore statehood—in their countries of origin, giving them the ability to travel. Now living in the UK, they are forbidden to travel abroad while appealing for “leave to remain.”

Forms of coastal liquidity are not available to migrants in such circumstances due to the restrictions placed on their mobility. As the testimonies of several participants in Chaps. 5 and 6 of this book show, they originally encountered similar processes, physically, economically, and socially, through a lack of social networks and/or Home Office restrictions that stigmatised them, prevented them from getting jobs, and

stopped them from travelling. This liquidity is inhibited affectively and emotionally as well. As Arun Saldanha (2006: 19) describes through his constructive notion of racialised “viscosity,” this is a matter of “how these bodies become viscous, slow down, get into certain habits, into certain collectivities, like city, social stratum, or racial formation.” Nonetheless, by the very nature of coastal liquidity, these conditions are not always permanent. Changes to the citizenship status, employment, and/or economic and social capital of some residents in Sunshine Bay have enabled them to gradually overcome the processes and practices that once “stuck” them to particular spaces and places.

Coastal liquidity is also an intellectual project. This book offers an in-depth analysis of the contemporary English seaside as a particular kind of coastal place and cultural institution. It also draws, where appropriate, on themes, theories, concepts, and arguments that reference other historical periods and geographical locations. This liquidity also reflects my own personal and intellectual journey, and the progression in my thinking over the decade I have researched this topic. This eclectic and elastic approach assists, I argue, our understanding of the seaside as a dynamic, relational, and scalar space, place, and practice.

## Naming Race and Racism at the Seaside

Alastair Bonnett (2008: 18) argues that “although racialisation is still important in the contemporary world, scholars in ‘racial studies’ need to widen their horizons: ‘race’ and ‘racism’ are not sufficient categories with which to understand ethnic exclusion in the twentieth or twenty-first centuries.” As this book shows, intersectional frames of whiteness, ethnicity, multiculturalism, nation, and conviviality are effective, along with race, in helping to understand the social processes and relations occurring at the contemporary seaside. These concepts need to be located as part of wider systems of racialised classification and subjugation. As Nasar Meer (2013: 504) points out, “instead of trying to neatly delineate social tendencies that are intertwined, they should instead be understood as a composite of cultural racism.” Moreover, Steve Garner (2006: 262) argues that:

to divorce analyses of whiteness from the power relationships that frame it is to commit a cardinal error: it bears repeating that whiteness has functioned as a racial supremacist identity, fleetingly suspending the power relationships between genders and classes within the self-identifying “white” group in order to unite them.

It is for this reason that race and racism are preferred and centralised here, explicitly in the book’s title and throughout its content. As a scholarly project that is explicitly personal and political, it is critical to ensure that race and racism remain, or in some cases are *put (back) on* the agenda, in analyses of the experiences of Britain’s minority ethnic seaside communities. As Anoop Nayak (2011: 560) reminds us, “we should remain vigilant of the concerns expressed by previous social geographers that the cultural turn can indulge scholarship that is ‘abstract,’ ‘apolitical,’ ‘desocialised’ and ‘dematerialized.’”. This is particularly critical during times of austerity and heightened discriminatory practices around immigration (Alexander 2014). More specifically, it is important, politically, that emergent work on race, ethnicity, and seaside environments critiques the normative assumptions of these settings as racially neutral, where race is absent and social structures and relations are not racialised, and, consequently, identifies *where, when, and how* racial and xenophobic prejudice and discrimination occur at the seaside.

## The Fieldwork

The fieldwork for this book consisted of two main parts. The first element, by far the more substantive, was approximately a year-long period of qualitative research I undertook in a particular seaside resort. This comprised a longitudinal, immersive study, using in-depth interviews and observations to explore the backgrounds, histories, memories, and contemporary experiences of a diverse group of minority ethnic residents in the town. This part of the research is described in further detail in the below text.

Second, I made a series of “ethnographic visits” to various seaside resorts around the coast of England. These trips allowed me to appreciate

and conceptualise the manner in which racialised Others are represented in the dominant imagery and texts of the seaside. They also offered me the opportunity to observe and map the various manifestations of whiteness (and its intersectionalities) that characterise these environments. Across both elements of the research, I have tried to configure the English seaside as a landscape, and also as encompassing *places* that are inhabited, that is, “as both form and process, spatial and social, cultural and material” (Mah 2012: 129). Although one aspect of the research examined the lives of residents and the other aspect nods towards the consumption of leisure and recreation resources, both phases were relational and mutually supportive in developing a comprehensive interpretation and analysis of the seaside.

The seaside town in which the principal research for this book was undertaken is located in southern England. It would be considered widely as a “traditional,” medium-sized resort town (see Chap. 2 of this book for a discussion of categorisations), with its attraction based historically on holidays and tourism. In line with conventional social science approaches, the town is given a pseudonym, Sunshine Bay, while the neighbourhoods and places within it are also referred to by aliases. This enables the identities of the research participants to remain anonymous, while allowing a greater degree of description and portraiture to be given to their experiences. Protecting the identity of the “real” town is also a matter of considering broader “reputational geographies” (Parker and Karner 2010), as well as those thousands of other residents who did not get an opportunity to speak in this project. The decision to use the pseudonym Sunshine Bay is mine, and I acknowledge that a minority of participants were quite comfortable for the identity of the town to be made known (see Crow and Wiles 2008; Sinha and Back 2014, for current debates around anonymity in social science research).

Like many other seaside resorts, Sunshine Bay fell into a state of decline and disrepair during the latter part of the twentieth century. Its tourist industry diminished rapidly, and there was very little new investment or diversification. Physical infrastructure became dilapidated, and a range of (continuing) social problems, including unemployment, anti-social behaviour, drug misuse, health inequalities, and social exclusion, became extremely prominent. Local authorities and private agencies

have strived to tackle these issues in recent years, with varying degrees of success. Parts of Sunshine Bay have been gentrified through art and culture-led regeneration and the emergence of creative industries in the town. This has led to increasing numbers of white middle-class residents moving there from other parts of the country, a trend which has had some significant effects on social relations in the town (a discussion that is beyond the scope of this text). The proportion of residents identifying as “white British” in the 2011 Census was more than 90 %, making the town, like all English seaside locations, considerably “whiter” than the national average (80.5 %). All minority ethnic groups are under-represented, although, interestingly, the “mixed” population has now risen above the national average. The largest “individual” minority ethnic community is “Asian/Asian British.” Despite these demographics, the town has become indubitably more multicultural over the past decade, with the white British population in 2011 approximately five percentage points lower than Census figures from the previous decade (see Chap. 3 of this book).

I first visited Sunshine Bay while on a week-long residential trip to a nearby town while I was at junior school in 1987. As a 10-year-old schoolboy yet to go anywhere outside England, it was a place I enjoyed immensely. I returned 23 years later, as an adult and a sociologist. In the period in-between, like many other coastal resorts, the town was subjected to unfavourable and pejorative discourses within local and national media. These portrayals can be extremely durable. As Gareth Millington (2005: 534) identifies, “marginal places carry an image of their marginality, a stigma indistinguishable from any empirical identity they may have had.” Yet, as Alice Mah (2014b: para. 1.6) discovers in her account of deindustrialised cities, “landscapes of industrial ruination are typically viewed as ‘ruined’ or ‘devastated’ only by outsiders, rather than by local residents who tend to have strong attachment to their homes and communities.” While decimation and urban decay are not apt descriptions of what has happened over recent decades in Sunshine Bay, there is evidently a disjunction between the rhetoric of decay and impoverishment on the one hand, and residents’ positive identifications on the other (see Shields 2014). In 2010, I (re)discovered a town that most of its

residents, of all backgrounds, were extremely proud of. It was one that I soon became just as fond of as I had all those years ago.

I spoke with a wide cross-section of minority ethnic people in Sunshine Bay during my research. Some were middle-aged or older people who had previously lived elsewhere in England (usually London), having migrated before that from the Indian subcontinent, the Caribbean, or the Middle East. Most had moved to the town within the past 10–20 years. Several younger people were also involved in the research. Many were locally born and bred, while some had come to study or work from other places in the UK. In line with the standpoint outlined in the previous section, these “long-term settled minority ethnic” communities (Hickman et al. 2008: 3) challenge assumptions that racialised communities in non-urban spaces must be “newcomers” who lack traditional connections to the area (Williams and Johnson 2010). Other residents migrated to the town directly from overseas, again usually for educational or professional purposes. A small, but prominent, population of asylum seekers, refugees, and other undocumented migrants have lived in Sunshine Bay since the Immigration and Asylum Act was implemented in 1999. The majority of participants can be regarded as “visible” minorities, but a smaller number were migrants from Eastern Europe who embody a “marginal” whiteness (Garner 2007). Notwithstanding the utility of these classifications, they are fluid, contested categories, and the boundaries between them are often blurred. As Umet Erel (2011: 2065) reminds us, “the very categories of ‘long-term resident’ and of ‘migrant’ are not simply descriptive but subject to struggles,” while “minority” and “majority” appellations can also be problematic (Valentine and Sadgrove 2013).

The research was undertaken according to appropriate professional ethical guidelines, and all participants in the research provided informed consent. The confidential, anonymous nature of the data they were providing was explained, as were the proposed plans for public engagement and publication. Participants were empowered to choose their own pseudonyms and to select their ethnic identities on a basis of self-categorisation. In addition to undertaking 39 formal interviews, I held a larger number of brief, informal, and often spontaneous conversations with other relevant residents in Sunshine Bay. I had no funds for translation costs, and so only individuals relatively fluent in English were selected for formal

interview. As a consequence, I acknowledge some segments of the local minority ethnic population have been left out of the research. During the time I was in Sunshine Bay, I attended a weekly “drop-in” advice, support, and social centre for asylum seekers, refugees, and “new” migrant groups. Not only was I able to meet lots of people from local minority ethnic communities, but I also got to know many of the volunteers and health and social services staff working with these client groups. I was able to observe first-hand the “everyday” comings and goings of Sunshine Bay and its residents, their struggles and accomplishments, and the different people moving through the town at different times of the week, month, or year. I picked up on local narratives, and was given details about current issues and forthcoming events. While some interviews were organised through this centre, primarily it was a place where I socialised with the service users. Sometimes we would talk about my work or what was going on in my or their lives; on occasions, I would help with tasks such as college applications or offer education advice when requested. Outside this centre, I attended many social engagements organised by the diverse minority ethnic community groups in the town, became involved with community committees, and helped to organise refugee week celebrations and local community football tournaments (in which I played, quite averagely, for one of the local mosque teams).

Although my research involved meeting and speaking with many people in Sunshine Bay who would identify as white British, these individuals were not interviewed formally, and their voices are not represented in this book. This was a deliberate approach, aimed at elevating and taking seriously the testimonies and narratives of those racialised communities who have been silenced and erased from dominant narratives of the English seaside. As part of “reconfigur[ing] classificatory spatial practices” (McKittrick and Woods 2007: 5), I wanted to trouble essentialist accounts that position “black subjects and their geopolitical concerns as being elsewhere (on the margin, the underside, outside the normal), a spatial practice that conveniently props up the mythical norm and erases or obscures the daily struggles of particular communities” (*ibid.*: 4). Such selective sampling is not without its pitfalls. As Kye Askins (2006: 159) points out, “the irony is that emphasis on otherness may normalise a homogenised majority, even while trying to destabilise that majority: the

very act of naming *as* ‘other’ can return visible communities to marginalised positions and perpetuate power imbalances.” Processes of Othering can revolve around factors of class, capital, and mobility, as well as race (Askins 2006; Lawler 2012; Tyler 2008). Sections of the white majority community in Sunshine Bay experience exclusion and associated social problems too, and their experiences of seaside living are often precarious. These communities have a lot to say about multiculture at the seaside. Their input would generate a more complete portrayal of life in Sunshine Bay, primarily the ways that race, immigration, and national identity are implicated in struggles and tensions around community cohesion and social space, as well as in the emergence of convivial, inter-cultural, everyday social relations (see also Tyler 2015).

As a white, non-migrant, British citizen, and a non-resident of Sunshine Bay, I undertook the research from various levels of privilege, “outsider” positions, and states of distance and proximity (Crow et al. 2001; Fisher 2014; Mah 2014b). I spent time, both in formal interviews and in informal social situations, with people who have experienced, and continue to endure, levels of difficulty, discrimination, and precariousness I can only imagine. These range from forms of everyday racism and other types of prejudice to the dehumanising biopolitical governance of the racial state and its anti-immigration machinery (Lentin and Lentin 2006). As Alice Mah (2014b: para. 1.6) points out, research with such communities can have a neo-imperial feel, for “there is something profoundly uncomfortable about researching marginalized people and places: the feeling of being a tourist, a voyeur, or a mass media vulture, drawn in by devastation and calamity.” I took inspiration and reassurance from Les Back and Nirmal Puwar (2012: 14) who argue that:

what we choose to be concerned with, or focus on and listen to, involves making judgements not only about what is valuable but also what is important. Sociology has a public responsibility to pay attention to vulnerable and precarious lives.

I hope that I have managed to do justice to those individuals who shared their lives and histories, reflections and memories, and struggles and aspirations with me.

Throughout the research for this book I strove to engage in the sort of “sociable methods that are participatory and dialogic,” discussed by Shamser Sinha and Les Back (2014: 475). I employed a research design that foregrounded, and was influenced by, the knowledge, experience, and wisdom found within local minority ethnic groups, as much as by what I was reading and my emergent conceptualisations and theorisations. As Divya Tolia-Kelly (2010: 40) argues, “the approach of all participatory researchers encompasses the assumption that the researcher is equal to participants and that a reflexive relationship with participants can yield a co-constituted set of research questions, vocabulary and disseminations.” Before starting the fieldwork, I contacted an independent organisation in Sunshine Bay, which provides education and skills for (mainly socially excluded) young people through a multicultural pedagogic approach and the medium of creative arts. The staff are well connected to various community organisations, and so were able to help me contact participants whom I may have struggled to get to know through other channels. They were also invaluable in enabling me to generate trust, credibility, and rapport with local residents. I held meetings with them to discuss the potential scope, content, and methodology of the project. I also ran a couple of open discussion forums at a local college, both before and after the fieldwork, to give local minority ethnic residents the opportunity to discuss and influence the research agenda, and to generate ideas about how the findings might inform different publics.

In generating data and writing this book I have attempted to consider and respond productively to the uneven power relationships that characterise the process of undertaking research with marginalised groups. I have remained cognisant of the requirement for responsibility in sociological and geographical writing, manifest in the relationship between epistemology, reflexivity, and knowledge production (Jazeel and McFarlane 2010; Nayak 2011; Noxolo 2009). These factors influenced who I spoke with, and the locations where I undertook the interviews or informal conversations. I was aware that formal interviews could, inadvertently, replicate or connote scenarios that had been difficult or traumatic at other times in participants’ lives, such as interrogations by immigration officers or dealings with landlords. Sometimes, it was clear

that formal interviews were not appropriate (see, e.g., FitzGerald 2016, on undertaking research with people who have been trafficked). Participants always chose interview venues. These ranged from their homes to cafés, restaurants, and other public spaces such as community centres. With those individuals who were especially vulnerable and had the least familiarity with research encounters, interviews took place in a private space at the asylum seeker and refugee drop-in centre.

In addition, as Sally Munt (2012: 560) highlights, “the refugee experience is highly gendered in its impact.” While the overall profile of male and female interviewees was almost even, the asylum seekers and refugees I interviewed (and most of those I engaged with informally) were all men. This was not deliberate; it simply reflected the demographic profile of these communities in Sunshine Bay (and elsewhere in the UK). It was also a matter of opportunity and access: issues related to mobility and “visibility” in the post-migratory phase for these communities certainly played a part, as did cultural norms and values about interactions between women and “strange,” non-kin males (i.e. academic researchers) in public places. I am mindful of the gendered nature of aspects of my cultural capital, which I used to facilitate discussion and rapport, such as an encyclopaedic football knowledge, although others such as my educational background, occupation, and family life were consciously less so. The upshot is that this book regrettably leaves the marginalisation of women’s and girls’ narratives in academic analyses of asylum seekers and refugees intact (Smith 2015).

At times I perceived the social distance between me and some of the participants to be so monumental that I approached research encounters with a sense of trepidation and embarrassment at my various forms of privilege. In hindsight, this represents a disservice to the participants. It located them as “victims” and reinforced their Otherness before I had even met these remarkable people (Conlon and Gill 2015), and it validated the (racialised) academic-public knowledge and status boundaries I wished to dismantle. I will be forever grateful to Hettie, one of my key research “gatekeepers.” She often broke the ice when I met new people and interrupted my stammering attempts to explain why I wanted to interview them. “Daniel, stop apologising for why you are here,” Hettie

would interject forcefully, “and start telling them what your research is about!” Shamser Sinha and Les Back (2014: 485) report that:

our participants do not want us to surrender our expertise. We found quite the reverse. What they wanted was to bring our erudition and overview into dialogue with their own hunches and insights, in a spirit of trust and mutual respect.

My experiences resonated entirely with this characterisation. I hope that by combining my scholarly ideas with the organic, experiential knowledge of the participants, this book achieves the objectives, aspirations, and responsibilities outlined throughout this introductory chapter.

Commensurate with its methodological and epistemological framework, embedded in race, critical, and feminist approaches to social research, this book centralises participants’ voices. It recognises and values highly the important role in knowledge production played by those outside the academy. I acknowledge the limitations of this stance, especially given my reliance on formal interview techniques. Despite researchers’ intentions, participants’ responses can be flattened and the diversity of their perspectives can be subsumed into a single minority ethnic “voice” (Back 2007; Chakraborti 2010; Garland et al. 2006). Moreover, as Shamser Sinha and Les Back (2014: 483) state, “voice as a process is devalued when the interviewer is viewed as a ‘data miner’ or when writing is the exclusive province of a distant analyst who has scrutinised a life he or she inhabits only momentarily.” I have made every effort to contextualise and portray the plural *experiences* reported by interviewees, and to place their testimonies in sufficient space and perspective to do justice to the complexity of their lives, the richness of their narratives, and the generosity of their time and knowledge.

## **Overview of Chapters**

*Race, Place and the Seaside: Postcards from the Edge* is divided into two main parts. Part I provides a theoretical, conceptual, and historical exploration and analysis of the English seaside (in its global context). Part II

offers an in-depth, empirical account of these themes through findings derived from the large-scale research project undertaken in Sunshine Bay. This division does not reflect the iterative process of the data collection and write-up, but it establishes some organisational clarity for developing the principal arguments and examples in the book. I encourage readers to interpret the two parts as related, and to view the former as articulating the fundamental issues, concepts, and influences that help us to contextualise and understand the lives of the residents we meet in Part II.

Chapter 2 explores a range of social, cultural, and political issues related to the English seaside, providing critical background for the specific themes of race, racialisation, and racism developed in the book. Focusing primarily on the English context, but also drawing, where appropriate, on a variety of contributions and comparisons from across the Global North, this chapter outlines the multifarious roles, meanings, and possibilities that the seaside holds within the popular imagination. The chapter commences by identifying the diverse trajectories along which modern seaside resorts have evolved. It highlights how seemingly positive processes of regeneration can actually marginalise racialised groups, while deprivation and (perceived) mainstream political exclusion have facilitated the conditions for the popularity of UKIP in certain seaside constituencies. Next, it addresses the problems with defining the seaside (and other coastal spaces). It then moves to an in-depth consideration of sociological, cultural studies, and historical theorisations and conceptualisations of the seaside as a specific social and cultural construction, ranging from the liminal and liminoid to more recent haptic cultural geographies. This chapter demonstrates that very little of this work, especially in the English context, has engaged with notions of race and ethnicity. As a response, the chapter considers how notions of liminality and “strangeness” might be applied to the lives of minority ethnic communities at the seaside.

Chapter 3 makes the case for including the distinct spaces of the seaside in contemporary spatial studies of race, racialisation, and racism outside the metropolis. It commences with a theoretical discussion of the spatial framework employed here for understanding the ways that these issues emerge and exist at the seaside. It then investigates and analyses the extant sociology and cultural geography literature on race and ethnicity

in rural and suburban locations, and in other “new” spaces of multi-culture. The chapter highlights the failure of this work to consider the importance of those geographical settings that lie on the coast, and, by way of reply, proposes that this field would be strengthened conceptually and empirically by a greater engagement with seaside landscapes and populations. The chapter then explores the implications arising from the predominant whiteness of English seaside communities and spaces, together with the challenges and shifts created both by internal minority ethnic migration within the UK and global population flows.

Chapter 4 focuses on a series of inter-connected elements that have become synonymous with the English seaside: leisure, pleasure, entertainments, and amusements. The analysis argues that these features provide important contexts and stimuli for the articulation of race, racism, and whiteness in this setting. Yet, paradoxically, they also contribute to the failure to acknowledge the racialised nature of the seaside and coast. The chapter begins by discussing how racialised themes of heroic and marginal whiteness(es), exotic Otherness, and (neo)imperial fantasy are embedded in the amusements and popular entertainments of the English seaside, connecting historical legacies with contemporary spaces and places of seaside leisure and pleasure. Adopting a necessarily global perspective, this chapter then shows how the beach is a contested, politicised terrain that has contributed to racialised notions of belonging and forms of racist practices and exclusion, both formally constituted through law and in more subtle ways. Importantly, this discussion also addresses forms of subversion and resistance to these racialised seaside exclusions.

Chapter 5 introduces readers to the residents of Sunshine Bay, focusing explicitly on the cultural politics that underpin minority ethnic identities and communities in the town. It begins by exploring participants’ memories of their first engagements with the English seaside, highlighting the material, affective, and emotional connections that were formed during these early visits. The chapter then shows that such influences do not exist for all minority ethnic residents in the town. While the majority of participants had some knowledge of “English culture” before arrival, they had very little, if any, previous knowledge of Sunshine Bay specifically, or the English seaside as a popular cultural space. The next section addresses participants’ myriad rationales for moving to a town next to

the sea, and the varied means by which they got there. Underscoring the purchase of *coastal liquidity* as an explanatory concept, the chapter reveals that processes of migration and settlement are uneven and contextual, and not necessarily one-directional. The analysis then investigates the ontological linkages between racialised bodies and the English seaside, and the (re)production of, and challenges to, these dis/connections in minority ethnic as well as dominant popular imaginations. The complexities and nuances characterising practices and perceptions of integration, isolation, social networks, and community formation in majority white spaces are also addressed.

Chapter 6 revisits the theoretical and conceptual frames discussed earlier in the book, demonstrating how the racialisation of space, locality, and mobility influences the lives of minority ethnic residents in Sunshine Bay. The chapter explores first the centrality of particular spaces, places, and aspects of the built and “natural” environments in forging or inhibiting residents’ nascent connections with the town. Employing a more micro-level analysis, the next section focuses specifically on particular streets and neighbourhoods in Sunshine Bay. Showing how material experiences combine with symbolic depictions and the influence of local discourses, the analysis demonstrates how these places create and adopt racialised connotations. It shows that the most problematic spaces, with regard to minority ethnic experiences of racism and feelings of fear and vulnerability, are often those that are deemed “traditional,” quaint, and popular with white tourists and day trippers, rather than those that are demonised routinely in the local popular imagination. The chapter concludes by arguing for the integration of a temporal perspective with a spatial one when analysing the English seaside.

Chapter 7 begins by examining how minority ethnic residents recognise, and reflect on the implications of, the multicultural changes that have occurred in Sunshine Bay over the past decade. It then explores participants’ thoughts on dominant attitudes towards multiculture and inter-cultural relations in the town, locating these perceptions within contemporary scholarship on integration, multiculture, and community cohesion. The chapter then considers some of the implications of these trends, including the misreading of minority ethnic identities and the discursive construction of “strangers.” The chapter then moves on to

residents' personal experiences of racism in the town, including physical assaults, verbal abuse, and racialised stare. In foregrounding narratives and experiences of racism, this chapter contests empirically the dominant assertion that racial discrimination is not a problem in majority white spaces. Indeed, it demonstrates how the "visibility" of (certain) minority ethnic people in predominantly white environments can increase levels of discrimination, with racialised bodies constructed as corporeal markers of undesirability and non-belonging. As with the previous two chapters, this one illuminates how these forms of prejudice and discrimination exist alongside convivial inter-cultural relations in other spaces and at other times in Sunshine Bay.

The book's concluding remarks are presented in Chap. 8. This chapter reaffirms the book's key contributions, and discusses the distinctiveness of the seaside as a site of racial formation and politics, racialised power and resistance, and conflict and conviviality. It also signposts directions for future research in the field of seaside studies. Finally, this chapter revisits the importance of coastal liquidity as an analytical concept, and it sets out some potential components of a glocal politics of social justice and solidarity at/of the coast.

# 2

## Shifting Sands? Theories and Concepts of Contemporary Life at the Water's Edge

### Introduction: “Low” and “High” Tides at the Seaside

Traditional popular cultural depictions and representations of English seaside resorts are becoming increasingly outmoded in terms of the debates that dominate contemporary policy concerns. Over recent years, processes of coastal liquidity have seen the seaside evolve along a variety of diverse trajectories. Seaside environments currently face myriad social issues, problems, developments, and opportunities, many of which, significantly, are associated with urban environments (see next chapter). A number of resorts suffer from dilapidated physical infrastructure, redundant tourist industries, high levels of marginalisation and exclusion, and substantial social and health inequalities among their residents. Conversely, ostensibly more progressive, although contested, shifts have occurred too. Regeneration and gentrification are notable in a range of seaside towns, underpinned by the arts, creative and cultural industries, and entrepreneurial activity. These places have turned themselves into popular year-round destinations, progressing beyond the seasonality and “rise and fall” of traditional seaside tourism (Tunstall and Penning-Rowse

1998). Much of this divergence in the fortunes of contemporary seaside resorts can be explained by their responses to major social and economic changes over the past half century. As Melanie Kay Smith (2004: 18) points out, “the majority of English seaside towns have suffered a similar fate to a greater or lesser extent, but their recovery rates have been variable.” These patterns of boom and bust, in relation to employment, tourism, housing, cultural provision, and the lived experiences of different communities, can be found in microcosm within individual seaside towns, especially those like Sunshine Bay, which have seen significant in-movement of middle-class professionals alongside elements of decline.

## **Low Tide?**

During the summer of 2015, the perverse infatuation of some television broadcasters with documenting the lives of Britain’s most precarious and excluded communities was extended to the seaside. *Benefits by the Sea: Jaywick*, shown on Channel 5, was a four-part portrayal of the residents of Jaywick, adjacent to the famous resort of Clacton-on-Sea on the south Essex coast. Each episode began with the programme’s narrator reminding viewers that Jaywick has more than five times the national average of people receiving social security benefits, that it is the “closest thing this country has to a shanty town,” and that it holds the unwanted status of being “the most deprived place in England.” As Rob Shields (1991: 4–5) notes about hegemonic connections between deprivation, culture, and peripherality:

the social definition of marginal places and spaces is intimately linked with the categorisation of objects, practices, ideas and modes of social interaction as belonging to the “Low culture”, the culture of marginal places and spaces, the culture of the marginalised.

If one is able to leave aside, momentarily, the sensationalist, voyeuristic nature of this television show, it did at least alert a mainstream national audience that many of the issues associated primarily with urban living occur in seaside environments as well.

Just over a decade ago, Christine Beatty and Steve Fothergill (2004: 462) identified that “seaside towns are the least understood of Britain’s ‘problem’ areas” and that they “potentially share the same economic problems as other ‘one industry’ towns.” This pivotal research was followed up by other studies and government policy papers that explored the forms and extent of social exclusion in seaside towns (e.g. Agarwal and Brunt 2005, 2006; House of Commons Communities and Local Government Committee 2007). Notwithstanding the value of this work in drawing attention to the problems found in seaside towns, its wider public impact was arguably limited. Suggestions that the seaside might not be purely an escapist and fun place have been resisted and deemed unpalatable (indeed *impossible*) by those who champion a nostalgic interpretation of “bucket and spade” innocence. For instance, in their book about Brighton and Hove, Julie Burchill and Daniel Raven (2007: 59; italics in original) admit to having:

a problem with the idea of a *City by the Sea*. To citify a seaside town in this country is to totally disregard the special nature of the British coastal resort. From Bournemouth to Blackpool, be they coarse or genteel, they all have a certain something in common; namely, their very outdatedness, their lack of everything—graft, overcrowding, pollution—that makes a city a city.

Despite this reticence to engage with alternative portrayals of the English seaside, the problems that exist there are becoming increasingly difficult to deny.

A 2013 report by the Centre for Social Justice (2013), entitled *Turning the Tide*, highlights the diverse trajectories of contemporary seaside resorts. Some are flourishing, some are struggling, and most fluctuate somewhere in between these polarities. Data from the report suggest that a significant number of resorts, both large and small, are more disadvantaged according to a range of criteria, than England as a whole. Problems include high unemployment, entrenched cultures of not working, low educational achievement, high rates of teenage pregnancies, and low property values. Importantly, the report establishes that “the challenges our coastal towns face are not unique, they are different versions of the problems found elsewhere in the UK” (*ibid.*: 35). The Office for National

Statistics (2013: 1) notes that, with the exceptions of Christchurch, Lytham St Annes, Poole, Worthing, Southport, and Bognor Regis, larger seaside resorts have experienced higher levels of deprivation than the rest of England in recent years. Blackpool, Clacton, Skegness and Ingoldmells are identified as especially disadvantaged locations.

An ensuing report by the Local Government Association Coastal Special Interest Group (2014: 11) states that:

many coastal communities are characterised by youth out-migration and inward migration of older people, high proportions of retirees and benefit claimants, transitory populations, physical isolation, poor-quality housing, over-reliance on tourism, seasonal employment, low incomes and pressure on services during the summer months.

The report cites further enlightening statistics. Approximately one-tenth of working age adults in coastal towns claim incapacity benefits. This is compounded by ageing populations, given that nearly all of the Local Authorities with the highest percentage of residents aged over 65 years can be found adjacent to the coast (*ibid.*). The proportion of people out of work and enduring long-term health problems that cause everyday activities to be “limited a lot” is higher than average at the seaside (Office for National Statistics 2014: 1). The effects of austerity following the financial crisis of 2008 have hit seaside resorts hard as well. For example, in 2013, the four places in England with the highest rates of individual bankruptcy were all coastal locations: the seaside towns of Torbay, Scarborough, and Blackpool, and the tidal city of Hull. Coastal towns comprise just under half of the top 40 places for such problems (Local Government Association Coastal Special Interest Group 2014: 11). In 2013, the British government’s education inspectorate, Ofsted, warned of under-achievement among pupils in coastal towns (Adams 2013). Two years later, the *Independent* newspaper reported that criminal drug gangs were taking advantage of the situation in deprived seaside resorts by extending their narcotics operations to the coast (Peachey 2015).

Given the aforementioned issues, the seaside’s growing political significance is unsurprising. The Conservative, Labour, and Liberal Democrat parties discussed the issues facing seaside towns in the run-up to the

2010 General Election (Office for National Statistics 2013). In 2013, the government's Coastal Communities Fund increased and extended its provision to needy seaside locations until 2016 (Department for Communities and Local Government 2013). What has become especially apparent is the extent to which some of the social, economic, and geographical conditions that preside over several seaside resorts have contributed to the rise of right-wing politics. Les Back (2003: 343) identified over a decade ago that seaside towns "occupy a special location in the national imaginary ... [and] have become the new frontier for the defenders of exclusive national culture and 'rights for whites'." The United Kingdom Independence Party's (UKIP) first two elected MPs, Douglas Carswell in Clacton (Essex) and Mark Reckless in Rochester and Strood (Kent), having defected from the Conservative Party, were in coastal constituencies in 2014 by-elections. Ten of UKIP's 12 target seats that year were seaside or coastal places: Grimsby, Sittingbourne and Sheppey, East Worthing and Shoreham, Great Yarmouth, Thurrock, Boston and Skegness, South Thanet, North Thanet, Eastleigh, and Portsmouth South (Dearden 2014).

In early 2015, it was predicted that possible UKIP gains at that year's General Election were most likely along the east coast of England, including the constituencies of Great Yarmouth, and Boston and Skegness (Jackson 2015). Elsewhere, the seaside resorts of Clacton, Bexhill and Battle, Worthing West, and Totnes had seen high levels of UKIP support among pensioners, one of the party's key demographic targets, in previous local elections (Ford and Goodwin 2014). Dilapidated seaside towns have been described as "fertile ground for UKIP" (Klopp 2015), while in the run-up to the 2015 General Election, UKIP claimed it would "rescue" the "bedsit land" seaside (Demianyk 2015). The seaside consequently provided the backdrop for much of the party's campaigning, especially in Essex and Kent. In February 2015, a protest was held in Margate in northeast Kent by the "Thanet Stand Up to UKIP" group against the campaign of UKIP leader, Nigel Farage, to take the South Thanet seat in the General Election (Webb 2015). Farage failed in his attempt to become an MP, but UKIP took control of Thanet Council, making it the first Local Authority under the party's power. Mark Reckless lost his seat

in Rochester and Strood, but Douglas Carswell retained his as the only UKIP MP in Parliament.

Other Far Right activity has taken place outside mainstream politics in seaside and coastal towns on the south coast. A fascist group calling themselves “Support the Dover to Calais Truckers” held a demonstration and attempted to blockade the port of Dover in September 2014. They claimed to support truck drivers who were being fined when authorities found refugees hidden in their cross-Channel lorries, yet no recognised trade organisations backed the group’s actions (Irvine 2014). There were scuffles in Dover one year later as anti-fascists opposed a protest by Far Right groups. The latter could be heard chanting “No More Refugees” in response to the repercussions of the humanitarian crisis in Europe that summer (Childs 2015). The scenes were repeated at the beginning of 2016, as hundreds of anti-fascists travelled to the town to oppose a fascist demonstration against refugees (Gayle 2016).

## **High Tide?**

Seaside towns are nothing if not resilient. A 2015 article in the *Observer* newspaper spoke of “a cautious optimism” around the revival of seaside towns, with visits to coastal places (not necessarily just seaside resorts) in England, Scotland, and Wales increasing that year (McVeigh 2015). The seaside continues to be regarded as a happy and healthy place too, with people close to the coast in England more likely to self-report positive well-being than those in other areas. As Benedict Wheeler et al. (2012: 1200) suggest, “it is possible that the benefits of living near the coast may mitigate some of the negative health effects of socio-economic deprivation.”

Key drivers in the upturning fortunes of many seaside towns are the related processes of regeneration and gentrification. In their article on Moonbow Jakes Café and Lido Nightclub in Margate, Loretta Lees and John McKiernan (2012: 20) identify that “regeneration then has come to the forefront as the state’s solution for many decaying coastal towns, and of course by regeneration, the state enacts gentrification.” Writing about the Turner Contemporary art gallery in Margate, the Midland Hotel in Morecambe, the Winter Gardens in Blackpool, the Jerwood

art gallery in Hastings, and the East Beach Café in Littlehampton, travel writer, Clare Gogerty (2015) notes that “the tired image of fly-blown arcades, grim B&Bs and shabby promenades is being replaced by exciting new galleries, quality restaurants and destination hotels.” Other venues to receive such boosts are the Folkestone Triennial public art project and the Art Deco style De La Warr Pavilion in Bexhill (Vella-Burrows et al. 2014; see English Heritage/Commission for Architecture and the Built Environment 2003; English Tourism Council 2001; Walton and Browne 2010 on other locations and developments). *Dreamland*, one of the oldest and most iconic seaside amusement parks in the country, reopened in 2015 after many years of dereliction and an arson attack in 2008 that destroyed much of its infrastructure (Wainwright 2015). Bournemouth has emerged as one of the UK’s fastest growing technical hubs, with the number of digital start-up companies more than tripling between 2010 and 2013 (S. Davies 2015). Attractions such as Blackpool Illuminations, the Tate gallery in St. Ives, Saltdean Lido, and the historic market in Scarborough have all benefitted from investment via the government’s Coastal Communities Fund (Department for Communities and Local Government 2015). Construction started in 2015 on the i360 in Brighton, the world’s tallest moving observation tower. With a decreasing number of piers left on the English coast, going up in the air, as much as going out over the sea, seems to be a popular escapist seaside experience of the twenty-first century.

According to Melanie Kay Smith (2004: 20), processes of seaside renaissance can be categorised by the “three Rs.” Regeneration involves using leisure, tourism, and culture to diversify and strengthen the local economy by providing jobs, creating small and medium size enterprises, and increasing the money spent by visitors. Revitalisation entails upgrading and improving facilities and infrastructure, and undertaking other environmental modifications. Reinvention is a matter of image rebranding and enhancement, trying to develop a distinctive identity for the resort, and offering new attractions and experiences. Based on economic and/or culture-led developments, these forms of recovery have been analysed in a variety of coastal locations (Centre for Entrepreneurs 2015; Dryburgh 2010; Gray and Powell 2010; Kennell 2011; New Economics Foundation 2015; Rickey and Houghton 2009; Smith 2004). Benefits can also be derived from positive changes to individual resorts’ identities through

media portrayals, such as in Barry, south Wales, which provides the setting for hit BBC situation comedy, *Gavin and Stacey* (Skinner 2016).

Processes of regeneration are contested and divisive, however, and not always as progressive as the boosters claim. As Paul Gilchrist et al. (2014: 2) argue:

there are important questions concerning the abilities of local authorities to reinvent the seaside, whether they are pursuing insular or parochial visions, how processes of coastal regeneration divide communities, and the degrees to which research knowledge is brought to bear on the decision-making process about changing leisure tastes and markets and the economic benefits they may bring.

More precisely, regeneration and gentrification processes in places like Padstow on the north Cornwall coast, which boasts four restaurants owned by celebrity chef, Rick Stein, and other resorts that celebrate forms of nostalgia and “vintage” popular culture are linked implicitly to notions of racialisation. They promote a middle-class whiteness that can be as robust, pervasive, and excluding to minority ethnic (and some white) communities as the more traditional working-class variants associated more habitually with the seaside (Garner 2013; Ryks 2014; West-Newman 2008; see Chap. 3 of this book).

Despite the emerging trends outlined in this section, it remains the case that very little, if any, of the academic or policy literature about social exclusion and regeneration at the English seaside acknowledges issues of race and racism. This is a significant omission, which this book sets out to overcome. Before undertaking this task, we need to first consider what exactly a seaside town is.

## **Re/imagining the Seaside—Multiple Spaces, Multiple Places**

Despite its vicissitudes over the past couple of centuries, the predominant status and function of the English seaside within the popular imagination remains durable and resilient. As Mark Gibson (2001: 282) states, the seaside has “a certain inertia; it is a place where things can be trusted

to endure.” Distinctive forms of representation continue to construct this environment as a particular sort of place. For instance, in a 2010 policy paper, entitled *Strategy for Seaside Success: Securing the Future of Seaside Economies*, Gordon Brown and John Denham (then Prime Minister, and Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government, respectively) stated that:

seaside resorts play a unique role in our history, heritage and culture: from the international reputation of iconic landmarks such as Blackpool Tower to the national contribution that seaside tourism makes to our economy. At a much more personal level, many of us have fond and evocative memories of fish and chips, buckets and spades, and Punch and Judy: trips to the seaside continue to be an integral part of family life in this country. (Department for Communities and Local Government 2010: 2)

This description presents a “traditional”, hegemonic view of the English seaside, which would resonate with much of the national population (as well as communities in many other global locations). The images invoked here will likely form the basis of many families’ memories and holiday narratives, reflecting the centrality of “traditional” components and activities in the popularity and allure of the seaside. As documented in the Preface to this book, they are well represented in my own childhood memories, and they underpin my sociological imagination in approaching this topic as a research project (as well as continuing to frame my life as a resident and leisure consumer in a seaside city). Perhaps, more importantly, they are familiar to the personalised historical narratives and memories of numerous minority ethnic participants in this research (see Chap. 5 of this book). These people, who are marginalised and subjugated in various ways as a result of living and working in seaside environments, still enjoy and empathise greatly with seaside landscapes and their communities. They regard them as key factors in generating feelings of identity, belonging, attachment, and well-being.

Through the conceptual lens of coastal liquidity, this book adopts a more dynamic and critical approach. It endorses the idea that the English seaside has never possessed a solitary purpose or meaning, and it argues that coastal environments are complex, ambiguous, and fluid landscapes. The seaside can be read and experienced in multiple ways in relation to

its functions, attributes, and charms, as well as its peculiarities, hazards, and repulsions. Tales of candy floss, donkey rides, deck chairs, and rollercoasters are still unquestionably popular with a large section of seaside consumers; however, there is also a significant proportion of people for whom this image is not only obscure and irrelevant, but also excluding. This is not to ignore or deny the role of nostalgia and re-enactments of “vintage” culture in forming the very appeal of the seaside for many people. For instance, the re-opening of the famous *Dreamland* theme park at Margate in 2015 boasted rides from all decades since the 1920s, and events were put on including an “old time” circus (see Kane 2009, on the park’s original design). Rather, it is a matter of recognising that alternative, contested, and altogether less favourable imaginaries of the seaside exist as well. These dis/connections emerge powerfully in Part II of this book.

The potential for multiple imaginaries is highlighted elsewhere in broader definitions of the coast. In contradistinction to interpretations of the seaside that celebrate its fun and frivolity, and recognise its mundane, predictable, and unwavering characteristics, there are those that address the more ominous and dangerous components of this environment. For example, Paul Gilchrist et al. (2014: 3; emphasis added) point out that:

[the coast] has an important place in the national psyche, with positive connotations linked to childhood memories of bucket-and-spade earthworks, end-of-the-pier amusement arcades and donkey rides on the beach, *to negative connotations of invasion threats, erosion, sea-level rise and piracy.*

This configuration of the positive and negative aspects of waterside locations sits well with Alice Mah’s (2014a: 27) persuasive analysis of the “black and blue” components of global port cities:

Writers have described port cities as exotic places of cosmopolitanism and vibrant cultural exchange, connected to the “blue” of sea, sky, and dreams. Port cities are surrounded by blue, the blue of water lapping at shores, extending out into distant horizons. They are filled with the blue of longing, of imagining possibilities at sea and in different lands. But port cities are also represented as “black” places of crime, violence, poverty, and social exclusion, classic settings for gritty *noir* literature and film.

Critical readings of the seaside similarly highlight issues of threat, danger, risk, loneliness and exclusion, rather than those of innocence, happiness, and escapism. Hazel Andrews and Les Roberts (2012a: 6) acknowledge that the seaside can “be looked upon as a space of transnational labour, migrancy, racial tension, death, fear and uncertainty and disorientation.” This point is reiterated by Rebecca Olive (2015: 2), who, in challenging some of the more benign conceptualisations and (auto) ethnographies of sea-based leisure, calls for the perspectives of “those for whom the sea is terrifying, distant and unknown.” For example, during the period of writing this book, hundreds of refugees drowned after their boats were shipwrecked between the coasts of North Africa and Europe, while many others experienced the trauma of shoreline rescues by local people and coastguards in Italy, Malta, and the Greek Islands. A humanitarian crisis also developed at the port of Calais, in northern France, over the summer of 2015, as hundreds of refugees sought to travel across the English Channel (particularly *under* it through the Eurotunnel) in search of safety—acts of desperation referred to reprehensibly as a “swarm” and undertaken by “a bunch of migrants” by Prime Minister David Cameron (Elgot and Taylor 2015; Mason and Perraudin 2016), and as “marauding” by Foreign Secretary Philip Hammond (Perraudin 2015). In a more local, personal context, this book’s production was punctuated tragically by incidences of young men swept out to sea off the Sussex coast, having fallen from the cliffs or having got into danger while at the water’s edge.

This fluid reading of the seaside as a multiple, liquid entity leads us into an exploration of the multifarious theories and concepts that have been employed within the social sciences and humanities to explore and analyse contemporary life at the water’s edge. The rationale for this scene-setting exercise is twofold. First, broadly speaking, a thematic mapping and critique of the extant literature portraying the English seaside as comprising a range of *social* and *cultural* spaces is fundamental to any “new” analysis of a hitherto under-researched facet of coastal life. Second, and more specifically, undertaking this overview uncovers that this literature has failed almost universally to engage with issues of race, racialisation, and racism at the seaside; accordingly, it encourages us to situate them at the forefront, rather than the periphery, of sociological enquiry.

## Defining and Conceptualising the Seaside

“We need to generalise, but taking account of the rich and enduring diversity of the British seaside,” writes John Walton (2000: 22), “We are dealing with a recognisable and distinctive kind of town, but with as many variations as a hawkweed or a burnet-moth.” It is, then, the simultaneous similarities and differences that exist between, and within, different seaside locations that make generating a holistic picture of resorts quite a conundrum (Tunstall and Penning-Rowsell 1998). Evidently there are intrinsic, unequivocal features of seaside places that we recognise routinely, and that remind us where we are and why we are there. Along with the obvious geographical and geological facets of the sea and the land, there are the various symbolic sights, sounds, smells, and embodied encounters—a helter skelter, a barrel organ, fish ‘n’ chips, or laughing revellers—that signify to us the type of landscape we are in. Yet, any suggestion that the resorts around the coast of England (or anywhere else) are necessarily the same sort of place is plainly erroneous. Seaside difference is based, to a degree, on size and geological landscape. It is also a matter of historical land ownership and designation, social demographics, economic status, climate, local politics, culture, tone, tourist practices, gentrification, and built infrastructure. People must be considered as central to this multiplicity too, with vast differences between (and also within, spatially, and temporally) the types of people found in various resorts and the sort of things they do there (Meethan 1996; Smith 2004). As Fred Gray (2014: vi) reminds us succinctly, “there is, of course, no single coastal culture.”

It, thus, comes as no real surprise that the “seaside” has not always been defined adequately, both within the academy and in popular culture (see Carter 2014, for similar problems with the more generic notion of the “coast”). Some scholars have found it more productive to begin with what the seaside is *not*. Rob Shields (1991), for instance, highlights its dominant positioning as the antithesis both of the “serious” industrial city and the idyllic, “innocent” countryside. Laura Chase (2005) points out crucially that this binary has habitually involved the application of feminine characteristics to the seaside in contrast to the masculinisation

of inland industrial locations (see also Keith 2005; Williams 1973, on conceptualisations of urban milieu).

Trying to construct a list of attributes that characterise all seaside spaces and places would be an endless, not to say *thankless*, task. Moreover, such an endeavour is not conducive to the relational perspective of coastal liquidity or this book's emphasis on multiple forms of marginality. What is, perhaps, more relevant is to think, briefly, about some of the difficulties inherent to undertaking such a task: why is the seaside so hard to define? Rupa Huq's (2013b: 37) typology of suburban and urban environments is an apposite starting point. At first glance, a number of aspects of Huq's suburban classification dovetail closely with popular interpretations of the English seaside:

SUBURBAN	URBAN
White	Ethnic mix
Quiet	Noise
Space	Built-up environment
Aspiration/affluence	Multiple deprivation, decay
Choice	Constraint
Uniformity	Difference
Homogeneity	Quirky
Conformist	Bohemian
Boredom	Excitement
Fuddy-duddy	Youth
Privatised space	Community

Yet, it is also the case that the seaside exemplifies increasingly many characteristics associated more usually with urban environments. The seaside is a repository of multiple layers of landscape, people, representations, behaviours, and attributes. It is undoubtedly a place that is physically distinct from, or ontologically "in-between," the city, the countryside, and the suburbs; but, it is also so much more than that. It is these nuances and complexities that the following pages grapple with.

Given the difficulties in conceptualising seaside towns, expedient definitions and categorisations tend to derive from policy reports and doc-

uments employing (semi-) quantitative methods of measurement. For example, Christina Beatty et al.'s (2014) report on the impact of austerity on seaside towns refers to *Principal*, *Smaller*, and *Other* resorts. The former have at least 10,000 residents, and tourism represents a major component of their local economies. A consequence is that:

they tend to share a number of characteristics that distinguish them from other industrial or commercial centres along the coast or inland. This includes a specialist tourist infrastructure (promenades, piers, parks etc.), holiday accommodation (hotels, guest houses, caravan sites) and a distinctive resort character that is often reflected in the built environment. (Ibid.: 12)

Smaller resorts have less than 10,000 residents. Although tourism may still play a role, these places are primarily residential or industrial locations as opposed to leisure resorts. The residual category of Other destinations includes sub-areas of bigger urban locations or places where seaside tourism is a supplementary element of the local economy (ibid.). Classifications by the Office for National Statistics (2014) are primarily size-related too, albeit employing a different scale, referring to *Large* (populations of more than 100,000 people), *Medium* (20,000–100,000 people), and *Small* (1000–20,000 people) resorts.

Such statistical measures are useful, but they are limited in their explanatory purchase when employed in isolation. There is also a need for qualitative and cultural definitions if we are to get to grips fully with the seaside environments we are seeking to understand. Christina Beatty and Steve Fothergill (2003)'s model is instructive here. They distinguish between the idea of a seaside resort and somewhere that happens simply to be next to the sea, such as industrial towns, ports, and other residential locations. They also examine seaside towns that exist in their own right, and not places that are components of bigger locations or coastal settings that contain just a handful of entertainment facilities. John Walton (2010) highlights similarly the need to distinguish seaside towns from places simply "on the coast," such as towns on estuaries or locations with large naval or commercial activity. For him, a seaside town is a specific kind of place. It is:

one whose economy and identity depends, and has depended, to a significant extent on seaside tourism, and the extended influence of a seaside tourism tradition on related activities or identities (commuting, retirement, fishing and maritime heritage), and on enterprises that are mobile because they deal in ideas, intangibles or easily portable items, which draw people to coastal locations because that is where, given a choice, they prefer to live and work. (*Ibid.*: 14)

Walton (*ibid.*: 18) goes on to provide further categorisations: older, popular resorts that have drawn large numbers of visitors traditionally from particular urban centres; resorts that have substantive residential functions, whether as places of retirement for older populations or as locations within commuting distance for urban workforces; and smaller places that are known and popular due to their heritage and picturesque landscape, such as harbours and other sites of maritime activity. Finally, Melanie Kay Smith (2004) emphasises a symbolic and affective typology of resorts. Drawing on a survey by the English Tourism Council in 2001, which asked tourists to categorise the various types of resort, the following classifications were constructed: picturesque, traditional, family, lively, and fun.

These contributions reinforce the difficulties in establishing what a seaside town is. To be clear, this book focuses on those resorts whose infrastructure and economy have been constructed historically and contemporarily in relation to pleasure, leisure, recreation, tourism, and heritage. Fundamentally, a seaside town is understood here along the lines of the Office for National Statistics' (2013: 2) definition of "any seaside settlement to which people travel for the beach and associated activities." It does not, therefore, include other types of coastal settlement or major port towns and cities, the latter of which have fascinating histories around race and immigration in their own right (see, e.g., Belchem 2014; Dudrah 2004; Halliday 2010; Nassy Brown 2005). Nonetheless, as a liquid entity, the seaside cannot be considered entirely distinct from either the coast in a general sense, or the beaches (and other elements) that comprise it. As such, it is necessary at times to refer to broader conceptualisations of the coast alongside a more specific focus on the seaside resort. This is

important for understanding the dynamic interplay between generality and specificity that gives seaside locations their specific place identities (Shields 1991).

## **Thinking About the Seaside and the Beach: Symbol, Liminality, Affect**

### **Constructing the Seaside**

For much of the modern era, the seaside resorts of the Global North have been synonymous with notions of recreation, relaxation, leisure, and holidaying (see, for instance, Lenček and Bosker 1998; Löfgren 1999; Urry and Larsen 2011; Walton 1983, 2000; Walvin 1978). Central to this conception is the beach, a particular space that can be found in a wide range of coastal environments, but one that has distinct meanings of leisure, fun, and carnivalesque behaviours when situated in seaside resorts. Put simply, *a* beach can exist anywhere, but *the* beach is firmly part of the English seaside. As Jørgen Ole Bærenholdt et al. (2004: 50) point out, the beach “is a site that is almost entirely distinguished through affording a space in which leisure can be performed, displayed and enjoyed. The beach is *the* emblematic space for a life of leisure.” This is, of course, a culturally specific interpretation, for in many parts of the world (both in the Global North and South), the beach is a different space entirely, one of labour, trade, residence, and conflict. One country’s or community’s notion of leisure can be another one’s experiences of neo-imperialism, exclusion, or servitude, for example, the privatised beaches and luxurious resorts of white, Western capital on the coasts of the developing world, and the dynamics between tourists and locals, including the exoticised and sexualised fantasies of some consumers (Sheller 2003). Moreover, as discussed earlier in this chapter, the idea that the beach is a site of leisure would appear perverse and insulting to many contemporary refugees crossing the Mediterranean Sea.

The seaside is temporally, as well as culturally, specific. Contemporary ideas about the functions of seaside landscapes are relatively modern constructions. As Lena Lenček and Gideon Bosker (1998: xx) argue:

the beach as we know it within the Global North is, historically speaking, a recent phenomenon. In fact, it took hundreds of years for the seashore to be colonized as the pre-eminent site for human recreation. Although the coast was the birthplace of history, before it could be transformed into a theatre of pleasure, it had to be discovered, claimed, and invented as a place apart from the messy business of survival. (*Ibid.*)

John Urry (2007: 259) similarly points out that:

over the past two centuries the beach went from a place of repulsion and danger to one of attraction and desire. It became a place to be dwelt upon by visitors, a place of landscape rather than land and especially of leisure rather than work.

This book has hopefully established by now its argument that residents and visitors respond to, and consume, the seaside and the beach in a multitude of ways. In turn, this requires recognition that these seaside *spaces* have been, and continue to be, constructed actively as particular *places* (albeit, critically, contested in their meanings and uses) by the different groups who use and consume them (see also next chapter).

This chapter does not retrace the social history of the English seaside. Rather, it explores, briefly, those elements that shed light on the changing nature and role of this setting over time. In the seventeenth century, Dr. Richard Wittie discovered rich mineral waters at Scarborough on the North Yorkshire coast, which were previously found at inland spas, and this was a pivotal episode in the development of the English seaside as a healthy place. Dr. Richard Russell's *A Dissertation Concerning the Use of Sea-Water in Diseases of the Glands* in 1750 and his subsequent establishment of a practice in Brighton enhanced this dominant discourse (Hassan 2003; Walvin 1978). The beneficial properties gained from salt water (both immersion and drinking) and fresh air saw the English seaside develop its social and cultural importance during the Georgian and Victorian periods, leading to the need to build appropriate infrastructure to cope with this increasing popularity. It is in this context that one of the English seaside's earliest, and now (locally) celebrated, minority ethnic residents emerged. Sake Dean Mahomed was born in Bihar, India, and lived in London from 1807. He moved to Brighton in 1814, where he

set up his Indian Vapour Baths and Shampooing Establishment, taking on the role of therapeutic masseur. His growing reputation led to his appointment as “Shampooing Surgeon” to the King, overseeing the Royal Baths at Brighton Pavilion (Ramdin 1999). In the early twenty-first century, he was one of the several local figures who had their names printed on the front of Brighton and Hove buses.

Throughout the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, a changing economic and political climate, the establishment of workers’ rights regarding paid holidays, and an increasing leisure time meant that the seaside took on the connotations with which we associate it today: notions of fun, frivolity, and escapism from the drudgery of everyday life. This was a matter both of embodied, material change and of social construction. As Jørgen Ole Bærenholdt et al. (2004: 51) point out:

before the coastal zone could become such a symbolic icon it had to be constructed as a space in the first place and coded for specific purposes and practices. The intangible border zone between land and sea was transformed into a stage, a playground, a site for edification, sexual gratification or simply easy living.

Much of the modern academic literature on the seaside has focused on this aspect, detailing its role as a site for, and source of, hedonistic pleasures, carnivalesque behaviours, and transgressions of the dominant social order (see Webb 2005, for a critique of this paradigm).

Chris Rojek (1993) highlights the shifting functions and constructions of the English seaside, proposing a phased model of its emergence and development. First, there was the dominance of discourses and practices of health from the eighteenth through to the early twentieth centuries. Second, the post-Second World War period can be understood, Rojek argues, as one of seduction and adventure. Finally, the late twentieth century saw ideas and patterns of consumption and transformation (such as sun tanning) become the hegemonic form of interpretation and practice. Rob Shields (1991) also constructs the seaside’s position as a social zone via three phases. The first half of the 1800s, characterised as a period of Dr. Russell, medicalised beach bathing and social promenading, saw

the seaside become a place that opposed the staid social arrangements of inland spas and the grimness of London. The succeeding 70 years until the end of the First World War were, Shields suggests, about the celebration of carnivalesque behaviours and engagement in the “antithesis of the rational productivism of the everyday environment” (*ibid.*: 111). The last part of the twentieth century is regarded as facilitating the emergence of “dirty weekends” and the hedonism and violence of 1960s youth cultures, where the transgression of social norms went beyond the institutionalised liminal zone of carnival (*ibid.*). As instructive as these models are, their contemporary and cross-cultural relevance is questionable. They speak exclusively to popular practices and dominant imaginaries, and, despite their references to seemingly transgressive and alternative ideas, many of these behaviours would now be regarded as normative. There is no reference to more subversive uses of the beach or more radical forms of challenge, protest, or resistance. Most significantly for our purposes, they are readings of the beach that are racially unmarked, and thus hegemonically “white” in their interpretations.

We need, therefore, to think differently about the shifting uses and meanings of the seaside over the past quarter century, for much has changed since Rojek’s and Shields’ accounts. We might add another, overlapping phase that emerges in the twenty-first century. Peter Borsay (personal communication) suggests that what we are witnessing now is, perhaps, a “*negative* medical model,” with the seaside associated with alcohol and drug misuse, and the dangers of exposure to the sun, water pollutants, and climate change. Further novel issues and functions of the seaside include its role as a hub for cultural and creative industries (Church et al. 2014; Lees and McKiernan 2012); rapid gentrification (and, in places, “studentification”) in planning, housing, and leisure infrastructure (Rickey and Houghton 2009; Smith 2008, 2012); entrepreneurialism and innovation (Centre for Entrepreneurs 2015; New Economics Foundation 2015); the scripted hedonism of stag and hen parties; the development of Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender leisure economies (Smith 2004); and concerns around environmentalism, such as coastal erosion and sewage (Franklin et al. 2013; Wheaton 2007). Yet, again, this literature speaks solely to the experiences of white British

coastal communities. It does not explore how these issues might intersect differently (or not, as the case may be) with minority ethnic communities' lives and potentially alternative conceptualisations of the seaside. This epistemological lacuna is addressed substantively in this book.

## **The Seaside and Beach as Threshold: Spaces, Bodies, and Time**

The most notable means of theorising the modern seaside and beach within the social sciences and humanities has been through the concept of *liminality*. This sub-section explores its application, and reviews its utility, in relation to these environments (Andrews and Roberts 2012b; Gilchrist et al. 2014; see Thomassen 2012, for a broader overview of liminality). In doing so, the analysis highlights the near total absence of any scholarship on liminality and the seaside that addresses race, ethnicity, and racialisation. This occlusion is remedied in the following section, where both the value and limitations of the liminality lens for understanding race (among other factors) at the seaside are considered.

Expanding the original work of Arnold van Gennep (1960), Victor Turner's (1969) notion of liminality has been the most influential on writings about the seaside. According to Turner, liminality is "a state or process which is betwixt-and-between the normal, day-to-day cultural and social states and processes of getting and spending, preserving law and order, and registering structural status" (cited in van Ginkel 2014: 46–47). It is, Turner adds, "a time of enchantment when anything might, even should, happen"; a period "full of potency and potentiality" (cited in ibid.: 47). The pre-eminent application of liminality to seaside analyses is Rob Shields' (1991) formative study of Brighton. "Liminality," writes Shields (ibid.: 84), "represents a liberation from the regimes of normative practices and performance codes of mundane life because of its interstitial nature." Shields' contribution is especially noteworthy for introducing a geographical, *spatial* element into ideas of liminality, taking it beyond more temporal notions of ritual, rite of passage, and other social situations.

While liminality is different to marginality and peripherality (Thomassen 2012), Shields demonstrates why certain locations that are “on the edge” geographically might be more likely to invite and enable liminal behaviours. Following Turner’s (1969) assertion that aspects of liminality are most likely to be found in marginal spaces, Shields (1991) suggests that the seaside town of Brighton:

became the locus of an assemblage of practices and of customary norms which, attached to the notion of “Beach”, transformed its nature into a socially defined zone appropriate for specific behaviours and patterns of interaction outside of the norms of everyday behaviour, dress, and activity. (Ibid.: 75)

Shields goes on to argue that:

as a physical threshold, a limen, the beach has been difficult to dominate, providing the basis for its “outsider” position with regard to areas harnessed for rational production and the possibility of its being appropriated and territorialised as socially marginal. (Ibid.: 84)

The seaside has, then, facilitated a “perception of unmediated encounters with other individuals also momentarily stripped of their social status” (ibid.: 89). In other words, historically, the seaside “was a free zone, ‘betwixt and between’ social codes. It was a zone, even *conducive* (without being determinate) to lapses in normative behaviour” (ibid.: 108).

The utility of foregrounding a geographical component to liminality, particularly in explaining why the seaside is conducive to the emergence of such behaviours, is emphasised in Maoz Azaryahu’s (2005) analysis of Eilat, in southern Israel. This resort can be seen as liminal, Azaryahu argues, due to three principal, interlinked geographical attributes: Eilat’s position between the two contrasting scapes of sea and desert, its solitude and relative inaccessibility from other parts of Israel, and its location at the very southern point of the country. This “extreme remoteness from the territories of social structure and established culture,” suggests Azaryahu, “represented the maximal dissociation possible from society and/or the

routines of everyday life. In the case of Eilat, its extreme remoteness was congruent with a profound sense of liberation” (*ibid.*: 121).

The theme of liminality has been explored by many other seaside scholars. John Walton’s (2000: 3) evocative description is worth quoting at length. Liminality, for him, is:

where land and sea meet, the pleasure principle is given freer rein, the certainties of authority are diluted, and the usual constraints on behaviour are suspended, however provisionally, to give a broader acceptability to, or at least tolerance of, variety of sexual partners and practices, or unscheduled bodily exposure, or drink-fuelled raucousness, ribaldry or indelicacy, or the consumption of greasy food with the fingers in the public street. The seaside puts the “civilising process” temporarily into reverse (although the participants understand that they are defying its conventions) and conjures up the spirit of carnival, in the sense of upturning the social order and celebrating the rude, the excessive, the anarchic, the hidden and the gross, in ways which generate tension and put respectability on the defensive, generating culture wars in settings where the prim and the Rabelaisian sides of British character come into maritime confrontation, and where the genteel, controlled, symmetrical front of the resort finds itself invaded by the disorder, untidiness and misrule of the back.

Robert Preston-Whyte (2004: 349) offers a similarly poetic definition of the qualities of the beach:

The beach is a place of strong magic. As a material space it is a boundary zone where the hint of celestial forces is whispered by the ebb and flow of tides, a space that is neither land nor sea, a zone of uncertainty that resonates with the sound of ever-changing seas, a setting that is, by turns, calm, tranquil, and soothing or agitated, unruly, and frightening.

Gareth Shaw and Allan Williams (1997: 1) refer to the seaside as “a place of escape, of pleasure, of spectacle and of unusual experiences”; Jørgen Ole Bærenholdt and colleagues’ (2004: 52) Goffmanesque reading locates the seaside as comprising “ambivalent spaces, not easily categorised as ‘back stage’ or ‘front stage.’”. The beach more specifically is, according to Leone Huntsman (2001: 173), both “ambiguous” and

“unpredictable,” and always in a state of *becoming*; for Tony Bennett (1986: 138), it is “traditionally unregulated land, outside the control of the local political machinery,” while for Chris Rojek (1993: 190), it is arguably “the apodictic of postmodernism.”

Without referencing notions of liminality explicitly, these conceptualisations have been extended to illuminate the nexus between cultural and ecological factors. They indicate the beach’s metaphorical qualities as a physical space onto which different cultural attributes and ideologies are figuratively mapped and inscribed. One of the most influential “readings” of the modern beach in the Global North comes from cultural studies scholar John Fiske (2011). He constructs the sea as representing “nature and primitiveness,” which contrasts with the “culture and civilisation” of the land. The beach denotes “a physically anomalous category” (*ibid.*: 34) between the two and “mediates this terrifying boundary” (*ibid.*: 35). According to Fiske, the beach is then:

a signifying construct of potential meanings operating on a number of levels. Like all texts, the beach has an author—not, admittedly, a named individual, but a historically determined set of community practices that have produced material objects or signs. (*Ibid.*: 34)

Fiske’s structuralist and deterministic account demonstrates the common and symbolic components of beaches, alongside an appreciation of the heterogeneity found between, and within, different seaside locations. It reminds us of the need to account for context, whether that be historical, spatial, or temporal (see Chap. 6 of this book). It also points to the ambiguous and polysemic qualities of the signs, images, and physical structures of the beach and seaside, and consequently the likelihood of their multiple interpretations and readings (see later in the text for a critique). Grahame Thompson (1983: 119) likewise shows how popular interpretations of the seaside have created a binary distinction between “the familiar and the known” land and “the unfamiliar, the unknown, the uncertain and the ‘untamed’” sea, with the beach representing an “interface” between the two. Suvendrini Perera’s (2013) interpretation is more radical, embodied, and contemporarily relevant. Reflecting on Hasan Elahi’s 1999 video installation *Flow-Wet Feet (Dry Feet)*, Perera

argues that “the beach is the site of an invisible border: between land and sea, dry and wet, onshore and offshore, legal and illegal, freedom and unfreedom, asylum and detention, life and death” (*ibid.*: 63).

Debates over the liminal attributes of the seaside and beach have been revisited over the past decade or so. Perhaps, most significantly, this literature identifies that alongside the freedom and collapsing of social boundaries that occur in seaside environments, they are spaces of relatively rigid control, regulation, and surveillance as well. These seaside restrictions and “rules” exist *simultaneously* with various forms of liberty, in a dynamic configuration of tension and, at times, seeming contradiction. For instance, Jennifer Webb (2003: 88) highlights that “while the beach may indeed be a liminal space which is not fully incorporated by the social/symbolic, still, as social beings, we bring to the beach with us, and establish there, rules and social practices.” Drawing on personal childhood memories of the beach, she recalls that:

it was a place quite distinct from everyday life because of its promise of freedom—though a peculiar, a closely patrolled, kind of freedom: *swim between the flags, don't eat before swimming, don't talk to strangers, don't go out of your depth.* (*Ibid.*: 77; emphasis in original)

In addition, Maoz Azaryahu and Arnon Golan (2007: 280) argue that:

by-laws that deal with codes of dressing and norms of conduct, the authority of life-savers and standards of behaviour introduce a semblance of order to the beach. The officially directed architectural (re)shaping of the beach is a measure of control aimed at differentiating land-uses and managing the use of the beach area.

Fred Gray (2014: vii) makes a similar point, arguing that “coastal cultures are frequently contradictory, at times seemingly centred on freedom and escape but on other occasions more about regulation and control.”

In Brighton, for example, seaside spaces of the beach and promenade are regulated in all manner of routine forms, albeit in indistinct, unmarked, and disputed ways (see also Fiske 2011; Ryks 2014): areas where dogs cannot be walked or barbeques lit; partial closures of the undercliff walk due to safety concerns around chalk erosion; sections of

the boardwalk where you cannot stand without purchasing expensive refreshments because they are adjacent to the premises of a bar or restaurant; restricted lanes for cycling or rollerblading; and small zones of the beach where nudity is accepted, in contrast to the majority of parts where it is frowned upon. While beaches in the UK are public spaces, some sections or routes cannot be accessed easily from the land because they are cut off by private residential properties. Forms of contemporary seaside regulation elsewhere made the headlines in Britain in 2015 in relation to normative body types and sartorial codes. An advertisement displayed on the London Underground for Protein World weight-loss products generated controversy over its sexist implications. Featuring a very slim, blonde woman wearing a yellow bikini, the advert asked, "Are you beach body ready?" (C. Davies 2015). Numerous complaints opposed the advertisement's promotion of a "size zero" body image, and a protest was held in London's Hyde Park (Alwakeel 2015). That the advert would feature a white model is predictable, but this implicit racialisation of beach bodies generated no discussion.

Reconsiderations of the liminality thesis have prompted some historical reflections as well. More contextual and relativist interpretations have (re)established that the seaside was never a liminal zone for all people or at all times (Chase 2005; Walton 2014; Webb 2005). Leone Huntsman (2001) explores the varied and shifting discourses of control that influenced bathing practices throughout the early nineteenth century in the Australian context, manifest in constraints on mixed gender participation, opposition to daylight swimming, and regulations about what were considered "suitable" costumes (see also Barclay and West 2006). John Walton (2014) assesses the historical image of Brighton presented by Rob Shields (1991), and questions whether Brighton's perceived liminal status (and its difference to places like London) can be attributed to any specific factors beyond the fact that it was marginal and peripheral *geographically*. Walton contends that the beach had become less important to resorts such as Brighton by the mid-Victorian period. A greater emphasis was placed instead on those activities that took place further away from the shore, either in the more controlled spaces of the promenade, or within the bawdy cultures of the pub or music hall. In larger resorts, the beach became less a place for the suspension of social position and "unmediated

encounters” (Shields 1991: 89) with those from other positions within the social hierarchy, for the seaside came to be “zoned by class and cultural preference, and a measure of informal spatial segregation” (Walton 2014: 22; see also Webb 2005). “All this confusion,” writes Walton (2014: 24), “makes it difficult to sustain a case for the beach at Brighton in particular, and perhaps the town or the seaside in general” as a liminal space.

Furthermore, the introduction of Wakes holidays—the habit of taking holidays during the specific short periods of industrial closures in the towns of the industrial North and Midlands—meant being away with neighbours and work colleagues, and staying in familiar accommodation every year. The result, according to Darren Webb (2005: 126), was a type of seaside holiday that “served to reproduce class and gender relations, reinforce home-town rules of etiquette, restrain behaviour and maintain the distorted nature of ‘polite’ communication.” Normative behaviours were *reinforced* rather than challenged, and seaside leisure became a *disciplining* practice as much as an enabling one. Walton (2014: 25) concludes that “there is no doubt that the concept of liminality is very useful as a tool for opening out new ways of understanding the British, and others, at the seaside. But to work effectively,” he argues, “it needs to be anchored to a clear understanding of change over time and the nature of social contexts and processes” (*ibid.*: 25).

Some seaside scholars have turned to the notion of the *liminoid* rather than the liminal (Turner 1969) as a more apposite analytical lens. Although transgressive and boundary-shifting behaviours still take place, this concept does not invoke the transformative experiences or permanent traversing of thresholds more typically associated with ritualistic behaviours (see Thomassen 2012; van Ginkel 2014, for a critique). The seaside may not, for the most part, be a truly transformative space, but there are significant instances where entering the spaces of the coast and the sea invokes ritual and can lead to some form of ontological transition. These include the asylum seekers and refugees who arrive at, or are dispersed to, seaside towns; British Indian Hindus performing the Ganesh Visarjan festival (the largest Visarjan ceremony of Lord Ganesh to take place outside of India); and black African Apostles of Muchinjikwa Church undertaking religious ceremonies on the seashore at Southend-on-Sea (Southend-on-Sea City Visitor 2015).

These examples suggest intriguing connections between race, liminality, and seaside. However, with a few notable exceptions (see later in the text), they have received hardly any academic attention. Although some of the literature on the contemporary regulation and control of seaside spaces and behaviours adopts a critical perspective, the majority of work still references normative patterns of consumption and focuses on the experiences of white communities (for exceptions, see Burdsey 2011, 2013; Ryks 2014; see Chap. 4 of this book for Australian, South African, and US comparisons). There is, then, a pressing requirement to focus much more closely on the *how*, *where*, and *when* of liminality at the beach (Preston-Whyte 2004) as an aspect of broader coastal liquidity. These facets are considered in the substantive context of race and minority ethnic identities and communities in the next section.

## Emotional, Haptic, and Sensuous Seaside Geographies

Before explicitly addressing issues of race and liminality, a distinct, newer way of conceptualising and theorising the seaside warrants acknowledgement—one that, like those described earlier, also remains enduringly “white” in its coastal foci. As Robin Kearns and Damian Collins (2012: 939) note, “while coastal landscapes and processes have long been of interest to geographers, emotion has been an explicit concern for little over a decade.” Commensurate with emotional and affective turns in cultural geography, and to a lesser extent leisure studies, recent research has examined the emotional binds and haptic pleasures (involving touch) to be found on the seashore and in the sea.

In discussing the centrality of coastal landscapes to people’s emotions, Kearns and Collins (*ibid.*: 938) argue that:

emotional connections to beaches often prevail among populations residing within easy reach of them ... This positive regard appears to hold across the broad diversity of coastal environments, from safe and sheltered bays through to “wild” ocean beaches with their attendant risks ... Indeed, part of the attraction of the coast may lie in the paradoxical blends of the transient and enduring, the routine and exceptional and the crowdedness and solitude.

These authors suggest that beaches can, therefore, be seen as “therapeutic landscapes” (Collins and Kearns 2007). This idea refers to “a framework within which to think through the settings and situations of those natural and built environments, social conditions and human perceptions, which have qualities that heal” (Straughan 2012: 25). Collins and Kearns (2007: 16–17) argue that beaches can be therapeutic for the following reasons: they facilitate getting away from the demands and routines of everyday domestic life, both physically and psychologically; they offer a chance to be close to nature; they allow beachgoers to experience various opportunities for solitude or social interaction; being at the seaside and engaging with its components can influence individual and group identities; and there is the possibility and space for physical activity and exercise. In addition, Stephen Kellert (2005: 12) points out that “what has made the coastal context a remarkably attractive site for human habitation is its special blend of opportunities for intimate relationship with nature across a wide spectrum of utilitarian, ecological, aesthetic, psychological, intellectual and ethical dimensions.”

Adrian Franklin (2014) encourages an appreciation of emotion and affect at the seaside as well. In particular, he is critical of Fiske (2011) for overlooking the materialist features of beach life. In Fiske’s account, Franklin (2014: 6) argues, “the beach was presented as a semiotically powerful boundary between nature and culture, which thus rendered what actually happened there as less relevant or formative than its (putative) hidden structures and its underlying representational elements in opposition.” Franklin calls, instead, for an understanding of the beach “as *a lively materiality*” (*ibid.*: 3; italics in original), and for “a relational materialism of the beach in which human subjectivities and practices as well as their objects (sandcastles, buckets and spades, etc.) can be seen in a choreography of agency with other objects and agencies of the beach” (*ibid.*: 22).

Drawing on Gaston Bachelard’s (1969) concept of *lived space*, Ann Game and Andrew Metcalfe (2011) offer a cogent analysis of beachgoers’ engagement in routine activities on the sand and in the sea. Their research participants at Sydney’s Bondi Beach in Australia articulated motives that went beyond those merely of physical fitness and health.

They described the ways in which they “inhabit” and feel “connected” to the beach and cultivate relational states and forms of practice with this landscape. Game and Metcalfe argue that “people are called to the beach by an experience of particularity-in-connectedness,” which is often unidentifiable and unnameable; rather, it is “known” through their participation in beach life (*ibid.*: 47).

Emphasising the importance of touch, Pau Obrador-Pons (2009: 197) proposes that “romantic accounts of the beach premised upon the centrality of sight are unable to account for the practices and feelings that co-constitute this leisure space.” Such an approach, he suggests, “neglects texture, sensation, and movement” (*ibid.*). Through a focus on the seaside practices of sandcastle building and sunbathing, he proposes that “thinking of the beach in terms of touch destabilizes the neat, gendered order of the sensible associated with the visual gaze” (*ibid.*). This approach to the relationship between physicality, emotion, and affective and haptic geographies has been explored in a range of coastal practices, including scuba diving (Straughan 2012), surfing (Anderson 2014, 2015; Evers 2009b; lisahunter 2015; Roy 2014), walking (Dawney 2014; Selwyn 2012; Wylie 2005), marathon swimming (Throsby 2013), and Nudism (Obrador-Pons 2008).

These interpretations undoubtedly provide an alternative way of thinking about the seaside, but they are nonetheless all culturally and functionally specific. For many people, the beach is a site of labour, while for others, as this book has stressed, it is increasingly one of trauma and death, or political refuge and safety. It may well be an emotional landscape for them too, but one far removed from the benign conceptualisations found in this literature. This research fails to explore the intersectionalities of its principal trends and processes with forms of ethnic identity, social position, and inequality. With a very small number of exceptions (e.g. Nemani 2015), these analyses concentrate on the experiences of white communities in the Global North, and they reinforce the privileges and positions of the white (auto)ethnographic academic voice. As such, in line with the more established literature on liminality, they offer us very little in terms of understanding and explaining specific forms of minority ethnic engagement with seaside and coastal spaces.

## Race, Liminality, and “Strangers” on the Shore

This chapter has made explicit the failure of social sciences and humanities literature on the English seaside to address issues of race and ethnicity. As a corrective, it now explores how the extant conceptual and theoretical components of this work might be harnessed to analyse processes of racialisation in this setting. The discussion earlier in this chapter acknowledged that the seaside is regarded by some academics as no longer (or as never being) truly or universally liminal. The psycho-social contrasts it once provided are perceived either to be inexistent or equally accessed through other leisure forms. Furthermore, the degree to which social convention is really being defied when “transgression” involves what are now normative seaside practices is certainly open question. There are times when liminality provides a valuable means of understanding minority ethnic engagements with the seaside, and there are also instances when its components and reasoning appear extremely distant and disconnected from the experiences of these communities. The following discussion highlights the ambiguities and contradictions of liminality in relation to race and racialisation, together with the need to appreciate the *how*, *where*, and *when* of its application and explanatory purchase.

### Racialised Liminality and the Seaside

Considering the focus placed by the liminality thesis on “an ‘outsider’ position often associated with a state of transition in space and/or time that licenses an exit from social structure and (relative) liberation from the constraints of normative cultural codes” (Azaryahu 2005: 120), the widespread absence of race and ethnicity in discussions on liminality and the seaside, especially in the English context, is noteworthy. This omission needs to be viewed in the context of two wider factors: the lack of work on race and coastal environments more generally in British sociology and cultural geography (see Chap. 3 of this book), and a relative paucity of research into the relationship between race and liminality *per se* (with similar, but distinct, analytical concepts taking preference). There are, nonetheless, a handful of critical contributions that are instructive in

developing our thinking about how race and liminality might configure at the seaside.

Before homing in on the English seaside, a consideration of the global context is beneficial. Reena Dobson's (2007) study of Mauritius is one of the few contributions to link ideas of liminality and race substantively to the beach. Dobson shows that beaches are not just borders in a physical sense; they are also ambiguous and porous *notionally*, leading to their construction as liminal spaces. Connecting the various ways in which ethnicities are exhibited and contested by local Mauritians, mixed in with the additional presence of overseas tourists, she develops spatial understandings of beaches as borders, while highlighting the political and performative aspects of liminality. Dobson argues that:

this idea then, of the border as porous and open and able to sustain multiple identities, as well as celebrate ambiguity, is a useful way of conceptualising, of reflecting on my argument of public spaces in Mauritius as border zones for ethnicised individuals, as spaces for articulating, negotiating, performing, critiquing or rejecting ethnicity, of public spaces as spaces of some neutrality from otherwise dominant ethnicised mindsets. (*Ibid.*: 9)

Importantly, Dobson also reflects on the temporality of liminal behaviours, noting “the ebb, sway and flow of daily interactions, at specific moments, between ethnicised individuals and/or groups” (*ibid.*). She points out that these interactions, while occurring in liminal spaces, do not involve any permanent crossing of thresholds, and individuals are often left to “return” to the identities that may have been subverted, momentarily and partially.

Arun Saldanha's (2007) ethnography of trance “freaks” in Goa, southern India, alludes, more obliquely, to ideas around thresholds at the beach. Although not referring overtly to notions of liminality, or indeed focusing primarily on the behaviours of minority ethnic communities themselves, Saldanha provides a compelling analysis of the implications of race and whiteness. Addressing the contradictory, culturally relative aspects of liminal behaviours, he highlights how the actions of white, Western trance freaks—designed to be hedonistic, carnivalesque, subversive, and liberating—end up actually contributing to the regulation and

immobility of other racialised bodies. Saldanha shows how the presence and practices of these Western revellers on the beaches of the developing world accentuate the hyper-visibility of local Indian people. This results in the latter feeling, and being seen as, “out of place” in this landscape. Saldanha also introduces the concept of viscosity. This describes “how an aggregate of bodies holds together” and influences, and is influenced by, different corporealities (*ibid.*: 50). “Viscosity,” Saldanha writes, “explains why music, ways of dancing, clothing, architecture, the beach, stereotypes, the psychohistories of colonialism, the distribution of light and money power together make white bodies stick and exclude others” (*ibid.*). These forms of racialised “stickiness” provide important interpretative frames for the empirical reflections on coastal liquidity explored in Chaps. 5, 6, and 7 of this book.

The relationship between race and liminality offers a fruitful avenue of enquiry for analysing the English seaside as well. In exploring these linkages, we turn first to Rob van Ginkel’s (2014) typology of liminality. Detailing the various ways that Victor Turner’s conceptualisation might be applied, van Ginkel (2014: 58) identifies the following principles:

- liminal *space*
- liminal *time, period, or phase*
- liminal *personae*
- liminal *entities*
- liminal *phenomena*
- liminal *symbols*
- liminal *agents*

The idea of liminal people is especially enlightening. Liminality might apply, in this instance, to individuals, groups (such as minorities), or larger populations (Thomassen 2012). According to van Ginkel (2014: 58), liminal personae are “‘threshold people’, humans in between statuses or positions, in the interstices of ‘limbo’ of social structure, unclassifiable persons.” As Victor Turner argues, “as well as the betwixt-and-between state of liminality there is the state of outsiderhood” (cited in Weber 1995: 529). This is a matter “of being either permanently and by ascription set outside the structural arrangements of any given system, or being

situational or temporally set apart, or voluntarily setting oneself apart from the behaviour of status-occupying, role-playing members of that system" (*ibid.*).

The idea of certain types of people as liminal is developed in Maoz Azaryahu's (2005) article on the beach resort of Eilat in southern Israel. While race is not an explicit feature, this study is insightful in thinking about the relationship between people and thresholds. Azaryahu describes various beachgoers who might be considered liminal in their actions and practices: the relaxed, non-time-conscious local *Eilati* groups who lead their lives at a slow(er) tempo; the young Western sojourners, inspired by hippy and beatnik youth cultures, who have been regarded as a distinct symbol of the beach at Eilat; and the more traditional, white European tourists who visited as Eilat became a popular holiday destination. These groups can be distinguished from local Arabs and Israelis who lacked the mobility—or coastal liquidity—to engage in such experiences.

Certain seaside residents in the English context, namely, asylum seekers, refugees, and other undocumented individuals who reside and/or work at the seaside, might be described as liminal personae (Burdsey 2011, 2013). While van Ginkel's (2014) assertion that liminal people are "unclassifiable" is not germane in this context—those individuals and groups that are forcibly ejected from, or prevented entry into, the nation's spaces and polities are *especially* classified—the experiences of many Sunshine Bay (and other seaside) residents revolve around thresholds and borders, both physical and notional. These pertain to broad political issues around citizenship and the right to remain in the UK, in addition to individuals' localised capacities and opportunities for coastal liquidity, manifest in their in/ability to move in, out of, and within seaside spaces (see Chaps. 5, 6, and 7 of this book). They are truly "people on the margin," both geographically and through their "in-between" immigration status; even when they are accepted into British territory, they usually remain excluded from the nation (and local) state, legally and ontologically. Yet, as the story of Sunshine Bay resident, Jimmy, shows (see Chap. 5 of this book), the seaside can also be a site of more substantive transitions from one status to another, both in a political and psychological sense, with regard both to citizenship and identity, and to emotional and affective responses to coastal spaces.

The seaside may hold a liminal or liminoid status for certain “settled” minority ethnic groups as well as those who are recent migrants. Blackpool has become a popular holiday or day-trip destination for British Muslims, particularly from Lancashire and Scotland, during *Eid ul-Fitr* and *Eid ul-Adha* festivals since the early 1990s. With the shifting timing of these celebrations in relation to the Gregorian calendar, Blackpool Pleasure Beach has opened out of season to facilitate them (Walton 2007). Still in Blackpool, yet turning to a work of fiction, notions of liminality are prominent in the 1993 movie, *Bhaji on the Beach*. The film, directed by Gurinder Chadha, follows a group of British Asian women, in various social circumstances, on a day-trip from Birmingham to Blackpool. According to Anna Claydon (2003), the seaside environment is fundamental to the notions of fantasy and the extraordinary contained in the narration and *mise-en-scène* of the film, while for Ana Cristina Mendes (2010: 331), Blackpool “becomes a site of fluidity and possibilities, a kind of interstitial space and place where the overlapping of different cultural positionalities occurs.” In addition, Jez Conolly (2008: 23) points out that in the film:

the Asian women all experience a personal freedom of sorts but as a group they are released to acquire a sense of Britishness denied them by dominant discourses and representations of race. This is truly the beach and seaside environment working as a transformative liminal space, a non-conforming place that allows for tensions to be exposed, true feelings to be expressed and boundaries between race, age and gender to be dissolved.

These observations remind us that if the seaside is to be understood as a multifaceted and liquid site, with multiple readings and experiences, then ideas of liminality will hence be experienced differently. As a break from traditional conditions, structural relations, and normative behaviours of everyday life, the seaside may (still) be a liminal/liminoid space and/or experience when utilised in distinct ways, such as for tourism or for religious rituals, by minority ethnic communities. This does not discount other modes of racialised being at the seaside, reiterating the necessity of contextual explanations. Liminal/liminoid experiences exist alongside much more rooted minority ethnic connections with, and

forms of ontological belonging in, everyday seaside spaces and practices (and their wider dominant claims to Englishness), especially for those communities who reside there.

The relevance of racialised liminality to white communities and their experiences of the English seaside are not redundant either. Indeed, enduring beliefs about this environment as a repository for border-crossing and status-suspending behaviours arguably reinforce aspects of the leisure economy of white, imperial seaside nostalgia and consumption. Consider, for example, the sale of Golly dolls and other racialised (and racist) souvenirs in numerous seaside resorts (Seymour 2012), as well as the historical practice of minstrelsy, which continued at some seaside towns (in modified forms) until the end of the twentieth century. Then there is the (re) production of (neo)imperial and colonial themes, and Orientalist imagery, in many seaside amusements and entertainments (see Chap. 4 of this book). This racialised leisure economy is underpinned by the outdatedness of some seaside places, and a residual desire to consume bygone pleasure activities. It is likely influenced by a failure to appreciate the offensive nature of such elements and viewpoints within a modern multicultural society (see Chap. 7 of this book on seaside dis/engagements with multi-culture). There may also be a perception that such forms of consumption are actually permitted, indeed *encouraged*, in the edgy, liminal spaces of the seaside, representing an attempt to escape the present for an imagined, “whitened” past (Gilroy 2004) before mass migration and perceived “political correctness” around race. This scenario relates primarily to the majority white British community, and we must recognise that *minority* white ethnicities might experience seaside liminality in quite different ways. We shall return to this point in the next chapter.

A final topic to consider in this discussion on race and liminality is that of sun tanning. According to John Fiske (2011: 36), the tan is another way of thinking about thresholds at the beach:

a tan is an anomalous category between *skin* (human, culture) and *fur* (animal, nature). A tanned body is a sign to be read by others, particularly others in the city. It signifies that the wearer, a city dweller, has been into nature and is bringing back both the physical health of the anima and the mental health that contact with nature brings into the artificiality of city life.

While this conceptualisation may not be entirely accurate—“artificial” tanning is now a central part of certain urban corporeal aesthetics and not necessarily related to coastal conditions or climates—exposure to the sun is still linked closely to many seaside practices and spaces (in the UK and beyond).

In a somewhat more grounded analogy, Catherine Cocks (2013: 112) outlines the agentic and transient nature of tanning, pointing out that for white people, a return to one’s original whiteness is always possible. She describes the tanning process as “a kind of ‘brownface,’ a playful experiment in becoming nonwhite that stemmed from, encouraged, and literally embodied a renovated relationship between civilization and nature.” This has important connotations in historical context, where tanning has had significant effects on perceptions of race and ethnicity (McDermott et al. 2003). A pale complexion was desirable, or even necessary, in many Western countries for hundreds of years to uphold the privileges of whiteness and class hierarchies. For instance, in the USA in the early twentieth century, tanned bodies blurred the distinctions of racial categorisation. Other methods, therefore, had to be employed to highlight and strengthen whiteness (Stanonis 2014). As Anthony Stanonis (*ibid.*: 119) points out, “as white Americans darkened their skin tone, blonde hair became a marker of racial whiteness and a definer of beauty within an American culture fixated with sun and sand.” This shifted following the interwar period, as the health benefits derived from regulated exposure to sunlight and tanning—differentiated as a *leisure* form from a life of *working* in the sun (Fiske 2011)—were acknowledged and promoted (Stanonis 2014). The implications of sun tanning are also explored in an influential, semi-autobiographical essay by Sara Ahmed (1997). “The white woman, by sun-tanning,” writes Ahmed, “may appropriate and domesticate the hyper-sexuality which is signified by Black skin, rendering the presence of colour a temporary aberration” (*ibid.*: 161; see also Ahmed 2000; Munt 2015).

## **Racialised Regulation at the Seaside**

In contrast to the aforementioned trends, the seaside is a landscape of stasis and immobility for many other minority ethnic communities. Seaside

spaces “can become inhibitorily sticky, entrapping racialized bodies, fixing them in space, excluding or immobilizing them” (Price 2013: 584). Asylum seeker and refugee groups, for instance, are perhaps least able to engage in liminal behaviours and coastal liquidity because of restrictions on their leisure time, not to mention the ways that their social (among other) activities are constrained, monitored, and policed. These ideas are explored in Hazel Andrews’ and Les Roberts’ (2012a) discussion of Margate. The marginal nature of this famous seaside town is, they argue, especially complex, dictated by a multitude of factors: its physical location on the edge of the nation, its declining significance as a seaside resort for holiday makers, its cultural marginality in relation to hegemonic imaginaries of nation, and the residence of socially excluded groups. Andrews and Roberts (*ibid.*: 3) suggest that “in this respect Margate was home to marginal people, those on the edge, betwixt and between structures of place and identity.” Drawing on their observations of a group of asylum seekers enjoying a summer beach party near the block of flats where they were housed, the authors question the applicability of Rob Shields’ (1991) liminality thesis to the town. A large crowd of local “spectators” was present to “watch” the party, along with a police CCTV van on the road behind the beach, which was monitoring the asylum seekers’ activities (see also Grillo 2005, on public responses to asylum seekers in Saltdean, East Sussex). Andrews and Roberts (2012a: 4) conclude that “the apparent ‘freedoms’ and licence ascribed to the partying migrants were so circumscribed, and subject to such intensive degrees of surveillance and control, that whatever Bakhtinian attributes the beachscape might display, in practice these are rendered all but meaningless.”

Andrews and Roberts expand their analysis to Paweł Pawlikowski’s 2000 film, *Last Resort*, which is set in Margate (although given the fictional pseudonym of Stonehaven). The drama follows a young Russian woman, Tanya, and her son, Artiom, arriving in the UK to meet her English fiancé. When Tanya’s partner does not show up at the airport to meet them, they claim political asylum and are taken to a seaside refugee holding centre in Stonehaven. Tanya develops a relationship with Alfie, a helpful English amusement arcade manager, which progresses from friendship to romance. The powerful film documents a life of being “contained” geographically in the town and a reliance on state-distributed

food vouchers. The desperation of her and Artiom's plight forces Tanya to consider paid Internet sex work, although she does not eventually go through with it. After an attempt to escape from Stonehaven in Alfie's boat, Tanya decides to head back to Russia with Artiom, hitchhiking first in an articulated lorry to London. The landscape of Margate/Stonehaven is framed as "shabby, desolate, marginal (and unequivocally 'off the map' of the tourist gaze)" and thus "connote[s] less a sense of the carnivalesque...than an affective zone of *stasis*" (Andrews and Roberts 2012a: 5; emphasis in original).

Themes of refuge, romance, and seaside coalesce in Jan Dunn's (2005) film *Gypo* as well. Again set in Margate (this time without pseudonym), the movie likewise portrays the precarious and traumatic nature, as well as the convivial and inter-cultural experiences, of refugees' lives at the seaside. Documented through a triptych of perspectives from the same fragmenting working-class white family—daughter, father, and mother—this award-winning Dogme 95 genre film details their varying engagements with Tasha, a Czech Roma refugee: of friendship, dislike and distrust, and companionship and unexpected lesbian love, respectively (see Conolly 2008).

These real-life minority ethnic experiences and symbolic portrayals of Margate are edifying. They remind us that seaside resorts can hold a multitude of meanings—the ideas of fun and play that characterise the tourist scapes of visitors, and also the lives of marginality and exclusion endured by many of the asylum seekers, refugees, and undocumented migrants who live there. In some cases, coastal living can be literally a matter of terror and death. Examples include 23 Chinese migrant workers who drowned after being trapped by the incoming tide while picking cockles @ Morecambe Bay, Lancashire, in 2004 (as portrayed in the opening and closing scenes of Nick Broomfield's 2006 film *Ghosts*; see Conolly 2008); 58 Chinese citizens found dead at the docks in Dover, Kent, in 2000, after being asphyxiated in the sealed container lorry they were travelling in (Kelso and Osborn 2000); 68 migrants from a variety of backgrounds found, fortunately alive, in lorries at the port of Harwich in Essex in 2015 (BBC News 2015b); and nine Vietnamese teenagers who survived hours in the back of a truck to reach Newhaven, East Sussex, that same year (Millard 2015).

Despite the severity of these examples, this is not the experience of all asylum seekers and refugees at the seaside. As described in Chaps. 5, 6, and 7 of this book, the residents of Sunshine Bay sometimes integrate with the majority white community, gain good jobs and qualifications, and experience social mobility and increased quality of life. Furthermore, they engage in coastal leisure pursuits, such as walking, swimming, and fishing. Hazel Andrews and Les Roberts (2012a: 6) conclude, rightly, that “the extent to which liminal spaces provoke counter ideas of social control, terror, surveillance, production and territorialisation, invites an urgent call to re-evaluate the meanings attached to ideas of the ‘liminal’ in studies of mobility.” This proposal is especially pertinent to the English seaside. As the aforementioned experiences all highlight, the relationship between liminality and race is fundamentally contingent on coastal liquidity, manifest in configurations of time, space, immigration status and degree of regulation by the state, and place of residence.

We can, then, draw a couple of conclusions here. One is that the liminality lens appears most applicable to those minority ethnic people who *visit* the seaside. Its use for those who live there, experience the quotidian and often banal elements of seaside life, and establish a sense of ontological belonging, or those whose lives are especially marginal and precarious, is arguably limited (see Andrews 2012). The second important point is that (the earlier discussion notwithstanding) applications of liminality do not always refer appropriately to notions of politics and power, especially the absence of racialised privilege available to those at the margins. Donald Weber (1995: 531), for instance, critiques Victor Turner’s work for portraying “the implicit apolitical consciousness of the ritual liminal, his or her refusal to recognize the historically contingent power coordinates that inhere in positionality” and as lacking “a conception and recognition of culture as *political* contestation” (*ibid.*: 532). This contention is supported by one of the few scholarly considerations of the relationship between race and liminality in contemporary Britain. While recognising that racialised liminality can hold a resistant component and a “perspective advantage” (Ladson-Billings and Donnor 2008: 373), Nicola Rollock (2012) shows that this position is nonetheless dependent on context. She argues that:

the field in which racialised others are operating, the tools or resources at their disposal, the support mechanisms available to them and the relative power of other actors present within the social space or field fundamentally impacts and brings into awkward tension the extent to which occupying a site in the margins becomes advantageous. (*Ibid.*: 66)

Power and politics must be placed at the centre of discussions of race and liminality at the seaside, facilitating an understanding of marginality as a multidimensional process that cross-cuts time and space with social location, identity, and status.

### **Race, the Seaside, and Being Made “Strange”**

Racialised meanings and demarcations of Otherness are mapped and inscribed onto particular seaside spaces, which, through their use and (re)imagination, interpellate particular bodies as (in)organic and (in) authentic members, and facilitate claims as to who belongs and who does not (Alexander and Knowles 2005; Puwar 2004; Sibley 1995). This can have significant implications not only for dominant imaginaries and representations, but also for the ways that minority ethnic communities connect with, and utilise, these spaces (Brahinsky et al. 2014; Finney 2014; see Chaps. 5, 6, and 7 of this volume). Taking this into account, hegemonic interpretations of the minority ethnic resident or visitor at the English seaside can be theorised through the notion of the “stranger.” While many social scientists and philosophers have employed notions of the “stranger” (see Hopkins 2014, for an overview), Sara Ahmed’s (2000) formative analysis is preferred here.

The starting point for understanding constructions of the stranger, argues Ahmed (2000), is that they are not someone yet to be encountered. Instead, the fact that they have been recognised as a stranger in the first place, as opposed to going unrecognised, means that they must have been confronted in this setting (whatever and wherever that may be) already. Indeed, “the stranger comes to be faced as a form of recognition: we recognise somebody *as a stranger*, rather than simply failing to recognise them” (*ibid.*: 21; emphasis in original). The stranger has thus been

“here” before. As a result of previous interactions, placed in the context of the delineation and control of relevant social space(s), they are “*already recognised as not belonging, as being out of place*” (*ibid.*; emphasis in original). For this to occur, the seaside must be demarcated continually, via boundary construction and maintenance, as a place where those who are “not strange” *do* belong. While an anti-essentialist model of whiteness is employed in this book (see in particular Chap. 3), white British communities are not usually rendered strange at the English seaside. Specific (sub)cultural groups might be seen as different or unusual (e.g. Goths at Whitby), but they are not regarded as *strange* in the manner conceptualised here, that is, in relation to their putative ontological connections to, and claims to be of, seaside spaces. They are seen as authentic, legitimate, and permissible. Unlike minority ethnic groups, they are not rendered *bodies out of place* (Douglas 1984). Likewise, although some migrant and/or minority white groups at the seaside might be perceived as “not from here,” they are still positioned as familiar visitors, rather than strangers, and their presence is less likely to generate inquisition or concern.

Critically, Ahmed shows how the stranger influences dominant constructions of the majority group as well. She argues that:

the proximity of strangers within the nation space—that is, *the proximity of that which cannot be assimilated into a national body*—is a mechanism for the demarcation of the national body, a way of defining borders within it, rather than just between it and the imagined and exterior other. (*Ibid.*: 100; emphasis in original)

Thus, although a threat ostensibly to the ontology of whiteness, the presence of racialised Others at the seaside also reinforces and stabilises hegemonic whiteness and its intersections with Englishness/Britishness. Social and political factors create the conditions whereby some individuals are seen as “stranger” compared to others. National identity, ethnicity, phenotype, class, citizenship, and immigration status all adhere to seaside bodies to position embodiments of whiteness and racialised Otherness in a hierarchy, leading to fractured and uneven senses of belonging and mobility, privilege and entitlement (see Chap. 3 of this book). Dominant ideas about race, and popular, political, and media

fears around immigration construct certain strangers as threatening, facilitating racism, xenophobia, and a targeting of the most vulnerable communities (Amin 2012).

Ahmed (2000) links these ideas to the national body politic, but they relate to specific spaces such as neighbourhoods and streets, and other public areas such as beaches. The seaside and coast are places where ideas about nation, especially discourses around threats to its borders and composition, are played out literally: at the borders and hinterlands of the nation, and at the ports, dispersal areas, housing estates, and quaint villages where the presence of migrants is opposed frequently. As Nirmal Puwar (2004: 141) argues:

there is a two-way relationship between spaces and bodies, which locates the coexistence of “different” bodies in specific spaces as “space invaders”: first, over time specific bodies are associated with specific spaces (these could be institutional positions, organisations, neighbourhoods, cities, nations) and, secondly, spaces become marked as territories belonging to particular bodies.

These themes are explored further, in relation to the lives of Sunshine Bay's residents, in Part II of this book.

In proposing this theoretical conceptualisation of the seaside stranger, caution is required to avoid repeating the essentialist, static, and reifying representations of the popular imagination. The experiences of these individuals must be interpreted in a way that is “relational, embodied, and emotional” (Hopkins 2014: 1572), rather than “fetishising, suspicious, and anxious in nature” (*ibid.*: 1582). This is a matter of understanding the *processes* through which strangeness is constructed (Ahmed 2000), via an empirical exposition of people's lives, and by giving voice to their narratives and reflections on being made strange in this environment (Conlon and Gill 2015; Hopkins 2014). As Sara Ahmed (2000) proposes, we must reject an ontology of the stranger, which correlates certain bodies inexorably with strangeness, as figures that have an existence of their own and thus make them objects of fetish. Instead of “cutting off” the stranger “from the histories of their determination” (*ibid.*: 5), “we need to consider how the stranger is an effect of processes of inclusion

and exclusion, or incorporation or expulsion, that constitute the boundaries of bodies and communities" (*ibid.*: 6). There are also potentialities in being strange, and we ought to comprehend the insight and advantages that come from dislocation and being "out-of-place" (Hall and Back 2009). As Chap. 6 of this volume demonstrates, there are seaside spaces and seasons that actually diminish the strangeness of minority ethnic bodies, albeit partially and transiently. They allow a "passing" as part of communities that are deemed to have a more authentic presence and right to be in those environments.

Generic notions of racialised "strangeness" at the seaside are well established in the popular imagination (see Chap. 5 of this book). They are fixed to particular bodies, creating essentialist constructions that conceal difference and intersectionalities. This book challenges this position. It shows that a blanket label of strangeness is not just marginalising and stigmatising, but also that it obscures the multiple affective dispositions, relations, and affiliations of minority ethnic residents at the English seaside. Like Sara Ahmed (2000), this book proposes that we need to view notions of organic belonging, authenticity, and strangeness at the seaside as *processes*, and to see them as relative to particular periods, power dynamics, and landscapes, rather than static elements fixed to people's bodies. Our task, again following Ahmed (2000), is to understand strangers in seaside environments and make them "less strange" without reifying their existence or denying and assimilating their difference. This must be part of the glocal politics of social justice and solidarity at/of the coast forwarded in the Preface to this book (and returned to in Chap. 8).

This chapter has provided a broad conceptual and theoretical mapping of social science and humanities approaches to the seaside. We now move to a more explicit consideration of the racialisation of *space* and *place* at the English seaside, and an analysis of the significance of the coast in extending our understanding of the contemporary cultural politics of race.

# 3

## Between the City and the Sea: Race, Ethnicity, and Space at the Periphery

### Introduction: Studying Race at the Seaside

Sociological and geographical work on race and the English seaside is scant. Research on how seaside environments (re)produce cultures and structures of racialised exclusion and sustain white privilege lags well behind investigations into similar matters in the countryside and other provincial spaces. A recent mapping of “new geographies of multicultural residency” in the UK details the range of landscapes being subjected to contemporary critical (spatial) analysis of race (Neal et al. 2013). Yet, while attention is paid to “multicultural suburbs, ‘ordinary’ towns and cities, urban spaces of superdiversity, and rural spaces” (*ibid.*: 312), the seaside is, again, conspicuous by its absence.

There are a handful of important sociological contributions that refer to ethnicity and the seaside in England (Gaine 2007; Grillo 2005; Millington 2005, 2008, 2010), but the context of being on the coast is not exactly fundamental to their analyses and they do not interrogate the seaside *conceptually* (see Munt 2015, for a notable exception).

Although these studies explore how issues of peripherality might influence social situations and racialised relations, the seaside setting itself, as a material or symbolic space, is not especially germane to their arguments. Moreover, these investigations focus primarily on local discourses about, and responses to, the immigration of asylum seekers and refugees, leaving the experiences of other racialised seaside communities unexplored. Epistemologically, they address negative sentiment and opposition to immigration within majority white communities, but they do not include the testimonies of minority ethnic seaside residents. They are valuable, nonetheless, for they all disrupt dominant ideas about the seaside as a racially neutral locale in which race is absent, and where social structures and relations are not racialised.

The omission of the seaside from academic scholarship on “new” spaces of multiculture reflects a failure to recognise the seaside as a racialised environment in other bodies of knowledge. From policy interventions on social exclusion to popular memories, narratives, and imaginaries, race is rendered plainly absent at the English seaside. The reasons for this oversight are manifold, and the factors that erase race from different dominant knowledges and ontologies of the seaside are not necessarily the same. It is, of course, not possible here to uncover all the reasons why the seaside has been neglected both in scholarship and in policy documentation on social exclusion at the coast. The more pressing and viable point is to insist for its relevance within this body of work. In addition, a pertinent and productive task is to think about the processes through which race and racism have been erased from the *popular* imagination at the seaside. To be precise, it is not just necessary to establish *how* and *why* the racialised nature of this environment is ignored; rather, the analysis must proceed from the realisation that this unawareness around race contributes actively to the racialisation and whiteness of the environment in the first place. This conundrum forms the basis of the discussion in this chapter. First, we need to consider briefly the relations between space and place at the seaside, and the manner in which race operates as a spatial regime of power.

## Finding a Space for Race at the Seaside

In their account of multiculture in public green spaces, Sarah Neal et al. (2015: 463) note that:

as migration processes and formations of multiculture have become more complex as well as more dispersed in the 21<sup>st</sup> century, there has been a return to geography and a recognition of the importance of “placing” studies that examine the impact of increasing cultural difference in everyday social relations.

The seaside is one of many sites where cultural differences, racial histories, and the dynamics of space and place are negotiated through quotidian social relations. Race is always spatialised, and through spaces of bodies, ideologies, and practices, the landscapes of the seaside perform as sites of racial articulation. This chapter begins by outlining some of the fundamental principles that influence the spatial perspective adopted in this book. Importantly, in line with the notion of coastal liquidity—the mobile, relational, multidimensional, and unfinished aspects of the seaside and the lives of its residents—this framework itself recognises the various conceptualisations and multiple readings of the seaside. Moreover, it shows how ideas of space cohere not just with forms of privilege and prejudice, but also with practices of resistance and subversion, contributing to the re/production of racialised social relations in what Divya Tolia-Kelly (2010: 14) calls “a post-colonial politics of landscape, representation and power.”

This book establishes that as an archetypal leisure space of happiness, fun, play, and escapism, the English seaside is perceived and represented widely as a benign, neutral, monolithic social space. It is deemed to possess, as Tim Edensor (1998: 15) puts it, a “transparent reality.” These assertions are enduring and influential in creating commonsensical ideologies that conceal the role of the seaside in maintaining the existing social *status quo* (Low and Lawrence-Zúñiga 2003), not least in relation to racial dynamics. As Katherine McKittrick (2006: xv) points out:

this naturalisation of “difference” is, in part, bolstered by the ideological weight of transparent space, the idea that space “just is”, and the illusion that the external world is readily knowable and not in need of evaluation, and that what we see is true.

Beyond their hegemonic ascription, spaces are not inactive entities though. As described in Chap. 1 of this book, they are fluid, erratic, and contested. They need to be understood in political, cultural, and historical contexts, and located in a scalar manner that appreciates the inter-relations between the local, national, and global (Massey 1994; Rodman 2003).

This chapter cannot do justice to the thorny and disputed attempts to define and distinguish between space and place within sociology and human geography over recent decades (see, e.g., Cresswell 2004; Hubbard et al. 2004; Lefebvre 1991, for useful overviews). This relationship is especially complicated in the present context given that the English seaside can be conceived of as both a *space* (and, in turn, consisting itself of particular spaces, e.g., a beach, a pier, an amusement arcade) and a *place*. It should suffice here (reiterating the discussion of Chap. 1 of this book) to assert that places are understood as dynamic, indefinite, and unfinished entities. They emerge from social relations, arrangements of power, and the attribution of meanings, and they comprise multiple spatialities, temporalities, and identities (Lefebvre 1991; Massey 1994).

Individual seaside resorts become constructed as recognisable places through their association with particular properties, meanings, and attributes, and the ways in which their component social spaces are constructed, inhabited, dominated, resisted, and mediated. Through a “geography of difference,” Rob Shields (2014: 31) argues that places become designated according to the behaviours and activities that are deemed in/appropriate within them. This develops his earlier contention that “sites are never locations. Rather they are sites for someone and of something” (Shields 1991: 6). Different types of bodies populate these various sites both as active producers and recipients of spaces and their social relations. Shields (2014: 33) argues that:

people learn the comportment associated with a place as well as with their social status and gender ... Bodies are “spaced”: the performative carriage

of the body, the gestures, actions and rhythms of everyday routines deemed socially appropriate to a particular site are etched onto place and into the somatic memory of individual inhabitants.

Race and whiteness are non-existent in Shields' theorisations of the seaside though (perhaps, understandable, given his historical focus on nineteenth-century Brighton). His otherwise eminent contribution sheds little light on how race is spatialised and space is racialised. We need, then, to consider more closely the relationship between race, space, and place, and to think through how these intersections and interactions can help us to uncover the racial dynamics of/in seaside environments.

The value of a spatial dimension in studies of race has been long acknowledged, especially its capacity to uncover trends and phenomena that are overlooked by other conceptual approaches (Knowles 2003). Claire Alexander and Caroline Knowles (2005: 2) point out that "space is a physical environment that materially inscribes racialised meanings, exclusions and dangers; that is claimed and transformed through its use and imagination." They demonstrate how space inexorably both *produces* and is the *outcome* of historical and current social relations and activities (see also Delaney 2002; Lefebvre 1991). The result is that:

space always contains multiple temporalities, just as it sustains multiple and contradictory uses, meanings, associations with different kinds of people. Space both reveals social priorities—whose lives and activities matter most—and provides for alternate voices, uses and versions of what matters. Space simultaneously sustains the existing racial order and offers the prospect of its subversion and reordering. (Alexander and Knowles 2005: 4–5)

There are implications for the politics of scholarship and the pursuit of social justice as well as analytical precision. As Brooke Neely and Michelle Samura (2011: 1934) argue, "at a time when the term 'post-racial' is used to signal a supposed decline in the significance of race, a spatial perspective can provide a particularly useful lens and language for locating and understanding persistent racial processes."

Ricky Lee Allen (1999: 257; emphasis in original) points out that "spatialities are neither real nor imagined, but are always both 'real-and-imagined', and *more*." As demonstrated in the previous chapter, the seaside can best

be understood via a combination of material, symbolic, representational, emotional, and haptic frames (see also McKittrick 2006; Millington 2005; Nayak 2011). A spatial perspective allows us to synthesise these elements, and to consider its social construction in the dominant imagination; literally, what the seaside is known *as* and *for* (Hetherington 1997; Millington 2005; Shields 1991). The seaside is, after all, a landscape of “the *physical environment, embodiment, sociality, memory, and image*” (Bærenholdt et al. 2004: 32; emphasis in original). It is underpinned by pervasive narratives and stubborn social constructions, both as a whole and in relation to individual resorts. Visual and literary representations are important here, while national and local media paint particular portrayals of seaside resorts. These contribute to the place-images (specific images or representations linked to a place) and the place-myths (stories that forge broader, holistic representations of a locale) of the seaside (Shields 2014: 168). Dominant constructions of place may resist material lived realities. Over the past quarter century, English resorts have often been framed resolutely around discourses of decline, even though the stigma attached to some seaside towns may be out of kilter with the perspectives of residents and visitors (Mah 2014b; McDowell 1999; Millington 2005; Shields 1991).

A final point to reiterate here is that the seaside is an *unfixed* and *unfinished* space and place (Massey 1994). As Doreen Massey (2005: 10) proposes, social space is relative, scalar, in process, political, strategic, and facilitates a “contemporaneous plurality.” Space is a site of ideological struggle where power is re-produced, but dominant structures and relations are also challenged in counter-hegemonic struggles and resistances. Drawing on Henri Lefebvre (1991), Michael Friedman and Cathy van Ingen (2011: 96) argue that:

despite the efforts of dominant groups, representations of space are not necessarily determinative, as within spaces of representation, people live their lives, express themselves and, perhaps, use spaces in ways different from the purposes of designers, and, in so doing, transform a space, its meanings and uses.

In line with this way of thinking, the perspective of coastal liquidity, commensurate with a spatial approach to race, more generally (Neely and Samura 2011), allows for resistance and subversion, as well as the

reproduction and stabilisation of the *status quo* at the seaside. Indeed, as a *political* intellectual project, coastal liquidity actively *encourages* and *engages in* defiance of dominant racialised classifications, constructions, power relations, and forms of control.

## Racialised Ontologies of Landscape and Belonging

The 2011 Census (re)established that the vast majority of minority ethnic communities in the UK continue to live and work in towns and cities. In terms of spatial patterns of settlement and residence, this survey demonstrated a narrative of geographical continuity, from the mass migrations from the Caribbean and Indian subcontinent in the twentieth century to more novel forms of global movement since the turn of the millennium. A closer and historically comparative examination of the evidence shows that this a fluid picture though. The demographic makeup of these urban centres, and the processes and trajectories through which their inhabitants have “arrived” or grown up there, have shifted considerably. More significantly for our purposes here, some of the most notable contemporary developments in relation to migration patterns and destinations, and key trends around localised intercultural relations, are occurring in very different types of place away from the metropolis.

We are witnessing, to be sure, increasingly complex and nuanced forms of multiculture. These appear in innovative *social* and *spatial* arrangements that are “intensely heterogeneous, labile, uncertain” (Neal et al. 2013: 309). Distinctive patterns of transnational migration, shifting labour markets, asylum dispersal strategies, and the geographical mobilities of some “long-term settled minority ethnic” (Hickman et al. 2008) populations mean that issues related to integration, conflict, conviviality, and prejudice between different ethnic groups are no longer purely the preserve of towns and cities (Catney et al. 2011). They can be located increasingly in non-urban areas that might be regarded as “out of the way” places (Nayak 2011) or non-traditional “gateways of immigration” (Goździak and Martin 2005) too. These “new” locations may not be able to match towns and cities in terms of their absolute numbers of minority ethnic groups, but relative to their own particular contexts and historical

unfamiliarity with multiculturalism, the changes are important nonetheless. In fact, as Sarah Neal et al. (2013: 313) argue, “distinct and different migration trajectories may be particularly apparent in newly multicultural spaces.”

While there has been a modest, but discernible, shift within the contemporary sociology and geography of race towards examining “new” multicultural spaces, the dominant location, historically, for spatial explorations of race has been the urban landscape. Ever since British social scientists embraced the work of the Chicago School in their own contemplations on the postwar “race relations problematic,” the vast majority of studies on the identities and experiences of Britain’s minority ethnic communities have focused on urban locations. Following John Rex and Robert Moore’s (1967) pioneering study into “the class struggle for housing” amongst minority ethnic groups in Birmingham, England’s biggest cities—London, Leeds, Bradford, Liverpool, Bristol, and Manchester, along with Birmingham—have all been analysed comprehensively (see Kesten et al. 2011; Knowles 2003; Nayak 2010, for overviews of this literature). With renewed interest in notions of urban multiculturalism, community cohesion, and conviviality (Gilroy 2004) at the turn of the twenty-first century, influential ethnographies have addressed the intricate interplay of racialised social relations in particular areas and neighbourhoods within these cities (see, e.g., Alexander 2000; Back 1996; Dench et al. 2006; Hall 2013; Hewitt 2005; James 2015b; Judah 2016; Nayak 2003). A more recent trend comprises in-depth examinations of the “everyday” microsites of racialised urban spaces, such as streets, road junctions, parks, cafés, markets, churches, and housing estates (see, e.g., Gidley 2013; Hall 2013, 2015b; Jackson 2014; Jones et al. 2015; Knowles 2013; Koch and Latham 2012; Neal et al. 2015; Rhys-Taylor 2013).

The dominance of the urban lens in the sociology and geography of race in the UK is predictable and rational. Urban landscapes are not only home to the vast majority of Britain’s minority ethnic populations, but also sites for many of their most significant and prevalent achievements, struggles, and events, and the settings for some of the most pronounced patterns of ethno-racial group dynamics. Yet, for some scholars, the modern city appears to be the sole locale for performances of multiculturalism and enactments of racism. This perspective fails to engage critically with the dialectics between the “urban” and the “rural/countryside” that make

respective sets of racialised meanings possible. Academic framings of minority ethnic lives purely in relation to the problems and potentialities of urban living reify and pathologise the connections between people and place, while at the same time they deny the reality or likelihood of their experiences beyond this setting (Glick Schiller and Schmidt 2016). As Rupa Huq (2006: 305) states, “common perceptions of ethnic minority peoples in Britain situate them as residing in inner city locations, languishing in multiple deprivation districts; condemned to play out their lives as ghetto dwellers.” The flipside of this is that connections between minority ethnicities and non-urban settings such as the English seaside become an ontological impossibility. More insidiously, the tendency to position minority ethnic communities exclusively within the metropolis also reflects how “the ‘inner city’ has long been constituted as the key symbolic location for representing racialised criminality, pathologies of black and minority family life and the centre of ‘corrosive alien cultures’” (Back 1998: 59). This portrayal contrasts directly with the seaside, which is constructed as innocent, safe, stable, and fundamentally white.

Other studies have generated more favourable readings of the associations between race and the city, but still end up presenting minority ethnic communities as static, immobile, and the passive “product” of their environments. Katherine McKittrick and Clyde Woods (2007: 6) refer to this as a process of “naturalizing racial difference in place,” whereby “identifying the ‘where’ of blackness in positivist terms can reduce black lives to essential measurable ‘facts’ rather than presenting communities that have struggled, resisted, and significantly contributed to the production of space.” Minority ethnic bodies become discursively naturalised in, and “fixed” to, certain spaces and places in the popular imagination, denying their agency and connections to alternative landscapes such as the seaside (Brahinsky et al. 2014; Finney 2014; McKittrick 2006; Millington 2005; Nayak 2010; see Chap. 5 of this volume). The predominance of these perspectives has meant that, until relatively recently, issues and problems in non-urban contexts have been marginalised. Neil Chakraborti (2010: 501) states that “the preoccupation amongst researchers for focusing upon environments with larger minority ethnic communities has left the subject of rural racism as something of a ‘sideshow’ to the main event of British race relations.” Indeed, Julian Agyeman and Rachel Spooner (1997) argue that some academic research and policy interventions have

actually sustained the demotic perception that racism is not a problem outside towns and cities.

One of the principal aims of this book is to trouble the popular perception that minority ethnic communities are external to the “everyday” existence of the English seaside (i.e. that they are merely tourists or itinerant migrant workers employed in leisure sectors or service industries). This is a matter of disrupting and decoupling “the affective ‘chaining’ of race to particular bodies, sites, and landscapes” (Nayak 2010: 2371; see also Mahtani 2014). In dissociating the links between the seaside, whiteness, and white corporeality, this book sheds light on the lives, and introduces the voices, of racialised Others who provide their interpretations of race, multiculture, and whiteness in this setting (Roediger 1999). In doing so, it foregrounds the “geometries of power” (Massey 2005) and forms of coastal liquidity that influence socio-historical processes of migration and community formation, and which dictate the movements of minority ethnic residents in, out of, and within seaside spaces.

Another broader objective of this book is to progress beyond the dominant urban/rural binary found habitually in much sociological and geographical literature on race, place, and identity. If we are to account fully for the diverse ways in which race is felt, lived, and experienced across different geographical contexts, it is essential to employ an interpretative frame that examines “third spaces” (Bhabha 1994) of multiculture that fall “in-between” the city and the countryside (Catney et al. 2011; Delaney 2002; Kesten et al. 2011; Nayak 2010). The spaces of the seaside are essential components in such a shift in thinking, for they can enhance our understanding of race, space, and place substantively. First, we need to reflect on what we know so far about race outside the city.

## **Race and Space Beyond the City: The Countryside, Suburbia, and Other “New” Locations of Multiculture**

In response to the overarching privileging of the urban milieu in spatial analyses of race and racism, over the past two decades, a distinct body of scholarship has focused instead on countryside environments. While

it references frequently the shorthand term of “rural racism,” this work has examined the complex interlocking patterns, social interactions, and meaning making around race and space in rural settings as well as the discriminatory outcomes. In what might be regarded as its “first wave,” this research makes apparent the exclusion of minority ethnic groups from the countryside, an environment which, like the seaside, is home to an overwhelmingly white British population. It details how the physical access and mobility of minority ethnic groups within rural spaces is discouraged and restricted. It also shows their difficulties in forging meaningful emotional and affective relationships with the countryside, resulting from dominant forms of rural ideology, narrative, and memory, which promote racialised and exclusionary discourses of authenticity and organic belonging (Kinsman 1995; Vega 2015). The hegemonic whiteness that pervades rural landscapes is sustained by the power and political dominance of the white middle- and upper-classes, which enable them to control images and representations of the countryside (Agyeman and Spooner 1997). Kye Askins (2006: 149) points out that “the English countryside continues to be interpreted as the ‘real’ England for ‘real’ English people, in a construction that appropriates ‘real’ as ‘white’, excluding a range of groups from accessing the countryside, both physically and emotionally.” Evidence also indicates that the countryside—regarded as a tranquil locale of innocence, nostalgia, tradition, and community—is considered by some white people as representing an “escape” from the multiculturalism and *multiculturalism* found in many of Britain’s towns and cities (Chakraborti and Garland 2004a; Darby 2000; Jay 1992; Neal 2002), reflecting the pervasiveness and durability of hegemonic spatial regimes of race in these respective environments.

Research on rural racism demonstrates that living in a country village or visiting a National Park, for example, can entail experiences of prejudice, harassment, and exclusion for minority ethnic communities, as well as more subtle racial microaggressions, such as being stared at or having their presence questioned (Sue et al. 2007). Issues around cultural and geographical isolation, and community formation and mobilisation, can be especially pronounced in these environments (Chakraborti and Garland 2004b; Neal 2002; Neal and Agyeman 2006a; Ray and Reed 2005; see Chap. 5 of this volume). Furthermore, awareness around mul-

ticulture, and the lives and identities of minority ethnic groups, can be limited among some service providers and policymakers. As Sarah Neal et al. (2013: 313) remark, these locations “tend to be ‘blank’ spaces in terms of the policy experience of multicultural and cohesion interventions and in terms of migratory settlement and the social capital of minority communities.” Yet, these spaces are anything but empty in terms of the imprint of existing racial grammar around whiteness. The outcome is that racism can be underestimated, mitigated, or denied in rural spaces (Chakraborti and Garland 2004a; Henderson and Kaur 1999; Neal and Agyeman 2006c).

Dominant representations of the English countryside are inherently unstable though. They are subject to contestation and change. This results in “newer, dynamic and shifting boundaries of rural social relations that stand apart from the whitened small-scale, orderliness of the inert sanitised countryside” (Neal and Agyeman 2006b: 8). Accordingly, a more recent “wave” of rural scholars has established that the positionings and experiences of minority ethnic groups in the countryside are heterogeneous, complex, mobile, and fluid. Affection, desire, and a sense of entitlement and belonging are expressed commonly alongside, and sometimes despite, experiences of exclusion. There are “multiple relationships embedded in visitor engagements” (Tolia-Kelly 2007: 329), and this range of identifications “disrupts any ‘easy’ reading of attachment and belonging in the English countryside, and points to the need to think identity and belonging *relationally*” (Askins 2006: 152; emphasis in original). Gradual changes to local policy and resource infrastructure are also apparent in some non-urban areas, which are beginning to account for increasingly diverse residential populations (Williams and Johnson 2010). These shifts are not unique to the countryside; they can be found at the seaside too. This is made evident in Chaps. 5, 6, and 7 of this book, where the empirical data unsettle conventional interpretations of minority ethnic relationships with the meanings and spaces of the English seaside and show that it can be a locus of progressive possibilities.

In 2015, statistics on the controversial and discriminatory police policy of stopping and searching black people (usually young men) established that the highest rates are found in the predominantly rural counties of southern England. In fact, the most frequent incidences were in the

coastal counties of Dorset, Norfolk, and Sussex (Morris 2015). This trend confirms other research that shows the habitual occurrence of racism in majority white, non-urban environments (Derbyshire 1994; Garland and Chakraborti 2006; Ray and Read 2005). Nevertheless, racism can evidently go unacknowledged, or be trivialised, in these spaces. Part of the explanation lies in the comparatively small size of minority ethnic groups living in them, underscoring the representational outcomes of power dynamics between racialisation, bodies, and space. As Sarah Neal (2002: 448) argues, this perception “is premised on a notion that it is the presence of black and minority ethnic populations which creates a ‘race problem’ and therefore without this presence the issue of race is not relevant.” According to Neil Chakraborti and Jon Garland (2004a: 386), this state of affairs can be conceptualised as a racial “double-bind.” On one hand, the small size of respective minority ethnic communities and the dominance of “no problem here” rhetoric—itself reinforced by low reporting rates of racism—mean that policymakers and service providers can be slow to respond appropriately to individual and group needs. On the other, because the Otherness of (certain) minority ethnic people is more “visible” in majority white environments, levels of discrimination can increase, with racialised bodies constructed as corporeal markers of undesirability and non-belonging (Neal and Agyeman 2006a).

In recent years, calls have come from the sociology and cultural geography of multiculture in the UK to look beyond the urban–rural binary (Catney et al. 2011; Kesten et al. 2011; Nayak 2011). Growing interest has emerged in the suburbs and fringes of urban areas. As Rupa Huq (2013a: 6) suggests in relation to the British context, “compared to the copious body of work that constitutes ‘urban sociology’ looking at disorder and divisions, the suburbs are relatively under-researched for the reason that they are considered to be devoid of problems and instead fairly peaceable and self-sufficient.” By way of response, Huq (2013a, 2013b) demonstrates that suburbia is actually an extremely informative locus for understanding multiculture (among other things) in contemporary Britain, and her work makes an original contribution to the social and cultural study of race, space, and place (see, e.g., Gregory 1999; Haynes 2006; Kruse and Sugrue 2006; Thangaraj 2015, on comparisons in the US context). Claire Dwyer et al. (2013: 408) likewise note that recent

scholarship on the suburbs “has questioned uncritical assumptions about their cultural homogeneity, particularly in terms of racial and ethnic identity.” They add that “a dominant image of suburbia as a racially homogeneous ‘white’ space, a viable generalisation for mid-twentieth century America, now does no justice to its complex social geographies” (*ibid.*). Important empirical work on multiculturalism, suburbs, and urban fringes has also explored London’s outer boroughs, such as Newham (James 2015a) and Redbridge (Saha and Watson 2014; Watson and Saha 2013), while Anoop Nayak’s (2010: 2371) account of space, identity, and power in the suburban West Midlands provides a critical exploration of how “everyday spaces are ‘whitened’ and come to perform as ‘white territory.’”

Studies have addressed locations with more limited histories of multicultural populations too. Many of the themes developed in this research link closely to those that materialise within this book. The practicalities of neighbourliness and locality that emerge in the contexts of migration and everyday racialisation are addressed in Umet Erel’s (2011) study of Peterborough. Through a scalar model of belonging and inclusion, Erel’s work reminds us that, despite their “newness,” multiculturalism and integration can quickly become ordinary, commonplace, and even desirable in peripheral locations. Likewise, Jamie Kesten et al.’s (2011) examination of schooling, and youth and religious centres in Milton Keynes shows the ordinary, prosaic nature of multiculturalism and integration. Alison Stenning and Stuart Dawley (2009: 274) analyse white migrants from European Accession countries in Newcastle-upon-Tyne. They demonstrate the changes that occur in a city in a “region with little history of in-migration but...which has recently been animated by the challenge of attracting and harnessing migration as a stimulus for labour market transformation and regional development.” Peterborough and Dungannon provide case studies in Mary Hickman et al.’s (2008) report on immigration and social cohesion in relation to family, education, work, and housing, evidencing exploitative and violent employment practices, and animosities between migrants and other groups. Jon Burnett’s (2011a, b, 2012) observations on Peterborough, Plymouth, and Stoke-on-Trent reveal the problems of race, hate crime found in smaller, more provincial locations. Katharine Tyler’s (2004) ethnography of a former coal-mining town in Leicestershire uncovers white residents’ perceptions of difference, particularly the responses of

young adults to the racist attitudes of friends and relatives. Larry Ray and Kate Read (2005) use semi-rural Kent as the setting for their empirical exposition of the fluidity of racialisation in community formation processes. A more overt consideration has been given to whiteness in provincial places as well, by Ben Rogaly and Becky Taylor (2007) in Norwich, and by Steve Garner (2013) in Portishead, Somerset.

The literature on rural and suburban spaces of multiculture in the UK overviewed here opens up a progressive intellectual space in which to discuss race issues outside the city, while highlighting the dialectical relations of race-making between urban and non-urban landscapes. Yet, this intellectual journey has only gone so far; in other words, it has stopped at the sight of the sea and sand and has refused to dip its analytical toe in the racialised spaces of the seaside and coast. Thus, while this research undoubtedly contributes to the background, impetus, and approach of this book, its limitations are also evident. Given the commonality in their patterns of enduring and excluding whiteness, relatively rapid shifts in their ethnic make-up, and the presence of popular discourses and performances of racialised Englishness and postcolonial melancholia (Gilroy 2004) that erase cases of racism, a relational dialogue on race and racialisation between *seaside*, rural and suburban landscapes is timely and exigent. Studies of multiculture at the seaside can learn much from rural-based scholarship and the converse is equally true.

## All White by Me? Dominant Racial Imaginaries and In/visibilities of Whiteness at the English Seaside

### Ethnic and Racial Demographics at the Seaside

Demographic analysis of the 2011 Census by the Office for National Statistics (2014) establishes a number of characteristics of seaside resorts in England and Wales that are germane to the present discussion. In 2011, a total of 6.2 million people, 11 % of the overall population of England and Wales, lived in coastal communities (*ibid.*: 4). Like all of its preceding iterations, this Census also confirmed that the populations of

English and Welsh seaside towns are overwhelmingly white. On average, white people make up just over 95 % of coastal communities, compared to a figure of 86 % of England and Wales as a whole. In over half of coastal locations, the white population is at least 98 % (*ibid.*: 9), with the highest concentrations found in the northern English traditional seaside resorts or industrial areas of Workington, Peterlee, Seaham, Redcar, and Bridlington (*ibid.*: 10). Perhaps, unsurprisingly, those coastal places with more numerically significant minority ethnic populations are *cities* by the sea, such as Brighton and Hove, Portsmouth and Southampton (and their immediate adjacent environs, such as Saltdean and Portslade-by-Sea near Brighton), rather than the types of resort town included in this book. The next highest numbers of seaside minority ethnic residents can be found in university towns like Aberystwyth and Bangor in Wales (*ibid.*: 10).

These statistics are influenced inexorably by the peripherality and relative geographical isolation of seaside resorts from the larger urban centres, which has meant that minority ethnic communities have not settled there in significant numbers historically. More nuanced, intersectional factors, such as age, play a part too. For instance, most seaside towns have considerably higher proportions of older age residents, especially retirees, and this demographic is disproportionately white within the UK. Alongside this, there is a discernible outward movement of young people (Local Government Association Coastal Special Interest Group 2014). The stability and “stickiness” (Saldanha 2007) of majority white populations and racial cartographies in these places are also influenced by the type and demands of labour markets, as well as an entrenched absence of the appropriate cultural infrastructure, social services, and community and kinship networks that attract and support minority ethnic communities. As Chaps. 5, 6, and 7 of this volume explore, there are issues of isolation, marginalisation, and racism—the kind of racial “double-bind” (Chakraborti and Garland 2004a) referred to earlier—that can reduce people’s desire and/or capacity to live in these places. Finally, symbolic factors construct the seaside as a haven for “traditional” and “nostalgic” worldviews, and even promote a racialised and regressive interpretation of Englishness (see later in the text). These ideologies and their practical manifestations can restrict the multicultural presence in seaside towns,

and inhibit emotional and affective relationships by minority ethnic groups with this environment.

The coastal liquidity of seaside spaces and places means that change is afoot though. Although the fact that English seaside towns still possess overwhelmingly white British populations is incontestable, many locations are becoming slowly, but surely, more diverse. For example, in Sunshine Bay, the White British population in 2011 was approximately five percentage points lower than Census figures from the previous decade. This is what makes the seaside such an important site for sociological and geographical investigation—the fluid and dynamic intersections between an inveterate “white space” and an emerging multicultural presence.

Shifting ethnic and racial (and national) dynamics in traditionally white spaces is underpinned, at least in part, by a trend for migrants from European Accession countries (as well as other sending countries) to settle increasingly in peripheral areas (Office for National Statistics 2014). This movement is often dictated by labour demands (which, at the seaside, are highly seasonal, although less so at the industrialised and militarised coast), but it is also influenced by the policies of asylum seeker and refugee dispersal (Catney et al. 2011). Christina Beatty et al. (2008) report that the majority of districts in England with seaside resorts in their administrative boundaries have a population of overseas migrant workers that is lower than the national average. The authors acknowledge that this latter figure is skewed by the population of London. As a result, they suggest that the actual figure of migrant workers in seaside towns is likely to be commensurate with other regions outside the capital. The seaside resorts with the largest numbers of migrant workers (all with more than 3 % of working age adults) are Bournemouth, Brighton, Great Yarmouth, Arun (Bognor Regis and Worthing), Eastbourne, Blackpool, and Southend-on-Sea (*ibid.*: 46). There is an interesting southern slant here (contrasting with the aforementioned northern seaside whiteness), and being close to London is clearly important. Beatty et al.’s (2008) figures are limited, however, as they rely on new National Insurance (NI) registrations by non-UK nationals. These exclude migrants with an existing NI number, that is, those who have worked in the UK before. These figures also fail to account for internal movements within the UK, for workers may have registered elsewhere before moving to the seaside

(Migration Observatory at the University of Oxford 2015). Moreover, these statistics cannot cover those undocumented workers employed in various industries (such as those in Sunshine Bay in the catering trade and informal economies) who are not picked up in “official” forms of data collection and monitoring (Bloch and McKay 2016).

Within the literature that explores and maps population shifts in new multicultural spaces, an analytical frame of relatively large-scale global migration tends to dominate and garner most attention. This is understandable, given that such transnational flows are the major driver of change in many of these locations, are often substantive temporally, and entail a range of significant networks and trajectories. They have particular political currency at the current time too, given the widespread demonisation and securitisation of certain migrant groups. However, in the peripheral spaces of the English seaside, immigration from outside the UK is just one of a number of processes contributing to the dynamic presence of multiculturalism. As Chaps. 5, 6, and 7 of this book explore, changes to seaside towns are also a matter of minority ethnic geographical mobility *within* the UK, in the context of domestic economic and labour patterns, together with the impact of minority ethnic lifecycles (e.g. patterns of residence during retirement). Growing populations of young, locally born minority ethnic residents are evidently contributing to the changing demographic make-up as well. The residence of highly paid professionals, students and school children, entrepreneurs and business owners, retirees, asylum seekers, and refugees have all contributed to emerging minority ethnic communities in Sunshine Bay, for instance, at different times over recent decades. It is impossible to privilege the impact of any one group. We need to acknowledge their cumulative effects and the multiple flows and processes—global, national, and local—that are taking place. Changes to seaside towns can only be understood if we move beyond descriptive demographic data, with any notion of change needing to encapsulate a qualitative element. These are, of course, harder to track and substantiate, and can often rely on a subjective, emotional, and affective categorisation—literally the “feel” of the place—rather than any systematic mapping (see Chap. 6 of this book). They are, nonetheless, critical ways of thinking about these resorts.

## Conceptualising Whiteness at the Seaside

Explaining the lack of recognition given to race, racialisation, and racism in the popular seaside imagination is not straightforward. The enduring “positive” qualities associated with the seaside certainly play a part, such as being a place of fun, innocence, and escapism; the “negative” elements associated with urban milieu and their populations, such as social exclusion, prejudice, and inter-group conflict (Back 1998; Huq 2006), are believed to be alien to coastal environments. It is the overwhelming *whiteness* of the English seaside that is most influential in the erasure of race from the hegemonic collective memory and spatial regime of this setting though. The idea of the *collective* memory is important, for it underpins forms of representation and narrative that dictate how the seaside continues to be remembered, known, and foreseen (Finney 2014). Photographic and pictorial imagery of the English seaside are particularly effective here, through “whitened” portrayals of its residents, visitors, subcultures, and values (see, e.g., *Guardian* 2008; Mikhailov 2005; see Waller’s 2014, 2015, collections for a handful of photographic references to racialised bodies and seaside cultures). This does not mean that individual experiences necessarily corroborate these imaginaries. All of the people who participated in this project had their own, sometimes markedly different, thoughts and stories to tell about race at the seaside, which did not always correspond with its social construction as a white space (see Chaps. 5, 6, and 7 of this book). However, they also recognised that there was little demotic discursive space for their ideas to challenge or disrupt the stubborn popular tropes and images of the seaside. The under-representation of minority ethnic communities at the seaside, a lack of recognition or celebration of their presence and connections (historically or contemporarily), and an epistemological silencing of their voices all contribute to a steadfast whitening of popular imaginaries of/at the coast.

As is the case in other social contexts, dominant understandings of the seaside fail to appreciate that whiteness is an element of broader structures of power, racialisation, and racism, and that the relative absence of racialised bodies is actually a driver and repercussion of whiteness itself. The presence and effects of race in primarily white environments

are rarely recognised in the popular imagination, ensuring that whiteness—the predominant and most visually identifiable subjectivity in such spaces—remains hegemonic, yet unmarked. The possession of a *racial* identity is seen to be the preserve of “visible” minority ethnic (i.e. “non-white”) groups (Dyer 1997). As Steve Garner (2007: 35) remarks:

whiteness for the majority of “white” people is so unmarked that in their eyes, it does not actually function as a *racial* or ethnic identity, at least outside of particular contexts when they might perceive themselves to be in a minority.

This discourse of power and colour evasiveness (McDonald 2009) fails to acknowledge how processes of racialisation can operate through the relative *absence* of minority ethnic groups as well as their presence (Keith 2005; Nayak 2010). Indeed, it is the unawareness of links between whiteness and racialisation in seaside environments that roots, naturalises, and stabilises whiteness in this setting. As Catherine Nash (2003: 640) states, “limiting attention to race to ‘non-white’ spaces is a feature of an unreflexive whiteness, that only sees race through the material markers of ‘non-white’ bodies, thus normalizing both the bodies and spaces of whiteness.”

The power of whiteness, thus, lies in the capacity of its embodied beneficiaries to situate it as universal, normal, stable, and unbefitting examination. As Maurice Berger (2001: 55) argues, “it is precisely this refusal to name whiteness, to assign it meaning, that frees white people from seeing their complicity in the social, cultural, and historical economy of racism.” Critical whiteness scholars have highlighted the illusionary quality of this scenario. They have demonstrated that the *appearance* of a normative and stable whiteness in the popular imagination is a social construction; whiteness can be typified more accurately by “its instabilities, its contradictions and its heterogeneous nature” (Rhodes 2013: 51). These dynamic manifestations and multifarious in/visibilities do not reduce the privileges available to those who embody, inhabit, and perform whiteness, or the ubiquitous marginalising repercussions for those who do not (Ahmed 2004). Whiteness at the seaside operates simultaneously as visible and subjugating to some people, but invisible, normative, and

nostalgic to many more. These forms of visibility and invisibility reside in a relational bind. They “are not simply states or conditions of being. Rather they characterise, express, reflect, or they are the effects of strategic relations” (Goldberg 1997: 82; see also Fleetwood 2010). Critically, it is this paradoxical position of whiteness, together with an associated belief in the ontological impossibility of race as a factor in predominantly white environments, that creates the common perception that racism is not, indeed *cannot be*, an issue at the seaside. This directly impacts the social spatialisation and the acts of place-making, which render it a white landscape.

It is not simply the contention here that the whiteness of the seaside prevents any acknowledgement of the presence and influence of race. An analysis of the seaside actually offers a powerful conceptual and empirical tool for revealing how whiteness operates in practice. The next subsection explores the pluralities of whiteness, while the following one addresses its symbolic properties in relationship with forms of English national identity. As part of the intellectual oeuvre of coastal liquidity, this is a *political* project as much as a scholarly one. It is a case, as Audrey Kobayashi and Linda Peake (2000: 400) suggest, of identifying and interrogating “spaces of silence,” and thus challenging the normativity accorded to “white” landscapes. This can formulate a “discursive critique [that can] be used to transform recognised socio-spatial hegemonies as well as uncover ones that are submerged” (Allen 1999: 258).

To consider whiteness as simply the result, or product, of the numbers or types of people represents a one-dimensional explanation. Whiteness is not simply coterminous with white corporeality and white identities. For Mary McDonald (2009: 9), whiteness is “active, elastic and adaptable,” and so “rather than simply describing what whiteness is, it is more useful to explain what whiteness does.” This is particularly pertinent given the spatial perspective employed here. As alluded to in the previous subsection, an intersectional framework that combines quantitative demographics with more qualitative measures is therefore required. This approach appreciates the configuration of bodies, spaces, structures, and movements, and forms of discourse and representation. Caroline Knowles (2008: 168) highlights that whiteness is both personal and structural, embedded in “the fabric of people and places, the dialogues of their inter-connection,

in the lived performances” and “made into (human and spatial) matter in the quotidian scenes and interactions of daily existence.” It is these diverse issues that emerge in relation to whiteness at/of the seaside: the people, the way that this environment is represented in popular culture, its infrastructure, the racialised gaze, and examples of tourist imagery (Burdsey 2011; see Chap. 4 of this book). In short, we need to start from a position that conceptualises the seaside, like the countryside, as “a repository of white values, ideologies and lifestyles” (Hubbard 2005b: 12), but one that also understands this whiteness as heterogeneous, liquid, and relative to other forms of racialised subjectivity.

## **Intersectionalities of Whiteness at the Seaside**

In line with the aforementioned strategy earmarked by Audrey Kobayashi and Linda Peake (2000), interrogating whiteness at/of the seaside can trouble ontologically, if not necessarily tangibly, its stability and normativity. In the demographic statistics outlined earlier in this chapter, many of the data employ white ethnicity as a blanket term and concept, itself an ontological manoeuvre and spatial regime that reinforce the stability and hegemony of whiteness. A closer examination of contemporary (and historical) immigration at the English seaside underlines the fallacy of such a monolithic interpretation of white identities. As has been noted with regard to the “plural trajectories of whiteness” (Garner 2007: 72; see also Hughey 2015; Wray 2006), we need to think not just about whiteness at the seaside, but about *whitenesses* too. This is a landscape that demonstrates their multitude forms and manifestations very clearly.

Like the majority of whiteness scholarship that has looked at working-class, urban communities (Garner 2013), most research about social difference and structures at the seaside—of which the focus on whiteness is somewhat oblique—has focused on the practices and traditions of lower socio-economic groups. We need to move beyond purely the social class distinctions (as important as they may be), manifest in resort function and tone, which have formed the primary focus of British seaside scholarship to date. Our task is to develop an understanding of whiteness at the seaside beyond white corporeality, addressing how it operates in different

characteristics and intersects with other form of subjectivity, such as ethnicity, nationality, and citizenship. This is not to leave class out of the equation. As Steve Garner (2013) points out, middle- and upper-class forms of whiteness require interrogation too (see also Knowles 2008), and these are undoubtedly under-researched in coastal spaces. They emerge at the seaside through processes and spaces of regeneration, such as art galleries, “pop up” boutiques and Michelin-starred restaurants, and lifestyle sport practices including kitesurfing, wakeboarding, and beach volleyball. While one needs to caution against reifying or essentialising these intersections, there are a multitude of classed (and gendered and sexualised, among others) whitenesses that exist at the seaside. Just like minority ethnic ones, white communities interact and engage with seaside spaces in a plethora of ways, at a variety of times, and through diverse forms of consumption. Sometimes, they come together in the same seaside spaces. The reopening of the *Dreamland* theme park at Margate in 2015 is case in point. Its designation as a “retro,” nostalgic space, with attractions drawing referents from across the years of the park’s original existence, blends traditional working class practices and activities with the contemporary middle-class fascination for “vintage” aesthetic and popular cultural forms.

Along with class, intersections between whiteness and other forms of power and privilege require our attention. In particular, we must consider the connections between whiteness and citizenship, immigration status and nationality. The English seaside is home to increasing numbers of people who might be regarded as “marginal whites,” such as migrants from Eastern Europe. Exhibiting an ethnicised “in-betweenness,” their experiences of marginality are distinctive in that they always have the option to identify as white when racial borders are most salient (Garner 2007; Roediger 2007). Yet, in other instances, they are positioned as “not quite white” (Gabriel 1998; Wray 2006), embodying a very different type of racialised liminality to the majority white communities described in the previous chapter. This scenario reiterates the residual power and stability of whiteness, while at the same exposing it as a heterogeneous and fragmented entity (Hughey 2015). Distinctions within the category of whiteness place white ethnic minorities (as well as racialised ones) in a hierarchy based on notions of cultural acceptability, entitlement, and economic value. Linda McDowell (2009: 28–29) argues that “whiteness

is a relational concept rather than a singular unvarying category. It is constructed by the way it positions others at its borders, as excluded and inferior,” and consequently it creates “hierarchies of acceptability.” Marginal white communities are, thus, sometimes unable to achieve the “wages of whiteness” (Roediger 2007) on offer to (most of) those of white British background. Indeed, they can experience what A. Sivanandan (2001: 2) refers to as “xeno-racism,” a form of discrimination that is “racism in substance but xeno in form—a racism that is meted out to impoverished strangers even if they are white.” These stratified and hierarchised embodiments of whiteness cement the relationship between Englishness/Britishness and whiteness by creating a situation where, although all whites are privileged, the ontological belonging and right to inhabit the national space—and that of the seaside—of some are seen to be greater than others.

An exploration of these multiple forms, roots, and routes of whiteness is especially germane at the seaside. Influenced by current labour dynamics pertaining to the service industries in certain seaside resorts, along with agricultural work in adjoining inland areas, the vast majority of migrants to the Sussex and Kent coast, for example, are white Eastern Europeans (Gaine 2007). The very few academic accounts that have considered ethnicity or migration at the English seaside tend to prioritise the presence and experiences of these white minorities too. For instance, John Walton’s (2007) historical account of the development of Blackpool Pleasure Beach provides evidence of the role of ethnic Others from a century-and-a-half ago. Focusing on the Romany groups that settled on the beach in the middle of the nineteenth century, he argues that:

the gypsies were important: they had helped to give the area its distinctive, edgy “otherness” since the 1860s, and their imagined way of life, with its distinctive culture and freedom from the restraints and obligations of the settled householder, was repudiated and romanticised in almost equal measure. (*Ibid.*: 26–27)

Gareth Millington (2005) notes the regular presence of Gypsies at Southend-on-Sea seafront in the 1930s, and the considerable opposition they faced as dominant groups strove to reinforce the racialised spatial

and cultural hegemony of the seaside. As the following chapter explores, Gypsy iconography remains highly visible in the leisure geographies of the English seaside. Attractions including tarot readers and palmists reflect how the identities and traditions of Travelling communities are now appropriated, sanitised, and packaged for a consumer audience, while at the same time members of these communities are marginalised and discriminated against. Histories of other “white” minorities in English seaside resorts throughout the twentieth century, particularly Jewish, Italian, and Greek Cypriot communities, have also received a small amount of attention (Millington 2005, 2011; Walton 2007).

## **Whiteness, Narratives of Nation, and the Symbolism of the Seaside**

A second principal way to think about ideas around whiteness at the seaside is through their common connections to dominant discourses on national identity and immigration. As Caroline Knowles (2008: 173) writes about the rural county of Devon, the seaside “stands for more than it is: it produces, embodies and sustains whiteness on behalf of the nation.” National identities, as Stuart Hall (1992: 293; emphasis in original) notes, are reproduced through “the *narrative of the nation*, as it is told and retold in national histories, literatures, the media and popular culture.” Sara Ahmed (2000: 98–99) adds a spatial component to this idea, arguing that:

the production of the nation also involves imagining the nation as *space*: it involves the projection of boundaries (nationhood as cartography), and the telling of stories about the authentic landscape (for example, in travel writing and tourism), and the production of interiority (imagining “the heart of the nation”).

Divya Tolia-Kelly (2006: 343) proposes that notions of landscape are important too. She argues that:

a valuable function of the metaphor of landscape is that it solidifies cultural memories of place in representational form and in material textures, which together form what we might call a “culture of landscape”. The experience,

memory, or culture of a place can be re-presented through a “culture of landscape”. Memory, along with the shifting contexts and sites of home, is a significant factor in shaping the nature of geographies of belonging, being, and desire.

The symbolic and material features of these environments combine with individuals’ identifications, attachments, lived experiences, and stories to form “the basis for identity, belonging and embodied connections to place, space and nation” (Tolia-Kelly 2010: 4). This process also facilitates connections between historical and contemporary narratives and memories (Knowles 2003). The exclusion of a group from landscapes that are intrinsic to articulations of national identity, through spatial marginalisation or discursive construction, can accentuate their exclusion from the national collectivity as a whole (Kinsman 1995). These factors play out across the social spaces of the seaside (among others) to position white bodies as authentic inhabitants, and racialised communities as “out of place.”

John Hassan (2003: 1) argues that “within the last twenty years the fascination with the encircling coast and how it has distinguished and formed the character of [Britain’s] peoples, particularly the English, has if anything intensified.” In the decade since Hassan’s observation, this interest has arguably increased even further. While conceptualisations of the fixed and permanent nature of coasts are illusory, with physical boundaries not necessarily mapping onto geopolitical and biopolitical ones (Anzaldúa 1987; Ryan 2012), and climate change eroding their structure, they are still seen widely to represent finite boundaries and clear designations of territory. As such these “natural” borders are straightforwardly and uncritically transferred onto social ones (Fiske 2011). In particular, their frequent association with discourses of invasion and defence means that coasts are intrinsic to popular narratives of nationalised and racialised inclusion and exclusion. While the English countryside may be more readily associated with (racialised) constructions of nation, due to its common reference in historical colonial assertions of cultural superiority and wartime defence, and in its contemporary capacity to invoke nationalistic sentiments (Chakraborti and Garland 2004a; Darby 2000; Holloway 2007; Prieto Arranz 2006), the

seaside plays a key role too. For instance, Sally Munt (2015) notes that Brighton Beach was mined during the Second World War to rebuff the Axis armies should they have made landfall on the English south coast. Fred Gray (2006: 98) addresses examples of martial commemoration, namely, the popularity of military bands and the presence of war memorials, which made the English seaside historically “a place where signs of empire and the nation’s military might were endlessly on display.” Seaside resorts have remained resolutely central to popular interpretations of national identity, and feelings of belonging, defence, and security since then (Museums and Heritage Online 2010). This can occur in symbolic form, from the use of the White Cliffs of Dover in party political television broadcasts by the British National Party in the mid-1990s to (personal observations of) the St. George flags that fly outside many pubs, hotels, shops, and houses in coastal spaces across southern England. These examples illuminate the inveterate configurations of race, whiteness, and nation at the seaside, which racialise its boundaries and spaces, dictate the content of its histories and portrayals, and inhibit its active engagement with multiculture.

The seaside allows—arguably it *encourages*—people to indulge in feelings of wistfulness or “postimperial melancholia” (Gilroy 2004), as well as those of repulsion or disgust. Through an attempted (re)homogenisation of local and national histories, this perspective and its connected behaviours foreground a sense of Englishness/Britishness (and by association discourses of localism) that is insular, retrograde, jingoistic, and occasionally racially exclusive. This involves the scripting of confined narratives of racial belonging along with physical and symbolic interjections upon both the built environment and the natural landscape. Writing about Southend-on-Sea, Gareth Millington (2005: 534) shows how exclusionary discourses are projected onto, and through, the town’s Palace Hotel. Associated negatively in the popular imagination due to its housing of asylum seekers, this venue “is no longer a symbol of opulence and enterprise, rather an architectural focal point for intertwining ideas apropos the perceived decline of the town” (*ibid.*: 534). He adds that these “self-destructive, melancholic tendencies of the established community draw upon the stigmatized position of ‘asylum-seekers’ in wider society to humiliate, punish and further shame [the town]” (*ibid.*: 545).

Extreme positions of this mindset manifest themselves in xenophobic and “asylophobic” (McGhee 2005) tendencies. The rise of the United Kingdom Independence Party(UKIP) at the English seaside identified in the previous chapter is a case in point. In 2015, reports emerged that a Muslim family had been racially abused and taunted at the seaside in Blackpool with chants of “Ban the Burka,” “EDL” (English Defence League), and “BNP” (British National Party), and the parents were threatened with physical violence (*Middlesbrough Gazette* 2015). Similarities can be drawn to the situation in Australia, where the coast has been utilised as an ideological and physical defence against contemporary immigration of refugees from the Middle East, and South and East Asian countries. Suvendrini Perera (2009: 138) argues that the beach:

encompasses the full weight of politico-historical experience as an arena where vital contests for power, possession, and sovereignty are staged. This beach is both the original scene of invasion and the ultimate border, a site of ongoing racial demarcation and exclusion, as of endless vigilance and fear.

Perera describes how Australian beaches were the setting for racial violence in 2009 after scaremongering stories circulated of mass arrivals of refugee boats. At Manley beach in Sydney, for example, minority ethnic people were attacked by white Australians wrapped in the national flag (*ibid.*; see next chapter for a discussion on the role of the beach in the local and global geopolitics of race).

As an uncontained entity, the English coast is open to the articulation of power and identity politics. It represents a spatial context and justification for a belligerent and reactionary mindset that seeks to “defend” white communities, histories, and spaces against the perceived threats posed by multiculturalism and unchecked migration (Back 2003). Coastal territories have become symbolic markers of contemporary nationhood and anxieties over its multi-cultural composition. In 2003, campaigns were launched in Saltdean, East Sussex, against plans to temporarily house asylum seekers in a disused hotel complex (Grillo 2005). The proposed accommodation of asylum seekers in the Irish seaside resort of Tramore, County Waterford, in 2000, was likewise met with strong public opposition. Ben Gavin, a member of the Fianna Fáil

political party, argued that holidaymakers did not want to be “hassled by 15 people on the prom selling Big Issues” (a fund-raising magazine for homeless/houseless people) (cited in Institute for Race Relations 2000: 7). Though opponents and protesters in such cases rarely acknowledge a racist motivation to their actions, claiming instead concerns over jobs, housing, and rights (Back 2003), “such campaigns of opposition are often intended to maintain the privilege and prestige of *white* spaces” (Hubbard 2005a: 52).

Several English seaside resorts continue to house small populations of asylum seekers and refugees. Demotic responses tend to articulate hysterical and discriminatory rhetoric. The political significance of these communities tends to be disproportionate to their numbers, and their presence is portrayed and resisted through popular and media discourses around threat and invasion (Andrews and Roberts 2012a; Grillo 2005; Marciniak and Tyler 2014; Millington 2005). In 2014, Conservative cabinet minister, Michael Fallon, argued that the populations of some resorts on England’s east coast felt “under siege” from the presence of migrant groups. In language echoing Margaret Thatcher’s anti-immigration diatribe of 1979, Fallon added that residents were being “swamped” by migrant workers (cited in Bentley 2014). Alarmist stories also emerged in newspapers like the *Daily Mail* about comparatively small numbers of asylum seekers, described as “waves of migrants” (Awford 2014), being housed in hotels in Bournemouth and Folkestone. A caption in one online article stated that, “Ladies, thought to be asylum seekers, leave the Grand Burstin Hotel in Folkestone, Kent” (*ibid.*). There was very little in the image to validate this conjecture—the only indication of ethnicised Otherness was the headscarves worn by the two women in the picture. This highlights the racialisation of asylum in the UK, and the ways that symbols of race, religion, and/or migration are “displaced on to people, objects, things and then brought to bear in everyday events and ‘encounters with strangers’” (Nayak 2011: 556). In 2015, the coast was (re)constructed as a place of defence against asylum seekers and refugees in a connected, global sense too (Mah 2014a; Munt 2015). Discriminatory nomenclature of “invasion,” “marauding migrants,” and “swarms” combined with draconian immigration legislation and attempts to “secure” the infrastructure of ports and the Eurotunnel in northern France. At the end of the year, an online article in the *Chichester Observer* (the link

to which became non-functional soon after) claimed that residents in the coastal village of Earnley in West Sussex were “terrified” by the prospect of 200 asylum seekers being housed temporarily in a local disused education centre. Widespread public opposition led to the plans being withdrawn shortly afterwards (BBC News 2015a).

In these examples, the seaside—and iconic elements within it, such as hotels, which are designated discursively and physically as places for holidaymakers—is portrayed as a symbolic realm of English national identity, in which asylum seekers should not be present. Racialised Others are removed from the spaces of leisure that are organised and interpellated as white. Returning to the discussion around “strangers” in the previous chapter, Sara Ahmed (2000: 79) points out that “the stranger’ comes into being through the marking out of inhabitable spaces, bodies and terrains of knowledge.” In this way, the environment of the seaside makes the asylum seekers’ Otherness especially overt. They are rendered “out of place” and intolerable at the seaside, reinforcing their ontological construction as belonging to urban environments or back in the countries from which they arrived.

These cases highlight the connections between bodies and nations in seaside spaces as well. As Ahmed continues:

the imagining of the nation as a space in which “we” belong is not independent of the material deployment of force, and the forms of governmentality which control, not only the boundaries between nation states, and the movements of citizens and aliens within the state, but also the repertoire of images which allows the concept of the nation to come into being in the first place. (Ibid.: 98)

Consequently, for Ahmed (ibid.: 100, emphasis in original):

the proximity of strangers within the nation space—that is, *the proximity of that which cannot be assimilated into a national body*—is a mechanism for the demarcation of the national body, a way of defining borders within it, rather than just between it and the imagined and exterior other.

Underlining the role of the local as a site for understanding contestations around nation (Knowles 2003), the configuration of embodied individuals and social spaces at the seaside reinforces the parameters of

the nation space and the biopolitics of authentic and legitimate inclusion. Space, corporeality, and racialisation combine to spatialise race into the larger landscape, thus linking the micro-politics of the seaside to those of the nation-state.

Water is also implicated in the spatial regime of racialisation at the seaside (Fajardo 2014; Perera 2013). The devastating experiences of refugees and asylum seekers across the coasts of North Africa and Europe during the summer of 2015—many losing their lives, being separated from loved ones, or experiencing dehumanising treatment at the hands of immigration and security machinery and personnel—add further to the pressing need to think about race, migration, and citizenship in the most peripheral geographical and coastal spaces, as well as the seascapes, of the Global North. Drawing on Deborah Bird Rose's (2007) notion of “water business,” Suvendrini Perera (2013: 59) points out that:

while refugees who entrust their lives and letters to the oceans remake and affirm their living complexity with their own stories and bodies, and are simultaneously remade by them, the “death-work” of unmaking water ensnares seaborne refugee bodies in the crude sovereign logic of territoriality. The deathwork of unmaking water is mystified and obscured under a series of rousing banners: law and order, stopping the boats, protecting the borders, securing the nation, even saving lives.

This centrality of racialised bodies and spaces in/of land and sea to the discourses and control of (im)migration, territory, and global im/mobilities materialises not only in relation to constructions of nation but is also implicated in the economics of coastal privilege, tourism, and real estate. As Les Back (2008) points out, “the bodies of drowned Africans frequently wash up on the select beaches of the Canary Islands.” “Africans are not very visible in Lanzarote and Fuerteventura,” he adds, “but the bodies of those vanquished haunt the property developers who take pride in attracting a ‘better class’ of tourist.” This observation makes evident the perceived sanctity of beach spaces as antithetical to the presence of particular forms and states of racialised and migrant corporeality and movement, reinforcing the putative innocence and whiteness of the coast. As an English estate agent cited in Back’s account sums up, “there

is no problem with groups of Africans in the urban centres begging, but bodies on beaches are a different matter and are most decidedly bad for business" (*ibid.*).

This chapter has argued that the distinct spaces of the seaside and coast have a great deal to offer to the contemporary study of race and ethnicity outside the metropolis, especially in relation to intersectional notions of whiteness, national identity, and immigration. The book now explores the role of ostensibly pleasurable leisure activities at the seaside, highlighting how amusements, entertainments, and beach recreation are implicated in the re/production of racial difference and inequality, and racialised resistance, in these coastal spaces.

# 4

## Race, Whiteness, and the Spaces and Places of Seaside Leisure

### Introduction: Taking Seaside Popular Culture Seriously

The seaside is a distinctive environment with an appeal as a place of pleasure, leisure, recreation, amusement, and entertainment that derives from two very different kinds of landscape. On one hand, there is what might be regarded (somewhat inaccurately now, given the extent of human interventions) as the “natural” landscape, comprising beaches, sand dunes, cliffs, coastal paths, and the sea itself. On the other, there is the more obviously constructed or “artificial” infrastructure of the seaside that has catered for the emergence of resorts as places of pleasure. This includes long-established piers, theatres, hotels, and watering holes, in addition to more modern amusement arcades, play parks, and other attractions. The seaside is, thus, both a place of relatively untouched natural beauty and vistas, and of occasionally garish buildings and sightlines. These seemingly discordant landscapes are, of course, quite compatible. Their combination not only highlights the heterogeneity *within* as well as between seaside towns, but also underpins the diverse reasons why many people choose to live in, or visit, them (Tunstall and Penning-Rowsell 1998).

As the previous chapter argued, the relationship between bodies and social spaces at the seaside is co-constitutive. Different coastal landscapes influence, and are influenced by, the types of activity, embodied behaviours, and affective encounters that occur within them. Both “natural” and “artificial” environments provide the backdrop and context for noteworthy leisure and recreational activities and experiences that are fundamental to the appeal and popularity of seaside resorts. As John Walton (2000: 94) argues, “from its earliest days the English seaside resort has made its living by offering distinctive entertainments and artificial attractions as well as the natural (but culturally mediated) features of shoreline and sea.” In making this distinction, we must avoid essentialising these landscapes and the activities that take place within them. As liquid coastal spaces, they have changed form and function in line with the seaside more generally over the last 150 years. In fact, the boundaries between them in the twenty-first century are arguably more fluid and blurred than ever. Certain lifestyle or action sports, for example, are underpinned by modern equipment and patterns of consumption; yet, they take place invariably in “natural” coastal locations or at sea (Wheaton 2013). The latest technologies are employed in some instances to create artificial seascapes and landscapes that replicate these natural environments, such as the Boscombe Surf Reef (rebranded in 2014 as the Coastal Activity Park) and Rock Reef climbing centre on the pier at Bournemouth.

This chapter examines both forms of landscape and their associated leisure activities in relation to the book’s central themes of race, place, power, and cultural politics. It demonstrates how the seaside and beach are often imagined, represented, and consumed as “white spaces,” and operate as sites of domination and exclusion. The first half focuses on seaside amusements and entertainments, including musical performance, arcades and slot machines, and play parks. The analysis explores how these leisure facilities symbolically (re)produce dominant historical narratives around imperialism and colonialism, models of hegemonic *heroic* and *marginal* whitenesses, and representations of the “exotic,” “non-white” Other. The second half of the chapter investigates how beach spaces (re)enforce practices of inclusion and exclusion through the interpellation of certain racialised bodies and the marginalisation of others. It shows how these seemingly benign spaces are figurative sites of wider meaning that

illuminate the contemporaneous cultural politics of race and multiculturalism, and notions of citizenship, immigration, and belonging. With both leisure forms, a historically informed interpretive lens is employed, not for historical analysis *per se*, but rather to understand the enduring influences on, and context for, contemporary seaside recreation. As Caroline Finney (2014) points out, processes of collective memory and the historical racialisation of space are critical to understanding current patterns of emotional attachment and engagement by different ethnic groups in particular environments.

Leisure practices and spaces connect individual experiences to broader structural inequalities. They must be considered as part of wider cultural and historical entities that influence why individuals and groups choose (or decide not) to take part in specific recreational activities (Erickson et al. 2009). This chapter accordingly employs concepts commensurate with a critical standpoint on race and leisure, such as racism, power, ideology, and white hegemony (Arai and Kivel 2009). It explores the ways that dominant ideologies, processes, histories, memories, narratives, and symbols can influence usage patterns, social encounters, and affective reflections by minority (as well as majority) ethnic groups. This chapter, however, is not concerned with descriptive accounts of participation rates, or the personal motivations of varied minority ethnic seaside consumers (see Stodolska et al. 2014; Wolch and Zhang 2004). This is not to disavow the relevance of these approaches or to imply essentialist, uniform relationships between different communities and seaside spaces and activities. Rather, as Dana Kivel et al. (2009: 475) consider, it is a case of “mov[ing] beyond descriptions of leisure experience and begin[ning] to theorize the social, political, and ideological contexts within which individuals experience leisure” (see Floyd and Stodolska 2014, for an overview of theoretical frameworks on minority ethnic [non-]participation in leisure). Recognising the contested terrain of the seaside, especially the beach itself, this chapter also highlights the challenges that have been made to the racial *status quo* in this setting through forms of cultural, political, and spatial resistances.

These racialised leisure connections are not always appreciated by those working outside of this academic field. Leisure activities are habitually regarded as ephemeral, throwaway elements of popular culture that are dwarfed in their scholarly importance by other, allegedly more important,

topics. As Victoria Wolcott (2012: 2) highlights, “recreational facilities are public accommodations and can appear marginal compared to economic and political structures.” This chapter argues that leisure practices and spaces must be incorporated into the analysis of race at the seaside. Although possessing utilitarian connotations, they still insinuate broader issues and phenomena. John Fiske (2011: 34), for instance, argues that the “foregrounded functional dimensions” of seemingly innocuous seaside facilities “should not blind us to their signifying ones.” Ben Pitcher (2014) points out that consumer culture is a significant, yet under-researched, site for helping us to understand the re/making of race. He proposes that when we think about the idea of race as a matter of consumption—in a cultural sense that does not necessarily require economic exchange—“there is no practice that is off-limits, to be considered too trivial or inconsequential for our critical attention” (*ibid.*: 3). The often momentary and trivial nature of engagements with popular cultural signs and depictions at the seaside does not devalue their importance in the generation and circulation of popular meanings around race and multiculture.

The attractions and experiences explored in the following pages underpin the construction and appeal of the seaside in the popular imagination. Their sociological significance is wide-ranging, not least in the manner they reflect the paradoxical relationship between race and the seaside. These leisure forms and depictions underline the seaside’s racialised character in some of the most revealing and enduring ways. They provide important contexts and stimuli for the enactment and stabilisation of ideologies of whiteness, (neo)imperial hierarchies, and practices of racial exclusion in seaside settings, whether that be in the symbolic, allegorical sense of the amusement arcade or play park, or in the more tangible, corporeal, and “real” racialised interactions of beach spaces. At the same time, these leisure facilities contribute to the ideological processes by which race is obscured, silenced, and erased. The inability or refusal to name whiteness as a *racial* identity and system of power (at the very moment that racialised, sexualised, and classed “Others” are marked), combined with well-established associations between the seaside and escapism, and hedonistic pleasure and carnivalesque behaviours, means that the role of popular culture in practices of racial difference and inequality can go unrecognised.

By focusing on elements of seaside leisure and pleasure, and by employing a global lens, this chapter explores issues and contexts that are

sometimes substantially removed (to various degrees) from the everyday lives of minority ethnic communities at the English seaside. References to tourist practices arose rarely in the fieldwork for this book, which is, perhaps, unsurprising, given that it is about participants' *residence* and *work* in the seaside resort of Sunshine Bay. Nevertheless, a book about the seaside that does not address practices and spaces of leisure and pleasure would not only occlude a fundamental component of its appeal, but also ignore the centrality of these features to notions of race, racism, and whiteness. Moreover, for several of Sunshine Bay's minority ethnic residents, their decision to move to the seaside in later life was influenced by pleasurable leisure excursions to the coast as young people (see Chap. 5) details, pleasurable leisure excursions to the seaside as young people were prominent influences in several of Sunshine Bay's minority ethnic residents choosing to live by the seaside as adults. The discussion on amusements and entertainments is undertaken in the context of the English seaside, while beaches are approached through examples from the USA, Australia, and South Africa—places where the beach is likewise a site primarily of *leisure* rather than labour. In the spirit of coastal liquidity, this global approach is utilised here because, despite the English seaside's distinctive nature as a social and cultural construction, it shares various conceptual and thematic commonalities with similar coastal spaces across the Global North, whether that be as function or symbol: racialisation, power, control, resistance, belonging, familiarity, "strangeness," and being "out of place."

## **Seaside Entertainments and Amusements: Heroic and Marginal Whiteness, Exotic Otherness, and (Neo)Colonial Fantasy**

### **The Empire at Home: Historical Racialised Leisure Experiences at the English Seaside**

As a particular social and cultural space and place throughout the modern era, the leisure practices and pursuits of the English seaside have been synonymous with providing consumers with "unusual" experiences.

Through the possibilities offered by a range of attractions, encounters, and activities, visitors have arrived at commercial resorts with the express desire to be transported metaphorically to otherworldly states, times, and places (Urry 2002). As Fred Gray (2006: 91) argues:

Western seaside resorts have always sought to provide out-of-the-ordinary experiences and, particularly from the early nineteenth century, architecture was used to intimate other exotic and pleasurable places and times. Visiting the seaside came to mean not only journeying to the edge of the land—in itself a unique experience—but also encountering a fantasy architecture designed to transport users to alternative worlds.

The genesis and referents of many modern leisure practices that emerged at the English seaside during the latter part of the nineteenth century, especially amusements and entertainments, were inseparable from contemporaneous British imperial and colonial projects. The focus of this chapter is primarily a contemporary one, but it commences with a short historical discussion. This diachronic approach delineates the connections between past and present seaside landscapes. More specifically, it illuminates how traditional representations and practices provide the *content* as well as the *context* for a range of contemporary leisure activities and spaces.

Through the notion of “domesticating empire,” Anne McClintock (1995: 219) demonstrates the importance of domestic commodities, alongside broader forms of popular culture, in buttressing and legitimating forms of British imperialism in the nineteenth century. Endorsing a relational, multilateral perspective on this period, McClintock (*ibid.*: 5) argues that “imperialism is not something that happened elsewhere—a disagreeable fact of history external to Western identity. Rather, imperialism and the invention of race were fundamental aspects of Western, industrial modernity.” Leisure practices and events were essential to the way that the Empire was “brought back” to Britain, with embodied colonial hierarchies placed literally on display for the Western gaze (Mackenzie 1986). For example, the catalogue for the 1911 exhibition at the Crystal Palace in London encouraged visitors to view and experience the venue and its attractions from an overtly imperialist viewpoint.

Racialised, colonial themes and the representation of subaltern groups as primitive, dangerous outsiders were also present in large public displays at the Belle Vue pleasure ground in Manchester (Pussard 2004; see also McClintock 1995). These themes were found in seaside leisure spaces and practices too, primarily in terms of the Orientalist architectural style and the racialised nature of popular entertainment activities.

Architecture was a principal historical means by which the “feel” of resorts was created, and their intrinsic activities and experiences were denoted. Fred Gray’s (2006: 9) detailed description is illuminative here:

The architecture of the seaside is the product of a complex and layered cultural design process: the manner in which a series of meanings attached to resorts, and their buildings and the seaside more generally, are produced and reproduced, perhaps in a drastically altered form, and have a formative and determining influence both on how people use the seaside and what they understand and envisage by it. The cultural meanings attached to architecture, the seaside and seaside resorts have evolved over time and vary over space. In particular, changing attitudes to nature and to other (often “foreign”) places, questions of taste and fashion, and divides around class, gender and other social distinctions are all important elements in explaining the production and changing use of seaside architecture.

Orientalism was by no means the only architectural and design style employed at the seaside; however, it is most readily associated with leisure spaces and the built infrastructure of pleasure there. According to Lynn Pearson (1991: 24), the style was appropriate for purpose at the seaside, both in terms of function and economic potential:

Architecturally, a generalised Oriental style was seen as appropriate for pleasure buildings and little else. It was perceived as ephemeral, not a serious style, and thus it rarely progressed beyond the garden or seaside; it was, however, a hugely successful style for transmuting pleasure into profit.

Although its popularity with English architects dates back to the seventeenth century (Pearson 1991), the mainstream breakthrough of the Orientalist style at the seaside came with the construction of West Pier in 1866, in Brighton. Eugenius Birch’s design for the pier appropriated

liberally the minarets, domes, and pinnacles festooning the nearby Royal Pavilion, which was built in Indo-Gothic style. Several other piers around the coast of England and Wales benefitted from Birch's designs, until his death in 1884 (Adamson 1977; Gray 2006).

Indian-style pier pavilions became popular additions at many seaside locations, including constructions at Blackpool in 1894 and Morecambe in 1897. The latter became known famously as the Taj Mahal of the North (Bennett 1983; Pearson 2002). Elsewhere, in Morecambe, Lynn Pearson (1991: 42–43) offers an evocative description of the visitor experience at the town's seaside Tower:

The original concept of the Morecambe Tower was the production of an entirely Oriental environment on the sea front, with the grounds laid out to Eastern designs and all the buildings in Oriental styles and colours. The visitor climbing the spiral road to the top of the Tower would have passed through an Eastern bazaar, with stallkeepers in Moorish, Egyptian, Turkish and other ethnic dress.

The aesthetic intentions of Orientalism at the seaside developed beyond their original resonance primarily with privileged social groups (Mackenzie 1995). These stylistic inferences became a principal rationale for visits to the seaside across the social spectrum due to the particular experiences and emotions that could be generated. Employing the concept of "demotic Orientalism," John Mackenzie argues that "what started out as a means of flattering the sensibilities and extending the range of experience of the aristocracy was ultimately transferred to leisure pursuits for the masses" (*ibid.*: 72). The connections between this demotic Orientalism and places of pleasure were soon ossified. This architectural style created alternative imaginaries of place and modes of being, where seaside visitors could be transported away from their daily surroundings. This could be achieved through distancing oneself physically from the coast, by walking out along a pier over the encircling sea. It could be accomplished figuratively too, via the imagined connotations of the architecture and by turning the gaze seawards to imagine life in far-off, exotic continents (Gray 2006). Critically, this was all done while remaining untouched by "foreign" bodies and untroubled by developments in

the colonies themselves (Hall and Rose 2006). As Lynn Pearson (1991) sums up, essentially, the impact of Orientalist style was felt not only on the architecture of the seaside, but also on the *emotions* of the people visiting there.

Making a brief historical detour, an episode involving the Hindu community in Yorkshire resonates with these themes. In 2007, an application was made to the local council in Scarborough to renovate a disused seaside pavilion and convert it into a Hindu shrine. Kishor Dabhi, from the Hindu Charitable Trust in neighbouring Leeds, noted that with the evident difficulties in transferring the ashes of deceased people to India for scattering in the Ganges, the North Sea of England was an appropriate resting place. He stated that “all the oceans come together as one and so it would be assumed that the ashes have now reached the sacred Ganges” (cited in BBC News 2007). Dabhi’s comments represent a powerful and pragmatic interpretation of coastal liquidity. They highlight the connectedness—geographically and emotionally—of seascapes and riverscapes in a global sense. They also show how the English seaside takes on a variety of connotations and purposes for different ethno-religious groups (see also previous chapter on Hindu Visarjan followers and the Apostles of Muchinjikwa Church). The episode at Scarborough illustrates how the meanings and associations of the seaside can be contested and generate conflict, through foregrounding notions of tradition and “appropriate” usage of space that enact implicitly a white, Christian Englishness. Plans for the shrine were opposed in many quarters, and the application was eventually refused (*Scarborough Evening News* 2007). A letter to a local newspaper from one holidaymaker stated that “it is supposed to be a multi-cultural society so [the Hindu community] are entitled to somewhere—as long as there are no domes or minarets and it is in keeping with the ambience of the place” (cited in Branagan 2007). Notwithstanding an apparent confusion with Islamic architecture, the author clearly ignores the historical prevalence of domes and minarets in the creation of seaside tone and landscape, much of which continues around the coast today (Gray 2006).

Architecture denoting neo-imperial fantasy and conjuring up ideas of the exotic Other provided the historical context for the pleasure places of the English seaside. These themes materialised, with similar legacies

and in equally enduring forms, in the amusements and entertainments found in many resorts. One of the most prominent forms of racialised popular seaside entertainment were “blackface” minstrel shows, which were a mainstay at numerous venues during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Minstrelsy, according to Sarah Howell (1974: 72), was “an essential part of the English seaside scene in the second half of the nineteenth century.” Likewise, Michael Pickering (2008: 69) states that minstrels were “a staple seaside item” until World War Two. The White Coons and Sam Hague’s Minstrels played at the Winter Gardens and at Uncle Tom’s Cabin on the north shore in Blackpool. The former troupe is also recorded as playing at Brighton, Felixstowe, Ilfracombe, Margate, Mumbles (on the edge of Swansea Bay), Plymouth, Torquay, and Westcliff-on-Sea. The public were entertained elsewhere by Uncle Bones’ Margate Minstrels; Alderman’s Minstrels at Eastbourne; Uncle Mac’s Minstrels at Herne Bay and Broadstairs; Burton’s Christy Minstrels, and Moore, and Burgess Minstrels at St. Leonards; and Harry Reynolds’ Minstrels at Rhyl and Colwyn Bay (Anderson and Swinglehurst 2005; Pertwee 1999; Pickering 2008). Practices of “blackface” continue their connections to the contemporary seaside, albeit with different antecedents and meanings, through the controversial annual Mummers Day (formerly known as Darkie Day) festivities in the Cornish coastal village of Padstow (Thomsett 2013).

Racialised themes and values were found in further aspects of seaside amusements and entertainments. Tony Bennett (1986) details some of the popular attractions available to visitors in Blackpool during the early twentieth century: a slot machine enabled punters to view depictions of colonial battles, with model African “natives” slaughtered by the British Army; a mock naval battle was once staged in the sea, involving an invasion by Afghan hordes—an absurd insinuation for a land-locked Asian country, yet clearly invoking contemporaneous racialised stereotypes and colonial justifications—who were repelled by white soldiers on the beach. At the same time, Nelson Lee’s slot machines on Brighton’s Palace Pier included Egyptian Tomb, while, referencing the recent British defeat of the Boxer Rising in China, J.G.M. Pessers’ 1901 patent specification for a shooting game involved the player directing the bayonet of a model soldier towards an Orientalist-depicted Chinese figure (Pearson 1992).

Entertainments listed in the 1909 summer season prospectus for the Morecambe Tower and Estates Company included Native Villages and Shooting Jungle (Pearson 1991). The Virginia Reel ride at Blackpool was converted to resemble the Taj Mahal during the interwar period, while patrons could visit the Indian Temple of Mystery and the Chinese Theatre, and watch Gogia Pasha's Sinhalese Devil Dancers (Walton 2007). Through these elements of popular culture, the everyday colonial discourses of these periods became subject to more attention, often in relation to anxieties about particular racialised Others or a fascination with other continents. Occasionally, they created the potential for critique of the imperial project (Hall and Rose 2006).

To judge hegemonic, taken-for-granted discourses around seaside leisure from a contemporary, postcolonial viewpoint is potentially problematic. This must be kept in mind when assessing the influence of leisure consumption on the domestication of Empire (McClintock 1995). The idea that there was an imperial hegemony in Britain has undergone recent challenge, especially the belief that the public consumed discourses and images in the manner they were intended, without reinterpretation, modification, or resistance (see, e.g., Porter 2006; Thompson 2005). With regard to coastal landscapes, Melanie Bassett's (2014: 125) study of Royal Dockyard workers in Portsmouth during the Edwardian period calls for a "more fluid and contingent" appreciation of the relationship between British citizens and imperialism, particularly in relation to local contexts. She suggests that "top-down influences were understood, negotiated and re-appropriated to create new meanings in the process of working-class identity-making" (*ibid.*).

As a sociological text, rather than an historical one, this book's contribution to the debate cannot be substantive. We might, however, question the extent to which many of the examples discussed here were quite so equivocal in the ideological intent and reception of their racialised themes. This line of thinking aligns with scholars who have argued for a closer appreciation of the effects of Empire on everyday British life. As Catherine Hall and Sonya Rose (2006: 2) articulate, "the majority of Britons most of the time were probably neither 'gung-ho' nor avid anti-imperialists, yet their everyday lives were infused with an imperial presence." This could emerge in mundane forms of "banal nationalism"

(Billig 1995), in that Empire affected the British metropolitan existence “in both very ordinary and supremely significant ways: it was simply part of life” (Hall and Rose 2006: 30).

Given that “the culture of Britain … was permeated with Empire” (Hall 2008: 202), it is unsurprising that popular culture would be critical to the transmission and communication of imperial ideas. Writings purveying what would now be regarded as scientific racism were relatively limited to intellectual and socio-economic elites, making them inaccessible or unreadable to large proportions of the population (McClintock 1995). Thus, as Anne McClintock (*ibid.*: 209) argues, forms of contemporaneous commodity advertising, from soap boxes to chocolate wrappers, “made possible, as never before, the mass marketing of Empire as an organized system of images and attitudes,” which “could package, market and distribute evolutionary racism on a hitherto unimagined scale” (*ibid.*). This occurred at the seaside too, where dominant racialised images and leisure practices “inveigled the pleasure-seeker in relations of complicity with imperialist values and sentiments” (Bennett 1986: 141).

The continuing seaside legacy and presence of these historical themes, especially in the widespread absence of alternative and more subversive and resistant portrayals, is a central concern of this book. As the following sub-section demonstrates, racialised tropes characterise contemporary seaside amusements and entertainments, often with little or no modification from their historical antecedents. There is evidently a connection between the colonial era and contemporary desires to experience “Otherness” in seaside tourist and leisure spaces (Edensor 1998). Historical and geographical distance does not necessarily mitigate these effects for, as Richard Dyer (1997: 18) notes, “the cultural production of the past few centuries still provides much of the vocabulary of the present.”

## **Legacies of Empire: Racialised Themes in Contemporary Seaside Pleasure and Leisure**

“Representations are integral to tourism and the tourist industry,” argues Tim Edensor (1998: 13), “Symbols, images, signs, phrases and narratives provide the ideas that fuel the commodification and consumption of

tourist sites." Writing specifically on theme parks, Scott Lukas (2008: 45) argues that they "represent extraordinary spatial and social forms, they offer some of the most basic needs, reflect deep and powerful emotions and cognitive modes, and present some of the most telling and controversial representations of the world." The reference points of the various symbols, narratives, and tropes found within theme parks are subjected to meticulous semiotic analysis by Deborah Philips (2012). Philips' instructive typology identifies the recurrent themes found throughout these venues, including chivalric, Egyptomania, explorers, fairy tale, gothic, science fiction, Treasure Islands, and Western. Although all these themes are racialised in the context of discrete (imagined) places and periods, primarily through ascriptions of whiteness, it is those of ancient Egypt, adventure and exploration, piracy and seafaring, and the historical US West that resonate most overtly with race.

The genres identified by Philips (*ibid.*) are equally "at home" at the seaside as at inland theme parks. They can be found in seaside adventure parks and play areas, amusement arcades and rides, boating lakes, and crazy golf courses. They exist in model figures, murals and images, soundscapes, and in aspects of consumption such as fast food and souvenirs. This sub-section explores these themes at the seaside through two key representational paradigms: (neo-)colonial adventures; and *heroic* and *marginal* whitenesses. Elements of the former appropriate and exoticise the identities of "non-Western" and other minority ethnic communities in ways that have arguably become more residual in other areas of popular culture. As in other seaside leisure spaces, representations of ethnic and racial Others in amusements and play parks frequently enact an Orientalist oeuvre. Orientalism refers in this sense to "a discourse [that] divides the globe unambiguously into Occident and Orient; the latter is essentially strange, exotic and mysterious, but also sensual, irrational and potentially dangerous" (Turner 1994: 44). According to Edward Said (2003: 3), Orientalism is:

the corporate institution for dealing with the Orient—dealing with it by making statements about it, authorizing views of it, describing it, by teaching it, settling it, ruling over it: in short, Orientalism as a western style for dominating, restructuring and having authority over the Orient.

The relationship is, thus, one of power and domination, with the West engaged in a number of potential relationships with the Orient, but without ever relinquishing its hegemony (*ibid.*: 7). At the same time and in the same spaces, seaside amusements (re)produce notions of hegemonic whiteness. They normalise and privilege dominant white identities, and they mark and marginalise racialised Others and specific white minorities alike. Forms of racial representation tend to be intersectional, with gendered, classed, and sexualised subjectivities underpinning processes of racialisation.

The following textual readings derive from observational fieldwork undertaken at English seaside resorts between 2007 and 2015: the socially and culturally diverse locations of Blackpool, Brighton, Eastbourne, and Southend-on-Sea comprise the substantive element (see Burdsey 2011), while additional commentary is taken from several other resorts. The inferences drawn from these observations are inexorably subjective, and so open to alternative interpretations. Few of the discourses and images highlighted in the following examples are unique to the seaside, but many hold strong connections with this setting and are intimately related to seaside spaces and places in the popular imagination.

## (Neo-)colonial Adventures

Rides and amusements based on tales of imperial exploration and colonial adventure are popular pursuits at the English seaside. They contain some of the most problematic referents too. This paradigm foregrounds a particular model of whiteness, which is historical in context, and based explicitly on masculinist ideas of exploration, invasion, and conquering “foreign” lands. It revolves around the construction of leisure spaces that create “a ‘frontier’ in which ‘primitive’ dangers lurk” (Philips 2012: 145). This type of seaside experience is found, perhaps, most famously in the River Caves ride at Blackpool Pleasure Beach. Visitors embark on a slow, indoor boat journey through foreign lands, coming into contact with people and cultures from around the world (Bennett 1983). The exotic locations on display include Impenetrable Jungles of Africa, The Wonders of Ancient Egypt, The Temples of Angkor Wat, The Magnificent Inca Civilization, and Mysterious China.

Representations of colonial adventure can be found in even more troubling manifestations elsewhere at Blackpool Pleasure Beach. Viewing and comprehending their full contents and connotations are not straightforward, as they are only visible to visitors from particular sections of the scenic railway that circumnavigates the site. As the train passes underneath the rollercoaster and past the Chinese Puzzle Maze, passengers see a sign for Dr. Livingstone's Safari Tours. Several model white, male explorers are in attendance, clothed in khaki fatigues and carrying guns. Another figure drives a jeep that carries a caged passenger on the back, presumably for his own "safety." A handful of imitation black figures look on, wearing only loin cloths or "tribal" costumes, and depicted with bright, bulging eyeballs. One "native," wearing a necklace of bones, paddles in a canoe on the river, and another holds a spear. A wooden, grass-roofed hut forms the backdrop, outside of which human skulls hang on a cooking frame over a primitive fire. The venue's scenic railway then travels directly to a rural landscape from the USA during the late nineteenth or early twentieth century, replete with colourful, carved totem poles and tepees. Model Native American men are seated on the ground. Gun-wielding white men stand adjacent to a woman in a boat wearing a dress and bonnet in the style of a Southern belle. Similar Western-centric representations of colonial motives and practices can be found in the jungles, safaris, and sub-Saharan adventures of leisure activities from thrill rides to crazy golf courses and cafes, in resorts such as Brighton and Southend-on-Sea.

At Southend-on-Sea, fun-seekers travel on moving cars around the nineteenth-century American frontier setting of The Goldmine (represented in similar forms elsewhere, such as Clacton-on-Sea). Reproducing the mythologised notion of Manifest Destiny, found routinely in popular "Western" literature and movies, the model white, male explorers are constructed and contextualised as dominant, civilised, and progressive. The grimacing face and twisted body of the axe-wielding Native American character position him in direct contrast as bloodthirsty, savage, and primitive. The Wild West crazy golf course at the King Alfred leisure complex in Hove, the River Venture ride at Clacton-on-Sea, the Cowboy Town area at Blackgang Chine on the Isle of Wight (a coastal theme park rather than a traditional seaside resort), and the war-dancing tribal tabard on the Blackpool Illuminations (Edensor 2012) all reproduce

stereotypical popular images of Native Americans. These representations focus almost exclusively on men, with female lives and identities marginalised or absent, denoting the racialised and gendered intersections of the colonial project (Najmi and Srikanth 2002; Ware 1992). According to Richard Dyer (1997: 33), it is through the Western movie, and children's games such as "Cowboys and Indians," "that enterprise and imperialism have had their most undeliberated, powerful appeal." This is a genre with popular cultural resonance that transverses geographical and historical reference points and sites of consumption (Pitcher 2014).

Representations of the exotic Eastern/Arabic Other are evident in several amusements and play parks at the English seaside. The theme of Egyptomania is particularly prevalent, employed as "a signifier of mystery, ancient history, adventure and exploration" (Philips 2012: 125). This construction, Deborah Philips suggests, "has claims to historical authenticity, which evokes geographical and historical knowledges, but simultaneously allows for imaginative speculation and fantasy" (*ibid.*). Visitors to the Adventure Island park at Southend-on-Sea are dared to risk the Pharaoh's Fury. The juxtaposition of the pleasures to be enjoyed on the exhilarating ride with the trepidation induced by the menacing sphinx looming above reflects the reward-risk dialectic encountered by Western explorers over centuries of plundering Egyptian treasures. In New Brighton, maps, hieroglyphs, Egyptian figures, and a large wall mural of an Arab man in red and white headscarf riding a camel adorn The Bright Spot Arcade. Pharaoh's Treasure and Arabian Gold coin waterfall games can be found in Blackpool. Tabards in the town's Illuminations include one of Egyptian mummies, and another, entitled Open Sesame, where moustachioed men in fezzes and turbans hide in tall pots and brandish cutlasses. The Magic Carpet Ride helter-skelter on the North Pier at Blackpool reproduces images from Disney's animated movie *Aladdin*, as do slot machines at Clacton-on-Sea. One of the last remaining seafront amusement arcades in Brighton, before its eventual removal, was Aladdin's. Despite, or perhaps because of, its dilapidated exterior, the visitor was encouraged to step inside the dark, intriguing space of the arcade, traversing the line from the quotidian to the fantastic. With the flashing lights of the arcade games and fruit machines glinting like precious jewels, the delights and treasures to be found in this mysterious enclave were deemed analogous

to those found in the Arabian caves and grottos of the folktale. The Zoltar machine, made famous in the 1988 Tom Hanks movie, *Big*, is popular in many resorts, offering the opportunity to have one's fortune told by a waxwork dark-skinned man, with curly moustache and beard, turban, and creepy glowing eyes.

## Heroic and Marginal Whitenesses

Whiteness is rarely named within dominant modes of speech and representation. Yet, as the previous chapter stressed, its manifestations and effects at the seaside can be ubiquitous and overwhelming. Hegemonic constructions of whiteness at the seaside pleasure park are presented as stable and innocuous, albeit in the different essentialised forms of *heroic* and *marginal* whitenesses.

Like the aforementioned paradigm of colonial exploration and adventure, considerable emphasis is placed at the seaside on notions of historically rooted heroic whiteness. Perhaps, unsurprisingly, given its geographical location, one of the principal ways in which this theme is enacted is through notions of piracy on the high seas. As Deborah Philips (1999) points out, symbols and narratives of piracy and the colonisation of unfamiliar landscapes, especially "Treasure Islands," are popular features of modern theme parks. This has achieved enhanced currency in recent years following the blockbuster *Pirates of the Caribbean* movie quadrilogy. The Treasure Island play park on Eastbourne seafront, for instance, depicts the movie's swashbuckling hero, Captain Jack Sparrow (played by Johnny Depp), in the mural on its main wall, while the model pirate figures on Blackpool's North Pier include a good likeness of the same fictional pirate.

The metaphors encapsulated in other aspects of seaside piracy themes possess older, and more problematic, referents. Images and models of seaside pirates reinforce the tendency for fictional depictions to "whiten" what were actually often multiracial communities (Linebaugh and Rediker 2000). This underpins, undoubtedly, their heroic and romanticised status in Western popular culture. Importantly, this iteration of whiteness intersects with gender in a historical sense (McClintock 1995).

Male pirates are always positioned as dominant, macho, brave, and valiant, while women are depicted as sexualised and subordinate to their accompanying men. The two model pirate women figures standing on Blackpool's North Pier wear tight trousers and high, buckled boots, and their shirts are unbuttoned to emphasise the shape of their breasts. One woman's underwear is visible above the waistline of her low-slung jeans. At Eastbourne, the pirate mural includes a couple of women, espousing normative models of beauty—blonde, pale-skinned, buxom—thus further perpetuating the racialised and gendered representations of Western fairy tale. The women (and their sexuality) appear to be under the protection of the male pirates, for at the centre of Treasure Island is the Caribbean-themed Long John's Shipwreck. This scenario reinforces historical Western fears around miscegenation and, in particular, the pervasive colonial discourse that white women needed to be saved by white men from the virulent sexual threat posed by black masculinity (Levine 2006; Ware 1992). It also underlines the position of white women as "ambiguously complicit" within Empire, "both as colonizers and colonized, privileged and restricted, acted upon and acting" (McClintock 1995: 6). Other forms of heroic male whiteness, whether they be pirates or medieval knights, can be found at the crazy golf course and boating lake at Hove Lagoon and at Harbour Park in Littlehampton, respectively. A sense of sexualised female whiteness can be found with more modern referents too, such as the Spin-a-Disc Waltzer and the Miami Trip ride at New Brighton.

Seaside displays of piracy and seafaring (and other forms of heroic whiteness) do not include minority ethnic bodies. They are marginalised from the physical space of the adventure park or ride, and allegorically from historical maritime narratives. Through their adoption of colonial imagery, these spaces recreate the very placelessness—the erasure of indigenous identities and voices, and the dominance of generic Western motivations—that was a central tenet of the colonial project (Warren 1999). For instance, the only reference to "blackness" at Eastbourne's Treasure Island is implicit, and juxtaposed against the pirates' whiteness, via the Caribbean Coffee Company refreshment kiosk and the reggae music played over the sound system. The unquestioning appropriation, objectification, and temporally inconsistent commodification of blackness

reflect the value of the Caribbean in Western popular culture primarily as a site/source of consumption for its climate, food, music, sex tourism, and capacity to indulge white fantasies of exotica (Sheller 2003). As bell hooks (1992: 27) points out, the West has historically maintained “a romantic fantasy of the ‘primitive’ and the concrete search for a primitive paradise, whether that location be a country or a body, a dark continent or dark flesh, perceived as the perfect embodiment of that possibility.” Deborah Root (1996: 72) also notes a tendency for white people to believe that they are able to access, or even possess, desired racialised bodies and images. “The source of all the fascination,” she notes, “can have no say in the terms of the exchange. If we think we already own something, why would we ask anybody’s permission to take it?” (*ibid.*).

Through the perspective of coastal liquidity, this book proposes that the signs, images, narratives, and physical structures of the seaside are polysemic. They are subject to multiple interpretations and readings, and visitors respond to, and consume, seaside leisure in a multitude of ways. This prompts questions about a potential disjuncture between popular understandings and critical scholarly analysis. For instance, Divya Tolia-Kelly (2006) identifies that environments that have been critiqued by academics as promoting excluding notions of white Britishness, such as the countryside, can actually generate positive emotional connections (see also Munt 2015, Chaps. 5 and 6 of this book). This point is made in the film *Bhaji on the Beach* (see Chap. 2 of this book) through the character of Rekha, who likens the bright lights, stalls and sideshows, and Orientalist leisure forms of Blackpool desirably to the street markets of Mumbai (Desai 2004; Conolly 2008). Moreover, Ben Pitcher (2014) cautions against essentialist readings of popular cultural consumption, suggesting that a binary of “racialiser” and “racialised,” together with assumptions that certain forms and practices unilaterally reinforce imperial and colonial discourses, is too simplistic. Pitcher (*ibid.*: 37) criticises the position of scholars such as Deborah Root (see earlier) who, he argues, “are too hasty to close down the potential in consumer culture for race to do anything other than perpetuate existing injustices, inequalities and regimes of representation.”

In the context of the English seaside, the prevalence of references to Gypsy and Romany identities is, perhaps, illustrative of this debate.

Yet, they highlight how, along with a positive focus on heroic whiteness, somewhat less favourable images and discourses allude to a *marginal* (yet, equally essentialised) whiteness. The presence of clairvoyants, chiromancers, and fortune tellers at the English seaside is widespread, including Lynn Petulengro at Skegness, Madame Rene at Southend-on-Sea, Lee Ester Alita Lee at Whitby, Gypsy Margo at Felixstowe, and Gypsy Martha at Bridlington (Williams 2006). Personal observations testify that similar characters can be found in most seaside towns. Eva Petulengro, along with Professor Mirza (the “great mystic of the east,” according to the sign above his door), offers this service in Brighton, for example. Widely associated with fortune tellers, the name Petulengro is thought to be of Egyptian origin and means “blacksmith” (*ibid.*: 166). This may reflect the fact that European Roma were often referred to historically as “Egyptians,” as seen in the English term “Gypsy” (Overy 2005). Strolling out onto Brighton (Palace) Pier, visitors even encounter a life-size mock traditional Gypsy caravan, home to Ivor the Tarot Consultant.

The presence of Gypsy fortune tellers might be regarded as celebrating historical tradition, purveying a sense of agency and creating a relatively benign representation of their way of life. However, the stereotyping and commodification of these communities’ cultures and identities for consumption *by* and *for* non-Gypsy groups at the seaside is a different matter. Although the images and discourses found in seaside settings are outdated and romanticised, they are connected ideologically and discursively to contemporary popular cultural and media frames that portray Gypsy and Romany communities as backward, superstitious, and inhibited by tradition. Most notably, the Channel 4 television series *Big Fat Gypsy Weddings* (and various spin-off productions) (2011 to present) provides clichéd, sensationalist portrayals of several Gypsy and Traveller families in England. The shows have received widespread criticism, both from within and outside these communities. As of 2015, there was a Big Fat Gypsy Weddings themed venue on Blackpool seafront. In a variation on this theme, Visit England (2015), the official tourist board for England, was one of several companies advertising opportunities to “experience a summer holiday with a difference this year by staying in a quirky Gypsy Cabin style pod” at Robin Hood’s Bay on the North Yorkshire coast. This commodification and (mis)representation of Gypsy and Traveller

lifestyles and traditions positions them outside both the hegemonic narrative of Englishness/Britishness (Matthews 2015) and the normative, everyday practices of seaside leisure. They are there *to be consumed* rather than consume, limiting ontologically the capacity for other potential relationships with the English seaside to be recognised and ignoring their historical involvement in the creation of seaside leisure economies (see previous chapter). In addition, dominant forms of representation serve to obscure the structural marginalisation and everyday racism endured by these communities in numerous seaside towns (and elsewhere).

Further forms of marginal whiteness are lampooned in seaside leisure spaces and amusements. The Hillbillys (sic) shooting game, which draws on stereotypes of poor white people in the American Deep South, and the Irish leprechaun character in the Rainbow Riches gambling machines at Clacton-on-Sea, for example, highlight forms of subjugated whiteness in relation to class, ethnicity, and nationality (Wray 2006). These representations are deliberately and overtly comedic, and so their problematic referents and connotations tend to be subsumed by the more positive associations of whiteness elsewhere at the seaside.

Caroline Knowles (2008) makes the important point that the social mechanisms that link contemporary manifestations of whiteness with Empire are rarely clarified. As shown here, in the context of seaside amusements and entertainments, contemporary images and representations possess unmistakeable connections with historical ones. They also reflect current political issues. For example, the racialised and gendered discourses of protection from dangerous sexual Others found within the piracy theme reflect the poisonous claims of the contemporary Far-Right about the “threat” posed to British women by certain ethnic and/or migrant groups (Byrne 2006). As Tim Edensor (1998) argues, the historical images found in tourist spaces cannot be ignored. Rather than conceptualising all interpretations as equivalent, “it is essential to identify which representations are inscribed with dominant ideologies” (*ibid.*: 15). Although visitors might not connect historical themes of shipwrecks, pharaohs, and goldmines with racialised notions of imperialism and subjugation, this does not make their current connections irrelevant or redundant. As this book argues, their sometimes subliminal

and unconscious consumption actually stabilises these racial discourses, reinforcing the broader racialisation of seaside and coastal spaces.

The future of seaside amusements and entertainments remains open to question. Evidently, there is an enormous public desire for *traditional* amusements at the seaside, in a way that is, perhaps, not so much the case at inland theme parks where rides have become increasingly futuristic. There seems to be an appetite for something different, however, given the popularity of *Dismaland*, an installation by the acclaimed street artist Banksy. Marketed as a “Bemusement Park” and “a festival of art, amusements and entry level anarchism” (*Dismaland* 2015), the park opened for five weeks in the late summer of 2015 on the seafront at Weston-Super-Mare in South West England. The “attractions” designed by Banksy, along with several other artists, included a grim reaper on the dodgem cars, Cinderella mangled in a pumpkin carriage crash, and, most interestingly, a boating lake where visitors could steer model boats packed with refugees. At the end of the installation’s residency, timber and fixtures from the “attractions” were dismantled and sent to The Jungle refugee camp near Calais to build shelters (Press Association 2015). This is the kind of social justice and solidarity at/of the coast proposed in the Introduction to this book, not to mention a manifestation of coastal liquidity and global connectedness.

## Race, Cultural Politics, and the Beach in the Global North

Beach spaces are ostensibly open and available to all (Barclay and West 2006; Munt 2015). A benign perspective on their functions, attributes, and experiences dominates the Western imagination. As Lena Lenček and Gideon Bosker (1998: xxi) state, “whether an isolated stretch of sand staked out by a solitary towel, or a populous strand colonized with carnivals and casinos, the beach is at once escape value and inspiration, symbol and playground.” More critical commentators have challenged this view, revealing the beach to be a place where inequalities and discrimination are (re)produced. Writing about the Antipodean scenario, Clifton Evers (2009a: 189) argues that “the egalitarian image of Australian beaches is

a myth and in its place are complex culturally informed sandy games of assimilation and exclusion.” Drawing conceptually on the discussion about bodies and/in space developed in the previous chapter, a similarly critical perspective that foregrounds power, politics, and privilege is presented here. As Christine Metusela and Gordon Waitt (2012: xxii) identify, “there is a sexual, gendered, classed and racialised politics of the beach.” “Bodies at the beach,” they conclude, “are therefore always political” (*ibid.*: xxiv).

These ideas of power, politics, culture, and contestation at the beach can be considered through John Hartley and Joshua Green’s (2006) notion of the “cultural public sphere.” Using Sydney’s Cronulla Beach, explicitly the racism meted out to Lebanese (and other) groups in 2005, as an exemplar (see later in the text for a fuller account of this episode), they suggest that the cultural public sphere is “a place where the politics of the private realm are brought into the glare of the political public sphere” (*ibid.*: 341). Such a concept is useful, they argue, as it pulls together and disrupts dominant binaries, of for instance, the cultural and personal on one hand, and the public and political on the other. Focusing on the beach and the activities that take place there forces a recognition of the politicisation of cultural life. In a Goffmanesque manner, the authors suggest that the beach represents a “stage” for performances of the cultural public sphere, a platform where the politics of identity and contestations of representation are elevated from the private domain and into public view.

It follows, then, that the leisure spaces of the beach are not exempt from processes of spatial control and territorialisation. As politicised spaces and contested terrains, they can become exclusionary zones in which certain forms of identity, ideology, and practice are protected against outsiders (Metusela and Waitt 2012; Preston-Whyte 2001). As the following examples demonstrate, this has occurred historically, sometimes as blatant forms of *de jure* exclusion, with beaches across the Global North providing the settings and impetus for racist abuse and violence. Exclusionary beach practices also revolve around more subtle regulations regarding who does or does not belong. Complex and nuanced iterations of power are enacted to control seaside spaces during periods, and in places, in which segregation is illegal. As Caroline Finney (2014: 62)

expresses powerfully, “one does not need to see a ‘whites only’ sign to feel that he or she is not welcome.” Coastal liquidity recognises that power is relational and dynamic, however. As such, this chapter emphasises that the beach can be a place of racialised resistance and subversion, as well as one of subjugation and exclusion.

“The body is the single most potent cultural symbol” at the beach, argues Douglas Booth (2001: 8), providing an embodied conjunction of wider social, economic, and political structures and forces. Consequently, “it is at the beach that individuals can become most acutely aware of their bodies, and of the body’s own tides, passions and anxieties” (Webb 2003: 81). By being literally on display, the body becomes “a site for the evaluation and classification of subjects: beautiful or flawed, toned or saggy, desirable or repugnant” (*ibid.*: 87). We can add classifications that relate to social groups, not just individual bodies, to this: pale or dark-skinned, “white” or “non-white,” British or “foreign,” religious or secular, at work or at leisure, engaging in “traditional” pursuits or in migrant traditions. The beach is as much a place for the articulation and contestation of signifiers of embodied privilege and identity politics as it is a place of freedom and recreation. Given the co-constitutive nature of its landscape in which ideas about race and space (as well as other designations of desirable or acceptable seaside bodies) are exhibited. We now turn to an exploration of how these themes have played out across the seas and sands of the Global North.

## Race on the Beach: The USA

In the post-Civil War period, the US eastern seaboard was a relatively unsettled landscape, and it remained peripheral to the mid-Atlantic economy. Coastal spaces held pejorative connotations. They were associated with inclement weather and disease, and they were divorced socially and economically from inland urban centres. Many landowners at this time were African American, and by the start of the twentieth century, some of the highest rates of black land ownership in the American South were in coastal counties (Kahrl 2012b). In fact, coastal areas were more diverse than inland ones in some southern states between the First and Second World Wars, the result of historical links between the South and the

Caribbean, and the colonial creation of Creole communities. Although this scenario was partly the upshot of opportunities following emancipation, “coastal lands were indeed often seen as only suited for ‘Negro’ habitation” (Kahrl 2012a: 491). This is not to deny the existence of inter-racial interactions though. As Anthony Stanonis (2014: 97) states, “the coast was the South’s melting pot, a contrast to the cotton South rooted in sharecropping, debt peonage, and sharp racial distinctions.”

Beaches became popular *leisure* spaces with African American visitors at the beginning of the twentieth century. Yet, as the concurrent tourist appeal of beaches to wealthy whites created designated and exclusive resorts, black people’s roles at the seaside became increasingly limited to service positions, such as nannies, waiters, and entertainers. In turn, the consumption and enjoyment of seaside landscapes became strictly regulated along racial lines. “On the beach and along the boardwalk,” writes Andrew Kahrl (2012a: 491), “performances of race were tightly scripted.” Blacks were criminalised, forced to live in shanty towns outside of the city limits, and prevented from visiting white resorts. Their broader presence and mobilities in white-dominated seaside settings were inhibited, with racial covenants and discrimination by real estate agents and lenders preventing further settlement (Kahrl 2012b; Stanonis 2014). Lines of segregation were drawn on the beach itself. These even continued into the water, with ropes fixed onto the seabed at Atlantic Beach, South Carolina, forming what was known as “The Coloured Wall” (King 2012: 117). At Long Branch, New Jersey, people were made to wear badges to signify entry to black or white areas of the beach in the late 1930s (Wolcott 2012), while racist and anti-Semitic discrimination restricted use of beach space in Miami as well (Lenček and Bosker 1998). “Few images were more threatening to the emerging Jim Crow order,” points out Andrew Kahrl (2008: 1135), “than that of a black family relaxing on a beach, books in hand, in silence.” African Americans who broke the rules surrounding the normative spatial regime of the beach were often repelled violently by the police and white mobs alike.

Segregation and exclusion from water-based recreation was commonplace for African Americans (Wiltse 2007). It also occurred in undeveloped lakefront areas, as, alongside commercial and residential development, urban leisure spaces became key components of real estate

values. African Americans were restricted to their own racially designated beaches (as well as urban rivers and canals), which could be extremely dangerous and full of health hazards. The prime concern for black people was not their inability to swim with whites, but the spatialised and environmental racism that led to the disappearance of many of their own water spaces, and that ensured the perilous and diseased conditions of the ones that were left (Kahrl 2012b; Wiltse 2007, 2014). Despite these obstacles, black seaside spaces became important and popular leisure sites during the early part of the twentieth century (Kahrl 2012b; Phelts 1997; Stanonis 2014).

The beach played an important role in African American life, as means of racial pride, solidarity, and cultural resistance. Notable venues included American Beach on Amelia Island near Jacksonville, Florida; Atlantic Beach in South Carolina; and Lincoln Beach in New Orleans (Phelts 1997; Stanonis 2014). As Andrew Kahrl (2012b: 178) argues:

the crowds gathered on the shores of commercially owned African American beaches on summer weekends reflected the role of leisure spaces in nourishing postwar black Americans' dreams of freedom from Jim Crow and in transforming visions and expressions of black cultural identity.

Likewise, P. Nicole King (2012: 113) writes that Atlantic Beach was "an example of the ways African Americans in the South persevered and built physical as well as psychological communities during the era of segregation." Further diversity in seaside and coastal spaces emerged from military presence and Cold War mobilisation, which saw naval bases set up on the seaboards of California and the Atlantic coast (Lenček and Bosker 1998; McKibben 2012). Other notable coastal developments include the tale of Richard Etheridge, who was the first African American to be a keeper of a lifesaving station in the USA. He also oversaw the first all-black crew, at Pea Island, North Carolina, in the late nineteenth century (Wright and Zoby 2000).

In much of the popular imagination, beach leisure in the USA is most associated with southern California. The connections of this West Coast location to ideas about race and practices of racial exclusion are sub-

stantial, if under-acknowledged. As Alison Rose Jefferson (2009: 156) remarks on the early decades of the twentieth century:

at a time when discrimination and restrictive real estate covenants prevented them from buying property in certain areas or using various public or private facilities, when distinct social barriers and overt discrimination persisted, African Americans were able to locate some relaxation, recreation, and vacation sites in southern California. At these places they were relatively free from bigotry to enjoy the sunshine and outdoor offerings of California.

The increasing privatisation of beach clubs, physical restrictions on accessing beach spaces, discrimination and racist violence, and public and political campaigns to preserve beaches for white communities reduced the sections of public beaches that African Americans and other communities of colour could access. An area marked “Negroes Only,” and known as The Inkwell in Santa Monica, became subsequently very important. The term Inkwell was used originally in a derogatory fashion by whites, but it was reappropriated by *some* African Americans (with others refusing to use the name) (Jefferson 2009), both in Southern California and at other black swimming sites (Peters 2016). California’s Inkwell was an influential seaside space, not only of leisure and sociability, but also of identity politics and community formation, both in the early to mid-twentieth century when *de jure* segregation was formally in place and during the implicit and covert enactment of racist behaviours in the Civil Rights era (Jefferson 2009). Many black beachgoers learned to surf at the Inkwell. This is recognised rarely in the popular imagination. Although the birth of modern surfing is associated widely with California, minority ethnic surfers were, and are, routinely rendered invisible. Indeed, the origins of surfing as a pre-colonial water-based activity in Hawaii, Aotearoa/New Zealand, the Pacific Islands, and the west coast of Africa are generally overshadowed or ignored as a result of the “whitening” of seashore and coastal histories and spaces in the Global North, and the ideological production of surfing as a “white” activity (Laderman 2014; Stranger 2011; Wheaton 2013).

Even during the otherwise progressive racial thinking of the Civil Rights era, beaches in California remained central to the reproduction and consolidation of white privilege and exclusion. This was epitomised through popular cultural representation. Examining Hollywood beach movies, primarily American International Pictures' series of 1960s films, such as *Beach Party*, *Muscle Beach Party*, and *Bikini Beach*, Josh Stenger (2008) demonstrates that these productions were inextricably linked to the racial politics of the era. Southern California was portrayed as a white utopian landscape, with the beach extending and enhancing processes and policies of racial containment and segregation in nearby Los Angeles. Stenger shows how these films naturalised whiteness as an organic element of the beach, constructing it as “an insulated, raceless geography in which middle-class white youth could engage in self-segregating, consequence-free leisure without ever having to acknowledge their own mobility, privileged subject positions or social power” (*ibid.*: 32). Furthermore, Gary Morris (1998) argues that by positioning the beach as unaffected by the social, political, and racial turmoil of 1960s America, these movies enabled viewers to ignore the Civil Rights struggles that were taking place across the nation.

Attempts to integrate beaches in this political context were rarely straightforward, even after the period of official desegregation had commenced (Kahrl 2012b). Beaches became crucial sites of cultural resistance. Mass entries into the sea by African Americans, known as “wade-ins,” took place in several coastal locations (Finney 2014; Kahrl 2012b; Stanonis 2014; Wolcott 2012; see also the movie *Whitewash* 2011). Protesters were met routinely with horrific violence, not only from police and white supremacists, but also from white beachgoers. As Victoria Wolcott (2012: 46) argues, “protecting white spaces of leisure was a form of leisure in itself for some young white men.” When racialised geographies and spatial regimes are so entrenched, comfortable and “common sense” in the popular imagination, attempts to contest access and patterns of usage and dominant meanings are met with hostility. “To challenge something that ‘just is’, as many subaltern subjects have, can be a very threatening geographic act,” writes Katherine McKittrick (2006: 145), “it is punishable, erasable, and oppositional.”

In line with the central themes of this book, resistance is a matter of troubling the dominant *discourses* as well as the practices that silence minority ethnic people or render them invisible in seaside spaces. Belinda Wheaton (2013) explains how the Black Surfing Association (BSA), founded in California in the 1970s (although some claim earlier), has challenged racial stereotypes and promoted black activism, while also teaching surfing skills and ecological awareness. Wheaton (*ibid.*) argues that the reclamation of physical and mediated virtual spaces has been key to the BSA's mission. Historically, they organised events called "black outs," where black surfers entered the water together, challenging their popular invisibility in this coastal leisure practice. Returning to the discussion in Chap. 2 of this book, which connected race to the notion of liminality at the seaside, Wheaton (*ibid.*: 176) argues that "for the majority of [BSA] individuals, neither the *beach* nor *surfing* was a liminal space beyond 'culture', power and regulation." Nonetheless, surfing has remained an inherently political activity. Similar patterns of resistance can be found elsewhere, for instance, in South Africa (see later in the text), while Mihi Nemanī's (2015) autoethnography also lifts the lid on "hidden" stories of surfing in other racialised cultures and communities, especially her own participation as a Māori Samoan surfer in Aotearoa/New Zealand.

The historical angle utilised in this chapter sheds light on the long-standing effects and legacies of beach and seaside leisure spaces and practices within the politics of racial exclusion in the Global North (although we still know much more about the beach practices of some minority ethnic groups than others, see Wolch and Zhang 2004). Donna-Marie Peters' (2016) analysis of African American swimmers at Martha's Vineyard, south of Cape Cod in Massachusetts, elucidates this point. She argues that:

the success of the civil rights movement contributed to the passing of laws that made it illegal to discriminate in public spaces. In the wake of these achievements, it is essential that researchers continue to examine the lingering effects of *de jure* and *de facto* discrimination in the everyday leisure life and activities of African-Americans. (*Ibid.*: 1)

Peters' research tells the story of the Polar Bears, an African American swimming group formed during the era of segregation. The Polar Bears' swim site is called The Inkwell too, and it has been a popular space for black swimmers since the end of the nineteenth century. She describes their contemporary swimming practices as "a purposive and symbolic act, which commemorates this space as a site of not-to be-forgotten civil rights struggles and successes" (*ibid.*: 5). Focusing on less formally organised activities, Wayne Lawrence's (2013) photographic portrayal of Orchard Beach in The Bronx, New York, also offers an important insight into contemporary minority ethnic beach and swimming practices.

Another prominent example of the racialisation of contemporary seaside space, and the importance of appreciating historical influences on the leisure practices of the present, is the Atlantic Beach Bikefest in South Carolina. The festival, often referred to as "Black Bike Week," began in 1980 and takes place annually on Memorial Day weekend at the end of May. Originally an event for African American motorcyclists, tens of thousands of additional attendees now turn up for social activities associated with the bikers' displays (King 2012). It takes place alongside another bike festival in Atlantic Beach—one for predominantly white riders that, predictably, is not attributed a racial signifier. The magnitude of Bikefest as a minority ethnic coastal leisure practice lies, according to P. Nicole King (2012: 150), in that:

the motorcycle festival offers hope for the town both because the event permits Atlantic Beach to act as a location for the growth and diversification of African-American leisure culture, and because it brings back the lively, crowded streets, blasting music, and sidewalks vendors so fondly recollected by early inhabitants of the town.

Sadly, Bikefest also sees a regurgitation of the racism of previous decades. Invoking ideas of "aural racism," local complaints are made about the noise of the bikes' engines and the vivacious young black partiers, resonating with historical racist portrayals of "raucous" and "disorderly" African Americans who were deemed to contaminate white leisure spaces (*ibid.*: 153; see also Kahrl 2008). Opposition to the event also cites its effects on neighbouring Myrtle Beach, leading to restrictions on where

the bikers can ride and decreasing support from the municipal authorities. As P. Nicole King (*ibid.*: 157) suggests, “Myrtle Beach’s focus on limiting the mobility of black bikers by closing off public streets hearkens back to the rope, fences, and road patterns that contained black revelers in Atlantic Beach during the Jim Crow era.” Controversy over the hosting of Bikefest became a national issue in the early twenty-first century. Having called for a tourism boycott of South Carolina because of the Confederate flag flying on the State House, the National Association for the Advancement of Coloured People (NAACP) appealed to motorcycle clubs for support. In 2003, a total of 25 black motorcyclists filed a lawsuit against Myrtle Beach, Horry County, and some local businesses for racial discrimination. A decade of debate between municipal authorities, the police, bike groups, and the NAACP followed. Bikefest has also been a source of inter-racial solidarity, however, with black and white bikers joining together in 2009 to protest harsh laws affecting riders of all ethno-racial backgrounds (King 2012).

The 2015 Bikefest was heavily disrupted, with closures of the Ocean Boulevard commercial thoroughfare. The deaths of nine white bikers at a shootout in Waco, Texas, the previous week were believed by many of the attending riders to have caused this prohibitive clampdown. Unsurprisingly, in comparison, the acts of the white bikers in Texas did not lead to the cancellation of predominantly *white* bike events in the aftermath (Blau 2015).

## Race on the Beach: Australia

One of the most notable instances of racialised beach conflict in the past decade occurred at Cronulla Beach in Sydney, Australia, in December 2005. Reports emerged of contestation over beach space and normative practices between Lebanese male beachgoers and white male surf lifesavers, culminating in a fight between small groups of men (Johns 2015; Poynting 2006). This developed within established local mythology, purporting that the presence of Lebanese men on the beach made white Australian women feel unsafe. These men were also deemed to dress inappropriately (by wearing everyday clothes as opposed to beachwear) and

to behave in a manner contrary to normative cultural and spatial practices (e.g. by playing football on the sand). This all took place in a climate of racism and Islamophobia, manifest in a defensive white localism that claimed beach spaces as belonging organically to certain groups and not others (Evers 2008). The beach in Cronulla, thus, acted as a social script for the interplay between local and global geopolitics, reflecting the broader role of seaside spaces in processes of racialised control, regulation, and subjugation.

After the original confrontation, segments of the Australian tabloid press, talk-back radio, and mobile phone text messaging networks whipped up a mob mentality among sections of Sydney's white communities. Local white "Aussies" were encouraged to "reclaim" the beach by attacking Lebanese and other racialised groups (Johns 2015; Noble 2009; Poynting 2006). This is extremely ironic and indicative of an historical amnesia, given the fact that Indigenous Australians have been marginalised historically from the country's beaches, both physically through the racialised and often violent control of space, and figuratively in the popular imagination (Huntsman 2001; Taylor 2009). One text message, reprinted in the largest circulation newspaper, *The Telegraph*, read, "This Sunday every Aussie in the Shire get down to North Cronulla to help support Leb and wog bashing day ... Bring your mates and let's show them that this is our beach and they are never welcome ... let's kill these boys" (cited in Poynting 2006: 86–87). Approximately 5000 people, mostly white and including Far-Right groups, rampaged around the beach, shops, and surrounding areas, attacking anyone of "Middle Eastern appearance" (Noble 2009). Alongside racist violence and chanting, flags and T-shirts displayed phrases including "Ethnic Cleansing Unit," "We Grew Here, You Flew Here," "Love Nulla Fuck Allah," "Wog-free Zone," and "Osama Don't Surf" (Evers 2008; Poynting 2006).

Critical commentators have located the events on the beach at Cronulla within the larger context of contemporary racisms, a widespread backlash against multiculturalism and the reinforcement of a mentality that demands "rights for whites." Ghassan Hage (2011) argues that what framed the Lebanese men as "out-of-place" at the seaside was not actually their *difference*; it was quite the opposite. Hage states that "beneath the complaint that the boys were not well-assimilated and well-integrated was

really the fear that the youths acted as if they were completely assimilated and integrated *despite* their cultural marginality and difference" (ibid.: 180). "They were," he adds, "totally comfortable on the beach being sexist, being macho, being vulgar and being aggressive. They were really very much at home" (ibid.: 179). This observation highlights the sometimes complex iterations and intersections of racialised and gendered beach space, and the variable nature of perceived threats and responses to racial hegemony at the seaside.

At Cronulla (and elsewhere), the beach and the bodies that dominate it took on meanings that outweigh their quotidian existence, emanating from the perceived threat to the iconic white male hegemony of the surf lifesavers posed by "new" types of beach users and consumers (Poynting 2006; Taylor 2009). The Australian beach, argues Clifton Evers (2008: 415), has "been constructed as a place of racial purity for decades," boosted by government discourses about threats to the nation's borders caused by immigration. Similarly, Suvendrini Perera (2007: 5) proposes that "the racialised fears and anxieties that characterise Sydney are layered onto Cronulla Beach as a sacred site of Anglo-Australia," and that "Cronulla Beach thus signifies on a national scale as a name that absorbs white racial fear and resentment and presents them anew, defiantly wrapped in the colours of national pride" (ibid.: 9). Further racist violence occurred on Sydney's beaches in 2009 following stories of the arrival of refugee boats (Perera 2009). As introduced in Chap. 2 of this book, the coast is positioned centrally to racialised ideas of nation in several countries in the Global North, as a peripheral location that is "vulnerable" to the primary and immediate effects of migration. It is a place where threats to the hegemonic whiteness, and by implication the safety and security, of the national polity are perceived to occur. As imagined spaces of whiteness, symbolic of the country as whole, coasts and seashores are deemed to require defending from threats inside and outside national borders.

The beach and seaside are not just spaces of dominance and subordination, although narratives of beaches as sites of colonial conquest, and the historical obliteration and genocide of Indigenous groups, live understandably long in collective minority ethnic memories in Australia and across the Tasman Sea in Aotearoa, New Zealand (West-Newman 2008). Resistance to the Australian beach as an imagined and lived white

space occurs too. Material interventions, such as the burqini—a full-body swimsuit for Muslim women designed by the Australian-Lebanese Muslim, Aheda Zanetti—have proved popular and have facilitated access to the beach for heretofore absent groups. As Susie Khamis (2010: 379) argues, the burqini “tests conventional representations of Australian beach culture, and suggests that, contrary to populist misconceptions, there is a place for Islamic cultural practices within Australian beach culture,” through a “fusion of two motifs that are already loaded with symbolic and often contested meanings—the veiled Muslim and the Australian beach” (*ibid.*: 380; see McCue and Kourouche 2010, for a more critical reading).

After the events in Cronulla, the iconic Surf Life Saving Australia organisation launched the multicultural “On the Same Wave” programme in recognition of its overwhelmingly white membership (Harris 2013). It received nearly one million Australian dollars of funding, in partnership with the local council and Federal Department of Immigration and Citizenship. A small number of women achieved their Bronze Medallions in 2006, making them eligible to undertake beach patrols. This was inspired, in no small part, by the availability of the burqini (Khamis 2010; see also BBC TV 2007). However, by the end of the decade, the project’s success was open to question. The original participants had withdrawn from surf lifesaving patrols, although some were delivering tuition at swimming pools (Elliott 2010; Knox 2010). Despite the material coastal liquidity of beach dress and practice, the capacity of these interventions to overcome a culture as embedded in whiteness as beach swimming and lifesaving in Australia has been unfortunately limited.

## Race on the Beach: South Africa

Issues around power, politics, place, and space are especially germane to the beaches of South Africa (Durrheim and Dixon 2001; Durrheim et al. 2011; Preston-Whyte 2001). Beaches were segregated legally under apartheid, permitting exclusive use by dominant racial groups. Not only were white communities allocated more beaches in terms of geographical area, but also their amenities were better and they were nearer the cities.

As in other global and historical contexts, minority ethnic beaches were often not conducive to recreation and were even dangerous places. Little changed after the end of apartheid in the early 1990s. While whites could visit “black beaches,” the reverse was still not the case even after segregation laws had been dismantled. Many beaches operated as “white-only sanctuaries, places where blacks were trespassers and interlopers” (Booth 2001: xix). This was especially the case when blacks undressed to their underwear (*ibid.*: xxii), or when they attempted to use beaches at particular times of the day (Durrheim et al. 2011), again highlighting the contextual limits of the beach as a liminal space. Such practices were often met with violent resistance. This parallels the arguments of Ghassan Hage (2011) about the incidents at Cronulla in Australia (discussed earlier in the text); it is not necessarily racialised difference, but a perceived case of cultural *similarity* through engagement in common activities, that is seen to threaten white dominance at the seaside.

Focusing on the city of Durban, Kevin Durrheim and John Dixon (2001) identify the discursive construction of beaches as the legitimate preserve of white families and as under threat from black beachgoers. Black beachgoers were regarded as “violating” or “corrupting” the beach as a “family space” by undertaking “inappropriate” activities, such as political protest in the 1980s and other group practices that were deemed “uncivilised” and “out of place” in the 1990s. Drawing on Mary Douglas’s (1984) formative theorisation of purity and danger, Marcus Stephenson (2004: 67) points out that “the restriction and control of black people’s access to white spaces signifies how ‘blackness’ is perceived to pollute ‘whiteness’ and how there are subsequent attempts by the dominant group to ‘purify’ the primary space.” These regulations highlight the contested and multifarious uses, meanings, and imaginaries of beach spaces, both during the anti-apartheid struggles of the late 1980s and beyond when inter-racial mixing was still rare (Booth 2001). Durrheim and Dixon (2001: 448) demonstrate “how fluid and historically variable constructions of place can function in arguments to justify exclusion and make segregation appear natural and necessary.” In South Africa, racialised constructions of bodies as being “in” or “out” of place were produced through a dual discursive process. This involved the attribution of normative bodies, uses, behaviours, and practices, and the designation of Others who

were deemed to transgress them. “Black” and “Coloured” communities were, thus, excluded through a series of hegemonic representations not only around “whiteness,” but also in relation to racialised constructions of “family,” “community,” and “leisure space” (Sibley 1995).

In line with the arguments outlined in this sub-section, leisure practices were intrinsic to resistance and subversion of dominant racial classifications and regulations of space in South Africa as well as their re/production and re/enforcement. Returning to the sport of surfing, Glen Thompson (2011: 2117) suggests that:

what gives the beach cultural meaning is that it was (and remains) a symbolic and embodied place where black and white surfers sought to escape from the everyday to find pleasure in the waves—a personal freedom outside of the political.

Surfing’s dissident potential was not unrestricted though, and participation in this sport could prove complicit with the prevailing politics of race and leisure. As Thompson (*ibid.*: 2120–2121) writes about Durban:

the making of a South African “Surf City” cannot be dislocated from this racially segregationist context. In this, the beach’s cultural geography was about how the social life of urban culture spilled over from the city into the sea. The beach, as a liminal coastal space, became that site where the social and the political reconfigured who could play in the sun, sand and surf.

Resistance to beach apartheid was forged in the mid-1980s. Ahmed Collier, a young black surfer who had “transgressed” the white beaches of Cape Town since the 1960s, formed a non-racial surfing movement with a multiracial group of surfers called the South African Surfriders’ Association. For Thompson, the legacies of this movement are clear, demonstrated by the increasing popularity of surfing among black South Africans in places on the KwaZulu-Natal coast and Wild Coast (*ibid.*).

From the amusements and entertainments of the English seaside to the beaches of the USA, Australia, and South Africa, this chapter has shown how seaside leisure spaces, practices, and activities are important

repositories for the re/production of wider ideologies and discourses around race. It has demonstrated the importance of adopting a historical and relational approach that pays attention to spatial, temporal, political, and cultural contexts and concerns. Moreover, it has highlighted how leisure forms and spaces at the seaside can facilitate cultural resistance and subversion, as well as the re/production and re/inscription of racialised dominance. This chapter concludes Part I of this book. Having provided the theoretical and conceptual framework for understanding race, space, place, and the seaside, Part II now comprises an empirical analysis through an exploration of the lives of minority ethnic residents in the English seaside resort of Sunshine Bay.

# **Part II**

# 5

## **"It Still Felt Like I Was Going to the End of the Earth": Race, Identity, and Community Formation in a Seaside Town**

### **Introduction: Situating Minority Ethnic Engagements with the English Seaside**

I don't want to generalise, but most BME [black and minority ethnic] communities somehow have links to their own traditions or their own backgrounds. For instance, the seaside for them can be a little bit intimidating in a way. Looking at more traditional backgrounds, communities where they feel the seaside, displaying bodies and that type of thing, [minority ethnic communities] feel a bit uncomfortable about it.

Opportunities to meet and talk with Jimmy (black African, male, 35–44 years old) were a real highlight of the fieldwork for this book, and I always anticipated our conversations keenly. His sophisticated and erudite understandings of the book's principal topics, exhibited in his aforementioned testimony, as well as his keenness to offer insight and feedback on my research, were invaluable. One balmy, mid-June afternoon we sat and chatted at length over hot drinks in a busy café in the centre of Sunshine Bay. We discussed in detail Jimmy's experiences in the town during the past decade. Employing a well-developed, organic

sociological imagination, Jimmy reflected both on the passage of time and on the influence of his own biography in helping him to comprehend the multifarious, fluid, and sometimes ambiguous nature of minority ethnic relationships with the English seaside. Born in the Democratic Republic of Congo, he has resided in the UK since claiming asylum in 2000, after which he was eventually granted leave to remain. He travelled to the UK—part agentic movement, part “being moved”—directly from another continent, but the political processes and immigration policies that dictated his journey as an asylum seeker (see later in this chapter) meant that London was the first port of call before Sunshine Bay.

Pausing to sip his coffee, Jimmy continued his explanation of the relationship between minority ethnic bodies and seaside spaces:

I think it's all about modernities, economic influences and material influences that try to influence how you define one particular place, and whether it becomes a luxury or whether it becomes a place of attraction really. Because of that, those types of perceptions do change within BME communities. So the example I gave you earlier, where the seaside wasn't [originally] something for me. But after time, because I've lived here—I'm influenced by that fact, I'm sure—I'm realising what to appreciate in relation to this culture. I'm appreciating the seaside because I live here and understand places, and I've got the meanings of them.

Jimmy's reflections illuminate powerfully the call made in this book for an intricate, situated, and contextual analysis of the English seaside. They exemplify in practice the analytical purchase of coastal liquidity as a means of understanding the dynamic nature of human relationships with this environment: materially, symbolically, and ontologically.

As the testimonies from Jimmy, and many other fellow participants over the next three chapters, reveal, coastal liquidity also defines (to varying degrees) minority ethnic residents' specific historical and current relationships with Sunshine Bay. Jimmy knew very little about the English seaside before his journey there, and it was certainly not a deliberate choice to end up in a seaside resort. Indeed, as he found on arrival, as seen from the aforementioned example he referred to, being situated near a large expanse of water was actually a traumatic experience because of the emo-

tional connotations of such places in the country where he grew up (see next chapter for a discussion of this story). Yet, eventually Jimmy moved from a position of *displacement* to one of *emplacement* (Glick Schiller and Çağlar 2016) as he established himself at the seaside and built various social networks. Put simply, Sunshine Bay became “home.” It was the town where he met and settled down with his wife, and where his two children were born—a place of work as a civil servant and community activist. When I last spoke to Jimmy in Sunshine Bay (while writing this book), he informed me that he was leaving the town after 15 years. The effects of austerity measures on employment options and career security in the public sector had taken their toll, and he had decided to take up a new job elsewhere in southern England.

Jimmy’s story is undoubtedly distinctive, providing one of the most redolent narratives of the research undertaken for this book. The thoughtfulness and richness of his testimonies, and the complexity and nuance of his relationship with the English seaside, are far from unique, however. As the following three chapters (including this one) demonstrate, residents of Sunshine Bay engage with the seaside in multiple ways. Some of their stories and reflections express similarity, while others are quite different in their experiences and encounters. The attitudes, memories, perceptions, anxieties, hopes, and desires featured their narratives emphasise the diversity, fluidity, and sometimes contradictions and ambivalence that characterise minority ethnic residents’ affiliations with Sunshine Bay explicitly, and the English seaside more generally. The analysis highlights the contrasting material, symbolic, emotional, and affective bonds that underpin relationships with seaside spaces and places: strong senses of attachment, pride, belonging, and entitlement are articulated alongside, and despite, feelings and experiences of marginality, exclusion, fear, and antipathy. These features all add valuable detail and depth in illuminating the diverse lives of minority ethnic residents at the English seaside.

The stories from the minority ethnic participants in this book tell us a great deal. They are instructive in their own right, enhancing our understanding of the spatial and cultural politics of race and ethnicity at the English seaside. They take on added value and resonance by opening up channels of communication from communities that have been marginalised in coastal contexts and from seaside narratives, and afforded very

rarely the opportunity to speak as authoritative, experiential commentators (see Chap. 1 of this book). These empirical chapters trouble and disrupt dominant representations of the seaside and its residents, and they overcome the erasure and silencing of minority ethnic bodies and voices in seaside spaces and places. In accordance with this book's epistemological standpoint, participant narratives are elevated and given the space to speak for themselves as much as possible. Many of the substantive themes explored and arguments raised do not lend themselves to discrete exploration and analysis. As the reader will encounter, they arise consequently at various points throughout all these chapters. For the purposes of comprehension, they are arranged into three broad areas. This chapter looks at issues of community formation in Sunshine Bay. It explores residents' initial engagements with the seaside and their early memories of this generic setting, the establishment of local networks in this particular town, and their experiences of integration and isolation there. Chapter 6 examines primarily the influence of space, place, and landscape on processes of inclusion, exclusion, and belonging in Sunshine Bay. Chapter 7 reflects principally on the emerging multicultural presence in Sunshine Bay over the past decade, focusing specifically on residents' embodied encounters with racial prejudice and discrimination, as well as their experiences of convivial inter-cultural relations.

## **Imagining and Remembering the English Seaside**

The interviews undertaken for this book proceeded usually with a shared discussion of our respective early memories of the seaside (or not as the case may be), together with the reasons that attracted us to living at the coast. These preliminary conversations, often nostalgic reminiscences, held a number of purposes. Largely, they were ice-breaking and scene-setting. In addition, they were critical in cultivating the necessary rapport for an engaging and empowering research encounter, helping to establish ontological dis/connectivities, distinct biographies, and a mutual recognition of seaside lives—past, present, and future. I would describe my

family history, and how I came to be born and live in Brighton, emphasising the memories recounted in the Preface to this book. Participants would respond (or would start the discussion), painting vivid and stimulating portrayals of their own initial seaside encounters.

In line with the idea of coastal liquidity, this nod to a “life story” approach also encouraged a diachronic analytical lens through which to understand participants’ lives (Valentine and Sadgrove 2013). This illuminated the broader historical configuration and embeddedness of minority ethnic communities in seaside environments, while affording the contextual setting through which to explore residents’ reasons for living in this particular resort (see Mahtani 2014). Establishing coastal connections throughout the entirety of participants’ life courses was critical because their memories as young(er) people were often key to their decisions to move to Sunshine Bay in later life. It is also, more broadly, a case of appreciating the bigger picture with regard to how history, power, and material and structural issues create the seaside as a special environment and impact upon the encounters that take place there (Valentine 2008). As Gill Valentine and Joanna Sadgrove (2013: 1980) note, “by paying attention to individual life-stories, we can better understand how prejudices unfold over time, when and how they become entrenched and where and why they are destabilised.”

The gap between their initial visits to the English seaside as children or young people and moving to Sunshine Bay as adults was at least a couple of decades for several of the participants interviewed for this book. Their seaside memories were nonetheless crystal clear, detailed, and meaningful. On the day I met Gary (black British Caribbean, male, 35–44 years), at the centre where he helps disadvantaged young people, the cold, grey, and dank weather was far removed from picture postcard images of the English seaside. Ironically, it helped to set the scene suitably for his story. Gary moved to Sunshine Bay in the mid-1990s with his white partner and their two, young mixed-race children. His reflections from four decades ago were extremely evocative:

It’s quite a distinct memory of getting up in the pouring rain, in Clapham Common [in south London], and piling into the back of an old Ford Prefect [car], and driving for however long, an hour or whatever, in the

back of the car, with my brothers and sisters and my mum and dad, to [the seaside]. And eating the candy floss and [sticks of] rock and doughnuts in the pouring rain, and sandwiches and fried chicken that we'd made and brought along with us. But it was a day out at the seaside. That's my earliest memory. It's pretty distinct.

I encouraged him to continue:

[The visits] started out in the late 1960s, lots of us trekking down. So you'd have four, five, sometimes seven, eight, nine cars of different families all going down to the seaside altogether, in a little convoy. You'd stop for the kids to have their little bits [of food] and whoever's kid was ill or whatever—which invariably was me throwing up, travel sick—then all the cars would pull out and you might separate into two groups. So you'd do that every summer, the big summer holidays, you'd have trips like that ... you had different people organising coaches, so that people wouldn't have to drive and they could have a proper day off ... and they'd all trek down to the coast and have a lovely day at the seaside, whatever, and then all trek back.

This depiction of travel, food, sweets, and car sickness would likely resonant with millions of Britons. There is, indeed, considerable similarity with the stories I have heard from my own relatives about their visits to the South Coast from their west London home around this time. Yet, to reiterate the aforementioned argument, minority ethnic historical (and contemporary) seaside narratives are still very rarely heard outside of their own communities. Look at any mainstream literature or photographs, or listen to popular reminiscences, of the seaside in the post-war era, and the likelihood of seeing racialised groups represented is almost nil. Gary's story is consequently of great importance—the inconsistency between the content of his recollections and the hegemonic received wisdom of life at the seaside illuminates the racial biases that characterise the ideological production of the seaside as a text, as well as those that control and regulate its social spaces.

Legato (West Indian, male, 65–74 years) is another Londoner. Born in the Caribbean, he spent much of his life in the capital, before retiring to Sunshine Bay, a place he had visited frequently as a tourist, in recent years. His memories also reference experiences from half a century ago:

For me, I suppose I came down here [to Sunshine Bay] in the late 1960s. This was one of the places I came. I always viewed it as a place where you could buy candy [floss], [sticks of] rock and stuff like that. We used to come down in a coach and we used to have parties, stuff like that. That's what I remember.

Like Gary's recollections, Legato spoke about seaside trips being undertaken as group ventures, rather than individual or family visits. This suggests that the numbers of minority ethnic people visiting the coast at that time were not insignificant. Legato also shed light on the formal, organised, and recurrent nature of these excursions, together with their importance for ethno-racial and community formation, sociability and solidarity, and cultural celebrations. These testimonies demonstrate the cross-cultural popularity of dominant British leisure practices of the period. Gary and Legato were simply doing what most other British people, regardless of ethnicity, were doing at weekends and in their holiday time.

Other residents spoke more about the emotional and haptic geographies discussed in Chap. 2 of this book, focusing on the actual *feelings* and *feel* of the seaside landscape. Trevor (black British, male, 18–24 years) grew up in South London. At the time of our interview, he was studying for a creative arts and digital media qualification in Sunshine Bay. He said:

My first memory of the English seaside is pebbles and sand. 'Cos the first time I went to the seaside was when I was young, I remember it was about rock candy, the sun, pebbles. I'm not sure where I went, but I know that we always used to go [there] when I was little. That was at the seaside.

Tia (African-Caribbean British, female, 45–54 years) is a creative art professional, with hugely impressive connections and experiences within the cultural and media industries. She had lived in Sunshine Bay for five years when we met. Sitting in her work studio, Tia became visibly animated when discussing her childhood memories:

I was probably at primary school [when I first visited the seaside]. I can see the picture in my head actually. I was not a very well child. I had asthma so

I went to a special school where I could get nursing assistance. They took us to the seaside. I remember dipping in the water, digging, you know, making sandcastles and things like that, just being happy.

I met Fola (Jewish-Nigerian, female, 45–54 years) in a lively pub one early summer evening. She described her first memories of visiting various seaside locations on day trips from London as a child. Fola talked eloquently about these times, stressing that they continue to underpin her current connections to the seaside, especially the pleasurable feeling of being in the sea:

It would be learning to swim, teaching myself to swim, just by being in the water. On the beach, in the sea, jumping over waves until we learned to stay buoyant and swim. So from that I've always had a great love of water, a great love of swimming. Sea swimming in particular, swimming in waves, which isn't most people's cup of tea, particularly black people, because the water is not clear down here, its muddy looking and cold. But to me that feels just fine. As long as the seaside temperature is warm, swimming in really cold water and cold waves is great.

Like those of Gary and Legato, these testimonies are essentially “colourblind.” Save for Fola’s comments, nothing in these narratives refers explicitly to race or ethnicity, or uncovers the individuals’ racialised identities. This signifies the commonalities found across otherwise diverse beach users of all ethnicities in relation to their quotidian, sometimes unextraordinary, historical, and current engagements with the beach and seaside (Jarratt 2015). It also reflects the fact that although all participants discussed at length the relationship between race, ethnicity, and the seaside, especially their own embodied experiences of this configuration, for the most part they rejected the possibility that their seaside connections could be understood exclusively through the lens of racialisation. This position was epitomised lucidly by Susan (mixed-race, female, 45–54 years): “If you ask me what it is that I like about the seaside,” she stated rhetorically, “it is that, you know, I’m not referring to my racial self. I’m referring to my *human self*.”

Racialised experiences were never far from participants' minds though. As each interview progressed and we delved into more detail, issues of race and ethnicity rose frequently to the surface. Elaborating on her early trips to the seaside, the racial demographics of the local population emerged as an abiding memory for Fola. Specifically, she recalled encountering the frequent discursive and attitudinal marking of minority ethnic bodies as "out of place":

It was an all-white and very elderly population [at the seaside] ... There were no black people that I could think of then. Maybe a few other mixed race children. There was an Indian [restaurant] and a Chinese [restaurant], but I never saw the Indian and Chinese people around outside their own businesses or shops. Yes, it was a tea and rock cake sort of place. If local people met black people they'd ask you, "How come you speak English?" "Where are you from?" you know, "*What are you doing here?*"

Fola continued by placing her experiences within the wider dominant ontological "fixing" of different types of ethnic and racial bodies to particular geographical spaces and places introduced in Chap. 1 of this book (see also McKittrick 2006; Price 2013; Shabazz 2015):

When I was a child, people didn't seem to think that black people should be in London or in Britain. Now black people are *so* associated with urban areas. Outside [towns and cities] it's, "What are you doing here? It's still ours" [i.e. white] ... Black people have come from the most beautiful parts of the world, no question, and yet there's sort of an idea that somehow our natural habitat is concrete and urban. But it so isn't.

Residents' reflections on racialised themes of being "in" or "out" of place, which are often fluid and contingent on time and space, are revisited in the following text and in the subsequent chapters.

Personal, historical connections with the seaside did not exist for all residents before they moved to Sunshine Bay. Although the majority of participants had some basic understanding of what they perceived to be "English culture" preceding arrival (often derived from dated literary texts they had read in school), they had very little, if any, previous

knowledge of Sunshine Bay specifically, or even the English seaside in general, as a popular cultural space. Their material, emotional, and affective relationships with this landscape were consequently much less developed than those individuals introduced earlier. Katie (Lithuanian, female, 18–24 years) works in a popular “greasy spoon” café. This eatery is located some distance from the centre of Sunshine Bay, on a main arterial road into the town, and it is certainly well off the beaten track from the principal spaces of multicultural settlement and social interaction. Katie kindly took time out during her breaks between serving customers one busy Saturday morning to talk with me over large mugs of tea. Looking for work after completing her studies in Lithuania, Katie came to the UK in 2006 on the recommendation of a friend. She remarked:

I'd never been to England [before moving here]. So I just trusted my friend because he was a good friend, yes, to find me where to live and a job for me. Just like this. I didn't know how it looks here.

Taymaz (Iranian, male, 45–54 years) came to Sunshine Bay much earlier, but his sentiments are comparable. Describing his journey from Iran to this seaside town in the 1970s to study in an English language college, he admitted:

I didn't know where I was coming to. I just knew I had an application form [for the college]. I came to London Heathrow [airport] and the owner of the college came to pick us up ... I didn't know anything about [Sunshine Bay].

Other participants lacked knowledge and experience of *any* seaside setting whatsoever. After leaving her home in Tanzania, Maasai (African, female, 65–74 years) lived in London for much of her life. Recurrent problems with her accommodation management in the capital took their toll, resulting in her decision to move away to a different environment. She had relocated to the coast ten years before we met. The sea views from the lounge window of her modern apartment in a retirement complex were breathtaking. Pouring a pot of tea while I started on the plate of chocolate biscuits, Maasai pointed out that:

I'd never been to the seaside in my country. I was born in the mountains so this was a completely new experience and I didn't know what to expect.

Burri (black African, male, 35–44 years) was born in Sudan and came to the UK in pursuit of business opportunities. He settled first in another seaside town, moving to Sunshine Bay a short while later. As we sat on a bench on the seafront, looking out to sea on a searing hot day, Burri told me that coming to work in England (rather than another country) was, to some extent, an inevitable decision. I asked him the reason. The entrenched historical links between Britain and Sudan, he responded, which emanated from British (and Egyptian) control of the Sudanese condominium in the first half of the twentieth century. The seaside itself was a different matter, purely an incidental location rather than a deliberate choice:

I didn't have any particular thoughts about the English seaside towns. But obviously I had some images about the countryside because of the literature we studied in Sudan at High School. Obviously we read Charles Dickens' books, *Tom Brown's School Days* [by Thomas Hughes], things like that, so we had a fairly good idea about the countryside. But as I said, it never crossed my mind to think about the English seaside towns.

Similarly, Leila (Tatar-Armenian, female, 18–24 years) admitted that she had no images in her mind of how the seaside would look when she arrived in the UK. She had travelled from Russia to visit a town adjacent to Sunshine Bay as a young adult and stayed for a short while. While she was there, Leila met a local man from Sunshine Bay. They began dating and decided eventually to get married:

I was interested in England because I studied English at university and I used to read Dickens a lot. I had these images of England, but not *seaside* England at all. In fact, I'd never read anything to do with seaside culture. I was sort of expecting these old-fashioned images of England, which I didn't see at all, you know.

These testimonies highlight the multiple and liquid dis/connections between Sunshine Bay's minority ethnic residents and the English seaside.

While coming to live at the seaside was a purposeful choice for some, it was not for others. More broadly, this phenomenon challenges some of the academic orthodoxies about migration, namely, in terms of migrants' assumed knowledge of the receiving society (Ryan 2011). This discussion is developed in the next section, which explores the various rationales, processes, and trajectories underpinning residents' migration to Sunshine Bay, both from global locations and from other places within the UK.

## Coming to the Seaside

The actual process of *travelling*—thinking about, preparing, and undertaking a “journey”—is a crucial, yet often overlooked, feature of modern migrant mobilities (Burrell 2008). One of the most notable, perhaps even self-evident, biographical characteristics of the participants in this research who had been born overseas was that, unlike the movements associated historically with urban populations, their arrival and settlement in Sunshine Bay was not part of large-scale ethno-national migrations. It was, instead, undertaken alone or with a very small group of significant others. Traditional, well-noted processes of “chain migration,” attributed more commonly to larger population numbers, were by no means redundant though. They operated in microcosm, with residents’ journeys influenced by friends and relatives already living in the town or by recommendations from other people. The trends found in Sunshine Bay are broadly indicative of the changing social, political, and geographical content and context of current migration practices and immigration policies. They also reflect the relatively embryonic nature of multicultural settlement in seaside towns and their status as “non-traditional” points of immigration. More specifically, principal reasons for arrival in Sunshine Bay, such as education or language study, professional employment, and political asylum, together with the liquid, multidirectional, and indirect manner of movement, and the marginal geographical position of the seaside away from the country’s urban centres, all contribute to the mostly *individualised* nature of these residential patterns (see Robinson and Reeve 2006). Sunshine Bay was sometimes migrants’ first port of call in the UK. On other occasions, it was an eventual destination after partici-

pants had lived somewhere else beforehand, usually (but not exclusively) London. Commensurate with practices of coastal liquidity, the stories from John, Satcha, and Ida in the following examples illuminate that residents' journeys were often fluid processes of "coming and going," as they generated affective ties, employment connections, and relationships with loved ones in the town. As alluded to in the previous section, these journeys involved varying amounts of human agency, migratory capital, and political influence.

The deliberate relocation to the seaside from other towns and cities in England represented an overt desire to experience a "slower pace of life" for some participants, particularly the older segments of the research sample. They often cited the role of pleasurable childhood seaside memories in choosing their new residential environments, underlining the historical connections of space and place. Given Tia's positive associations with the seaside as a young person (described in the previous section), her reasons for coming to live in Sunshine Bay did not come as a surprise. As she described her decision to leave London and relocate to the seaside, her passion for coastal life was tangible:

For a number of years I'd been thinking that I wanted to live somewhere else. I wanted to live near the sea, I love the sea ... You can keep waiting and waiting and waiting for everything to line up the way you want it or you can just make it happen. I had this voice in my head for years saying, "You've got to go, you've got to go". It sounds really weird ... All of a sudden, when I was out of London I felt better than when I was in there. [In London] I was living near a main road, there were police sirens all the time, helicopters going over your head. I just thought, "It's not what I want". I wanted a more relaxed way of life. One day I got up and thought, "Today's the day". I got in the car and drove to the coast.

Likewise, for Gary:

I came back [from working overseas] and [my family] were, like, "We're going to live in Sunshine Bay". And I was, like, "Cool", because all I was thinking about when I was [abroad] was, "Wouldn't it be great to just be by the sea?". And I kept seeing [in my mind] the sea with cliffs and maybe trees, but it was mainly the sea and the beach and cliffs, and I was, like,

"Yeah, I'd like to live by the sea". I'd lived in a city all my life ... So it was like, "Yeah, let's get out to the seaside."

Jean (Jamaican, female, 55–64 years) was one of the first research participants I met in Sunshine Bay. During a pleasant morning of discussion over tea and cake in a popular Persian-run seafront café, she recalled:

I'd been down here quite a few times because I had friends down here. And I grew to like it very much. I thought the people who I met were quite friendly, compared to London. They had more time for you. I certainly think they had more time for you than London. Plus it wasn't crowded, you know.

Sushma (British Asian, female, 45–54 years) is an articulate and genial healthcare professional. She invited me to meet her at her office, located in a quiet, residential neighbourhood of Sunshine Bay, some distance from the seafront. She stated that:

I'm from London originally and I decided I'd had enough of London at that point. This was about 18, 19 years ago now. And I started applying for jobs outside of London and the first job I got was in [Sunshine Bay]. So, yeah, I decided to leave London and come down here with my partner. We weren't actually planning to remain permanently. We were thinking that we'd get out of London, maybe go to Spain. Then we had children, just got established and it's a lovely place to bring up children, so we ended up staying here.

These statements indicate the possession of relative individual privilege and mobility. All these residents held the agency and capacity to move to a seaside (or other) space (and they will be able to leave should they wish). They embody coastal liquidity in terms of their dynamic movements within coastal landscapes and fluid relationships with them.

The situation for other residents is very different. Their sense of coastal liquidity is much less evident, replaced by a "stickiness" to particular seaside institutions, services, communities, and physical spaces (Saldanha 2007). They were literally "placed" in Sunshine Bay as a direct result of government immigration and asylum dispersal policies, and they have

been limited severely in their mobility. The restrictive components of this legislation have prevented them from moving outside Sunshine Bay, while their marking as “strange” bodies has curtailed their movement and social mobility within it.

I met Ali (Kurdish, male, 18–24 years) at the “drop-in” advice, support, and social centre for asylum seekers, refugees, and “new” migrant groups I attended weekly through my research. Like many clients, Ali just turned up one day, and over time we established that he would like to talk about his experiences. We bonded over our shared passion for football, and we enjoyed discussing the performances of the different teams in the 2010 men’s FIFA World Cup each time we met. Despite his limited English language skills, Ali articulated that:

I came to [Sunshine Bay] at the beginning of February 2005. I had a problem in my country so that’s why I ran away. That’s why I came here.

Jimmy, who readers met at the beginning of the chapter, stated that:

I came to [Sunshine Bay] in 2000. Obviously I didn’t have the choice to come to [Sunshine Bay]. I was sent [here] after a few weeks in London. I came to London fleeing civil war in the Democratic Republic of Congo ... I came to London and as soon as I arrived at Gatwick airport I claimed asylum. I was detained for a few days. After detention they decide where to send you and it happened to be [Sunshine Bay].

Walat (Kurdish, male, 35–44 years), from Syria, also arrived in the town as an asylum seeker, in the late 1990s. He now works as an advocate for other members of his community and is a well-known local activist. Although he remembers seeing the sea and being impressed by the views when he first arrived in Sunshine Bay, Walat did not feel attached to the place for quite a while afterwards. He told me that when he spoke initially with relatives back in Syria on the telephone, he would make sure he gave the impression that it was a nice place, even though he did not feel positively towards it. Like Jimmy, time has forged a better relationship for Walat. He described the birth of his children in the town as creating a greater sense of attachment, reflecting the role of young people in

facilitating the integration and social networks of their parents in receiving societies (Ryan 2011; Spicer 2008).

Some participants came to Sunshine Bay to study. John (black African, male, 55–64 years) is an established, well-regarded member of the local community. He holds a senior professional role in social services and now lives in the residential suburbs of Sunshine Bay. John's mixed-race children have grown up and left home, and they continue to live nearby with their own children. Sitting on comfortable wicker chairs in the modern conservatory of his neat home, we discussed his original arrival in the 1960s, then departure, then return to Sunshine Bay in the 1980s:

In 1962, I was sent as a kid into boarding school from Africa. Rich African families sent their kids to England because they wanted them to have this British education. And so I wasn't a unique person as other families were sending their kids to boarding school here. So I came at that age to private boarding school in [Sunshine Bay]. I did my O Levels and A Levels and then left and went to the United States. So I left England in 1969, spent a year in Africa and then I changed to the States [to get my degree] ... I eventually returned [to England] because I met [my wife] when I was here, she's from here, and from the States we went back to Liberia. I was going back home after I got my degree. We were there for 4 years until there was a military coup in 1980. So we had a choice of either going back to the States or coming back to England where her family were.

Education was the driver for Adam's (Turkish, male, 25–34 years) journey to Sunshine Bay as well. He was studying at college when we met, while earning a wage by cleaning a local school at night. A mutual passion for football again brought us together. I used to chuckle as Adam tried to influence which team I should make an affiliation with on my upcoming visit to Istanbul. He was a Galatasaray supporter, whereas I was always keener on Fenerbahçe! He told me:

Before I came here I checked on the internet everything about price and school facilities and everything. Also my school worked with a travel agency in Turkey and they recommended to me to study in [Sunshine Bay]. They told me it was a very beautiful place, by the sea, and you can travel to

London and everywhere, and everything is convenient. Accommodation is cheap he told me ... so I decided to come to [Sunshine Bay].

Other residents came to Sunshine Bay to take up professional positions or other forms of employment. I interviewed Abulbishr (Arab, male, 45–54 years) in the meeting room of a local mosque. At that point, he had lived in the town for nearly eight years. An eminent clinical consultant at a local hospital, Abulbishr had spent most of his life since leaving Iran in the English Midlands, but the opportunity to undertake a new medical role brought him to the seaside. Burri, a young businessman and entrepreneur, made the move to Sunshine Bay from a nearby seaside town after forming a professional partnership with another Sudanese man. Recommendations and information about the town were provided to these participants by close friends or relatives, some of whom were themselves living in the town, while others were simply passing on good things they had heard about it. Last, but not least, for an increasing number of Sunshine Bay's young minority ethnic residents (several of whom are mixed-race), home has never been anywhere else. It is the town where they were born and in which they grew up.

## Connecting with the Seaside

Like all seaside resorts in England, Sunshine Bay is a “non-traditional” destination for transnational immigration. Movement by “settled” minority ethnic populations to the town from elsewhere in the country has likewise been historically quite small. This picture is changing relatively rapidly, and the repercussions are extensive (see Chap. 7 of this book). Nevertheless, some minority ethnic residents have been less able to generate or access local networks of extended family and/or co-ethnic friendship groups than those more “established” communities in urban settings, a factor accentuated by the aforementioned *individualised* migration patterns. Connections to their communities in other parts of the UK, as well as to global kinship networks, have accordingly proved very important. Many minority ethnic Sunshine Bay residents can be regarded, therefore, as “spatial pioneers” (Robinson and Reeve 2006: 7)

in this new environment. They have been reliant largely on their own abilities to deal with local issues relating to employment, housing, and social services, and their processes of community formation have often crossed ties of ethnicity, nationality, citizenship, religion, and class (Fox and Jones 2013). Some of the main implications of these trends are considered in the following text.

It is important to acknowledge here that, as spatial pioneers, participants' decisions to move to the seaside sometimes generated negative responses from relatives and other members of their ethnic communities. Jimmy's fluid and anti-essentialist interpretation of minority ethnic engagements with the seaside reported at the start of this chapter is not always endorsed elsewhere. The ontological "fixing" of racialised corporeality to landscapes that dominates the popular imagination—the way that minority ethnic bodies are seen to inhabit certain spaces (e.g. cities) and to be incongruous in others (e.g. the coast)—can also be reproduced by minority ethnic people themselves. Ranu (British Bangladeshi, female, 45–54 years) came to Britain from Bangladesh in the early 1970s, as a 16-year-old with her family. She described the disdainful reaction to her seaside residence she received from other British Bangladeshis: "Any of my friends that live up in London, if they come and visit me, they say, '*how do you live here?*' Other participants described similar experiences when informing friends and families that they were moving to Sunshine Bay. Sushma recalled that:

It still felt like I was going to the end of the earth. My family thought that I was crazy. I might as well have gone to Timbuktu. They just thought it was weird: "Why is she going all the way out there?" ... I had to tell my family, "Do you know I see black faces every day when I leave my house?"

Pausing periodically as a wistful smile broke across her face, Tia described how her friends responded to her decision to move to Sunshine Bay:

I think initially they were a bit, "What are you moving down there for?!", kind of thing, like leaving the mothership of London! And also at that time, you know, very few BME people were moving into the countryside

and things like that, and that was my first experience of living in a non-urban area. I wasn't sure at first if it was what I wanted to do, but it's just so great. I really like it now.

Fola stated that:

Other people have said to me, you know, if you wanted to move why didn't you leave and go overseas because the weather here is so awful. How can you enjoy the seaside in the sort of weather that we have in England? And I say, "a) I can swim in the sea when it's cold, and b) I like the sea in this sort of weather, I like being by the sea, walking along the coast even when it's cold". And I think many black people, whose experience of the seaside is on very hot days, Bank Holidays, bucket and spade, find it weird that you'd want to live here.

Some participants recalled—either from their personal experiences or by rehashing the tales of others—the appellation of specific pejorative terms from members of their ethnic communities. This nomenclature was used to imply that the cultural identities of minority ethnic people living by the seaside were less authentic than those of urban residents, because either they had (been) assimilated into the dominant white coastal culture or they were too distant from other members of their ethnic communities to engage in cultural (re)production. Sham (British Bangladeshi, male, 25–34 years), for example, spoke of being labelled a “coconut,” while Gary mentioned how the young minority ethnic people he worked with were described as “country” by friends and relatives in inland towns and cities.

Other people's predictions of “sticking out” were often reflected in practice during residents' early weeks and months in Sunshine Bay, but changing personal circumstances and broader multicultural shifts eventually alleviated their effects for several of them. Moving to Sunshine Bay has been by and large a very positive experience for the majority of participants in this book, although, as Chap. 7 highlights, their Otherness can still be rendered quite pronounced and “strange” in the local popular imagination, and they experience racial prejudice and discrimination on a routine basis. The embodied cultures and experiential knowledge of

seaside life thus offer a direct rebuttal to the received wisdom that the relationship between minority ethnic bodies and coastal environments is ineluctably disconnected, negative, or problematic. For instance, Legato spoke of the convivial atmosphere he experienced on his early morning seafront walks throughout the town, during the period in which he was considering relocating permanently to the coast:

I used to walk down the seafront and people used to say, “Good morning”, which was different from in London. They were more polite. You used to go into the shops and they had time to talk to you. So that brought me to think, “I could live here”. I knew when I came that it was a lot different from London, but I was prepared to accept the quiet.

Satcha (Zimbabwean, male, 55–64 years) migrated to Birmingham from southern Africa in the 1970s to read for a bachelor’s degree at university. He moved later to another seaside town, and then again to Sunshine Bay to undertake advanced study. From the early 1980s until 2000, he lived in Sweden. He left there due to his experiences of racial discrimination. Returning to Sunshine Bay was the natural choice, because he “felt even more at home here than in Zimbabwe.” Satcha chose an amusing example to make his point:

When I came to Sunshine Bay and was studying, I took another job as a barman. I’d never worked before as a barman but I learned quickly. I met a lot of people. My first experience in an English pub here was asking for a whisky and coke. The barman gave me *another* whisky and coke [in addition]. I said, “I ordered only one”. He said [pointing to another customer who had bought the drink], “That man has never in his life seen anyone drink whisky and coke”. People were so friendly. That’s why I liked Sunshine Bay. There was no feeling of stigma or anything, no feeling that I was a foreigner, trying to cut me down or something like that. I made a lot of friends in a short time.

Katie spoke similarly about the cordial welcome she received from local people in the community:

People are really very nice, yes, every time asking, “How are you?” Sometimes from the same person. It was very strange for me, yes, because

in my country no one asks me too many times. I like English people. They are nice, yes.

The everyday, personal micro-interactions between Sunshine Bay's minority ethnic residents and its majority white British community are explored in more detail in Chap. 7 of this book. Nonetheless, it is productive at this juncture to contemplate the implications of the testimonies from Legato, Satcha, and Katie. They illuminate the sometimes very ordinary and prosaic enactments of multiculture, integration, and belonging in the town—what Kye Askins (2015: 471) refers to as a “quiet politics of encounter.” As Umut Erel (2011: 2056) points out, these forms of racialised social relations and inter-cultural exchange are often inconspicuous, yet they still create substantial bonds and attachments through the quotidian processes and practices of work, education, romance, and neighbourliness (see also Kesten et al. 2011). Like the conceptual approach regarding “new” spaces of multiculture outlined by Sarah Neal et al. (2015: 464), the lives of Sunshine Bay's residents frequently challenge the essentialist “segregation-distrust-conflict model,” as well as the idea that new immigration leads inevitably to tension in local neighbourhoods (Hickman et al. 2008). The participants in this book instead spoke frequently about forms of interaction that are much more convivial (Gilroy 2004; Nowicka and Vertovec 2014). This is an understanding of racialised community relations that:

does not ignore tension and discord, but rather attempts to reposition the dominance of conflict and pay attention to the coexistence of other, often slight and spontaneous and sometimes amicable forms of multicultural social interaction that can occur and be thrown up in the vast range of settings that are often moved through in any one day and night. (Neal et al. 2013: 315)

Such a standpoint necessitates appreciation of context: of Sunshine Bay itself; of the English seaside more generally and its relationship with other landscapes; and of the cultural, spatial, and temporal politics of everyday multiculture (Hall 2015a; Neal et al. 2013; Wise and Velayutham 2009).

## Community Formation at the Seaside

### Ethnicity, social networks, and integration

Community formation with people of similar backgrounds has sometimes been quite straightforward for minority ethnic groups in Sunshine Bay. Relatively, small population numbers have allowed easy identification of co-members, dynamic interaction, and organisation of regular social activities. On the contrary, for some residents, the idea of community has been purely notional. The size of the group and the available resources and capacities to coordinate the network have been insufficient to represent anything more than a loose collection of people. Studies undertaken as part of the earlier wave of research on rural racism suggest that minority ethnic groups living in areas where people of a similar background are not represented significantly can experience a sense of cultural isolation. For example, Julian Agyeman and Rachel Spooner (1997) argue that minority ethnic groups in these circumstances are separated from the local majority white community *and* other members of their ethnic communities simultaneously. Likewise, as Jon Garland et al. (2006: 427) identify, these groups may “feel isolated, both geographically and socially, and lack the kind of in-built formal and informal networks that numerically significant urban minority ethnic communities have developed.” For example, Kose (British African, female, 18–24 years) spoke about her experiences as a student in Sunshine Bay along these lines:

If I had not met [a black female friend] and one other [black] girl, I probably would have felt very isolated, because even now there's only two black people on my course. I don't know if this is just with me, but I guess you find it easier to, like, mix with your own kind. It's like a defence mechanism isn't it, mixing with your own kind.

In addition, individuals' capacities to affirm and articulate a minority ethno-cultural identity can be inhibited by their experiences of racism (Henderson and Kaur 1999; see Chap. 7 of this book).

Feelings and reflections on this matter are not static. Instead, they fluctuate, as Jimmy alluded to at the beginning of this chapter, emerging and

dissipating over different times and spaces. For those participants who had lived elsewhere in between periods of residence in Sunshine Bay, it was sometimes only during their return settlement that feelings of isolation became apparent. Ashrafun (British Bangladeshi, female, 25–34 years) is an intelligent and erudite young woman who was combining part-time postgraduate study in social work with a career as a civil servant during the period we were in contact. As we talked over tea and snacks with other members of her family in her mother's living room, she reflected that:

I don't know if it was me or what, but before, you don't know any different when you're growing up somewhere. But moving away and living in London, it was a really mixed area, there wasn't one group more than the other, it was just mixed. I came back here and that was the first time that I really felt like a minority. Even though there were more minorities around [than before], I did feel like a minority for the first time. And it was a bit weird to feel like that, especially when I grew up here.

This point about the repercussions of the whiteness of seaside spaces was reiterated by Susan as we sat at her kitchen counter one afternoon. Susan became quite emotional when discussing her relationship with the seaside (especially in conjunction with her memories as a young person), but interjected periodically to reassure me that thinking and talking about this period was actually a positive and happy endeavour for her:

I went back [to Sunshine Bay] first between 1990 and 1995, after being in London and, you know, living the urban life. That was a complete culture shock coming back here and [thinking], "where are all the black people?!" And just hearing people's views about BME communities, it was like, "Oh god, no, these are stereotypes!" The feeling of isolation really in a sense, you know, did hit home.

These examples reinforce how the Otherness of minority ethnic people may become more pronounced and "visible" in majority white environments, contributing to their ontological construction as "strange" bodies in seaside landscapes (see Chap. 2 of this book). This can lead to increasing levels of discrimination, as racialised bodies become corpo-

real markers of perceived undesirability and non-belonging (Neal and Agyeman 2006a; see Chap. 7 of this book). In turn, these perceptions, feelings, and experiences can be heightened by policymakers and practitioners who may overlook the needs of these individuals and groups, especially the realities of racism (Garland et al. 2006).

The situation is not always so cut-and-dried though, while the centrality of ethnicity in community formation is not universal (Fox and Jones 2013). David Robinson and Kesia Reeve (2006: 14–15) argue that:

physical isolation is not a measure of cohesion and geographical separation of culturally distinctive groups is not necessarily harmful. Inter-community tensions or ethnic-relations tensions can arise in ethnically mixed towns and cities (such as London), as well as in locations (such as northern towns and cities) where new immigrant groups and minority ethnic populations are clustered in inner-city neighbourhoods characterised by poor housing. The converse is equally true, with relatively harmonious relations existing in both types of location.

As is characteristic of migration processes more generally, “new” minority ethnic residents adapt to life at the seaside at a variety of speeds, combining migratory and/or “ethnic” capital with those resources obtained after settlement (Erel 2010). This development of a seaside habitus is influenced by a variety of factors, both *involving* and *outside of* ethnicity, including age, gender, religion, skin colour, immigration status, social class, profession, language competency, (perceived) cultural proximity, and ability to access appropriate social services.

Meeting people through a local mosque and co-religious professional networks at work (see Ryan 2011) proved to be productive strategies during Abulbishr’s first few months in Sunshine Bay:

For the size of [Sunshine Bay], I think the Muslim community or the non-indigenous community is a reasonable size. [Muslims] tend to adopt a habit that wherever you go, you find where the mosque is and that would give you a sense of the community, how big it is. And I think probably coming from the profession of being a doctor, working in a hospital, there’s quite a lot of doctors who are from the same background. So you tend to socialise a little bit.

Language was a pivotal factor in forming social networks for several residents, although this occurred in differing ways. Soon after being dispersed to Sunshine Bay, Ali heard fellow asylum seekers and refugees speaking Kurdish. He was able to establish where a number of fellow migrant Kurds were staying in the town, and he began to participate in their social circles:

When I first came I didn't know any of the people here, the Kurdish people. One week later, I started hearing people speaking Kurdish. When I came there was one [place where many Kurdish people were staying]. Sometimes I went there and saw the Kurdish people.

Competency in English was perceived to be more important for others, underlining the cross-ethnic nature of community formation and social networks in Sunshine Bay, discussed later in this chapter. As a woman, a migrant, and eventually a single parent, Ranu faced particular difficulties (see Lopez-Rodriguez 2010). Attending English classes during her initial residence in Sunshine Bay enabled her to develop her language proficiency and to make friends at the same time:

Not many Asian people were living in the area, so that was my main issue. The isolation. I was looking for any people like me with a family. Women mainly. I knew I had to learn the language. But it was difficult for me. My children were very young and I was working. I used to go for English classes in the evening and friends helped me as well.

Adam stated that:

When I came here it was very hard for me and I struggled with many things, financial, because I had a language barrier, I couldn't speak anything. I just knew "yes" or "no". I started to learn the language step-by-step. It was very hard. I started a part-time job six months later which was really good for me because I met English people and foreign people, and I started to speak with people. It was really good. I improved very well.

These testimonies are all indicative of the issues and problems, but also the possibilities and opportunities, faced by "new" minority ethnic resi-

dents, especially recent migrants and “spatial pioneers” (Robinson and Reeve 2006: 7), in seaside towns. As a manifestation of coastal liquidity, they demonstrate the assorted means through which people (seek to) establish networks around similar ethnicity, religion, and/or nationality, and the coping strategies they employ to overcome and/or avoid isolation.

It is critical to avoid essentialising and reifying these networks, and to resist from viewing them as inert entities, for their durability fluctuates over space and time (Raghuram et al. 2010; Ryan 2011). It is also the case that while ethnic connections are frequently the most conventional and important during the early postmigration stage, they can be superseded by the inclination and capacity to move beyond them. Links with members of other communities often forge around neighbourhoods, work places, children’s schools, relationships, leisure and recreation, shared social experiences, and other aspects of everyday life. As Louise Ryan (2011: 709) reminds us, “the networks that migrants encounter when they first arrive are unlikely to remain static especially if migrants experience social and geographical mobility within the ‘host’ society” (see also Erel 2010; Fox and Jones 2013; Glick Schiller and Çağlar 2016). Cross-ethnic community formation and social networks are especially apparent in Sunshine Bay. These patterns and social relations are addressed later in this chapter.

## Culture, Consumption, and Community

Feelings of isolation for some of Sunshine Bay’s residents can be accentuated by the absence of culturally specific activities or provision. These include the likelihood of hearing certain music genres at bars and nightclubs, and the availability of “ethnic” foodstuffs in local grocery stores (see Rhys-Taylor 2014, on relations between food, identity, and multicultural spaces). For example, Maasai pointed out that:

We used to have one shop at [my block of flats] and it used to get a few African foods. But that disappeared. It lasted two years. There was another one [nearby]. Again, started by a Nigerian friend of mine. It was very, very expensive. Because when we want food, we make journeys to London. I actually go to see my children and buy the plantains and the yams from

London. A few months or whatever ago, a Nigerian opened a shop in [Dock Avenue] and whatever he's selling is very expensive. I've been telling him, "Look, you can't start like that", because the yam, or whatever, is too expensive.

Jean stated that:

I find there's not enough things for black people down here [in Sunshine Bay]. The thing is, when I first came down here, there wasn't many black people. But I've noticed as the years have gone by that there appear to be more and more coming in. I don't know whether they're students or what they are, but I don't think that there's enough stuff for them to take part in, and I think a lot of them might be bored because there's nothing for them to do.

Ayesha (Turkish, female, 18–24 years) was one of those students in Sunshine Bay who embodied Jean's concerns about a lack of appropriate cultural activities to take part in. Originally from North London, I met with Ayesha and some of her fellow students at her college. Employing a distinct "colour-coding" of genres of popular music, she mentioned that:

London obviously is so diverse. You've got all the reggae, bashment [dance-hall reggae] clubs, you know, hip-hop, R'n'B. [In Sunshine Bay] it's all sort of like white music. It's only, like, selected nights and stuff innit, because apparently [black music] doesn't appeal to everyone. So I do prefer going to clubs where it's more my sort of music. Coming here, I felt it's all like techno, all that crap.

Ayesha's description of black music genres as "my sort of music" is especially noteworthy, if not perhaps unusual, given her white Turkish ethnicity. Her socialisation and multiethnic friendship groups in London have led her to renounce the popular cultural practices associated primarily with white young people (see also Harris 2013), and she finds their alienating and excluding qualities to be accentuated in the less diverse social spaces of the seaside.

More substantive reflections on Sunshine Bay's increasing ethnic diversity are explored in Chap. 7 of this book, but it is important to note here

that a number of other residents felt that culturally specific foodstuffs *were* becoming increasingly available. Sushma stated that:

There were a few shops that came about or that I found. There was one small shop near Morrisons [supermarket] and one on the seafront that's gone now. I've seen Caribbean restaurants and places come and go, you know, and now there's one in [Harbourside] so hopefully that will be established. [My friend], she has a hairdressing business and she's been here for years, so there are pockets of services around.

Dahab (Sudanese, male, 65–74 years) travelled to London as a refugee from Sudan ten years ago. He was reunited with his family when they came to join him after a few years. They decided subsequently to move to the seaside. He stated that:

Now, because the [minority ethnic] community is becoming larger and larger, commercially there are a number of shops selling Oriental food and selling Muslim meat, *halal* meat, some things like that. Although it is a bit expensive, the prices, compared to London.

Leila explained to me that residents' happiness regarding the availability of certain food products signifies much more than a matter of culinary taste. Rather, these items facilitate cultural connections and emotional links to (ancestral) homelands and other members of their ethno-national communities. She reflected that:

For me it's not really that important because, as I said, I adapt really well, but since that shop [selling Eastern European groceries] was opened I go there quite regularly. It's quite nice to have that option, but I would definitely survive without it. I can buy Russian bread there which I like and I missed, and candies and chocolate ... It's your memories and nostalgia generally rather than the quality of the product. If it ever closes down, goes bust or whatever, I'll be upset, so I support it with my business.

Sunshine Bay's demographic profile and location as a marginal geographical and cultural place have, in Gary's opinion, had a negative impact historically on minority ethnic young people's popular cultural

consumption. Keeping up with the latest fashion and sportswear trends or musical crazes emanating from London and other major cities in the UK has been a difficult task. Gary felt that this is a changing scenario though, with social media helping to connect these young people with aspects of popular culture elsewhere. He said:

It's only changed in the last four or five years really, stepped up a gear. Previous to that, you know, information travels a lot slower from London to here and back. So you found that kids here were a lot slower with fashion, a lot slower with the latest music, a lot slower with the latest sport or leisure activities. So you kind of got this thing where people were trying to catch up all the time. If they weren't trying to catch up, they were trying to discover or pre-empt what the next thing might be—and getting it wrong. So you had people calling you "country". All the young kids from here, if you're ethnic minorities, you're seen as "country". "You come from country". And it's like, "No, [Sunshine Bay]". And it's like, "That's country, bruv". It's like you're a lot slower. But in the last four or five years, young people's networks are probably the most efficient and functioning of all the networks that exist. And now information is instantaneous. Something can happen in London in the morning and within an hour its news here and people know what's happening.

Notably, Gary showed how dominant constructions of centre and periphery at the seaside do not just have geographical and cultural inflections (Millington 2005; Shields 1991), have racialised ones too.

### **Living Within a Majority White Community in a Seaside Town**

In contrast to, and often alongside, feelings of isolation, several residents identified distinct social benefits from living within a majority white community. They felt that life in a seaside resort like Sunshine Bay actually facilitates forms of integration and conviviality that might be unavailable or inaccessible in larger urban areas (see also Dawney 2008). Privileging an assumed primacy of ethnicity in normative identity formation and social networking, Sham pointed out that:

The main factor of growing up in a seaside town and being [minority] ethnic is that probably your friendship group is much more different. And that's really important, because if you were in a city then you'd be with much more people like yourself, whereas if you grow up in a seaside town you have to be ... well, you don't have to be, this is what we know ... you [make friends] with everyone.

In a similar vein, his sister, Ashrafun, described her feelings about moving away from Sunshine Bay to study at university in London a few years ago. As a young British Bangladeshi woman growing up in a predominantly white seaside town, she believed that forging friendships and establishing social networks across ethnic boundaries were *necessary* social strategies, not just beneficial ones:

When I went to London, some Asian people found it difficult to have friendships [with people from different ethnicities]. [They're] not holding anything against each other, but sort of don't know how to relate to white people, whereas I could easily do that. Maybe they thought "oh, that's different". But I could always relate to different types. *I had to.*

The involvement of Ida (Iranian, female, 35–44 years) in this research was especially notable. She introduced me to an array of local residents, community leaders, and other influential people in Sunshine Bay, and she vouched for my credentials when accessing new social spaces and approaching research participants. She ferried me around in her car, invited me to join committees and take part in community activities, and encouraged me to come along to the refugee and asylum "drop-in" centre group on a weekly basis. Ida came to London from Iran shortly after the beginning of the millennium, with her Iranian husband who had already lived in the UK and held British citizenship. After the birth of their first child, they went back to Iran. They soon chose to return to the UK, but not to the capital, because they desired what Ida described as "a smaller area ... a safer area, and less expensive than London." Like Ashrafun, Ida compared her approach to creating social networks while living in London, which revolved around co-ethnic and co-national groups, to the more ethnically inclusive one she utilised on moving to the seaside:

[Sunshine Bay] has given me something which I could never, ever have achieved in one million years in my country [Iran]. I have met so many cultures and it has broadened my point of view about other cultures. We all have our own biases and prejudices ... Because of the problems and history in Iran we don't socialise that much with Arabs. But now I have so many Arab friends. [Sunshine Bay] has given me this opportunity. In London I was just looking for Iranians, but in [Sunshine Bay] the first person I met, and still we are friends, she was Thai. The second person was Indian, and now the three of us are good friends.

Dahab added that:

When my family came here I had two daughters, one at the age of 15 and the other one was 12 years old. In London we have a very big [Sudanese] community and I thought that if we stayed there we would be more connected with our community and other Arabic-speaking or African communities. This would not have helped [my daughters] to improve their language, to master the English language. Because here, to succeed at university and in your studies, you have to know English fluently. To not be discriminated against, you have to know the language. Because if you don't, people will start, you know, picking on you, spiting you, backbiting or something like this. So you have to master the language so as to live and to fight for your rights. So I said, "OK, I have to move out of London."

As these examples highlight, patterns both of ethnic isolation (sometimes in a perceived sense) and of integration are evident in Sunshine Bay. This is not a binary scenario; it is a fluid relationship, characterised by the everyday acts and exchanges that occur in the messy, in-between spaces of social interaction.

It has been argued that the comparatively small number of minority ethnic people living in non-urban areas makes the process of gaining inclusion and acceptance within dominant communities more likely to be one of assimilation rather than of integration (Garland and Chakraborti 2006; Agyeman and Spooner 1997). This was not evident with the participants in this book. They sought routinely to retain their ethnic, cultural, and religious attributes and practices while also engaging substantively in social interaction with the majority white community.

Notwithstanding this, these forms of inter-cultural exchange and feelings of belonging should be plotted on a sliding scale rather than as polar opposites, and they are underpinned by a variety of inter-sections, such as gender, class, and age (Erel 2011). They are also a matter not only of the respective sizes and backgrounds of the different groups (see earlier in this chapter), but of individuals' own desires and inclinations to form or reject inter-ethnic friendships and social networks.

Ethnic-specific networks can be enabling or disabling, depending on the spheres in which they are employed, their intrinsic social power, and their relationship to mainstream social, political, and economic structures (Anthias 2007). Some residents in Sunshine Bay stated that they chose not to socialise with members of a similar ethnic background, because of aspirations to get to know people in the broader local community, attempts to improve English-speaking skills, or anxieties around the repercussions of revealing personal details to co-nationals they do not know well (especially common amongst asylum seekers, refugees, and other undocumented migrants). This again provides a timely rebuttal to the "segregation-distrust-conflict model" (Neal et al. 2015: 464) that assumes the clustering of minority ethnic groups, as well as lives of inter-ethnic difficulties and tensions for new migrant communities, in majority white spaces.

## **"This Is Our Community": Community Formation Beyond Ethnicity**

The sort of scenarios identified in this section have led some scholars to ponder the expediency of a conceptual framework of "community" and related nomenclature. As Jon Garland and Neil Chakraborti (2006: 172) state:

the term "minority ethnic community" may be something of a misnomer in a rural context, as the research has pointed to the existence of essentially scattered, isolated households who lack peer group support and the types of networks that tend to be associated with the formation and sustenance of such a community.

However, while recognising that potential issues can arise in relation to forging a recognisable collective of a substantial size, David Robinson and Kesia Reeve (2006: 8) suggest that such a viewpoint:

fails to recognise the factors that can draw together new immigrants from diverse backgrounds. In particular, evidence suggests that new immigrants can be drawn towards existing clusters of minority ethnic settlement, regardless of whether they share a similar ethnic or cultural background.

Larry Ray and Kate Reed (2005) similarly contest the assumption, reinforced by the likes of Sham and Ashrafun, that minority ethnic communities are necessarily less cohesive in non-urban areas simply because of their lower population densities. They argue that this perception reifies notions of ethnicity and privileges ethnic ties above all other social relations. In their study of minority ethnic groups in semi-rural areas of Kent, they highlight that despite their participants living near few people of a similar ethnic background, perceptions and feelings of belonging to a specific ethno-cultural community were not inhibited. Community simply existed more as an imagined entity rather than something that could be mapped spatially. As Michael Keith (2005: 47) remarks in relation to cities, but with relevance to all geographical spaces, “demographic fractions … do not constitute communities. Communities are built, imagined and fought for.”

One of the most interesting trends to emerge from this research was that, when referring to *local* manifestations of community, residents chose frequently to identify as being part of a generic, larger “BME [Black and Minority Ethnic] community.” This is not to say that specific ethno-cultural markers and boundaries were not invoked, celebrated, or denigrated in different times and spaces, as the testimonies throughout Part II of this book highlight. For instance, participants still talked specifically about, say, “the Chinese community” or “the Muslim community.” However, when referencing broader issues of multiculture in Sunshine Bay—whether that be in relation to community associations and events, social services, or the everyday manifestations of inter-cultural relations—notions of specific ethnic communities were routinely superseded by discourses and practices of cross-ethnic ones. Indeed, as Chap. 7 of this book demonstrates, this mobilisation extends frequently beyond the

inclusion of racialised groups; social relations, interactions, and alliances with members of the majority white community are also valued highly and were stressed as being fundamental to the patterns of convivial intercultural exchange experienced in the town.

Being part of a larger community of minority ethnic citizens is a source of great pride to many people in Sunshine Bay. My questions about this choice of expansive community affiliation rarely generated much discussion. The answer from residents was simple: it is just “our community.” Such attachment and mobilisation might represent a strategic means of emphasising substantive presence and lobbying for services, a nod to a sense of “blackness” in an historically *political* sense (Spivak 1990). It may reflect members’ acknowledgement of their position simultaneously as *imagined* rather than spatially fixed “ethnic communities” (Williams 2007) and as broader “communities of ‘shared risk’” (Garland and Chakraborti 2006: 173) too. More prosaically, residents clearly recognise the diverse communities in their town, the varied journeys and experiences, and the absence of a numerically dominant minority ethnic group. This scenario can create inter-cultural “communities of practice” (Phillips et al. 2014: 44) or “domains of commonality” (Glick Schiller and Çağlar 2016: 18) that emerge across ethno-cultural groups, with residents from varied backgrounds joining together in social groupings and “successfully coalesc[ing] and collaborat[ing] around local neighbourhood issues of mutual concern” (Phillips et al. 2014: 46; see also Fox and Jones 2013). In short, interpretations of community in Sunshine Bay always seemed to me to be emblematic of an approach based around future-thinking, pride, positivity, and civic identity; a shared attachment and affiliation with the town that challenged those individuals who attempted to portray it as a place of segregation, tension, and neglect.

This chapter has demonstrated how the seaside is imagined and remembered by minority ethnic residents in Sunshine Bay, the processes and routes by which they came to this seaside town, the manner in which they dis/connect with it, and the ways that they have formed and mobilised communities. We now move to a closer examination of the racialisation of seaside spaces, and the significance of particular landscapes, neighbourhoods, and time periods for minority ethnic residents at the seaside.

# 6

## **"Sometimes, You Know, I Feel Happy When I See the Sea": Landscapes of Race and Spatial Im/mobilities in a Seaside Town**

### **Introduction: Minority Ethnic Imaginaries of Place and Belonging at the English Seaside**

"It didn't have a wow factor, you know." It was with these words that John (black African, male, 55–64 years) recalled his immediate reaction on arriving in Sunshine Bay as a teenage boy from Liberia to attend boarding school in the early 1960s. To say that this particular seaside landscape did not exactly overwhelm him with positive sentiments would be an understatement. I encouraged John to expand on his description. Readjusting his position in his wicker conservatory chair, he smiled wryly and continued:

The only thing that I remember vividly was when I saw these terraced houses. I thought that they were owned by one person, because back home [in Liberia] all the houses were detached! I just thought, "Wow! That must be a very rich family!" But then I spent my holiday—because part of the agreement at the boarding school was that families would look after you during the holidays—with some other students with a [different] family.

And that was my second culture shock, because I believed that they were worse off than the people I left [in Liberia]! They didn't have a refrigerator. I just thought, "Oh my god!"

John laughed as he considered what he had just said. Coming to England from West Africa had filled him with anticipation and ideas of what life would be like here. He had held particular preconceptions before his journey about how the English seaside, as a well-known geographical place and cultural construction, would—or *should*—look and feel. Finding his new environs to be more impoverished than what he was used to in the developing world was a huge shock to John. These images characterised his feelings about Sunshine Bay for a long time: “As a kid I just kept thinking, ‘These are poor white people!’” Yet, a significant change occurred in John’s life, and his feelings for the town took a change for the better—he fell in love with a local, white woman (and they later married). After leaving the town at the end of the 1960s, they lived back in Liberia, and then the United States (see previous chapter). When the necessity to move again occurred a decade later, returning to Sunshine Bay was their clear preference.

This conversation with John remained at the forefront of my mind for quite a while. Whenever I read through his interview transcript or narrated this story on a PowerPoint slide in a conference presentation, John’s comment about the size of the houses in Sunshine Bay always conjured up endearing images of The Beatles’ 1965 comedy adventure movie, *Help!*. The film includes a scene where the four-band members arrive home on their street of terraced houses. The musicians all enter the buildings through separate front doors, but as the camera pans inside the walls it reveals a single, large (and quite bizarre) dwelling. More seriously, John’s description was one of those key moments in the fieldwork where I was forced to think differently about the multiple and equivocal relationships between minority ethnic communities and the English seaside. His comments do not just interrogate dominant assumptions about life in the developing world and its relationship with the over-developed one, but, more importantly for our purposes here, they show that the seaside is not regarded universally as the culturally appealing, architecturally grandiose, or aesthetically pleasing environment of the British popular imagination. John’s testimony speaks more broadly to the intricate and complex con-

nctions between race, space, and place in this setting, namely, the significance of social interactions with the built and natural landscapes—in their material, symbolic, affective, and emotional constitutions—in forging minority ethnic people's dis/connections to/with the English seaside.

This chapter continues with several of the themes introduced so far in this book around inclusion and exclusion at the English seaside. A much more prominent focus is given here to the notions of racialised *space* and *place* developed in Chap. 3 of this book, namely, how they influence minority ethnic residents' connections to different parts of Sunshine Bay (e.g. the seafront itself or particular neighbourhoods), and their forms of mobility, movement, and coastal liquidity within them. Careful consideration is given to the dynamic, mutually constitutive relationship between material and social constructions of Sunshine Bay itself, which give rise to the attribution of meanings, labels, and reputations to its constituent parts. The chapter commences by discussing how the physical environment of the seaside underpins residents' feelings of attachment or disconnection with the town, and belonging or being "out of place" within it. Residents' testimonies highlight that the seaside is a place that makes many of them, to put it simply, very happy (see also Munt 2015); however, the emotional dis/connections and connotations for others have quite the opposite effect. The chapter then explores the racialisation of seaside space on a localised, micro-level, emphasising how emotional and affective dispositions correspond with discrete locations and patterns of movement across the town. In doing, so the importance of connecting space and place with time (Massey 1994) and seasonality at the seaside is emphasised. The chapter concludes by revisiting the relationship between race and spatial manifestations of liminality introduced in Chap. 2 of this book.

Interactions with racialised Others "occur *in place*, and are embedded in histories of encounters re-produced through local, national and international discourses" (Askins 2008: 236). Thus, as David Parker and Christian Karner (2010: 1452) argue, "exploring the complex interplay between identities, inequalities and belonging requires...a greater sensitivity to the importance of places in shaping trajectories of integration, and the infusion of a more geographically sensitive exploration of the politics of belonging." Foregrounding these connections between race, space, and place facilitates recognition of how current structures of power

might be opposed and altered (Neely and Samura 2011). As the examples throughout this chapter elucidate, forms of cultural and spatial resistance are fundamental to the changing racial dynamics of the English seaside. While many of the testimonies included here point to the (re)affirmation of hegemonic racialised relations, control of social space(s), and (re)production of the racial *status quo*, others highlight how dominant interpretations of race, embodied coastal practices, and the meanings attached to seaside environments are challenged and reinscribed through particular activities, connections, and constructions.

## Seaside Landscapes of Emotion, Affect, and Embodiment

The previous chapter explained that erstwhile experiences and memories of the seaside influenced many participants' decisions to move to, and live in, Sunshine Bay. Conversely, a number of residents lacked any concrete knowledge of seaside environments before their arrival in the town. Andy (Persian, male, 35–44 years) encapsulated the latter position. He left Iran in 1999 as an asylum seeker and ended up in Sunshine Bay after a brief period living in London. Throughout my time in Sunshine Bay, Andy held a number of jobs, including one as a security guard (he was a very well-built man who kick-boxed to a good competitive standard), and he also volunteered frequently in community social activities. His feelings were unequivocal about the most appealing element of Sunshine Bay when he settled there:

It was the sea. When I came out of the train station, the first view that caught my eyes was the view of the sea. So the main [feeling] was very nice, you could view the sea from the town.

Aspects of the built environment, rather than the "natural" one, were more influential in others' positive appraisals of landscape. Leila (Tatar-Armenian, female, 25–34 years) stated that:

I just thought how cute and clean everything was, and how you don't see any apartment blocks. In fact, even when I started going around [the

county and to nearby towns], I still thought that there weren't that many apartment blocks which really surprised me. I knew that England is quite over-populated and I thought, where do they all fit then, if everybody lives in a cottage or a house?

Katie (Lithuanian, female, 18–24 years) had been in Sunshine Bay for less than four years when we met. Either she had not yet experienced how cold it can actually get in England or still found the climate to be favourable in comparison to Lithuania. When I encouraged her to talk about her feelings for Sunshine Bay, she stated that:

It's really nice. It's different because all the buildings look very different to my country. It really is very lovely and the weather is nice because here there is no winter. All the buildings are very different. It's nice, it's nice, yes.

Trevor (black British, male, 18–24 years) provided an evocative and truly memorable description of the seaside landscape. Articulating a thoughtful and sophisticated interpretation of how the *soundscapes* of the seaside connect with the *sights* of the built environment (see Back 2007), Trevor's abiding memory of coming to live in Sunshine Bay was that it was:

Calm and serene. The serenity really like hit me, because where I'm from [in London] there's police sirens going past my house every five seconds, do you know what I mean? Here you notice the police sirens because there's none at all. It's just quiet, calm. Where I was living when I first moved down here was [Royal Street]. [It] looks like something that's out of *Oliver*, like the setting and that, it's just nice. So I thought, yeah, it's a nice calm and serene setting for me.

At first I found Trevor's reference to *Oliver* quite puzzling. There were a number of occasions during the interviews when I had been unsure what a participant had implied, and so this was not the first time I had sought clarification. Yet, this was not a question about a place, expression, cultural practice, or piece of immigration legislation with which I was unfamiliar. The conversation with Trevor was a different matter altogether. I asked him what he meant regarding a particular street looking like "something that's out of *Oliver*." Trevor laughed at my ignorance. He explained it was a reference to Charles Dickens' *Oliver Twist* (the

1968 movie version to be precise), and the grand period buildings near the seafront in Sunshine Bay reminded him of those portrayed in the fictional depiction of Georgian London. I found this to be a charming connection, not to mention an apposite description. Trevor's seemingly tenuous and incongruous link between Dickens' London and the contemporary seaside was, in fact, an important analysis. It highlights the ways that residents attribute meaning to their surroundings, and seek to establish links between their (new) places of residence and other recognisable, comforting cultural narratives and depictions (see Tolia-Kelly 2006). In conjunction with the other aforementioned testimonies, it also shows how residents in the town make sense of, and find pleasure in, the various historical aspects of the seaside landscape.

The journey to Sunshine Bay made by Jimmy (black African, male, 35–44 years), and his fluctuating emotional and affective relationships with the town, were introduced in the previous chapter. Sunshine Bay is now a place he is very fond of, providing a home for him and his family for a decade-and-a-half, until they moved on again in 2015. His arrival as an asylum seeker ten years before we met was, however, understandably a traumatic experience, but perhaps not just for the most obvious reasons:

I think my first impression [of Sunshine Bay] was probably influenced by the conditions which I was in. Metaphorically—I don't know whether I can say this—now, if I compare the perception I had at that time to now, it's completely different, because I'm free to move at the seaside a bit and I know that a seaside place is a good place to live. But at that time, the seaside was actually something scary for me. It was kind of a physical barrier for me: how could I get in touch with other people? And I do remember, when I was walking on the seafront, the memories of childhood [in DR Congo] about big rivers and big waters being the main obstacles in terms of reaching others. And we used to have those times when the water would go down so we were able to cross over and I would imagine that was something different. When I was 12, we moved to a place where there was a lake and it was probably just 40 metres from the house where we were living. And the lake, personally I had a lot of trauma about it. It wasn't a place I enjoyed. I knew it was nice to go there [in terms of its natural beauty], but because of the issue we had, ethno-political conflict that was the most dangerous place to go for us. People were attacking us, they would kick us in

the water and it wasn't a place we would enjoy. Again, here, it was an obstacle. To me the sea was a kind of obstacle to communicate.

Jimmy's considered and candid portrayal of his harrowing memories of being near large spaces of open water in DR Congo, and the effects this had on his early life in Sunshine Bay, represents a moving exposition of his initial lack of coastal liquidity. Waterside landscapes in Africa were regarded as dangerous places where injurious treatment was meted out to members of his ethnic community. These connotations continued to resonate strongly on his arrival in England. The condition of being near the water again affected his mental well-being and capacity to settle, representing what he described as an "obstacle to communication" (see also Fajardo 2014; Perera 2013, on spatial regimes of water). The *physical* repercussions of being in this environment were equally severe, with Jimmy's movement and ability to communicate restricted by government policies on the mobility and agency of asylum seekers. This inhibited his sense of coastal liquidity during this period, and left him "stuck" in a space that felt like an "island." As he elaborated:

Ironically, after a while as I knew that I was under the control of the authorities, I never moved from the area for a few months. I thought I was kind of on an island, as the first thing I saw when I arrived [in Sunshine Bay] was the sea. Because I arrived in a van and I couldn't see where we were going, apart from a stop in [town]. Arriving in [Sunshine Bay], for me, was kind of an island.

Here, geographical and political conditions combined with emotional and affective states, creating a particular mode of being that Jimmy equated with life at the seaside and in coastal spaces more generally during his early months in Sunshine Bay.

Jimmy's experiences point to the embodiment of an extreme emotional geography (Davidson et al. 2007), attributing particular sentiments to aspects of his biography, the places he has lived, and the processes of movement he has undertaken. As Sally Munt (2012: 556) identifies in relation to the condition of forced migration:

disoriented in space and time, this person embodies a most severe emotional geography. Sometimes life can be semiotically overwhelming, even crushing, and it may be only later, once reaching a place of relative stability, that this grammar of experience can be arranged.

Munt (*ibid.*: 559) goes on to argue that:

cultural narratives become crucial to reconstructing refugee experiences, in order to make sense of trauma and reintegrate parts of the self that may be disassociated or denied, so that on a basic topographical level we can start to realise psychological “spaces of the past”, “spaces of the present” and “spaces of the future” that are linked to places on our life journey.

Hannah Jones et al.’s (2014) important collection on emotion, space, and narrative underlines the dynamic nature of emotional geographies, especially for asylum seekers and refugees. Commenting on prevalent academic research on global population movements, Jones et al. (*ibid.*: 2) argue that:

amongst the greatest omissions, grounded in a preference for tracing quantifiable and abstracted flows, has been a consideration of the experience of being moved. Literally, the experience of a passage from one place to another, but also the experience of passage from one emotional state to another that can accompany motion.

This is an extremely timely consideration that dovetails with the notion of coastal liquidity, through the commingling of physical and psychological seaside trajectories, journeys, and arrivals. The specific themes of Jimmy’s biography also speak to the broader connections between landscape, identity, memory, and contemporary social encounters (Svašek 2010). As Divya Tolia-Kelly (2010: 10) argues, “remembered landscapes of the past” are important facets in diasporic community formation. Indeed, “memory, along with the shifting contexts and sites of home, is a significant factor in shaping the nature of geographies of belonging, being, and desire” (Tolia-Kelly 2006: 343). Collective experiential memories and narratives can, in turn, affect the degree to which physical

environments and landscapes are used by minority ethnic communities for leisure and recreational purposes (Erickson et al. 2009; Finney 2014).

As mentioned in the previous chapter, Jimmy's circumstances eventually changed. He was granted indefinite leave to remain in the UK, he found a good job, and he married his partner. His relationships with seaside spaces and places became consequently much more positive. Sunshine Bay became a place in which he *was* able to experience coastal liquidity, for instance, through forms of geographical (within the town, the UK, and travelling back to Africa), social, educational (he now has a postgraduate degree), and labour mobility. As Patricia Price (2013: 584) argues, "becoming stuck can provide an opening for the transgressive, transformative potentials of a body. In other words, stickiness can be disruptive and, therefore, potentially productive." Jimmy became a passionate community activist and campaigner alongside his job in local government, and the benefits he has brought to the lives of other people in Sunshine Bay are still talked about widely today.

Analogous to John's reflections at the beginning of this chapter about arriving in Sunshine Bay, other participants encountered a place that did not live up to their expectations either. While their stories are less harrowing than Jimmy's description of being "trapped" on a metaphorical "island," they help us to further understand the connections between physical environment, emotion, and attachment to space and place at the seaside. Ida (Iranian, female, 35–44 years) spoke about Sunshine Bay in conjunction with another seaside resort with which she was familiar. The comparison was not favourable when she arrived in Sunshine Bay, but, as is characteristic of processes of coastal liquidity, feelings of attachment and belonging emerged strongly once the town became "home":

Before coming to [Sunshine Bay] I had never been here so I hadn't had any experience about [it]. But for our weekends we used to go to [another seaside town] when we were in London, so I had this image of a lovely seaside [place]. Obviously at the beginning [Sunshine Bay] was a shock for me because I was visualising something like [another seaside town]. But after a while I got used to it and I like [Sunshine Bay]. I don't want to move anywhere else.

After living for years in the Midlands, encountering a seaside landscape for the first time left Abulbishr (Arab, male, 45–54 years) rather underwhelmed. He felt:

A little bit surprised, probably verging on disappointment, because of the fact that I think that [Sunshine Bay's] name is probably bigger than what it is. You think that everybody knows about [the town]...and then you come here. It's a lovely town but it doesn't live up its reputation I think.

Dahab (Sudanese, male, 65–74 years) likewise noted that:

I felt a bit disappointed, because Great Britain, [there is] a lot of [cultural] propaganda, and you come to find things are different.

Finally, Taymaz (Iranian, male, 45–54 years) reflected that:

I wasn't impressed at all. I was thinking we had a much better life back home [in Iran] than I could see here, you know, regardless of it being by the seaside.

These testimonies highlight, again, the multiple imaginaries and engagements with the seaside among this community of minority ethnic residents in Sunshine Bay. They also compel us to recognise the intersections between space and time (see later in the text) in the ways that participants allude to the psychological “spaces of the past,” “spaces of the present,” and “spaces of the future” (Munt 2012: 559), albeit in quite different ways.

There are, of course, many things that are distinctive about seaside towns. A number of these have been documented throughout this book. Seaside towns differ most obviously from other types of place because of their proximity to the sea. It would be remiss of a book on this topic not to explore the social and psychological benefits (as well as the disadvantages, as per Jimmy, mentioned earlier in the text) that minority ethnic residents in Sunshine Bay ascribe to living in a seaside location, especially the forms of recreation and leisure that they undertake there. These elements were given theoretical and conceptual consideration in

Chap. 2 of this book, while Chap. 5 highlighted the significance of being in, and beside, the sea in participants' early memories and reflections of the English seaside.

Minority ethnic residents in Sunshine Bay face substantive and recurrent problems related to structural discrimination, marginalisation, and racism (see next chapter). Yet, these problems exist alongside, in fact, *despite*, positive connections with, and feelings about, the town. This is not to downplay the severity of these racialised life experiences; rather, it is a recognition of participants' refusal to let them dictate their relationship with Sunshine Bay or to impede their happiness and well-being. In short, the following examples highlight the "co-existence of contradictory emotions about the localities to which many [people] feel profoundly attached, despite their difficulties" (Parker and Karner 2010: 1455). More specifically, they subvert popular ideas about a lack of engagement by minority ethnic communities, especially migrant ones, with the leisure spaces and cultures of the English sea and seashore. Reflecting the notion of the coast as a therapeutic landscape (Collins and Kearns 2007; see Chap. 2 of this book), residents spoke openly about how the sea afforded them a range of visceral, personal pleasures.

Alonso (Latin American, male, 35–44 years) had lived in Sunshine Bay for just over eight years at the time of our interview. He works in a student support role at a local educational establishment. His English wife had been, in his words, "born overseas from rich parents," but she moved back to Sunshine Bay with her family when she was a baby. Alonso met her when she was an adult, doing voluntary work in his home country of Costa Rica. They got engaged and made the mutual decision to settle in Sunshine Bay. Alonso described the pleasures he derived from living next to the sea:

I live by the seafront in [the west side of town] so it's very nice just to cross the road and start having a stroll along the promenade. And I take the chance for a swim when the weather is not too cold. When you have very impressive winds and you have big waves splashing against the seafront, it's an impressive sight as well I think. I like fresh sea produce too. Fresh fish is always available. That's nice.

Lolly (white/black African, female, 55–64 years) was born in the North West of England. Her memories of visiting Blackpool and the north Wales coast as a young person influenced the connections she (re)made to the seaside in later life. Lolly moved to Sunshine Bay as an adult, many years after her brother made the same journey. Her comments about the seaside were memorable, largely for the way that she would move seamlessly between accentuating her fondness for the “natural” environment and her contempt for the amusement arcades that adorn the fronts of many seaside resorts, including Sunshine Bay. Lolly told me that:

I go for long walks, so I walk from the [centre of town] to [the adjacent seaside town]...That's what I use the seafront for, walking basically. I'd never go in the water, but I like walking along and watching people fishing or the kids splashing in the water.

Many other residents spoke about their predilection for aspects of the seaside’s “natural” environment. Ali (Kurdish, male, 18–24 years) stated that:

Sometimes, you know, I feel happy when I see the sea. I love to. Sometimes I like to swim as well. The summer time is good. Sometimes I go fishing. It's good. It makes me happy.

Satcha (Zimbabwean, male, 55–64 years) remarked that:

The summers [in Sunshine Bay] are beautiful. And the town is not as congested as London. When I go to London, there's a feeling of claustrophobia. Because there's so many people, the trains, everything, it's too much. Maybe because Zimbabwe wasn't as congested as London. But I've always loved open air places and [from here] I can get to the country[side], where it is so quiet.

Adam (Turkish, male, 25–34 years) mentioned that:

I like living by the seaside because there is fresh air, I think, and also when you get bored you can walk along the seaside. Listen to the waves. It's good. I enjoy a walk along the seaside, and cycling or jogging or something. Yeah, I love living at the seaside.

For these residents, the seafront was primarily a source and site of leisure and relaxation—a place of respite away from other aspects of their lives, and from less inclusive and favourable parts of the town.

Living by the sea took on important additional functions as a therapeutic landscape for some residents, in relation to achieving psychosocial well-being and generating personal resilience. As highlighted earlier in this chapter, Ida did not feel very complimentary towards Sunshine Bay when she first moved there from London. Being by the sea helped her reach a more positive emotional state during her early weeks and months in the town. She stated that:

When we moved to [Sunshine Bay], my son started school and at that time I was really depressed because, at the beginning, I didn't like [Sunshine Bay], I didn't know anyone. So I was really depressed and I used to take my daughter to the seafront and just sit there by the sea, and it was like a healing, recovering thing. That's why I love the sea ... For me it takes my worries and negative thoughts away.

Ida's reflections embody lucidly the intricate and powerful connections between emotion and landscape for marginalised groups, especially women (Pain and Smith 2008).

The testimonies discussed here highlight the broad connections between minority ethnic residents and the *space(s)* and *place(s)* of the English seaside in general, and of Sunshine Bay specifically. In the next section we move on to the micro-spatialisations of race, manifest in the racialised attribution of streets, neighbourhoods, and areas in this seaside resort.

## **Localised Space and Place, Embodied Encounters, and Maps of Multiculture**

### **Geographies of Racialised Belonging and "Strangeness"**

Viewing race through a spatial lens allows us to connect individual and group experiences with broader structures and geographies of power, control, and resistance. We are then able to establish how bodies literally

feel, embody, reflect, and reject the racialised meanings of the spaces they inhabit, travel through, and depart, and how they influence and construct them reciprocally (Alexander and Knowles 2005; Neely and Samura 2011; see Chap. 3 of this volume). Specifically, a spatialised understanding of embodied behaviours and social relations emphasises local understandings of space and place. These emerge via the organic knowledges, practices, and traditions of the locality and its inhabitants, and via dominant popular representations and media portrayals.

According to Neil Spicer (2008: 506), “in an industrialised country such as the UK, neighbourhood places are closely linked to asylum seekers’ and refugees’ experiences of social exclusion and inclusion.” The meanings and “un/natural” residents of such places are frequently contested; they are often related to wider regional, national, and global discourses and constructions that demonise particular groups and render their difference more “visible” on a local, everyday level (Haldrup et al. 2008; Pain and Smith 2008; Parker and Karner 2010). These understandings of space and place combine the effects of the tangible built environment with the emotions, feelings, apprehensions, and uncertainties that emerge from particular streets and neighbourhoods (Seabrook and Green 2004). The result, John Clayton (2009: 491) argues, is that:

geographies of belonging play a critical role in re-producing raced and classed distinctions and notions of belonging, because they do not remain within the realm of the imagination. They influence which areas are deemed to be safe through the association of certain neighbourhoods with danger and thus have a discernible impact on everyday routes through the city.

Marcia England and Stephanie Simon (2010) demonstrate how the long-term accumulation of this spatial habitus impacts on individuals’ “everyday geographies,” specifically the actions they take, the forms of transport they use, the routes they choose to travel, and the areas and neighbourhoods they pass through or avoid. It is the repercussions of the latter that are exposed explicitly—how forms of mobility and access are restricted when these particular spaces, or the people within them, connote discomfort, anxiety, or threat. Conceptualisations and connotations of space, and the manner in which they become *places*, may be related to

forms of subjectivity such as race, gender, sexuality, and age, and also to social and residential status, experiential knowledge, and historical/family connection to the area. “Places are assigned multiple and contested meanings by different people,” summarises Anoop Nayak (2011: 553), “and their status is always in a process of fraught negotiation.”

That minority ethnic residents in Sunshine Bay exhibit discernible attachment to, and affiliation with, certain spaces—often those associated with multicultural settlement and/or service provision—is neither especially surprising nor significant, given that this is their home town. What is noteworthy, however, is the fact that the areas individuals described as liking or disliking, or feeling safe or fearful in, appear to challenge dominant “reputational geographies” (Parker and Karner 2010) and the “localised symbolic boundaries” within the dominant local popular imagination and media that distinguish “in” and “out” groups (Sohoni and Bickham Mendez 2012) in Sunshine Bay. According to David Parker and Christian Karner (2010: 1452), these reputational geographies are:

social imaginaries defining an area as “good” or “bad”, safe or volatile, “no-go” or peaceful. [They] refer to the symbolic and material boundaries drawn around places as indicators of social status, sites of memories and repositories of affect that can have profound socio-economic as well as emotional consequences for local residents.

Like many seaside towns, the reputation of Sunshine Bay at regional and national levels is not especially positive, and particular areas are coded in certain ways in the local imagination as “rough,” “unsafe” “white” “multicultural,” “inclusive,” “alienating,” “gentrified,” and “quaint,” among other descriptors. Yet, these popular images and appellations do not map neatly onto the interpretations of residents themselves (see also Millington 2011). When mentioning parts of Sunshine Bay that they tried to avoid, minority ethnic residents rarely mentioned the local authority housing estates perceived to be synonymous with the town’s impoverished white working-classes, for instance. This does not mean that these neighbourhoods were regarded as safe spaces or desired places of residence by any means. It is more a case of their marginality *vis-à-vis* the everyday geographies and experiential knowledge of minority ethnic

communities, together with participants' reluctance to stereotype other disenfranchised communities in the manner in which they themselves are routinely subjected. Nonetheless, some peripheral commercial streets of Sunshine Bay that are deemed deprived, rundown, and associated with people on the margins of society were still felt to be more inclusive multicultural spaces. In contrast, the town centre itself and areas that are "traditional," quaint, and popular primarily with white tourists and day trippers are perceived to be the most problematic spaces in terms of experiencing racism, and producing feelings of discomfort and fear for some minority ethnic residents.

This situation illuminates the contested nature and diverse interpretations of local geographies, and the disjuncture between symbolic and material understandings of place (Shields 2014). It shows how race, class, and nation coalesce in the dominant imagination (Virdee 2014) to portray and stigmatise certain neighbourhoods and streets as "unfavourable," irrespective of whether this aligns with, or contradicts, the perspectives of residents and visitors (McDowell 1999; Millington 2005; Shields 1991). Furthermore, dominant constructions of place in Sunshine Bay fail to appreciate the injurious effects of whiteness (in intersection with all social classes) as found in the assumed "innocent" social spaces of town centres, antiquated tourist areas, and regenerated bourgeois cultural quarters.

Along with their emotional and affective connections with the sea and seafront, participants talked about other areas of Sunshine Bay that they liked and feel comfortable in. Their comments were sometimes based on the ethnic demographics and characteristics of these places, or at least their perceptions of them. The following testimonies are interesting in this regard in that they come from two women of white minority ethnic backgrounds. This reminds us of the need to adopt an intersectional, multidimensional approach to identity, and to avoid any simplistic understanding of racialisation and embodied attachment to place. While spatial borders or boundaries can be constructed as "colour-coded," these are usually indefinite, contested, and unpredictable, and sometimes purely symbolic or imagined (Watt and Stenson 1998; Webster 2003). They can still have tangible effects in determining entry and mobility for different types of bodies, but there can be a disconnect between assumptions about the affective dispositions that certain groups will display to certain neighbourhoods and those that they actually do.

In response to a question on this theme, Ayesha (Turkish, female, 18–24 years) named a well-known road in Sunshine Bay, which is marked in the popular imagination as a place of multicultural settlement and service economies, such as restaurants, cafés, and takeaways:

[Pebble Street] is, like, full of foreigners and I do feel at home there actually. ‘Cos I’m [living] quite near it anyway, ‘cos it’s a lot of Asians or whatever and I’m Turkish so there’s a lot of Turks there. When you see Kurdish people they do sometimes shout things, they know that I’m a Turkish girl, and I’m just, like, “Get over it”!

She added:

I feel I fit in down there [on that road]. Because they all know me as a Turkish girl, we do all look after each other. So when they know I’m Turkish they all just look after me. So I feel safe there.

Speaking about the same street, Leila stated that:

A lot of people actually think it’s quite a dodgy place. I actually feel a bit more at home there than, say, in [the predominantly white estate of Coast Hill], because there are a lot more foreigners on that street. That’s probably me discriminating on my part, but I actually think that they wouldn’t really do anything to me because I’m one of them ... So I actually like that road. It’s got all these different shops there, *halal* meat shops, a little Russian shop that I use, where you can get goodies from my home country.

Particular parts of Sunshine Bay hold negative connotations for other residents though, as places of racism, abuse, discrimination, vulnerability, and associated forms of prejudiced treatment. Sea Park is case in point. Home to a substantial proportion of Sunshine Bay’s white working-class communities, it is a few miles inland from the seafront. Very few minority ethnic people have lived there historically, although on one occasion when I spoke with Ashrafun (British Bangladeshi, female, 25–34 years), her father had just moved into a house there. She recalled:

He moved in at the weekend and two days later there was what the police are classing as racially-aggravated criminal damage. Bearing in mind we actually grew up in that part of [Sea Park], you know, and we didn’t really

have that much of a problem. So I find it really interesting that when we grew up there obviously there were things that happened as we were there for a while, but generally it was alright. But now [my father] has gone there, in 2010, and the day after he moves in there's been a few incidents.

These shifting correlations of space, place, and time are brought to light in this example, configured from economic and social issues in the town, as well as the demographics and perceived characteristics of particular neighbourhoods. As Nirmal Puwar (2004: 32) argues, “the space and the normative bodies of a specific space can become disturbed by the arrival of black and Asian bodies in occupations [and settings] which are not historically and conceptually marked out as their ‘natural’ domain.” Assumed threats to white spatial hegemony can lead to discriminatory responses. This is explored in more detail in Chap. 7 of this book.

Notwithstanding the out-of-town experience of Ashrafun’s father, the town centre and the surrounding “traditional” streets where tourists flock to consume nostalgia and purchase souvenirs—more central, or *unavoidable*, locations in minority ethnic residents’ everyday geographies—are regarded as places where discriminatory encounters are more likely to occur. Gary (black British Caribbean, male, 35–44 years) stated that:

For me, you know, I feel like I could walk anywhere in [Sunshine Bay], regardless, at any point in time, because I’ve done it. I’ve got up at three in the morning and been like, “I want to go out to the sea” and I’ve done that, you know. I haven’t felt in any danger or I haven’t felt funny. Although, you know, there is the thing that’s over the whole of that, that [Coast Hill] and [Sea Park] and [Harbourside] where we are, are seen as the most deprived areas of [the town], you know. “Ooh, don’t walk around in [Coast Hill] or [Sea Park] or [Harbourside]. What are you doing? You don’t want to walk around there. Don’t get your money out there”. They’re perceived, or reported, as being the most dangerous areas. But I’ve got to say, for us, we’ve never had a problem walking in any of those areas. Where I’ve had a problem is in the centre of town, outside my own front door ... I’ve had someone, who’s got their own issues, suddenly, in front of a packed street on a Bank Holiday Monday, come screaming at me, “You fucking black bastard!”. And they think it’s acceptable as well.

In a similar vein, Burri (black African, male, 35–44 years) said:

For me personally, I'll go in any part of the town. But I find myself sometimes unwelcome in some parts. Shops in [the quaint side streets], for example, because obviously it's a tourist area and they have their own brand of people who come and visit. So when you go there you feel like you are unwelcome because you are not there to buy gifts, just to wander around.

Racialised bodies entering historically and predominantly white spaces frequently encounter a discomforting atmosphere (Knowles 2008), and are met with a “look” or “stare” that marks their presence as abnormal and informs them that they do not belong there (Puwar 2004). Although “the ‘white gaze’ may not always be focused on disapproving perceptions and negative images of ‘black others,’ but on curiosity and intrigue perhaps, it does have a unifying ability to provoke feelings of isolation and desolation in white areas” (Stephenson and Hughes 1995: 154). Burri spoke about the way people reacted to him in certain spaces and places (see also Chap. 7 of this book), which he interpreted to be a result of his black skin, together with his large physical frame. He told me about particular problems he had with a branch of a well-known national department store in the centre of town. He felt that he could not browse their goods at leisure, as “you can notice this suspicious look at you, you can feel this straightway. You are not welcome.” As Rachel Pain and Susan Smith (2008: 13) argue, “bodies are drawn into [the] unequal materialisation of fear too: certain people are more or less feared in different places and times, partly depending on bodily markers, and this profoundly affects their own feelings of security.”

Referencing similarly the central districts and parts of Sunshine Bay adjacent to the beach—areas that are deemed “traditional” and popular with tourists—and describing a specific racist incident (the “banana comment”) that is discussed in Chap. 7 of this book, Kose (British African, female, 18–24 years) said:

That's where you'd find the older people. I don't go out in [Sunshine Bay] at night 'cos that is when I would get a banana comment or something.

I would say that [Harbourside] is safer, even though that is where all the crackheads [drug addicts] are. But it's more diverse down there.

These connections between race, space, and place (as well as age) demonstrate that what might be celebrated as “tradition” and “nostalgia”—putatively benign and racially neutral—by the town’s majority white residents and visitors is interpreted quite differently by minority ethnic groups. These notions possess racialised connotations for them, sustaining the hegemonic spatialised whiteness of the town and contributing to feelings of exclusion.

Racialised feelings of anxiety, discomfort, and fear intersect with gendered ones too. For Ida:

There are some areas where personally I would avoid even driving through. I know people say [Sea Park] or [Coast Hill] ... Now I’m living in the town centre, at night, *that’s* the only area I would avoid, even walking.

Tia (African-Caribbean British, female, 45–54 years) added:

I’m a woman, a black woman, so it does make things more difficult for me. But I guess I just refuse to be ... I go where I want to go, you know. I’ve travelled a lot and I’ve lived in different places, but I think someone just coming down from London who is used to being in their own community, it could be a bit intimidating, you know, be a bit uncomfortable.

Les Back (2005: 19) points out that “racism is by nature a spatial and territorial form of power. It aims to secure and claim native/white territory but it also projects associations on to space that in turn invests racial associations and attributes in places.” The ontological process of making particular communities into “strangers” is enacted through the imbrication of racialised bodies, the meanings attached to neighbourhood (and other) places, and the broader discourses and ideologies that construct these groups in the popular imagination (Ahmed 2000). The coastal liquidity and mobilities of minority ethnic residents in Sunshine Bay, especially those who have moved from elsewhere in the UK or migrated from overseas, can evidently be limited at times (of varying duration and

severity) through being “stuck” to parts of town where they feel comfortable and in which they are regarded as “natural” occupants rather than as “out of place.” This is underpinned by processes of ontological belonging that create place attachment, together with the materiality of these areas and their inhabitants over time (Bennett 2015). This can restrict how they move, where they live and work, and where they shop and socialise. In turn, this can reduce their social contact with other communities, as well as other members of their own ethno-religious groups (see previous chapter).

Strategies for making sense of these spatial distinctions and im/mobilities are referred to by Clifton Evers (2008) as “safety maps.” These individual cartographies represent “a personal, embodied construct used to assess possible dangers or threats” (*ibid.*: 412). The components and referents of these maps are formed through the intersections of race, gender, age, and sexuality (among other attributes). As Divya Tolia-Kelly (2010: 6–7) points out, the visual and material facets of everyday experiences “are accumulated knowledges that are corporeal, habituated and felt, embedded in the rhythms, spaces and flows of our lived identities,” and are used to negotiate movement through local (and other) spaces.

### Intersections of Space, Time, and Season

The idea of safety maps was embodied by residents who spoke explicitly about taking or avoiding particular routes through Sunshine Bay, being mindful of certain forms of transport and, significantly, going out or staying in at certain times. As Marcia England and Stephanie Simon (2010: 203) note, “perceived safety of spaces can be contingent upon time of day and whether one is alone or not. Spaces that can be entered in daylight would not be ventured into at night and especially if on one’s own.” Marcus (British African, male, 18–24 years), a student contemporary of Kose and also a Londoner by birth, described the adaptations he made when walking around Sunshine Bay:

In my first year [of my course], I’d walk through town to get to college. Now I walk through the backstreets to get there because I try to avoid the

town as much as possible, ‘cos there’s too much people. I can’t stand the stares. Sometimes I just want to get to where I’m going peacefully. If it’s early [in the morning] I’ll go through town. If it’s not, if it’s during the day I’ll go through the backstreets.

Fundamental to Marcus’ behaviour was the experience of being stared at. This was not a unique account and is explored further in the next chapter.

Dahab made connections between time, place, and anxiety-causing behaviours:

[My family] avoid walking outside after eight o’clock in the evening. Because many people are drunk and there is a high possibility to get in contact or trouble with them. So only when it is necessary we go outside. Even using the trains … one month ago my daughter was coming home late from college. I said, “Ok. I am going to wait for you at the railway station, because it is not safe”. We live just a stone’s throw from there. But for safety I said I would meet her … Even on the train it is not safe if you are coming after ten o’clock. Especially on Saturdays and Sundays. There are a lot of drunk people on the train and anything could happen if you are alone.

Lolly stated that:

I think in [Harbourside], they’re trying to brighten it up, you know, change it. But I think at night, even me, although I live just down the road, I still get a taxi because I don’t feel [safe], because there’s a lot of yobbish behaviour. There is that in the evenings there.

Ashrafun commented that:

Before [now], you wouldn’t have gone down [Dock Avenue] past sunset time really. I started feeling a bit unsafe walking around [Sunshine Bay] when I was in my mid-teens because there were a lot of reports about horrible things that happened. And they were real because they would be on the news or in the newspaper. And that made me feel a bit unsafe. And when I moved to London [to go to university], I actually felt safer even though a lot more and worse stuff happens.

Both Legato (West Indian, male, 65–74 years) and Alonso, like Dahab, mentioned that evenings, especially at the weekend, were the worst time to be in the centre of town. They cited specifically the effects of drunkenness and violence that emanate from aspects of the night-time economy. Legato said that:

On a Friday and a Saturday, [Sunshine Bay] itself, the clubs and bars, that could be a very naughty place to be. They get drunk in the pubs and clubs. They pick on people of a different colour or race, or whatever. That's the drink talking. My son came down here, and he and another friend went down town, and they were having a drink. And they got in a scrap. Some guy, whether he'd had drink, he said, "You black bastard, what are doing down here?" Luckily [my son] came away from it.

Alonso told me that he was sad about:

Not being able to go town on a Friday night because of the fights. I just avoid it ... if you are on a Friday night in [Sunshine Bay] at midnight when all the pubs are chucking people out, you know, staring at someone or pushing can lead to mindless violence. That shocked me.

Associations between anti-social behaviour, especially alcohol misuse, and the seafront itself were also deemed to be particularly problematic. For instance, Adam stated that:

Sometimes there are drunk people at the seaside in [Sunshine Bay]. This is disturbing people because I don't think you're allowed to drink on the sea-front. Because children and families, if they wanted to enjoy a seaside walk or do an activity there, these drunk people disturb other people. Also it gives a bad experience for foreign people. It's not good. I think the council need to take care of these drunk people. I see these drunk people on the seaside every day.

Several other residents, including Ida, Ranu (British Bangladeshi, female, 45–54 years), Taymaz, and Tia, spoke about drunkenness by local people as a problem and a cause of fear for minority ethnic groups on the seafront and in surrounding streets in Harbourside, both in the daytime and at night.

Critically, connections between race, time, and the seaside are not simply important in relation to the different times of the *day* or *week*. Their effects can be observed on a much more longitudinal scale in terms of seasonality, which is particularly distinctive in seaside settings (see Chakraborti 2010, for rural comparisons). While the perspective of coastal liquidity does not lend itself to an essentialist, dichotomous, and easily-defined model of seaside seasons, there are widely recognised “on” (roughly late spring, summer, and early autumn) and “off” periods (other times of the year) that characterise life in seaside resorts. These seasons arise from meteorological conditions and so dictate the availability of entertainments, facilities, accommodation, and jobs, thus influencing significantly the numbers of visitors at different times of the year. For Sunshine Bay’s minority ethnic residents, seaside seasonality has a palpable effect on tone, liveliness, and cultural diversity.

When Gary and his family came to Sunshine Bay in the mid-1990s, they arrived in the middle of the summer. He told me that the place had a positive, even *multicultural*, vibe at that time. Yet, as the summer tourist season came to end, things changed rapidly:

We spent the summer of 1995 [in Sunshine Bay] and it just felt like, “Oh my god, this place is beautiful!”. Lots of going to the beach, you know, the beach was in walking distance from where we were and we actually loved it, and thought it was brilliant, excellent. And then the winter came and it changed, you know, back to school in September. And it was just like, what a stark difference! The whole place just changed. It was like not just a different town, *it was like a different world!*

In a similar vein, according to Alonso:

[Sunshine Bay] is a very seasonal town. You have like a see-saw between winter and summer, and people move. Not only for the local population, but also for people with second homes or using [Sunshine Bay] as a base for day-trips and so on. But really it's a two-faced town: one in Autumn/Winter and one in Spring/Summer. I would say they are two completely different towns. And that was confirmed when I started working in language schools, where obviously most of the students would come in the spring and summer, and then in the winter we would have very few students.

Legato described his experiences as follows:

I think what happened to me, maybe, on a smaller scale, but it's going to happen to other people, when they came and saw things, it's like when you go on holiday, it's all bright, and they all leave London, or wherever, and they come down here. Now, they can get properties a bit cheaper down here. But when they do live here and the holiday period is over, that is when the reality sets in.

Finally, Abulbishr stated that:

My wife wears the veil. When we go to the seaside we always try to avoid the very hot weather, the very busy time, when a lot of people would be by the seaside probably, and due to their customs or whatever, they'll wear what they are used to wearing. My wife feels uncomfortable both ways, in that she will feel out of place and at the same time think so much exposure is something which, even for us men, is against what we believe. So we try to avoid this time which, in a way, defeats the purpose because actually you are avoiding the best time. But that's something you don't have a choice with and you are the foreigner here. I've become a British citizen now, but I'm the one who is out of place when it comes to that.

Abulbishr told me how he developed an alternative strategy as a response to this situation, with him and his wife seeking to enjoy the seaside at other times of the year instead (see also Munt 2015):

There are other times that I can enjoy the seaside. It doesn't mean that if you don't go to the seaside [in the summer], you've missed the whole year. So, yeah, I think minority people do try to avoid that, either through fear of being ridiculed or they don't want to put themselves in a position where they feel, "This is not the right time for me."

These stories testify that phenomena associated more routinely with larger urban places of substantial multicultural settlement, such as the racialisation of neighbourhoods and other spaces, happen in "new(er)" spaces of multiculturalism, such as the English seaside, as well. They also stress the need to integrate a temporal perspective with a spatial one in analyses of this setting (England and Simon 2010; Massey 1994; Shields 2014).

## Resisting Spatial Classifications: Towards a Racialised Liminality?

While this chapter has foregrounded notions of space and place as critical concepts for understanding the situation in Sunshine Bay, they are not the only factors germane to processes of inclusion, exclusion, attachment, belonging, and coastal liquidity. As Ash Amin (2002: 963) reminds us:

there are other processes cutting across the spatial patterns of residence that shape cultural practices, such as the inwardness produced by deprivation and inequality, the suspicion and fear aroused by generalised racism, the experience of sustained discrimination or exclusion along racial and ethnic lines, and the stories that communities—proximate, distanciated, and virtual—end up telling of themselves and others.

Moreover, in line with the convivial approach outlined in the previous chapter, it is important also to appreciate the ways in which people come together through the everyday “quiet politics of encounter” (Askins 2015: 471), and how these exchanges may overcome spatial demarcations (albeit, sometimes, ephemerally). As Deborah Phillips et al. (2014: 45) note:

positive interactions, it is argued, range from chance encounters in public or institutional spaces, which might engender a greater appreciation of diversity and difference, to more structured activities (including topical discussion, sport and social events) designed to promote social exchange, dispel myths, overcome strangeness, increase hospitality towards newcomers and enhance civil integration though the active negotiation of difference.

These forms of contact and communication were demonstrated poignantly by Garshasp, an Iranian man living in Sunshine Bay. Garshasp is a similar age to me (we were both in our mid-30s when we got to know each other). He volunteered at the asylum and refugee “drop-in” centre, which I attended each week throughout my fieldwork. Garshasp had himself sought asylum in the UK after being persecuted in Iran due to his

political beliefs. At the time I met him his immigration status was uncertain, as his application for asylum had been “lost” in the system. I was delighted to hear some years later, by which time unfortunately we were no longer in regular contact, that he had been granted indefinite leave to remain. I did not formally interview Garshasp, as he was not especially keen to participate and so we just spoke about other things. For instance, I helped him with college and university applications, and offered what career advice I could (he wanted to be a dentist). He routinely made us both tea and then thrashed me at chess, sucking his teeth and shaking his head with each tentative repositioning of the pieces I made, asking rhetorically “why did you play that move?”, before the quick and inevitable checkmate. Garshasp’s life was precarious in many ways, spatially through the limitations on where he could live, work, and travel, but also in relation to the uncertainties around his citizenship status. Yet, through studying at a local college, living in a mixed ethnicity household, community volunteering, and training with a local football club, his cross-cultural connections and interactions within the town were probably more extensive than many “better off” fellow residents.

Like the emotional and affective relations and attachments described in the previous chapter, we must be aware that the spatial regimes discussed here are not necessarily permanent. Mobility can increase and decrease over time, as localised knowledge, vernaculars, habituses, and modes of being develop and “unstick” bodies from spaces, or “fix” them there even more resolutely. They affect people differently, and denote various meanings temporally too. These processes are all emblematic of coastal liquidity. By way of a final example, we return to Jimmy, whose reflections and experiences have punctuated the last two chapters. Over the years, the seaside has taken on an especially significant role for Jimmy. The specific spaces of the seafront have facilitated a form of spatialised racial “passing” (Ahmed 2000). Jimmy said:

The attitudes you see in different sides on the seaside are quite different. In some of the sides, you can see people wondering whether you are local or not. But the good thing with the seafront is that it is known as a place where even [minority ethnic] people from London will just come to be. So it does get less of that [discriminatory] type of attitude. You don’t care

much about it, for instance, because you know that even though, you know, you feel you shouldn't be here, at least you are less fearful about it, because you could be from anywhere else. It would be different to any other place in town.

It was, of course, saddening to hear Jimmy talk of the seafront as a place where he felt he should not be, in terms of racialised and biopoliticised ontological connections to this space. His musings underline strikingly the English seaside's construction as a white space in the popular imagination. Yet, his belief that he was actually less likely to receive explicit discriminatory comments, attitudes, or looks there, because people assumed he was a black British day tripper or holidaymaker from London, rather than a refugee from Africa, is fascinating. His perception that his ability to "pass" or likelihood of being "tolerated" decreased as he moved away from the seafront into other parts of town also reiterates the patterns of racial spatialisation in Sunshine Bay discussed in this chapter. In short, his presence on the beach constructs him as a tourist in the local population imagination. In other parts of the town, his presence cannot be explained this way, according to dominant racialised scripts: he is a "stranger." Returning to the debates raised in Chap. 2 of this book, Jimmy's experiences speak not only to notions of coastal liquidity, but also to ideas of racialised liminality—conjoining thresholds of race, space, and citizenship. This again highlights the need to employ contextual and relational analyses of liminality if we are to understand the mutual racialisation and spatialisation of contemporary seaside environments.

This chapter has explored the centrality of space, place, time, and seasonality in the processes through which minority ethnic communities forge links with the seaside as a whole, Sunshine Bay in particular, and certain streets, neighbourhoods, and areas within this resort. It has also shown the significance of these spaces and places in creating racialised imaginaries of, and undertaking practical responses to, fear, vulnerability, and feelings of being "out of place." The next chapter now moves on to explore the configuration of race, nation, localised citizenship, and prevailing patterns of multiculture in Sunshine Bay, with regard to relationships between different minority ethnic residents in the town, their reflections on living in a white majority space, and their experiences of racism.

# 7

## **"It's Just the Culture of the Town. They're Not Used to Different People Coming": Racialised Inclusions and Exclusions in a Seaside Town**

### **Introduction: Configurations of Otherness, Conviviality, and Racism at the Seaside**

We are tenants, this is not our house and we are sharing this garden with other neighbours. It's a big area and my children play here. There are some other children around this area that don't have this facility and they think that my children are so privileged for having this backyard. Especially in summer time we do get other children, my children's friends, coming to play. Sometimes we have ten children playing in this area, but as long as we know them they can come and play. This was something other children round this area picked on my children for last summer. [The other children] started throwing paint, anything, at them over the wall. My husband, Taymaz, bought my son a new Manchester United football kit with his name on it and they saw him with it and started throwing things at him. When Taymaz went out and confronted them—they were all local and the oldest one was 12 or 13—and asked them why they were doing this, one boy used very abusive racial language towards him. Taymaz didn't say anything, he just said, "I would like to see your dad". [The boy's] dad was more aggressive than the boy, saying, "You foreign people, you can't

live here". Because [the other man] looked like 20-something [years of age], Taymaz said, "I've been here longer than you so I'm as British as you!"

As Ida (Iranian, female, 35–44 years) retold this story, her tone, demeanour, and body language shifted notably. We were talking over spiced tea and cookies at the time, in her modern flat situated right in the centre of Sunshine Bay. She gesticulated through the open lounge window towards the backyard as she reflected on the situation her family had been put in. There was a sense both of sadness and frustration as she described the experiences of her young son and daughter. Ida became visibly more animated as she described the response her husband had received on challenging the father of the other children, and the subsequent rejoinder around his Britishness.

Ida's testimony speaks of the way that engagements with racialised difference can be resisted and refused in Sunshine Bay and other seaside towns by majority white populations. These are accentuated especially during times of austerity and related difficult social, political, and economic conditions. Ida's family have lived in Sunshine Bay for well over a decade, and her husband for even longer (across different time periods); they are British citizens, their children were born in England, and they are well-respected residents in the local community. Yet, their perceived inveterate Otherness in the eyes of some other local people, in this case the manner in which ideas of "foreignness" are "stuck" to their bodies, was invoked to subject them to outsider or "stranger" status. This led to the claim that they should not be living "here," which likely refers to the town itself, but, by implication, suggests the country more widely too. The fact that Ida's husband had lived in Sunshine Bay longer than him was irrelevant to the aggressor; Taymaz's ethnicity was seen to override his citizenship and to invalidate his organic connection to, and right to be in, this particular seaside space.

This chapter demonstrates that episodes like this are experienced by Ida and many other minority ethnic residents in Sunshine Bay on a routine basis. Several of the examples discussed over the following pages can be described as racial microaggressions. These are "brief, everyday exchanges that send denigrating messages to people of colour because they belong to a racial minority group" (Sue et al. 2007: 273). Microaggressions can be

subtle and unconscious, occurring routinely as gestures, looks, or tones. A solitary microaggression can have some degree of impact, but their accumulation over a period can have more significant detrimental consequences. Racism in the town is enacted in physical and speech acts that constitute blatant hate crimes as well. These racisms have significant implications and repercussions for the individuals involved, for minority ethnic communities in general, and for residents' perceptions of racialised relations and multiculture in Sunshine Bay. Crucially, these incidents do not necessarily nullify residents' positive experiences of, and favourable attachments with, Sunshine Bay and its different communities, neighbourhoods, and social resources (see previous chapter). Cordial relations exist in Sunshine Bay, alongside hostility, prejudice, and discrimination. Like Gareth Millington (2011: 158) argues in his synopsis of the seaside town of Southend-on-Sea, "racism and melancholia exist alongside the conviviality that immigrants have brought to the town, and to which many established residents have responded enthusiastically." These scenarios should not be read as binaries though; as embodiments of coastal liquidity, most residents' experiences lie in the messy spaces in-between, and positive and negative racialised relations emerge and recede across different times and spaces.

This chapter begins by exploring how minority ethnic residents interpret, and deliberate the implications of, the significant multicultural changes that have occurred in Sunshine Bay over the past decade. It then considers participants' reflections on hegemonic attitudes towards multiculture and inter-cultural relations in the town, and their explanations for this state of affairs. The chapter then outlines some of the specific implications of these trends, such as the dominant misreading of ethnic identities and the rendering of racialised "strangers." It proceeds to map and analyse the various manifestations and personal experiences of racism in the town, including physical assaults, verbal abuse, and the racialised stare.

## The Changing Face of a Seaside Town

Visiting and walking around Sunshine Bay throughout the summer of 2010, and on numerous occasions since then, I often stopped (or sat in cafés) to contemplate the *feel* and *ambience* of the place. In many

ways, it remains the traditional seaside resort I visited 30 years ago as a young boy on a school trip (see Chap. 1 of this book). It is indubitably a place that is distinct from other nearby towns and the surrounding countryside, geographically and culturally, and it is recognisable as a seaside resort by its infrastructure of pleasure places and the presence of day trippers and tourists. It remains a town with an overwhelmingly white population. Yet, alongside elements of stasis, there are unmistakable signs of social change and coastal liquidity as well. As the previous chapter demonstrated, particular streets, such as those that provide a service economy of cafés, restaurants, and takeaways, now have a distinct multicultural appearance and character. Drinking rose tea in a local Persian café or nodding a greeting to the staff as I walked past an African barber on a daily basis were not things I had associated traditionally with the English seaside; however, they became less and less remarkable as my research progressed. Furthermore, there were people, places, events, and exchanges that I was privileged to experience and access as a researcher, which would not probably be “seen” by the average resident or visitor to Sunshine Bay. These are, nonetheless, fundamental to its changing face, for instance, the mosque hidden away on a back street, the refugee and asylum seeker “drop-in” centre, and the community groups organising social occasions.

Anoop Nayak (2011: 554–5) remarks that:

processes of racialisation simultaneously work through a palette of senses including sounds, smells, taste and touch. The burr of foreign accents, the aroma of spicy cooking or the embodied expression familiar to particular national customs are all part of the silent choreography through which an idea of race becomes intelligible.

The different spaces, signs, shops, voices, smells, and tastes (see Rhys-Taylor 2014) that have emerged in the town in the time I have known it, and most certainly before that too, all symbolise the ways that certain matters of race are becoming much less extraordinary in “new” multicultural spaces (Neal et al. 2013). Alongside the minority ethnic residents interviewed formally for this book, I often spoke with a variety of other local residents, including councillors, community workers, activists, and

teachers, among others (mainly, but not exclusively, white people), about the social and cultural shifts occurring in the town. They too described a rapidly changing town, backing up my own visceral (as well as socio-logical) observations. These demographics had been demonstrated in the 2001 Census data, and they were again reiterated by the findings of the 2011 survey.

## Looking Back: The “Early” Days

Several participants recalled the multicultural make-up of Sunshine Bay when they first came to the town, and they reflected knowledgeably on their positions as racialised bodies in this space at that time. They found that their friends’ and relatives’ warnings that they would “stick out” when living at the seaside were borne out in practice in their respective early days and months. As was documented at the beginning of Chap. 5 of this book, Gary (black British Caribbean, male, 35–44 years) moved to Sunshine Bay from London with his family in the 1990s. He told me about the sense of astonishment exhibited by local people when they met him for the first time:

When we first came [to Sunshine Bay] it was like there were hardly any black faces at all. I’d step into somewhere and people were like, “Whoa!”. Not negative things, but, “Whoa! Alright mate!”

Unfortunately, others encountered scenarios that they found to be more discomforting than the one experienced by Gary. Destiny (Mixed Caribbean, female, 18–24 years) is Gary’s daughter. She was a young girl when her family moved to Sunshine Bay. Independently of her dad’s narrative, she spoke of her feelings about the type of situation that Gary mentioned:

I just remember when we moved down here, I used to feel bad for my dad because I’m mixed, but my dad is black and I used to feel a bit uncomfortable because he was the only black person ever [in the town]. Everywhere he went he was the only black person.

As Destiny thought further about this period of her life, she acknowledged that she was probably the only minority ethnic person in her class at school at that time as well. She also spoke about a strategy of recognition and solidarity that occurred in response to her dad's situation:

When we moved down here, Dad was the first black person. Then there'd be another black person, and Dad would say hello to them, but they wouldn't say hello back. So then, the next day, he'd see the same black person again. He'd wave again, and they'd be like, "Hello, hello, hello!", because they'd realised that we have to stick together.

Maasai (African, female, 65–74 years) made a similar journey from London to the coast in 2000. Referencing the sorts of comments mentioned in Chap. 5 of this book about perceived disconnections between minority ethnic people and the seaside, she stated that:

People said to me, "When you go there [to the seaside], you will just stand out like a sore thumb because there aren't any black people around" ... Yes, when I came here there were very, very few black people. There were a few black professionals, nurses and social workers, but as far as I can remember there were just a handful of them.

Participants who had arrived in the town more recently, and as younger people, recalled common feelings and observations. Marcus (British African, male, 18–24 years) had come to Sunshine Bay from London to study a couple of years before our interview. His reflections focused not only on issues of race, but also on their intersections with age:

I felt kind of out of place. I didn't feel like I fitted in with everybody else. I do understand that a lot of people here are old, but even the general people around my age or maybe a bit older, I still didn't feel like I fitted in with them either ... Yeah, it was a bit different for me because I came when there wasn't really that many black people here. It was just a few and you could count them on one hand, or maybe two.

When introducing the insights of Ayesha (Turkish, female, 18–24 years) in the previous chapter, it was noted that her ethnicity would

likely be interpreted by uninitiated observers as white British. Along with her “real” Anglophone name, this increased her capacity to “pass” as “a local” in many of the town’s spaces, even though she spoke about feeling more comfortable among South Asian and Turkish people who “know that she is a Turkish girl.” Her experiences were, however, very similar to her student contemporary, Marcus, a young black man, cautioning us against any simplistic correlation between phenotype, racialisation, and lived experience. For Ayesha:

[Sunshine Bay] was just too white I thought when I came here. It was, like, just a lot of poverty and white people, and it was really segregated. I felt really segregated and stuff. It was completely different to London because London’s so diverse and wherever you go you see different cultures and whatever. So it was completely different for me. It felt foreign.

Ayesha’s use of the term “foreign” is especially interesting. Customarily projected onto racialised and/or non-British populations (as was the case with the narrative provided by Ida at the beginning of this chapter), Ayesha employed it in a very different way. While still utilised to describe a racial homogeneity with which she was not accustomed, it was the majority white British community that, unusually, was attributed this appellation.

## Looking Forward: The Contemporary Picture

Like many seaside towns, Sunshine Bay has changed. Although this is the result of multiple social, economic, and political factors, it is the make-up of the town’s population that most participants perceived to represent the most significant shift. Gary’s use of personal biography summed up the transformations pertinently, demonstrating a notable change in the scenario described by Destiny earlier in the text. He laughed while narrating his story, appreciating a transition that once appeared banal, but now seemed symbolic:

When we first came here, there were three or four black guys that I saw on the street. I was like, “Yo!” and they’d be “Alright!”. Now it’s totally different. Now you say, “Hi”, and they’re like, “Who are you?”. And you think,

"Oh yeah". It's not unnatural now to see a black or Asian family. It's becoming almost like somewhere a bit more inland.

Jimmy (black African, male, 35–44 years) remembered the arrangements made by people from minority ethnic backgrounds to meet and socialise around the time that he arrived in the town a decade ago. He contrasted them with current practices:

Ten years ago, the black community used to meet at a pub and I can count at that time we were less than 10 people. And I used to try to find out whether there were any other communities from ethnic minority backgrounds, apart from first- and second-generations of black communities that had moved from London. And there was really very little. But now it's changed a lot, in many ways.

Leila (Tatar-Armenian, female, 25–34 years) reinforced Jimmy's conclusion:

In the time that I've been here it is definitely more diverse. I mean, the most visible difference—and forgive me for saying this, it is purely *visible*—is that there are more black people in [Sunshine Bay]. That's purely because they stand out. And I think there's actually a lot more Russians around as well, because you go into town on a weekend and on practically every corner you can hear Russian speech now. Yes, it's definitely become more diverse, but also with people from within England, like black people.

Ida added that:

If you go to [Royal Street] at night, it doesn't look like a white English road at all, because you just hear loud Kurdish music and, you know, they speak their own language, especially the bottom part of [Royal Street]. It's really interesting if you pass that bit of [Royal Street] at night.

Amin (Mixed, male, 45–54 years) left his home in Poland when the country joined the European Union in 2004. The sister of one of his friends lived in another town near Sunshine Bay and had mentioned some

employment opportunities for people working in health and social care there. Amin moved to England to take up a job in this sector, but subsequently joined the police as a Community Support Officer in Sunshine Bay. He said that the town:

Has become a lot more multicultural. When I came to [the adjacent town] I noticed it was already there a little bit multicultural. But then I used to come here [to Sunshine Bay] sometimes, most often [Harbourside], because of the shops, you know, the Polish food and the Arabic food, to do the shopping. I noticed that [Harbourside]—maybe not that much [in other parts of the town]—is really very much diverse. [Harbourside] is very small and everything is happening in a small area. That diversity, you already see it in [Royal Street].

The changes that these residents identify have had significant implications for the town at a macro level, creating a critical mass of minority ethnic communities, an unprecedented level of “visibility,” and the establishment of a racialised service economy, including cafés, hairdressers, and grocers. They have also necessitated new community support groups and specific social services. The effects occur on a more micro scale too. Revisiting the trends identified in the previous two chapters, shifting population demographics have substantial implications for racial and community formation, social networks, and individual perceptions (if not necessarily the actual experience) of inter-cultural relations and integration, as well as emergent forms of racialised agency and power. In turn, changes in Sunshine Bay have also likely had an impact on those residents in the town who identify as part of the majority white community.

Both scales of change contained in the aforementioned reflections, documenting “earlier” and “later” phases in Sunshine Bay need to be considered as relational, uneven, and multi-directional processes. Participants’ perceptions about these multicultural shifts are diverse and intersectional, and so they must be subjected to a contextual and nuanced reading. They vary with regard to their skin colour, age, gender, citizenship status, social class, profession, language, length of residence (in the town and in the UK), and perceived cultural proximity to the white majority, while they are also influenced by local and national media portrayals (Ford 2011;

Kesten et al. 2011; Williams and Johnson 2010). In addition to their views on broader transitions, residents' individual patterns of integration and reflections on their own inclusion, exclusion, and sense of belonging are heterogeneous too. These factors impact, in an everyday sense, on the spaces in which residents live, work, and play (see Chap. 6 of this book), and the people with whom they are likely to meet, work, socialise, and form relationships. This is especially the case with sections of the long-term settled minority ethnic population, where involvement in professional roles and political networks has enhanced some residents' social and local geographical mobility considerably (Erel 2010; Ryan 2011).

Some participants felt that the effects of increasing multicultural settlement in relation to engendering positive social change, especially around race, are negligible and had been overstated by others. They purport a more critical perspective (as seen in the academic literature, see later in the text) that purely being in the presence of other communities and co-existing with their members is not necessarily the same as, or does not lead to, meaningful interaction with them. Nonetheless, the majority of participants were generally in agreement with what Trevor (black British, male, 18–24 years) put pithily: that Sunshine Bay was "changing from being more traditional to more welcoming."

## Racialised "Strangers", Defensive Localism, and the Politics of Mis/recognition

As has become clear throughout this book, its intellectual and political oeuvre makes naming racism, and mapping and analysing its manifestations, in the spaces and places of the seaside and the coast a necessary undertaking. This is especially important both in the context of normative assumptions and dominant claims that the seaside is a racially neutral space where racism does not exist; and in relation to the fact that scholarship in this field is emergent, meaning that this book has the capacity and responsibility to contribute towards setting the academic agenda. As Les Back (2015b) makes clear in a critique of the superdiversity paradigm (Vertovec 2007) that dominates current writing on migration, race, and ethnicity in the UK, we need to take account of the colonial legacies that

underpin patterns of multiculturalism, and to foreground the ideologies and practices of racism that emerge around them.

This book has de-essentialised minority ethnic communities in seaside spaces. Although “established” communities and “recent” migrants are included, where appropriate, within the same broad analytical frame, this book rejects any insinuation that there is a single narrative that describes and explains the presence and experiences of racialised bodies at the seaside (or elsewhere). In turn, the dangers of homogenising and reifying white British seaside communities as “a *lumpen* white (and racist) majority” (Millington 2010: 376), or slipping into a simplistic, reductive “black victims/white perpetrators” frame (Williams 2007), are recognised. This is particularly pertinent given the absence of voices from members of Sunshine Bay’s local white majority population in this book. In addition, ethnic and racial prejudice and discrimination are evidently experienced by residents who are part of white minorities too. As the likes of Adam, Alonso, Ayesha, and Katie alluded to in the previous section, their perceptions of their acceptance and integration within the majority white community in the town are unquestionably variable.

Long-lasting inter-ethnic friendships and relationships with white people, and the work undertaken by numerous white people in fighting racism, providing migrant support, and promoting community cohesion, were highlighted by several interviewees of diverse ethnic backgrounds. They also emphasised the more prosaic forms of lived inter-ethnic “domains of commonality” (Glick Schiller and Çağlar 2016: 18) that have brought them together on an everyday level through work, leisure, friendship, love, children’s education, and residential patterns. As Deborah Phillips et al. (2014: 55) write:

Interpersonal relations between new and settled residents are likely to be complex and individualised, made up of both strong and weak associations, with instances of neighbourly trust as well as suspicion and apprehension. The potential for settled populations to accommodate difference arising from new migration is also likely to vary quite considerably across localities; local opportunities and resources, the dynamics of in-migration, the history of intercultural relations, local politics etc. are all likely to help shape the nature of encounter.

Christian Karner and David Parker (2011: 366) refer to these trends as the “contradictory tendencies of fragmentation and boundary maintenance on the one hand, and of “bridging” capital and localised, inter-ethnic solidarities on the other.” For instance, Maasai stated that while she “kn[e]w there is a lot of antagonism in other towns,” that is not the case in Sunshine Bay, where she described the local people as “very tolerant.” Likewise, based on his own experiences, Taymaz (Iranian, male, 45–54 years) denied steadfastly that there is any form of prejudice in the town. “I’ve heard it from a lot of foreign people that there is a little bit of racism and discrimination,” he told me, “but nothing has happened to me.” This assertive denial of racism is in itself interesting—Taymaz is Ida’s husband, and was involved in the incident with which this chapter began.

Alongside their intersectional identities and diverse experiences of multiculturalism, members of *all* minority ethnic groups in Sunshine Bay encounter various common problems and share similar tales of racial discrimination. Furthermore, they are routinely essentialised and racialised generically in the local popular imagination. Several minority ethnic residents in the town spoke about encountering what they perceive to be a dated, uninformed, and sometimes prejudiced attitude among sections of the local majority white community. For example, Ranu (British Bangladeshi, female, 45–54 years), who has lived in Sunshine Bay for more than 30 years, told me that, “People have a lack of awareness about other people’s cultures.” She continued:

Even though I like to think I’m an established member of the community, still if I go out now, until you speak to people, they don’t want to know you ... Just going to the supermarket, people will brush past you, thinking, “Who are you? Should you be here?”

Her daughter, Ashrafun (British Bangladeshi, female, 25–34 years), added that:

One of my [white] friends always says about “those foreigners” and stuff like that. Obviously she doesn’t think I’m a foreigner, but I’m very linked to a foreign land and things like that.

Some residents spoke candidly about the social and cultural factors they feel influence contemporary attitudes to multiculture in Sunshine Bay. Specifically, limited inclinations and opportunities for substantive and ongoing engagement with difference within segments of the majority community were perceived as the prime features inhibiting greater inter-cultural knowledge and the generation of positive feelings about minority ethnic groups (see Dawney 2008, on rural comparisons). Interestingly, this mindset was not necessarily interpreted as being driven by racism. Instead, a general lack of familiarity with, understanding of, and congeniality towards, minority ethnic groups was believed to be an inevitable, indeed *normal*, feature of towns such as Sunshine Bay; overwhelmingly, white British and predominantly working-class populations, comparatively “new” and small minority ethnic communities, and relatively immobile residential patterns that can promote an inward-looking worldview.

There was a strong feeling that discrimination towards minority ethnic groups is exacerbated during times of economic downturn and austerity measures, with perceived competition for jobs and the withdrawal of social services reducing neighbourliness and inter-group cohesion. This is an important observation. Although “there is still no evidence of an overall negative impact of immigration on jobs, wages, housing or the crowding out of public services” (Wadsworth 2015: 2; see also Valentine 2010), evidently this is not always reflected within local popular imaginations and discourses, where particular misconceptions about the repercussions of immigration abound. Issues related to national and global economics are heightened by specific local issues and narratives around employment, perceived sexualised threat, and racialised claims about entitlement, leading to pejorative discourses about minority ethnic “newcomers.” Asylum seekers and refugees in Sunshine Bay are especially demonised and rendered “strange” and “out of place” despite constituting a very small proportion of the overall minority ethnic population in the town. For instance, at the time of my fieldwork, there were pervasive local rumours that constructed young men from migrant Afghani, Kurdish, and Pakistani backgrounds as “pervy” sexual predators who represented danger to white young women and girls. As Ali Rattansi (2005: 296) reminds us, crucially, “racism is never simply rac-

ism, but always exists in a complex imbrication with nation, ethnicity, class, gender and sexuality” (see also Meer 2013).

In some cases, residents were resigned to the state of inter-cultural relations in Sunshine Bay, at least as they perceived them. There was even a palpable sense of compassion in a few instances, along with a denial of the racist intent and effects of these speech acts and behaviours. For example, Ida suggested that:

I'm thinking it's not racism, it's mainly ignorance and lack of education ...  
The majority of [local people] don't have any clue at all. Even [about] Eastern European countries, let alone about Asia and the Middle East.

She illustrated her point by comparing London and Sunshine Bay, differentiating the multicultural friendship groups she developed on arrival in the latter (as described in Chap. 5 of this book), and the limited social networks of her current neighbour:

When I came [to Sunshine Bay], one of my neighbours, she's British. Maybe I was her first experience of a foreign person. It was really interesting for me knowing that she did not know anything about foreign countries. When I was in London, the second question that people would ask me is, “Where are you from?” Not in a bad way, just out of curiosity. I was more than happy to say, “I'm Iranian, I'm from Iran”, and if people didn't know where it was I would explain it. But here, people would not ask, “Where are you from?”, because the majority of them, they don't have a clue where Iran is.

Kose (British African, female, 18–24 years) is a young woman from London who was studying at a college in Sunshine Bay. She stated that, “It's not anyone's fault, it's just the culture of the town. They're not used to different people coming.” Her student contemporary, Steve (British Caribbean, male, 18–24 years), was also originally from London. He interpreted majority white community responses to minority ethnic groups in a similar manner:

I know a lot of [minority ethnic] people who've lived here for many years and they've talked to me about this whole town. The way I see it is [white communities] are not used to us. It's not their fault. I don't blame them.

There's a lot of old people here and this is their town. This is what they're used to. They're used to the milkman coming in the van and giving them milk. They're not used to waking up and looking across the street and seeing a black guy wearing all his shiny clothes or something, you know. It's a different thing to them. So when I used to catch them looking, I used to always be angry. I'd walk around angry, but after a while I started to realise some of the people who I thought were looking at me because they were being racist or whatever, when you actually talk to them, they're fine, they're perfect with you. It's just the way they are.

These testimonies demonstrate apparent attempts to understand and explain the situation in Sunshine Bay, together with a reticence to “blame” local white majority communities for their perceptions on multiculture. Even so, they present arguably a simplistic and essentialist, not to say an overly sympathetic, portrayal of white British communities and “their culture.” As highlighted in the previous two chapters, there are many examples that do not fit into these participants’ interpretative schemas: convivial interactions, and inter-cultural awareness and exchange on one hand; and incidences of overt, crude, and deliberate racism on the other. The latter seems very difficult to exonerate along the lines expressed by participants here. These statements hold one thing in common though: they all point to the belief that an enduring, blinkered worldview on multiculture is entrenched in sections of the local popular imagination.

These residents’ ruminations remind us that minority ethnic groups can reproduce a dominant discourse—manifest in certain political, media and even academic circles—that attributes perceived challenges to localised community cohesion to the arrival of certain “newcomers.” In turn, they support the “contact hypothesis” (Allport 1954) on inter-group relations. This model proposes that increased contact between minority and majority (ethnic) groups, and the consequent improvement in their knowledge of each other can eventually create substantive social bonds and bridges. The upshot of these interactions is a decrease in tension and prejudice. Recent work in sociology and cultural geography has problematised this position. This literature subverts the contention that ethnic heterogeneity creates fragmented communities, while also demonstrating that proximity and contact between different groups are rarely,

on their own, sufficient to generate understanding, respect, and tolerance. Research has called instead for an appreciation of the complexities, nuances, and contradictions embedded in the contemporary everyday multicultural encounter (Wise and Velayutham 2009). “Habitual contact in itself,” argues Ash Amin (2002: 969), “is no guarantor of cultural exchange.” This is especially apparent when placed within the wider influence of extant racial prejudice and discrimination. Moreover, an area’s immigration history, levels of deprivation, adequacy and/or appropriateness of institutional policies and service provision, and localised discourses of “neighbourliness” (Erel 2011; Hickman et al. 2008) are also important contextual factors. As Deborah Phillips et al. (2014: 45) point out:

critical assessments of the contact hypothesis have exposed several limitations, notably the unpredictability associated with bringing strangers together, especially where there has been a history of animosity between groups, the assumption that prejudice against newcomers or other “out-groups” is rooted in ignorance that can be overcome by contact, and potential inequalities in the process of engagement.

The situation in Sunshine Bay shows how harmonious and discordant community relations exist both in integrated areas and in places with well-defined, limited pockets of multiculture. As various critiques have outlined, enacted in many of the testimonies here, the outcome of positive social relations often depends on the degree to which *meaningful* interaction can be achieved (Harris 2013; Sturgis et al. 2014; Valentine 2008, 2010).

A far greater unwillingness to absolve exclusionary perspectives was evident with several participants. They felt that there was a noticeable reluctance and defiance within some sections of the local majority white community to embrace the many positive repercussions of shifting ethno-racial demographics in Sunshine Bay. This was interpreted as reflecting deeper, racialised feelings of mistrust and suspicion of “outsiders,” which manifest themselves through a defensive localism and the discursive construction of “strangers” (see Chap. 2 of this book). Sushma (British Asian, female, 45–54 years) highlighted the implications of this mindset

in practice. She felt that there had been inadequate local provision by social services for challenging discrimination:

When I came down here I saw [Sunshine Bay] as very much behind the times actually in lots of ways, in terms of policies and, you know, just populations as well. General awareness around race discrimination, for instance. So that was a bit of a shock! I kept saying, “God, this can’t be right!”

Andy (Persian, male, 35–44 years) stated that:

Some of [the white British population] have actually settled down with foreign people and they’ve got families and all that. But the majority of the [Sunshine Bay] population, they can’t get on with foreign people. There’s a big network of these people in [this town].

Gary added that:

You have a genuine sense of community in this town, you really do. But underlying, for some reason, going through the centre of it, you have this thing whereby no one wants to accept how racist or how fearful the majority of people are in areas like [Coast Hill, Sea Park and Harbourside] of anything that is different or anything that might bring about change.

Jimmy referred tellingly to this condition as a “fear of the unknown.” It could be explained, in his opinion, by Sunshine Bay’s distinctive characteristics, primarily the fact that its minority ethnic population is much smaller and less established, historically and socially, than in other, inland towns and cities. With characteristic erudition and drawing clear links between bodies, space, and visibility, he stated that:

Local communities are quite reserved here and historically this [presence of minority ethnic residents] is something new for them. It’s a big change for the town and we are probably 20 to 30 years behind in comparison to bigger cities. So things we’ll be dealing with are things that London would have been through probably 20, 30 years ago. So the foreignness is still quite visible in this town.

Dahab (Sudanese, male, 65–74 years) also explored the theme of “foreignness.” Unlike Ayesha’s usage earlier in this chapter, for Dahab, it was a more conventional shorthand for racialised and ethnicised difference. Making a comparison between the spaces of “traditional” and “non-traditional” destinations for migration and multiculture, he felt dominant discourses of “foreignness” were figuratively inscribed onto his body by local white residents in Sunshine Bay. Dahab told me that:

In London, you don’t feel that you’re a foreigner, because everybody is a foreigner. Because you are mixed with a lot of ethnic minorities, you don’t feel that you are different. Your contact with [white] English people is only on official matters, at the Job Centre for example. Because most of the [white] English [people in England] don’t live in London, they live outside London. So in London you don’t feel that you are a foreigner. But here, you feel it.

Dahab’s comments are particularly interesting, given the reason he gave for moving to Sunshine Bay from London in the first place. As explained in Chap. 5 of this book, he had a strong desire to bring his family up in a place where they would be required to integrate into a majority white community and to speak English regularly. His latter testimony actually underlines the limitations of such a strategy; his family’s experiences show that language proficiency, portrayed by many politicians as a prerequisite for integration and as signifying the adoption of “British values,” does not preclude being marked as a “foreigner” or “stranger” (Ahmed 2014).

Another noteworthy trend was some participants’ belief that habitual non-engagement with multiculture leads to a tendency for others to “misread” their identities. Sham (British Bangladeshi, male, 25–34 years) recalled that:

Where I work, they didn’t even realise I was Muslim. When I said I was, they said, “I never thought you was Muslim because you don’t wear them big skirts”. So you have to sort of tell them about yourself, which is kind of good. I think if you educate these people then it’s going to be a lot better in the future, but there’s nothing in place for that.

Destiny stated that:

If I was to go to London, people would know I'm mixed-race. They wouldn't even have to ask. Here, they think I'm white, so they'll be racist in front of me. If I don't agree with things, I have to say. I have to pull [people] up about it. They don't understand, they just think [that attitude] is normal.

Evidently, Sham and Destiny met people through their work or in the town who "misread" their identities. As a result, these individuals reacted differently to how they might have done should they have interpreted Sham's and Destiny's characteristics correctly. This highlights a lack of familiarity with, and experiential knowledge of, minority ethnic groups among their peers, colleagues, and neighbours. It also implies that these participants had not previously had opportunities in these settings to discuss their backgrounds. In such scenarios, stereotypical markers of identity, corporeal or material, can become the sole criteria through which to attempt categorisation. In their absence, Sham was not recognised as a Muslim, and Destiny was erroneously viewed as white. These examples reflect what David Delaney (2002) refers to as geographies of racial passing. They represent spaces, whether that be the specific microsite of Sham's workplace or the broader context of Sunshine Bay, where forms of racial/religious "passing" occur due to an unaccustomedness with the variances and nuances of embodied multiculture. Although misrecognition can be unintentional and could even be argued to exempt people from certain forms of prejudice, the repercussions can be oppressive (Taylor 1992). Most significantly, Destiny's passing as "white" meant that she was forced to endure racist sentiments. Discriminatory comments may not have been directed towards her, or indeed anybody else present, but her treatment reveals the acceptance of racism by dominant white groups when articulated within what is deemed to be a safe "back stage" environment (Picca and Feagin 2007).

## Racism

"It is quite a racist town I would say," was Sham's short, but damning, appraisal of Sunshine Bay, "You can tell by people's attitudes towards you." Other participants, interestingly young people as well, reflected similarly

on their feelings about race relations in the town. Referencing an incident that is expanded upon in the following paragraph, Steve said that:

I guess to sum it up, yeah, [Sunshine Bay is] very racist. An example is there was a film, the Biggie film that came out [*Notorious*]—a 2009 biographical movie about the late American rapper, The Notorious B.I.G.]. The [local screening of the] film got cancelled because someone sprayed “Nigger” all over the poster. It was set to show, but they cancelled it. So that pretty much sums it up. That’s what it is. It’s racist, man.

Furthermore, Ama [British African, female, 18–24 years] stated that:

I would say the majority [of local people] are not in the “I hate you” [category], but I don’t think a lot of them know they have those prejudices. Or they do, but they just don’t think that it is racist. You have the ones that don’t want to see you, but I think in general a lot of them have a few, like, ideologies and expectations of what you’re meant to be like or what you’re going to be like, but they don’t see it as racist.

These scenarios described in these testimonies are not uncommon. Nearly everyone who participated in the research for this book had experienced personally some form of racial prejudice and discrimination, including racist epithets, verbal threats, harassment, and physical attacks. These were usually multiple and recurrent, and occurred across a range of social contexts and spaces.

Andy informed me about an incident that had occurred relatively recently before our interview, which combined a verbal assault and an attempted physical attack. While Andy self-identifies his ethnicity as “Persian,” he was marked as “black” by his assailant, underlining again the essentialist construction and racialisation of minority ethnic communities, especially migrants, as “strangers” at the seaside (see also Valentine 2010):

I had an incident where I was called “a black B” [bastard]. Where I used to live with my child and my child’s mother, we parked the car outside the premises. When I went to pick it up there was a man who basically wasn’t happy with foreign people, with coloured people [sic]. He was a

bit drunk as well. He came out and he started to fight. He called me a few names, but I ignored him because the culture in which I was brought up is to respect your elders, even if it's only by one year [age difference]. When he called me "a black B" I still ignored him. Then the mother of my child started arguing, saying that if you are calling my partner "a black B" then you are assaulting my child as well. Then he showed his fist and went towards my child's mother. At that point I had to get involved and stand in-between.

Gary told me that:

[I was talking to someone] and his English is not amazing, but he could make himself understood. He was saying, "Why do they hate us?". And I was like, "Whoa, whoa! Who?". And he said, "Us". He's never had any problems [in the neighbourhood] where he lives, but moving up and down the town he said he's had different people shout things at him, like "F-ing Paki! Go back to Pakistan". And he said "I'm Nepalese!" He said he feels really bad. His dad was a Gurkha so he thinks about how his dad used to go on and on about England. That's why he's here. But he's come here and he feels no one really relates [to him].

Steve recalled an incident during his first few days of residence in the town (alluded to in his aforementioned comments) that made clear the spatial manifestations of racism at the seaside:

I was walking through town and I happened to come across a group of English [white] boys. One of them was shouting some sort of racist stuff down the phone to his friend: "There's no black boys here, none of them people are here, don't worry about it", not realising that I'm walking past behind him. I think one of his friends realised that a black boy *was* walking past. I just thought "zone out, forget it", but as I was walking past one of them shouted, "I'll f[uck] you up" or something like that.

In this incident, the white man was reassuring his friend that young black men—and, one might assume, the pejorative associations he perceived them to hold—were not present and/or welcome in Sunshine Bay. Steve's presence destabilised this construction and, by association, forms

of hegemonic whiteness in the town. As a result, the man's aggressive, racist behaviour enabled him to assert his—that is, white—“ownership” and control of this space as “territory” (Back 2005; Nayak 2010).

Dahab told me a story about his daughter who currently attends a local secondary school:

Unfortunately there, from the beginning, she has been bullied. Other girls started making troubles, disturbing her. Sometimes she goes and sits in the toilets to eat her sandwich because she cannot sit normally with other people and eat with them in the canteen ... One day on the bus, coming from school, two girls were smoking. It was during winter and one opened the window. My daughter said, “It’s very cold for me”. So one girl opened the window [wider], and another came and took her *hijab* from her. Luckily at the next stop my daughter could get off [but] she came home weeping.

The unrelenting nature of his daughter’s marginalisation and discriminatory experiences makes Dahab’s testimony especially striking and upsetting. It also contrasts starkly with Sham’s recollections earlier in the previous section. As Anoop Nayak (2011: 556) points out, “the materiality of skin, beards, turbans, mosques or veils have become the rubric through which race difference is assembled and the grammar through which race is made legible.” Here, Dahab’s daughter’s headscarf was identified as an unequivocal material marker of Islamic Otherness, and its forced removal became a symbolic rejection of difference by the other girls. The experiences of Steve and of Dahab’s daughter demonstrate that “the fact that someone may look visibly different appears to act as a catalyst for forms of racism peculiar to environments where white communities are simply not familiar with, or used to, people with markedly different physical features” (Garland and Chakraborti 2006: 163–4).

Yet, as Leila pointed out, discriminatory behaviours are not simply triggered by the identification of racialised corporeal markers, but they can be underpinned by xenophobia and the construction of other types of “foreign” or “strange” bodies too:

In the time that I’ve been in [Sunshine Bay], I think the younger people have become a bit more aggressive. Just simply from the things that I’ve

seen that I didn't use to. In the last two or three years, for example, [the town] gets a lot of English language students in the summer and I've seen quite ugly scenes where kids, not older than 15 probably, were just really aggressive to a group of, in that case, Spanish kids. And they were bullying them openly. I don't know how the whole incident started, but what I saw were English kids behaving really aggressively, really bullying the Spanish ones. And nobody really sort of interfered for a while, but then a guy of, say, late 20s tried to and got completely ignored by the group of kids and so also left. It just looked so wrong and so ugly. I wanted to interfere as well, but I thought if I open my mouth and they hear my accent, they will start on me.

Leila's narrative indicates the need to analyse practices of racialisation in a way that acknowledges the influence of *cultural* as well as phenotypical attributes in the Othering and demonisation of particular groups at the seaside (Clarke and Garner 2010; Meer 2013).

Ali (Kurdish, male, 18–24 years) spoke about the ongoing harassment he has received from neighbours in his block of flats, together with the inadequate response from the police:

It was a Saturday and I was working. A friend was at my home watching a movie and the man on the second floor kicked my door. My friend opened the door for him and when [the man] came in he started swearing ... That night, at around four o'clock in the morning, I was sleeping. They came from the second floor and kicked the door, and the door was damaged. The next day it happened again, and [the man] came and he started swearing ... I told the police on Tuesday. They told me to go home and they would come round at half past four. I went home and waited for them, but they didn't come.

When I informed community activist, Walat (Kurdish, male, 35–44 years), about this incident (without, of course, disclosing Ali's identity), he was unsurprised about the inaction by the police. They work iniquitously in relation to minority ethnic groups, he argued, both when they are victims of crimes and when they are suspected of perpetrating them. Walat did not think other members of the Kurdish community would bother to report further racist incidents to the police. This might be due

to a range of reasons, including a lack of faith in the criminal justice system, a fear or distrust of “authority” figures and uniformed services, or a belief that despite their current treatment they are still in a better (or safer) situation than they had been before migration (Chakraborti 2010). Sally Munt’s (2012) analysis of migrant women in Britain highlights this latter point. Munt suggests that her empirical findings offered a blunt rejoinder to her predictions of generating “data of misery”:

The women constantly reminded me, and each other, of how favourably the UK compared in its attitude to women, in its tolerance and inclusivity, citing our laws as exemplary of democratic equality (and giving short shrift to primarily Anglo-American feminist grievances). They were disinterested in the aetiology of blame, so obsessively retold by political critics of British policy on immigration, instead mobilising positive feelings towards their adoptive nation. (*Ibid.*: 561)

In the previous chapter, speaking about a particular part of Sunshine Bay she sought to avoid (especially at certain times), Kose (British African, female, 18–24 years) referred to a “banana incident.” She had been out in town for the evening with a group of friends and had received a comment from a passing man. Kose thought at first that the man was making a lewd, sexual comment towards her, but soon was even more horrified to comprehend that it was primarily a racist one:

We went out and the guy just shouted, “Do you want a banana or something?” I didn’t really clock on to, like, what he was saying. I thought he was just, like, being a cocky guy, [adopts male voice] “Hey, do you want a banana?” I thought he was talking about his private parts, like, “Do you want some banana?”! Then I clocked that he had a banana in his hand and I thought, “No, no, no”. I was really angry that night.

Gary’s experience of being called a “black bastard” in the middle of the day, in the centre of Sunshine Bay, was discussed in the previous chapter. With regard to another episode, he stated that:

I’ve had racism before, but [Sunshine Bay] was the first place I’ve ever lived where I’ve got up one morning, gone out to the shop to get a newspaper

and this woman said to me in the shop, “Get thee behind me, Satan”. And I was like, “What’s that about?” She’d served me lovely and everything, but then she was just, “Get out! Go on, get out!”

This incident had added significance for Gary. He admitted to me that it was “the first full-on racist abuse I’d ever had.” It occurred well into his adult life, but happened relatively shortly after he began living in a seaside town.

Through her concept of the “politics of proximities,” Patricia Price (2013: 578) proposes that “vulnerability and proximity also come into play with respect to the gaze—a form of vision that can approximate a touch (wanted or unwanted)—and racialized skin” (*ibid.*: 582). In addition, Anoop Nayak (2011: 554) points out that:

there is much that goes unsaid in modern multicultural encounters—gestures, fleeting glances, strained silences and the discreet performances of othering that have come to mark difference. What these daily events and small acts achieve is that they bring the silent, immanent markers of race into emergence.

Referencing the idea of “sticking out” discussed earlier in this chapter (and in Chap. 5), several residents spoke about the excluding repercussions of being stared at by other people in seaside spaces (see also Munt 2015). Burri (black African, male, 35–44 years) told me that:

At times like summer time when I go to the mosque very often, it is ten minutes walking distance, and you can see people gaze at you. Not in a friendly way, it’s a suspicious way ... I’ve lived here long enough to discern and differentiate between those who give you a friendly look and those you give you a suspicious look.

Ama added that:

Sometimes I’ve taken stares where I’ve just thought, “Ok, it’s nothing”, but when they stop what they’re doing, when they do it so much and they are whispering and the person behind them stares at you, then you think, “Ok, there’s a problem there”. I work in [Sunshine Bay] as well and I have cus-

tomers who will buy something from me, but they will not look at me. If I try to talk to them or anything, they will not talk and they will snatch the receipt out of my hand and stuff like that. Or they'll come in and literally just stare at me, they'll point with their partner and just stare at me. When they do it all the time you think that maybe there is something wrong.

These situations influenced participants' decisions to avoid doing certain things—out of fear of being labelled a “stranger” and “out of place”—in different locations and at different times. Leila mentioned that:

I don't drive so I use public transport a lot, so quite often I'm at the bus stop quite late and there's a group of teenagers hanging round and, you know, sometimes I talk to my friends in Russian on my phone. I actually now sort of catch myself thinking, no, perhaps I'll do this a little bit later when I get home rather than doing it at the bus stop.

She paused and then continued, asking herself, rhetorically:

Now where did that come from? Maybe just sort of this incident that I saw [with the Spanish students, discussed earlier in the chapter]? I can't say I'm afraid but it's quite subconscious, you know.

Ayesha stated that:

Yeah, I do find [the town] racist because obviously we are still a minority here ... If my friend from Zimbabwe comes to visit, they always stare at us all the time when we are waiting by the bus stop, so I start arguing with people, because I just don't like the way they treat her when she comes. I just find it, you know ... it's all to do with the culture and the background of the town, so obviously we're in their territory so we can't argue.

Ayesha's testimony is symbolic in that despite living in Sunshine Bay, albeit for a short period as a student, she still feels that certain parts of the town are the “territory” of the local white majority population. She perceived her links to these spaces accordingly to be inauthentic and without power, and she did not think that she had the agency to resist discriminatory behaviours. These feelings of being stared at link closely to the

notion of “safety maps” (Evers 2008) introduced in the previous chapter, reiterating the racialised intersections of space, im/mobility, emotion, and affect.

This chapter has highlighted how Sunshine Bay, as an exemplar of what is happening in many other, but certainly not all, seaside towns, has changed over the past decade. In short, it is becoming a more multicultural place, which is evident in population changes, the development of culturally specific service economies and social services, and somewhat more nebulous notions of “feel” or “tone.” The present analysis has explored minority ethnic residents’ divergent opinions on the repercussions of these changes. It has also documented their reflections on dominant attitudes towards multiculture and inter-cultural relations in the town, and their interpretations of this state of affairs. Finally, but perhaps most importantly, these narratives have challenged and critiqued the overly benign application of the superdiversity paradigm in “new” multicultural locations, which has a tendency to ignore or obscure the presence of racism and anti-immigration discourses and practices (Back 2015b). Sunshine Bay is, then, a story, and has a future, of continuity and change. The coastal liquidity of its people and places creates some patterns of social relations that are fluid and dynamic, and others that are steadfastly resistant to modification. Sunshine Bay is a town that the majority of minority ethnic residents interviewed for this book love, enjoy, and value, and it is also, undoubtedly, one in which they experience the pernicious manifestations of racism and structural exclusion.

# 8

## Conclusion: The Tides They Are A-Changin'?

### **Seaside Strolls: Multiple Spaces, Times, Seasides**

During the final weeks of writing this book, I took a series of long walks along the seafront in Brighton and Hove. As I prepared to gather my thoughts and consolidate my arguments for these concluding remarks, I wanted to draw on the various visual and sensual stimuli of the contemporary seaside as well as the pages of my typed manuscript. Through this practice of thinking-while-walking—in and out of different seaside spaces and past various seaside people—I was able to consider the central themes of this book in a reflexive, embodied, and present manner. On each occasion, I spread my gaze widely, taking in the beach and the sea, the promenade, and the lawns, while also paying close attention to their particular comings and goings. Commensurate with the principles of the sociological imagination (outlined in the Preface to this book), I observed attentively and noted critically in a manner “which makes the unfamiliar more familiar and treats the familiar as a source of astonishment” (Gane and Back 2012: 405). I undertook these observations primarily as a sociologist, but I also felt the need to view the seaside

beyond that frame, adopting both a touristic gaze and *flâneuristic* mode of being: for instance, stopping to peruse souvenir shops, art galleries, artisan craft boutiques, and chip shops; watching people playing beach volleyball, *pétanque*, or musical instruments; and gauging which types of bodies occupied or avoided which spaces.

One Sunday morning in the middle of October 2015, I parked the car on Grand Avenue in Hove and walked eastwards with my companions towards the (soon to be opened) i-360 viewing tower. To say that the day was unseasonably warm would be an understatement—I wore a short-sleeved shirt and we drank our coffees outside at the bandstand café. From the café I noticed a coach parked outside one of the hotels on King's Road, the seafront's main thoroughfare. A sizeable group of black visitors of all ages disembarked, unloading their suitcases, and gathering to chat on the pavement. They were part of a tangible multicultural presence on the seafront that day, comprising families, couples, and young people clearing their heads after the previous night's partying. On the return stroll, I was taken by the sight of a Muslim family on the beach between the piers. The mother, dressed in a black *burqa*, stood near the encroaching waves and held her infant daughter tightly in her arms. Another, older daughter, in a striking pink *hijab*, paddled in the shallow water. Their male companions, the father and son, had waded out to a depth sufficient to submerge their shoulders. Both were fully clothed, the former in *shalwar kameez*, and they were floating peacefully on their backs as the sun beamed down on the calm sea.

My thoughts were drawn immediately to the vignette with which this book commenced (see Chap. 1): a Twitter posting by the French politician, Nadine Morano, which denounced a Muslim woman for covering up on a beach and rendered her inauthentic, "out of place," and a threat to dominant religio-cultural values. Over the following week, I thought a lot about the Brighton beach scene, and the obvious pleasure the family were having at the seaside. Their use of seaside space intrigued me as an academic and made me proud as a Brightonian. I had seen Muslims and other ethnic, racial, and religious minorities on Brighton seafront and the pier many times before, but I could not recall seeing them so prominently on the beach. I was reminded of the experiences of Sunshine Bay

residents Jimmy (black African, male, 35–44 years) and Abulbishr (Arab, male, 45–54 years) explored in Chap. 6 of this book. Jimmy emphasised the need to understand the micro-sites and micro-politics of the seaside, specifically the role of the beach in processes of (de)racialisation and “passing.” Conversely, Abulbishr told me that he and his veiled wife were less likely to walk on the beach during “very hot weather, the very busy time, when a lot of people would be by the seaside.” On this occasion in Brighton, here was a family—maybe locals, perhaps tourists—who were clearly *of* this beach. They were confronting the sartorial expectations and the normative beach behaviours of an autumn seaside day, but their pleasure in/from the seaside and their expression of an ontological belonging—a sense of racialised liminality even—appeared undeniable.

I also considered how this episode spoke to other ways of rethinking the seaside apropos race, ethnicity, and religion, such as Brighton-based artist, Susan Diab's, 2001 installation *Oh, I Do Like To Be Beside The Seaside* (see <http://www.susandiab.com/>). Diab's work encourages us to think about the possibility of destabilising dominant narratives of whiteness at the seaside and offers a reimagination of what the British seaside might *look* and *sound* like. The popular music hall song *Oh, I Do Like To Be Beside The Seaside* was written in 1907 by John A. Glover-Kind and has quintessential associations with the English seaside and traditional notions of (white) Englishness. Diab's reworking of the ditty enunciates the words in Arabic rather than in English, reflecting the artist's Anglo-Syrian heritage and her desire to understand the fluid, unstable, and unfinished facets of her identity. The installation (which has been performed both as a standalone sound recording and accompanied by images of people walking along the promenade at Hove) was originally conceived as part of the *What We Did on Our Holidays* exhibition in St. Leonards, East Sussex. Tensions between sections of the local majority white population and asylum seekers in the locality provided the immediate catalyst, while the widespread demonisation and vilification of Muslim communities in the post-9/11 climate provided further motivation (personal communication with the artist).

Diab's art, alongside that of contemporaries like the Australian artists Dianne Jones, Tracey Moffat, and Anne Zahalka (Morris 1992; Perera

2009), provides a striking exemplar of the potential for challenging and troubling dominant, racialised ideologies, images, and representations of the seaside. The family I saw on Brighton beach on that October day showed that disrupting normative patterns of whiteness, dominant control of social space, and modes of ontological belonging at the seaside can be more than symbolic, allegorical, and aspirational; it can be tangible, embodied, and lived, too.

I took another walk in November 2015. The temperature was barely above freezing this time, but the day was bright and sunny, and Brighton and Hove seafront was quite busy. Nearly everyone I passed in a few hours of strolling was white and, I surmised, relatively middle-class. The whiteness of seaside tourism spaces and services seemed even more pronounced on this day. This really was the seaside as a white space, “a repository of white values, ideologies and lifestyles” as Phil Hubbard (2005b: 12) puts it. A stable, enduring environment, seemingly out of touch with the multicultural advances evident in coastal (and other) spaces elsewhere and at other times. A seaside that has progressed in many ways, but that has stood still in others. Different whiteness, *same whiteness*.

Both of these Sunday seafront strolls epitomise the “real” English seaside. Yet, to draw uncritical generalisations or to position them in a binary would be a mistake. Indeed, the experiences described here emphasise the analytical power of “coastal liquidity,” the interpretative lens introduced in this book, namely, multiple and fluid spaces, times, and seashores, across resorts but also *within* them. These are *everyday* occurrences, but *exceptional* at the same time. There are so many other “seaside” to be found within coastal landscapes, emerging from subjective experiences, representations, narratives, emotions, affects, ontologies, and epistemologies, but many that appear familiar too. Context is critical, synthesising the bigger picture with local and temporal attentiveness (Back and Keith 2014; Karner and Parker 2011; Sohoni and Mendez 2012). Seaside studies need to combine the specifics of place with recognition of commonalities in racialisation and racial formation found across diverse social and geographical spaces (Hall 1996; Millington 2010; Robinson and Gardner 2006).

## Placing Race at the Seaside: Racialisation, Marginality, and Coastal Liquidity

*Race, Place and the Seaside* has presented an alternative depiction of the English seaside, relying neither on the traditional (academic and popular) themes of fun and frivolity nor on the increasingly hackneyed binaries of gentrification and rack and ruin. Chapter 2 of this book detailed one particular interpretation of seaside renaissance: the “three Rs” of regeneration, revitalisation, and reinvention (Smith 2004). I have argued that the English seaside can be characterised by a different, alliterative conceptual trio: race, racialisation, and racism.

This book has called for an acknowledgement of the racialised nature of the English seaside, challenging the dominant idea that it is a racially neutral setting in which race is absent and racialised social structures and relations accordingly do not exist. It has shown that minority ethnic communities are far from being external to the “everyday” life of seaside towns, thus “disrupt[ing] the affective ‘chaining’ of race to particular bodies, sites, and landscapes” (Nayak 2010: 2371; see also Ahmed 2000; Nayak 2011; Price 2013; Saldanha 2007), and resisting their ontological construction as “not from here” in seaside spaces. Epistemologically, this book has addressed the silencing and erasure of minority ethnic subjectivities in this environment within dominant academic and popular accounts; in response, it has *written them into* a different, more radical narrative of the seaside. In a wider sense, I have argued for including the distinctive spaces, places, traditions, and narratives of the seaside within broader analyses of race in contemporary Britain, given that they reinforce, but also differ from, several of the processes and practices occurring in other “new” multicultural destinations.

This book has also investigated whiteness(es) at the seaside. The examples discussed already in this chapter show how the hegemonic whiteness that emerges from, and permeates, the seaside is being challenged and disturbed by the increasing presence of racialised bodies in this environment. Yet, it is simultaneously strengthened and stabilised through the Othering and marginalisation of minority groups, celebrations of

racialised nostalgia, gentrification, and opposition to immigration. The seaside offers a powerful indicator of the multifaceted, intersectional, and hierarchical nature of whiteness, with the effects of class, nationality, citizenship, and immigration status cautioning us against essentialist interpretations of white people, practices, and privilege.

*Race, Place and the Seaside* has argued that as archetypal “places on the margin” (Shields 1991), there is something *distinctive*, although not necessarily unique, about the configuration of social, economic, cultural, and geographical factors in “traditional” seaside resorts, such as Sunshine Bay. They are situated literally “on the edge”; the seasonality of seaside life presents two vastly different social and economic (as well as meteorological) climates; relatively poor transport connections to the bigger urban centres often inhibit centre-periphery mobility and exchange; declining tourist industries have negatively impacted the labour markets, while the effects of new businesses, employment, entrepreneurship, and regeneration are uneven and uncertain; as peripheral geographical places away from the traditional migrant settlements in towns and cities, experiences of living with ethno-racial difference are limited; reduced wider community mobility inhibits outward movement and can promote local-centric worldviews; and anxieties about local demographic changes and residents’ (perceived) exclusion from mainstream political processes have made them fertile ground for right-wing anti-immigration parties and movements. While we must caution against a spatial determinism in trying to understand the seaside, the aforementioned facets of being at/on the periphery can all create lack of opportunity and/or reticence to engage with multiculturalism.

Through the concept of coastal liquidity, this book has provided a relational analysis of a range of racialised contemporary seaside experiences, practices, discourses, ideologies, and narratives. Explaining the shifting ethno-racial demographics, migratory politics, and spatial dynamics found at the edge of the sea, along with the relative im/mobilities of the minority ethnic communities who move and reside there, it has shown the English seaside to be both a locus of racialised categorisation, exclusion, and subjugation, *and* one of resistance, conviviality, and inter-cultural exchange. The concept of coastal liquidity challenges static portrayals of the seaside: liberating it discursively and ontologically from essentialist approaches

that render it a monolithic space, containerise it in a particular time period, and decouple it from other geographical environments. Coastal liquidity explains the multifarious definitions and meanings of the seaside, its functions and roles, its contemporary significance, its threats and opportunities, its usage patterns, the people who live and work there at different times and in different spaces, and its opportunities and possibilities. Coastal liquidity helps us to understand the fluid interplay between seaside people and seaside places: the relative im/mobilities of the former into, out of, and within the latter; and the concurrently static and dynamic nature of aspects of coastal landscapes, namely, their capacity to “look back” as much as “look forward.” By thinking about, and through, coastal liquidity, we are forced to recognise the repercussions of the past, the contestations of the present, and the potentialities of the future at the seaside. I return to this latter consideration in the following final section.

The argument for a fluid, scalar, and relative perspective on seaside people, places, spaces, and times has been established through the theoretical, conceptual, and empirical insights of this book. Chapter 2 explored coastal liquidity via the multifarious roles, meanings, and possibilities that the English seaside holds within the popular imagination, and the range of conceptualisations and explanations that have been utilised in relation to it. It then highlighted the intersections of race and whiteness with diverse contemporary seaside trajectories around social exclusion and gentrification. Challenging the lack of attention given to race in sociological, cultural studies and historical theorisations and conceptualisations of the seaside, the chapter provided substantive analyses of racialisation, liminality, and “strangeness” at the seaside.

Chapter 3 theorised the embodied relationships between race, space, and place to reveal the seaside as a racialised landscape. In accordance with the relational perspective of this book, it established the conceptual and empirical dis/connections between the distinct spaces of the seaside and those of inland, urban, and rural locations. It then explored how the ideas of coastal liquidity might apply to notions of whiteness, highlighting the need to understand the normative, stable, and essentialising aspects of whiteness at the seaside, together with its intersections and stratifications along axes of ethnicity, nationality, citizenship, and immigration status.

Seaside practices and spaces of leisure, pleasure, recreation, and entertainment, specifically amusements and beaches, formed the focus of Chap. 4. The analysis demonstrated how those features provide important contexts and stimuli for the articulation of race, racism, and whiteness in this setting, but also contribute to a failure to acknowledge the racialised nature of the seaside and coast. In the spirit of coastal liquidity, this chapter incorporated broader geographical and historical contexts beyond the contemporary English seaside, emphasising common conceptual, thematic, and experiential issues of racialisation, power, control, and resistance.

Drawing on the book's substantive empirical interview data, Chap. 5 demonstrated the seaside as a liquid coastal space in practice. It highlighted considerable variation in minority ethnic residents' preconceptions about the English seaside, their rationales for moving to Sunshine Bay, and the journeys they made to get there. It then illuminated the multifarious material, emotional, affective, and ontological associations between racialised bodies and the English seaside. Practices and perceptions of integration, isolation, social networks, and community formation in Sunshine Bay were shown to be diverse, contextual, and labile.

Chapter 6 developed the themes identified in the previous chapter through a specific focus on the racialisation of space, locality, and im/mobility in Sunshine Bay. It established how particular spaces, places, and aspects of the built and "natural" environments are fundamental to the ways that residents dis/connect with the town. Material experiences of certain streets and neighbourhoods of Sunshine Bay were shown both to coalesce and to contrast with symbolic depictions and local discourses, creating pervasive racialised connotations for these spaces. Critically, the intersections of space and place with time and season were highlighted as important factors in the lives of minority ethnic seaside residents.

The multicultural changes that have occurred in Sunshine Bay over the past decade were considered in Chap. 7 through residents' reflections on the implications of these trends. This chapter emphasised the importance of naming racism in nascent investigations into "new" multicultural locations, and it highlighted the various manifestations and personal experiences of racism in the town. Connecting the empirical findings to the conceptual and political underpinnings of this book, this

chapter offered a powerful rejoinder to the dominant contention that racial discrimination is not a problem in majority white spaces.

There is, of course, more to be done. As proposed in the Introduction to this book, I see coastal liquidity as an intellectual project too: mobile in content and context, flexible in temporal focus, and comprising an open and inclusive research agenda. Although coastal liquidity is by no means solely a matter of race, race is fundamental to its current intellectual and political significance. The views of white British seaside dwellers would certainly offer additional perspectives on inter-cultural relations at the English seaside (see Valentine 2010). In particular, the intersections between whiteness and class hinted at in this book certainly warrant further investigation. The experiences of minority ethnic communities as tourists, rather than residents, would represent a productive avenue of enquiry in relation to the places and practices of leisure and pleasure discussed in Chap. 4. Drawing on the spatial approach underpinning this book, a detailed micro-mapping of seaside spaces, activities, and practices in relation to minority ethnic groups would further develop the ideas presented in Chap. 6. Then there are the pernicious politics of hate, manifest in support for UKIP and anti-immigration sentiment at the coast, which urgently require sociological analysis as well.

## **Making Seaside Bodies “Less Strange”: Towards a Glocal Politics of Social Justice and Solidarity at/of the Coast**

In his formative work on seasides, centres, and margins, Rob Shields (1991: 276) suggests that “margins” can “become signifiers of everything ‘centres’ deny or repress; margins as ‘the Other’, become the condition of possibility of all social and cultural entities.” He adds that “margins, then, while a position of exclusion, can also be a position of power and critique” (*ibid.*: 277). This contention has encouraged me to think outside, and beyond, the boundaries and limits associated with peripheral places (described earlier in this chapter), focusing instead on the opportunities and possibilities that might exist at the seaside.

While the sociology of the seaside needs to focus on, and engage with, the excluding and subjugating effects of race, racialisation, and racism, and to challenge vigorously the retrograde politics of the Right, it must also be a sociology of *hope* (Back 2015a). As such, I am intrigued about how we might develop what I call a glocal politics of social justice and solidarity at/of the coast. I remain unsure what this could or should look like, but I now have a better idea than when I started writing this book. The recycling of the timber and fixtures from the “attractions” at Banksy’s 2015 *Dismaland* seaside “Bemusement Park” to build shelters at The Jungle refugee camp near Calais is, perhaps, an indication of this joined-up progressive thinking. The local residents in Sunshine Bay who have thrown their arms open to refugees and asylum seekers, welcoming them into their homes, workplaces, social circles, and community organisations, epitomise this position as well. On a personal note, I locate my own voluntary work in Sussex with refugee communities and with homeless/houseless people within this politics of social justice. The role of education is fundamental and, as I stressed in the Introduction, I hope this book can play a part by providing a counter discourse to dominant orthodoxies around race and migration at/of the English seaside.

“The ocean,” writes Suvendrini Perera (2013: 66), “is not only a death zone” for refugees and asylum seekers. It is “simultaneously a space in which other ontologies, geographies, poetries and politics are mobilised, set in play, enacted and resignified by the movements of foreign bodies in small boats” (*ibid.*). In a similar vein, this book has demonstrated that the English seaside and coast are not simply (and sometime not at all) places of difficulty, despair, or trauma for these (and other minority ethnic) communities either. Accordingly, the politics of social justice I am talking about inexorably foregrounds possibilities and opportunities: it imagines and creates landscapes that are open to human movement, rights, and well-being, rather than ones that foreclose them. It is a politics of solidarity and support, locally and globally, transcending locality, class, nationality, citizenship, and race (Conlon and Gill 2015). Migration affairs are fundamental to this progressive politics, but they are also about broader manifestations of race (and, indeed, other forms of identity). It is a matter of making the coast a safe, inclusive, tolerant, and progressive space for all its inhabitants, and a place of refuge for

those who have escaped persecution, frequently via other locations next to the sea. A glocal politics of social justice and solidarity at/of the coast acknowledges and celebrates diversity and difference, rather than assimilating or marginalising them; it disrupts ontologies and manifestations of whiteness; and it looks forward to a seaside future that is more multicultural than its past. We are moving in the right direction, but there is more to do. The popular seaside imagination must shift to a position where minority ethnic bodies, cultures, traditions, and practices become familiar components of the seaside, rather than being rendered "strange." This is a personal, cultural, spatial, environmental, and institutional politics of/at the coast that emphasises progressive thinking, social justice, and, not least, hope.

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