Accented Radio: Articulations of Caribbean Britishness in UK Community Radio

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> In the commercially dominated media system community radio means radio in the community, for the community, about the community and by the community.[1]

The project of community radio has historically been conceived of as a grassroots initiative to empower marginalised communities by providing broadcast opportunities for community self-representation (Lewis and Booth 1989; Barnard 2000; AMARC 2015). I argue here that in addition to this crucial capacity for community expression, community radio facilitates avenues for alternative articulations of marginalised and minority experiences which negotiate, counter and challenge normative discursive framings of race which otherwise dominate mainstream media in the UK. To situate my enquiry into community radio's capacities to create material and ideological space for such articulations, I will briefly outline community radio's established project of promoting inclusivity, and unpack my concept of accented radio (Moylan 2013) through which I explore radio representations of diversity. I will then turn to examine selected content from community radio programme *The TalkBack Show*, broadcast from Nottingham (UK), to analyse the ways in which this programme in particular enables and facilitates nuanced and sometimes contradictory expressions of Caribbean British identity and experiences—and thus functions as an example of 'accented radio'.

Improvements in streaming technology have meant that under-resourced community stations can now 'broadcast' live online, thus expanding their audience beyond a previously limited geographical range. In this context of widening accessibility, both the stated ethos and common practices of community radio's proposed project continue to enable modes of production which facilitate articulation of multiple subjectivities, in notable contrast to most British public service and commercial broadcast programming which continues to reproduce and reinforce a dominant and reductively singular 'British' subject position. Downing and Husband (2005) locate any opportunities for minority representation—and marginalised and minority community rights to such equitable representation—as firmly embedded in a national project serving to reinforce the given nation's status quo, so that any discussion of such self-representation 'necessarily becomes framed by the dominant political model for managing diversity' (Downing and Husband: 196). Despite pledges to better represent the UK's substantial emergent and established diversity, 'Britain's mainstream media continue to proffer negative, simplistic, or stereotyped representations of ethnic minorities, when they

are not simply rendered invisible', as determined by the 2006 Parekh Report cited by Born (2012: 122) and which I suggest remains the case a decade later. Born and others (see Campion 2005) connect such limited and reductive representation to equally limited and discriminatory employment practices of mainstream British broadcasters.

In this reduced and incomplete communicative context, community radio facilitates both minority-produced content and minority community production. Within the spectrum of broadcast media, community radio has been recognised as 'third sector' media in EU media policy (Lewis 2008), with the capacity to provide alternative fora to those available on public service and commercial radio. In theory and often in practice, community radio embodies and promotes a bottom-up grassroots approach, conceived of as inherently inclusive and allowing for diverse approaches to production practice, in both policy and individual station remits. Broadcasting from within geographically, politically and socially specific contexts, community radio 'covers different approaches, attitudes and precepts that are sometimes defined in terms of modern versus traditional, progressive versus conservative, or even revolutionary versus reactionary' (Barnard 2000: 68). Community radio is typified by a multiplicity of production approaches allowing for greater scope of community expression (Lewis and Booth 1989; Day 2007; Scifo 2008; Gordon et al 2009; Moylan 2013). This multiplicity of approaches, and the resultant content, constitutes an alternative to mainstream top-down content which functions, in Nancy Fraser's conceptualisation, as a counterpublic (Fraser 1993). Counterpublics comprise necessary alternative communicative spaces for self-representation by marginalised and minority groups otherwise without equal access to communicative arenas. Myria Georgiou (2002) argues for recognition of what she terms alternative publics for the production and circulation of diasporic media and identifies key elements which effective diasporic media must contain: they must be interactive, decentralised (the better to offer new means of communication) and dependent on communities' own input. Community radio's capacity to facilitate and encourage minority community *production*, of minority community-focused *content*, takes as a point of departure Georgina Born's (2012) observation that 'it is not enough to represent a diversity of viewpoints or cultures in terms of content produced, without attending to diversity and inclusion at the level of practice' by providing 'the access to the means of self-representation and self-expression in media production on the part of minority and disadvantaged group' (Born 2012: 133). The provision of such access is the more necessary given that, as Charles Husband has observed, 'in many instances minority ethnic media are the dominant media for minority ethnic communities' (Husband 2005: 462). Community radio station structures are well situated to facilitate media content produced by and for minority communities which otherwise lack access. Identifying community radio's capacities as an alternative in the sense of a counterpublic, within which minority and marginalised groups can speak and be heard enables, in turn, recognition of community radio as a politicized yet nuanced

communication tool which mobilizes the medium's community-building capacity (Barnard 2000, Hartley 2000).

I further suggest that programmes produced by and for marginalised and minority communities on community radio can be considered as a form I term 'accented radio.'[2] Categorising all such minority programming simply as ethnic media can serve to reinforce entrenched hierarchies of difference when the content and production practices of such programming are under-explored. Considering these programmes as examples of accented radio enables analysis and examination of the diverse ways in which community identity is foregrounded and expressed at the level of the aesthetic, the social and the political, enabling a scrutiny of programme content which is both medium-specific, drawing on radio's aesthetic and material characteristics; and community-specific, focusing on ways in which a given community represents, and re-produces itself. I argue that *accented radio* is a mode of cultural production, my conceptualisation of which draws on Hamid Naficy's (2001) recognition of how 'accented' modes of production can enable transcultural articulation and community expression. In the context of theorising voice and delivery, 'accent' can be initially defined as a heard vocal sounding, communicating regional and social identity but also affiliations: community, educational, faith, linguistic (Naficy 2001). While each of us speaks with an accent, value is conferred upon individual accents within a hierarchy in which accents are invested with different degrees of currency, readability and social capital. Given all these factors, 'accent is one of the most intimate and powerful markers of group identity and solidarity, as well as of individual difference' (Naficy 2001: 23). In considering the radio texts under analysis as accented radio, I build on Naficy's (2001) original concept of accented cinema as a form of cultural production which foregrounds the conditions of displacement (diasporic, exilic) which in turn inform and permeate this mode of production. Such accented modes of production are shaped, in film and, I argue, in radio (see Moylan 2013), by their informing conditions of displacement and marginalisation and the preoccupations which can emerge from these experiences. An accented radio programme functions at the local level – speaking not only to the community whose members produce it but also to other local (and marginalised) communities – and at the same time articulates a wider, shared and transnational perspective. Yet accented radio retains a specificity through which the material conditions of programme production can be heard alongside articulations of individual and community identity. Thus accented radio enables us to listen for identity articulation through uses of voice and delivery within both a localised format and simultaneously within the larger hegemonic paradigm of a normative British multiculturalism which primarily reinforces established hierarchies.

In a radio text, voice narrates and narrativises, providing both structure and topic, and establishes a point of view and of identification for the listener. During a talk radio programme, when given sufficient time on air, voice can be deployed *in process* by a given speaker in the form of an

individual narrative (Couldry 2010) which serves as a situated 'account, implicitly or explicitly, of the world within which they act' (2010: 7). In radio and in community radio in particular, accented programmes can express shared conditions of displacement and marginalisation in nuanced and multi-layered ways, through modes of delivery referencing this situatedness and enabling its exploration. Interactive practices regularly used in radio production (such as phone-ins and studio discussion) when employed in community radio contexts can particularly facilitate participation of marginalised and minority groups with otherwise limited access to speaking on the airwaves. In addition to community radio's overarching remit of inclusivity (AMARC 2015)[3], the material conditions of many community radio stations (Lewis and Booth 1989, Moylan 2013) also contribute to and shape a production context which facilitates inclusive practices. Due to limited provision of resources such as studio space and available recording equipment, programmes in community radio are often broadcast live rather than pre-recorded. This 'liveness' produces a greater sense of immediacy and veracity, suggesting that what is being heard is unmediated, or at least less mediated, because what is being said is being said 'now' – at the moment of broadcast (Scannell 1991). Further, many community radio talk programmes are characterised by an informal presentation style and a fluid running order (one less or un-hampered by advertising), leading to extended phone-in opportunities and a greater flow of in-studio conversation, dialogue, and debate—all broadcast live. These characteristics are created in significant part by practices created by working with limited material resources, producing in turn (albeit mostly inadvertently) an aesthetic specific to community radio. This aesthetic, typified by liveness and greater listener access via the phone-in component, results in an increased sense of intimacy, as there are fewer layers of mediation between on-air speakers and listeners. These qualities of intimacy, liveness and fluidity comprise key components of accented radio in ways which are explored below. In this enquiry, I analyse selected programme content from Nottingham community radio station Kemet FM broadcast in spring 2014, through close reading of its textual properties focusing on modes of conversational expression. These textual readings enable an exploration of the diverse ways in which community experiences and negotiations are articulated within the layered form of accented radio, through the relation of common experiences within which community identity is reinforced through accented expression. My analyses of these radio texts is further informed and supported by practitioner insights provided by the programme producer/presenter, Kevin Brown, in interview.

I. 'Call in with your views': Accented articulations of community

The three largest cities in the British midlands, Birmingham, Leicester, and Nottingham, each host several community radio stations which, to varying degrees, serve and engage with the substantial diversity of the metropolitan midlands region. Leicester and Nottingham house several community

stations dedicated primarily, but not exclusively, to representing south-east Asian communities and broadcasting largely in the first languages of those communities. While primarily serving South Asian language communities, Leicester station EAVA FM schedules a wide range of community programmes with additional shows broadcast by and for members of local Chinese, Polish, Somali, Spanish and southern African communities. In some contrast, Birmingham's Unity FM, Leicester's Kohinoor FM and Nottingham's Radio Dawn and Radio Faza primarily feature first language faith-based programming. Heritage FM just outside Leicester city targets the local English language community and Takeover FM in Leicester is dedicated to young broadcasters. Birmingham's Newstyle FM and Nottingham's Kemet FM broadcast primarily in English and combine music and talk programming, the latter directed at local African British and Caribbean British listeners in particular.

Kemet FM was established in 2007 with a remit to 'serve the needs of the African and Caribbean communities of Nottingham and surrounding areas, whilst bringing together communities from across the city to engage in debate and enjoy a variety of music styles and cultural entertainment'[4]. From Monday to Friday, the schedule combines talk programmes during the day with music programming in the evening. On Sunday evenings, Kemet FM broadcasts *The TalkBack Show* which features interviews and topics about and of interest to Nottingham's African and Caribbean British communities. Through this particular community focus, *The Talk Back Show* reinforces and also challenges prevailing discourses of African and Caribbean Britishness through discussion topics which prompt and enable their in-depth exploration. The two-hour talk show is broadcast live from 9pm until 11pm Sundays and is both produced and presented by Kevin Brown, who is British Caribbean. Crucially, *The TalkBack Show* regularly incorporates comments from callers. Brown describes the show's focus as follows:

> What the show does is it focuses on issues that are very specific to the black community that are not captured by the mainstream media…. I think the challenge with the mainstream media is that oftentimes we are invisible....so we're trying to address that invisibility insofar as giving the community a platform to air their views and to discuss things that they think are important to them that they don't see in the mainstream. And this is why it's very important to have the facilities for listeners to call, email and text the show.[5]

During my research into Kemet FM's programmes in spring 2014, *The TalkBack Show*'s programmes regularly comprised detailed interviews with prominent people in Nottingham's African and Caribbean British communities alongside thematic debates on current issues. In contrast to the daily talk programmes on Kemet FM such as *The Mid-Morning Show* and *The Afternoon Show* which broadcast in a magazine format foregrounding coverage of local issues, *The TalkBack Show* features greater in-depth discussion of each week's (singular) topic. In general, across radio forms (public service, commercial and community), night time talk programmes lend themselves to a greater depth of discussion than daytime talk shows, in part because evening programmes tend to have a slower,

more contemplative rhythm. Speaking in a Jamaican accent inflected by a British midlands idiom, Brown uses a series of phrases and pre-recorded station voiceovers to reinforce the show's aim of addressing 'the issues that matter' and to urge listeners to 'call in with your views'. Brown regularly fields callers on the programme and usually allows she or he considerable scope to develop their observations live on air, as he sees this capacity as crucial to the show's function as a community platform: 'If someone calls they're given top priority. We stop the discussion there and then and answer the phone and they go on live, because this interaction is so important.'[6] Between February and April 2014, weekly topics included individual interviews of prominent local black women and men, usually of Jamaican background; interviewees included past Olympic javelin champion Sharon Gibson; local businesswoman Yvette Johnson, and Merlita Bryan, the Sheriff of Nottingham. Other programmes during this period featured thematic discussions based on topics including work opportunities for young people in Nottingham; advice on building up a new business; memories of the Rwanda genocide; and a show dedicated to Stuart Hall's contribution to British multiculturalism. What emerges in these programmes is a range of individual responses to normative discourses of Caribbean Britishness, communicated and expressed, I suggest, through an accented mode of articulation.

Two recurring thematic preoccupations on *The TalkBack Show* during this time period were: the importance of developing a work ethic in the face of workplace discrimination, and negotiations of everyday racism in multicultural Britain in the past and today. In three programmes broadcast in spring 2014, the notion of 'taking the initiative' in relation to work opportunities is regularly framed as a strategic individual response to historical and current discrimination in ways that warrant unpacking. This theme is explored in the 23 February 2014 show, which features advice for starting a business, and again in interviews with Yvette Johnson and Merlita Bryan on 6 and 20 April respectively. In the 23 February programme, established local business owner 'Mr Mac' and new painter and decorator Shane describe their experiences of establishing businesses in Nottingham. Relating his background of building businesses in Jamaica in a deep Jamaican patois, Mr Mac delivers a rolling series of detailed anecdotes before drawing on his experiences to situate his business practice in Nottingham:

> I'm from Jamaica, I've got the experience: what is for what, what is for what, they'll come and ask me questions…you gots [sic] to study a thing, know a thing, right, know that you can answer questions, know that you can tell a customer, say: look. If it's not right, you come see me, it'll be right. (23 February)

In contrast to Mr Mac's expansive delivery style, Yvette Johnson and Merlita Bryan both relate their experiences of and perspective on their work lives briskly, framing their professional decisions as strategic choices informed by pragmatic factors such as childcare and social standing. While all three accents are recognisably Jamaican, both women are less caught up in relating anecdotes on air, instead

describing their approaches to work opportunities succinctly. Johnson situates her experience as advice, in positive and encouraging terms: 'You have to hustle…You don't have to have four jobs; *I* wanted that, because I knew I could and I could manage it… Opportunities are there and here. If you want it, search it out. Go for it' (6 April). Bryan echoes this positivity: 'With the background I come from… it's always, you got to work, nobody owes you a living, you've got to go out and make your own life' (20 April). She picks up this theme later in the programme, again in the form of encouragement: 'I've always worked, I've never thought that anybody owed me a living, and my children feel the same. So therefore we've got to do what we can to help others see life like that as well'. While Yvette Johnson and Mr Mac utilise different delivery styles, both foreground a professional pride via the discussion—and celebration—of a personal work ethic, articulated here within their differently accented deliveries.

Describing the context for developing her work ethic, Bryan relates her memories of the racism she experienced at work, and insists that 'racism is there in the workplace, there's no doubt it's there, you can see, it doesn't matter how you get on with people in the workplace, you can always see the ones.' Bryan remarks that she generally felt supported by her co-workers, white and black, men and women. In reply, Brown observes that 'you're saying we shouldn't necessarily use racism as an excuse, you can still get to where you want to be.'

> Bryan: You just need to know how to do it, and to bypass it, you don't always have to put it at the forefront of your mind. You know it's there but put it to the back of your head and get on with your life.
>
> Brown: It's more about interacting with people, until people learn to trust you and so on …
>
> Bryan: I'm a black woman and it was doubly hard to work in a male-dominated environment. But like I said, I got on with them. I see them in town now, and they shout to me and I shout… It's how you are with people, how you make people react with you.
>
> Brown: And I guess if you're living in this country, you've got to learn…
>
> Bryan: …you'd better get on with it. (Both laugh.) (20 April)

In framing her experience through the suggestion to 'get on with it' Bryan invokes the work ethic logic but complicates it by incorporating further layers of her experience. The onus in her advice remains focused on the individual subject's requirement to make the best of given circumstances; yet the reference by Brown to 'in this country' points to deeper negotiations around sustaining a sense of belonging. Crucially, the related experiences of sustained racism are subsumed by Bryan, framed as contributing to her development of a work ethic 'in this country.' While all three contributors present their experiences as providing encouragement to listeners by personal example, Mr Mac's delivery is presented as an end in itself, comprising a form of storytelling. In contrast, both Johnson and Bryan link their experiences more substantially to learned family values and call directly for others to 'go for it' and to 'see life like that'—even as Bryan situates her experience within wider social contexts

characterised by systemic discrimination and inequality. In presenting different perspectives which are in turn articulated and expressed in diverse ways, *The Talk Back Show* offers multiple points of listener identification through the multiple experiences—and approaches—discussed. The accented nature of the conversation provides a value for many listeners, in the familiarity of Jamaican accents, and within these particular modes of expression; whether in Mr Mac's expansive anecdotes or Bryan's no-nonsense advice. In writing about Black American podcasting, Sarah Florini describes the appeal of 'a free-flowing, flexible and conversational approach, including the use of a wide range of vernaculars' (2015: 212), suggesting the flow and multifaceted vernaculars re-create a familiar audio 'space' which serves to re-produce a felt, and sounded, sense of community.

For all three contributors, the development of a 'work ethic' in professional life is foregrounded as a survival strategy, a direct response to (historical and ongoing) discrimination against and reduced opportunities for members of Britain's black communities. In these narratives, the productive individual is a celebrated figure in neoliberal rhetoric. Produced by discourses that situate individuals as primarily 'entrepreneurial actors' (Gill 2008: 436), the neoliberal subject is encouraged to present her or his life choices, including work choices, as acts of individual responsibility despite entrenched social and economic constraints. In the individual's personalised narrative, 'neoliberalism requires individuals to narrate their life story as if it were the outcome of deliberative choices' (2008: 436). In this context, as Paul Gilroy argues, the 'go for it' rhetoric, while seemingly positive and encouraging, draws on and reinforces an entrenched black vernacular framing of what Gilroy terms a 'particular, post-slavery work ethic' (Gilroy 2013: 27). In neoliberal Britain, the trope of the work ethic bypasses its usefulness as a survival strategy when presented as 'the vindication or redemption of racialized forms of both natural difference and social suffering' (Gilroy 2013: 27). This narrative can be summarised thusly: '[a]ny individual's successful battle to overcome the effects of racism can supply conclusive evidence that racism is no longer something to be concerned about' (2013: 27). The absorption of the idea that developing a work ethic is all that is required for success, or even sustainability, erases the material and political existence of obstacles for marginalised and minority groups. In her development of a concept of social abjection, Imogen Tyler describes 'mechanisms through which *norms of abjection* are fabricated, operationalised and internalised', identifying these as 'contingent expressions of normativity' (Tyler 2013: 37; emphasis in the original). Drawing on this formulation in relation to the 'work ethic' myth, we can see that social abjection is produced in the gaps that emerge between the achievements of those accorded full agency in the neoliberal paradigm and those whose agency is curtailed. Members of marginalised groups therefore negotiate the 'work ethic' as one expression of normativity, separated out from the context of unequal access to work opportunities in the first instance. Given this instrumental deployment of the 'work ethic', its adoption as a survival strategy can be read as an importation of a top-down universalising subjectivity which insists the onus is entirely on the individual to build and develop a successful professional career.

Such a normative construction of subjectivity assumes every individual has full agency and autonomy to avail of and pursue work opportunities according to economic necessity and desire for fulfilment, and ignores real and persistent obstacles to this pursuit for those from marginalised groups. Combating such normative constructions, on *The TalkBack Show* these articulations of the necessity for a work ethic are complicated further in other moments in these programmes, opening up a wider discursive space to identify and examine obstacles in the way of work opportunities for black youth in particular. On the 23 February show, for example, an exchange of experiences and advice between Mr Mac and Shane is actively encouraged by Brown, who repeatedly emphasises the lessons to be learned from the 'elder' Mr Mac, and situates the conversation within a wider discussion examining the work opportunities available for black youth. Mr Mac observes that in Nottingham, 'they will value the Indian man, they will value the white man, they will value everybody else but most of the black community, they're not valuing the young black brothers. And it's about time we start to put some value in them, because they are the futures of tomorrow.' The layered sounding of community expressed in these articulations reflects Husband's (2005) recognition of the ongoing negotiations necessary in minority ethnic media to balance the diverse experiences and affiliations of community members where these diverge depending on generation, or indeed on gender.

On the 16 March show, a discussion of difficulties and discrimination faced by young black men in Nottingham provides a bridge between Mr Mac's perspective and problems currently experienced by black youth in getting work. Jackie, a youth social worker and guest on the show, asserts that local companies need to be more open to taking on young black people, and remarks in a pointed tone that 'we tend to get engaged and involved in things that will accept *us*'. On the 20 April programme, Merlita Bryan insists on the necessity to publicise stories about successful black professionals in Nottingham, saying that

> You know what black people are like. We get on with what we're doing quietly, we don't shout it from the rooftop "I'm doing this, I'm doing that". So of course a lot of youngsters in Nottingham don't realise that there are prominent black people in Nottingham (20 April).

These observations begin to unspool the shibboleth of the 'work ethic' as a fully available recourse and achievable solution, and provide some insight into existing obstacles for young black people seeking work in Nottingham. Further, this discussion, and the topic choice which prompted it, is a recurring theme in *The TalkBack Show.* Brown observes that topics addressing aspects of social and structural inequity resonate more with his community of listeners:

> Definitely certain topics do draw more attention from the community than others...And a lot of them are to do with negative social indicators. So when you talk about the disproportionate stopping and searching of black men and when you talk about the disproportionate under-achievement of African–Caribbean boys. …so when you start talking about all these negative social indicators that are out there, those definitely will generate interest.[7]

II. 'We're talking to ordinary people about their lives': Broadcasting multiple layers of community

In his introduction to the 6 April show, Brown situates *The TalkBack Show's* project of excavating earlier experiences of migration and memories of Caribbean life:

> One of the things I like about these life stories is that we're talking to ordinary people about their lives … If you have any children out there, wake them up and make them come and listen and learn about what people from the Caribbean went through when they came over here in the 60s. It's a very interesting time and of course things are very different now in Britain, and sometimes we take that for granted (6 April).

The TalkBack Show's regular broadcasts of in-depth interviews with 'ordinary' African and Caribbean British contributors produces an accented point of identification for listeners from these communities to relate to. In broadcasting stories of migration, relocation and then of discrimination, articulated and discussed in substantial detail, *The TalkBack Show* facilitates the suturing of these individual experiences and stories within a narrative trajectory of migration to and settlement in the UK, enabling necessary expansion on entrenched normative narratives of migration circulating in mainstream representations. I suggest these on-air discussions, and the questions they open up and engage with, critique and challenge conditions of displacement and marginalisation, constituting an accented response to a depoliticised black British subjectivity (Hesse 2000). The suturing which takes place in these programme texts, once woven together, coalesces into a historically specific set of accounts and in the process allows 'practices of subject and state formation to be thought together' (Tyler 2013: 35). The interviews with prominent Caribbean British men and women in Nottingham on *The TalkBack Show* regularly expand on their memories of early life in Jamaica and the Caribbean, situating these shared experiences alongside negotiations of a universalising British subjectivity. These articulated experiences produce an alternative set of narratives to this universalising tendency in the form of a *structure of feeling*. Structures of feeling, as developed conceptually by Raymond Williams, comprise a set of 'meanings and values as they are actively lived and felt', producing fluid and historically variable 'relations between these and formal or systematic beliefs' (Williams 1977: 132). The multiplicity and complexity of these expressed meanings and values in *The TalkBack Show* are presented through an accented mode of voiced communication. As a form of accented radio, *The Talk Back Show* produces feelings of recognition through common experiences broadcast on air, as expressed in Jamaican and other Caribbean accents which the listening community can relate to.

The 16 February show references an entrenched hierarchical discourse in Jamaica in a discussion of what Brown describes as the Jamaican 'colour bar system', as part of a show based on Stuart Hall's life and work shortly after his death in February 2014. Discussion of the implications of the 'colour bar' emerges again in the 6 April show in which Yvette Johnson relates her childhood experiences. Brown contextualises the memories related by Johnson and Hall (from a prior BBC recording),

drawing on these in a studio discussion about ongoing damage caused by reductive discourses on race. On the 16 February show, following an archived clip from BBC radio in which Stuart Hall recalls his sister's thwarted relationship with a black doctor in Jamaica due to perceptions of their skin tone differences, studio discussion turns to current practices of skin bleaching and the attention paid to skin tone amongst Nottingham black teenagers. By segueing from the Hall clip to an updated discussion on societal scrutiny of skin tone, Brown provides an accented frame for Hall's recorded conceptualisations of race and how these have been performed in everyday (UK) life. Brown asks his studio guest, Nottingham historian Kwame Osei, originally from Ghana, if he believes skin tone is still considered a factor:

> Are you saying that some of these things are still there, in terms of parents wanting, if they have a light-complexioned daughter, they'd prefer that they wouldn't marry a black person, or vice-versa, a black professional would probably want a light-skinned wife. And of course bleaching. Are you saying these things are still quite pervasive? (16 February)

Osei situates his response in the current moment, replying that

> If you look at it in the British context, there are many Jamaican men who are dating lighter skinned women. So it tells you that white skin is being associated with beauty, with purity, with acceptance, with success, is a reality in our community. (16 February).

On 6 April, Yvette Johnson's recollections of her Jamaican childhood open up a nuanced conversation about the social centrality of skin tone as a factor when she was growing up in Jamaica: 'My grandma…she's part Jewish, she's quite mixed: Indian, Irish'. Brown takes her up on this point, extrapolating by asking 'would you say she came from quite a privileged background?' 'Very privileged', replies Johnson. Brown expands on this to situate the 'colour bar system' for listeners, saying, 'in Jamaica they had this situation around the colour bar, where light skinned people being in, in influential positions, wealthy and having access to wealth' (6 April). In their on-air development and degree of detail, these individual observations of how privilege was historically linked to skin tone re-inscribe this historical discursive construction of race into normative discourses of African and Caribbean British identity, which have otherwise been de-politicised. Whilst cultural signifiers of black Britishness circulate widely, in UK mainstream media these continue to take the form of music and performance references symptomatic of a celebratory multiculturalism but empty of historical continuity. The political and historical context for Caribbean migration to the UK and the resultant social and political consequences are rendered opaque, and black Britishness is re-framed, as Barnor Hesse argues, within a racist discourse 'structured discursively around a racially unmarked (i.e. white) *British* perception of the problem of national identity induced by post-1945 *non-white immigration* from the New Commonwealth' (Hesse 2000: 11, emphases in the original). In contrast, in providing an accented forum for in-depth exploration of experiences of black Britishness, *The TalkBack Show* functions as an alternative to the top-down containment project of 'diversity management' of mainstream media (see Gordon and Newfield 1996).

The 16 February show exploring the legacy of Stuart Hall prompts further debate about the relative successes, or failures, of multicultural Britain. Brown claims Stuart Hall for the Caribbean British community from the start of the show, conferring community intimacy by his use of Hall's first name throughout. The programme begins with a clip from a BBC *Desert Island Discs* interview with Hall in which he describes critical moments of his own experience which shaped his theories on multiculturalism. This interview provides the context for the in-studio discussion that follows on the efficacy of the multicultural project in the UK. Brown observes that Hall 'questioned the whole concept of Britishness, because in the colonial days and even in the 40s, 50s and so on, to be British meant you were white.' He continues to unpack Hall's analysis of postcolonial Britain: 'in Stuart Hall's circumstances he still remained Jamaican, but also British. That's an argument that a lot of people out there … believe in, that they have a right to be British and so on' and explains that it is 'not necessarily down to your colour, it's more within your historical context and link with Britain that should define your Britishness so to speak' (16 February). The conversation then turns to current discursive framings of race in Nottingham. Brown builds on his accented positioning of Hall by drawing his studio guest into a conversation updating Hall's conceptualisations of race in the British context. Studio guest Kwame Osei, heard previously on this show, describes overhearing children insulting each other using terms based on skin colour and asks, sounding exasperated:

> Haven't we learned anything as a people, to the extent that now we're calling each other "black this, black that?" It tells you something [sic] seriously wrong with racial identity, where you belong and who you are, when it comes to our children calling and shaming each other due to pigmentation. (16 February)

Brown builds on this observation, referencing the tendency in US black culture for black people to refer to each other as 'nigger':

> We're the only race of people, *only* race of people, and anybody can call me to correct, but as far as I know we're the only race of people, *only* race of people, who insist on normalising racial slurs and making them terms of endearment. (16 February)

This conversation, detailing the nuances of everyday uses of terms coded in relation to skin tone and value, can be read as a pointed critique of the implications of such value-laden terms. Such an articulation contributes to the development of what Tyler describes as a 'historically grounded account of social abjection' (Tyler 2013: 35) comprised of individual and community responses and negotiations of cultural and linguistic constructions of value within conditions of marginalisation. I suggest these individual accounts, and the broadcast space provided on *The TalkBack Show* for their articulation, work to negotiate, challenge, and critique reductive representations of African and Caribbean Britishness by deploying the community broadcast space to produce an alternative structure of feeling as defined above. I argue that through producing such a structure of feeling *The TalkBack Show* produces a complex set of stories of past and present Caribbean, particularly

Jamaican, experiences which connect to and inform collective negotiations of wider African and Caribbean British experience underexplored in UK mainstream media.

Later in the 16 February show, a discussion develops from a voiced recognition of the invisibility of slavery as part of African and Caribbean British history as perceived by members of these communities. When a caller references cultural stories of slavery and perceived community resistance to these stories, Brown expands on the topic:

> Why is it that black people who feel embarrassed about slavery, it's quite pervasive, especially in Jamaica and here. A lot of Jamaicans have no time for talking about slavery. Yet still, as far as I know we didn't do anything wrong, we were the victims… but for us we would be happy if slavery would just go away (16 February).

In response the (unnamed) caller reinforces the ways in which elements of black history have been occluded, in part by the black community:

> Having been the victims of it, because it is so clouded in terms of our role in it, and what we did and what we didn't do, we then find it difficult to … engage with it and I think that's the biggest problem we have got. We have not invested in actually understanding what happened during slavery; all we get are snippets and small shots of the story of slavery…. So when it comes down to people engaging with it, it's only a process of no knowledge, and hurt.

After this the conversation moves to discuss a felt lack of community empowerment, with the same caller asserting that

> Black people do not have power… This country is a capitalist country. You're not given the chance, you take the chance. And I don't think we have the confidence to take the chances, to stamp our feet on the ground and make something of our own (16 February).

This observation contrasts with and therefore complicates the simplistic positivity of aspirational neoliberal thinking which (for example) coalesces around the work ethic myth via the expression of experienced limitations. The wide range of observations throughout the show, of which this call is typical, is encouraged by Brown, who in introducing Hall's vision of multicultural Britain as a point for comparison for contributors, opens up and sustains considerable discursive space, one which is then taken up by in-studio guest Osei as well as callers in to the show. This capacity for representing a multiplicity of perspectives is actively enabled by the airtime given to callers into the show. Brown states above that this phone-in facility is crucial to the show; he expands on the risks and benefits of this:

> People come on and there's always the risk that you don't know what they'll say and what their views will be, and that's a risk we've carried on the show… But I think it allows people to vent their concerns and to speak about the issues that are very particular to their British experience and to also comment on observations made internationally as well as they relate to black people.[8]

The substantial discursive space given to callers as well as studio guests provides critical room for the diversity of responses articulated on the show, something Brown sees as crucial to the programme's project as community platform:

> The views in the black community are not homogenous; that's another thing that mainstream news gives the impression of: that all black people think one way, and behave one way. And actually if you listen to the show, people call in with a wide range of views.[9]

The Talk Back Show thus enables multiple articulations of diverse, even contradictory experiences, in turn producing multiple points for community listener identification—demonstrating Husband's recognition of ways in which minority ethnic media necessarily includes ongoing negotiation of community identity and its expressions (Husband 2005). This capacity for multiple articulations of community experience is additionally enabled by the materialities of community radio programme production: a two hour time slot with a fluid and malleable running order which can expand to encompass the wide range of response generated by key topics. This fluidity facilitates the freer flow of conversation (noted by Florini, 2015) which itself produces feelings of community recognition through familiar accents and a shared vernacular. Informed by both such material factors and Brown's production practices, *The TalkBack Show* demonstrates a capacity to produce a resonant structure of feeling to more fully articulate Caribbean British negotiations of past migration and ongoing processes of belonging. The alternative set of narratives expressed within this structure of feeling is particularly, even uniquely facilitated by the form of accented radio particularly enabled by the discursive—and material—capacities of community radio contexts.

Conclusion: Alternative Articulations as Interrogative Phenomena

Taken together, the ongoing development of recurring themes and the articulation of individual accounts on *The TalkBack Show* produces a structure of feeling which is culturally specific to the African and Caribbean British communities in Nottingham, but which additionally provides an alternative set of stories and discourses about black diasporic identity in Britain. Despite Britain's substantial and established diversity, the dominant British subject position as produced by universalising cultural discourses remains primarily coded as white, male and middle-class, reinforced in relation to 'colonial and post-colonial power in which subjectivity is the prerogative of the white man alone' (Tyler 2013: 42; see also Fanon 1994). I have argued here for recognition of community radio's capacity for production of alternative articulations in the form of accented radio, which facilitates expanded broadcasting of situated experiences for minority community listeners. Over time these articulations accrue to produce a structure of feeling which allows for and enables nuanced and contradictory expressions of experiences of marginalisation not otherwise articulated in UK media. Within the structure of feeling produced, and reinforced, on *The TalkBack Show*, I have identified

some ways in which multiple, contradictory yet overlapping articulations can effect interventions into a normative multicultural logic which persists in mainstream British media representations of apparently 'minority' communities. I suggest these articulations can function as *transruptions* within the UK's universalising multicultural project. Transruptions, as introduced conceptually by Hesse, function as 'interrogative phenomena that, although related to what is represented as marginal or incidental or insignificant, that is identifiable discrepancies, nevertheless refuse to be repressed' (Hesse 2000: 17). It is the 'irrepressible quality of interrogation' (2000: 19) which renders transruptions effective; as Hesse argues '[t]ransruptions are troubling and unsettling because any acknowledgement of their incidence or significance within a discourse threatens the coherency or validity of that discourse, its concepts or social practices' (17). The transruption functions as a useful intervention in the context of 'historical antagonisms and social inequalities which underline cultural differences that are represented as marginal or insignificant in dominant discourses; and are conventionally repressed as a subject for discussion or redress' (Hesse 2000: 16), particularly and persistently in British mainstream media. It is this very repression which functions to confirm and reinforce the legitimacy of these antagonisms and inequalities as long as they remain unarticulated, and which the transruption seeks to unsettle and challenge.

I have argued here that *The TalkBack Show,* as a transcultural mode of alternative broadcast production, functions as an example of accented radio in its production of a set of articulations of African British and Caribbean British experience which together interrogate prevailing discourses of race in UK mainstream media. In doing so, the show draws on community radio structures in particular, but also on broadcasting's capacities considered more fundamentally: for community-building but also for generating 'empathy and recognition' (Born 2012: 134), especially amongst groups which are otherwise marginalised. The production and reinforcement of community feelings of recognition are performed via the articulation of common *experiences* on air, and within the diverse African and Caribbean *accents* through which these experiences are spoken and expressed.

It remains the case in Britain that, as Downing and Husband argued over a decade ago, 'the political economy of media operations typically is disadvantageous to the viability of minority ethnic media'. Given this, they propose that if 'ethnically diverse societies are to have a range of media which reflect and represent the many identities and interests present within them then the routine logics of contemporary media production must be challenged', and at the level of policy (Downing and Husband 2005: 204). Such a legislative intervention will, however, require the additional material resources to ensure representative equity across community as well and commercial and PSB sectors. In the absence of such structural change, broadcasting's strength remains, as Born argues, its 'reach as a space for exhibiting and experiencing difference and diversity' (135). In the community production context, that reach is characterised by a multiplicity of production practices creating diverse spaces for

alternative articulations, creating the capacity for counterpublics to communicate, empathise and recognise each others' experiences—on air[10]. For show producer/presenter Kevin Brown, *The TalkBack Show* provides an essential space for this communication:

> Mainstream media, consciously or unconsciously, reinforces certain stereotypes. Reinforces certain institutional racist beliefs around minorities. Through my show one of the aims is to challenge these stereotypes, and to take these stereotypes and to deconstruct them, or at the very least discuss them from our perspective rather than from somebody else's.[11]

In the current context of a Britain in which race continues to be re-inscribed as a divisive factor, such alternatives continue to be necessary when mainstream media lends itself to limited and reductive framings of race rather than enabling sustained expressions of lived diversity.

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NOTES

[1] Definition from the Philippines TAMBULI project and published on the AMARC website, http://www.amarc.org/?q=node/47 , accessed 11 June 2015.

[2] See also S. Vertovec, who developed the idea of accented radio separately in an analysis of Berlin's Radio MultiKulti. (Vertovec 2008).

[3] From http://www.amarc.org/?q=node/47 , accessed 10 June 2015.

[4] From the 'About' section of the Kemet FM website, http://975kemetfm.co.uk/about , accessed 12 June 2015.

[5] Interview with Kevin Brown, 1 November 2016.

[6] Interview with Kevin Brown, 1 November 2016.

[7] Interview with Kevin Brown, 1 November 2016.

[8] Interview with Kevin Brown, 1 November 2016.

[9] Interview with Kevin Brown, 1 November 2016.

[10] I am re-phrasing Born's original point arguing for 'the existence of channels for counter-public to speak to counter-public' (Born 2012: 137.)

[11] Interview with Kevin Brown, 1 November 2016.