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**Aspiration and Resilience - Challenging Deficit
Theories/Models of Black Students in Universities - an
Auto/Biographical Narrative Research Study**

by

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Thesis submitted for the Degree of Doctorate in Education

2017

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Abstract

There is no greater agony than bearing an untold story inside you.

Maya Angelou (1928 - 2014)

Deficit theory can still haunt the academy, and nowhere is this more prolific than in rhetoric used to explain the position and overall experience of Black Students in universities, in comparison to their White counterparts. The adoption of a Critical Race Theory (CRT) approach is helpful in illuminating how and why this happens, especially if combined with auto/biographical narrative enquiry. And how, in thought and practice, the academy can be made more inclusive. The study illuminates something more complex and human than theory alone in that the lives of three women (Zara, Gail and Mary, the researcher), are redolent with the imprints of family, gender, generational change, migration and cultural richness attesting “community cultural wealth” and a challenge to “cultural capital”, narrowly defined. To understand us and our narratives, requires an auto/biographical imagination or what Wright Mills (1959) coined the ‘sociological imagination’ where there is an inquisitiveness to find out the individual’s historical and social as well as intimate experiences in society and to give meaning to these. To examine Black women’s role in education and in diversity issues. Rather than a deficit model, the argument is that Black students demonstrate forms of resilience, and that the academy needs to learn, in theory and practice, from what we have to offer.

There is, as part of the above, an interrogation of what being a university is and might be. There can be emptiness in policy statements, as well as avoidance, on the one hand; on the other, moments of courage, and struggle, of which the thesis is a part, to remind us of what a university can be; a place where difficult issues are addressed, in passionate, reflexive, intellectual yet also humane ways. It identifies our responsibilities and roles as champions of social justice as the very essence of being an academic. The thesis is written for a lecturer who did not see, and colleagues who did not understand, and the institution that needs to listen and act. It paints a picture of what the more inclusive university might be like, alongside an understanding of how difficult it is for humans to engage with difficulty and complexity, of race, stereotyping and discrimination as it pertains to the academy. Most importantly the thesis is written for the countless Black students “who still rise” through their resistance, resilience and aspiration in the face of an ideological discourse, however disguised, of deficit.

Acknowledgment

To my family for their continuous encouragement, support and inspiration. To my editors Lauren Drummond and Jo Oliver. To my supervisors Professor Linden West, who stretched my thinking and critical analysis. To Dr Lynne Graham-Matheson for her ability to ask questions I had not thought about. To 'Zara' and 'Gail' my case studies and the Equalities and Diversity managers, who provided opportunities to walk, talk, listen and growth through this research, and to my church family and friends who held me up through this process. To God for giving me the staying power.

How We Got Over

“Our lives begin to end the day we become silent about things that matter.”

Martin Luther King (1929 –1968)

This study sets out to illuminate, in depth, the experiences of two Black students, as well as myself, using auto/biographical narrative enquiry. It seeks to challenge deficit theories that explain and inform the ‘underachievement’ of Black students in universities and instead offers an alternative perspective using Critical Race Theory (CRT). A CRT approach sets out to highlight the wealth in Black families and communities and the composite nature and development of resilience and aspiration. Whilst acknowledging a growing body of work on the experiences of Black students in universities, the research nonetheless identifies a gap in the voice and articulation of their experiences, of an in-depth auto/biographical narrative kind and seeks to explore this. In relation to terminologies, the current and popular use of the term Black Minority Ethnic (BME) is perceived as (a), ambiguous for its miscellaneous application, and (b), a misnomer since internationally defined and applied it would reveal a majority and not a minority people and group. A preference for the term Black, in this respect, denotes and specifically refers to the African and Caribbean origins of the researcher and participants. It is also the focus of this particular group in the research. It is not used in a wider political and generic context and where ‘other Black’ students are mentioned this is highlighted and differentiated. I want to refrain from the tendency to homogenise BME groups, with little attention paid to their differences in relation to culture and social identities (ECU 2009).

I want to put the study in some context by identifying how my interest in this topic evolved. Some years ago, I was approached by my Head of department in the University where I work to undertake a small scale institutional study in developing a support system for Black students, because of concern about their drop-out rate within the faculty (Andall-Stanberry 2007). As the sole Black staff within the faculty I had shared my own experience of stereotyping, discrimination and racism at work and this may have influenced my selection. Though initially identified as an issue in this particular faculty it became evident that poor

retention rates were a university wide malaise identified in the study and in other national research (see chapter two). Through the study, I unearthed a range of issues highlighted overwhelmingly by Black African/Caribbean students. Some were students' perception of being targeted, unfair treatment, stereotyping, low grades, racism from students and staff members and generally not feeling part of the university culture (a pilot mentoring scheme was initiated as a result of the study since it was one of its key findings).

Initially I had set out to look at Widening Participation policies and practices and institutional responsibilities as my original thesis idea. However, in reviewing the literature I found elements of deficit theories on offer in various researches as a way of addressing Black Students experiences in universities. Yet in the small study I undertook, none of the students had made reference to deficit theories in their own journey from home to university. My appetite was whetted in terms of wanting to interrogate/challenge deficit theories and models and, I imagined, to contrast these with what I thought would be a deeper understanding of the aspirations and resilience of Black students in universities.

My interest in this topic was also borne out of personal experiences as a Black woman in academia, as a student and an academic. This was also facilitated by an interest in social justice intertwined through my childhood up bring and beyond, which played a pivotal role in transmitting lessons of life. It found expression through extended family; faith communities and wider kinship networks. Thus social issues were topical at family gatherings (see chapter five) and featured in stories of survival; of adaptation to a new environment; of successes and failures.

As a result of these experiences generally, and more specifically within the halls of academia, I became interested in the stories and experiences of Black students within the context of universities. For example, the report, Race for Equality/NUS (2011), based on a survey of over 900 students with African, Asian and Caribbean backgrounds found that though not a heterogeneous group, they nonetheless shared common concerns in relation to overall satisfaction which they felt institutions overlooked. For example, Black students found a lack of Black role models and a Euro-centric curriculum particularly challenging. Additionally, Race for Equality/NUS (2011) found that:

two thirds of these students have experienced racism in their current institution....and one third do not trust their institution to properly handle complaints....a further one third felt the environment was not conducive to bringing Black perspectives to lectures, seminars and tutorials.a significant and persistent minority were not happy with their university experiences with 23% describing their university as cliquey (p. 4).

Delgado Bernal et al (2006) assert that conspicuous by its absence is the documentation and analysis of research which articulates Black students' experiences in universities. Where pertinent questions need to be raised about how Black students make sense of their own identities in the face of cultural deficit theories and models. So in spite of a number of biographical studies such as those of Merrill and West (2009), there remain a dearth of sustained research of and with Black students and their experiences, especially of an in-depth auto/biographical narrative kind in a UK context. And we still need to know more about, and in greater depth, the experiences of Black students in universities. As a result, this research sets out to explore primarily through an auto/biographical narrative study of two Black students, their experiences, as well as interrogating my own. For although according to Davis (2012) there is a small body of pedagogic research into the general Black student experience nonetheless "it requires qualitative research to drill down into the potential issues to which existing quantitative studies point and a fundamental need for research into the Black student experience in HE, particularly fine-grained institutional research". (Davies 2012, p. 65).

The views of two Equality and Diversity Managers (E&DM), one from a university with high visibility Black student intake and the other with low visibility Black intake, are also interrogated relating this to institutional policies and practices. Or if indeed they acknowledge the existence of deficit theories and models in their institutions; thus my research set out to address the following three questions:

1. What are the factors that encourage or discourage a successful university experience and how is this subjectively understood by Black students?
2. What factors discourage progression and retention for Black students in UK universities?
3. How might university cultures and subcultures better enhance the development of Black students?

The chapters are therefore structured in the following way: In chapter two I draw on the literature to set the research in context by reviewing the evidence on overall position of Black students at university. It discusses Black students participation; satisfaction and experience as well as the concerns in relation to the continued awards of low classification degrees in comparison to White students. It introduces the concept of deficit theories and critical race theory (CRT), with a more in-depth interrogation of cultural deficit theories that connect race, intelligence and culture to academic performances. It further discusses CRT as offering profounder insights into the experiences of Black students at universities hitherto unexplored through traditional paradigms. Diversity and diversity management are also explored, as are Black women in Higher Education as students and academics.

The methodology is that of auto/biographical narratives, these are discussed in chapter three, as is the preference for auto/biographical narratives rather than traditional methods of data collection. Here the importance of listening to 'voices' and stories of Black students are explored, along with discussions of the importance of such methodology and critical race framework. Chapter four is the case studies of two Black students. The first Zara, is 21 years old. The only Black student throughout her three year programme, Zara's story illuminates her aspiration to succeed and the resilience needed as she identified this period as a very isolating experience, with little peer or academic support. The second case study focuses on the narrative of Gail, who was 18 years old at the time. Gail initially drew my attention because of a statement made three months into her first year at university: "I have experienced more racism here in the past three months, than I have in my entire eighteen years in London". Gail narrates her struggle within and between the world of university and home, and her pro-activeness in ensuring that she earned a place as a student and learner and also as contributing to the social and academic life of her university.

In chapter five I introduce my own auto/biography as both a student and academic, where I identify my family and the expectations of educational achievement; the culture which facilitated self-esteem and a vision in which education played a pivotal role as signals and signs of social mobility; the church community that offered opportunities for spiritual growth, and the extended family which placed a high expectation on its children through the sharing of countless stories of inequalities, success, triumphs, resilience and racism.

It was important to include Equality and Diversity Managers (E&DM) in this study as they generally provide support and advice on equality and diversity issues to students and staff in universities. In chapter six their views are highlighted exploring policies and practises of diversity, and widening participation from two respective institutions. Essentially the aim is to ascertain the extent to which the two E&DM believe that deficit theories are at work, and or implicit or explicit in the discussion of Black experiences at universities. If so what measures are taken or planned to ameliorate these and whether they experience any internal institutional or external barriers?

Chapter seven summarises the previous chapters and offers an insight into what a more inclusive academy might look like by identifying its defining characteristics, in the context of current debates about the nature and purpose of the university, all informed by the case study analysis. It examines fundamental beliefs of social justice and human nature and their interplay with control and power.

Literature Review: Introducing the Black Student Experience

No Crystal Stairs

*Well, son, I'll tell you:
Life for me ain't been no crystal stair.
It's had tacks in it,
And splinters,
And boards torn up,
And places with no carpet on the floor—
Bare.
But all the time
I've been a-climbin' on,
And reachin' landin's,
And turnin' corners,
And sometimes goin' in the dark
Where there ain't been no light.
So, boy, don't you turn back.
Don't you set down on the steps.
'Cause you finds it's kinder hard.
Don't you fall now—
For I've still goin', honey,
I've still climbin',
And life for me ain't been no crystal stair
(Mother to Son: Langston Hughes 1902 – 1967)*

This poem highlights the struggle Black students and academics have to endure to be successful at universities

Introduction

In setting this chapter in context the literature on the position of Black students will be highlighted with regards to their participation, classification of degree attainment and experiences at university. I will introduce the concept of 'deficit theories' and critical race theory (CRT) as underpinning much of the discussion on the position of Black students in universities. I will also discuss diversity management as well as the experience of Black women in Higher Education.

Participation

According to the Stevenson (2012); Richardson (2010); Tope (2013) the percentage of UK-domicile Black students studying in universities, at all undergraduate levels, is statistically higher than that of White students. However, although the proportion of UK-domiciled Black students has increased from 14.9% in 2003-04 to 18.1% in 2009-10 (Tope 2013; ECU 2011) there are substantial differences in patterns of participation. Generally there are more Black females who participate in universities than males; Black Caribbean and Bangladeshi participation rates are half those of Black African and Indian participation rates; and Black students are on average older than White entrants (Aim-higher 2006; Elevation Networks Trust 2012; Stevenson 2012). Discussions of these variables is beyond the remit of this research, suffice it to say, whatever Black group students belong to, the outcome academically, falls below those of their white counterparts.

Classification of Degree Attainment

Both Richardson (2007; 2010) and Tope (2013) noted the gap in degree attainment, and highlight the difference between the proportion of white qualifiers who obtained a first class or upper second class honours, and that of Black qualifiers. Tope (2013) drew attention to the attainment gap which increased from 17.2% in 2003/04 to a peak of 18.8% in 2005/06 and was at 18.6% in 2009/10. Furthermore, there appears to be little change in the attainment gap of Black students, compared to a decade ago. For example, Connor et al (2004) concluded that Black people are more likely to take university qualifications than White people. However, they do not do as well in degree performance with fewer Black students gaining first and upper second class degrees in comparison to White students.

Studies in relation to degree attainment of Black students ((Bhattacharyya et al 2003; Law et al, 2004; ECU 2011; Berry and Loke 2010) appear to support the research of Connor et al (2004) and highlight the disparity between white and Black students. Additionally, figures released by the Equality Challenge Unit (2012) showed that 69.5 per cent of UK-domiciled white students achieved a first or a 2:1 in 2010-11, compared with 51.1 per cent of Black students. When broken down into categories, the gap was even wider for Black students of African and Caribbean descent, with only 40.3 per cent scoring a first or a 2:1; leading Richardson to state that:

Relative to White students, those from every non-White ethnic group are less likely to obtain good degrees and less likely to obtain first class degrees. The odds of an Asian student being awarded a good degree were half of those of a White student being awarded a good degree, whereas the odds of a Black student being awarded a good degree were a third of those of a White student being awarded a good degree (Richardson 2007, p. 10).

The Student Experience

Not only do students from Black groups underperform in relation to degree attainment on a range of measures compared to White students (Broecke and Nicholls, 2007). They are less likely to be satisfied with their student experience and are more likely to leave early (Singh 2009). Although the gap in satisfaction is generally seen to be reducing (National Student Survey 2006-2010) for most ethnic groups, Black students had lower overall satisfaction with their HE experience than white students.

In the study by McNamara and Coomber (2012) of a single institution, the majority of the Black students interviewed reported feeling isolated, with an increased awareness of their 'race'. The study also revealed Black students' dissatisfaction with what they perceived as insufficient relevant course content pertaining to Black perspectives and CRT, an issue also highlighted in Race for Equality report (NUS 2011). McNamara and Coomber assert:

Improving the experiences of Black students requires a critical reflection on the practices and thinking at the school. It is evident from the experiences of these students at Central that a number have been touched both directly and indirectly by experiences of racism and discrimination during their time at the institution. (McNamara and Coomber 2012, p. 4).

Their study does not appear to point to a link between the possibilities of isolation, discomfort and discrimination, and the impact on Black students' academic performance and experience. Instead McNamara and Coomber (2012) seem to employ deficit theories in explaining Black students' lower attainment; high drop-out rate and overall dissatisfaction. In doing so, they cite the works of York et al (1997) and Ozga and Sukhanandan (1998) in suggesting that "Black students have difficulties integrating into the university culture, because they are not prepared for university life due to 'unrealistic expectations and compatibility of choice'" (Ozga and Sukhnandan (1998. p. 321). Although unrealistic expectations are not explained within the context of the McNamara and Coomber (2012) work, there appears to be some element of truth therein. For example, it is likely that many parents would have high expectations for their children and this should be viewed as a positive rather than unrealistic. Conversely, due to the position of some Black families socio-economically, and otherwise, they may view education as a leveller (Williams et al 2011).

It is within this sphere that Wright et al (2016) and Gándara (1995) speak of the resilience that is evidenced in those who allow themselves and their children to dream of possibilities beyond their present circumstances. These are not necessarily unrealistic expectations, for if we level these same charges against technology or science, a hundred years ago, it would have been considered unrealistic or even impossible for man to land on the moon, much less the technological advances made in the last two decades through social media.

Pertinent questions are raised however, in the use of Ozga and Sukhanandan's (1998) work by McNamara and Coomber (2012), in identifying lack of preparedness as a contributory factor in Black students' failure and low grades. For example, is this uniquely a problem with Black students? If so, there is the danger that people believe there is something inherent in Black students, which makes them predisposed to being unprepared for university, and therefore substantiating explanations underpinned by deficit theories. Or are there alternative suggestions that could be proffered and is it this: even when Black and white students present with a similar family history and socio-economic backgrounds, universities are still likely to validate white students experiences over and above those of Black students. Broecke and Nicholls (2007) claimed that even though much of the attainment gap can be explained by factors other than ethnicity (e.g. type of HE Institution, subject, prior attainment, term-time accommodation gender, age, disability and deprivation):

despite controlling for these other factors, we find that ethnicity is still statistically significant in explaining attainment in HE: all students from minority ethnic communities (except Other White, Other Black, Mixed and Other) are found to be less likely to achieve a better degree relative to White UK and Irish students (Broecke and Nicholls 2007, p. 17).

Deficit Theories

Bensimon (2004) emphasised that traditionally and historically the Higher Education research community study of Black students has been primarily through the lens of student development theories. In what is called 'organization learning'. Bensimon (2004) identifies how both theory and practice is effective in making the invisible visible and the undiscussable discussable, two conditions that aptly describe the status of race-and ethnic-based unequal outcomes at universities. Among the many factors that contribute to the invisibility of unequal university outcomes for Black students is that of cognitive frame or mental maps which 'represents the rule or reasoning' that governs how individuals interprets situations and how they design and implements their actions' (Bensimon 2004, p. 100). Thus organizational learning theories can help us understand the nature of cognitive frames and the ways in which some reveals patterns of unequal outcomes, while others hide them. If patterns of inequality are invisible they will not be discussed.

In looking at 'organization learning problems' which is identified as the persistence of unequal education outcomes for Black students with a history of past discrimination, Bensimon (2012) views inequality in educational outcomes as a learning problem of institutional actors (faculty members and others, rather than a learning problem with students, the more typical interpretation (Garmoran et al 2003). The problem with unequal outcomes resides within individuals, in the cognitive frames that govern their attitudes, beliefs, values and actions.

Similarly, the reduction of inequalities also lies within individuals, specifically, in their capacity to develop equity as their cognitive frame. That is, individuals whose institutional roles can influence whether students are successful or not need to learn cognitive processes that enable them to think about the situation of under-represented students and their outcomes through the lens of equity. However even if they were to consider the educational status of such students, institutional actors, according to Bensimon (2004), are more predisposed to do so from the standpoint of deficit.

According to Bensimon (2012), individuals with a deficit cognitive frame may value diversity and have positive attitudes towards increasing Black students' participation in universities. But they are inclined to attribute differences in their educational outcomes such as lower rates of retention or degree completion, to cultural stereotypes, inadequate socialization, lack of motivation and initiatives on the part of the students. It can also be conveyed in well meaning, but pessimistic attributions such as concluding that students cannot be expected to overcome the disadvantages of poverty and under-preparation, therefore unequal outcomes are expected. Attributions framed by deficit models and perspectives imply that the academic difficulties of Black students are either self-inflicted or a natural outcome of socioeconomic and educational background. Essentially, from a deficit perspective, unequal outcomes are a problem without a solution. Of the various conceptual framework that has been used to explain Black students experiences in universities, deficit thinking theories and models have held the longest currency amongst educators, policymakers and scholars. Although there are several explanatory variants of this model, the deficit thinking paradigm, as a whole, posits that students who fail to do well, do so because of alleged internal and cultural deficiencies (motivational/cognitive limitation) or shortcomings.

Deficit Thinking Discourse

Much of the discussion around these topics concentrates on some aspect of deficiency: those who do not succeed in higher education fail because of some internal shortcoming (eg. cognitive or motivational), or some external weakness linked to the student (eg. cultural or familial background) (Barnett 2007). The dominant discourse in higher education attempts to understand student difficulty by framing students and their families of origin as lacking the academic, cultural and moral resources necessary to succeed in what is presumed to be a fair and open society, and needing support from the dominant society or culture. It effectively blames the victim for lacking certain desirable characteristics that would promote academic success. Various terms are used in the educational literature to refer to this kind of approach: deficit theories, models of deficit thinking, cultural deprivation or inadequate socialization, and even the more recent construct of the 'at risk student'. They all have in common a focus on the inadequacies of the student, and 'fixing' this problem. In the process the impact of structural issues are often ignored or minimised. When applied to education policies it has been argued that deficit thinking amounts to a neo-liberal commitment to help those who cannot help themselves (Valencia 1997), and warns that deficit thinking is a 'protean' theory,

taking on different forms to adapt to acceptable educational thinking of the day, and that it continues to impact on teaching policy and practice.

Problem with Deficit Thinking

In some ways, there is a common-sense appeal to deficit thinking: students enter higher education with real shortcomings, and a programme is developed to bridge the gap between prior schooling and university, but there are some fundamental difficulties with this kind of thinking. One of the most serious effects of deficit thinking is that it strengthens stereotypes in the minds and thought of educators, policy makers and students themselves. In essence, deficit thinking allows generalisations about student ability to be made, and supports a laziness to grapple with the complex issues around student difficulties. In the process people who are already disenfranchised are labelled and further stigmatised. Since deficit theories take the position that Black students and families are at fault for their poor academic performance because students enter universities without the normative cultural knowledge and skills, it then suggests that Black students are less likely to succeed, as they present at the academy with 'deficits' from their culture, homes and communities. Research by Hylton (2011); Gillborn (2012); Wright (2013) highlights how deficit thinking and theories permeate UK society, and Garcia and Guerra (2004) argues:

that this reality necessitates a challenge of personal and individual race, gender and class prejudice expressed by educators, as well as a 'critical examination of systematic factors that perpetuate deficit thinking and reproduce educational inequalities for students from non-dominant socio-cultural and linguistic backgrounds (p.155).

In line with deficit theories, (Yorke et al 1997; Ozga and Sukhanandan 1998) states that Black students are unprepared for university life and more likely to have lower attainment; high drop-out rate and experience overall dissatisfaction (McNamara and Coomber 2012). It advances the claim that Black students lack the particular "cultural capital" necessary as a prerequisite for academic success. Some of the cultural deficiencies are identified by Eitzen et al (2013) as limited outlooks and attitudes toward the future, a lack of parental involvement in schools, low intellectual abilities, and a limited interest in education. According to this perspective Black students often enter universities with a lack of "cultural capital" that are affirmed by universities and therefore considered valuable. Upper and middle-class students, according to Bourdieu (1997), are more likely to do well in school because they possess more cultural capital of a relevant kind.

In education Bourdieu (1997) has been used to explain the academic difference between White and Black students' outcomes. The assumption follows that Black students 'lack' the particular forms of capital relevant to the habitus of the university. This often results in universities working from a cultural deficit models by structuring ways to help 'the

disadvantaged' who do not possess the necessary cultural and social capital (Valenzuela, 1999). However Harry and Klingner (2007) warns: "When a habit of looking for intrinsic deficit intertwines with a habit of interpreting cultural and racial difference as a deficit, the deck is powerfully loaded against poor students of colour" (p.7).

I begin with a critique of the ways Bourdieu's (1997) work has been used to discuss social and racial inequity. In education, Bourdieu work has often been called upon to explain why Black Students do not succeed at the same rate as Whites. According to Bourdieu, cultural capital refers to an accumulation of cultural knowledge, skills and abilities possessed and inherited by privileged groups in society. Bourdieu asserts that cultural capital (i.e., education, language), social capital (i.e., social networks, connections) and economic capital (i.e., money and other material possessions) can be acquired in two ways, from one's family and/or through formal schooling. The dominant groups within society are able to maintain power because access is limited to acquiring and learning strategies to use these forms of capital for social mobility.

In his analysis of students in French HE institutions, Bourdieu (1997) came to the conclusion that working-class students were less successful (Thomas 2002) not because they were of inferior intelligence or not gifted, but because the curriculum was 'biased in favour of those things with which middle-class students were already excurricularly familiar' (Robbins 1993, p. 153). Or as Thomas (2002) states, educational institutions favour knowledge and experiences of dominant social groups to the detriment of other groups, as in the case of Black students in the UK. Bourdieu's (1997) theory of cultural capital has been used to assert that some communities are culturally wealthy while others are culturally poor.

This interpretation of Bourdieu exposes White middle class culture as the standard, and therefore all other forms and expressions of 'culture' are judged in comparison to this 'norm'. Cultural capital in this respect, refers to an accumulation of specific forms of knowledge, skills and abilities that are valued by privileged groups in society. (Yosso 2005, p. 78)

However the knowledge espoused by White middle class male as the norm has been both recognized and challenged (hooks 1997; Gillborn 2010; Huber 2009; Kilomba 2007, and from the RANLHE (Access and retention: experiences of non-traditional learners in HE) project (see Monteagudo 2010). For example specific tests from North American, such as Williams (1972); BITCH (Black Intelligence Scale of Cultural Homogeneity), and Kilomba's (2010) from Germany, revealed that the distribution of test score for Black students showed a clear superiority as compared to the white student group. This highlighted the danger in associating intelligence from cultural specific testing. Kilomba (2010) states that every semester her seminar students, both Black and white are asked to address the following:

What was the Berlin Conference of 1884-5? Which African countries were colonised by Germany? How many years did German colonisation over the continent of Africa last? Who was Queen Nzinga and which role did she play on the struggle against European colonisation? Who wrote Black Skin, White Masks? Who was May Ayim? Not surprisingly, most of the white students are unable to answer the questions, while the Black students answer most of them successfully. Suddenly, those whose knowledge has been hidden, become visible, while those who have been over-represented become unnoticed and invisible. Those who are usually silent start speaking, while those who always speak become silent. Silent, not because they cannot articulate their voice or tongues, but rather because they do not possess the knowledge.
(Kilomba 2010, p. 27)

Like Williams (1972); and Bourdieu (1997), Kilomba (2010) used the above to demonstrate how the concept of knowledge and the idea of cultural capital are linked with power and racial authority. Knowledge in this case is not the ability to 'know certain facts' because clearly the Black students demonstrated their knowledge in this respect. Rather "it appeared to be that of whose knowledge is valued and acknowledged in the halls of academia...it is about the recognition that academia is not a neutral location but rather a White space where Black people have been denied the privilege to speak and facilitated in articulating their knowledge (Kilomba 2010, p. 27). Whilst for Thomas (2002; 2011), educational institutions are seen as perpetuating inequalities by reinforcing the dominant culture through the language, knowledge and values, so students who represent the dominant culture are more likely to succeed in comparison to others.

Monteagudo (2010) too raised concerns as to the kind of knowledge produced and transmitted in university contexts, which reproduced social inequalities and enhanced the monopoly of 'truth' therefore its criticism by feminist and postmodernists. Monteagudo (2010) views such 'knowledge' as historically being the product of White middle class men with little attention to the consequences for the identities of women: I would add to this the consequences for Black students, academics and Black people generally.

It is for these reasons that Bourdieu highlighted the educational environment as being more predisposed to the successes of White middle class students because they already possess the cultural capital due to their familiarity of the culture and language of the university. Gail understood this only too well, and gravitated towards those she perceived as possessing the cultural capital espoused by universities. On the other hand, as illuminated in Chapter four through the case study of Zara, educational institutions historically have not been places where Black peoples have had a voice, in fact our voice have been silent, our behaviours misunderstood and our resilience and resistance seen as oppositional behaviours (Hylton 2011; Gilborn 2009; Picower 2009).

Constructed by White scholars, theoretical discourses such as cultural deficit theories and models have rendered Black people inferior, as objects rather than subjects, because we could not represent ourselves.. Therefore what we know has been systemically disqualified as valid knowledge through a system of racism which silences our voices and thereby invalidates our experiences in academia... It is not the case that we have not been speaking; but rather that our voices - through a system of racism - have been systematically disqualified as valid knowledge. (Kilomba 2010, p. 28).

This has resulted in a lack of articulation of Black peoples' voice in the academy, because clearly we do not have the power or access to the necessary resources to be heard and thus our voice remains silent. As Kilomba (2007) states Black students and people encounter unequal power relations rather than an objective scientific truth which defines what counts as knowledge and true in universities.

Yosso writing in 2005 provides a simple example, in explaining Bourdieu's cultural wealth approach of knowledge that is valued in universities. It is of middle class students who may have access to developing computer-related vocabulary and technological skills at home. According to Yosso (2005), these students may have acquired cultural capital because computer-related vocabulary and technological skills are valued in the school setting. However, a working class Black student for example, whose mother works in a factory may bring a different vocabulary, perhaps in two languages to school, along with techniques of conducting errands, translating mail and phone calls for her or his mother. Thus, whilst this cultural knowledge is very valuable to the student and their family it is not necessarily considered to carry any capital in the educational context. So there are there forms of cultural capital that marginalized groups bring to the table that traditional cultural capital theory does not recognize or value, and according to West et al:

Bourdieu's view of capital is too constrained – neglecting psychological or experiential capital (such as lifelong learning) – because his gaze is overly sociological. We need, it is suggested, more fine-grained, psychosocial analysis of how inner worlds may shape outer worlds. (West et al 2013, p. 121).

While Bourdieu's work sought to provide a structural critique of social and cultural reproduction, his theory of cultural capital has been used to assert that some communities are culturally wealthy while others are culturally poor. This interpretation of Bourdieu exposes White, middle class culture as the standard, and therefore all other forms and expressions of 'culture' are judged in comparison to this 'norm'. In other words, cultural capital is not just inherited or possessed by the middle class, but rather it refers to an

accumulation of specific forms of knowledge, skills and abilities that are valued by privileged groups in society.

Stevenson (2011) attributes much of the students' experiences to the existing structures of universities that disable, rather than enable Black students to function to the best of their ability. Thus a number of potential causes are cited such as: "racism, lack of role models, segregation, discriminatory practice, and student and staff's attitudes and expectations of Black students" (p. 11). Indeed some of these are expressed in the narratives of Zara and Gail. As such Ismail (2012) warns universities to refrain from the preoccupation with explaining attainment gap through deficit theories, and instead tailor extra support to help identified students.

However perhaps the strongest criticism are those of Back (2004) who accuses the HE sector as lagging behind in addressing the question of differentiation for Black students in relation to grade, retention and experiences. Back (2004) identifies a lack of transparency to confront discrimination as a tendency of academics and those who work in universities, to see themselves as unique and therefore less susceptible to discriminate, while Patton (2004a) warns that the universities run the risk of being seen as "complicitous in domination and oppression" (p.190) because of their reluctance to explore and embrace diversity. Therefore, for Prendergast (1998) citing the work of Gilyard (1996):

"race remains under-theorized, un-problematized, and under-investigated in composition research leaving us with no means to confront the racialized atmosphere of the university and no way to account for the impact of the persistence of prejudice on writers and texts. (Prendergast 1998, pp. 36)

The reluctance to confront the under-investigation of race becomes the perfect formula for locating the problem somewhere else, as in the case of cultural deficit theories and models, which are not beneficial in enhancing the experiences of Black students in universities. This cultural deficit theories and models feature Black students' lack of educational success to characteristics often rooted in their cultures and communities. Hence Trueba (1988) and Valencia (1997) stated, this have the appearance of blaming students of institutional oppression for their own victimization. For example, there is little awareness or acknowledgement of the obstacles Black students have to overcome to perform in HE (Zara as an isolated and lone Black student, for three years on her degree and Gail, a young student away from the familiarity of "home", who has felt vulnerable due to being 'serenaded' with a racist chant at night in an unfamiliar environment; (see case study chapter four). Or of the invaluable contributions from our families via words of affirmation; by building of resilience; and cultivating high aspiration as a positive force, and by engendering the support system necessary for academic success in the face of stereotyping, discrimination and racism.

As well as being underpinned by stereotyping, like Asthana et al (2010) I argue that lurking beneath this premise of deficit theory is also a more insidious characterization, which goes back to the intellectual capability of Black people in comparison to whites. These views have been historically situated in relation to the superiority of 'race' and used to explain the intellectual abilities as well as the subjugation of one race over another (Smith 2013). Examples can be found in the 1800's and 1900's where scientists, psychologists and anthropologists (see Galton 1869; Terman 1916; McDougall, 1921) concluded that Black people did not possess the ability to think abstractly and were intellectually inferior (Smith 2013). Black people were originally brought from Africa to the Caribbean and America(s) during the 16th, 17th, 18th and 19th centuries. They were forcibly transported across the Atlantic in slave ships (in which many died) and sold as slaves, to work on sugar and cotton plantations in the Caribbean and the southern states of North America and beyond. They had no rights and were seen by their white owners as little more than animals or machines. http://www.bbc.co.uk/schools/gcsebitesize/english_literature/prosemockingbird/0prose_mockingbird_contrev1.shtml.

“The Negro’s intellectual deficiency is registered in the retardation percentages of the schools as well as in mental tests. And in view of all the evidence it does not seem possible to raise the scholastic attainment of the Negro to equality with that of the White. It is probable that no expenditure of time or of money would accomplish this end, since education cannot create mental power, but can only develop that which is innate” (Ferguson 1916, p. 125).

The work of Jensen (1969; 1985) and Jensen and Miele (2002), though controversial, is nonetheless also famed for their genetic intellectual inferiority suppositions on race and intelligence. For example, a significant difference in IQ scores between Blacks and whites, were 'found', where Jensen (1969) discounted environmental factors in favour of an "implicated" genetic factor. This inferred that Black children were only suitable for vocational training because of their innate capabilities' (cited in Thomas and Sillers 1972).

Being at university is connected with "intellectual ability - perceived or actualized" (Smith 2013, p. 7), so when the views of 'experts' are still used to explain Black students performance it again polarise notions of intelligence and race aligned to deficit theories. This will be seen in the case of Peter the E&D manager interviewed in chapter six, and alluded to in the study of McNamara and Coomber (2012). Remedies informed by deficit perspectives created to ameliorate student underachievement and failure, often fail to address problems within universities meaningfully. Employment of deficit theories according to Steele (1997), have the appearance in part, of absolving universities from their responsibilities. As will be seen in chapter four; an awareness of the environment and how this impacted on Zara socially, academically and psychologically as she navigated her way through university was woefully

missing. Her strength, resilience and aspiration was not appreciated or understood as she was compared to the dominant group in terms of her general behaviour.

Critical Race Theory (CRT)

I proffer a CRT approach, which it is envisaged, would offer a more insightful understanding of the experiences of Black students in universities which is seldom explored. Initially originating from North America, CRT drew from and extended a broad literature base of critical theory in law, sociology, history, ethnic studies and women's studies. Crenshaw (2002) explains that in the late 1980s, various legal scholars felt limited by work that separated critical theory from conversations about race and racism. Alongside other 'Outsider' scholars (Hill Collins, 1986), Crenshaw (2002) was "looking for both a critical space in which race was foregrounded and a race space where critical themes were central" (p. 19). Scholars such as Bell (1987) and Freeman (1978) asserted that one reason why the Critical Legal Studies (CLS) interrogation of the law could not offer strategies for social transformation was because it failed to incorporate race and racism into the analysis (Delgado 1995a; Ladson-Billings 1998).

Not listening to the lived experiences and histories of those oppressed by institutionalized racism limited CLS scholarship. This argument had also been taking place in social science and history circles, specifically in ethnic and women's studies scholarship. Over the years, the CRT family tree has expanded to incorporate the racialized experiences of women. Women of colour have also challenged CRT to address feminist critiques of racism and classism through FemCrit theory (Caldwell 1995; Wing 1997, 2000). In addition, white scholars have expanded CRT with WhiteCrit, by 'looking behind the mirror' to expose white privilege and challenge racism (Delgado and Stefancic 1997; Gillborn 2009, 2011).

CRT in education draws from and extends a broad literature base of critical theory in law, sociology, history, ethnic studies and women's studies (Crenshaw 2002). In the UK CRT approaches and perspectives are being tailored and formulated and applied in discussions on Black people within the education context (Chakrabarty et al 2012; Rollock and Gillborn 2011). CRT operates on the basic premise that racism must be challenged because it is pervasive and permanent; not just an individual pathology, as it systemically represents itself in the very structures of our institutions (Macpherson 1999). However, it is complex to address because it is engrained within society and is a frequent occurrence in the day to day existence of Black peoples' lives.

There are several themes that are central to CRT: One is that racism is normal, not aberrant, in American or British society. Because racism is an ingrained feature of our landscape, it looks ordinary and natural to persons in the culture (Delgado and Stefancic 2000, p. xvi). CRT regards racism as so deeply entrenched in the social order that it is often taken for granted and viewed as natural (Gillborn 2011; Wright 2013).

CRT scholars emphasize that racism does not necessarily operate in crude explicit forms but operates in a socio-political context where it is becoming more embedded and increasingly nuanced. Racism can be evidenced in the outcome of processes and relations irrespective of intent (Gillborn 2005; Ladson-Billings 1998). Today CRT has developed rapidly into a major branch of social theory and has been taken up beyond the United States to include work in the Europe, South America, Australia and Africa. It is often denigrated by people working with alternative perspectives who view the emphasis on race and racism as misguided or even threatening (see Kaufman 2005 and Cole and Maisuria 2007). Despite such attacks, which frequently rest on a lack of understanding and oversimplification of the approach, CRT continues to grow and is becoming one of the most important perspectives on the policy and practice of race inequality in the UK.

CRT exposes deficit informed research which misrepresents and misinterprets the experiences of Black students HE. It is used as a framework to theorize and examine the ways race and racism implicitly and explicitly impact on social structures, practices and discourses. In response to deficit theories and models, CRT would assert that there are forms of cultural capital that marginalized groups bring to the table that traditional cultural capital theory does not recognize or value. In doing so, the traditional view of cultural capital narrowly defined by white, middle class values is expanded by a CRT approach.

For the field of education, Daniel Solórzano (1997, 1998) identified five tenets of CRT that can and should inform theory, research, pedagogy, curriculum and policy: (1) the inter-centricity of race and racism; (2) the challenge to dominant ideology; (3) the commitment to social justice; (4) the centrality of experiential knowledge; and (5) the utilization of interdisciplinary approaches.

1. The inter-centricity of race and racism with other forms of subordination, which Crenshaw (1989) and other have called intersectionality. Here CRT acknowledges the inextricable layers of racialized subordination based on gender, class, immigration status, surname, accent and sexuality (Wright 2013, Hylton 2012, Crenshaw 1993). Discussed more fully in chapter three, intersectionality examines the ways in which race, gender, class and so on intersect to affect social behaviour or people's lives. There was increasing use of the concept in feminist work on how women are simultaneously positioned as women and as Black working class and so on (Crenshaw 1989). This was an attempt to avoid individuals being reduced to one category at a time and therefore to treat social positions as relational, since "multiple positioning constitutes everyday life" (Yuval-Davis, 2011). Intersectionality addresses precisely the issue of differences among women by providing a 'handy catchall phrase that aims to make visible the multiple positioning that constitutes everyday life and the power relations that are central to it' (Phoenix 2006, p. 187).

2. The challenge to dominant ideology. CRT challenges white privilege and refutes the claims that educational institutions make toward objectivity, meritocracy, colour blindness, race

neutrality and equal opportunity. CRT challenges notions of 'neutral' research or 'objective' researchers and exposes deficit-informed research that silences, ignores and distorts epistemologies of People of Colour (Delgado Bernal, 1998; Ladson-Billings, 2000). Discussed more fully in chapter three, CRT argues that these traditional claims act as a camouflage for the self-interest, power, and privilege of dominant groups in society (Bell 1987; Solórzano, 1997).

3. The commitment to social justice. CRT is committed to social justice and offers a liberatory or transformative response to racial, gender and class oppression (Matsuda, 1991). In the UK it is being addressed in education and in working towards the elimination of racism, sexism and poverty, as well as the empowerment of Black People and other subordinated groups (Freire, 1970, 1973; Wright 2013;). Perhaps key to understanding the differences between CRT in England and the US is the comparative histories of the two. For example, Warmington (2011) article takes both congruence and difference between histories of race, racism and struggle between the US and the UK as its starting point. Whilst acknowledging the connecting points, he highlights the key differences in theoretical perspectives which mean that CRT inhabits a very different 'British intellectual space.' Hylton (2011) on the other hand, takes a different approach, focusing on CRT methodology rather than intellectual history, and considering the ontological positions of research in this area. Critically, Hylton considers that CRT is more than an 'application' of theory, or method, but rather a political positioning which involves the researcher in either transformational work or, ultimately, complicity.

4. The centrality of experiential knowledge. CRT recognizes that the experiential knowledge of Black people is legitimate, appropriate, and critical to understanding, analysing and teaching about racial subordination (Delgado Bernal, 2002). CRT draws explicitly on the lived experiences of Black people by including such methods as storytelling, family histories, biographies, scenarios, parables, chronicles and narratives and so on. Discussed in chapter three.

5. The trans-disciplinary perspective. CRT goes beyond disciplinary boundaries to analyse race and racism within both historical and contemporary contexts, drawing on scholarship from ethnic studies, women's studies, sociology, history, law, psychology, film, theatre and other fields (Gutiérrez-Jones 2001).

These five themes are not new in and of themselves, but collectively they represent a challenge to the existing modes of scholarship, informed by scholars who continue to expand the literature and scope of discussions of race and racism. CRT in education is defined as a theoretical and analytical framework that challenges the ways race and racism impact educational structures, practices, and discourses. CRT is conceived as a social justice project that works toward the liberatory potential of education (hooks 1994; Freire 1970). This acknowledges the contradictory nature of education, wherein schools most often oppress and marginalize while they maintain the potential to emancipate and empower. Indeed, CRT

in education refutes dominant ideology and white privilege while validating and centring the experiences of Black people. CRT utilizes transdisciplinary approaches to link theory with practice, scholarship with teaching, and the academy with the community (Hylton 2012; Gillborn 2011). As Rollock and Gillborn asserts, CRT is an analytical framework that provides race-based epistemological, methodological, and pedagogical approaches to the study of everyday inequalities in education:

Critical race theory (CRT) is an approach that offers a radical lens through which to make sense of, deconstruct and challenge racial inequality in society' ...it is a body of scholarship steeped in radical activism that seeks to explore and challenge the prevalence of racial inequality in society. It is based on the understanding that race and racism are the product of social thought and power relations; CRT theorists endeavour to expose the way in which racial inequality is maintained through the operation of structures and assumptions that appear normal and unremarkable. (Rollock and Gillborn 2011, p.1).

CRT approach to education involves a commitment to develop schools that acknowledge the multiple strengths of Black communities in order to serve a larger purpose of struggle toward social and racial justice:

Theory, then, is a set of knowledge. Some of these knowledges have been kept from us— entry into some professions and academia denied us. Because we are not allowed to enter discourse, because we are often disqualified and excluded from it, because what passes for theory these days is forbidden territory for us, it is vital that we occupy theorizing space, that we not allow white men and women solely to occupy it. By bringing in our own approaches and methodologies, we transform that theorizing space. (Anzaldúa, 1990, p. xxv, emphasis in original).

Anzaldúa (1990) calls on Black people or people of colour to transform the process of theorizing. This call is about epistemology—the study of sources of knowledge. Scholars such as Ladson-Billings (2000) and Kilomba (2010) have asked: whose knowledge counts and whose knowledge is discounted? In addressing the debate over knowledge within the context of social inequality, Bourdieu and Passeron (1977) argued that the knowledge of the upper and middle classes are considered capital valuable to a hierarchical society. If one is not born into a family whose knowledge is already deemed valuable, one could then access the knowledge of the middle and upper class and the potential for social mobility through formal schooling. Bourdieu's theoretical insight about how a hierarchical society reproduces itself has often been interpreted as a way to explain why the academic and social outcomes of Black students/ people are significantly lower than the outcomes of Whites. The assumption follows that Black students 'lack' the social and cultural capital required for social mobility. As a result, schools and HE most often work from this assumption in structuring ways to help

‘disadvantaged’ students whose race and class background has left them lacking necessary knowledge, social skills, abilities and cultural capital (see Valenzuela, 1999).

As a framework CRT can be used to theorize, examine and challenge the ways race and racism implicitly and explicitly impact on social structures practices and discourse, therefore I am going to critique the assumption that Black Students come to the university/classroom with cultural deficiencies. Utilizing a CRT lens, I challenge traditional interpretations of Bourdieuan cultural capital theory (Bourdieu and Passeron 1977), and introduce an alternative concept called community cultural wealth. I will then outline at least six forms of capital below that comprise community cultural wealth and most often go unacknowledged or unrecognized, in examining some of the under-utilized assets Black/Students bring with them from their homes and communities into the university/classroom.

These various forms of capital are not mutually exclusive or static, but rather are dynamic processes that build on one another as part of community cultural wealth. For example, aspirational capital is the ability to hold onto hope in the face of structured inequality and often without the means to make such dreams a reality. Yet, aspirations are developed within social and familial contexts, often through linguistic storytelling and advice that offer specific navigational goals to challenge (resist) oppressive conditions. Therefore, aspirational capital overlaps with each of the other forms of capital, social, familial, navigational, linguistic and resistant. As Anzaldúa asserts, ‘In our theories we create new categories for those of us left out of or pushed out of existing ones’ (Anzaldúa, 1990, p. xxvi, emphasis in original).

Yosso (2005) identifies six essential qualities of ‘community cultural wealth’ which are nurtured through: (1) Aspiration capital; this is similar to Baker and Brown (2008) where communities and families nurtured aspiration in their children to achieve and prepared them through validation and high expectation of success (evident in the stories of three Black women in chapters four and five, where there is an expectation to do well academically from family and community. Aspirational capital refers to the ability to maintain hopes and dreams for the future, even in the face of real and perceived barriers. This form of cultural wealth draws on the work of Wright et al 2005, 2012; Wright et al (2016); John 2006, and others who have shown that Black Caribbean experience one of the lowest educational outcomes compared to every other group in the UK, yet their parents, and communities engender high aspirations for them, and were collectively involved in supporting through the school system and beyond (Wright 2012). For example, Wright et al (2016) study of school and aspiration stated “the black males talked about how their high expectations, inspiration, emotional support and cultural resilience related to the aspirational capital developed through their family, shaped their educational and personal careers” (p.7).

(2) Linguistic capital is often reflected where Black Students possess multiple language/dialects and communication skills that can foster intellectual and social skills. For

example, linguistic capital includes the intellectual and social skills attained through communication experiences in more than one language dialect and/or style (see Faulstich Orellana, 2003). It reflects the idea that Black students arrive at school with multiple language and communication skills. In addition, these children most often have been engaged participants in a storytelling tradition, that may include listening to and recounting oral histories, parables, stories and proverbs. Faulstich Orellana (2003) examines bilingual children who are often called upon to translate for their parents or other adults and finds that these youth gain multiple social tools of “vocabulary, audience awareness, cross-cultural awareness, “real-world” literacy skills, math skills, teaching and tutoring skills, civic and familial responsibility, (and) social maturity” (p. 6).

(3) Familial capital, which carries a sense of community history, memory and cultural intuition (Delgado Bernal 1998, 2002) as in stories told of migration and survival mechanisms (see chapter five). According to Delgado Bernal (1998, 2002) family capital refers to those cultural knowledges nurtured among familia (kin) that carry a sense of community history, memory and cultural. This form of cultural wealth engages a commitment to community well-being and expands the concept of family to include a more broad understanding of kinship., Familial capital is nurtured by our ‘extended family’, which may include immediate family (living or long passed on) as well as aunts, uncles, grandparents and friends who we might consider part of our familia. From these kinship ties, we learn the importance of maintaining a healthy connection to our community and its resources. Our kin also model lessons of caring, coping and providing which inform our emotional, moral, educational and occupational consciousness (Wright et al 2016 and Auerbach 2004). This consciousness can be fostered within and between families, as well as through sports, school, religious gatherings and other social community settings. Isolation is minimized as families ‘become connected with others around common issues’ and realize they are “not alone in dealing with their problems” (Delgado-Gaitan, 2001, p. 54). This is evidenced through the setting up of supplementary schools to address the ‘under-achievement’ of Black children in schools. Or support systems when families are bereaved (chapter five). Familial capital is informed by the work of scholars who have addressed the communal bonds within Black communities in the UK (Wright et al 2010 and Andrews et al 2013).

(4) Social capital can be understood as networks of people and community resources. These peer and other social contacts can provide both instrumental and emotional support to navigate through society’s institutions (see Andrews 2013; John 2006; Wright et al 2013, 2016). For example, drawing on social contacts and community resources, these networks may help a student financially (as with faith groups) while also reassuring the student emotionally that she/he is not alone in the process of pursuing higher education. Again from focus group students experience – “I cannot fail – there are too many people depending on me to make it here’ – and ‘I have to set a good example for my sisters and brothers’ – ‘I just can’t fail man” (Andall-Stanberry 2007). This tradition of ‘lifting as we climb’ has remained the traditional motto of ‘Families transcending the adversity in their daily lives by uniting with

supportive social networks' (Morris 2004, p. 105). Evidenced in chapter five, "Black people shared their cultural capital with one another and developed their social capital (Black social capital); for survival and success in a world bounded by the omnipresent forces of racism and discrimination' (Morris 2004, p. 102). Nowhere was this more present than in the birth of supplementary schools from the 1960's onwards. Initiated by concerned parents, community organisations and faith groups to redress the balance of their children continuing to fail in the British school system (see Coard 1971; Andrews 2013, Coard et al 2005). Such work also demonstrates that the forms of capital comprising community cultural wealth are engendered from within the context of a legacy of racism and are thus tied to a larger social and racial justice project (Perea et al 2000). Morris (2004) stated, "it is important that social capital theory also consider the agency and sustenance that are characteristic of African American (and to an extent African-Caribbean people) culture and institutions—apart from and in response to oppressive forces. Indeed, the main goals of identifying and documenting cultural wealth are to transform education and empower Black people to utilize assets already abundant in their communities" (p. 102).

(5) Navigational capital is best illustrated in the skills needed and displayed by Black students as they developed strategies to navigate through isolation, racism, discrimination and stereotyping in the teaching and learning environment (as will in fact be observed in the narratives of Zara and Gail in chapter four) through social institutions. Historically, this infers the ability to manoeuvre through institutions not created with Black communities in mind. For example, strategies to navigate through racially-hostile university campuses draw on the concept of academic invulnerability, or students' ability to 'sustain high levels of achievement, despite the presence of stressful events and conditions that place them at risk of doing poorly at school and, ultimately, dropping out of school' (Alva 1991, p. 19).

Scholars have examined individual, family and community factors that support Black students' academic invulnerability—their successful navigation through the educational system (Wright et al 2013). In addition, resilience has been recognized as "a set of inner resources, social competencies and cultural strategies that permit individuals to not only survive, recover, or even thrive after stressful events, but also to draw from the experience to enhance subsequent functioning" according to Stanton-Salazar and Spina (2000, p. 229). Indeed, Black people draw on various social and psychological 'critical navigational skills' (Solórzano and Villalpando 1998) to manoeuvre through structures of inequality permeated by racism (Wright et al 2013). Navigational capital thus acknowledges individual agency within institutional constraints, but it also connects to social networks that facilitate community navigation through places and spaces including schools, the job market and judicial systems (Williams, 1997; Wright et al 2010).

(6) Resistant capital; as in the case of students whose parents reiterated the need to be strong and resilient throughout their academic studies (Zara's narrative and Wright et al 2005; 2013). These characteristics of community cultural wealth are especially featured in chapter four and

five. Resistant capital refers to those knowledge and skills fostered through oppositional behaviour that challenges inequality (Freire, 1970; Solórzano and Delgado Bernal 2001). This form of cultural wealth is grounded in the legacy of resistance to subordination exhibited by Black Communities. Furthermore, maintaining and passing on the multiple dimensions of community cultural wealth is also part of the knowledge base of resistant capital. Solórzano and Delgado Bernal (2001) reveal that resistance may include different forms of oppositional behaviour, such as self-defeating or conformist strategies that feed back into the system of subordination. However, when informed by a Freirean critical consciousness (1970), or recognition of the structural nature of oppression and the motivation to work toward social and racial justice, resistance takes on a transformative form (see Solórzano and Yosso 2002b). Therefore, transformative resistant capital includes cultural knowledge of the structures of racism and motivation to transform such oppressive structures (Pizarro, 1998; Wright 2013).

Anzaldúa urges the generation of theories based on those whose knowledge are traditionally excluded from and silenced by academic research. She further asserts that beyond creating theories, “we need to find practical application for those theories. We need to de-academize theory and to connect the community to the academy” (Anzaldúa 1990, p. xxvi). Anzaldúa (2002) also notes that “Change requires more than words on a page—it takes perseverance, creative ingenuity” (p. 574). CRT offers a response to Anzaldúa’s challenge in listening to the experiences of those ‘faces at the bottom of society’s well’ (Bell 1992, p. v). These experiences expose the racism underlying cultural deficit theorizing and reveal the need to restructure social institutions around those knowledge, skills, abilities and networks—the community cultural wealth— possessed and utilized by Black people. It is for these reasons a CRT approach has been employed as a challenge to deficit theories and models.

In focusing on the experience of Black people, CRT reveals accumulated resources and assets. It highlights the abilities, skills, knowledge and networks Black people and communities use to survive and resist oppressive practices. For Smith et al (2011) ‘Community cultural wealth’ also involves a commitment to conduct research, teach and develop schools that serve a larger purpose of struggling toward social and racial justice. Anzaldúa (1990) states “If we have been gagged and disempowered by theories, we can also be loosened and empowered by theories” (p. 26). Indeed, if some knowledge has been used to silence, marginalize and render Black People invisible (Kilomba 2010, Gilborn 2011, Hylton 2012). Then ‘Outsider’ knowledge (Hill Collins 1986); mestiza knowledge Anzaldúa (1987); (where layers of the writers own identity is unfolded through the contribution of a variety of literary techniques according to Kynclová 2006) and transgressive knowledge (hooks, 1994), (where the norms and standards of society is deemed as confining, constraining and therefore restrictive) can value the presence and voices of Black People. And provide places and spaces empowered by transformative resistance (Solórzano and Delgado Bernal 2001).

However Anzaldúa (1990) urges the addressing of how theories are generated, based on those whose knowledge is traditionally excluded from and silenced by academic research,

and asserts that beyond creating theories, 'we need to find practical application for those theories, we need to de-academize theory and to connect the community to the academy' (Anzaldúa, 1990, p. xxvi). CRT offers a response to Anzaldúa's challenge in listening to the experiences of those 'faces at the bottom of society's well' (Bell 1992, p. 5). It challenges traditional research paradigms, text, and theories used to explain the experiences of Black students. It exposes deficit-informed research and methods that silence and distort the experiences of Black people: rather it focuses on their racialized, gendered and class experiences as sources of strength (Wright 2013; Hylton 2012; Solorzano 1997).

Criticism of CRT

However CRT is not without its critics who argue that in its quest to address inequalities, CRT may unwittingly be subscribing to further inequality by isolating the general population. According to Prendergast (1998) much of CRT seems to be concerned with issues of discourse and rhetoric, and faulted for:

not so much for their arguments—what they are saying—as for their departures from standard legal discourse—how they are saying—no doubt because what they are saying is, in part, that the atmosphere of the university and the courts remains racialized. Given a prevailing colonial sensibility, this message reaches ears which will register only dissonance and unintelligibility(Prendergast 1998, p. 38).

Prendergast admits that these very issues and the environment created by critical race theorists, have nonetheless fostered the mechanisms of bringing racism and race back into the public and legal discourse. CRT approaches are also criticised by Bennett (2012). Indeed Pyle (1999) describes CRT as divisive and an attack on the liberal traditions of North America. Asserting that CRT does not truly offer an alternative as it postulates; but rather polarises differences, which have served and demonstrated North America as a place where all races work and live well together. Pyle does however acknowledge that there are still areas of race inequality that need to be addressed but believes this will only be achieved by a coming together of the different factions.

For Pyle (1999), the inequalities in North America specifically has more to do with individuals and communities not being qualified for certain jobs, and not taking full advantage of education in preparedness for better paying jobs. Thus over-representation in the criminal justice system, welfare reform and immigration laws by Black people are more of a symptom, rather than due to simply bigotry. In effect elements of cultural deficit theories seem to be emerging in Pyle's arguments in that he offers little or no response to the addressing of the years of racial inequality. Instead 'race critics' are portrayed as unrepresentative of the views of the majority of North American Black people. Further Pyle (1999) see these CRT critics are impatient, intolerant and expressly setting out to unsettle the equilibrium of the society.

Bennett's entrenched view is that CRT makes white North Americans feel uncomfortable for their past, and for the involvement of their forefathers in race superiority validation. Bennett (2012) does not readily take any responsibility for current day race inequalities in North America. Rather he views CRT proponents as spreading hate speech in trying to address race and seeking a balance primarily through academic discourse. This interpretation is seemingly irrational but nonetheless needs to be dispelled by CRT proponents if it is to be understood that it is not a systematic attack on individuals but rather on a system which embodies inequalities of race.

In the UK CRT have also been criticized by Kaufman (2005) believing it to be quintessentially a North American problem which cannot readily be translated or transferred to a UK context. Working class and Marxist groups have also criticised CRT for its primacy of "race" over "class". Marxists the likes of Cole and Maisuria (2007) view this as being divisive in that it weakens, rather than strengthen and gather a collaborative force against the status quo. Additionally Cole (2009) takes umbrage with terminology used by Gillborn (2008) such as "White Supremacy" which is viewed as more akin to a North American culture context and history. Yet the antecedent of Gillborn's "White Supremacy" resembles those in a UK context for its characterisation of:

"a political, economic, and cultural system in which whites overwhelmingly control power and material resources...conscious and unconscious ideas of white supremacy and entitlement are widespread, and relations of white dominance and non-white subordination are daily re-enacted across a broad array of institutions and social settings" (Gillborn 2008, p. 36).

CRT is also accused of telling stories that are often one-sided, misleading and often glosses over the diversity of Black people. However, as Duncan (2005) points out, CRT has the explicit goal of encouraging an ethics of scholarship that takes seriously and considers specific viewpoints. Essentially, it "prompts a kind of multiple consciousness...CRT takes the words of Black people seriously and, instead of stopping there, it allows these voices to inform how we approach our examination of the material conditions that are part of lived experience" (Duncan, 2005, p. 106).

CRT is also accused for not sufficiently accommodating the idea of multiple racialisations or of incorporating intersectional explanations (Rizvi 2009). Yet CRT through its expansion has addressed the racialised experiences of African Americans; Latinos; Native Americans and Asian Americans. CRT has taken up the challenge in addressing feminist critiques of racism and classism through FemCrit theory (Wing, 1997, 2000). It has included WhiteCrit, where scholars have sought to expose White privilege and challenged racism and class (Delgado and Stefancic, 2001, Gillborn 2009). In the UK, CRT has been employed in discussions of Black peoples' position in education and beyond (Gillborn 2011, Hylton 2012, Andrews 2013).

Diversity Management

Thomas (1990) was one of the first to bring attention to diversity management, calling on organizations to draw on diversity as a strength and competitive edge. He initiated an expanded notion of what diversity entailed, moving beyond a discussion of diversity as simply race and ethnicity. He argued that managing for diversity meant managing for all differences, whether they are based in race, ethnicity, gender, education, or function. This meant focusing on making sure all groups of employees had what they needed in order to succeed at work, moving the emphasis in large part to post recruitment processes. Recruitment was important, Thomas argued, but mainly in a strategic sense.

Thomas's idea about how organizations should focus on diversity is inherently pragmatic and focused on improving outcomes such as job satisfaction, employee motivation and performance, and interpersonal relations. It maintains a clear link to performance. Some scholars though have argued that diversity management is damaging to organisations because it detracts attention from discriminatory behaviour that should be remedied first (Caudron and Hayes 1997; Morrison 1992). Nonetheless it was felt that if diversity management is explored alongside continued emphasis on equity in recruitment, selection, and promotion, then it actually may assist in levelling the playing field for race, ethnicity, gender, education according to Naff and Kellough (2003).

As a result, Diversity management have been introduced into the public and private sector with a supposedly range of aims, including: increasing the rates of participation for women and minorities, and their improved career prospects, as well as incorporating wider perspectives into decision making processes and helping organisations reach new, and formerly untapped market (Lorbiecki and Jack 2001). In relation to HE, The Higher Education Funding Council for England (HEFCE) declares in its policy statement, 'diversity' is less about equity and more about diversity of HE provision so as to secure the 'best fit' to meet the diverse needs of students, the economy, and society: "Diversity is widely agreed to be a desirable feature in Higher Education.....the goal must be to secure the pattern of diversity that most cost-effectively meets the needs and aspirations of the greatest number of stakeholders" (HEFCE 2000, p.3).

According to (Greenaway and Haynes, 2003) UK universities have seen a large increase in their student populations from 400,000 in the 1960s to 2,000,000 at the turn of the new century. One in three students now participate in HE as compared to one in sixteen at the start of the 1960s (Blanden and Machin 2004). This expansion was seen as a positive and: "increased educational opportunities were associated with greater equality of opportunity as more university places offer greater potential for the advancement of students from poorer backgrounds" Blanden and Machin (2004, pp 230).

The 'widening participation agenda' as it is called, was a response to the Blair government concern about the lack of diverse and Black students at universities. The commitment to increasing the participation of 18-30 years olds in HE to 50 per cent by 2010 was successful and: "In 2001-02, the participation rate for people from ethnic minorities was 56%. More specifically, the participation rates for Asian people and Black people were 60% and 61%, respectively, whereas the participation rate for white people was only 38%. (Richardson 2010, p. 1).

Thus the twin goal of New Labour was encapsulated in the expansion of education both in terms of the improvement and delivery (Wilkinson and Burke 2013) including widening participation as a mechanism for "redressing the under-representation of certain social groups in universities" (Wilkins and Burke 2013, p. 1). 'Aim-higher' (now defunct by the present government) was another New Labour initiative which saw the implementation of outreach programmes aimed at recruiting young people from disadvantaged backgrounds into universities. Targeted and financial support through bursaries was allocated in enabling poorer students to cover their living cost and university expenses (DfES 2006a).

Yet all these widening participation initiative may not have materialised into qualitative benefits for Black students. In fact, Richardson (2010) states that lessons ought to be learnt from North America where there appear to be an understanding that 'equal participation is not simply about gaining access to HE, but also about achieving parity in terms of educational outcomes" (Richardson 2010, p. 1). These changes in the landscape of HE have been accompanied by a number of policies for addressing inequality and equity supposedly in the building of a less discriminatory environment. As such, widening participation is not as a single policy, but rather (Universities UK 2003) a long-term process of social and cultural change in universities underpinned by changes in the marketization; business and delivery of HE states Taylor et al (2006). Moreover, it was also believed that the extent to which academic staff reassessed their roles in terms of delivery and provision of education would determine the success of widening participation. Invariably this would include a more adaptive learning and teaching environment (HEFCE 2001). Challengingly anticipated in its implementation were the barriers needed to be removed for equal and equitable participation for all students, where it was assumed that these changes undertaken would herald a more advantageous outcome for all. In fact, HEFCE (2001) saw the benefits in this approach for its ability to inculcate the propensity for improved relationship between staff and students and the inclusion of student perspectives, opinions and experiences.

However, it is unclear the extent to which HE was prepared for the diverse Black university entrants it now houses, in terms of creating solidarity and being initiated into a community of learners for those previously estranged from such establishments. Although not a heterogeneous group, Black students nonetheless face similarities in the general output of their academic achievements and general experiences as previously discussed in chapter two. If current responses are to be used as indicators from students, it appears that this continues

to be an area of much disconcertion for Black students. Weekes-Bernard (2010) suggests that widening participation is a mask that universities use to attract Black students, Mai-Sims (2010) claims that a diverse environment in terms of student intake did not necessarily indicate a “welcoming environment or good social relationship” (p. 29). Diversity documents in higher education institutions highlight Black (or working class) numbers to show how successful (or not) they are achieving equality. But this is not a true representation of equality. It is a notion of diversity that is ‘skin deep’. As one student said, ‘when I saw the prospectus with so many Black faces, I thought the university really understood diversity beyond ‘numbers’. (Andall-Stanberry 2007). This is supported in the narratives of Gail and Zara, as observed later, and Davis (2010) who stated that:

equitable or fair access to and participation within higher education is not achieved at the point of entry or transition to HE ... despite commitments to equity and diversity as defining fair access or widening participation in HE and forms of lifelong and/or vocational.... there remain systemic and systematic forms of inequality for individuals and institutions including HE. (David 2010, p. 12).

Even in universities which house high visibility Black intake, students experiences of widening participation and diversity are still of concern. Further Mai Sims (2007) warns that when conversations of ‘student diversity’ are being discursively mobilised within the context of ‘equality’ and ‘social inclusion’, the common-sense linkage between ‘equality’ and ‘diversity’ is conceptually untenable due to a privileging of the economic, the pursuit of institutional diversity, and the use of the market within HE. According to Jones (2006):

Social justice and diversity are the new buzzwords of political discourse and organisational policy. The achievement of social justice represents one of the most challenging goals for contemporary societies. Conceptually, ‘social justice’ carries a multiplicity of meanings, each of which is located within specific historical, economic and socio-political contexts.[1] However, in general parlance, the concept rests on a premise that members of a society will assume shared responsibility for the welfare and well-being of each other. This responsibility not only requires the fair and equal distribution of social resources and wealth, but also requires that each individual be afforded opportunities to develop their full potential. Though the concept remains ambiguous within higher education, since the 1960s social justice in the sector has largely been synonymous with government-led transformative measures designed to eradicate traditions of institutionalised class-based inequalities that maintained higher education as the preserve of a privileged, largely white male middle-class elite. (Jones 2006, p.1).

Consequently, there is a call for more critical discourse and analysis of the meaning and application of diversity, and of not creating a two tier system or labelling students ‘non-traditional’ (Thomas 2001). This label is also discussed in the work of Wilkins and Burke

(2013); Gorad et al (2006); and Lawler (2005) where there is suspicion levied against widening participation, because of its propensity to inculcate resonance of deficit theory to supposedly “non-traditional students”. Here it posits that Black students as lacking certain disposition to education and learning (Gorad et al 2006). Both Wilkins and Burke (2013) and Schostak and Schostak (2008) believed that widening participation becomes a pathologizing model when it identifies Black students as being a special case, ‘othered’ and warranting special help in raising their aspirations as noted by Bensimon (2012). The terminology of the non-traditional student is also challenged by Hockings (2010) for its assertion and implied link to a deficit view of students.

those who subscribe to this view believe that ‘non-traditional’ or ‘widening participation’ students lack the study skills and cultural capital to succeed at university...they are also believed to require additional resources and are seen as more problematic than their ‘traditional’ peers (Hockings 2010, p.3).

Therefore as long as universities frame discussions about Black students in relation to ‘lack’ it would undoubtedly resurrect notions of deficit theories and subsequent deferential two-tier treatment of students. It assumes identification of those who ‘legitimately’ belong in the ‘halls of academia’ as white and middle-class and those who do not as ‘Black Students’ and to a lesser extent working class White students. Thus widening participation warns Wilkins and Burke (2013) are “powerfully shaped by the ethical, moral and social class commitments” (p. 16).

Instead of a vehicle for social justice and deconstructing the culture of universities widening participation through its initiatives and piece-meal policies for “disadvantaged students” lessens the social justice perspectives. It has not championed the changes warranted in HE institutions and is therefore viewed as upholding inequalities. Far too many of us are aware of policies that have no teeth, but shiny gums and therefore “no bite”. Indeed policies in themselves are ineffective if those who are responsible for putting these in place are not committed at a fundamental level to change and social justice. Subsequently, politically and socially adept practices are still needed to ameliorate experiences and treatment of Black students in universities. Macedo (2000) warns that “diversity is not always a value, and it should not be accepted uncritically...many themes and interests constitute diversity work and are connected to particular forms of practice” (p. 10). The varied institutional agenda surrounding diversity are not equally beneficial to students, and some are poorly conceived and misguided. This realization must be accompanied with fundamental commitment to social justice not just redundant widening participation and equalities policies. As Thomas et al (2005) claim moving widening participation from the margins to the mainstream is a significant challenge because:

“It necessitates a shift away from supporting specific student groups through a discrete set of policies or time-bound interventions, towards equity considerations being embedded within all functions of the institution and treated as an on-going process of quality enhancement. Making a shift of such magnitude requires cultural and systemic change at both the policy and practice levels’ (Bridger 2010, p.2).

This cultural change required will be discussed in the penultimate chapter, in the light of the case study material. Bowling and Phillips’ (2003) criminal justice study on the Stephen Lawrence investigation and subsequent inquiry is highlighted for its potential similarity to education. This is in terms of practices being more explicitly visible than policy statements. Both believe that the ‘problem’ with Black people/students and communities were lodged within, however in soliciting the views of the communities there were polar divisions in terms of perception. While the local communities; churches; individuals and groups were recounting the numerous racist experiences and uneven treatment by the police, Bowling and Phillips (2003) stated, that the police on the other hand, pointed attention to their various initiatives and policies to respond to victimisation. The comparison with universities is similar in that whilst policies such as widening participation or aspiration towards greater equality may be in place and promulgated as evidence of a welcoming environment, the lived experience of Black students asserts otherwise. Most telling, Singh and Cousins (2009) study revealed that although most universities had equality schemes very few had action plans in place for achieving these.

Bowling and Phillips (2003) argues that: ‘conflicting perspectives can be partially addressed and achieved through improved collection; analysis; interpretation and dissemination of data to improve understanding and knowledge of the specific issues’ (p.5). However for Bowling and Phillips (2003), ‘data must be accompanied by what they see as ‘a critical deconstruction of the process of the knowledge production about minorities’ (p.5). The rhetoric of widening participation has not been accompanied by practices to address inequalities for Black students. As a result, institutional policies have not materialised in the provision of an equitable experience in universities for Black students and the issues of race have not been addressed for the most part. In presenting a critique on diversity management, Thomas (1993) assert, that criticality can only be achieved if management is understood in its wider context, assumptions are identified and challenged, awareness is developed of alternative ways of doing things, and by being more sceptical about what is presented in management dogma. The question is not, therefore, one of accepting that individuals are different but creating an atmosphere of inclusion and making a commitment to valuing diversity.

Black Women in Higher Education

A cornerstone of diversity management is its stress on the recognition and valuing of individual rather than social-group difference. An emphasis on individual difference may, however, carry profound consequences for the achievement of equality, for it may in fact serve to obscure and exacerbate the structural causes of inequality and, moreover, it may be an inadequate approach to countering the racialised discrimination and disadvantage encountered by Black female academics. (Jones 2006, p.)

So for Jones (2006) while the situation is bleak for Black academics as a collective, Black women academics represent the most marginalised and disadvantaged social group within the sector, in spite of gender and racial equality legislation. In considering diversity for Black academics in higher education, Jones (2006) highlighted how little has changed and that Black women still continue to experience exclusion, disadvantage and discrimination within higher education. Black women academics are doubly disadvantaged by their race/ethnicity and gender with research presenting a broad picture of institutional inequality when compared against the career progression of White female academics. Collectively, Black women academics have not attained the progressive benefits that have accrued to White women in the wake of gender equality initiatives and directives as they are still trailing behind White female colleagues in pay and promotion stakes.

Figures according to a report by Runnymede Trust (2015) reveals there are only 17 Black female professors in the entire system. Overall, 92.4 per cent of professors are White, while just 0.49 per cent are Black. Only 15 Black academics are in senior management roles, and according to HESA (2016) overall, females made up 54.0% of all staff and 47.2% of the academic atypical staff population. Almost half (47.5%) of all full-time staff and over two-thirds (67.5%) of all part-time staff were female. For academic staff, the proportion of females was 45.0%. For full-time and part-time academic staff, the proportion of females were 40.0% and 55.1%. It is clear that ethnic minorities are under-represented in the senior ranks of university management. According to the report, Equality in Higher Education: Statistical Report 2015, there are just 20 UK-born BME deputy or pro vice-chancellors, compared with 530 White ones. Of course, there are fewer BME academics than there are White ones at all levels; according to the 2011 census, 86 per cent of the population of England and Wales is White.

The ECU report (2015) notes that BME staff are half as likely as Whites to hold one of those top roles. Overall, a significantly higher proportion of White university staff (8.5 per cent) than BME staff (6.4 per cent) are in senior roles. Among academics, the proportions in senior roles were 15.7 per cent for Whites and 12.8 per cent for minorities. Those statistics run counter

to what has been an encouraging story of diversification in the lower academic ranks over recent years. The number of UK academic staff from a minority background grew by almost 80 per cent in a decade, up from nearly 6,000 staff in 2003-04 to almost 10,700 in 2013-14, (Equality in Higher Education: Statistical Report 2015). Meanwhile, the number of non-UK BME academics rose at a similar rate, up from 7,050 in 2003-04 to 12,735, 10 years later, but they are half as likely as non-UK White staff to be in senior roles.

BME staff are also more likely to find themselves on a fixed-term contract, with 35 per cent employed on one, compared with 31 per cent of white staff. The gap was even larger for non-UK BME staff, of whom 50 per cent are on fixed-term contracts, compared with 41 per cent of White non-UK staff. It is, therefore, predictable that the rate of academics leaving their university is much higher for BME than for White staff, according to the ECU data (2015): 21.7 per cent of BME academics left their institution between 2012-13 and 2013-14, compared with 15.7 per cent of white academics. However, despite these endemic inequalities and patterns of marginalisation Black women persist in their desire for education as social transformation (Mirza 2005). Levels of participation in further and higher education are as high for women of Black African, Caribbean and Indian origin as among White women (Higher Education Statistics 2012/13).

Young Black people of African and Asian origin are nearly three times more likely to be in university than their White counterparts. If we look at the percentages of young people under 21 on full-time undergraduate courses, Black and minority ethnic women are the highest participants of all. As a proportion of the average 18-19 year old population we find 59 percent of young Black women going to university to do a degree, as are 48 percent of young Black men (NAO 2002). Mizra (2005, p. 19)

Mizra (2003) and Wright (2013) highlights the paradox of Black women being significantly represented in the student numbers, yet barely visible in universities as academic staff, especially as those holding senior or management positions, irrespective of their education qualifications. And Maylor and Showunmi (2013) reflected this, in their experience as academics in higher education whilst moving from being junior to senior academics, and of challenges encountered as they progressed into academic careers. Examples was cited of not being supported by senior managers, being questioned by colleagues, being 'othered' and referenced as 'other than academics'. Maylor stated:

Black staff, though in academic positions are often viewed as not academic by White people and this is not helped by difficulties in gaining promotion. In a previous institution, I sought to gain promotion, but imagine a situation where two colleagues, one White and one Black (me) apply to be re-graded. The White staff member is encouraged to apply for promotion and their application is formerly supported by the White line manager, whilst the Black staff

member is informed that there is a promotion process when she enquires, but nothing further happens. It happens that the White employee is promoted and when questions are asked by the Black employee about her own promotion she is told by her line manager: 'I didn't think you wanted to apply. I thought you wanted to wait'. 'Wait, for what?' was my reply. The line manager's response above, might be seen by some as a reasonable interpretation or that similar comments would have been made to White staff, but to me the comments reflected 'problematic racialised interpretations' (Maylor and Showunmi 2013, p.7).

Black women slip into invisibility in the site that matters the most how they are valued and embraced in everyday practice and the transforming difference that they bring to higher education institutions. In universities, Black women struggle daily against the presumption that they are narrowly focused or lacking in intellectual depth (Wright et al 2007). "Whatever our history whatever our record, whatever our validations, whatever our accomplishments, by and large we are perceived as one-dimensional and treated accordingly...fit for addressing the marginal subjects of race, but not subjects in the core curriculum." (Madrid in Lopez 1993, p. 127). Maylor (2013) relayed an incident which took place after an academic staff meeting where she and a colleague approached the Deputy Vice Chancellor, who had chaired the meeting. He asked what department her colleague was in, then turned to Maylor stating that she must be the admin worker. This caused Maylor to question the purpose of equality policies and equal opportunities when the deputy VC could make such an assumption in what was seen as an ethnically diverse academic staff body (Maylor and Showunmi 2013, p.8, 9).

Jean-Marie et al (2009) also highlighted how Black women in leadership positions in professional settings still have to contend with 'gendered racism' (Essed 1991), as well as the double jeopardy of being Black and female. According to Glazer-Ramo (2001), as "more women earn professional degrees for entry into traditionally male professions, women experience isolation, exclusion from informal networks, and systemic discrimination" (p. 145). In entering the professional roles in education leadership, they not only have to deal with internal and external pressures to lead successfully but also have to navigate through the scrutiny they often encounter (Boris-Schacter and Lager 2006; Jean-Marie and Martinez, 2007). And Puwar (2001) identified stages of 'disorientation' and 'infantalisation' as the process of Black women experiences being in a university space historically preserved for white men and women. She argues there are several ways in which Black bodies are constructed when they do not represent the racial somatic norm within White institutions (Puwar 2001; 2004). First, there is 'disorientation', a double take as you enter a room, as you are not supposed to be there. You are noticed and it is uncomfortable. Like walking into a pub in a town where you do not live. There is confusion as infantalisation you are the not the 'natural expected occupant of that position'. Second; you are not only pigeon-holed into

being 'just a race expert', but Black lecturers are seen as less capable of being in authority. This can mean Black staff are assumed to be more junior than they are. There is a constant doubt about your skills, which can affect career progression. Third, there is the 'burden of invisibility' or hyper surveillance. Here you are viewed suspiciously and any mistakes are picked up and seen as a sign of misplaced authority (Bhopal and Preston 2011; Wright et al 2007).

You have to work harder for recognition outside of the confines of stereotypical expectations, and can suffer disciplinary measures and disappointment if you do not meet expectations in your work performance (Andall-Stanberry 2008). As a result, Back (2004) stated that higher education remains a 'hideously white' place, rarely open to critical gaze, and according to Puwar (2001) it has emotional and psychological cost to those who are perceived as different and as 'Black bodies' out of place in white institutions.

In my previous institution of employment issues of race, anti-discriminatory practice and equality were on-going and seem to be explicitly addressed in meetings, curriculum developments and incorporated in teaching methods and workshops. Additionally, about 40% of the students were from Black African, Caribbean or Asian backgrounds and as such the teaching environment was afforded richness in terms of the varied experiences on offer. Issues of racism however still materialised in relation to grades, retention, perception and discrimination, this of course was not unique to any particular educational establishments as is already evidence in chapter two.

I remember one such incident when a disgruntled group of students wrote to an awarding body of a vocational course to complain about the organisation of the programme. They had also written to a national newspaper, which resulted in the institution being investigated and threats of the programme being withdrawn if the complaints were upheld. Fortunately, the complaints were unfounded and we were given the go ahead to recruit, albeit now rather late for the upcoming academic year. In a series of meeting to set this plan in motion and to minimize the threat of redundancy, there ensued a conversation as to how many and what type of students would register on a programme with such a reputation. One of my colleagues, an erstwhile sociologist and labour councillor stated, 'well obviously all the bright ones will have already secured places elsewhere, so no doubt we will get an influx of Black students'. I sat there, angry, humiliated, offended and isolated. For whatever reason, no one among my ten colleagues responded to that statement.

I chose to be absent in the ensuing coffee break because I was still angry. However, I found out that a consensus was reached with the Dean during this time that the issues should not be revisited. This was seen as less embarrassing for the individual concerned who had 'proved' to be a champion for social justice, having taught many years on the programme. A general apology was made by the Dean who pointed out this lecturer exceptionally good

relationship with Black students. I did not feel confident then to pursue this matter as the lone Black staff, particularly as the Dean had made her position clear. The matter was closed and an uncomfortable silence resulted between this colleague and I who at the time shared a room.

Even where participation rates among faculty have increased, evidence from Black academics is that racism, harassment and discrimination remain an everyday reality of their professional lives. Hence, there is a general consensus that while the adoption of equal opportunity policies might be said to have been effective (albeit to a limited extent) in increasing the participation rates of Black academics, it has done little to change the attitudes and beliefs of employees. It appears that decades of equality legislation, policy making and initiatives have done little to disrupt the quotidian racism and discrimination within HEIs (Jones 2006), as attested to by Black academics across the country who continue to report diverse experiences of racism and harassment from their colleagues, support staff and students (see UCU academics speaking of racism in the sector 2016).

Disillusionment with the mechanisms for reporting and addressing such practices prevents many from taking action to redress grievances. There is widespread belief that the systems either do not work or complaints and concerns will not be taken seriously; that senior university managers and department heads have limited understanding of the terms of the Race Relations (Amendment) Act 2000 or the concepts of equality and diversity; that staff charged with responsibilities for equality and diversity initiatives will not be properly trained in handling race grievances; or, worse perhaps, that complainants will open themselves up to further victimisation. The pervasive reluctance of academics to discuss the lived realities of race and racism (which, unlike gender, still retain a nasty undertone) also serves to exert pressure on Black academics to remain silent about institutional racism and discrimination. The under-representation of Black groups within the powerful decision-making senior administrative and governance structures merely serves to exacerbate the problem.

Like others, Maylor and Showunmi (2013); and Burke et al (2002) states that the process of sharing common experiences not only make visible the details of race and gender oppression faced, but also acts of resistance engaged in within the academic community. Additionally, the work of Benjamin (1997), Jones (2006), Wright et al (2007), Andall-Stanberry (2008) and Mizra (2006; 2009) identifies the difficulties Black academics continue to face. Having to challenge cultural and social prejudice and being fully aware, that we occupy a space traditionally reserved White middle class males. Or we are seen as 'space invaders' and 'out of place' (Kilomba 2010; Puwar 2001).

Wright (2006) attests to this in her Black Britain article stating:

“Any right-thinking black academic in a UK institution whether they admit it or not is involved in a daily struggle. Some of them like myself have got to the point now where I am overt about the struggle...the experience of Black academics is characterised by isolation in institutions that are meant to hold liberal values and liberal principals. But far from being progressive, British Higher Education institutions are the perpetrators of the marginalisation of Black academics who experience a lack of support, lack of resources and both indirect and overt racism on a daily basis. Universities are places where the cultural and social values of society are imparted to those who participate whether they are lecturers or students, and these institutions should be honest about their treatment of people who are not white.”

(www.blackbritain.co.uk)

The above is demonstrated when three of my white colleagues gave advice to three white students on a module I had academic responsibility for, and which none of my colleagues had taught. Although I was seeing two of these colleagues on a weekly basis, even sharing an office with one part-time, none divulged this information. However, in class it was obvious that these students were being given different information from what I was suggesting. I found out later that my three colleagues had knowledge of each other's dealing with the three students, but had not said anything to me. When this was reported, the comment from the faculty senior manager was 'this should not have taken place'. Added to this, a Black student who attended the class relayed a conversation that she overheard; where one of the three students stated that she was not having any Black lecturer teaching her anything. Black women's journeys into higher education are journeys into the 'heart of whiteness'. As Casey describes Black women's innocent expectations and eager quest for knowledge can take them on an unexpected journey 'to another place' where they are transformed, but are also transforming:

young Black women set off into the White world carrying expectations of mythic proportions...their odysseys, they believe will transform their lives ...but separated from their cultural communities these young women's passages turn out to be isolated individual journeys ... 'into the heart of whiteness'
(Casey 1993, p.132)

Casey argues the reductionist homogenous identity of 'the Black woman' is created by 'a white gaze which perceives her as a mute visible object' (Casey 1993, p. 111). Being a 'mute visible object' is something that consumes your very being and as bell hooks argues Black women need healing strategies and healing words to enable them to deal with the anguish that sexism and sexist oppression creates in daily life . She suggests Black women need to

theorize from a 'place of pain ...which enables us to remember and recover ourselves' (hooks 1994, p. 74). Simmonds suggests that in higher education Black women have to 'negotiate daily with such embodied social situations' (p. 227) and Williams talks of the collective trauma such everyday incursions into your embodied self-hood engenders:

There are moments in my life when I feel as though part of me is missing. There are days when I feel so invisible that I can't remember the day of the week it is, when I feel so manipulated that I can't remember my own name, when I feel so lost and angry that I can't speak a civil word to the people who love me best. These are times I catch sight of my reflection in store windows and I am surprised to see the whole person looking back ...I have to close my eyes at such times and remember myself, draw an internal pattern that is smooth and whole. (Williams 1991: quoted in hooks 1994: 74).

Black women are increasingly visible in public spaces as professionals in previously race/gendered homogenous places such as universities, the judiciary and the media. The Black feminist writer Hill Collins (1998) suggests this shift in the positioning of race and gender and class through changing power relations and privatization has led to reconfigured patterns of institutionalized racism. In what Collins calls the 'new politics of containment' surveillance strategies become increasingly important when middleclass Black women enter institutional spaces of whiteness in the increasingly devalued public sphere from which they were hitherto barred. As Collins explains: "Whereas racial segregation was designed to keep Blacks as a group or class outside centres of power, surveillance now aims to control black individuals inside centres of power when they enter the White spaces of the public and private spheres" (Collins 1998, p. 20).

Black women are watched in desegregated work environments to ensure they remain 'unraced' and assimilated (Collins 1998: 39). This view is also expressed by Wright et al (2007) Bhopal and Preston (2011), and Ahmed (2004) who stated that being seen to be assimilated is important as standing out can invoke deep feelings of need, rejection and anxiety within the white other. To be unassimilated or 'stand out' invites a certain type of surveillance that appears benign but can be deeply distressing for Black women. For example surveillance means being accountable and having more attention than others heaped up upon you. Mizra (2006) cited the Black female professor who was first appointed with fanfare and excitement.

'She was a 'special case'; one in 'million'; a Black female trophy. She was in the University news (front page and the web) and she was invited to many high profile functions and events. Though it was not her job, in the first week she has to publicly present a detailed plan for delivering equal opportunities and race equality for the next five years to the senior managers and executives of the University. By three months she had been required to write five reports on her targets, attainments, and strategies and also found herself accountable to

three different line managers (as it could not be decided to whom she should report, the executive, academic area, or the faculty). Their 'kind and supportive' attention was all consuming but she received no real support for her academic research and teaching. Finally she became ill. No other professor had received this exhausting and intense level of scrutiny or expectation over such a short space of time' (Mizra 2006, p. 107).

There is an irony to heightened visibility for the 'invisible' in our polite and gentle corridors of higher education. A national survey of ethnic minorities in higher education found Black women were more likely than any other group to report being the victim of sexual harassment and discrimination at work (ECU 2009). Collins (1998) points out that "surveillance seems designed to produce particular effects- Black women remain visible yet silenced; their bodies become written by other texts, yet they remain powerless to speak for themselves" (p. 38).

We need to begin to open up and understand the complex multidimensional world Black women inhabit on the margins of white institutions. Moreover, we need to understand Black women's agency and subjectivity in relation to their space on the margin. Significant numbers of Black women are already in universities, colleges and other educational institutions, and as Mizra (2006) noted, young Black people of African and Asian origin are nearly three times more likely to be in university than their white counter parts. Research shows Black female educational urgency is a pervasive cultural orientation among Black women at all levels.

As mothers, Black women invest in the education of the next generation. In research on African Caribbean women educators working in Black community schools, (sometimes called supplementary or Saturday schools) Black women were found working alongside the dominant educational discourse (Mirza and Reay 2000a; Wright 2013). In their space on the margin, with their quiet and subversive acts of care and 'other ways of knowing' these women:

"operate within, between, under and alongside the mainstream educational and labour market structures, subverting, renaming and reclaiming opportunities for their children through the transformative pedagogy of 'raising the race' – a radical pedagogy, that ironically appears conservative on the surface with its focus on inclusion and dialogue with the mainstream." (Mirza 1997, p. 274)

Black women appear to occupy parallel discursive spheres in what Reay and Mizra have called a 'third space' (Mirza and Reay 2000b). Fraser calls this third space, "hidden counter public' spheres which are arenas where: members of subordinated social groups invent and circulate counter discourses, which in turn permit them to formulate oppositional interpretations of their identities, interests and needs" (p.84).

Black women appear to seek social transformation through educational change. The African-Caribbean women teachers in Black supplementary schools as indeed those working and studying in universities and schools struggle for educational inclusion in order to transform opportunities for themselves and their children (Wright et al 2005; Wright et al 2010). These women work to keep alive the Black communities collective desire for self-knowledge and a belief in the power of schooling to militate against racial barriers (Fordham 1996:63).

For African-Caribbean women educational institutions are not just mechanisms through which individuals are unconsciously subjected to the dominant ideological system but rather as Friere argues education are the terrain on which they acquire consciousness of their position and struggle (Freire 2004). Just as the Black women educators had developed through their experience a strategic rationalisation of their situation and opportunities so too have Black women in higher education developed a sense of their space on the margin through self-actualization and self-definition.

Conclusion

In conclusion, this chapter has addressed the rates of entry into HE by Black students which is statistically higher in comparison to their white counterparts in the UK. However, an increased participation and population have not materialised into better outcomes in relation to degree attainment, experience or satisfaction. To this end a body of research has been identified in highlighting issues of low classification of degree and concerns are raised due to systematically failing of Black students to do as well as their white peers, as is evidenced in research dating back to the last ten years or so. Additionally, there also appears to be evidence that Black students face inequality at all stages of the HE experience. The concept alluding to deficit theories and 'cultural capital' used to explain Black students inability to perform at HE is challenged. Deficit theories such as those of Bourdieu (1997) and others have been used in explaining Black students experience in education.

I argue these characteristics continue to stereotype and label Black students within universities as lacking cultural capital and hence the disparity in their educational achievement when compared to their White counterparts. The cultural deficit model asserts that Black students often fail to do well because of perceived "cultural deprivation" and to some extent, and absurdly, brain size. Here, in the light of the narrative material, I also revisit inequality in universities through discussion of notions of "cultural capital" and whose "cultural capital" is acknowledged, with a discussions on critical race theory (CRT). CRT proponents take umbrage with its identification and correlation to 'deficits' in Black communities and students and ramification for educational achievement. Instead CRT offers the concept of community cultural wealth and all that it embodies. Like Kilomba (2010) I argue that the premise of "knowledge" is contested space where Black students have little input by

way of articulating “their knowledge through ‘community cultural wealth’ when compared to ‘cultural wealth’.

It has been argued that ‘diversity management’ as a policy movement in higher education has had little to do with transforming the experiences Black female staff and students. Inequalities still seem to exist for Black students in all aspect of their university experiences in spite of diversity management which propose using the principle of difference in acknowledging that these can contribute benefits for HE, because they provide a wider range of perspectives. However, just as the police points to myriads of initiatives in place in trying dispel the perceptions of Black people, universities too, appear not to have listened, in general, to the voice and experience of Black students. They continue with a range of widening participation policies which, however, may not contribute to positive experiences for Black students. The political and social justice driver needed to deconstruct universities culture and construct a discourse on social justice issues for Black students appear to be conspicuous by its absence. Moreover, expansion in universities in the late 20th century to address a changing economic and global market is not without its complexities states David et al (2008). These have not been accompanied by the requisite policies and practices. Contested areas of race, social class, gender and widening participation continues to be problematic with diversity issues and equity, ostensibly used when formulating racialised policies, but which however have not addressed the continuing inequalities in universities.

In higher education many diversity action plans and equality statements have been produced by universities to meet the requirements of positively promoting racial equality required by the Race Relations (Amendment) Act (2000). In spite of these action plans race, class and gender divisions show little sign of abating (Reay et al 2005; Connor et al 2004). For Black women in higher education as academics and students, we experience racism, sexism and class disparity. As academics we continually have to fight to be recognised in relation to progression, research knowledge and how we are perceived by colleagues, managers and the very institutions we work for. For Black women universities are not simply a place to get qualifications and pass exams in an increasingly instrumentalist market driven educational culture, but as Mohanty (1993, p. 43-44) argues for Black women, educational sites represent accommodations and contestations over knowledge by differently empowered social constituencies. ...thus education is a central terrain where power and politics operate out of the lived culture of individuals and groups situated in asymmetrical social and political positions.

“If I cannot do great things, I can do small things in a great way.”

Martin Luther King (1929 –1968)

The Chameleon and Resilience

In this chapter I identify auto/biographical narrative enquiry as my methodology of choice and discuss its preference in relation to others, not least because of how it coheres with critical race theory and also intersectional understandings of oppression. At the core of the methodology are a number of auto/biographical narrative interviews with two young Black women Zara and Gail, as well as more semi-structured interviews with certain Equality and Diversity Managers; and my own auto/biographical writing. The chapter further explains both the generation of narrative material – in what I call conversational style – and how I approached the analysis, using a particular pro forma, designed to encourage awareness of all the thoughts, feelings and the processes of doing research. I too am written into the text, as a Black woman working in a university, and as part of building the auto/biographical dynamic, and how this relates to but also differs from biographical and life history research in bringing the researcher more explicitly into the frame; and, to repeat, I explore how such methods resonate with the imperatives of CRT. I also explain processes of writing myself into the text as well as the different, and more traditional approaches I adopted for interviewing two Equality and Diversity managers. I describe too the business of getting ethical approval and consider some of the ethical issues raised in doing research of this kind.

Rather than traditional methods of data collection, the importance of listening to ‘voice’ and stories of Black students is explained. The theoretical repertoire of the study draws on critical race theory and to a lesser extent notions of intersectionality, so as to best understand the experiences of Black students in education. This specifically encourages researchers to challenge methodological rules and interpretations shaped by dominant, ‘white’ narratives (Hylton 2012). I discuss how feminist scholars, among others, have encouraged and developed reflexivity as a practice, in which researchers are especially concerned with issues of power, active listening, narrative and discourse, and interviewing ethics (Devault, 1991). While sharing information with one’s participants may reduce the hierarchy between researcher and the researched (Cook and Fonow, 1986; Ellis and Berger, 2002), sharing one’s experiences can also serve to create a collective space. I discuss how this knowledge as strength, draws explicitly on the lived experience of Black people through stories and storytelling and discuss the importance of voice as a central tenet in critical race framework and position Black students within this context.

A critical race framework as a body of theory is pertinent in understanding the experiences of Black students in education and as Hylton (2012), stated, it encourages researchers to challenge methodological rules and interpretations of dominant narratives. I also discuss how an auto/biographical narrative methodology can generate knowledge by looking to those who have been epistemologically marginalized, silenced and disempowered (Denzin and Lincoln 1994). It challenges many traditional methodologies because it can focus on processes of social transformation, where knowledge is generated specifically for the purpose of addressing and ameliorating conditions of oppression. This is the point of the whole study.

Black students are at the core of the process, and an attempt is made to understand the world through their eyes, but also to use my own experience to interrogate what facilitates or hinders Black people in universities. The juxtaposition of auto/ and biography has to do with bringing myself firmly into the text, alongside the two students; the notion of auto/biography acknowledges the co-constructed nature of narratives; and by narrative, I mean the emphasis given to story-telling and to creating a good enough space where this can happen. I discuss how critical race methodology is then drawn on because it recognizes the experiential knowledge of Black people as legitimate, appropriate and critical to understanding, analysing and teaching about race and racial experience. As a Black female academic undertaking research with Black students in Higher Educational Institutions, I explore specifically how during the interview process, by sharing my own experiences with participants through storytelling, we can create collective transformational spaces, co-constructed knowledge about self, and a shared, deepening of our understandings about the role of race.

For so long 'others' have spoken for and on behalf of Black students and indeed for me as a Black academic; in this study I seek to hear an articulation of the students' voice. I wanted to place Black students at the core of the process, and to understand the world through their eyes, but also to use my own experience to interrogate what may facilitate or hinder Black student progress in universities. And, as stated, I address ethical issues in considering the research process as it impacts on those being researched and the researcher, not least for the researcher to be clear about her role, and in doing no harm to participants.

Relegating Race in Qualitative Enquiry

Before dealing with the specifics of auto/biographical narrative enquiry, it is important to provide a backcloth to the place of race in qualitative enquiry more generally, and its neglect. While there has been the occasional edited volume such as (Denzin and Lincoln 1994; 2011) the vast majority of qualitative method texts often tend to relegate race to theoretical footnotes and the occasional token chapter or special issue (Gunaratnam 2003; Lopez and Parker 2003). Consequently for Gillborn (2011) and Bhopal and Preston (2011), education research has rarely produced research that is participatory and transformative particularly with regard to Black students, their communities and their concerns related to social justice and educational empowerment. This has resulted in Black people seeing little substantial

change in their condition in the United Kingdom despite years of qualitative and scientifically acceptable research and numerous corresponding policies and policy changes that affect them (Bhopal and Preston 2011).

Thus scholars have raised questions about whether traditional methods are applicable or merely insufficient for studying racial and ethnic populations (Zinn 1979). Ethnic models of research that have managed to establish themselves in mainstream social science research often mirror the pathological and culture of poverty interpretations of Black people, reconfirming White hegemonic ideals (see Hylton 2011; and Stanfield 1994). As Pizarro (1998) argues, “Even the most innovative qualitative researchers tend to be overly concerned about standards—such as validity and reliability, embedded in the larger construct of objectivity—as they have been problematically and ethnocentrically defined within a positivist tradition” (p. 57).

Moreover, while most qualitative research method texts aim to provide readers with tools in conducting and evaluating qualitative research studies, scholars rarely question the validity or trustworthiness of these approaches (Lopez and Parker 2003). Even when they do, as in Rolfe’s (2006) study, absent from these texts is a critical discussion about race and racism, and an analysis of how race mediates the research process. There remains a serious gap in addressing race matters in qualitative research. As Stanfield (1994) argues, “Qualitative research methods textbooks and handbooks rarely touch on racialized ethnic diversity issues” (p. 177).

The history of qualitative research reveals that the modern social science disciplines have taken as their mission “the analysis and understanding of the patterned conduct and social processes of society” (Vidich and Lyman, 2000, p. 37). The notion that social scientists could carry out this task presupposed that they had the ability to observe this world objectively, and qualitative methods were perceived as a major tool of such observations. Leading Vidich and Lyman (2000) to state that, qualitative research in sociology and anthropology was “born out of concern to understand the ‘other’” (p. 38). However, Denzin and Lincoln (2007) write suspiciously about the onslaught of research whether quantitative or qualitative and how these have been used historically to define cultural norms and values from a Euro-centric perspective:

‘qualitative research, in many if not all of its forms (observation, participation, interviewing, ethnography), serves as a metaphor for colonial knowledge, for power, and for truth. The metaphor works this way. Research, quantitative and qualitative, is scientific. Research provides the foundation for reports about and representations of “the Other.” In the colonial context, research becomes an objective way of representing the dark-skinned Other to the white world. (Denzin and Lincoln 2007, p.2).

In tracing the beginnings of qualitative research Denzin and Lincoln (2007) highlight historical accounts when research has been used to stereotype; label and 'other' groups, communities and individuals. Examples from anthropology, such as Mead (1928), Malinowski (1967) and Radcliffe-Brown (1952) are offered as researchers who went to a foreign setting to study the culture customs and habit of another human group and to explain these from a Eurocentric perspective. "Colonizing nations relied on the human disciplines, especially sociology and anthropology to produce knowledge about strange and foreign worlds" (Denzin and Lincoln 2007, pp.2). Whilst Karenga (1993) writing from a North American perspective, but undoubtedly with application for a UK context, attests to the number of research undertaken on Black families and communities, with accompanying labels, citing as an example the famous 1965 Moynihan study which referred to black families as a "tangle of pathologies".

Thus since its early 20th-century birth in modern, interpretive forms, qualitative research has been haunted by a double-faced ghost states Denzin and Lincoln (2007). Qualitative researchers have assumed that qualified, competent observers can, with objectivity, clarity, and precision, report on their own observations of the social world, including the experiences of others. On the other hand, researchers have held to the belief in a real subject, or real individual, who is present in the world and able, in some form, to report on his or her experiences. So armed, researchers could blend their own observations with the self-report provided by subjects through interviews and life story, personal experience, and case study documents.

These two beliefs have led qualitative researchers across disciplines to seek a method that will allow them to record accurately their own observations while also uncovering the meanings their subjects bring to their life experiences. Such a method would rely on the subjective verbal and written expressions of meaning given by the individuals studied as windows into the inner lives of these persons. This search for a method has led to a perennial focus in the human disciplines on qualitative, interpretive methods and this position and its beliefs have come under assault (Gillborn 2011; Fine et al 2000). Thus, my turn to auto/biographical narrative enquiry.

Auto/biographical Narrative Methods a Brief History

Although there is a broad variety of approaches which comes under the umbrella of auto/biography (Denzin 1989), essentially for Sikes (2007) "auto/biographical research is research that starts from, and focuses on the personal and subjective perceptions and experiences of individual people". As such Marcus (1998) and Stanley (1992) see auto/biographical as clearly fitting between biography and autobiography because one necessarily impacts on the other and vice versa. In fact, Stanley (1992) states that the slash (/) between auto and biography is there to remind readers that any biographical writing is always mediated through the biography of the writer who interprets, analyses and re-

presents them. Similarly, Merrill and West (2009) states that "the term auto/biography draws attention to the inter-relationship between the constructions of one's own life through autobiography and the construction of the life of another through biography" (p.31).

As a subjective process, auto/biographical research has been reproached for its ability to selectively use information which fits into a certain kind of schemata or as Stanley (1992) states 'auto/biographical truths' where only certain events are reclaimed in the present. However, Stanley (1992) validates these 'auto/biographical truths' by providing examples of how in everyday life, incidents and stories are condensed and selectively undertaken without necessarily losing their essential qualities or values. The retelling of stories, a news item, a television documentary, a film, a chapter in a book, all these are of necessity selectively undertaken. However, the salient points are reiterated from the perception and pertinence of the teller; it is their interpretation of the truth that matters, alongside the theorising. Hence for Cassell and Symond (2004), "the very subjectivity of interpretation is its cornerstone" (p. 34) in that it adds meaning to the individual experiences and of their own interpretation of events in their lives. As Thomas (1923) stated if men (sic) define things as real, they are real in their consequences.

Psychologists such as Hastorf and Cantril (1954) attest to the inability of the human mind to remember every detail, and of its ability to recall through a process which operates selectively. Denscombe (2010) too states that the mind filters information it receives through selective perception which it lets in some and excluding others. Denscombe (2010) argues, what we experience is shaped by our perception, which is a process of selecting, organising and interpreting the world as we see. In auto/biography this perception may be influenced by the researcher's class, culture, gender and religion, however, "It is the interpretation of the auto/biographer which assigns consanguinity to them" (Stanley 1992, p.128). For example, West (2010) highlighted the difference in perception and interpretation between himself and a colleague. This concerned a mixed raced parentage man called N. Owing to N's 'deprived background' and associated experiences and challenges; West (2010) tended to perceive and attribute notions of deficit to the story-telling. His colleague on the other hand, had viewed N's religious faith; his multi-cultural background and support from significant others as rich in capital, as he could draw on these for future difficulties and in dealing with racist encounters. West put the difference down to his own psychological analysis as opposed to the socio-cultural interpretation of his colleague, who had personal experience derived from being racially different. West (2010) stated:

"Such auto/biographical sensibilities, alongside inter-disciplinarity, enabled more complex readings of the narratives to emerge. And there was a kind of post-positivistic scientific spirit in this, alongside the artistry, in the determination to engage with the messy complexity of the narrative material and our differing responses to it" (West 2010, p. 6).

These are often the challenges embodied in the representation of self and others, and indeed the exposé of the truth or 'auto/biographical truths' as Stanley (1992) coined it. If the mind is selective, and recall information is based on individual perception coloured by life experiences, it then is beholden to ask to what extent truth is represented in our stories or the stories we present of others. Or if indeed we should seek to represent 'the truth' at all. In trying to address this issue, Clandinin and Connelly (1994) imply "that all our stories are interpretation of 'a truth' because 'A story has a sense of being full, a sense of coming out of a personal and social history....People live stories and in the telling of them reaffirm them, modify them, and create new ones" (Clandinin and Connelly 1994, p. 415).

In this respect Gergen and Gergen (1988), Sikes (2006), and Andrews et al (2013), all attest to the propensity for auto/biographical narratives to locate the individual within a wider social context, thereby enabling better understanding of their personal and subjective experiences and perception.

'By focusing on narrative, we are able to investigate not just how stories are structured and the ways in which they work, but also who produces them and by what means; the mechanisms by which they are consumed; how narratives are silenced, contested or accepted and what, if any, effects they have'.
(Andrews et al 2013, p. 2).

And yet we should be careful of how this is undertaken and of our intent, as Sikes (2006) warns, our motives should be as researchers committed to social justice, rather than the relative ease of working with people who lack power and the opportunity to be pro-active in telling their stories. I chose narratives as my methodology, as a researcher committed to social justice, and giving voice to those unheard or usually silenced. In so doing Merrill and West (2009) point to the richness of this approach because of the opportunity to study the relationship between the individual and society, with a normative aim of exploring how social justice can be enhanced.

Generally speaking, auto/biographical narrative studies tend to focus on fewer people as they seek to explore in-depth issues in gaining understanding, of how and why individuals respond to or perceive a given situation or a phenomenon. They are concerned with exploring and identifying the full range of issues related to a phenomenon (Curry et al, 2009). Simons states that such narrative case studies offer "an in-depth exploration from multiple perspectives of the complexity and uniqueness of a particular project, policy, institution, programme or system in a 'real life' context" (p. 21). Others such as Shaw (1930), Frank (2000) and Steffensmeierer (1986) demonstrated that even a single case study can provide substantial validity, in producing rich accounts of subjectivity in understanding a given situation or circumstances.

Steffensmeierer's (1986) single case study of a dealer in stolen goods known as 'the fence' provide useful insights into the relationships between 'the fence' and groups and individuals in society, with a wealth of information on the behaviour of 'the fence' in terms of the skills

required for his job. Similarly, Shaw's story of a delinquent boy entitled 'The Jack Roller' (1930), also provides insight into delinquency, from the perspective of a youth who attested to the material environment, and financial poverty shadowing his survival and contributing to his continued criminality. Finally Frank's (2000) single study of a disabled woman incorporates a friendship spanning some twenty years where the researcher pens her own initial stereotyping of what it means to be 'othered' and how through the process of the research she was made to revisit and confront her assumptions of the ability of those considered 'disabled'. Frank (2000) is transparent in addressing ethical issues in forming a personal friendship with Diane DeVries the subject of her study. These three examples suggest that the numbers of case studies is not a deciding factor in order to shed light on a given phenomenon: it is the depth of illumination and the verisimilitude of the material as well as how we relate this to a wider literature.

Wilmot (2005) asserts: "a phenomenon only needs to happen once to be of value" (p. 4). Since much has been written on increasing numbers of Black students in universities and their experiences (see chapter two) I wanted to explore this through a small but in-depth narrative study. This would enable an exploration of the phenomenon of being a Black student in university illuminated through the 'lived' experience of Zara and Gail, a process of illumination often missing in larger samples (Reid and West 2014). Wilmot (2005); Crouch and McKenzie (2006) and Reid and West (2014) speak of the benefits small samples provide, affording in-depth studies, and rich insights into the breadth and depth of experience and perspectives. The phenomenon would not be satisfactorily addressed through a larger study, using, for instance questionnaires, and much of the in-depth nature of qualitative research would be lost.

Mason (2010) in highlighting the benefits of small samples studies states that more interviews does not necessarily lead to more information, this is because one occurrence or a phenomenon:

"is all that is necessary to ensure that it becomes part of the analysis framework. Frequencies are rarely important in qualitative research, as one occurrence of the data is potentially as useful as many in understanding the process behind a topic. This is because qualitative research is concerned with meaning and not making generalised hypothesis statements" (Mason 2010, p. 1)

According to Bolívar and Domingo (2006), biographies encapsulate feelings and desires; with an insight into the personal lives through finding out what happened and why and how it was dealt with. It can provide a platform to tell stories of those belonging to marginalised community and group 'and give rise to their concern' (Merrill and West 2009, p. 179) usually absent in mainstream and traditional work.

Rosenthal (1993) states:

“that while the life history is being narrated to the interviewer (who plays the role of the interested and empathetic listener), the latter does not interrupt the main narrative, but encourages the biographer by means of non-verbal and paralinguistic expressions of interest and attention” (Rosenthal 1993, p. 60).

In contrasting traditional interviews with those of narrative interviews, Mishler (1999) and Gubrium and Holstein (2011) view the former as limiting because it suppresses stories either by ‘training’ the interviewee to limit answers to short statements, or by interrupting narratives when they do occur. On the other hand, the benefits of narratives lie in the potential to transform the interview where respondents are valued for their wealth of experiences and are actively rather than passively involved. Thus, I perceive that by asking Gail and Zara to tell me the story of their lives, this might be empowering given the freedom and the lack of inherent control in the interviews. This could afford opportunities to choose and highlight aspects they considered worthy of emphasising, without my prompting, or in essence, steering the narrative process.

Where Black students have been marginalised, misrepresented and misunderstood, storytelling can act as a powerful tool, and can even have therapeutic benefits in terms of facilitating self-preservation. Zara and Gail, as will be shown, were able to tell their stories from their own perspectives and in order of significance and the priority they chose. They constructed “narratives out of the historical, socio-cultural and political realities of their lives (Ladson-Billings 2006: p, 11). For Bhattacharyya (1998) narratives also contributes to the healing the wounds of history and daily racism, whilst for Merrill and West (2009) “storytelling offer rich insights into the dynamic interplay of individuals and history, inner and outer worlds, self and others” (p. 1). As well as constructing the stories of marginalised people, narratives help us understand how traditional ways of research serve to limit the educational opportunities of Black students. Through their stories, Zara and Gail can turn margins into places of “transformative resistance” (Solorzano and Yosso, 2001), and we can “theorize about the social life through these use of stories” (Silverman 1998, p. 111). As West (2016) stated “writing is a creative art, an aesthetic to do justice both to the personal and the academic and bring narrative coherence and integrity to the complex experience. It is an act of making meaning rather than simply the record of conclusions” (p.45). As such, in representing the lives of Zara and Gail, I identified myself within the process as a novelist, a social scientist, a social justice advocate and more.

Using Critical Race Theory

One of the tenets of critical race theory in education is the importance and centrality of narratives and counter-narratives, or stories—particularly stories “told by people of colour” (Lopez, 2003, p. 84). From critical race theory perspectives, knowledge can and should be generated through the narratives and counter-narratives that emerge from Black people. Critical race theorists argue that narrative and counter-narrative should be captured by the researcher, experienced by the research participants, and told by Black people.

Critical race theory’s advancement of the narrative and counter-narrative centralizes race for the knower and for the known. In other words, race and racism are placed at the centre of the narrative and counter-narrative in critical race theory. Thus, as Ladson-Billings and Tate (1995) explained, “A theme of ‘naming one’s own reality’ or ‘voice’ is entrenched in the work of critical race theorists” (p. 57). Whilst Solorzano and Yosso (2001) explained that critical race theory in education works to “challenge . . . dominant ideology” (p. 2) and to centralize “experiential knowledge” (p. 3). Emphasis and value are placed on knowledge construction, on naming one’s own reality, and on the multiple and varied voices and vantage points of Black people, thus Black communities are empowered to tell stories often much different from the ones that have been portrayed in the past (Chapman, 2007). Dixson and Rousseau (2005) described the importance of voice and narrative in their review. They wrote that voice concerns “the assertion and acknowledgement of the importance of the personal and community experiences of people of colour as sources of knowledge” (p. 10).

Similarly, Ladson-Billings (1998) wrote that “the use of voice or ‘naming your reality’ is a way that critical race theory links form and substance in scholarship” (p. 12). Indeed, the stories of those considered by the dominant culture (and others) to be at the bottom—in many instances, Black students and Black researchers— “illustrate how race and racism continue to dominate our society” (Bell 1992, p. 144). Such narratives need to be told but often have been dismissed, trivialized, or misrepresented in education research. CRT places particular importance on the voices and experiences of Black people; their insights into the operation of discrimination and their understanding of being racially minoritised. As Ladson-Billings (2006: p, 9) states, ‘it enables the constructing of narratives out of the historical, socio-cultural and political realities of the lives of Black people by places a high emphasis on the voices and experience of marginalised people through telling their stories’.

It is not assumed that their accounts represent one singular truth or reality rather that their position at the margins of society means they will be able to make an especially insightful contribution (Gillborn 2009). Such accounts sometimes take the form of story-telling or counter-narrative and may be semi-autobiographical or allegorical in nature. As a tool, story-telling can act as a powerful means of enabling racially minoritised groups to ‘speak back’ about racism and facilitate ‘psychic preservation’. CRT scholars are not making up stories – they are constructing narratives out of the historical, socio-cultural and political realities of their lives and those of Black people of (Ladson-Billings 2006: xi). Storytelling, according to

(Rollock 2012), has potential to act as a persuasive and potentially transformative tool to challenge liberal racist ideology. Stories then can be a powerful way of providing information about how racism operates in society as well as the intricate ways in which Black people challenge dominant narratives.

Drawing on the lived experiences of Black people, critical race theorists seek to document the voices of marginalized people as well as centre social transformation. Placing the marginalized at the centre of analysis (Gillborn 2011) these approaches allow us to capture stories and narratives of marginalized people as well as to understand how traditional ways of research serve to limit the educational opportunities of Black people and turn margins into places of “transformative resistance” (Solorzano and Yosso, 2001).

As such, stories of the oppressed can illuminate the material and social conditions that provide a means to make social change (Freire, 1970), empowering the storyteller as well as those who listen (Delgado 1989). As Black people our stories are often untold—the assertion of our subjectivity as creators and interpreters of texts is a political act (Lawrence 1995). Stories also provide new insights into analysing the role of academia for those that have been marginalized, silenced, and disempowered (Denzin and Lincoln 1994).

Narrative inquiry is an old practice that may feel new to us for a variety of Reasons. Human beings have lived out and told stories about that living for as long as we could talk. And then we have talked about the stories we tell for almost as long. These lived and told stories and the talk about the stories are one of the ways that we fill our world with meaning and enlist one another’s assistance in building lives and communities. What feels new is the emergence of narrative methodologies in the field of social science research. With this emergence has come intensified talk about stories, their functions in our lives and their place in composing our collective affairs
(Clandinin and Rosiek 2007, p. 35 -36).

A story can have a sense of being full, a sense of coming out of a personal and social history. Furthermore, states Clandinin and Connelly (1994) ‘Experience is the stories people live. People live stories and in the telling of them reaffirm them, modify them, and create new ones’ (p. 415). Referring to sociologists, but, undoubtedly with application for other disciplines, Silverman (1998) suggests that, ‘all we sociologists have are stories. Some come from other people, some from us. What matters is to understand how and where the stories are produced, which sort of stories they are, and how we can put them to intelligent use in theorizing about social life’ (, p. 111).

My use of stories, as part of an auto/biographical narrative methodology, combined with a critical race theoretical repertoire, provides a venue, I suggest, for Zara and Gail to voice their knowledge and lived experiences. Participants are able to not only tell their stories by reflecting on their experiences but can also make them public. Further, storytelling has a rich

history in African American (Bell 1996; Banks-Wallace 2002; Stinson 2008); African (Champion 2002; Reitmaier et al 2011; Finnegan 2012; Tobin 2008); and Caribbean (Creighton 2009; Bridgewater and Buzzanell 2010); communities, and the tradition of storytelling about oppression can guide the marginalized through understanding that oppression, thus serving as a means of healing.

Storytelling appears to have been important in African and African-Caribbean cultures, over time, and as a way of communicating experience and retaining connections between past, present and possible futures. Through storytelling, questions were answered, history was conveyed, and lifelong lessons were taught and learned, essentially this art emerge from our African ancestors. When Africans were brought to the Caribbean during the infamous slave trade, the slavers denied them many of the traditions they had practiced for thousands of centuries. The enslaved African was refused all connections with their rich African past, and their names, which had substance and meaning, was taken away. Additionally, they were refused the right to pray to theirs gods or to speak their native language. Those who survived the horrors of the Middle Passage, the route travelled by the slave ships across the Atlantic from West Africa to the Caribbean (West Indies), brought with them the clothes on their backs and the stories they had listened to and told in the motherland—Africa. And they told those stories (Taylor 2000). As a result, contemporary African-Caribbean and African communities and societies, in spite of some dilutions, erosions, intrusions, and disappearance, can celebrate several African cultural forms and social traditions. These features are still celebrated in African and Caribbean communities in the UK today, and may be familiar to Zara and Gail.

According to Creighton (2009) the ‘Crick Crack’ storytelling performance has its variants in different Caribbean countries. It is a group performance in which the ‘audience’ participates and there are close connections between performers and audience to the extent that the two almost become one. It has the African format of a leader and chorus in which the participants are both chorus and audience, participating in elements and parts of the whole storytelling session. Always, these stories have great entertainment value, but it is part of the African tradition that have become parts of the fabric of Caribbean society that they have so much social and cultural significance and play roles in the lives of the people well beyond their existence as performance and entertainment according to Hamilton (2013). Thus the telling of stories serves many purposes for Black people. Storytelling serves as a powerful means of survival and liberation. Storytelling not only exposes and subverts the dominant discourse but also serves several theoretical, pedagogical, and methodological purposes (Fernandez, 2002; Solorzano and Yosso, 2001). First, stories (or more specifically, counter-stories) build a sense of community among those at the margins of society by providing a space to share their sense of reality and experiences. Stories build consensus, a common culture of shared understandings. Second, counter-stories challenge dominant ideology. They can teach people about how we construct both story and reality.

So, to summarise, and drawing on feminist perspectives, there are three ways in which storytelling may serve to guide researchers when conducting research with, for instance, Black students. First, storytelling serves as a means to build deeper and more meaningful relationships with participants. Second, through storytelling, the researcher may disrupt discriminatory messages that Black students may receive, at universities, particularly in predominantly White settings. Last, storytelling serves as a means for both researchers and participants to carve out spaces to share personal experiences about discrimination and prejudice, but also of resilience and aspiration. As Black researchers, when conducting research, we can draw on our particular racialised experiences, and through sharing our stories with marginalized students we can show empathy, allowing for participants to express themselves as racialised beings. Sharing these experiences, not only help students cope with discrimination and stereotyping, but also provides a space to affirm resilience; aspiration and the lived experiences and knowledge of Black students. The telling and sharing of stories also provides a safe space. These spaces offer a place to resist, reflect, and to recuperate to reinforce Black students resilience and aspirations. In Fine and Weis' (1996) words:

they are not just a set of geographic/spatial arrangements, they are theoretical, analytic, and spatial displacements— a crack, fissure in an organization or a community. Not rigidly bounded by walls/fences, the spaces often are corralled by a series of (imaginary) borders where community intrusion and state surveillance are not permitted. These are spaces where trite social stereotypes are fiercely contested. That is, these young women and men, in their constant confrontation with harsh public representations of their races, ethnicities, classes and genders, use these spaces to break down these public images for scrutiny, and to invent new ones. (p. 261).

A Meeting Point between Theory and Method

Critical race theory and an auto/biographical narrative methodology thus complement each other. In education they offer a way to chronicle and theorise the experiences of Black people along the education pipeline (Gillborn 2011 and Hylton 2012). Such a methodology generates knowledge by looking to those who have been epistemologically marginalized, silenced and disempowered (Denzin and Lincoln 1994). It challenges traditional methodologies because it requires us to develop “theories of social transformation wherein knowledge is generated specifically for the purpose of addressing and ameliorating conditions of oppression, poverty or deprivation” (Lincoln 193, p. 33). It pushes us to humanize quantitative data and to recognize silenced voices in qualitative data. (Solórzano and Yosso (2002; Gillborn et al 2012).

Racialized discourses, and ethnic epistemologies is not merely to “colour” the scholarship, but rather it is to challenge the hegemonic structures (and symbols) that keep injustice and inequity in place (Ladson-Billings 2000). As Anzaldúa (1998) eloquently explains, some of this

knowledge has been kept from us— entry into some professions and academia denied us. Because we are not allowed to enter discourse, because we are often disqualified and excluded from it, because what passes for theory these days is forbidden territory for us, “it is vital that we occupy theorizing space, that we not allow white men and women solely to occupy it. By bringing in our own approaches and methodologies, we transform that theorizing space.” (p. xxv). Racialized discourse and ethnic epistemologies are not about dismissing the work of European and Euro-American scholars, rather they are about deciding the limits of such scholarship (Hylton et al 2011).

‘Any scholarship that does not convey the Eurocentric order of knowledge has been continuously rejected on the grounds that it does not constitute credible science. Science is, in this sense, not a simple apolitical study of truth, but the reproduction of racial power relation that defines what counts as true and in whom to believe. The themes, paradigms and methodologies of traditional scholarship, the so-called epistemology reflect not a diverse space for theorization, but a rather specific political interest of White society. It determines which questions merit to be questioned (schemes), how to analyse and explain a phenomenon (paradigms), and how to conduct research to produce knowledge (methods), and in this sense defines not only what true scholarship is, but also whom to believe and whom to trust. But defines which questions merit being asked? Who is asking them? Who is explaining them and to whom are the answers directed.
(Kilomba 2010, p. 16)

As Pillow (2003) argues, race-based or race sensitive methodologies, as in the case of auto/biographical narrative enquiry, can recognize that “how we conduct research is intimately connected to the kinds of questions we ask, how we ask them, and for what purpose, and that the processes of doing research cannot be disconnected from epistemologies that guide our research” (p. 187). Such methodologies often focus on different questions, add new information, and they not only shift our thinking about research issues or subjects but also challenge normative, hegemonic frameworks. Therefore in auto/biographical narrative enquiry, framed by critical race understandings, the concept of the aloof objective researcher is abandoned as the focus is more on action, participatory, and activist-oriented research and therefore the view that the push from Black scholars is to raise the bar of qualitative inquiry (Hylton 2011; Ladson-Billings 2000).

We must also continue to challenge ourselves beyond theory and keep in mind that “there are no simple universally applicable answers to the questions of social justice, such questions must be continuously asked, from various locales” (McLaren, 1993, p. 16). Ladson-Billings and Donnor (2005) raise the following question: “Is it enough to follow protocols for human subjects?” (p. 290). And Ladson-Billings (2000) and Gunaratnam (2003) argues, that this is a

minimalist standard and that as scholars we have to strive to be inclusive of the moral and ethical action that must be taken.

Similarly in education research, 'the adoption and practice of colour-blind and culture-blind research epistemologies and approaches can potentially lead to the dangers of exploitation and a misrepresentation of individuals and Black communities' (Milner 2007, p. 392). An alternative methodology challenges, in such terms, traditional research paradigms, text, and theories used to explain the experiences of Black students, further it exposes deficit-informed research and methods that silence and distort the experiences of Black people, and instead focuses on their racialized, gendered and classed experiences as sources of strength (Solorzano 1995; Hylton 2011; Gillborn 2008). In comparison ethnic models of research that have managed to establish themselves in mainstream social science research often mirror the pathological and culture of poverty interpretations of Black students and communities, reconfirming White hegemonic ideals (Anderson, 1978 as referenced in Stanfield, 1994).

The issue of validity and reliability is taken up by Pizarro (1998) who sees it as something qualitative researchers are overly concerned about when set in the context of objectivity, "as they have been problematically and ethnocentrically defined within a positivist tradition" (p. 57). Or as Hylton using Denzin et al (2009) argues:

Those researchers that advocate neutrality and objectivity, aligned to conventional views of validity and reliability may not agree that they could be reinforcing racialized inequalities by tolerating only certain forms of knowledge. In relation to neutrality and objectivity, CRT has been critical of mainstream methodologies for being apolitical, and reinforcing oppressions whilst subordinating the voices and values of those rendered invisible through conventional modes of thinking. (Hylton 2012, p. 4)

Harding (1987) on the other hand makes the analogy with freedom and democracy, insinuating that these concepts cannot be objectively and legitimately conceptualised one way. Arguing that: "There is not just one legitimate way to conceptualize objectivity, any more than there is only one way to conceptualise freedom, democracy, or science. The notion of objectivity has valuable political and intellectual histories; as it is transformed into 'strong objectivity' by the logic of standpoint epistemologies . . . Might should not make right in the realm of knowledge production any more than in matters of ethics". (p. 138)

Sandelowski (1993) similarly rejected reliability as a useful measure of quality in qualitative research in favour of validity or trustworthiness, and cautioning scepticism of the positivist notion that validity can be achieved by the rigorous application of method or technique. A view also shared by Mishler (1990) that 'validation is less a technical problem than a deeply theoretical one', and is ultimately 'a matter of judgement' (Sandelowski 1993, p. 2). Similarly

Rolfe (2006) stated that validity is achieved through consensus on each individual study rather than by the blanket application of predetermined criteria.

A critical race methodology challenges the traditional claims that educational institutions make towards objectivity, meritocracy, colour-blindness, race neutrality and equal opportunities. Critical race scholars argue that these traditional claims act as a camouflage for the self-interest, power and privilege of dominant groups. It challenges White privilege, reject notions of 'neutral' research or 'objective researchers', and exposed deficient-informed research that silences and distorts epistemologies of Black people (Delgado Bernal 1998), and thus is a response to the question raised by Zinn (1979) as to whether traditional methods are applicable or merely insufficient for studying racial and ethnic populations). A CRT framework addresses the reproduction of established practices that make up the way types of research have been traditionally carried out; it does so by reflecting the experiences of Black people without passively borrowing from traditional research (Hylton 2012).

Bringing Gail and Zara into the text

Due to the sensitivity of the research topic, my aim had been to reach out to students who I hope would display a level of comfort and transparency in talking about such issues, but who I also felt, were capable of refusing to engage in the research. As stated previously, I had taught Zara, so felt a certain level of ease in approaching her. Gail was a student I met once where she made a statement openly, that in three months at the university she had experienced more racism than in her total eighteen years of life. I reasoned that because Gail had made such a comment she may be predisposed to talking about her experiences at university. Zara, on the other hand, who I identified as being somewhat quiet, could use this medium as a platform and a voice to be more proactive in her experiences of university. These were my judgements in approaching Gail and Zara.

Both Zara and Gail suggested others who might also be interested in participating and they provided the names of two males and one female. These were followed up with telephone conversations where the two males showed further interest after discussing the research; and a face to face meeting agreed at their convenience (this involvement by Zara and Gail contributed in serving to redress some of the status; power differential and hierarchy between the researcher and the researched). Collaboratively undertaken I rationalised that the identifying of others demonstrated Zara and Gail's comfort level and interest in the topic and commitment to the research. Since it was they who suggested, provided names and contact details of the other students they felt might be interested. I assumed that the two males may also be comfortable discussing their experiences at university.

Subsequently four students agreed to be part of the study, two males and two females; equally split from Caribbean and African backgrounds representing two types of universities (with high and low Black student intake). One student had to travel back to his country of origin due to a severe road accident, and the other student decided that he no longer wished

be involved. However due to the nature of auto/biographical narrative inquiry I felt that an in-depth study of the two remaining female students would provide an invaluable and insightful understanding of their experiences and probably different dynamics.

Moreover, as already suggested, I did not want to assume the role of the researcher where according to Merrill and West (2009): “there is presumption that the researcher has more and better knowledge” (p. 185). Therefore, I did not set out to conduct the interview in a question and answer style, although I identified some broad issues (mentioned above) as being pertinent for the research. Rather my aim as Mishler (1986) suggests was to conduct the interview more as a conversation between two equals, as a basis for storytelling. A space where according to Douglas (1985) the hierarchy is removed as both the interviewer and interviewee share information and a common ground, and where the space becomes more comfortable (Cook and Fonow 1986; Ellis et al 1997; Ellis and Berger 2002). Further from a feminist perspective the research space can become a place of resistance and resilience, and an opportunity to share our experiences as Black women.

Zara and I had several conversations regarding availability of time, and place for the interviews, though presenting a number of options I nonetheless left Zara to make the final decision regarding choice of venues. Thereby setting out to empower her from the initial stages by facilitating her choice and decisions about all aspect of the interview, including whether she wanted to continue, withdraw, or interrupt the session. To this end a university, a library and a restaurant were chosen. In total there were three interviews lasting between one and a half to two hours. Similarly with Gail there were three interviews lasting between one and a half to two hours. Gail too was instrumental in deciding the place and time as dictated by her availability. One interview took place at a London library, for the other two Gail chose the university campus because it was most convenient for her.

How the Three Central Narratives Were Analysed in Relation to Each Other

In the case of my own auto/biographical narrative material, I wrote reflexively, to bring myself into the text. The writing evolved over the period of the study: partly shaped by the process of engaging with the lives of Gail and Zara, and to help me think through the ideas that were shaping, in turn, the development of the thesis itself. I wrote regularly, and in free flowing associative ways. I wanted to create a space with and for Zara and Gail to share their stories, and where appropriate to draw mine alongside theirs, as we identified similarities and differences as Black women.

Although I anticipated some similarities between Zara, Gail and myself by virtue of gender, race and aspects of our cultures, I also thought there might be some differences and disparities which if unchecked could affect the interview process. I was acutely aware of the power differential and the possible influence of the research dynamics, for example the mere

presence of the ‘researcher’ and ‘the researched’ could be deemed problematic in that it could denote hierarchy. There was also the added dimension of ‘lecturer’ and ‘student’ and the impact this could have on how both Zara and Gail responded. As an academic I may be perceived as the holder of knowledge and experience in comparison to them, this could be disempowering and restrict their involvement and comfort level or even act as a barrier for their story telling (Merrill and West, 2009). There was too the difference of the older female researcher and younger female students. I recognized that I needed to be aware of these power dynamics between us and also of my propensity to take on a ‘parenting role’ to shield Zara and Gail from the ramification of what they may reveal. Therefore I was aware of the researcher’s impact on the interview, something that Reid and West (2010) warn of, both in terms of shaping the interview, albeit unconsciously, and of the power inherent in such a relationship.

I did not want to speak for Zara and Gail they already possessed the necessary prerequisites to do this, nor did I want them to feel that they were in the presence of “mother figure”, thereby engendering unequal power relations. Maple and Edwards (2010) acknowledged “the emotional energy and resilience on the part of the researcher to remain with the participant and the story, even when it is agonizing, and for the researcher to find attachment in order to gain understanding, yet do so in a way that she does not lose herself” (p.44). And West (2016) stated

people are not simply aggregates of certain sociological or epidemiological variables. They are living beings with stories to tell of what it feels like to exist in particular conditions or in some of the stories, to experience disrespect. Their aspirations and narratives have validity in their own terms, however difficult and distasteful these might be. Understanding lives from the inside requires time and what I term a psychosocial, historical and educational imagination to interpret what people say (West 2016, p 37)

Using the Pro Forma

I engaged with the material by listening first, then identifying themes, often listening and reading again and checking out what I was finding with my collaborators. I was mindful of West’s (2016) statement that “auto/biographical narrative research is serious business. It ask a great deal of the researcher – they have to think, for instance of the interplay between their life and the agenda in their encounter with others” (p. 36). Armed with the research questions in mind, my supervisor and I used West’s analytical proforma (Merrill and West 2009) pro forma as a shared exercise and as an opportunity for me to learn about its potential. We drew out themes in Zara and Gail stories of critical incidents; and considered the quality of the process; the setting or ethnography of the interviews and any over-arching theme, or gestalt, that might help make sense of the fragments. Included in the ethnographic thinking is the circumstances of the interview, including interruptions, and general impressions of the

setting and what might have been happening, where it took place and the impact this could have on the interview. I also drew on academic literature to illuminate theories in enabling better understanding of issues and situations as they presented themselves. 'It required attentiveness and the ability to wait for an overarching gestalt or unifying form to emerge, so as to make better sense of the fragments' (West 2016). So, the gestalt for example can have something to do with deficits, 'being othered', racism, and isolation in the university campus and of how this is play out. As Merrill and West (2009) states, the intention behind the pro forma is to develop a way of recording and reflexively considering key issues in interviews, in relation to a particular person, in a more standardised format. It is therefore crucial to immerse ourselves in the material and to allow it to work on us and us on it. The basic idea is to explore, iteratively, key themes, and any interpretative and conceptual issues raised, alongside bringing into play relevant literatures, and auto/biographical resonances. According to Merrill and West (2009), the point is to be inclusive and to use the document as an evolving, living text, seeking to create understanding of the material as a whole and the potential inter-relationship between different parts of the narrative. "The pro forma provides a kind of transitional, playful and textual space in which to identify and develop themes and consider the process, including its effect on me and the likely collaborators". (West 2016, p. 43).

As well as the themes, the pro forma is used to consider the process of the interview and observations about the nature of the interaction, including issues of power and possible unconscious processes. What is not being said, and how can this be understood? It includes any reflections on the quality and richness of the narrative material. As I reflected on the interviews and reread the transcripts, using the pro forma, I began to see similarities in the stories of Zara and Gail, on certain issues, and indeed my own, for example on the role of family culture in expecting educational excellence and forwardness without the necessary involvement or articulation of its children. Others were of resilience, education, racism, marginalisation, isolation, stereotyping and discrimination. Whether it is the status of a student or that of an academic, as Black individuals we knew and expressed what it was to be 'othered', and shared it in that safe space we created. For us as women, these were "filtered through the lenses of language, gender, social class, race, and ethnicity" (Denzin and Lincoln 1998, p. 24) and intersectionality.

Intersectionality

I sought to use ideas about intersectionality in my interrogation of the narrative material: no person has a single, simplistic unitary identity. 'Intersectionality' speaks to an understanding of the complex and multiple ways in which various systems of subordination can come together at the same time (Crenshaw 1995; Gillborn 2005). Introduced by Crenshaw (1989) 'intersectionality' was used to reduce the identification of Black women to just one category, and to acknowledge how race, class and gender can act as a multiple oppressor for Black women. Because so often when we talk about race, class, gender and many other social attributes of an individual, it is as though they are a single 'stand-alone' issue. However our

day to day lives are much more complex than that. Intersectionality acknowledges that race, class, gender, religion, sexuality, religion, education, citizenship status, and geographic location all interact with each other. According to Wright (2013):

Intersectionality analysis was created by Black feminist as an attempt to counter work by feminists to 'homogenize women's situation' (Yuval-Davis 2011). It developed as an integrated analysis of interlocking systems of oppression and specifically the intersections of race, gender, class, and social class in the lives of Black women. In essence, the approach examines the ways in which race, gender and so on intersect to affect social behaviour or people's lives (p.4).

For Brah and Phoenix (1994); and hooks (1990), there was a need for Black feminism to challenge and deconstruct the concept of 'woman' and to find a space where issues of race, gender and class amongst others was addressed. In so doing Brah and Phoenix (2004) highlighted the amalgamation of 'Black women' (Asians, African and African-Caribbean) in the UK through political coalitions, challenging the essentialist connotations of racism.

"This particular project of Black British feminism was forged through the work of local women's organisations around issues such as wages and conditions of work, immigration law, fascist violence, reproductive rights, and domestic violence. By 1978, local groups had combined to form a national body called the Organisation of Women of Asian and African Descent (OWAAD). This network held annual conferences, published a newsletter, and served as an active conduit for information, intellectual conversations and political mobilisation. The ensuing dialogue entailed sustained analysis of racism, class, and gender with much debate as to the best means of confronting their outcomes whilst remaining alive to cultural specificities" (Brah and Phoenix 2004, p.78).

Gillborn (2011) too argues that race and class inequalities cannot be understood fully in isolation; media and historical perspectives need to be taken into consideration in enabling a better understanding of how race and class is generated and promoted in the media and through historical context. In discussing the failure of 'global sisterhood' Brah and Phoenix (2004) takes into account the power relations that separates our historical, cultural and social experience. They stated:

"that dimension for social life (economic, political, cultural, psychic, subjective and experiential) cannot be divided into singular realms of analysis, but must be addressed in accordance with their contradictory and conflictual relations to each other". (p. 80)

Bhopal and Preston (2011) examination of the intersections of race, gender and class, seeks to broaden the understanding of education research beyond the confines of the education sphere into an arena of sociological and cultural discourse. This is supported by Hancock (2007a) who conceptualise intersectionality as a 'paradigm' rather than a 'contents specialisation' therefore it should be theorised as a paradigm, which includes 'normative theory and empirical research (Hancock 2007a, p. 251). According to Hancock (2007a) these paradigms are characterised by several key assumptions, such as class, gender and race which plays a role in shaping lived experience. These categories are the effect of individual and structural influences, which interact with each other to produce political 'reality'. Thus for Hancock (2007a) a conceptualisation of intersectionality is a sufficiently inclusive definition because it acknowledges intersectionality as both a theory and a research method. Davis too attest that:

Intersectionality addresses the most central theoretical and normative concern within feminist scholarship: namely the acknowledgement of differences among women. In doing so, intersectionality brings together two significant aspects of feminist thinking; firstly, the impact of race, class and gender (and other intersections) on women's lives, and how relations of power are produced and transformed through this interaction within women's lives and experiences. Secondly it offers support for the deconstruction of binaries, normalisation theories and homogenizing categories while simultaneously offering a platform which can address the concerns of all women (Davis 2008, p.71-72).

Therefore, it is through intersectionality that we may be able to consider our inter-subjectivities; that the categories through which we are defined are interlocked in constant negotiation; and that who we are is never a pre-given reality, but constructed, performed, enacted, and filtered through structured discursive formation. Intersectionality then can be described as the hierarchical nature of power and how belonging to multiple discriminated classes, for example (race, class, gender) can mean that these multiple discrimination can be ignored, by choosing of importance one instead. It is here that Zara, Gail and I shared our experiences of similarity and differences in respect of racism, class (deficits) and gender as students and academic. It is here I was able to identify and be cautious of the power differential between us in relation to class and status, but also in acknowledging the similarities of our stories. According to Peterson (2006):

There is a serious need to examine the experiences of individuals within Intersecting oppressions.....doing so will allow a critical examination of how our thought and actions may uphold another's subordination. From this perspective the potential for social change lies in understanding the multi-dimensional nature of oppression (p 721).

Thus I took the necessary steps in embodying an approach where Zara and Gail felt independent and contributed to the research as they felt comfortable. Zara, Gail and myself, all experienced racism and within that, class issues as related to our race and place in the society and university, and sexism, by the fact that as Black women especially, we continually fight to be accepted and acknowledged for our contributions made in education and beyond. Adopting an intersectional framework allows for the exploration of differences within and between Zara, Gail and myself to acknowledge how race, class and gender can act as a multiple oppressor for Black women as we interact with each other.

How the Interview with Equality and Diversity Managers Were Formulated and How This Material Relates to Other Material in the Thesis

The work carried out by Equality and Diversity managers were likely to include: researching, applying and promoting diversity initiatives and sharing best practice; providing advice, guidance and support on equality and diversity issues; developing systems for reporting any incidents of discrimination; raising awareness in university; dealing with conflict within the university; interacting with people at all levels and from a wide of backgrounds; responding to complaints and providing information on options for complainants; maintaining an up-to-date knowledge of anti-discriminatory legislation; translating equality legislation into practice to ensure organisations meet statutory requirements; writing, implementing and reviewing policy at corporate and service level; presenting reports and recommendations; preparing and delivering presentations and workshops to staff, stakeholders and partner organisations.

It was because of their involvement in the fields above I decided to interview two E&D managers at their respective institutions, each interview lasting one and a half hours. The aim was to explore the extent to which the Equality and Diversity Managers (E&D managers) believe that their organisations are fulfilling their obligations, and whether they experienced any internal or external barriers. I initially wanted to know how the E&D managers became involved in this type of work. My rationale for doing so was to find out if there was a personality or character trait that drew specific types of individuals to this role, perhaps a political or social justice underpinning. I also wanted to compare and contrast the response from the Zara and Gail with the E&D managers in relation to equalities and diversity issues at universities. By definition E&D Managers have a responsibility as specified in their job roles to seek to address and eliminate discriminatory issues in universities. I was also aware that they come into contact with many students in relation to discriminatory issues amongst others. Therefore my three research questions, although I had slightly amended the first question in order to elicit a more targeted response. Question 1. Now being: In your opinion what are the factors that encourage or discourage a successful university experience and how do you think this is understood by Black students? 2. What factors discouraged progression and retention? 3. How might university cultures and subcultures better enhance the development of Black students?

I decided to use a more semi-structured than narrative approach with the E&D managers, although I applied the pro forma here too. The E&D managers would freely give of their knowledge and valued expertise in relaying an understanding of the issues, for the students' institutions and their own role. This approach would invariably put the E&D managers in the driving seat, so to speak, by allowing them to tell their story of working in a university institution within the context of policy making and practices. It reduces the hierarchy between the interviewee and the interviewer as demonstrated in the two way process of narratives (hooks 1995) and further it does not suppress the story of the interviewee (Mishler 1999; Holstein 2011).

Ethical Issues

'The actual experience of doing research is often troubled and troubling as well as potentially empowering for the researcher and their subject. We need to be mindful of boundaries and limitations, in addition to the potential illuminative power of what we do. (West 2016, p. 42).

As part of my research procedure, I had go through the process of seeking approval from The Education Faculty Research Ethics Review, where I had to outline the possible ethical issues involved in the project; potential risks for participants and how these risks were to be addressed (see appendix 4). I did not perceive specific ethical issues other than those that accompany biographical narrative research more generally, such as the need for respectfulness, and sensitive management of interviews, confidentiality and anonymity issues. Yet the possibility of studying sensitive topics has the potential to arouse feelings of distress, and this was an area that I grappled with being fully aware that my research, from an ethical standpoint should seek to 'do no harm' as a consequence of Zara and Gail's participation, yet recognising its propensity to do harm. This may well have been a consideration in the second male decision not to participate since he did not elaborate further and we did not meet face to face as previously agreed. He may have felt vulnerable; alternatively as the only male student now participating with a researcher he had not yet met, he may have perceived the process as uncomfortable. Moriarty reminds us that:

A fine judgment is needed to balance the potential value of the research against the risk of causing distress. Sensitive approaches to data gathering, ensuring that participants are aware they can stop or not answer a particular question and identifying sources of support, if needed, can all ameliorate such issues. (Moriarty 2011, p. 24).

In meeting with Zara and Gail and explaining my intended research and their possible involvement, I assured them that their comfort level was paramount in terms of the

information they chose to share. There was also the reiteration that their participation like the information they chose to provide was voluntary and could end at any time of their choosing. In setting out to redress the power imbalance of the relationship between myself and Zara and Gail, I sent an outline of the areas I was seeking to explore in my research (see appendix 2), this was to provide further details on previous meetings and to ensure they understood their involvement. Further, I was led by their identification and availability in regards to the time and place for the interviews (see case studies in chapter four). Again the power differential was reduced as Zara and Gail both chose their pseudonyms and I took steps to ensure their anonymity of location, family details and institutions so that minimal amount of information could be used to identify Zara and Gail publically.

The protection of the participants' anonymity was provided in that they are not identified by the findings. Ethical research projects also guarantee confidentiality, as only the researcher will be able to determine a given subject's responses, so standard strategies include replacing names with pseudonyms and changing or not revealing the names of where the research took place.

Developing a procedural consciousness as a researcher is critical in conducting research, especially when studying marginalized populations according to (Bhopal and Preston (2011) and Dunbar et al 2002). Researchers must develop a sensibility as it applies to the subjectivity of racialized populations, and this sensibility must be maintained throughout the entire research process. Developing a procedural consciousness entails having a deep understanding about the racialized participant, giving one's participant all the humanity he or she deserves. Part of this procedural consciousness also entails demonstrating empathy and disclosure on the part of the researcher. Although disclosing oneself may be viewed as "contaminating the data," one could argue that it further encourages the participant to elaborate on their experiences. Demonstrating empathy to the respondent gives the message that they are capable and deserving participant. By having general sensitivities to racial issues, the racialized participant feels valued. Developing a procedural consciousness is necessary in establishing meaningful relationships with marginalized populations. Through storytelling, researchers can express empathy and build these relationships with marginalized students. Seidman (2006) argues, "Interviewing is both a research methodology and a social relationship that must be nurtured, sustained, and then ended gracefully" (p. 95).

From the time immediately after World War II until the early 1990s, there was a gradually developing consensus about the key ethical principles that should underlie the research endeavour. Two marked events stand out (among many others) as symbolic of this consensus. The Nuremberg War Crimes Trial following World War II brought to public view the ways German scientists had used captive human subjects as subjects in oftentimes gruesome experiments. In the 1950s and 1960s, the Tuskegee Syphilis Study involved the withholding of known effective treatment for syphilis from African-American participants who were

infected. Events like these forced the re-examination of ethical standards and the gradual development of a consensus that potential human subjects needed to be protected from being used as 'guinea pigs' in scientific research.

Thus in recent years ethical considerations across the research community have come to the forefront. This is partly a consequence of legislative change in human rights and data protection, but also a result of increased public concern about the limits of inquiry. Overall, there is widespread agreement amongst universities, where most research is conducted, on what research is, what the major research ethics issues are, and appropriate mechanisms for ensuring that research is ethical (ESRC 2003).

This increased concern for accountability in these spheres has led to the establishment of systems for “research governance”; that is, ways of discovering and sharing information that are open to public scrutiny and can be seen to be subject to the highest ethical standards. In an era of advanced information and communications technology ethical concerns over access to and the management of information are heightened. For example, Canterbury Christ Church University ‘Introduction to Issues and Principles in Research Ethics’ states that ‘ethical practice in the management of research requires that a body, independent of the research team, examines the research design and system for protecting participant's interests in judging their ethical acceptability and their accountability’.

As Black scholars, when telling stories to participants, we may reflect on what may have brought us to the topic, what we have learned about our own subject positions as well as our own emotional responses to discrimination, stereo-typing and racism. This can illuminate the topic at hand as well as help us understand how participants see their worlds. When conducting research, as Black scholars we can draw on our particular racialized experiences, and through sharing our stories with marginalized students, we can show empathy, allowing for participants to express themselves as racialized beings (Dunbar et al 2002).

Ethical discussions usually remain detached or marginalized from discussions of research projects. In fact, some researchers consider this aspect of research as an after-thought. Yet, the moral integrity of the researcher is a critically important aspect of ensuring that the research process and a researcher's findings are trustworthy and valid (Heintzelman 2001, p.32).

Reference can be made to the ethical code adopted in the study in the appendix 1. The framing was agreed in the institution's ethical review process where its main consideration as Chataika et al (1995) and Sikes (2006) reminds us, is to protect the dignity of those marginalised in society who generally feature in narrative research; we need to consider the effect of the work we undertake with them. Similarly, Bulmer (2001) states that “ethics is a matter of principled sensitivity to the rights of others; being ethical limits the choices we can make in the pursuit of truth” (p. 36); this was a dilemma I faced. Armed with ‘insider knowledge’ I nonetheless felt ethically prohibited from sharing certain information with Zara

in terms of how she was portrayed by colleagues and in the email contents we had both received from the same staff member (see chapter four). I also identified areas of power, status, age (mentioned above) and doing no harm in considering ethical problems that could arise from my research with Zara and Gail.

Educational researchers should operate within an ethic of respect for any persons involved in the research they are undertaking. Individuals should be treated fairly, sensitively, with dignity, and within an ethic of respect and freedom from prejudice regardless of age, gender, sexuality, race, ethnicity, class, nationality, cultural identity, partnership status, faith, disability, political belief or any other significant difference. This ethic of respect should apply to both the researchers themselves and any individuals participating in the research either directly or indirectly. BERA (2011, p.5).

Ethical research should seek to never cause any harm whatsoever to participants and researchers must strive to protect subjects from undue harm arising as a consequence of their participation in research. Research has consequences and those consequences are potentially harmful. A fundamental principle of social research is that it should 'do no harm' either to the research subjects or the researcher him/herself. This requires that subjects' participation should be voluntary and as fully informed as possible and no group should be disadvantaged by routinely being excluded from consideration. Further, the research subject chooses to take part and has the right to end participation in research at any point. Essentially the researcher is seeking to ascertain participants views on an area that could be viewed as be emotive and sensitive. However in considering this, provisions have been made for respondents to provide as much or as little information as they choose through the methods employed. For example some of the questions asked is phrased in light of the university commitment to widening participation and diversity issues as stated in policy and mission statements. These took the form of interviews where open-ended questions may be asked. Social research is by necessity invasive and subjects are often called upon to reveal personal or embarrassing information; therefore in an effort to be more ethical participants should always do so voluntarily and told that they can freely refuse to participate.

"Researchers must recognize the right of any participant to withdraw from the research for any or no reason, and at any time, and they must inform them of this right. In all such circumstances researchers must examine their own actions to assess whether they have contributed to the decision to withdraw and whether a change of approach might persuade the participants to re-engage. In most cases the appropriate course of action will be for the researchers to accept the participants' decision to withdraw. Decisions to persuade them to re-engage must be taken with care. Researchers must not use coercion or duress of any form to persuade participants to re-engage

with the work. In cases where participants are required by a contractual obligation to participate e.g. when mandated as part of their employment to facilitate an evaluation study, researchers may, however, have proper recourse to a third party (e.g. the employing authority) to request compliance with a contract". BERA (2011, p.6)

Research is predicated on the belief that greater access to well-grounded information will serve rather than threaten the interests of society. According to Bulmer (2001), in planning all phases of the research, from design to presentation of findings, the researcher considers the likely consequences for institutions at large, groups and categories of persons within it, respondents or other subjects, and possible future research. Further The Social Research Council (2003), stated that since no generic formula or guidelines exist for assessing the likely benefit or risk of various types of social enquiry, social researchers must be sensitive to the possible consequences of their work and should as far as possible, guard against predictably harmful effects. For example, the seeking of Zara and Gail's views on areas that could be seen as emotive and sensitive such as asking them to speak of their experiences at university and the story of their lives. Acknowledging that social research can be invasive where respondents are often expected to reveal personal information Chataika et al (1995), it is incumbent that researchers inform interviewees that they have a right to freely volunteer or withdraw participation at any point in the interview process. In the University Ethical Review process I had to give a brief outline of the project, including sample selection, recruitment procedures, data collection, data analysis and so on. I also had to demonstrate how the privacy and confidentiality of participants were to be safeguarded, and address the potential risks areas. Additionally, I had to identify how the participants were to be made aware of the results of the study and the steps to allow them to retain control over audio-visual records and over their creative products and items of a personal nature.

Conclusion

So, my chosen methodology has been auto/biographical narrative enquiry and I have sought to provide a rationale for this. I have identified its qualitative benefits, but also some of the concerns raised by using the approach. Additionally, the importance of stories and narratives are explored for their potentially empowering qualities especially in the case of marginalised students such as Zara and Gail. For these reasons, traditional quantitative methods were considered to be unsuitable in their promulgation of detachment and supposed objectivity, which themselves could be experienced as oppressive. Instead, a critical race framework and feminist perspectives, combined with an auto/biography methodology, expressed and embodied the need for a less hierarchal structure and more interactive interviewing process. Here the stories of Black students and the researcher are viewed as legitimate, appropriate and critical in their ability to understand and analyse issues of race, through lived experiences, and storytelling. The two case studies, it is suggested, provide rich contextual in-depth

materials. They provided a means to delve more deeply into the lives of the students, illuminating their perceptions and reflexive interpretation of events. The importance (and its problems) of voice is a central tenet of this framework. The interview with the two E&D managers was useful in illuminating the current situation in universities with regards to policies and practices and in addressing the research questions. By definition, E&D Managers have a responsibility as specified in their job roles to seek to address and eliminate discriminatory issues in universities.

It was important to acknowledge and interrogate the power dynamics in this relationship in terms of the status of the lecturer and student; the researcher and researched; the older and younger Black women and how this could shape the research process. The sharing of stories may have the impact for both researchers and participants to carve out spaces to share personal experiences and to acknowledge the intersectionality of the situation, in that often race, class and gender enter-twinned in how we were perceived and treated. Moreover, providing these spaces may also serve as a means to affirm the lived experiences and knowledge of students and to highlight the chameleonic and resilience spirit of both researcher and students. There were multiple interviews because both Zara and Gail had much to say that could not be contained in one designated interview period. Further, in transcribing the interviews I realised that there were areas that appeared unclear and needed more clarification from Zara and Gail in order to represent their stories accurately. In this way, storytelling serves as a means of empowering for Black students during the interviewing process. It was also important to be cognizant of ethical consideration in the research in terms of the effects and impact this can have on Zara and Gail as well as identifying ways to ameliorating these and addressing sensitive information provided. The approach to the analysis took into consideration the research questions and similarities of the narrated stories. These were subsequently developed into emerging themes and discussed with underpinning theories.

Zara and Gail, and the music of their songs

*I am a Black Woman
 the music of my song
 some sweet arpeggio of tears
 is written in a minor key
 and I
 can be heard humming in the night
 Can be heard
 humming
 in the night
 I saw my mate leap screaming to the sea
 and I/with these hands/cupped the life breath
 from my issue in the canebrake
 I lost Nat's swinging body in a rain of tears
 and heard my son scream all the way from Anzio
 for Peace he never knew....I
 learned Da Nang and Pork Chop Hill
 in anguish*

*Now my nostrils know the gas
 and these trigger tire/d fingers
 seek the softness in my warrior's beard
 I am a black woman
 tall as a cypress
 strong
 beyond all definition still
 defying place
 and time
 and circumstance
 assailed
 impervious
 indestructible
 Look
 on me and be
 renewed*

(Mari Evans)

This poem testify to the strength of Zara and Gail; defying time, place and circumstances in their quest to acquire a university education

This chapter includes the case studies of both Zara and Gail, two Black students experiencing difficulties and barriers in conforming to and being part of the university community. Their stories include discrimination, stereotyping, estrangement, being othered, and feeling a sense of not belonging. Their responses draw attention to the three questions I set out to address in this study: first, what are the factors that encourage or discourage a successful university experience and how is this subjectively understood by Black students? Second, what factors discourage progression and retention of Black students in UK universities? Third, how might

university cultures and subcultures better enhance the development of Black students? Linden West (Merrill and West 2009) has developed a pro forma as an important tool in analysing case studies, and in exploring the auto/biographical dynamics of the interview process. West further states that the auto/biographical dynamics of the narrator can be a source of insight into meanings and emotions being communicated. How he or she has experienced certain life history processes and his or her own life history. I wanted the interview with Zara and Gail to highlight areas such as; what motivated their entry into HE, experiences of support in HE, support from academic staff, experience of social life; experience as part of a community of learners; organizational mechanisms to support Black students in HE, Black students' awareness of policies and practices regarding widening participation; Black students' perception of HE institutions; Black students' perception of themselves as learners; an exploration of Black external support system and of Black students 'aspirational habitus'. In these two case studies I look at themes, generated in the analysis, including critical incidents, and consider the whole process of our interaction, as well as any overall gestalt in the narrative material. I start with Zara as the first case study, then Gail.

Becoming a solo entity

Zara is a rather tall and striking British West African female student, well presented who displayed an immaculate range of hairstyles from time to time. In the classroom, Zara could be found doodling on pieces of paper and contributing very little unless directly asked. Zara did not live on campus, but travelled some sixty miles to and from the university. Zara is often on her own, in and out of the classroom. From previous observations, she presents as relatively vocally quiet in the larger group and only minimally so in small group discussion. Zara envisaged a period of making new university friends, but instead encountered isolation, discrimination and a cultural environment she found difficult to be a part of. As a result, Zara became a solo entity, and describes having to 'psyche herself up' when entering the university where she was the only Black student on her degree programme. Aged 21, Zara grew up in an inner city, and her biography demonstrates how her sense of culture and family identity enabled success at university.

Faced with what Zara perceived as discriminatory and stereotyping behaviour in an email received from a lecturer, she nonetheless proceeded to seek recourse through the appropriate university mechanism recognizing in doing so, the programme director (who was currently teaching Zara) and partner of the said lecturer, would obviously have knowledge of this. Zara was prepared to continue standing on her own and becoming even further isolated from the teaching staff. It appears that far from the 'wondering around alone doing nothing' student, identified by this particular lecturer, Zara was resolute in her belief of succeeding in education, even in the face of the many obstacles faced.

The Process - Anxiety and Worries

Although I was resolute that this was the most appropriate method of collecting information, as the interview date approached I nonetheless felt somewhat anxious due to this approach

being radically different from what I was used to, and certainly what I was teaching in current research sessions. I felt almost schizophrenic in nature, teaching one thing, and in essence practicing another. For example, a present interest in subjectivity and the turn toward self-critical reflexivity (that is, the practice of being explicit about how a researcher's race, class, gender, and other identity markers have influence the research) marks a departure from what I had always thought of as research. Then I simply assumed that researchers would strive to maintain a distance between themselves as the knowers (the narrators) and their research subjects as the knowns (the narrated).

But I also began to worry as to whether I was exposing Zara in terms of asking her to speak on issues she had kept quiet about, and which may be quite painful for her. I wondered how candid she was going to be about her experience, and how I would manage the process if there were long silences, and what mechanisms ought to be in place if I noticed that Zara was becoming affected emotionally and psychologically by revisiting her stories. I felt a level of inadequacy in facilitating this kind of interview being a novice with this approach. So whilst I took my supervisor's advice in considering the beginning of the interview by asking Zara about 'the story of her life', I nonetheless became a little concerned, as to how well that would work, what if the student 'dried up'? I was aware that there needed to be a certain amount of trust established in requesting this level of openness; however I surmised that certain factors that were present, such as gender and race may well act as a prerequisite for establishing trust, as well as the student's own comfort level.

On the day of the interview, I felt less anxious however, being aware that this could influence the interview process, I also anticipated that the student may need added assurance of the recording of her story, in terms of its security, confidentiality and being anonymous. I surmised that for these reasons alone, I ought to present as being fairly comfortable and at ease in a process I was asking the student to be involved with. In undertaking measures to reduce the hierarchy of the interview process Zara was afforded choice of venue, facilities and decisions about other aspects of the interview, including whether she wanted to continue, withdraw, or interrupt the session. The interviews took place at a university, an inner city library and a restaurant, they were all suited for the purpose, even the restaurant, which turned out to be fairly empty at the time.

Traditional and structured family

Within Zara response to the question of telling me the story of her life, her family culture emerged as of primary importance; its significance as well as the dogged expectation of Zara to succeed. The effects of the family culture and history represent a relatively unexplored aspect of habitus, but its importance was noted by Bourdieu: 'the subject is not the instantaneous ego of a sort of singular cogito, but the individual trace of an entire collective history' (Bourdieu 1990, p. 91). Therefore, expectation of Zara's family may well have provided the catalyst to repudiate notions of giving up. Although paradoxically her family may

be misconstrued as adding extra pressure, in an alien environment where messages are often received that have negative connotation for Black students (Leathwood and O'Connell 2003). This expectation by Zara family may unwittingly act as the impetus providing the resilience for academic success in the habitus of the university community.

Further, according to Wright et al (2016) study, Black students often spoke of the high expectations, inspiration, and emotional support and cultural resilience related to the aspirational capital developed through their family, and how this shaped their educational and personal careers (p. 8). Wright et al (2016) also stated that the strong bonds with their families, in turn helped Black students gain other kinds of capital such as aspirational and resistant capital which were critical to ensuring educational and personal success (p. 9).

No internal Family Conflict

Zara did not identify any internal conflict with the direction and choice her parents made for her education wise. She did not see this as problematic; it was how she was brought up, further, most of her friends had the same upbringing and attitudes by their parents; it was their normality. Zara knew her parents expected her to be the best she could be, and provided the necessary guidance as they saw it.

It was what they long for, and another completed phase of education. They want you to achieve your best; to do better than them, that would make them happy..... My parents have okay jobs, they are just a standard family trying to bring up their children, but my mother did not go to university until later in her life when she came to the UK. I filled that space that she should have by going to university when I did. It sort of enhanced her position in the community because she could now say 'well I did not go to university until late, but my daughter did'. It is a proud moment for my mother and my father, and good role model for my younger brother.

Auto/biography and family expectations

Throughout the first interview, it was apparent that there were many similarities between Zara and myself. There was familiarity with Zara's story that resonated with my own in terms of family aspirations, expectations and resilience. In Zara's West African family background and community there was a taken for granted expectancy to success academically, regardless of any prevailing circumstances. This success in turn was associated with family pride and their standing in the community. In my particular case, I had the support of a large Caribbean extended family and a church family that nurtured; encouraged; facilitated and expected academic success; Zara and I both acknowledged however, that part of the impetus for our success was inextricably linked to our parents living vicariously through us, by not having our opportunities for academic success. The notion of Yosso's (2005) 'Community Wealth' as a

'Cultural Capital' is best exemplified here through the educational aspiration and resilience of the community's children. I was acutely aware that from stories told by various family members and their friends, that a number of them had missed the opportunity to further their education because of the prevailing hostility and racism when they migrated to the UK in the fifties and sixties. Therefore I knew whatever I achieved was also intertwined with my wider family pride and success. I was never a solo entity, so I understood the pride in Zara's family and their expectation of her academic success.

A nurturing environment – 'I will make it'

... my mother often said to me if I gave up here, how would I know that it is going to be better at another university. Am I going to run away wherever I go? The way I was brought up and that little voice that keeps reminding me that I cannot give up, that my family does not expect me to give up, kept me going. They had the ability to believe in spite of what I was going through at university I would make it. This enabled me to succeed.

Zara spoke of the strength in terms of where her parents came from, coming to a new country; her father; working his way up to going to university and her mother with three children still going to university. In looking at the struggles they had, Zara was able to draw on these same strength in knowing that regardless of what was going on at university, in three years' time she would make it. Although by her own words, she had to '*psych herself up to come to university every day*', she nonetheless continued, and kept on coming in the face hostilities, as she perceived them. Within Zara's family there was the provision of a nurturing environment, a habitus for aspiration, a safe place of resistance and the mentoring of resilience from parents who were still aiming at educational success themselves, added to this is the role of Zara as a contributor towards the family cohesion strength and pride. Zara position can be best explained within the context of cultural differences.

Western and African Cultures – Individuals and the Collective

Western views of psychology may tend to assert that children should be given space to make up their own minds, with an individualistic approach embedded in western psychological theories such as those of Schaffer (2006) and others. On the other hand a diametrically opposed view is embraced in non-western cultures such as of Chinese (Chen et al 1998) and African cultures, where children are brought up to be compliant (Mbiti 1990), and where the community or group need is prioritised before those of the individual need. Mentiki (1973), contrasted the Western concept of persons from those of the African concept, by asserting that: 'whereas most Western views of man abstract this or that feature of the lone individual and then proceed to make it the defining or essential characteristic which entities aspiring to

the description "man" must have. The African view of man denies that persons can be defined by focusing on this or that physical or psychological characteristic of the lone individual. Rather, man is defined by reference to the envioning community'. (Mentiki 1973, p. 6).

In looking at the distinction noted, it becomes quite clear why traditional African societies tend to be organized around the requirements of duty while Western societies tend to be organized around the postulation of individual rights. In the African, and to some extent in Caribbean understanding, priority is given to the duties which individuals owe to the collective, and their rights, whatever these may be, are seen as secondary to their exercise of their duties. In the West, on the other hand, we find a construal of things in which certain specified rights of individuals are seen as antecedent to the organization of society; with the function of government viewed, consequently, as being the protection and defence of these individual rights. In light of above one could digest how Zara, a West African student was able to conform to the wishes of her family. At a fundamental level she understood being part of the community and family prioritise her individual needs, she appear to understand that well, and therefore did not pose any difficult, especially as her friends also acclimatize under similar family expectations and cultural norms.

Indeed, in the African Charter on the rights and welfare of the child which entered into force in 1999, states in Article 31 under the heading, Responsibility of the Child. 'Every child shall have responsibilities towards his family and society, the State and other legally recognized communities and the international community. The child, subject to his age and ability, and such limitations as may be contained in the present Charter, shall have the duty; (a) to work for the cohesion of the family, to respect his parents, superiors and elders at all times and to assist them in case of need; (b) to serve his national community by placing his physical and intellectual abilities at its service; (c) to preserve and strengthen social and national solidarity; (d) to preserve and strengthen African cultural values in his relations with other members of the society, in the spirit of tolerance, dialogue and consultation and to contribute to the moral well-being of society (Article 31). This sentiments articulated in the charter confirms both the view of Mentiki (1973) writing almost forty years ago and the experience of Zara, an African student born and living in London, and my own experience of family and community expectations.

Excluded and Different

Zara related her story of being excluded and 'different' because of her reluctance to socialise in pubs with her peers.

Being the only Black girl in the class was really difficult. I did not feel like anybody related to me, I am not a racist, I do appreciate white people, but at the same time it would have made me feel a little more comfortable to have a couple more students who I could relate to. Everyone else in the room was relating to one another, I could not relate to them. The experience they shared, for example, a lot of them go to the

pub every weekend. Until I came to this university I had never, ever, been to a pub, it is just not something I would do....so it was not until they decided they wanted to go for lunch, and we ended up in a pub. They were surprised that I had never been to a pub before, and they asked questions, how could you never have been to a pub before? Well I do not have any business in a pub it is not something I have been brought up to do....to go to a pub. All these different scenarios was showing in the diverse situation between myself and other students, is what really made me not like coming to the university. Not that there was anything wrong with the university itself, but just the fact that I was the only Black girl in the room, and I had to sort of not say much..... keep quiet; but everything you would want to say....certain things you would want to say, but I could not say it anyway, because I just felt I was only one person against all these different people in the room and they do not even know what I am talking about.

Stories of Isolation, Discrimination and Disempowerment

Black students can face many barriers to academic achievement which can negatively impact how they experience their education. Johnson-Bailey et al (2009) found that “more than 50% of Black graduate students experienced racism on campus and suffered from "isolation, loneliness, disconnection, and discrimination" that could be attributed to racism” (p. 192). Zara stated the nightmare experienced of being the only Black girl in the class. She had attended university to have a new experience, to work at her academic studies, but also to make friends. However, Zara felt the response received from her peers was ‘why is this girl trying to attach herself to us’? So when Zara saw that it was not working, she decided to take each day as it came, continually reminding herself ‘that it would be over soon, it is not going to last forever so just get on with it’.

In Zara’s narrative about being the only Black student in her class, she identified the issues that rendered her isolated but also displayed a spirit of resilience; resistance and aspiration. I also acknowledged this by sharing my own stories of racism, discrimination, stereotyping and isolation. The isolation that I alluded to is similarly shared by Wright (2006); Wright et al (2007) and Benjamin (1997) a North African-American female academic, writing some nineteen years ago, who stated that “in the ivory tower, the voices are shrouded beneath a racist and sexist cloud that is often chilly at white institutions... where we encounter isolation and non-nurturing environments that affect the promotion retention and tenure process” (p, 21). As I understood her story of isolation; discrimination and disempowerment; it therefore was an area where we could share our stories, and thus create a collective space (Dunbar et al 2002; Ellis and Berger 2002) and so I shared my experience with Zara:

I understand where you are coming from on so many levels, like you I have never understood the need to socialise in a pub. It is quite a foreign concept to me. Most of the socialisation from my childhood onward took place at family homes, social gatherings, at church or in the homes of friends, where food and not drinks was what everyone looked forward too and

spoke about. A few older Caribbean men, from my childhood went to the pub, but it was not seen as a place, where young Black people or women would gather because of its association with just drinking, and possibly getting drunk, which was seen as irresponsible behaviour and very Eurocentric. At university, I would often turn down offers to socialise at the pub, I think initially I was perceived as unfriendly, and when I finally explained my reluctance, I was told that I was strange. Ironically, on the two occasions I went to the pub, I felt really out of place, as I could not understand the socialising mechanism of being in a pub. I saw some people slowly losing their inhibitions, and I found it most uncomfortable. So I really do understand when you say you did not feel comfortable among the group.

Not part of the University Community

Kuh et al (2005) and Thomas (2012) state that student engagement and feelings of belonging are crucial elements in success in higher education. This sense of belonging has been identified as an important factor in persistence and success in the UK in relation to student retention and success (Thomas 2012). According to Bollen and Hoyle (1990) this sense of belonging in HE seems to draw on two key ideas. The first idea, which could be described as the 'fit' aspect, focuses on the students' perceived cohesion within a group. In the case of a university, this may be cohesion with peers on a course, cohesion with departmental teaching staff and perceived cohesion with the university community. The second idea, which could be called the 'contact' aspect of belonging, is the relational interactions with others characterized by stability, emotional concern and ongoing positive contact (Baumeister and Leary 1995). Belonging is the human element of feeling valued and accepted (Thomas 2012). So now faced with not achieving the social milieu Zara envisaged, or the friendships expected, Zara nonetheless was determined to continue as a solo entity for the duration of her degree, and stated: "*I decided to just go in and take each day as it came*".

Zara did not feel a part of the university community, although she was a student. Her intention to study, have fun and make friends did not materialise.

It was not nice for me. It may not have been bad be for anybody else, but for me personally I did not like it. Had I known I could have transferred I would have gone to a London university. It was only when some students did not come back at the beginning of the second year, I realized I could have transferred, but by then it was too late as I only had one year left to complete. It is a good university the facilities are okay, I just think more could be done for ethnic minorities' 'period', with more Black lecturers, with more activities for Black students group. My message to the university organisation is this in future when new students are applying they should organise the classroom and groups so that individuals do not feel isolated and intimidated because they are different. There should be modules that explore other cultures, and just thinking of peoples' feelings and how they would feel in that situation.

Light Laughter

Zara would often start her response with a 'light laugh', which I concluded was more of an irony when set in the context of her accompanying response/story. These stories/incidents were often negative in connotation as can be seen by above. These 'light laughter' appeared to be storehouses of disappointments, but I also interpreted it as determination to succeed whatever the prevailing circumstances in order to achieve her 'aspirational habitus'. It was often the 'light laughter' or 'huh-huh' I heard on countless occasion from my childhood and in adulthood, when listening to friends, relatives and extended family personal stories of racism experienced in the UK; to this extent this 'light laughter' was therefore very familiar and telling.

Sharing a Collective Space

Whether it was as a result of the level of transparency with my own experience of isolation, or whether Zara now perceived similarities of family and cultural background, she now felt a certain level of comfort treading the waters of racism, as she highlighted the following incident.

In my first year at university I was taught by this particular lecturer for one module. I was not taught by this lecturer again therefore I assumed he knew very little about me. Then an incident occurred when I came into a room where this lecturer was, to look for another lecturer. This lecturer from my first year spoke to me very harshly and condemnatory with several accusations as to my supposed behaviour on campus, he also decided I was on a 'walkabout' instead of being in class. Following the way he spoke to me, he also sent me a very nasty email stating that if he was an employer, he would not employ someone like me. He said that over the past couple of yearsI have been wondering around doing nothing, and had I used my initiative I would have gone downstairs to reception and find out exactly where the lecturer I was looking for was. I was left wondering if I had been the topic of conversation between him and other lecturers, because of some of the things he had said. He then proceeded to tell me where I should have been and what time I should have been there. So the point I am trying to make is, without sounding funny, this was a white lecturer, and it almost seems like he was stereotyping me, without getting the facts straight, it seems like, oh, this particular person does not know what she is doing, she is just another Black girl, wondering around doing nothing. So when I received this email I did not know..... I was not going to do anything about the email, because I thought what is the point? What is a Black girl going to do? Who is going to listen to a Black girl? The wife of this lecturer is the programme director and I did not want to jeopardise my degree. The whole university is predominantly white, so why would anybody want to listen to me? After several weeks and with the help of another person, I manage to find out that I could do something about the email and the manner in which I was spoken to. I was referred to an, 'ethnic and diversity person' (Equality and Diversity Manager), who explained this is something that can be dealt and taken further if I did not believe that

the email that was sent to me should have been sent that manner. I was told that there was certain procedure I can take, so I did follow that up, and I did get an apology in the end. But the point I am trying to make is, did the lecturer who sent me this email, did he sent me this email because he thought, judging by the media and the news we hear about Black student, that he thought that maybe I was just another Black person who he could speak to anyhow.

Resilience and Resistance

Again, we see elements of resilience and resistance in Zara's narrative of this incident. Faced with what she perceived as racist and stereotyping behaviour she nonetheless proceed to seek recourse through the appropriate university mechanism, recognizing in doing so the programme director (who was currently teaching Zara) and partner of the said lecturer, would obviously have knowledge of this. She was prepared to continue standing on her own and becoming even further isolated from the teaching staff.

Corroborating Zara's Encounter

Unknown to Zara, I was privy to certain information that corroborated Zara's encounter and the email she received. I knew the lecturer Zara spoke of, and had witnessed negative discussions about Zara from several of my colleagues, mostly about her inability to be part of the group and her 'strange' mannerism. On one such occasion, the discussion involved about four of my colleagues gathered together. I did not participate but felt very uneasy, aggrieved and defensive of the student. I am not sure if they were unaware of my presence then, but at a point one of them approached me to say they really should not have done this, but that they were just having a 'little moan' about Zara. I did not respond because I found the whole episode quite upsetting. These were my colleagues engaging in behaviour unbecoming of their profession and professionalism. I felt the trend of the conversation boarder on racism and a total lack of consideration of what it must be like for Zara on her own on a day to day, basis at the university. I knew that my quietness and refusal to respond was uncomfortable for them and ended their conversation almost immediately. As Trinh (1989) says, "Silence as a refusal to partake.... it is a voice, a mode of uttering and a response in its own right" (p. 83).

Vulnerability of Black Staff and Students

My silence that day had more to do with my frustration of the on-going vulnerability of both myself as a Black academic staff, and Zara as the student. Of our respective marginalisation and an even deeper awareness of just how pervasive racism is; of my own inadequacies as a Black member of staff to protect Zara by my very awareness of that conversation; and the tiredness of having to fight almost always on my own, or so it seemed. It was a rude awakening that indeed racism; discrimination and stereotyping 'was alive and kicking' and still the preserve of educational institutions. This scenario was for me, a demonstration of a monumental betrayal of trust of by my colleagues; and an even further demonstration of own disempowered status. Since that incident, the particular colleague who approached me about

having a 'little moan' about Zara, apologised for her contribution in the general discussion, and we had several discussions about racism and stereotyping. Coincidentally, I too had received an email from the lecturer Zara identified in the interview. It was also of an accusatory manner and had insinuations of my ineptitude as a lecturer, with aspersion cast on my ability to have relationships with students. I interpreted element of bullying, racism and stereotyping in its contents. However, I surmised that by virtue of whiteness; maleness; majority presence; (Gillborn 2009) and as the partner was the programme director, this individual must believe that he possessed an insurmountable amount of power in relation to me. So like Zara, I was most uncomfortable approaching the programme director as I felt there would be a conflict of interest and chose to raise the matter in another arena instead.

Crossing Borders and Safe Space

Similar to Villenas (1996), I experienced "a fluid space of crossing borders and, as such, a contradictory one of collusion and oppositionality, complicity, and subversion" (p. 729), as I contemplated my role as a Black academic and researcher and the divulging of what I perceive as 'insider' information. Villenas (1996) writes; 'as a Xicana and indigenous woman, I cannot escape my own experiences of marginalisation and dislocation.....at the same time, I cannot escape the privilege afforded to me as a university professors' (p. 729). My dilemma was this; to what extent should I reveal this incident to Zara in identifying the similarity experienced between us? On the one hand, this information provided a real live platform for discussing and dismantling racist and stereotypical perceptions, yet I felt a certain amount of organisational and professional constraint. Zara was still being taught by the programme director; the partner of this lecturer. In the end, I prioritised professional integrity above my own experience of marginalization and dislocation.

Nonetheless, in discussing Zara's email, we were able to share how often people make stereotypical statements about us and of how we have to rise above it. We acknowledged those elements of our lives that continue building our resilience like our family's expectations or our belief in our abilities and drawing strength from experiences of those who had trod this path before. As I shared my own stories of racism; resilience; aspiration and self-disclosing in the academy by reflecting on my own personal experiences, I affirm as well as legitimize Zara's experiences.

Working on the 1st Transcript

Whilst typing the transcript of Zara's interview, using oral history conventions (Merrill and West 2009) I was experiencing a number of emotions. I felt a level of frustration that this student's experience emanates from a university that positioned itself in terms of attracting diversity, and yet there were clear examples of Zara being discriminated against by an academic staff that had the audacity to put it in writing to her via email. I hypothesize as to what extent this white male academic staff recognized that he had a certain amount of power

over Zara and took advantage of it, being fully aware that Zara was the only Black student in her class, isolated, and not particularly close to any of her peers.

I found myself using the questions I had identified for prompts more at the initial stage of the interview, I think this had as much to do with how I managed and interpreted periods of silence rather than Zara not having much to say. I recognized that that is something I need to be more cognizant of in succeeding interviews. Further on revisiting the transcript I realized that I could have asked Zara to elaborate more on some 'stories'. This is where as the researcher, I need to be careful in the assumptions I may make unwittingly of the similarity of Zara and my own family expectations. I assumed there were some things Zara did not need to explain further, as we both knew what she was talking about. There is a familiarity with Zara's story that resonated with my own, and as such I employed an unwritten code of 'knowing' when this may well have not been the case.

From the first transcript, I identified some areas where I interrupted Zara's story because of my perceived familiarity and similarity to her own story. In this second interview I was more cognizant of these by allowing Zara to tell her story without my interruption or over-identification, yet still with the sensitivity that it is important to share similarities between the researcher and the researched, to this extent the first transcript acted as a 'checks and balances' of sorts. According Rosenthal (1993) while the life history is being narrated to the interviewer (who plays the role of the interested and empathetic listener), the latter does not interrupt the main narrative but encourages the biographer by means of non-verbal and paralinguistic expressions of interest and attention. The interviewer waits until the narrator breaks off the story of his or her own accord, and only then asks questions in the second part of the interview. (Rosenthal 1993, p. 60).

Reflecting on the Initial Interview

On asking for her reflection on the first interview process, Zara said:

I felt good because I was able to tell my story, tell somebody what my journey was like at university, so it was really good. I finally had the opportunity to talk about it. I think it was quite comfortable, I did not think I was being, well, under pressure to do it, and I did not think it was hurting me in anyway, if anything it was really good to talk about it, and so yes I felt comfortable.

Zara was alluding to the therapeutic aspect of the interview, by affording her a platform to talk about her experiences, without pressure, and feeling better afterwards. Though the topic was sensitive Zara nonetheless found it empowering, and thus support Kvale's (2006) view that that the interviewing process can be sensitive as well as powerful. Recognizing this duality of the research process, it was also important for me check Zara feelings.

Workplace Problems

The second interview was set up and the areas identified from the transcript continued discussion, however Zara, now a final year student and working, seemed preoccupied with her employment situation, and began informing me of problems in the workplace. For Zara, there appear to be more pressing issues at hand than the impending interview, and recognizing the level of her employment I supported Zara by providing a space to express her frustration, to share; to reflect and to recuperate through our respective positive affirmation (Fine and Weis 1996).

Affirming Each other's Experience

I articulated to Zara that when I went back and read the transcript, it brought up a lot of emotions for me, and I wondered if it did the same for her. As I stated my own reaction through sharing our experiences, we were able to create a collective space, and I felt this contributed towards reduce the hierarchy between the researcher and the researched (Ellis and Beger 2002). We affirmed each other's experience in a safe space; we respected each other emotions as the various stories evolved and as we reminisced on others, far from the traditional methodology which suggests minimal human contact and the absence of emotional involvement between participant and researcher.

Resilience

Zara affirmed:

I can now stand up for myself, if I saw something that was wrong, 'I think I can speak up now....one of the positive things that have come out of my isolation at university is that it has made me a stronger person. I guess it is a case of what does not kill us, makes us stronger.....'I went back to the whole process of the incident with that particular lecturer, I relieved it again, I reflected on the stance I was able to take with help. I reflected on how scared I was to be in the same place as that particular lecturer and how powerless I felt when we were in the same room to discuss the things he had said about me. Although the Head of Department and Diversity Officer was there, it was still uncomfortable as I was still a lone Black student. But reading back the transcript I realised that I was stronger than I thought, however when I thought of all the other incidents I still wish I had chosen another university. I shared the transcript with my family when I first received it, they all felt it was a worthwhile cause to be involved with, because it might just bring about change for others if they see what you are writing about.....It made me feel good that even though I was the only Black girl I was able to succeed, get a letter of apology from that particular lecturer. I am proud of myself that I stayed the course.

According to Wang et al (1997) the main characteristic of resilient students is the ability of being adept in identifying and engaging in relationships and environments that promote their growth, and having the ability to screen out negative messages. Zara was able to do this in

expressing how she felt in accessing a platform to challenging the email received and including her family within this process. This verifies Rhamie (2007) statement that Black students are protected from risks factors by their parents who use a range of supportive measures to supplement their children's education.

The Restaurant

It was now July and Zara and I had arranged to meet in the park on a Sunday, for the final interview because of the sunny and warm weather. We had arranged to follow this up with a meal at an African restaurant, relatively close to where she lived. However, Zara informed me that she wanted to omit the park and go straight to the restaurant. She was keen to show me the array of African delicacies on the menu. I was a little dubious how this would work especially with recording her story, but I agreed anyway sensing Zara's enthusiasm. Fortunately, because it was early afternoon the restaurant was virtually empty for the next hour and a half or so. Zara had just arrived from church, and seemed in rather good humour. Having now secured a permanent job, Zara said she had a plan for the next five years, to be the manager of a nursery or own her own nursery, and asked what my five year plan entailed. Suddenly she stopped talking, pondered and stated:

Mary, do you know that I have not exchanged a single contact with a single student; no one asked for my details and I did not ask for anyone's. Not one single contact for the whole three years I was at university, imagine that she said wistfully.

Respecting the Silence

I took time to respect the silence that followed Zara's statement. The silence was not uncomfortable and I did not try to fill it with words. I felt it was more of a recognition and understanding; an acknowledgement of the price we often as Black people, have to pay for our resilience; our aspirations or solo status, and our venture into uncharted waters (Benjamin 1997). This silence provided a space for Zara to revisit her histories and turn margins into places of transformative resistance.

Zara's Utterance – Reflections

Zara's utterance caused me to revisit my own journey of being Black, female and an academic in almost exclusively white universities and of the experiences therein. Thus the question, posed by Benjamin (1997), how then has it been for Black academics to live, work and sometimes even claim success in academic institutions, is pertinent in a UK today. Like Bhattacharyya (1998); Wright (2013); and Hylton (2012), Benjamin (1997) contextualised the situation by asserting that Black colleagues have scaled several resisting walls as well as the unrelenting adversaries of racism, sexism, and class, with each as a major confrontation with powerful forces of tradition. Additionally, Bhopal and Jackson (2013) in their work on Black academics, stated that there was a lack of trust, where the credibility of Black Academics were

questioned and over-scrutiny by senior colleagues. However continues Benjamin (1997), despite universities avowed intention to foster policies of encouraging cultural and ethnic diversity within the institutions, there remain difficulties and discomforts that arise from institutional neglect in relations to patterns of racial stereotyping and expectations that are racist in nature.

Space of Empowerment

By providing this space and making Zara aware that she was not alone in experiencing isolation, racism and stereotyping; that the possibility of working through the pain exists as well as reminding ourselves of our own self-worth, this opens up a space of empowerment for both myself and Zara. The interview space became a place for both of us to share our experiences, providing a space of healing and empowerment. Women have historically used conversation with each other as a way to deal with oppression. This space at the library, in the restaurant, in a quiet tutorial room late in the evening became more than simply a space to conduct an interview. Instead, it transformed into a shared emotional space—a physical space in which both researcher and participant share human interaction, divulge personal instances of racism, and share various emotions such as fear, anger, self-doubt as well as strategies on coping. These spaces become spaces of collective transformation, where both participant and researcher share their experiences of racism, recuperation, resistance, resilience and affirmation. For Black women, sharing with other women has been an important way to confront and endure our marginality. Sharing stories with others raises the other individual's consciousness and opens up the possibility for social action (Fernandez, 2002). Conducting interviews in such a way—by reflecting on one one's own personal experiences, self-disclosing, and sharing my own experience of resilience; resistance and racism through storytelling—served as part of a consciousness-raising process through human interaction and meaningful conversation.

A study on the social mobility costs of attending university found Black working-class students faced several dilemmas that their middle-class counterparts at elite universities and working-class students at new universities did not have to confront (Jetten et al 2008). Such dilemmas include the ability to maintain connections to one's social background, including family, friends and the wider community. However, in Zara's account of her experience, this rarely seem to be the case. There was not "the disconnection from family and cultural backgrounds" that Wentworth and Peterson (2001, p.10) identified when describing the university experience of working-class and by extension Black students. Rather, Zara displayed the ability to successfully move across two very different fields, combining strong connections and loyalties to family and home friends. In the interview for instance, one can see examples where Zara drew on the strength the family had to offer as she experienced isolation and discrimination within the university setting. McNay (2008) suggests that students such as Zara, had already begun to engage in processes of self-conscious reflexivity in which self-

awareness and a propensity for self-improvement had become incorporated into their habitus.

Unlike scholars who may argue that limiting one's interactions with participants and sharing experience "can distort an interview and distract participants from their own experience to the interviewer's" (Seidman 2006, p. 95), I argue that sharing personal stories about discrimination racial and otherwise, as well as practicing reflexivity during the research process, can serve multiple purposes when interviewing marginalized students. Reflexivity helps researchers explore how our theoretical positions and biographies shape what we choose to study and the approach to studying it. Reflexivity is also a communal process that requires the researcher to be attentive to the structural, political, and cultural environments of the researcher and participants. Drawing on the lived experience of Zara for example, critical race theorists seek to document the voices of marginalized people as well as centre social transformation. Thus placing Zara at the centre of analysis (Valdes, 1998), these approaches enabled the turning of margins into places of transformative resistance (Solorzano and Yosso, 2001). Thus the identification of storytelling in my interview with Zara, seem almost natural when considering its place of importance in our respective countries of origin, as well as its situational predisposition in providing a venue for the marginalized such as Zara to voice her knowledge and lived experiences. Here, Zara and me Mary, were able to share episodes of resilience and aspiration in drawing from supportive cultures of family and others. This enhanced our ability to survive in an environment where she, and we, were 'othered'.

A Sister in the Struggle

Gail is a first year Black student of West African background, who refers to herself as British Black. She was born, and lived most of her childhood in London. I initially approached Gail because of a statement made, when she introduced her presentation as a year one student, new to the university community, and to the area where the university is based. The statement which propelled me into wanting to explore Gail's story was: 'I have experienced more racism here in the last three months, than I have experienced in the total eighteen years I have lived'. I thought it was a profound statement to make, because race as an emotive topic might affect the dynamics between Gail and her peers; further it could also make others wary and possibly target her as someone who had a 'chip on her shoulder'. However, I made the assumption that this was a very brave and courageous individual who dared to be transparent with peers she hardly knew. Gail experienced being 'othered' within the university by students and lecturers and within the locality because of being Black. Not wanting to be labelled with the negativity she perceived all around her, Gail began socialising with those society assumed to have 'cultural capital' and therefore more likely to be academically and socially successful at university.

"Ethnic identity development is a complex, multifaceted, and dynamic process. It has both public and private, individual and communal, conscious and unconscious, positive and negative, past and present, cognitive and emotional, expressive and symbolic dimensions" (Gay 1987, p. 35). Ethnic identity also interplay with gender, class, and age too.

The encounter between the researcher and her subject is multi-faceted across the three interviews. An interplay between two people and different but also comparable worlds. It became more of a conversation than a conventional life history interview, one that stirred the soul. It has a powerful normative dimension, with the researcher, Mary, wanting Gail to see things in a new light; to become more reflexive about her way of being in the world, how she wears her hair and why she goes to fencing classes. The nature of this research encounter needs to be articulated reflexively and theorised.

Gail is a young person feeling her way in the world. Age matters as does the nature of the transitional space called the university, and in the interview. How possible is it to play with stories and be open about the complexity called experience? She is caught between the world of her family (about which she has deeply ambivalent feelings), and the world of university, in Canterbury; a place that seems in some of the narrative to be so different to London. And she is caught in a complex relationship with the researcher, as here and now wrestles with there and then. Where the power and persuasiveness of the researcher forces her to wrestle with questions of who she is, has been and might be in the future. Small things take on a big symbolic significance: this includes having her hair done, possibly to please Mary, but then feeling exposed, as a woman, unattractive but also able to take a risk.

Small and big things matter in encounters at university and on the street. Of feeling threatened by White men; feeling exposed in a predominantly White space. Of feeling trapped in the classroom, and being stereotyped by a White lecturer. The personal as deeply political as she is asked questions on the basis of colour, and stereotypes. Questions about violence; and Gail longs to be accepted for who she is rather than being stereotyped but the world will not let her, or accept her in that way.

Gender and class rear their heads; as in the possession of absence of material things. As wanting to be accepted and acceptable in the public school that she walks past every day of the week. Longing to be accepted, maybe to act like a phantasised 'them'; to be one of them. Her story can be read at another more micro level: of feeling alienated from her family of origin; and of wanting to belong and to find a new family; to be more like her cousin; maybe more like Mary as the research unfolds. There may well be warring issues in her own body: of wanting to be attractive; of wanting to be accepted; but also, in the context of the interview, wanting, increasingly, to question and challenge. Except this is scary. Lee Rigby and the wider world enter the stage: of solidarity with peoples of Muslim faith; and with Nigerians who also can be stereotyped. Guns and Black people are there in the classroom, as is the difficulty of challenging a lecturer. Power matters, in that the lecturer will mark an assignment; there is a constant need to take care.

There is burden in "acting white" because of a "stereotype threat" (Fordham and Ogbu 1986), but also a feeling that she might be accepted; ambivalence. This can be seen in Gail's preference of choice of friends, activities, beliefs and attitude. Gail adapted her behaviour to conform to perceived norms (Berkowitz 2000). As no doubt, she did in the interview, as power was circulating there too.

But the quality of the research relationship did change. My action of being open carried a deep ambivalence; and I worried as to whether I was sufficiently listening because of the noise, the anger, in my own head. When I, Mary, talked of feeling exposed and confused, as in the incident with the car, and her own relative, Gail comes alongside; realising that she, Mary, me, struggles too. I have not got it all together either, which gives space for Gail to accept some of her own frailty and messiness.

I shared with Gail that I sympathised with her brother's position as the eldest sibling, as I have suffered a similar fate of being set up to be emulated and being reprimanded when falling short. I shared the undue pressure and responsibility of being the eldest child and wondered if in trying to please his dad Gail's brother became frustrated because he just could not continue with a degree he did not choose and possibly had little interest in. Similarly, I understood Gail's position in refusing parental advice in her educational direction. My own father without any discussion made decisions as to the career path his five children would follow. So as the designated banker, I started working in a bank, and absolutely detested it.

There are struggles with the researcher about wanting to set the agenda and to focus on a pre-defined subject (of race and racism) and not to be side-tracked by other matters. Except, thinking intersectionally, other themes enter the stage, and will not go away. This includes the quality of the *inter-view* space itself. What Mary says matters and Gail is trying to process it, which includes ambivalence about doing a 3rd interview at all. Mary has been challenging, maybe too intrusive in wanting Gail to think critically; but ultimately things progress.

Internalised Racism

I will use Gail's narratives to discuss theories of Internalised Racism. I will also be drawing in part, on historical theories of African American identity and Higher Education rather than from the UK. For although they are very distinctive (one, being much more established by virtue of the number of years and racism entrenched in law) there are also similarities which can enhance a better understanding of the position of Black students in the UK, and Gail's experience in particular.

Traditionally internalized racism has been defined as the internalization of negative stereotypes or judgements of one's racial group. Although I feel these definitions are useful, they do not capture the complexities of racism. For this reason, I am using a CRT framework to redefine internalized racism as the conscious and unconscious acceptance of a racial hierarchy in which Whites are consistently ranked above Blacks people. Internalised racism goes beyond the internalization of stereotypes imposed by the white majority about Black people. It is the internalization of beliefs, values, and worldviews inherent in white supremacy (Gillborn 2005), that can potentially result in negative self as in the case with Gail. So, when for example Gail expressed her reluctance to be seen with other Black students, or to join an association, it was primarily because of how she perceived it was viewed by her white counterparts, the society at large and the university as a whole. Further her refusal to expose the naturalness of her hair was simply based on what her white friends would think. As a result Gail has worn long extensions braids because according to her this is more acceptable and beautiful than her short curly hair.

For years psychologists such as Lasch (1984) and Hardy (1997) have considered the psychological effects of oppression on the human psyche. Much of this work has found a place in the field of counselling and psychology, where psychologists have strived to understand the consequences of racism on racial minorities in the UK and elsewhere. Although it may be an important premise guiding their work, very few psychologist directly name internalised racism as a lens through which they investigate and conduct research. There are even less scholars who have explicitly centred their research on internalised racism, but among these are the works of Sue (2010) which attest the effects of internalised racism for white people as well as Black people and Lyubansky (2012) piece, entitled ten things everyone should know about White privilege today.

Notion of double consciousness

Writing from the perspective of a Black male academic DuBois in (1897) states “One ever feels his twoness-an American, a Negro; two souls, two thoughts, two un-reconciled strivings; two warring ideals in one dark body, whose dogged strength alone keeps it from being torn asunder,” (DuBois 1897, p. 194). According to Dubois (1897). African Americans have always struggled with how to portray authentic Blackness and still be an American. This notion of double consciousness still persists for both African American and British Black students today, as they struggle to formulate an identity at universities. This struggle can be implied as Gail juxtaposes her presence as a student and person of colour with whom she associated as having cultural capital. Further, in a published social study titled ‘The College-Bred Negro’ (1900), along with a follow up study; ‘The College-Bred Negro American’ (1910), DuBois sent a comprehensive survey to African American students, African American college graduates, and academic staff at various types of institutions to access their experiences in higher education. He posed questions regarding the hindrances that they faced on campus and asked White staff questions regarding the institutions attitude toward African American students. DuBois found that prejudice and lack of acknowledgement of Black students was the main problem Blacks students faced. For its time this research was ground-breaking because it was the first to elicit responses from African Americans discussing the psychosocial barriers to higher education. Although over one hundred years old, there are still elements of DuBois work that are still pertinent in the UK, in terms of how Black students navigate their university communities, and are perceived.

As Gail began to compose her story, it became apparent that she has had to overcome many hurdles before university and since her arrival. Gail story identified how she became an autonomous individual as she navigated through the expectations held by her parents with those she wanted for herself, even in the face of a deteriorating relationship as a result. Having secured a place on a degree course not of her parents’ choice, Gail experienced alienation and isolation from them, but was determined to follow her preference of choice in earning her degree. Ultimately, this also resulted in a physical separation as it became unattainable for Gail to continue living in the family home. To this extent there was isolation, and although Gail stated that she really did not care if her parents did not trust her to make decisions about her life, she clearly did, owing to the significant amount of time spent talking about her brothers her mother and father and their relationships. When Gail embarked on studying at university I think she envisaged an environment that could to some extent, act as a replacement for the severed relationships with her siblings and parents. However, what she found was a culture inside and outside the university environment which made her aware of skin colour and of racism in a way she had not encountered in her eighteen years of life.

Gail has already begun to understand the pervasiveness of racism and its impact on Black students. Because of the legacy of racism, university can be problematic for Black students, particularly where they are in the minority and thus paradoxically more visible (Anderson

1988; Ladson-Billings and Tate, 1995). For such students, feeling culturally alienated, being physically isolated, and remaining silenced are common experiences. Similar views are also expressed by Datnow and Cooper (1998, 2000) who attest that these feelings (culturally alienated, being physically isolated, and remaining silenced) are often exacerbated when Black students are in universities where they are a minority. Because of this Datnow and Cooper (2000) state it is imperative that educational researchers explore the role of race when examining the educational experiences of Black students.

Racism at CCCU, as part of a 1st Year Student Presentation

In her presentation as a year one student, new to the university community and the area where the university is based. The statement which propelled me into wanted to explore Gail's story was this *"I have experienced more racism here in the last three months, than I have experienced in the total eighteen years I have lived"*. I had made the assumption that similarities between Gail and myself in terms of race and gender and being 'othered' would be familiar enough to enable her to speak on issues that was important. However, in requesting my permission to talk about racist experience, Gail may have perceived me as being part of the establishment, and therefore needed to be careful in terms of what she said, and to whom. Even then she began talking about her family dynamics for a considerable period of time before she felt comfortable raising the issue of race, discrimination and being different in the university.

Finding family at college; and a cousin

My cousin is doing law at another university and she is treated differently to me by my parents, she has dream and aspirations, she believes in me, that is where I get my inspiration from..... my cousin was instrumental in my decision to study at here. We share accommodation here and I also live with her family when back in London. I am more comfortable there than at home. I feel more of an individual and feel my contributions are valued. Whereas at my home my parents just expect me to be recipients of their so called wisdom. At my cousin's home I have a voice and can articulate how I feel. I am listened too...It is difficult even having a conversation with my mother. I mean she tries, but I just do not feel it. I feel she talks down to me, in a way she does not talk to my younger or older brother. Even when she was talking to me about having a 'boyfriend', she could not come out and say the word, instead she said 'if you ever had a 'friend'. It is so frustrating, why can she just say the word 'boyfriend'. We just never developed that kind of relationship of mother and daughter, that closeness. I guess their lack of confidence in me, and the way they spoke to me, really affected me, because I just cannot talk to them.

In articulating the importance of the relationship, Gail identified her cousin's inspiration and belief towards her. This may have provided the support needed during the discord with Gail's family as she strived to succeed educationally at university.

Treading Two Cultures – Home and Outside

I think it is difficult for those of us whose parents are brought up in another country, with different cultural norms and values, because there are occasions it appears that we exist in a parallel universe when discussion arise on particular topics and themes. It would appear that it is extremely difficult for our parents to see some things from our perspectives as we find it equally difficult to see things from theirs. In respect of choosing careers, they want us to have the opportunities denied to them, and we understand that only too well, however they also expected us to do as they say without questioning, which is something we find increasingly difficult because of the society we were brought up in. Hence differences in accommodating each other's views and opinions are often framed in words such as 'disrespectfulness' by the older generation, and 'parents wanting to lead their children's life' by the younger generation.

Yes, yes, I totally agree, my parents have lived a different life to me. At the same time they do not speak to me about how they grew up. From conversation I have overheard with others, there is implication that they were wilder than us. I think my parents are over-protective because of how they had lived, and they think they know me, but they do not, because you cannot know someone you do not listen too. For example if I were to tell my mother my entire life story, she would 'kick me out' (laugh). It would not live up to her expectation. Any yet my mother have a tattoo, can you believe that? She had a rebellious past. May be she is protecting me. We live on an estate which is drugs ridden, I would often smell drugs and it was openly used, so I could have gone down that route, but I did not. I think my parents should give me some credit for that. She (mother) does not know how far from the norm I am, because the norm is to smoke 'weed'; the norm is to take drugs, but I have not done any of these things. I do not even drink.

It appears as though Gail is seeking appreciation from her parents, and longing to have a conversation with them, on the things that are important to her. Gail however, identifies over-protectiveness as well as the different lives lived when compared to her parents and herself. Yet Gail is proud of the fact that she has not been involved in drinking or taking drugs, and wish her parents would acknowledge this.

Reflecting on the 1st Interview

In the first interview Gail had spent quite a significant amount of time talking about her family dynamics and of how and why she became estranged from them. Although at the time I could not see the relevance of this information, and thought it distracted from the essence of our own interview, I have now come to realize that her family and current experience has shaped her personality and character and has contributed to a dogged determination to succeed.

Racism on the Street

I was walking towards the train station on my way back from the university library, (probably four months after I started university) and there were about eight men standing in a group, as I neared the station I could hear them singing 'on your bike', go back to 'your f----- country'. It was intimidating, it was late and some of them, I think was drunk. I was scared and called my cousin, because I did not know what to do, I felt my life was threatened as I could not predict their next move. I was by myself and really, really scared, I did not know if I was going to be alive or dead. I was being serenaded a racist chant, yes I was very scared. I just walked on and hoped for the best. There is where I feel that you need that support from other Black students, because a White person would never know what it feels like to experience that kind of fear because of the colour of your skin, thankfully I had my cousin I could reach out to, so yes I can see that having that kind of support is necessary when you are experience particular circumstances.

In sympathising with Gail I shared my experience of sitting on a bench in the town centre with about five white youths; some of who were smoking. I remember smelling something burning whilst they were laughing and began moving away, but kept turning back to look at me. As a result of their behaviour I became a little suspicious as I could still smell burning. Instinctively I put my hands to my head where I discovered a small segment of lighted cigarette embedded in my Afro-hair style. These young men had deliberately set my hair on fire and thought it was funny. That really made me scared.

More street racism

Two months later my aunty came to see me for the first time, we were walking over the bridge near the town centre when a young man on a bicycle pass rode by and said, 'move out the way rubber lips'. I was just like 'wow', I was shocked, but I was not going to let that incident colour my view of being here, so I set out to talk and engage with everyone.

Gail's experience of stereotyping and racism was challenging, however in finding a way to address it Gail resorted to embracing a wider network of friends.

Why the Stares? Everyday Racism?

Last term I was the only Black person in my year, I just thought, 'so you are the only Black person, okay, this is it'. So I decided to go out of my way to make friends with everyone, I wanted Black and White friends Asian friends the lot. I was at university and wanted to be friendly with a wide range and backgrounds of people regardless of race. Yet still I knew from my short time of being here that racism existed. One day my cousin and I were walking when this man kept staring at us. We could feel his animosity. Because of the incident near the train station, I asked myself if he was staring in such a hostile way because we were Black. I mean you have to ask yourself

such question, and it is a discussion you cannot have with a White person, because again they would not know what you are talking about, whereas with a Black person you do not even have to explain or describe it, because most of us have experienced such looks.

All the girls in the house are white, so basically I got into an argument with one girl over who had used my cup, she then went to a third person and told them I was aggressive towards her, so I called a meeting and asked her why she had used the word 'aggressive' to describe the exchange we had. She then said that she had a bad day, and basically took it out on me, but she could not explain why she used the word aggressive. Since then I have been keeping to myself, because again I am aware that these are labels that are often given to Black people, she did not say I was assertive, which means confident or self-assured, she chose instead to use 'aggressive' which means antagonistic, hostile and violent. She had labelled me in a negative way, so I kept my distance, again retreating to my room like it did when I lived at home.....I was even told by my flatmates that they do not like the smell of 'Black food' in the flat, and that they all had to open their windows every time I was cooking. This was of course after 'the cup incident'. Again this leads me to believe that I was being discussed in my absence. So I have stopped cooking my traditional food, and stick mainly to English food, which I do not particularly enjoy, except chips. I mean what is Black food? Is there such a thing as white food? To me this was another example of their racism. When I asked what in particular they did not like about my food, they said everything. No explanation, just everything! This is the reason I am reluctant to display my hair. I feel I will stand out and seen as an oddity if I wear my hair natural. I feel I have no alternative but to wear long extension braids as I would not have to explain why my hair is different or have friends asking me if they can touch it, which I have done in the past, but not here at this university.

Gail's fear of being isolated, or being considered as different, may have influenced changing the food she ate and wearing her hair in braids. Yet she was prepared to go through this in order to have friends and be part of the 'in-crowd'. Already far from her home environment, distant from her parents, and having experienced racism in the local student vicinity, Gail endeavoured to ensure that she was not going to lose the friends made as well.

Not wanting to be Pigeon-holed

I did not select friends based on their colour, I did not think that because someone was Black they should be my friend, because there are still differences between Black people, and different cultures as well, and I did not want to be 'pigeon-holed' into who I should or feel I had to be friends with. So I am not going to do anything associated with Black people, because I am me, not just a Black female student. There are many things I would not do here, for example I could never wear my hair in a 'natural hair style' it would draw too much attention and my friends and others would ask too many

question, and anyway I do not even like my hair short and curly this is the reason I wear long braids. I think it suits me better.....there is no way I am going natural, no way! I mean I could not be like you. I guess I do not have that kind of confidence, I am always thinking of how I will be viewed by my White friends and other White people.

It appears as though Gail is really trying to be part of the 'cultural capital' group, she is not comfortable being identified as a Black student, or even liking her hair in a 'natural style'. Gail does recognise however that this has a lot to do with her confidence level.

The Black Expert, Stereotyping and Power

In a second interview, Gail talked about stereotypical dynamics in the classroom:

At times I am made to feel like the 'Black expert' in class simply because I am Black, and I am not necessarily talking about students, I am referring to lecturers who ask, in my opinion questions that are not well thought through. For example one lecturer wanted the 'Black view' on discipline and Black males. I did not want to be rude, but I thought to myself, is there just one type of 'Black discipline' or one type of Black family dishing out the same discipline. I wondered why she had not taken into consideration different customs and cultures of Black people, even different social class group, the same way she would have done for white people. So in this respect I thought she was quite ignorant. I felt that she was most inappropriate to facilitate discussion on race and discipline when quite clearly she had not considered the issues herself fully, but I did not say that aloud for fear of being seen as an opinionated Black person. From that time on, I just kept quiet in her class, even though there were other issues I felt uncomfortable about, because of the way she would stereotype different groups and communities in a way she would not white communities. She was the same lecturer when the issue of guns and Black people was directed at me from another student did not in my opinion address this well. I asked the lecturer why the question was not directed at the other White student from London, the lecturer responded that Black people 'according to the media' was more likely to be involved in gun crimes, so the student had asked a valid question in her opinion, however she apologised if I took it the wrong way. I told the lecturer that that question could only be valid if there was conclusive proof that all Black people were criminally minded and therefore hoarded guns. She told me I was getting too emotive....So no, I am not comfortable or confident enough to tell her that some of her views are offensive and discriminatory. How can I say that to a lecturer who will be marking my assignment? She might view me as an arrogant Black student, which I am not, so I just keep quiet and wait for that class to be over and dread the next class....I hear the murmurings of some White students when certain issues arise. I hear their responses on immigration, race, social class and welfare recipients. These sometimes border on racism in my opinion, however they are never challenged by this lecturer, even when some are articulated as whole group discussions, for example one student said that she did not intent to offend anyone, but

in her opinion, most welfare recipients were immigrants who came to this country to 'scrounge of the state'. The lecturer replied by stated that was not strictly true, that was all she said. I went back to my flat that evening and could not even extend that discussion with my flatmates. It was then that the isolation really hit me. I felt isolated in the classroom for that particular module anyway, and isolated in the flat, and unprotected in the street of the city. This is why I made the statement in the presentation that I have experienced more racism here in the last three months, than I have experienced in total eighteen years I have lived.

The isolation Gail speaks of appears really profound here. She feels unable to articulate her views on certain topics because of the students and the lecturer. Gail is reluctant to jeopardise her grades, which she sees as a possibility if marked by this particularly lecturer. Gail therefore chose to remain quiet, even she felt some of the lecturer's views were offensive and discriminatory. Hence Gail's isolation in this classroom.

Talking Too Much - Anxious to Explain or Justify?

I think we take on the stereotypes from the media which informs us that certain types of people are more inclined to commit crimes, and we know where Black males are positioned within this discourse. The stereotype is so pervasive that the government's own research states, the police are five times more likely to stop and search a Black male in comparison to a White male. So your attitude to your safety is not uncommon. I think we are all affected by stereotyping at an unconscious level whether we are Black or White." I was in London and decided to use the cashpoint at about 9pm at night. I became acutely aware that a group of about four young Black men had gathered around my car, with one of them leaning against it. I am ashamed to say, all the stereotypes of young Black men came to the fray. I wondered if I was going to be mugged; I wondered if my car was going to be broken into. I decided to confront them and started walking towards my car which was parked on the opposite side of the road to the cashpoint. As I got closer my young cousin emerged from the small group and hugged me, exclaiming that he recognized my car and was waiting to greet me. University students and church going young men, they had been visiting a friend at a nearby hospital involved in a road traffic accident. As I drove home, I was appalled and embarrassed that I could even have such negative views, what is even more I chided myself that I should know better."

I shared that experience with Gail, because I wanted to show her that we all struggle with stereotyping. However, 'as educators, we must critically analyse their source, rationale and impact on the people doing the stereotyping and on those being stereotyped' Soloranzo (1997. pp 15). Gillborn in a conversation with TES in January 2017, stated that from observation in class rooms and listening to conversations in staff rooms, teachers like many other groups in society operate on a range of stereotypes about which kids are likely to be

causing trouble and which kids are likely to excel. Gillborn (2017) said that this stereotyping is not necessarily something that a teacher is aware they are doing. "I'm not suggesting that teachers walk into a classroom and think, 'How can I pick on the Black kids today?....it's a thing that White people learn from very early on and it's reinforced through television and the media. We learn a different set of expectations about different ethnic groups.'" <https://www.tes.com/news/school-news/breaking-views/tes-talks-today-david-gillborn>. I would extend Gillborn's argument by suggesting that Black people often internalize these stereotypes portrayed in the media and society at large and may also unconsciously use these in stereotyping their own individuals and groups. Gail said:

I am surprised to hear that coming from you. I thought you were so together. ...I need to be aware of how I am affected by stereotyping, because I am the kind of person who will hear something and run with it

Being Constructed as the Black Student; Canterbury and London in Interplay

Gail continued:

I remember an occasion where I turned up for a tutorial and we were having a general discussion of my extracurricular activities, when I told the lecturer that I was a keen sports person, she replied 'well that is expected, because Black people are good at that'. May be I was foolish, but her reference to my ethnicity made me realize that before she saw anything else about me, she saw my colour, so for the first time I had to see myself as Gail the Black student, rather than Gail 'a student at this university'.... I mean it is not as though I do not know I am Black, it is not something that consume my day, or it never used to, but since coming here, I have begun to look more closely at how race and my ethnicity seems to be unconsciously or consciously an issue for students, for lecturers and for the community at large. It is something I did not pay regards to in London, and as such it is a bit of a culture shock here, but I am not going to allow anyone to fit me into a box I am not prepared to go into.

Gail is troubled that she is seen as a Black student with stereotypical abilities by her tutor. Her inclusion within a white students group, has not materialised in being 'invisible' of her colour/race. It appears that Gail cannot hide from the colour of her skin anywhere.

Race for Equality Report

Gail's university experience appear to consolidate those of the findings in the 'Race for Equality' 2011 NUS report, which show that 1 in 6 Black students have experienced racism in their current institution, one third do not trust their institution to properly handle complaints, and one third feel their educational environment leaves them unable to bring their perspective as Black students to lectures and tutorial meetings.

<https://www.nus.org.uk/en/news/racism-widespread-across-uk-education-system-report-shows/>

Boundary and Power Issues/What Does it Mean to do This Kind of Work?

When asked in the second interview, Gail said she did not see the importance or relevance of meeting with a Black Student group. Stating that she mixed well with a variety of students therefore did not see the need to be associated with a Black group, especially when she had so many White friends....Gail also commented that because I allowed her to do most of the talking about things that are important to her, she did not really see this as a proper interview.

Resistance, in a 3rd Interview, and Ambivalence

Jacob and Furgerson (2012) reminds researchers to:

close your mouth and listen! It is important to remember that while you are getting to know your interviewee you should not let your experiences overtake theirs. While it is fine to share things about yourself to build trust and get the conversation going, you are working to understand someone else's life experiences. If you talk too much, you may miss the best part of the story, so work hard to listen to your respondent. Truly listening to another person is one of the hardest things to do. Most people are so busy composing what they will say next that they never fully listen. (p .9).

I had left a number of email messages for Gail, regarding our third and final interview, but these were met with silence. I surmised that Gail no longer wished to proceed with the interview, and decided not to pursue the matter further. I reflected of the power imbalance in the relationship between myself as the researcher and academic, and Gail as student, and rationalise that may be Gail just did not want to continue the interview process. I wondered if elements of the second interview had proved too painful for Gail, or whether as the researcher I had probably 'probe too deeply' in relation to Gail's view of her ethnicity and comfort level with associating with other Black students. This caused me some consternation as began replaying elements of the second interview and was reminded of Gail's responses. Thus I did not expect to hear from Gail again and surmised that the interview process had come to an end. However, I received an email from Gail early in the new academic year stating that she had been in London over the summer period, but now back on campus, she would like to continue the interview process. Gail provided dates and times of her availability. I followed these up and the third and final interview took place.

I have not done an interview like this before, so it was strange to see me in the transcripts, I think I am quite an open book, and was quite surprised by some of the things I said, and what that make me look like. I like talking, but of course I never get to see the interpretation or transcript like I have with you, and it is really interesting to

see and hear myself on paper. It is like a mirror into my soul, and it is quite strange to see what I sound like. So there are a few things that I would like to change.... It was quite strange to see on paper how I view my family. It felt like it was someone else, but I realized quite quickly that it was what I had said. It was really strange, because I did not realize just how much I spoke about my family. I guess I was looking for an outlet. So it is not just about my experience of racism...

When Lee Rigby died, I suddenly understood what the Asians had been going through with the discrimination levied against Muslim. As Nigerians my family and I thought, 'well what are we going to do now'? We did not even know these people, I did not even know that my country had so many Muslims. Suddenly it was the worst thing to be, if you were a Nigerian. I felt so bad for Muslims because the vast majority are law abiding citizens, and I felt uncomfortable being Nigerian because the spotlight were on these two assailants 'being Nigerian and Muslim converts'. You just could not get away from that fact in the media. Suddenly you feel exposed and vulnerable, suddenly you are no longer British, but a Nigerian, a foreigner and you are all the same, so I understand and agree with what you have said about stereotyping. But going back to the 'X's and the 'O's' I feel that I have a lot of identity layers. I think my cousin really showed me how layered I am, because with her I can be myself, I do not have to 'over-perform', she accepts me for myself. Even now, whatever I am saying is put on 'accent wise'. I feel the need to do this. I have a bit of an inferiority complex, whereas with my cousin she is confident. I mean I did not feel I was good enough to do law or medicine and she is doing law, so in a way I feel she is better than me, so now I have to compensate. I cannot afford to speak regularly, I have to announce everything I say. It is quite difficult sometimes because we can have a conversation at home and then we can have a conversation outside and I will be two different people.

Due to the media attention and reporting of the Lee Rigby murder by two Nigerian Muslims in 2013. Gail in reflecting on the incident, highlighted how one can be catapulted from the comfort of being British, to being seen as a foreigner. As a result she felt vulnerable and exposed being a Nigerian although British born. Gail also now appeared uncomfortable with how she expressed herself in the second interview, but acknowledged the importance of having a space to talk about her family, racism, stereotyping and her multi-identity layers.

Identity and self; struggling with self and identity; here and now, there and then.

It is quite strange because I do not want it to sound like I dislike Black people, I do not want to sound like I have a complex, but it seems like I do not want to talk to Black people, but I would not say that that is the case. With guys and girls it is a bit different. I have a friend who is 'biracial' and we talk all the time, I mean I do not know what she

classifies herself as, she is in a way an ethnic minority, I mean it is strange....I was speaking to the girl that is biracial, and I said to her that I am trying so hard not to be a product of the society I was brought up in. Like I am not rich, some people have parents who have bought their houses; I am not in that category. And then I hear conversation such as 'we moved out of London because it is so expensive'. That is not my life; that is not my class. I portray an image to make sure I feel secure on campus and with other students. I can sometimes be seen as arrogant because I speak a lot, and on reflection, I realized that last year I spoke far too much. For example if no one spoke, I assumed that no one knew the answer and so I would always have something to say. I realize now, that I may have been seen as someone quite pompous who always felt that their voice had to be heard. But when I make sure that I articulate my words, I feel quite good. I was raised quite Western so I do not know how to speak 'my mother tongue'. I know how to listen to it, but I cannot speak it. Basically, I sound like a Westerner trying to speak the language. I am not sure what it is with me, but when I am speaking to my friends, I go into a professional mode, it is like if I have to 'up the ante' in terms of how I speak. I feel I have to come across in a serious manner so they do not think that just because I come from South East London I cannot speak properly. I do not want to come across like a 'commoner'.

Gail has not doubt, taken on some of the society's distinction in relation to class. She is of the opinion that quite possibly speaking with a certain accent or always having something to say, may have portrayed an image of someone who is confident. Instead Gail was seeking for a place to be herself but could not find it. Gail, it appears, is absorbing the media influence on materialism, class, race and cultural capital and it is resurrecting feelings of how she want to perceives herself, and of how others should to perceive her.

Changing Accents - a Persona

I have a lot of identity issues. So when I went to college and this male asked if I went to private school, I thought 'wow' let me keep this up, so I adjusted my accent even more to seem more polished. I thought that guys might like that kind of accents, so I pretty much 'put it on' I do not want people to think I am arrogant, but I think I do sound arrogant. I was talking to another student and she was telling me about her parents' who were both academics, and had both studied at Oxbridge and where they lived, and I thought you had an opportunity to go to Oxbridge and you chose here. I suddenly became aware that whilst I was trying to acquire a different type of accent, she naturally had it and for her it was not a big deal. All the time I was being smart in class answering all the questions she knew the answer. It suddenly dawned on me that the difference between us was the fact that she was comfortable in her skin and I was still trying to impress to find a niche...

The irony is that I feel that I am not really stretched on my present programme. I want to teach at a private school, I want to make money, I do not want to go back to my community however terrible that sounds, I do not want to give back to my community, and I know that that is selfish. I loved doing work experience at the private school, the children were lovely, I remember seeing a child about six years wearing an Aston Martin jacket, this jacket cost more than my entire wardrobe. And I am thinking you want to get a qualification, you want to work in a private school, you want to be like this, and you want to be like that, but this is not necessarily from your background and these children are blessed to have these opportunities, but you will not choose to make a difference in the community where you come from and make an impact.

It is not just because of my colour, well that is part of it too, but it is also because of my 'class' and what I have not achieved, and that really hurts me. I could not do a particular adjoining professional qualification. I am a really good student, I do not mean to boast, but I am getting 2.1's and first. You have to have GCSE in particular subjects, in order to get on that professional course, and I feel that my past is haunting me because even though I am a bright student I do not have these GCSE and it means that I cannot do what I really want to do...When I was at school, I thought I would stay in my community and possibly get any kind of retail job. But as you get older your horizon change, I now want more for myself. I was the stereotype because that was all I knew, I guess that is where my cousin and I differ somehow she does not feel she has to impress anyone. She is academic and therefore does not need to impress, whereas I feel I need to impress because I am not as academic as her. You know with fencing or random sport it is so much fun, maybe I do associate it with class and a White sport.

Gail has already begun to see the importance of accents and class as identified by society, and of how these may heighten her future prospects. She is recognising her status of being Black and working class as a hurdle, as well as her degree of choice. She is wanting more, but frustrated by the challenges in getting there.

Hair, identity and auto/biography; gender...

You know I said that I would never 'wear my hair' natural, well I tried it. It was horrible; it was not just for me. I guess it put me in a stereotype, it put me in a box. I like straight hair and I tried to love the 'natural hair' but it completely shattered my entire confidence. I remember going into class one day and people was looking at me as if I was crazy, that is not the me that they have seen before. I felt that they thought I had gone crazy. I felt that they were saying 'you have been living a lie all this time, and this is the real you' and it was uncomfortable for me. I was trying to change myself, but it taught me something. I really do like straight hair, if my hair was the texture of a 'mixed-race' person I would probably like it better than straight

hair, but that day when I came to the lecture with natural hair, I felt as though I was at the bottom of the pile....I have never felt attractive. I was certainly not one of the 'it girls' at school, and when I started going to college and had straight hair I began receiving compliments from males, so I knew I had to keep my hair straight for the interest to continue. It was the only time members of the opposite sex took an interest in me. I cannot go back to feeling unattractive. The kind of person I depicted is someone who like different things. However the 'hair thing' was going too far, it was out of my comfort zone.

I was surprised, but pleased Gail tried to wear her hair in a natural style, but also recognized how difficult it must have been for her to look so different. This probably expressed Gail's dilemma of wanting to be herself (probably to impress me), but also longing to be accepted by her white peers. For Black women deciding on a hairstyle—a presumably simple and personal decision—is both a constrained choice and a formidable dilemma. Black women frequently must choose between hairstyles that conform to the norms and expectations of their white colleagues or hairstyles that are central to their African, Caribbean, or other racial or ethnic identities. This choice is complicated because in our society, long straight hair has generally been considered the gold standard for attractiveness, and the expectation of a straight conservative hairstyle is clearly present in corporate organizations (Dash 2006).

The Power of the Process - Auto/biographical Dynamics

These series of interviews has really challenged my thinking and views on a range of issues, it was difficult for me to accept some of the things I obviously said and why I said it, but it has been a steep learning curve. I almost was not going to read the transcript because there were too much but I am glad that I did, it gave me a window into my thinking and where my mind is. Ironically I could not speak to my mother about the things I have spoken about with you. It is rather strange how one could speak to peoples that are not that close to them and cannot speak to those who are supposed to be close to them. I am definitely glad I had this experience with you, it took me out of my comfort zone, it pointed things that was wrong with me, things and thinking I need to address. But I was being open, and this was my thought process at the time. I believe I have made some changes, because people change.

Gail was beginning to reflect on her position as a Black student and person. In the third interview she was very reflective of her status both in terms of class and race, and readily admits her struggle to find a place where she feels comfortable internally and externally. I

therefore acknowledged Gail's comments that it is sometimes difficult to recognize ourselves and our words in print.

Yes that is true, but it is not that I do not like Black people the interview sounds like I do not like Black people

Not wanting to be Stereo-typed

From listening to Gail's previous interviews, I got the distinct impression that she did not want to be stereo-typed, and did whatever it took to do so. This was very transparent in terms of how Gail expressed herself in both transcripts. I do not think it was a case of not liking Black people, but rather Gail felt that all the negative association with being Black was something she did not particularly want to experience on campus. I think that came over clearly in the interviews. I found myself affirming Gail throughout the interview process. She had laid bare her soul and now needed direction in putting the pieces back together in a different way. I had to remind Gail of how she overcame bullying; addressed the dynamics in her family. *How she* did not just accept what was going on. I reminded Gail that it took a certain mind-set of determination in choosing not to give up or give in, and that she demonstrated this extremely well. Gail could have packed her bags and go back to London, but instead made certain adjustments and carried on, that is in my opinion sheer determination.

Listening and not Hearing

During the interview, I was listening but I was not hearing, it was only when I started typing the transcript that I heard Gail's emotions and feelings on a range of issues, when it is written in print, it is a powerful record. This was a dynamic between research and consciousness raising; between doing research and learning; between the anger generated by racial oppression and the need to listen and take care. And a young woman struggling to be a person, a self, as against fitting in with a false identity; a false self, designed to make herself acceptable to the phantasised public school, including in the way she speaks, her accent. Of not wanting to be exposed as the person she fears she might be; unacceptable, unattractive, alone.

In addition to the general assimilation into campus life, Black student deal with the perceived notion of Black racial inferiority linked to the history of discrimination. This leads to what scholars have deemed "the burden of acting white" or "stereotype threat" (Fordham and Ogbu 1986). This can be seen in Gail's preference of choice of friends, activities, beliefs and attitude. Thus in deference to the social norms theory, Gail adapted her behaviour to conform to perceived norms (Berkowitz 2000).

However, Horvat and Lewis (2003) have shown how the burden of “acting white” can be used in a positive manner. As a result of the alienation experienced by high achieving Blacks at the hands of low achieving peers, there emerges a subculture of students who value education. Students can then find a way to manage their academic success and receive encouragement from supportive peers, allowing them to maintain normal social lives as well as excel academically. It would appear that institutional racism and structural inequality are not taken into consideration in this model and therefore limiting in its explanation. As a result the extent to which Gail sees those who have redress to the African-Caribbean associations as low achievers is uncertain, although she clearly sees herself as an above average learner and therefore does not need the support of an association to validate her experience or her presence at the university. I am not sure if this is a positive manner of ‘acting white’ as identified by Horvat and Lewis (2003). Rather I see it as an individual who has internalised all the negative characteristics of Black peoples and has subsequently decided that she does not want to be in any situation where she will be stereotyped even if this means completely alienating herself from anything associated with ‘Black’.

The threat of being stereotyped leads many students to question their academic ability and to fear social marginalization. Social marginalization cannot be overlooked because as a result of the stereotypes associated with “Blackness” members of an institution may expect Black students to be portrayed in a certain way. Implying that in a lot of ways being an intelligent Black student with a mind for education and not having stereotypically Black attributes can lead to alienation from members of all social groups, including ones’ own. This could clearly be seen in Gail’s interaction with both the fencing teacher and Black student who found it difficult to accommodate Gail’s interest in fencing with a sport that is associated with Black people. Further, in the interview Gail attests that the other Black students in her class did not speak to her, apart from one saying hello. This then can be seen as exemplars indicating that Gail could be alienated for being different.

The research of Dipietro and McGloin (2012); Shah et al, (2010); Lacourse et al, (2003) although addressing children in schools, is still nonetheless pertinent in illuminating Gail’s position. Writing specifically on internalised racism Dipietro and McGloin (2012) attests that some Black children will conform to the culture of their surroundings in order to feel accepted amongst peers, if they feel they can gain acceptance by dissociating themselves from their ethnic group. To this extent Gail was resolute that her white peers and social group offered her the best opportunity to enjoy her student life in an inconspicuous way.

Relating Gail’s experience and choice to elements of Cultural Capital Theory in educational settings, in a society based upon the ideals in which anyone can achieve any level of success they choose, the education system is entrenched in the idea of meritocracy. One’s own merit and individual effort is supposed to be enough to achieve success. However, there are many non-merit based factors that uneven the playing field such as the strength of one’s network,

inheritance, access to education, as well as race and gender. These factors illuminate meritocracy in the higher education system as the myth that it is. Certain people from certain places have certain advantages that ultimately play major roles in their success or failure. Gail perceived and extrapolated this view early on in her student life and consciously made adjustment accordingly.

Explication of both Gail and Zara's experiences as Black students revealed how they felt "uncelebrated" at a university that claimed to celebrate and encourage diversity. More specifically, their counter-narratives provide opportunities to critically reflect upon their positions of being Black students attending universities. Furthermore, by telling their stories in their own words, their narratives also allow them to contradict the 'Othering' process, and challenge the privileged discourses that are often found at universities. The factors in relation to the encouragement or discouragement of a successful university experience and how it is this subjectively understood are related in their stories of isolation, 'being othered' stereotyped and discriminated against. Question 2. What factors discourage progression and retention for Black students in UK universities and Question 3. How might university cultures and subcultures better enhance the development of Black students? can be summed up in Zara's statement *'It is a good university the facilities are okay, I just think more could be done for ethnic minorities' 'period', with more Black lecturers, with more activities for Black students group. My message to the university organisation is this, in future when new students are applying they should organise the classroom and groups so that individuals do not feel isolated and intimidated because they are different, there should be modules that explore other cultures, and just thinking of peoples' feelings and how they would feel in that situation'.*

Why this cage bird sings

*Why the Caged Bird Sings
The free bird leaps
on the back of the wind
and floats downstream
till the current ends
and dips his wings
in the orange sun rays
and dares to claim the sky.*

*But a bird that stalks
down his narrow cage
can seldom see through
his bars of rage
his wings are clipped and
his feet are tied
so he opens his throat to sing.*

*The caged bird sings
with fearful trill
of the things unknown
but longed for still
and his tune is heard
on the distant hill
for the caged bird
sings of freedom*

*The free bird thinks of another breeze
and the trade winds soft through the sighing trees
and the fat worms waiting on a dawn-bright lawn
and he names the sky his own.*

*But a caged bird stands on the grave of dreams
his shadow shouts on a nightmare scream
his wings are clipped and his feet are tied
so he opens his throat to sing*

*The caged bird sings
with a fearful trill
of things unknown
but longed for still
and his tune is heard
on the distant hill
for the caged bird
sings of freedom.
(Maya Angelou 1928 – 2014)*

Introduction

It is time to focus more on me, in this explicitly auto/biographical chapter. I am the backcloth to the study, and my presence is there in all its stages, from the initial identification of the problem through to generating, analysing and representing the narrative material. I identify critical periods in my own life, bearing in mind the research questions, as a basis for my engagement with Gail and Zara. Those questions, to recall have to do with the factors that encourage or discourage successful university experience and how this is subjectively understood; alongside the factors discouraging progression and retention for Black students in UK Higher Education and how university cultures and subcultures can best enhance the development of Black students?

In doing so I aim to engage in transparency and reflection and highlight “family”, belief system, cultural background, values and their contributions in understanding the social context of the world in which I exist. The intention is not so much to make myself central to the study as Edwards and Ribbens (1998) warns, thereby eliminating the voice of Zara and Gail. Rather it is to elicit “the researcher’s own voice and stance” (Connolly 2007, p. 453), to make the distinction as to whose story it is and the extent to which my story intertwines with those of Zara and Gail’s. In so doing I am reminiscent of McAdams (2008) statement that:

the stories we construct to make sense of our lives are fundamentally about our struggle to make sense of who we imagine we were are and might be in our heads and bodies with who we are and might be in the social context of family, workplace, culture, ethnicity, class, gender therefore the self comes to term with society through narrative identity. (McAdams 2008, p. 242).

As a consequence, I identify my family and the expectations of educational achievement; the culture which facilitated high self-esteem and a vision in which education played a pivotal role as signals and signs of social mobility. The church community also provided opportunities for spiritual and educational growth and addressed social issues. The extended family placed a high expectation on its children, and also shared countless stories of separation and loss, inequalities, success, triumphs; resilience; racism and race. These appear to be ever present both at an unconscious and conscious level in almost every part of my life. I will also identify the challenges as a student and academic. As a result, concepts of Yosso’s (2005) community cultural wealth (aspirational, navigational, social, linguistic, familial and resistant capital) were clearly present throughout my life and have left an indelible mark when reflecting on my childhood and up to date. In juxtaposing the use and narrow definition of Bourdieu’s “cultural capital” with my own meanings (see chapters two), the former does not represent the variety of experiences or “cultural wealth” in my family, church community or indeed in my story. Nor do deficit theories address the continued commitment to progress and social mobility. As stated in chapter three, I have used writing through journals, rather than an interview

approach, to bring myself into the text. This writing regularly undertaken evolved over the period of the study: partly shaped by the process of engaging with the lives of Gail and Zara, helped me think through the ideas that were shaping, in turn, the development of the thesis itself.

Aspirational Capital

What has become obvious through this process of writing is the subtlety of a number of situational settings which have shaped and concretized my life and passion. Whether it was at home, church, visiting extended family, or family friends, or even at social occasions, it seemed to me, that along with my siblings, the question of how we were doing at school or educationally always emerged. These questions would then be developed regarding our future studies and intended career paths. It was not uncommon for conversations between parents whatever the setting, to take on an almost adversarial component, with each attempting to show off their children's academic prowess in comparison to others. Thus the idea of pursuing education was not a new phenomenon in my family or indeed within the community, this was also evident in Zara's and Gail's stories.

It was not unusual for the men of the family to be found discussing the political and economic situation of the world, and suggesting measures for improvements. I gleaned from such conversations that social justice or injustice was a major factor, this was underpinned in the main, by their own experiences of coming to the UK in the fifties and early sixties. These stories were relayed to children and young people frequently. They served as countless reminders of how fortunate we were that we did not have to suffer the humiliation of reading signs which stated 'no dogs'; 'no Irish'; 'no Blacks', when seeking accommodation. I am reminded of a maternal uncle telling the story of how he had to share a bed and room with his best friend; however they considered themselves more fortunate than others, because due to working opposite shifts, it enabled them to have the bed to themselves during the week. There were stories of overt racism such as name calling, people spitting in their faces, of being paid significantly less for doing the same jobs as their White counterparts, and banks not giving mortgages even when they had deposits. These stories were sometimes entwined with humour and the light laughter similar to Zara's. I think this was their way of cushioning the blow of racism and building in their children and successive generations the courage to triumph under adversity in developing resilience.

Linguistic Capital

It was in these gatherings that children became familiar with the 'proverbs' and 'sayings' often disseminated in the 'dialect' or 'language' of the presented Caribbean island. It seemed to us as children that stories took on a particular familiarity (discussed in the methodological chapter) and richness when told within the vernacular of the associated dialect. Used freely and without cause for superficiality it provided a platform where displaced people could once

again relive the familiarity of sounds, voice and linguistics without recourse of having to explain themselves or of not being understood. As children many of us grew up trammelling two worlds and borrowing from each other, learning adequately to re-event ourselves depending on our social environment. When accents were not easily understood it was generally the children who would interpret and act as advocates thus accumulating a range of skills in negotiating, communicating and listening and so on.

Social Capital

Black families suffered a range of overt and explicit discriminatory practice from the host society on entering the United Kingdom. This propelled them to adapt mechanisms for survival, nowhere was this more evident in the adaptation of what is commonly called 'Susu'. When banks were reluctant to provide Black families with mortgages and loans 'Susu hands' were most often used in order to secure homes, plan weddings or buy cars or such likes. Susu is derived from the Yoruba word "esusu," which roughly translates to "pooling the funds and rotating the pot" (Huggings 1997). Each month or so, one member gets a "hand" the entire amount of the pool collected for that week; month or year. It is still used by successive generations today, myself included, for planning holidays and so on.

Familial Capital

This pooling of resources can be best expressed in what Delgado Bernal (1998, 2002) named 'Familial capital' which embodies the community well-being as a form of cultural wealth. It was with the help of Susu than my father, uncles, other relatives and family friends secured their homes. As with many Caribbean families who owned their homes then, one or more rooms were rented out to generate income and to provide accommodation for others. Our second home by comparison was much larger and spacious but still housed lodgers; a cousin and her husband bought a large Victorian home and renting out every bedroom except one. There were about six families each occupying a bedroom, all sharing the dining and living room and cooking communally, including looking after each other's children, thus avoiding the expenses of child minders.

The family who owned that home had a seven year old daughter who was very bright, aided and abetted by her father she would be presented at Sunday gatherings armed with selected newspapers of the day. Here she would read the news to all and sundry, it was his way of showing off his daughter's ability to read fluently. This would cause parents to impress upon their children the importance of out-performing their peers and in particular White counterparts at school. Our parents reinforced that in order to secure employment a Black person would have to be at least ten times better, just to compete in the same job market as their White counterparts. This was their experience and most assuredly that was my father's response when White friends requested my company to play with them. My father would remind us of a cousin who was an outstanding and well respected teacher 'back home' (a

reference to Caribbean people's country of origin) yet reduced to being a bus conductor, and others who had held similarly professional positions now working in factories or for London Transport on the underground. A few women had sailed the then lofty heights of becoming nurses in the 1950's and 60's, but for most the dream of improving their education and finding a fulfilling job with decent pay and conditions did not materialise. Their five or ten year plan to make some quick money and go 'back home', remained a dream to be realised, more often at retirement, but with new dynamics. Establishing families and spending most of their lives in the UK, they were now going 'back home' after forty and fifty years with little or no support there. Ironically in some respect, where they started off, with their families in another country, only now it was the UK.

My father worked the night shift on London Transport for many years as an engineer, before being employed as a road inspector. My mother for the most part stayed at home, looking after her children and those of family and friends. My mother was instrumental in ensuring that all school work was completed, but it was my father who bought books on the planet, the solar system, medical books and so on. I later realised that these reflected my father's own areas of interests as did his pro-activeness in identifying his children career paths.

Much to his chagrin none of us followed our father's career choice, but his greatest disappointment was reserved for my brother, his only son, who decided on a career in the Arts, rather than medicine. Though a graphic artist by profession, my brother did not receive the accolade he so desired from my father. Continuous differences of opinion occurred between them resulting in a fragmented relationship which was never healed even at my father's death. Similarly, my father surmised that working in a bank, the profession for which I was earmarked and where I was dutifully employed albeit rather briefly, would eventually, with accompanying studies, catapult me into the world of an international banker. He acquiesced to my profession of being an academic, because he saw it as preferable to the social work profession where I was once employed. I think that whilst my father could come to terms with his daughters chosen professions, he could not afford the same towards his son, who he saw as being responsible for carrying on the family name. After all, daughters would invariably marry into another family and take on another name, a son however, had an obligation to the family name, and therefore a worthwhile profession was a sign of this.

My father took an avid interest in current affairs and cricket, it was the only occasion when the whole family gathered to watch sports, and in particular the West Indies cricket team. On the weekend, usually Saturday evenings or Sunday when all family visits seem to take place, the men could be found in a corner of the room animatedly discussing the why and wherefores of the standard of play and how the players could improve their skills. My father had also earned the reputation of being seen as a rather disciplined and respectable man in the community. Maybe this was because he controlled his family with an iron rod; maybe it was because of the family name and its association with business and money in his country of

origin. Whatever the reason, it was not uncommon for parents to present their “wayward children” to my father for admonition, or families to seek his advice on financial matters or for warring couples to turn to him for impartiality.

As I remember my primary school days were filled with fun and excitement and some caring teachers, because of this experience I looked forward to going to the ‘big school’. Unfortunately, I wish I could say this interest in education was as evident at my secondary school. I do not have a single memory of any teachers at school enquiring of or encouraging my academic development. I surmise that because I was not perceived as being outstanding or an academically poor student they did not have high aspirations for me and therefore I did not warrant their attention. Black students at my school were involved in sports activities, and had made up most of the school’s sports team although we were small in number. My father however, had stated unapologetically that his children were not going to be the stereotypical sports heroes and heroines for the school at the expense of our education.

I do not even think that any of my teachers knew that my mother was terminal ill. Yet I was having a difficult time concentrating at school, as well as wondering what would happen to my siblings in the case of any eventualities. I was not inclined to inform any of my teachers of mother’s health. Previous visits to parents evening revealed that I had potential, but was not putting it to good use; and that I could pay more attention in class. Contrasting school with my church community, the latter provided unconditional support and encouragement. Paradoxically, the lackadaisical child at school was most involved in activities at church.

As mother’s illness became progressively worse, with bouts of hospital admittance we now had even more responsibilities in the home. In this respect my family was typically of many Caribbean families in the 1970’s, in terms of children being given responsibilities. As well as being viewed as good training for life, and the accumulation of necessary wifely skills for girls, many children quite simply, had to help out in the home because their parents worked long hours. In supervising younger siblings a number of children took on a ‘parenting role’ as a norm within African and Caribbean households. Sometimes the discovery of this by the school authorities resulted in families having children removed from their care to foster and children homes. Ahmed et al (1986) explained that teachers simply did not understand Black family culture and dynamics. Parents believing schools and social services conspired to split up families, admonished their children not to divulge any information about their private lives at school. Therefore I heeded severally, the warnings by various ‘aunties’ in this regard.

Navigational Capital

For about two years after my mother died, and up to the point my father remarried, we had an influx of ‘aunts’ and ‘uncles’ who took it in turn to visit during the week and especially on weekends. The men provided companionship for my father and brother, but it was the women who took us aside and prepared us for the journey called life by the types of

conversations that ensued. The spiritual dimension was provided through weekly visits from our church pastor, and it seemed that almost everyone impressed upon us, the importance of making our father proud through our education, careers, conduct and choices. Again there was similarity with Zara and Gail whose family remained indulgent with respect to the importance of education and choice.

Though typical, ours was also different from many Caribbean families in that our father did not believe in physical punishment. He would rather discuss or what we called 'lectured you' on a number of areas where he thought you were offending. At these 'lectures' my father would also solicit our views on whether we thought he was being unfair or not. My mother on the other hand, continued to be appalled that we were being given a platform to air our views. Her main concern being that her children would be perceived by other Caribbean parents as disrespectful, which according to her, would imply, that she had not carried out her parental responsibilities effectively.

My father also had an untypical upbringing; he was brought up by his grandparents and sixteen year old father, and had not experienced physical punishment. He too was encouraged to discuss his behaviour and his views were an integral part of decisions made by the family. My father's mother was sent to another Caribbean island after giving birth at fourteen years old. Since my grandfather's family was known to be comfortable financially, it was agreed, that a solution to "the problem" was to send my grandmother away to another island so the relationship would be severed, but the child, my father, would be brought up by his paternal grandparents and father. Both my father's parents later married other people and established families of their own.

My father's education ended in his mid-teens much to his regret. As the oldest child and male, he was expected to shadow his father in becoming acquainted with the various businesses of farm land production such as cocoa, nutmegs and spices as well as other small businesses. This he undertook for a number of years until he immigrated to the UK; something he later regretted. Ironically, those siblings left 'back home' were more successful academically, financially and professionally. However, the prospect of travelling to the 'mother land' with the opportunities afforded to further an English education; good career prospects, job opportunities and making his own money, held a great sway for a young man, as it did for many of his friends.

Resistance capital

About 150 in membership our church teemed with professionals, small business men and women and numerous students as well as blue collar workers of various trades representing a microcosm of society (Bilton et al 2002). It was here that we were afforded leadership opportunities and the platform to be creative within the remit of the organisational rules. It was commonplace to have a range of activities such as music and voice training, singing,

debating teams, playwriting and performances, concerts, supplementary schools and so on. Though the original membership of this inner city based church was predominantly White and middle class, by the time Caribbean people started attending mainly from the 1950's, the congregation slowly yet visibly went through a metamorphosis. By the 1970's when my parents started attending it was predominantly Black in membership, with the exception of a few older White members. The church provided spiritual, educational and health directives for its members.

It appeared that those identified as professionals with a university degree were highly esteemed and treated significantly favourably in comparison to the rest; this favouritism was also extended to university students. Incongruously, even then I was acutely aware that the church appeared to have its 'pecking order' and hierarchy among its members. Not too dissimilar to the differentiation identified in sociological texts, such as those of Bilton et al (2002) and Harambolos (2008) in relation to youth, class, race and professional status. Consequently, relationships were not always harmonious and real areas of tension arose between the old and the young; between those perceived as educated and those not, between those with traditional ideas and views and those who were more progressive; between the remaining few older White members, and the Black majority members, for example disagreements ensued on the types of music and ways of worship. However like Howard (1987) it was felt that these styles of worship peculiar to Black African-Caribbean churches were needed in order to build supportive faith communities.

Until the early 1980's almost all our church pastors were White, some gelled well with the congregation, others did not, some addressed aspect of social justice apart from the pulpit delivery others did not. It was not until we had a Black pastor that issues of race began to be addressed openly and explicitly. Now as a predominately Black congregation these were significant and on-going issues. Additionally a sizable number of radical members had a more political perspective, often underpinned and understood within the context of the writings of Cone's (1969) Black Theology of Liberation. They unashamedly embodied a more assertive political and religious explicit approach to life generally. In this respect, the church was paradoxical in that while it undoubtedly provided a nurturing and supportive community for diverse individuals and groups to work together, it was also very divisive.

Christian author Cone (1969; 1970), had called for changed pastor-ship to reflect the culture and traditions of church members. In the late early 80's these debates reached an unattainable level and the organisations succumbed to the recruitment of large numbers of Black pastors. Though a decisive victory for the local churches, it nonetheless engineered greater division with the remaining White members. They had by now formed exclusive conclaves in the suburbs and in areas which were conspicuous by their absence of Black people. To this day there remains a kind of cultural religious and racial apartheid, whereby the Black and White church seemingly exists in a parallel universe, with little interaction or

conversations between them rather than drawing on the experience and richness of the diversity available.

Armed with a 'capital' rich in community cultural wealth I enthusiastically anticipated my transition to university life. My undergraduate studies at an inner city university housed a relatively diverse group of students, and one Black academic, who unwittingly became my role model. I greatly admired his ability to articulate theoretical concepts, debates and themes. I would often seek him out as appropriate for discussions on a range of issues because of his affability. He also reminded me of the comfort and familiarity of some of my church members. In fact more often than not he would dine with us, generally providing a wealth of information which expanded his lecturers, as well as approaches to assignments. In these gatherings we had some very deep sociological and politicised discussions on racial issues, discrimination, prejudice and religion as they affected Black people. Looking back I often wondered whether he chose to dine with us. As a relatively young Black male lecturer, he may have felt somewhat isolated from his colleagues, or it may simply be that he enjoyed conversing with a group of students who had an unquenchable thirst for knowledge from someone they could identify with. Whatever the reason, an indelible impression was left by him.

However even then there were rumours of Black students receiving low grades in comparison to their white counterparts. My own experience is that of being given 10 marks higher when an examiner randomly selected one of my exam scripts. On receiving my exam papers I found some comments by the examiner which stated that they did not understand why my marks had been so decidedly low. The original marker for this work was a lecturer I had challenged a few times in class on assumptions he had made about Black people. Having apparently worked at a West African university he had used this experience as underpinning knowledge in making numerous stereotypical statements. I do not know to what extent our relationship influenced his marking of my work, but I do know that my peers were not surprised. As a result, collectively we came to the conclusion, that if we wanted good grades as Black students, we undoubtedly had to keep quiet on certain issues. Views similarly expressed in the narratives of Zara and Gail (see chapter four). However it would be unfair to say that my undergraduate student days were traumatic in terms of isolation, or that I personally experienced racist and stereotypical overtones, apart from the incident above. This I attributed to the overall diverse environment; modules which directly took Black perspectives into consideration and a Black lecturer who I, and undoubtedly others could identify with. Unfortunately for Zara and Gail these were mostly absent in their educational environment.

Overall, for the most part, my undergraduate and post-graduate experiences were fulfilling socially, academically and politically, because primarily of the consideration shown in ensuing Black students had an equitable experience at university. In fact a long lasting impression was conceived when undertaking my post-graduate studies at a Russell group university. The

programme director provided a Black external personal tutor and mentor for the only three Black students on the course. This somewhat remedied the absence of Black academics on the programme. Additionally through this medium we were able to discuss a range of issues, which the tutor/mentor took back to the relevant department and teaching staff, thus we felt valued and an integral part of the learning community though small in number. I was involved in numerous societies and actively pursued social justice issues pertaining to the needs of women; disability and Black students in particular. However, I was all too aware of the personal testimonies of others who had experienced difficulties within their chosen programmes of study; of racism, of isolation and of sometimes overt and covert display of discrimination. I had personally witnessed individuals in despair when pondering the prospects of continuing their education, not because they were incapable academically, but because of the environment in which they found themselves.

Two incidents in particular stand out for me; one the inability of a wheelchair bound student to use the lift in a fire drill exercise. The other was when the blood bank had set up a number of mobile bus clinics throughout the campus, and had accompanied their request for blood with a proviso stated in rather bold prints on posters, that African students should not give blood because they were likely to be HIV carriers. These two incidents were the catalyst used in determining the extent to which I was prepared to be proactively involved in social justice issues. Indeed these were the very precepts facilitating social justice through home; church and the wider community.

Like Wright (2006) and others, I am upfront about the struggles of Black academics and Black students and realize that these are the aspects of social justice I am most interested in. I was at a national conference and engaged in discussion with two colleagues. As the area of my research surfaced, the white colleague commented 'oh that must be interesting for you' and turning to the other Black colleague 'apparently' jokingly, stated 'don't tell me you are doing the race thing as well'. Thus confirming the old adage: 'many a truth are often spoken in jest'. The marginalisation of research that addresses social issues and Black women is highlighted in Benjamin's (1997) work. It is further raised by Gillborn (2009) who states that the research and teaching of 'race' by Black lecturers and researchers, are often not given the same platform as when undertaken by white staff. Wright et al (2007) similarly agrees by asserting that that the former is viewed as 'low status and the latter 'high status' work.

Not only are there disparities in terms of how particular research are viewed, The Institute for Employment Studies (2005) and the Equality Challenge report (2009; 2011; 2014) continues to highlight disparities for Black staff in relation to academic research work; pay; permanent contract and progression when compared to their White counterparts.

In a small scale study (Andall-Stanberry 2008), where most of the eight academic respondents were employed between 10-14 years, it was established that only one held a principal

lecturer's post. Most were employed as senior lecturers and sessional lecturers and one was employed as a part-time lecturer. None of the respondents were professors, head of department, deans or held any other senior management roles. Certainly this has been borne out in my own experience of being a senior lecturer after 10 years employment on a permanent contract and observing the progression of colleagues who started at the same time and after me.

As Black academic staffs we feel unsupported in terms of appointed opportunities; professional progress and opportunities being made available and there is also the personal effect (Andall-Stanberry 2008) whether it is isolation or the lack of progression when compared to White counterpart. Wright et al. (2007) too stated that as well as Black academics feeling that there is an over presence of the scrutiny of their work (by students; colleagues and managers) we also lacked mentoring and support in order to facilitate career development and promotion. It might be argued, as is suggested in Benjamin (1997) North American study, that the lack of mentoring can be a major stumbling block in the attainment of successful academic career for Black academics. This in turn can contribute to fewer opportunities to develop our research capacity and enhance promotion prospects (Jones, 2006; Wright et al., 2007). This may well be one of the reasons that as Black academic staff (Equality Challenge report 2009), we identify fewer opportunities to develop our research capacity and enhance promotion prospects (Jones, 2006; Wright et al., 2007).

The perspectives of Black staff in terms of their presence, their treatment, and positions in HE is significant in evaluating the commitment of these institutions in their aims to provide an environment where their Black colleagues do not feel marginalised, isolated and vulnerable, and where they can see the possibility of real careers prospect in their respected fields (Andall-Stanberry 2008, p. 4)

Conclusion

In conclusion, turning once more to my research questions of the factors that encourage or discourage successful university experience and how this is subjectively understood; and the factors discouraging progression and retention for Black students in UK Higher Education as well as how university cultures and subcultures can best enhance the development of Black students?. I have interrogated the various influences that have motivated my family, church and community to persevere in the face of hostility and injustice and for facilitating my interest in education and social justice thereby challenging deficit theories and models. Conversely, it is also true to say that the stories of triumph over disappointment, have been most compelling as they unconsciously reinforced my commitment to keep on trying in the face of opposition and varying forms of discrimination. I have not reflected in depth on the different strands of my studies, employment, interest and passion. However I can now see the intricacies, interweaving and shaping which have propelled my directions and personal

and professional development. Undoubtedly, these areas have contributed to my on-going interest in social issues especially those concerning Black students; individuals, communities and groups. I can see traces of resilience and aspiration as I reflect on my past and current position as a Black academic.

However there is also the recognition of the factors discouraging progression and retention. From the perspective of a Black academic these relate to opportunities for research, progression and professional opportunities when compared to my White counterparts. I am often froth with frustrations and isolation in an environment which contrary to its avowed intent still presents challenges for Black academics and students alike as some White colleagues still appear reluctant to engage in anti-discriminatory, anti-racist and anti-stereotyping discussions.

Yet we know that it is possible for university cultures and subcultures to enhance the development of Black students; and I daresay the development of Black staff through mentoring for example, in order to support and facilitate career development and promotion. For Black students it is about creating a welcoming environment and ensuring that diversity is incorporated in the curriculum in terms of learning and teaching materials, but also in providing staff that Black students can view as role models and mentors. It is about working with White colleagues more explicitly in addressing the sometimes difficult areas of race and racism as it impinges on education. It is the reason I started the chapter with 'I know why the cage bird sings'. It is what we long for as Black students, researchers and academics, it is what we are working towards although it seems far away 'on distant hill', but like the cage bird we sing of possibilities.

Colour Blind

*If you can see the sepia in the sun
 Shades of grey in fading streets
 The radiating bloodshot in a child's eye
 The dark stains on her linen sheets
 If you can see oil separate on water
 The turquoise of leaves on trees
 The reddened flush of your lover's cheeks
 The violet peace of calmed seas*

*If you can see the bluest eye
 The purple in petals of the rose
 The blue anger, the venom, of the volcano
 The creeping orange of the lava flows
 If you can see the red dust of the famished road
 The white air tight strike of nike's sign
 the skin tone of a Lucien Freud
 The colours of his frozen subjects in mime*

*If you can see the white mist of the oasis
 The red, white and blue that you defended
 If you can see it all through the blackest pupil
 The colours stretching the rainbow suspended
 If you can see the breached blue dusk
 And the caramel curls in swirls of tea
 Why do you say you are colour blind when you see me?*

(Lemn Sissay 2011)

Introduction

This chapter derives from semi-structured interviews, rather than auto/biographical narrative ones, with two Equality and Diversity managers. I wanted to address the three questions of what factors encourage or discourage a successful university experience for Black students? What discouraged progression and retention? And how might university cultures and subcultures better enhance the development of Black students? I used a similar pro forma analysis as discussed in the methodological chapter. It was a semi-structured interview, since I wanted to hear the stories of the E&D managers. As to how they became involved in this type of work and whether they had a theory of social justice underpinning this. Their views

are highlighted exploring policies and practises of diversity, and widening participation from two respective institutions, one with high visibility Black students (over 40%) and the other with low visibility under (18%). I also wanted to know whether they acknowledge the existence of deficit theories and models in their institutions.

I discuss my interview with someone I call Peter first, then Janet.

Peter, Making a Positive Contribution?

'Peter' wanted to make a positive contribution to society and made the transfer from the field of disability to equality and diversity. He found some of the issues in relation to discrimination across protected characteristics similar to disability, so felt he could use the lessons learnt in one area to another, although he recognised that this similarity was not always present. Peter acknowledged concerns in the move towards integrating the Protected Characteristics as identified in the Equality Act 2010 which includes age; disability; gender reassignment; race; religion and belief; sex; sexual orientation. It is in these vast and varied areas that E&D managers are to be experts in their field and have the knowledge and commitment to engineer change. However, Peter appears to struggle in emerging himself wholly with diversity issues, viewing these primarily as the choice of groups to form themselves rather than an institution's obligation in helping to facilitating. Peter's office housed a number of books on Equality, Inclusive practice and Race, and materials on policies. It was here he suggested that the interview should take place.

Factors that Encourage or Discourage a Successful University Experience for Black Students

Peter identified unfamiliarity with course content as contributing to retention and attrition as seemingly an issue for Black students alone. Adaptation and comfort level in university, with reference to cultural capital and family history was also raised. And although stating he was reluctant in make assumptions in terms of what some students bring to the university, Peter at an unconscious level had already drawn on deficit theories in labelling Black students in terms of the characteristics he associated with them, in stating:

From my perspective I think that if we start with the sort of overall culture of the university, that it is very important that students have an understanding of what they are coming to.....because I think in terms of how prepared they are. I think there is a lot about this in the literature in terms of for example, students' awareness of the course they are going on to, the extent of how that understanding correlates to students retention and attrition. In other words, there is evidence that the less you know about the subjects you are going to study the more likely you are to leave university without completing your study. From the academic perspective understanding, what you are going into, but then also from the social societal and sort of cultural, it's how easy and comfortable it is for you to adapt to the HE environment. Again.... in literature, there is a link to notions of cultural capital like Bourdieu, and previous family history of HE is obviously very important in that regard. I think that as

a widening participation institution it is very important to be aware of the disparity in terms of what some students and others do not come with. Quite how you would address this in terms of policy is quite complex without making assumptions. But I do think preparedness for the environment is one of the things that are important.

Cultural Capital

In exploring these areas in more depth, I shared with the E&D manager some challenges of interpretation to Bourdieu's (1997) view of cultural capital. That in order for some Black students to adapt and have that comfort level articulated in response to question one, various forms of capital had to already be in evidence. For example, aspiration as can be seen in Zara and Gail's narratives (cultivated through family expectations of a university education as a matter of course), and varied forms of resistance capital, where networks were developed in building a supportive environment. Of interest is the fact that none of the students identified their families, socio-economic factor or cultural background as a barrier; rather it was one of the main impetuses driving their ability to succeed.

Family History of Education

I sought further elaboration on Black students and their family history of education, since it was one of the areas highlighted in the E&D manager's response. In doing so, I wanted to explore a commonly held belief that Black students were underperforming because their parents did not have a university education.

Peter: No, I agree, I think it is a factor. I mean my parents did not go to university and I never felt intimidated in the slightest going to university. I think it is how it compares with other factors and how it interlinks with other things. For example if you look at the percentage of ethnic minority students coming into our university which has increased at a healthy rate year on year, and that is replicated around the country. There is no problem in relation to ethnic minority people accessing universities. There is a problem with them accessing 'the better universities'. However, we have seen nothing like for example the same number of increase in ethnic minority staff..... I think that the disparity between the proportion of ethnic minority staff and students is a factor, so it will be that combined with lack of family background, combined with other issues, so it is not just one factor on its own. I do not think that there is very much research around the impact of the ratio of ethnicity in relation to staff and student, but to me it is quite a basic thing. Staff are role models they inspire the students, they have an awful lot of power in a situation, and if you go through an entire university experience and never encounter anybody who even looks like you, then that can have some kind of impact on your overall engagement. I am not quite sure exactly how you would address that, because obviously you cannot start imposing rules stating that you have to have the same ratio of staff for students, I would not agree with that either.

Making Assumptions – Protected Characteristics

Peter: I think it is a really fine line between assuming that because somebody has a certain characteristic, whatever that is, that they are going to need a certain thing different. That constantly is the equality debate; I mean I am in debate with a facultyabout what OFSTED appear to be requiring in their new inspection rule. What they seem to be saying is that you have to put study plans in place for students that reflect individual characteristics. I am basically saying.... you cannot ask the student whether they are 'gay' and then if they tell you they are, then you have to put in place an extra meeting every month to make sure 'they' are doing okay. It is always much more complex than OFSTED....or seem to be the case. That is why I think focussing on inclusion as a holistic all-encompassing is a much more healthy way of moving forward.

Complexity of Roles and Provision

The discussion of 'equality and equity' undoubtedly illuminated the complexity of the E&D manager's role, in terms of provision for the different protected characteristics. However, the examples provided highlighted the different dynamics for some groups. Some gay people may choose not to reveal their sexuality for a variety of reasons whereas for a Black student this is not optional. They cannot choose to be invisible it is this visibility that sometimes leads to discrimination and stereotyping and the receiving of perceived differential treatment. Making provision for students who are of a 'protected characteristics' would seem to be redressing these imbalances. In the final analysis it is up to the student if they choose to access this type of support or not, but at the very least it should be on offer, since the University, like society, is not an equal playing field for students of whatever genre.

Peter: Yes, I know, and also you cannot say that we have done "race" so that is okay, because we know that that is not the case, and of all the equality areas, it probably is the one that is the most difficult....because people find it difficult to talk about. Particularly white academics just want to assume that everything is okay. It is the right instinct, but it is over-simplifying the world, and you cannot get away from our social history. So, yes, it remains a very difficult area.

What Factors Discouraged Progression and Retention?

Although prepared to make some comments about the learning environments and broader comments, Peter qualified his response by stating that he had to be careful about what was said about the teaching environment. He is not a member of the teaching staff, though he has some insights. Peter is very committed to the notion of the Inclusive Curriculum and think there are ways in which students feel alienated as they do not actually see themselves reflected in the subject that they are studying. Peter believes there needs to be a radical

overhaul to enhance the engagement of students learning and to make them feel a greater degree of ownership. Stating he would encourage any academic member of staff when they are preparing their reading list for a new group of students, to reflect on their own position in relation to their subject.

Peter: I am not saying the curriculum that we teach in this university is not inclusive, but I want us to be very confident that they are. We have to think of how students see themselves engage with methods in the curriculum, so yes, the importance of the curriculum, the broader culture of the university; both these things could either encourage or discourage progression and retention.

How Might University Cultures and Subcultures Better Enhance the Development of Black Students?

Peter: I think it is important that things are owned and led, by the groups that need to own and lead them. I can take a policy that has been made by the government and try and impose it on the institution, but that is always going to come from outside and being imposed, but things generated from within a group, within the institution will always be rooted. If I look at some of the work I have done with staff in terms of networks and the successful and thriving LGBT minority interest groups. We now have very good groups for LGBT network and now disabled network, it is interesting in terms of ethnicity and Black... there does not seem to be among staff a real drive or need for such a group, which I can understand, but I do not think it is down to me to impose such a thing. Again, I think if you look at the student, I think it would be great if there could be something that comes from the group and the student union. I know that having a Black student welfare officer had quite a powerful influence over the last year or so. I do not know what difference it will make now that it will be a white student in that role in terms of engaging with the Black students. It can sometimes come down to the personality and commitment of individuals. In talking about sub cultures it needs to be something that comes from the ground and come up. In terms of what the university can do, the university can nurture and support, if I think about our LGBT staff group and how it started. When I first came here, I could barely get a member of staff to tell me that they were gay, nobody wanted to, but then a few people began getting together, it was like a little flame I had in my hand around, now it has mushroomed out and they do not need me.

Societal, Political and University Climate

The comparison between an emerging Black and an LGBT support group is I believe an uneven one, because the societal, political and university climate is much more conducive to gay and lesbian issues in a way that they are not in regards to Black issues. Black issues resurrect

feelings of guilt and accusations of racism for some, and therefore uncomfortable to acknowledge (Back 2004) in a way that LGBT issues are not. Although of course one recognizes the discriminatory and homophobic nature inherent in the society. This is somewhat ameliorating because to a degree the LGBT movement is engineered in the main by White females, males and transgendered persons.

Inclusive Curriculum – Reinforcing Stereotypes

Peter: It would be impossible for me to say that the work on the 'Inclusive Curriculum' is not linked to the fact that the results of Black students are not as good as the results of White students. It is because we want better results, but even by talking about it we are giving 'them' the message that 'you are not doing as well', so you are kind of reinforcing the negatives. But that is a very, very difficult thing to manage, and I am not quite sure of the answers. One of the things in terms of sub-cultures I probably would say, I think, if there is something to do with transparency, it is about how things get done.... a group of ethnic minority students fed back to the university that they felt they had been split up into more or less Black and White groups. Actually the rationale for splitting the group up was to do with where they were going on placement so that they could support each other, it had nothing to do with their ethnicity, but the students perceived this as the Black students being grouped together and the White students being grouped together. This became quite a serious thing, because the programme had not looked at the dynamics.... it had not even occurred to them, even when they had divided the two groups.... It is that kind of thing when you are in a busy environment and you have a million things to do to organise your programme, and you are not proactively engaging with your students. I genuinely think that the majority of white people at university do not want to, or it does not occur to them to think that it might be an issue to be an ethnic minority..... and that is because they want to think that they should treat everybody the same and that is okay.....and that we came from a certain place in history and we are not there anymore, and that is okay. That is how they want to think. Because I think about this so much and listen to people's experiences, I probably do go out of my way to be extra friendly to make others feel welcome whereas most people probably will not do that, but is more to do with the fact that they do not think that there are any kind of problem. I certainly do believe that that is part of the problem.

We Need to Discuss the Problematic Areas

I do believe that the vast majority of people would like us to all get along well, but in order to get on well, we need to discuss the problematic areas, but we do not do that very well. I am mindful of an experience I had at university about ten years ago. I was waiting with some other colleagues for the snack bar area to be opened when I was approached by a male (an academic staff, I later learned) who singled me out from a small group of about seven people and asked when I was going to start serving. I responded by asking, why he had assumed that

I would be the one serving? After further exchanges between us he walked away. Remarkably though, not one of my colleagues said anything through this entire process or since, although one commented that it was rude of him to speak to me like that. According to Pilkington (2012), Turney et al, (2002), and Back (2004) these are examples of barriers which constitute obstacles in terms of getting staff members to take issues of racism and race equality seriously and to act accordingly and appropriately.

I am not saying that they are the worse but I think that academic members of staff feel that they as academics should have the drop on issues such as racism, so they are very unlikely to admit to any chinks in their armour, or 'blind-spots'. Whereas somebody like me who spends a lot of time thinking about this are so aware of all the things I am probably doing wrong, assumptions that I am making because I kind of 'live and 'breathe' it. What I think is in terms of solution, is a way of finding or getting to a place where people can think and reflect on themselves without feeling that they are bad people or that they are breaking the law.

The E&D manager was able to point to important although rather small measures in addressing subcultures and thus institutional changes. However, these were usually at the behest of individuals or groups rather than an institutional undertaking.

The Process

I decided that a semi-structured approach was best suited as an interview technique. The E&D managers would freely give of their knowledge and valued expertise in relaying an understanding of the issues, for students' institutions and their own role. Further, a semi-structured style would invariably put the E&D managers in the driving seat, so to speak, by allowing them to tell their story of working in an HE institution within the context of policymaking and practices. Although known to one of the E&D managers, there was some hesitancy when approached in responding to my request for an interview. This was alleviated when I suggested sending my research questions, research proposal and reassurance that the opportunities to address the questions would be totally directed by them.

Gestalt

I was left with the impression that Peter's knowledge base and skills were not fully developed in addressing the wide range of expertise this role called for, he did not appear pro-active in initiating discussions in promoting Black issues for either staff or students, believing this to be the remit of students or staff. Yet within this is an unawareness of how race mediates academia and results in an uneven playing field for students and staff. Very little concrete ideas were offered and a reticence to explicitly identify factors that discouraged a successful university experience for Black students. The apparent level of ease with which deficit theories was used in protecting the university inability to address failing Black students was a

little alarming. It stood as a reminder that such theories used by both by academics and other staffs, do little to advance the cause of Black students in Higher Education. Ideas of how the institution would inculcate plans to address these areas were limiting at best. Similarly ideas for improvement seem to be levelled at individual academic rather than a whole institution responsibility, to this end the question of how might university cultures and subcultures better enhance the development of Black students was only partly addressed

Interview – Janet

Janet was an architect by profession. Her previous role was that of Director of Learning where the remit included ensuring students' academic success, it was an area Janet found interesting. In her new Lead role, it became even more important to look at the students' experience in more detail. As a consequence, her interest in equalities issues developed as the faculty decided to focus on Black students, because the Key Performance Indicators (KPI) showed that some categories of Black students were not doing as well as others. Janet is committed to helping various types of students do better, and so as a manager, is trying to bridge the gap between the KPI's and conversations between theory and the practice. Janet further asserts that there are no quick fix measures, and warns that if people think that the problem is huge and complex then they will feel it is too much, but if they look at it strategically in terms of the small things that they do, this can contribute to a larger vision and change the culture of universities. Janet is of the opinion that like herself a lot of her colleagues have a sense of social justice but they do not know how these have a bearing on their teaching and practice. Yet Janet is considered in her thinking and approach to issues of the university experience for all students, including Black students. She is able to reflect on university policies and acknowledge that perhaps they needed to look more in-depth into providing an environment where all students are enabled to flourish and be comfortable.

This interview took place at Janet's university, where they have dismantled their structure, so instead of an E&D manager and named office, this role is now subsumed within each Faculty with a Lead person. However for the purpose of this interview I will revert to the title of E&D manager for Janet, to diffuse confusion of terminologies and roles. This singular interview lasted for one hour.

Factors that Encourage or Discourage a Successful University Experience

Janet: A successful university experience I think for every student not just for Black students, is that they... students... have quite a good understanding of what to expect in university in HE, and if we can let them have an idea of that as soon as possible even before applying that is even better. So it is actually being quite clear of what HE means in terms of their aspirations their prospects their way of studying their way of learning

and so on, that will encourage them. Another aspect is once they are there that they have to feel they belong, so a sense of belonging is very important for every student not just Black students for every single student. This is in a way very good in some areas and in others it needs improving, it is how you can foster that sense of belonging so it is actually treating students as partners. So if you start looking at the students as a partner you encourage them to feel that they belong to the learning experience to the process then I think they will have a successful experience. So there are many factors that would encourage belonging and we are working on some of them.

Knowledge and Understanding

Janet's response appears to confirm her knowledge and understanding of these pertinent issues. In so doing she was able to identify the university as primarily responsible for the students' experience in terms of transitions from school, expectation and sense of belonging. This sense of belonging is best seen by the involvement of students as partners as part of the learning process. She additionally identified factors that would encourage belonging:

Factors That Could Encourage Belonging

Getting students a lot more involved at many levels; decision making, representation, participating in students societies, sports activity, sharing interest together, creating groups, making friends, it is actually about students feeling that they can have an input in their learning in creating the curriculum with the staff, sharing, bringing some of their background into the learning tasks and participation. It is also students being encouraged to learn from each other so peer mentoring is one of them, peer assisted learning is another and anything that would help students help each other and if they feel it enhances their sense of belong that is also very important. How it is subjectively understood by Black students...My opinion is based on things I have read, I have not interviewed Black students myself but I think the feeling of not belonging is a very important one. A lot of Black students feel that there is a gap.... there is something to be bridged so that they feel they belong to that institution to that learning process, so isolation and not belonging is important and is probably a very subjective. Maybe they are not too clear sometimes on what is expected of students in HE and this can be explained better to them anda lot of the Black students will come from first generation and widening participation so it is varied for them, but it is also varied for our other students as well....it is how you then bridge that gap and encourage them to feel confident about what they should be expected to do and about how we work together.

Bridging the Gap – Encouraging Confidence to Thrive

I noted though that reference to first generation and widening participation were not specifically aimed at Black students though they were included. What appeared important for Janet within the context of this discussion, was not necessarily the students defining

characteristics in terms of backgrounds or culture, rather how the university bridged the gap and engendered confidence to thrive.

We Can Improve it For Everybody

Janet: In my view if we can improve it for Black students we can improve it for everybody, but it is more complex than that, because if you target just Black students sometimes they feel that they are not happy with that they feel they stereotyped, they feel 'why me, why should I be a target'? ...it is quite a sensitive area and I think it is something that maybe we do not know how to do that very well. In regards to managing and providing what is necessary even managers will tell you that they need data and in some cases it is quite difficult to find data in terms of who is progressing and how fast at programme level while in other cases these data can be easily accessed in illuminating the gaps between Whites and some Black students' categories, such knowledge will already be an improvement because if staff are aware of that then it becomes something which is real and need addressing.

Like Peter, Janet similarly identified the complexity of providing services and support for groups under the umbrella of 'protected characteristics' and how it may be interpreted by them. Neither was able to demonstrate how this was to be successfully addressed.

Successful University Experience – Students as Co-creators

There are many who come from Black families where they are motivated to encourage the students to have degrees and do well, so you really cannot generalise. This is not readily available in terms of general staff understanding..... It is important to encourage a successful university experience and that students have to feel that they are co-creators.... they have to bring something to the curriculum, it is very important not just for Black students, but for everybody. It is how you have a curriculum that is inclusive, I think that this is where a lot of staff development is required, because staff can talk forever about their curriculum being inclusive. They can talk about architecture in different countries for example, but it is not about that, it about how you make it relevant to the various backgrounds and what people bring to the process, it is quite a deep cultural thing in HE. I am not saying it does not happen but I think we need to improve that a lot. I read the NUS report 'Race for Equality' where there was a lot of narratives as well from some students.....which is quite interesting, some of them highlighted very valid things and ... the idea of role model. I am not sure but I think students would feel more included if there were more Black staff, but I am not too sure how it would work, I think in the NUS report one aspect was that of improving retention and progression which talks about having more role models in delivering the curriculum and that might be helpful as well.

Navigational Tools

I shared my own experience of being supported by a Black tutor as one of two Black students on a programme at a Russell group university. Away from home and in a new environment, it was refreshing to have someone to relate to. Someone who understood issues of race and of discomfort, who had experienced discrimination, isolation and racism as she spoke of her own journey in life and in academia. I shared how for me this provided helpful navigational tools and demonstrated aspiration and resilience in her words of affirmation towards us. In contrast, I also shared Zara's experience of being isolated for three years as a Black student on her course. Of the time she needed to talk about certain issues but felt there was no one she could relate to either in the student or staff group.

Janet: There is also the issue that they may feel that no one would understand, but this may not be true, but it is their perception and could be a subjective view. The NUS recommended that each HE Institution have a Black officer in their student union who is making sure that Black students have somewhere to go to talk to address some of their issues their ideas. I think this is happening because we have a Black officer here however I do not know how proactive they are on that level.

Factors that Discourage Progression and Retention

Janet: Recruiting students who are going to have the ability to succeed is very important. It is about year one transition, how do you bring them along into the experience of HE? How you provide good transition, good introductions, good support, supporting their journey, being quite clear what the experience might be like; being quite clear about the assessment, this is quite a huge area; having different types of assessment so that different types of students might do well in different ways of being assessed being quite clear about that; formative assessment is very important gaining confidence that they can achieve. There are a hundred of ways..... our school of pharmacy here are linked to the University of 'B'. Most of our students are Black mainly from the Indian sub contingent. Recently they created, and redeveloped a whole assessment and it had a dramatic effect in terms of their success rate... they got an external consultant to do that and to look at where students were struggling because pharmacy is quite strict, they have exams, you need to be competent. So you need to adapt your subject area to the kind of students you have and look at your learning outcomes, assessments and giving positive feedbacks to students is important, but also having a university level in terms of support, of academic support as well as students' advisors, student support, office of students' affairs and so on.

Widening Participation Agenda

We are talking about quite a broad spectrum of Black students, but I sometimes wonder if widening participation agenda tends to set up students to fail. Because we talk in terms of bringing a whole range of different ability and diverse students into the academy, and yet

very little support is often identified by institutions to help, and that is how some Black students see it as well.

We Brought Them in Faster Than we Have Changed our Ways of Doing Things

Janet: Well yes we brought them in faster that we have changed our ways of doing things. That is true, definitely, but I think that is something all universities have to become better at because the landscape is changing, so whether we like it widening participating or not we still have to be much more proactive in changing our ways in terms of teaching especially with new technology.

This was quite a profound statement from Janet and encapsulated the whole area of the discussion and topic. For indeed it appeared that whilst seeking to embody an increased and ethnically diverse group of students, universities have unwittingly failed to make preparation at an institutional, faculty and programme level in accommodating and helping to facilitate learning.

How can University Cultures and Subcultures Better Enhance the Development of Black Students?

Janet: Well I think we have to be very clear, what image of culture we project first of all. For example we see all these pictures of mixed students in prospectuses that we present but it is not always the reality, so that has to be thought through. I think the culture has to be ...the more Black staff you have the better it will be in that sense of having a multicultural staff as well as having multicultural students. It is how you then foster a dynamic exchange of conversations because you cannot stereotype and that is a very important point. But people do, for example we have an Islamic student society, some people view these in a very subjective way and looking at them in negative way.....I think universities should be open, to provide a balance discussion and to foster debates, to represent the various cultures and where the students come from and to encourage the students and the staff to make that a rich environment in a way. In terms of sub cultures, it is true to say that diversity is not well understood in academia in general, people vaguely understand the concept. A lot of private industry is much more advanced than universities in this area and I do not think universities have a grip on that at all.

Process

The quest in identifying a second E&D manager willing to participate proved challenging. I approached a second E&D manager at a Widening Participation Conference. Based at a university with a high visibility Black student intake, they had been one of the workshop contributors, delivering a paper on Diversity and Black students. Having agreed to be interviewed the E&D manager had since declined, due to institutional restructuring. I was

redirected to at least three other E&D managers, I am not sure if I was partly at fault because I had attached my research questions in emails. However, when followed up with telephone conversations, without exception I was informed by all, that they knew others who were more experienced in the field and I was given more names. This led to a university with a high Black students' visibility and thus provided a contrast to the first E&D manager's Institution. Yet again I was told, that although prepared to be interviewed Janet nonetheless felt others were more experienced and qualified to speak in relation to the information I was seeking. An email with the research questions requesting her permission to be interviewed was sent, this was followed up with a telephone call and an agreed time for the interview. This second interview was held at a university with high visibility Black intake (over 40%).

Gestalt

Peter and Janet the two E&D managers often facilitated very distinctive responses and understanding of their roles and those of the institutional obligations. In relation to the first question, both Peter and Janet identified the need for students to understand the culture of the university. The difference however, was highlighted between the level of ease with which deficit theories were implied and used in addressing Black students experience on the one hand, and the warning of stereotyping Black students on the other hand. The latter, sees the university as being responsible for creating a sense of belonging for all students. This should embody a partnership approach where there is shared understanding and clarity in terms of students' aspirations, prospects and their way of studying and learning. For Janet the factors discouraging progression and retention include being more selective in the recruiting of students who are going to have the ability to succeed, but also about year one transition. Briggs et al (2012) points to the challenges in the transition to HE for students by stating "it is also a significant social displacement, which may be intensified where the student is mature, is the first in their family to attend university, or is from an ethnic group under-represented in the university population" (p. 2). A good transition for Janet would include, good introductions, good support, supporting the student's journey, being quite clear what the experience might be like and having different types of assessment so that different types of students might do well in different ways of being assessed.

In terms of how the university cultures and subcultures can better enhance the development of Black students the response was somewhat different between Peter and Janet. One seems to identify individual responsibility as opposed to the other, who highlighted whole institution responsibility, critiquing institutions, academics and the learning and teaching environment including the curriculum. These responses showed an insight into the complexities of present day issues for Black students. Whilst it is also true to say that some of these complexities were also highlighted by Peter, there ensued little structural recourse for addressing them. On the

other hand, Janet acknowledged how a much more informed environment with students' participation and the organisation's determination can result in more conducive practices. Of interest was Janet's statement of the factors that discouraged progression retention. Again Janet was able to levy the responsibility and lack of planning with the culture of the university, by stating 'well yes we brought them in faster than we have changed our ways of doing things'. This would seem to imply that the mechanisms were not in place for an increased and ethnically diverse group of students. Universities therefore have unwittingly failed to make preparation at an institutional; faculty and programme level in accommodating and helping to facilitate learning. Thus it would appear that Black students have been thrown into what Bourdieu (1997) calls the 'habitus' but have not been enabled or given the appropriate tools by the university for survival or success

Imagining a More Inclusive Academy

Everybody is a genius....but if you judge a fish by its ability to climb a tree it will live its whole life believing that it is stupid
Albert Einstein

So to conclude, and summarise, the insights of the study primarily here in relation to the third research question, but not exclusively so: how might university cultures and subcultures better enhance the development of Black students? I want to consider this by imagining what a more inclusive academy might look like, in the light of the case studies and associated theorising. What might be the prerequisites for Black students and others? We have to at a fundamental level begin with the individual self however uncomfortable that may be; after that we have to address the society and culture we are a part of, because indeed the academy is a microcosm of society with all its inherent flaws and shortcomings.

Examples are depicted in journey back to slavery; the civil rights movement of the 50s, and 60s, in North America; the Apartheid system in South Africa from the 50's to the 20th century and the UK race riots from the 50s, 60s, 70s, 80s 20s. Additionally, my own experience of growing up in church illustrate the volatile struggle and dichotomy between those who want to hold power by virtue of their race, culture and power as opposed to those feeling constrained and repressed by such. The significance of the information provided thus far is this; people who are comfortable do not readily give their power to accommodate or share it with others. And as such, wars and coup d'état have been used to overthrow in gaining freedom for those who see themselves as oppressed. Thus the truism expressed by Scottish philosopher James Mill (1820) that those who wield the hand of power can often use these for selfish and “sinister interests” and therefore the need for accountability.

In relating the above to universities, Black students and Black staff have been and are continuing to revolt through their voices and discomfiture in academia. They may not be taking up physical arms as we know it, but they are rebelling through the “arms” of their experiences, voice and narratives and stories as can be attested by Zara, Gail and Mary. We have not remained quiet in expressing our isolation from the culture and assumptions in universities. Yet few academic institutions have addressed the diversity in staff level, mentoring or curriculum development, which Black students identified as being important to their academic success.

Black academics too have simultaneously experienced discrimination, racism and stereotyping. We continue to feel, at times at least, unwelcomed and unappreciated in our positions, and we constantly have to challenge deep seated social prejudice being altogether familiar that the space we occupy in academia was never meant for us, but rather the preserve for the white, middle-class males.

Yet we are without excuse in the 21st century, for however uncomfortable it may be, CRT does offer some insights into the experiences of and the position of Black students and communities in the UK; it has provided pointers into what universities can undertake and implement in its embodiment of a more equitable experience for all students. It challenges biological and cultural deficit stories through its concept of “community cultural wealth” and exposes inherent underlying racism. It also reveals the need to incorporate and restructure UK social institutions around those knowledge, skills, abilities and networks—the community cultural wealth—possessed and utilized by Black people.

The respect and honour reserved for UK universities nationally and internationally sets it apart as a bastion of knowledge to be acquired. Further, it has initiated some social justice initiatives through noted sociologists, educators, historians and those holding Marxist ideologies (Hall 1997; Dubois 1897; Bilton et al 2002; Fryer 1984, Gilroy 1988). By virtue of its dominance and influence, universities have a pivotal role to play in setting an example, as to how it can clean up its own backyard with equanimity in relation to matters of inequalities and social justice. However as previously stated, this can only be undertaken through interrogation of personal as well as collective values held, and how these emanate from individuals to institutions, as well as self to others, and ultimately being played out in interactions with Black students. It is the individuals within these communities whose values drive the day to day and face to face decisions and are active in continually constructing/acting out the ‘hidden curriculum/culture’. For some institutions and colleagues this may well imply an acceptance of the privileges of “whiteness”, and all that it embodies.

Barnett (2011) describes universities today as corporations, since they act as businesses rather than moral establishments, where it appears that economic and marketing imperatives override or side-line the moral quest. So despite policies and strategies put in place by the dominant group, individuals themselves are powerful in acting according to their own principles and prejudices. As such the question of social justice must constantly be raised by Black researchers no less. Thus I view my responsibility and response as fundamental to being an academic, a Black woman and a radical Christian. Radical in the sense that inherent in Biblical scriptures is the call to champion the cause of the powerless and oppressed. Thus I strive to emulate the strength of characters and social justice champions the likes of Jesus, Malcolm X, Martin Luther King, Mandela, Maya Angelou, Sojourner Truth, my family, church and community, but also only too aware that raising such issues as I have may not be particularly well received in academia.

However like Mandela (2005) “I learned that courage was not the absence of fear, but the triumph over it. The brave man is not he who does not feel afraid, but he who conquers that fear”. I am concerned by the relative ease with which responsibility is first passed to the student via deficit theories (for their ‘apparent’ inherent difficulties of not fitting into academia); the academic (who does not incorporate an inclusive and diverse curriculum and requisite diverse teaching materials therefore subscribing to the colonisation of the academy

by Government and its agencies) and only latterly to the institution itself, which resides in an archaic domain of a bygone age where diversity to a large extent, appears to be an unknown vocabulary and is still superficially undertaken. As Janet the E&D manager stated, diversity is not well understood in academia in general and people vaguely understand the concept. Consequently, it appears that there is an almost a laissez-faire attitude to diversity, with its incorporation by the more social justice adept academic, whilst for others it is conspicuous by its absence. Neither of the two approaches is necessarily incumbent upon academics and institution by way of accountability, even in the face of policies as can be seen in the narratives of Zara, Gail and Mary.

The political and social justice driver needed to deconstruct universities culture and construct a discourse on social justice issues for Black students appear to be conspicuous by its absence. Moreover, expansion in universities in the late 20th century to address a changing economic and global market is not without its complexities states David et al (2008). These have not been accompanied by the requisite policies and practices. In higher education many diversity action plans and equality statements have been produced by universities to meet the requirements of positively promoting racial equality required by the Race Relations (Amendment) Act (2000). In spite of these action plans race, class and gender divisions show little sign of abating. Widening participation continues to be problematic with diversity issues and equity, ostensibly used when formulating racialised policies, but which however have not addressed the continuing inequalities in universities.

Psychologists (Akbar 1985 and McAdoo 2007) speaks of how the home environment and society plays an important role in individuals, in terms of who we turn out to be and in the part we play in our given society and institutions. Thus every academic was susceptible to a socialising process where they were recipients of mores and values, and messages passed on regarding their place and importance in society. Consequently, we do not as academics, arrive at a pre-arranged space in our heads where we now cultivate issues of equality and equity, these seeds were planted and sprouted long ago in our childhoods. Mine was transmitted through the various “family types” church and communities which facilitated and nurtured social justice as a fundamental right. Alongside these as a child were the memories of racist taunts in playgrounds, parks and in school. It appeared even then, that some children were all too aware of the pecking order in society. Believing they had the “right” and the “power” to abuse others racially, because they saw themselves as innately superior because of their “whiteness”. These children grew up into adults and now find themselves in a variety of positions and roles in society at large, even as academics.

Perhaps it may be an unenviable truth that the institution now more than ever needs to get to grips with how its past continue to shape its present, culture and attitude in its treatment of those deemed different in race and culture. Noting its potential to constrain and mould the

individual but also of its ability to shaped individuals' thoughts, values and behaviour and so on (Hodgson 2006).

As such institutional culture cannot change unless we undergo change, for the institution is not the mere mortar and brick though it stands as a representative, but rather the inner and deep seated value base which we hold and which becomes apparent in our attitudes, dealings, communication, interactions and expectations of Black students. It may well be that some of those "planted" stereotypes and prejudging of others for which we are all guilty have to be "uprooted". This can be an excruciating painfully process psychologically, emotionally, culturally and others. It presents a particular challenge because of the taken-for-granted privileges of "whiteness" and all it represents. It is a "political, economic and cultural system in which whites overwhelmingly control power and material resources, conscious and unconscious ideas of white superiority and entitlement are widespread, and relations of white dominance and non-white subordination are daily re-enacted across a broad array of institutions and social settings". (Ansley 1997, p. 592). As Barnett (2011) states, the business model akin to most universities now with key players other than academics, may well contribute to the level of comfort for those who do not see their role as academics to champion the cause of social justice. This may contribute to a belief system that there are those infinitely poised to dispense greater knowledge on the issue of equality and social justice. Yet as the British philosopher and political theorist J. S. Mill (1867) warned: "Let not anyone pacify his conscience by the delusion that he can do no harm if he takes no part, and forms no opinion. Bad men need nothing more to compass their ends, than that good men should look on and do nothing" (Mill, J.S. 1867, p.36).

In addressing the characteristics of a more inclusive academy, my three research questions are taken into consideration. An inclusive academy will make better links with schools in preparing students for the world of university, setting out expectations as independent and autonomous learners, recognising that the transition may result in isolation and personal difficulty for some and they may need to be supported in this process. As Janet, the E&D manager stated, a successful university experience incorporates students having a good understanding of what to expect in university, and what universities means in terms of their aspirations, prospects and ways of studying and learning. Transitions and induction programme could facilitate this. For example, induction programme should centre less on information giving and instead incorporate and build on measures to enable a more successful university transition and adjustment. In North America some universities have implemented an orientation credit module where students develop skills problem solving; critical thinking; how to think and learn; library skills and so on. Additionally, this could also include elements of race and critical race theory. This is seen as potentially having a qualitative value in positively enhancing students' engagement in relation satisfaction; academic performance and retention.

By exploring the role of race in research and making a correlation between the legacy of racism and the everyday experiences of Black students an inclusive academy will pay

particular attention to groups historically underrepresented in higher education. This could be undertaken by developing knowledge, and identify specific strategies which could reduce Black students' attainment gap. Universities should be concerned by the continued experience of Black students' cultural alienation, physical isolation, heightened awareness of their race and remaining silenced. It is for these reasons a CRT approach provide a framework for educational researchers in exploring the role of race in examining the educational experiences of Black students. CRT unabashedly highlights the racial inequality in society where disenfranchised people are oppressed systematically thus their stance for an activist social justice and social transformative intervention where race is explicitly stated and addressed.

However there is also the recognition of the factors discouraging progression and retention. From the prospective of a Black academic these relate to opportunities for research, progression and professional opportunities when compared to my white counterparts. I am often froth with frustrations and isolation in an environment which contrary to its avowed intent still presents challenges for Black academics and students alike as some white colleagues still appear reluctant to engage in anti-discriminatory, anti-racist and anti-stereotyping discussions.

Additionally, for Black women in higher education as academics and students, we experience racism, sexism and class disparity. As academics we continually have to fight to be recognised in relation to progression, research knowledge and how we are perceived by colleagues, managers and the very institutions we work for. It is here intersectionality was developed as an integrated analysis of interlocking systems of oppression and specifically the intersection of gender, race and social class in the lives of Black women. In essence, the approach examines the ways in which race, gender, class and so on intersect to affect social behaviour or people's lives. As mentioned previously, there was increasing use of the concept in feminist work on how women are simultaneously positioned as women and as Black working class and so on. This was an attempt to avoid individuals being reduced to one category at a time and therefore to treat social positions as relational, since multiple positioning constitutes everyday life. For Black women universities are not simply a place to get qualifications and pass exams in an increasingly instrumentalist market driven educational culture, but as Mohanty (1993) argues for Black women, educational sites represent accommodations and contestations over knowledge by differently empowered social constituencies. ...thus education is a central terrain where power and politics operate out of the lived culture of individuals and groups situated in asymmetrical social and political positions.

Further, as Black academic staffs we feel unsupported in terms of appointed opportunities; professional progress and opportunities being made available and there is also the personal effect whether it is isolation or the lack of progression when compared to white counterparts. Wright et al. (2007); Bhopal and Jackson (2013) and others, highlighted Black academics feeling of being over scrutinised in their work (by students; colleagues and managers), yet at the same time, lacking mentoring and support in order to facilitate career development and

promotion. It might be argued, as is suggested in Benjamin (1997) North American study, that the lack of mentoring can be a major stumbling block in the attainment of successful academic career for Black academics. This in turn can contribute to fewer opportunities to develop our research capacity and enhance promotion prospects, and may well be one of the reasons that as Black academic staff (Equality Challenge report 2009), we identify fewer opportunities to develop our research capacity and enhance promotion prospects.

Yet we know that it is possible for university cultures and subcultures to enhance the development of Black students; and I daresay the development of Black staff through mentoring for example, in order to support and facilitate career development and promotion. For Black students it is about creating a welcoming environment and ensuring that diversity is incorporated in the curriculum in terms of learning and teaching materials, but also in providing staff that Black students can view as role models and mentors. It is about working with white colleagues more explicitly in addressing the sometimes difficult areas of race and racism as it impinges on education.

As Zara stated “there should be modules that explore other cultures”. As well as modules that explore the culture of others, there should be opportunities through modules content to explore ‘racism and the Black/Black students experience’ – looking at this from a historical perspective; institutional racism and its implication, using the university as a model and so on. Issues of Black perspective in psychology and sociology as well as other disciplines could also be explored. The intention being, in the designing, planning and evaluation of programmes principles of equality ought to be embedded. It gives the appearance of a more diverse learning environment for all, where the struggles of Black students, among others, are chronicled and thought about in curriculum materials and in literatures. An area noted as important for Black students. The marginalisation of particular students in the curriculum contents, or the hidden curriculum where certain ideological perspectives have the benefit of advantaging White middle-class students would also be addressed. This would give some credence to universities mission statements which is fundamentally linked issues of diversity, inclusion, and equity initiatives. It is felt that ignoring these issues in everyday practice jeopardizing the institutional vitality (Thomas and May 2010).

An inclusive academy will have clear and adequate complaints mechanisms where both students and staff felt supported in addressing pertinent issues. This was missing in Zara’s case where she wished to lodge a complaint against one of her lecturer. It was also an area raised by Black and Black women academics, as they spoke of the over emphasised scrutiny of their work in comparison to their White colleagues. Stevenson and Lang (2010) too identified the ineffectiveness and frustrations by academics of the inadequate complaints mechanisms when raising the pedagogic practices by colleagues. An inclusive academy would recognise and take steps to effectively train all staff, especially those long standing and

perceived as expert in their field (such as my previous sociologist colleague referred to in chapter five), who do not see themselves as needing to change their practice. It goes back to the claim of arrogance by academics, who see themselves as above the mundane rhetoric of equality and equity and race issues by virtue of their theoretical knowledge. As Janet the E&D manager stated, “lot of staff development is required, because staff can talk forever about their curriculum being inclusive, but it is not about that, it about how you make it relevant to the various backgrounds and what people bring to the process, it is quite a deep cultural thing in universities”. Libraries too, should evidence a range of Black authors in demonstrating inclusivity, and in supporting and signalling a marked difference on modules recommended reading.

Recently, I became aware of two Black students from the first year who were missing lectures. They were less inclined to attend some sessions where they had little understanding of the contents. They were also less likely to seek help because of their perception that the university did not encourage the same sense of success for Black students’ to succeed as White students. Confused and isolated they began withdrawing because they felt judged, and because of the lack of familiarity with the environment. An inclusive academy will want to replicate their diversity staff intake, recognising that Black students can often feel marginalised. The opportunity to approach a staff member who they feel they have something in common with may well alleviate some of the insensitivity to culture, religion and language sometimes displayed by White staff. Diverse staffs demonstrate the institution willingness to take into account specific needs of Black students, and the reality of living in a society where there is not always a level playing field for them, even in academia. This was an issue raised by Zara, and the Race for Equality NUS (2011) report.

An increase in the diversity of staff would also bring a unique perspective to the academy in terms of visibility and in the challenging of the dominant cultures and ideologies. Certainly the visible presence of Black academics and their close proximity to my learning made a positively fundamental difference to my undergraduate and post-graduate experiences. It would also contribute for a less isolating environment for Black staffs who like me, for the most part have never had the opportunity to work with someone that looked like them.

Bensimon et al (2014) views inequality in educational outcomes as a learning problem of institutional actors. Similarly, the reduction of inequalities also lies within individuals, specifically, in their capacity to develop equity as their cognitive frame. That is, individuals whose institutional roles can influence whether students are successful or not need to learn cognitive processes that enable them to think about the situation of under-represented students and their outcomes through the lens of equity.

Attributions framed by deficit models and perspectives imply that the academic difficulties of Black students are either self-inflicted or a natural outcome of socio-economic and educational background. Essentially, from a deficit perspective, unequal outcomes are a problem without a solution. Of the various conceptual framework that has been used to explain Black students experiences in universities, deficit thinking theories and models have held the longest currency amongst educators, policymakers and scholars. The deficit thinking paradigm as a whole, posits that students who fail to do well, do so because of alleged internal deficiencies or shortcomings, usually linked to familial deficits and dysfunction.

An inclusive academy will be identified by its transparency and willingness to discuss issues presented as difficult, such as the continued disparity of degrees awarded to Black students and their experiences as learners. This may include internal institutional inspection and scrutiny as well as self-criticism. If properly undertaken this could result in motivation and enlightenment as renewed interest are identified for resources needed to catapult the changes envisaged as necessary. For although it may be uncomfortable to broach such topics, it would undoubtedly signal a commitment to equalities issues where leadership is portrayed foremost from the head down. Criticism of the institution should not be viewed as an indication that it is not doing anything right, rather it should be viewed as a platform for ensuring practice continues to improve thus eliminating resistance to change.

According to Jones (2006), there remains widespread concern over the persistent under-representation of some social groups, and the quality of the educational experiences of non-traditional groups within the academy. Despite increased access and participation, it is evident that inequalities of social class, race, gender and (dis)ability, among others, persist within the system, and continue to be at the forefront of current educational discourse and policies. What these persisting inequalities point to is the failure of the equal opportunity framework, which rested on the principle of the firm application of the same rules for all, irrespective of socio-economic or cultural background, in the belief that equal outcomes could be secured. This approach failed to recognise or address the structural basis of social inequalities, and therefore to appreciate the need for changes to institutional cultures and structures.

Evidence suggests that students are more likely to perceive greater levels of institutional commitment when the academy enacts a more comprehensive inclusive approach as opposed to a piecemeal one. The effects of strong institutional commitment to diversity may positively affect not only individual outcomes but also the academy climate, which further reinforces the benefits associated with inclusion. There are some universities where this takes place, even as a symbolic gesture. Greenwich University, for example have renamed of some of their buildings in recognition of Black leaders and historical Black figureheads. Canterbury Christ Church, as a university birthed out of a Christian foundation such symbolic

gestures could be seen in light of commitment to social justice, however superficially they may be undertaken. For example, we could have Martin Luther King Junior building; Maya Angelou library; Mahatma Gandhi registry office; James Cone research centre and the John Sentamu chapel. Typically, these need to be more explicitly concretized in the higher echelon of the academy's practices and demonstrated rather than stated; where conditions are created that maximize the learning and outcomes associated with an inclusive academy.

As Jones (2006) stated, higher education not only carries the potential to enhance substantially the quality of any society's human resource – essential for sustaining economic and social development – but it also plays a significant role in enhancing individual creativity and improving individual levels of participation in the social and cultural development of their society. Hence, higher education serves not only as a driver of wealth creation, but as a critical determinant of life chances ... rather than reinforcing social stratification, as it did for much of the 20th century. Universities traffic a diverse influx of changing students by virtue of its role. Accordingly, it has the opportunity to create a space consciously or unconsciously that can influence the individual emotionally, culturally, socially and politically in its learning community, and in contributing to build a more tolerant cohesive and empathetic citizen.

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Appendices

Appendix 1: Ethical Procedures for the conduct of Research Involving Human Participants

Appendix 2: Consent form (Gail)

Appendix 3: Zara's pro forma

Appendix 4: Gail's pro forma

Education Faculty Research Ethics Review

Application for full review

1. PROJECT DETAILS

MAIN RESEARCHER	Mary Andall-Stanberry
E-MAIL	Mary.andall-stanberry@canterbury.ac.uk
POSITION WITHIN CCCU	Senior Lecturer
POSITION OUTSIDE CCCU	
COURSE (students only)	Early Childhood Studies and Health Studies
DEPARTMENT (staff only)	ERD
PROJECT TITLE	Aspirational Habitus - A Reflective Auto-biographical Narrative Enquiry of BME Students in HE
TUTOR/SUPERVISOR: NAME	Professor Linden West
TUTOR/SUPERVISOR: E-MAIL	Linden.west@canterbury.ac.uk
START/END DATE OF PROJECT	2011-2013

OTHER RESEARCHERS	N/A
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2. OUTLINE THE ETHICAL ISSUES THAT YOU THINK ARE INVOLVED IN THE PROJECT.

The project aims to engage BME students and in different context around the theme above. I do not perceive specific ethical issues other than those that accompany biographical narrative research more generally, such as the need for respectfulness, and sensitive management of interviews, confidentiality and anonymity issues

3. GIVE A BRIEF OUTLINE OF THE PROJECT in no more than 100 words. (Include, for example, sample selection, recruitment procedures, data collection, data analysis and expected outcomes.) Please ensure that your description will be understood by the lay members of the Committee.

The study explores Bourdieu's concept of habitus, in order to discern the impact of the university experiences on the constructions and re-constructions of the students' identities and explore the processes of compliance or resistance with which students engage in order to position themselves as effective learners. The methodology involves conducting in-depth auto/biographical narrative interviews with up to four students, in exploring how BME students manage the academic in relation to their social selves across two very different types of institution. The research is further concerned with how they navigate and relate to the university both academically and socially in order to develop 'academic ability' and accrue educational knowledge (cultural capital) which they can turn into 'success'. In order to develop an understanding of student experiences and interrelated processes the research has employed Bourdieu's (1990a) concepts of habitus, cultural and social capital.

Bourdieu (1990a) argues that when an individual encounters an unfamiliar field, habitus is transformed. He also writes of how the movement of habitus across new, unfamiliar fields results in 'a habitus divided against itself' (Bourdieu, 1999a). The researcher aims to explore whether there are more nuanced understandings in which the challenge of the unfamiliar results in a range of creative adaptations and multi-faceted responses, which may well

display dispositions of self-scrutiny and self-improvement – almost ‘a constant fashioning and re-fashioning of the self’ but one that still retains key valued aspects the BME student self. For some the process is more about finding themselves than changing and are thus liberatory. Although the students are confronted with their own difference and do at times adapt and reformulate their identities accordingly this is not a passive capitulation. Here the researcher will set out to identify the extent to which BME students have navigated their way through, at times inhospitable but frequently unknown, waters, making or appropriating the space for themselves and hopefully ‘others like them’(Goodwin 2006 p. 103). The research also set out to explore the extent to which the ‘aspirational habitus’ of BME students have contributed in developing resiliency in the journey towards success.

4. How many participants will be recruited?	Four in total: two E&D managers, and two students
5. Will you be recruiting STAFF or STUDENT from another faculty?	NO If yes, which Faculty? IMPORTANT: If you intend to recruit participants from another Faculty, this form must be copied to the Dean of the Faculty concerned, and to the Chair of that Faculty's Research Ethics Committee.
6. Will participants include minors, people with learning difficulties or other vulnerable people?	NO
7. Potential risks for participants: - Emotional harm/hurt - Physical harm/hurt - Risk of disclosure - Other (please specify)	Please indicate all those that apply. YES YES YES There are some risks of difficult feelings being engendered, when people talk about experiences in families communities and in education, but to talk about such matters, in a good enough research space, can be potentially empowering.
8. How are these risks to be addressed?	Potential referral agencies have been identified if people feel they want to talk about issues in more depth, as a result of the study. And there is a clear understanding, which is articulated in the ethical code, and how this is explained, that the researcher has a duty of care towards all collaborators.
9. Potential benefits for participants: - Improved services - Improved participant understanding - Opportunities for participants to have their views heard. - Other (please specify)	Please indicate all those that apply. YES YES YES Giving voice, and being listened to, are fundamental values in biographical narrative

	research and this study will seek to model such beneficial practices
10. How, when and by whom will participants be approached? Will they be recruited individually or en bloc?	Via contacts with colleagues at CCCU and a London university, and with students who have been individually approached by the researcher due to their experiences.
11. Are participants likely to feel under pressure to consent / assent to participation?	NO
12. How will voluntary informed consent be obtained from individual participants or those with a right to consent for them? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Introductory letter - Phone call - Email - Other (please specify) 	Please indicate all those that apply and add examples in an appendix. YES YES YES YES: the process involves a full explanation of the project, its values and the rights and responsibilities of the researcher. See the notes of explanation and consent form at the end of this document.
13. How will permission be sought from those responsible for institutions / organisations hosting the study? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Introductory letter - Phone call - Email - Other (please specify) 	Please indicate all those that apply and add examples in an appendix. YES/NO YES/NO YES/NO Contacts with universities, using long standing relationships with both institutions.
14. How will the privacy and confidentiality of participants be safeguarded? (Please give brief details).	Material is anonymised and is only ever used in full consultation with participants who will see draft material. All data is stored in a secure space at CCCU.
15. What steps will be taken to comply with the Data Protection Act? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Safe storage of data - Anonymisation of data - Destruction of data after 5 years - Other (please specify) 	Please indicate all those that apply. YES YES, as much as is possible or desired YES
16. How will participants be made aware of the results of the study?	By on-going consultation, using transcripts and recordings, by sharing of draft written material; the interviews transcripts and interpretation will be shared as part of building a good research relationship.
17. What steps will be taken to allow participants to retain control over audio-visual records of them and over their	A fundamental tenet is that the material belongs to participants and permission has to be sought, constantly, for its use.

creative products and items of a personal nature?	
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18. Give the qualifications and/or experience of the researcher and/or supervisor in this form of research. (Brief answer only)	Professor Linden West, my supervisor, is an internationally known and respected researcher, and has years of experience of such research.
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Attach any:

- Participant information sheets and letters
- Consent forms
- Data collection instruments
- Peer review comments

DECLARATION

- I certify that the information in this form is accurate to the best of my knowledge and belief and I take full responsibility for it.
- I certify that a risk assessment for this study has been carried out in compliance with the University's Health and Safety policy.
- I certify that any required CRB/VBS check has been carried out.
- I undertake to carry out this project under the terms specified in the Canterbury Christ Church University Research Governance Handbook.
- I undertake to inform the relevant Faculty Research Ethics Committee of any significant change in the question, design or conduct of the study over the course of the study. I understand that such changes may require a new application for ethics approval.
- I undertake to inform the Research Governance Manager in the Graduate School and Research Office when the proposed study has been completed.
- I am aware of my responsibility to comply with the requirements of the law and appropriate University guidelines relating to the security and confidentiality of participant or other personal data.
- I understand that project records/data may be subject to inspection for audit purposes if required in future and that project records should be kept securely for five years or other specified period.
- I understand that the personal data about me contained in this application will be held by the Research Office and that this will be managed according to the principles established in the Data Protection Act.

Researcher's Name: MARY ANDALL-STANBERRY

Date: 12/12/2011

FOR STUDENT APPLICATION ONLY

I have read the research proposal and application form, and support this submission to the FREC.

Supervisor's Name: Linden West

Date: 12/12/2011

CONDITIONS ATTACHED TO APPROVAL BY THE COURSE RESEARCH ETHICS COMMITTEE

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	NAME	DATE
Approved by Course Committee		
Checked by Faculty Committee		

CONDITIONS ATTACHED TO APPROVAL BY THE EDUCATION FACULTY RESEARCH ETHICS COMMITTEE

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	NAME	DATE
Approved by Faculty Committee		

Aspirational Habitus - A Reflective Auto-biographical Narrative Enquiry of BME Students in HE

Notes of guidance and Consent Form

- 1 This research set out to discern the impact of the university experiences on the constructions and re-constructions of the students' identities and explore the processes of compliance or resistance with which students engage in order to position themselves as effective learners. The overarching aim of the project is to explore BME students' experiences of higher education; the impact of these on their learner and socio-cultural identities and the implications for their progress and to explore the extent to which these experiences are 'raced'.
2. Given the potentially sensitive nature of the material you have a right not to answer any questions asked as well as to withdraw from the study at any stage. I will be careful not to push you in directions you do not wish to go.
3. You have the right to withdraw retrospectively any consent given and to require that your data, including recordings, be destroyed. Obviously, it is important that I know your position as soon as possible after reading transcripts (see below). Refusal or withdrawal of consent would normally therefore be within 2 weeks of receiving a copy of your transcript.
4. Confidentiality is a key issue. I will provide you with a Consent Form which will allow you to preserve anonymity if you so wish.. I will take all steps to preserve your anonymity in the presentation of case studies.
5. You will be given a recording of your interviews. I will produce a transcript of the interview, which will be sent to you. This can be edited as you wish and might be used as a basis for subsequent interviews. Copies of the material, including final edited versions of the transcript(s), and the recordings, will be kept in a secure place. Any other access to the material, apart from by members of the project team, will be with your permission only.
6. In general terms these procedures are informed by the British Educational Research Association and they accord with the ethical codes of the University.
8. Thank you for all your help and contribution.

Aspirational Habitus - A Reflective Auto-biographical Narrative Enquiry of BME Students in HE

CONSENT FORM

1. I agree to the material in the recording and transcript being used for study purposes and is, subject to the conditions specified in the Notes of Guidance attached to this form. I understand access to it is restricted to the researcher and supervisor, unless specific, additional agreement is obtained.

2. I request that my anonymity is preserved in the use of the material via the use of pseudonyms etc.

3. Any other comments

Signed.....G. Egbewole - Adereti

Name (please print) GRACE EGBEWOLE - ADERETI

Address and telephone number 07715684048
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Date 16.07.2012



Auto/Biographical Narrative Interview Proforma

The intention behind this proforma is to develop a way of recording and reflexively considering key issues in interviews, in relation to a particular person, in a more standardised format (without jeopardising the flexibility of the whole process i.e. more open-ended forms of interviewing and bringing different and diverse interpretations into play, including our differing perceptions of material). It is crucial to immerse ourselves in the material and to allow it to work on us and we on it. The basic idea is to explore, iteratively, key themes, and any interpretative and conceptual issues raised, alongside bringing into play relevant literatures, and auto/biographical resonances. Research diary material can also be woven into the text. Issues not understood and needing to be explored further should also be included. The point is to be inclusive and to use the document as an evolving, living text, seeking to create understanding of the material as a whole and the potential inter-relationship between different parts of the narrative.

The focus is on four main aspects:

- The themes, which seem important, such as key stories and moments in a life. Explorations of all aspects of a person's life history, including family, educational, formal and informal, and how these have been experienced; processes of managing situations and different identities in play; the interplay of the socio-cultural and psychological in experience and in learning from it; the interplay of past and present as well as future; the role of significant others etc. This section could include a summary of any themes to be explored further with the participant in the next cycle of interviews. It might include reflections on how the narrative is structured (is there a sense of drawing on some larger narrative e.g. of the heroic figure in adult education, on a linear journey from darkness to light?); or to what extent is there evidence of being storied as against storying a life, or, connectedly, senses of agency in a life?)
- The second aspect has to do with the process of the interview and observations about the nature of the interaction, including issues of power and possible unconscious processes. What is not being said, and how can this be understood? It includes any reflections on the quality and richness of the narrative material. It is important to include any auto/biographical resonance, and to document any thoughts and feelings as they arise, even from dream material or free association.
- The third, thinking more ethnographically, is about the circumstances of the interview, including interruptions, and general impressions of the setting and what might have been happening around it.
- The fourth is concerned with any sense of a gestalt or overall form and patterning in the material: might there be an emerging theme around the meaning of participation, or to do with the resources a person is drawing on, connecting past with present and possible futures? This is to be done tentatively, more a play of ideas and potential interconnections, as a basis for shared reflection

Please cut and paste relevant (and brief) extracts into the proforma and add any thoughts on content, process, context and 'gestalt'. And weave into the text reference to wider reading and insights from the literature. At an appropriate stage, produce a pen portrait of the person, in a new section before the themes, which acts as a kind of introduction while the themes will provide, over time, a way of structuring the refinement of a case study.

Participant's Name Zara

Address, phone number and email

Interview 1 - University

Interview 2 - Library

Interview 3 - Restaurant

Name of interviewer(s) Mary Andall-Stanberry

Zara's Interviews

Pent portrait (this is developed after an immersion in the text; possibly as a first step in composing a case study chapter). The headers below can then be used as a way of structuring the material in writing it up.

Many traditional and progressive scholars often ignore the positive acts of resistance and instead focus more on the "self-defeating" resistance in which students contribute in furthering their own domination (Solorzano and Delgado Bernal 2001). Asking how Black students make sense of their own identities in the face of oppression becomes critical when understanding how knowledge about marginalized populations can be empowering. As very little research paints complex portraits of Black lives from which we can consider their perspectives and resilience in interaction with institutions of power such as universities (Delgado Bernal et al 2006), their voices have largely gone unnoticed. There are elements of resilience and resistance in Zara's narrative of incidents with peers and lecturers. Yet faced with what she perceived as racist and stereotyping behaviour she nonetheless proceeded to seek recourse through the appropriate university mechanism recognizing in doing so, the programme director (who was currently teaching Zara) and partner of the said lecturer, would obviously have knowledge of this. She was prepared to continue standing on her own and becoming even further isolated from the teaching staff.

Zara is a rather tall and striking individual British West African female student, well presented who displayed an immaculate range of hairstyles from time to time. In the classroom Zara could be found doodling on pieces of paper and contributing very little unless directly asked. Zara did not live on campus, but travelled some thirty plus miles by bus throughout her course of study. She is often on her own, in and out of the classroom. From previous observations, she presents as relatively vocally quiet in the larger group and only minimally so in small group discussion.

The Theme

This chapter deliberately focuses on the narratives of two Black students of African origin, and the researcher as they demonstrated resilience and aspiration in enhancing their ability to survive in an environment where they experienced racism, discrimination and were the recipient of stereotyping. Zara aged 21 (case study 1)

and Gail age 18 (case study 2) grew up in an inner city, and their biographies demonstrate how their sense of culture, history and family identity enabled success at university.

The Process

I initially approached Zara, being aware that she was the only Black student on her programme in campus B. Further, I had observed Zara's minimally involvement with students within the class and on the rare occasion I noticed her outside the classroom environment, she was almost always on her own, and thus seem to be operating as an independent navigator of sort. As I had previously taught Zara, I felt somewhat comfortable approaching her, for the purpose of this study. I reasoned that she would not be suspicious of my intent in broaching the subject of her experience at university, after all we both had in common a number of variables, namely that of race, gender and the minority status within a large educational institution. On the other hand, I could very well identify a number of reasons why Zara may well be suspicious of my intention: I represented the institution as an academic staff; there were power dynamics between us, as student and lecturer and Zara may well contemplate as to whether I would value and respect 'her story'.

I engaged with Zara in a brief explanation of the purpose of the research, I then provided details as well as some research materials on Black students in Higher education. The purpose of this was twofold; first, so Zara could be aware that her involvement was within the context of ongoing concerns regarding the status and position of Black students in Higher Education, and secondly to enable her time for reflection as to whether she wanted to participate or not. Additionally because of the power dynamics inherent in the student lecturer relationship, Zara may well have felt pressured, and therefore I wanted to give her space and permission to withdraw without feeling any obligation. However, a subsequent email from Zara a few days later relayed her consent; this was followed up with a formal letter sent via email from me to this effect.

Having made an appointment with Zara in an adjoining campus facility, I explained the purpose of my study, and my interest in the topic. I shared my personal stories of growing up as a Black child and as an adult in the UK; a similarity that Zara and I shared, and of some of my struggles at school as well as experiences of education and work. In so doing, I aligned with Douglas's (1985) view of sharing a common round.

Specifically I discussed with Zara the importance of eliciting hers and the stories of other Black students in negotiating and make sense of their own identities through resistance and empowerment within university settings. I also reassured Zara, that personal details of her will be anonymous, as well as her programme of study and

institutional location. Zara, appeared keen, stating that she had a lot to say, and had been keeping quiet for years. Zara welcomed the opportunity of being given a platform to reflect on the experiences of being at university and of her solo Black status within the class. She wanted to know if there were other students from other campuses and universities, I would be speaking too and offered some contacts. Zara felt like her, they would have much to say. I informed Zara that other students approached had also shown interest, and that I would be soliciting the views of students from a London university in comparing similarity and differences regarding their experiences.

Anxiety and worries

Although I was resolute that this was the most appropriate method of collecting information, as the interview date approached I nonetheless felt somewhat anxious due to this approach being radically different from what I was used to, and certainly what I was teaching in current research sessions. I felt almost schizophrenic in nature, teaching one thing, and in essence practicing another. For example, present interest in subjectivity and the turn toward self-critical reflexivity (that is, the practice of being explicit about how a researcher's race, class, gender, and other identity markers have influence the research) marks a departure from earlier times. Then it was simply assumed that researchers would strive to maintain a distance between themselves as the knowers (the narrators) and their research subjects as the knowns (the narrated).

I also began to worry as to whether I was exposing Zara in terms of asking her to speak on issues she had kept quiet about, and which may be quite painful for her. I wondered how candid she was going to be about her experience, and how I would manage the process if there were long silences, and what mechanisms ought to be in place if I noticed that Zara was becoming affected emotionally and psychologically by revisiting her stories. I felt a level of inadequacy in facilitating this kind of interview being a novice with this approach. So whilst I took my supervisor's advice in considering the beginning of the interview by asking the student about 'the story of her life', I nonetheless became a little concerned, as to how well that would work, what if the student 'dried up'? I was aware that there needed to be a certain amount of trust established in requesting this level of openness; however I surmised that certain variables present, such as gender and race may well act as a prerequisite for establishing trust, as well as the student's own comfort level, interest in the topic and her knowledge of the purpose interview.

Interview 1st

On the day of the interview, I felt less anxious however, being aware that that could influence the interview process, I also anticipated that the student may need added assurance of the recording of her story, in terms of its security, confidentiality and being anonymous. I surmised that for these reasons alone, I ought to present as being fairly comfortable and at ease in a process I was asking the student to be involved with. In undertaking measures to reduce the hierarchy of the interview process Zara was afforded choice of venue, facilities and decisions about other

aspects of the interview, including whether she wanted to continue, withdraw, or interrupt the session.

I re-iterated to Zara that because of the nature of the interview, her storytelling may, unwittingly surface some painful memories and or experiences may emerge, and if these became uncomfortable then she could again withdraw, or take time out, and in exceptional circumstances, counselling could be arranged as appropriate. Again I sought the student's permission to record the conversation, and promised her a transcript. I assured her the recording will only be heard by me, though I may have to discuss the transcript. Thus I decided that I would begin the interview by asking Zara to 'tell me the story of her life, without interruptions, but to also have some questions for prompting if necessary.

My aim was to conduct the interview more as a conversation between two equals than as distinctly hierarchical, questions-and answer exchange. Mishler (1986) argues for telling stories as a new way of conducting interviews. Rather than analyzing thematic bits of talk, (DeVault and Gross, 2007), consider long stretches of talk will give the researcher a deeper and more complex understanding about the participant. To contextualize words and meanings constructed by both researcher and participants, the interviewer tries to tune into the interactively produced meanings and emotional dynamics within the interview itself (Denzin and Lincoln, 2005; Ellis and Berger, 2002).

Douglas' (1985) writes about "creative interviewing" where the interviewer expresses common ground with their respondents, so that both interviewer and interviewee share a narrative space. Respondents and researchers share information, the interview context is more comfortable, and the hierarchal gap between researchers and respondents is diminished (Cook and Fonow, 1986; Ellis and Berger, 2002; Ellis et al 1997). Feminist researchers on the other hand, have produced interviews that are considered to be collaborative encounters (DeVault and Gross 2007).

The student and I had several conversations as to where she would feel most comfortable doing the interview, I gave her several options and the final choice of the venue. This was part of the empowering process of the interview for the student and facilitating the choices and decisions about all aspect of the interview, as well as whether she wanted to continue, withdraw, or interrupt the session. I pointed out to the student that because of the nature of the conversation, as stated before, unwittingly some painful memories and or experiences may emerge, and if these became uncomfortable, then she could again withdraw, or take time out, and in exceptional circumstances, counselling could be arranged as appropriate.

In the interview Zara started by providing a biographical account of her family life.

Traditional and structured family

Zara: Well basically, I come from a very sort of traditional and structured family where you sort of do things by the book. So I am not really sure if I had a choice about coming to university, or just doing it to please my parents. Because where I am from you have to do everything like I said by the books, so I went to primary school, secondary school, college and then it was not as if not going to university was optional, it basically was not. Because of my parents and the way I was brought up, and their position in society, it made me feel I had to go to university. Not that I regret it, because I am now going to get my degree, but *it's just basically instructed life, that is really how I ended up here.*, If I did not come here it would be a disgrace on my *parents first of all, and on family as well. Because they would be looking at me as 'oh that's the girl that did not go to university, that is the girl that dropped out just like everybody else' etc...so, yes'..... It looks bad, as though you have not achieved anything.* Although some people do get good jobs without going to university, for my parents the pride was their daughter going to university, from my culture, you have not really achieved anything in education if it is not underpinned by a university degree. For those of us who do not go on to university it is seen by the Nigerian community as though our parents have failed us, they did not train us right, on the other hand having gone to university you can do more or less what you want now.

Within Zara response to the question of telling me the story of her life, her family culture emerged as of primary importance; its significance as well as its dogged expectation of Zara to succeed. The effects of the family culture and history represent a relatively unexplored aspect of habitus, but its importance was noted by Bourdieu: 'the subject is not the instantaneous ego of a sort of singular cogito, but the individual trace of an entire collective history' (Bourdieu 1990, p. 91). Therefore, expectation of Zara's family may well have provided the catalyst to repudiate notions of giving up. Although paradoxically her family may be misconstrued as adding extra pressure, in an alien environment where messages are often received that have negative connotation for Black students (HEFCE 2010; Leathwood and O'Connell 2003; Read et al 2003). This expectation by Zara family may unwittingly act as the impetus providing the resilience for academic success in the habitus of the university community.

Similarities

Throughout the first interview, it was apparent that there were many similarities between Zara and myself. There was familiarity with Zara's story that resonated with my own in terms of family aspirations, expectations and resilience. In Zara's West African family background and community there was a taken for granted expectancy to success academically, regardless of any prevailing circumstances. This success in turn was associated with family pride and their standing in the community. In my particular case, I had the support of a large Caribbean extended family and a church family that nurtured; encouraged; facilitated and expected academic success; Zara and I both acknowledged however, that part of the impetus for our success were

inextricably linked to our parents living vicariously through us, by not having our opportunities for academic success. The notion of Yosso's (2005) 'Community Wealth' as a 'Cultural Capital' is best exemplified here through the educational aspiration and resilience of the community's children.

No internal family conflict

Zara did not identify any internal conflict with the direction and choice her parents made for her education wise. She did not see this as problematic; it was how she was brought up, further most of her friends; mainly Black, had the same upbringing and attitudes by their parents, it was their normality. Zara knew her parents expected her to be the best we could be, and thus provided the necessary guidance as they saw it. Therefore, Zara did not have a choice about going to university; it was not optional, but her parents wish as graduating from university was a way of making her parents proud:

Zara: It was what they long for, and another completed phase of education. They want you to achieve your best; to do better than them, that would make them happy..... My parents have okay jobs, they are just a standard family trying to bring up their children, but my mother did not go to university until later in her life when she came to the UK. I filled that space that she should have by going to university when I did. It sort of enhanced her position in the community because she could now say 'well I did not go to university until late, but my daughter did'. It is a proud moment for my mother and my father, and good role model for my younger brother.

Zara and Mary - family expectation

I was able to share with Zara the similarities of our family expectation, coming from a Caribbean background with a heavy church influence and a very large paternal and maternal extended family. Without exception, they all expected my success at school; at university and beyond. I was acutely aware that from stories told by various family members and their friends, that a number of them had missed the opportunity to further their education because of the prevailing hostility and racism when they migrated to the UK in the fifties and sixties. Therefore, I knew whatever I achieved was also intertwined with my family pride and success, my church success and my wider family success. I was never a solo entity, so in this regards I expressed to Zara that I fully understood the pride in Zara's family and their expectation of her academic success.

I will make it

Zara: my mother often said to me if I gave up here, how would I know that it is going to be better at another university. Am I going to run away wherever I go? The way I was brought up and that little voice that keeps reminding me that I cannot give up, that my family does not expect me to give up, kept me going. They had the ability to

believe in spite of what I was going through at university I would make it, This enabled me to succeed.

Zara spoke of the strength in terms of where her parents came from, coming to a new country; her father; working his way up to going to university and her mother with three children still going to university. In looking at the struggles they had, Zara was able to draw on these same strength in knowing that regardless of what was going on at university, in three years' time she would make it. Although by her own words she had to 'psych herself up' to come to university every day, she nonetheless continued, and kept on coming in the face hostilities, as she perceived them.

A nurturing environment

Within Zara's family there was the provision of a nurturing environment, a habitus for aspiration, a safe place of resistance and the mentoring of resilience from parents who were still aiming at educational success themselves, added to this is the role of Zara as a contributor towards the family cohesion strength and pride. Zara position can be best explained within the context of cultural differences.

Western and African cultures – individuals and collective

Western view of psychology asserts that children should be given over to make up their own minds and having an individualistic approach to life as espoused in western psychological theories such as those of Schaffer (2006) and others. On the other hand a diametrically oppose view is embraced in non-western cultures such as of Chinese (Chen et al 1998) and African cultures, where children are brought up to be compliant (Mbiti 1990), and where the community or group need is prioritised before those of the individual need. Mentiki (1979), contrasted the Western concept of persons from those of the African concept, by asserting that: 'whereas most Western views of man abstract this or that feature of the lone individual and then proceed to make it the defining or essential characteristic which entities aspiring to the description "man" must have. The African view of man denies that persons can be defined by focusing on this or that physical or psychological characteristic of the lone individual. Rather, man is defined by reference to the environing community'. (Mentiki. 1973, p. 6).

In looking at the distinction noted, it becomes quite clear why traditional African societies tend to be organized around the requirements of duty while Western societies tend to be organized around the postulation of individual rights. In the African, and to some extent in Caribbean understanding, priority is given to the duties which individuals owe to the collective, and their rights, whatever these may be, are seen as secondary to their exercise of their duties. In the West, on the other hand, we find a construal of things in which certain specified rights of individuals are

seen as antecedent to the organization of society; with the function of government viewed, consequently, as being the protection and defence of these individual rights. In light of above one could digest how Zara, a West African student was able to conform to the wishes of her family. At a fundamental level she understood being part of the community and family prioritise her individual needs, she appear to understand that well, and therefore did not pose any difficult, especially as her friends also acclimatize under similar family expectations and cultural norms.

Indeed, in the African Charter on the rights and welfare of the child which entered into force in 1999, states in Article 31 under the heading, Responsibility of the Child. 'Every child shall have responsibilities towards his family and society, the State and other legally recognized communities and the international community. The child, subject to his age and ability, and such limitations as may be contained in the present Charter, shall have the duty; (a) to work for the cohesion of the family, to respect his parents, superiors and elders at all times and to assist them in case of need; (b) to serve his national community by placing his physical and intellectual abilities at its service; (c) to preserve and strengthen social and national solidarity; (d) to preserve and strengthen African cultural values in his relations with other members of the society, in the spirit of tolerance, dialogue and consultation and to contribute to the moral well-being of society (Article 31). This sentiments articulated in the charter confirms both the view of Mentiki (1973) writing almost forty years ago and the experience of Zara, an African student born and living in London, and my own experience of family and community expectations.

Excluded and different

Zara related her story of being excluded and 'different' because of her reluctance to socialise in pubs with her peers.

Being the only Black girl in the class was really difficult. I did not feel like anybody related to me, I am not a racist, I do appreciate white people, but at the same time it would have made me feel a little more comfortable to have a couple more students who I could relate to. Everyone else in the room was relating to one another, I could not relate to them. The experience they shared, for example, a lot of them go to the pub every weekend. Until I came to this university I had never, ever, been to a pub, it is just not something I would do....so it was not until they decided they wanted to go for lunch, and we ended up in a pub. They were surprised that I had never been to a pub before, and they asked questions, how could you never have been to a pub before? Well I do not have any business in a pub it is not something I have been brought up to do....to go to a pub. All these different scenarios was showing in the diverse situation between myself and other students, is what really made me not like coming to the university. Not that there was anything wrong with the university itself, but just the fact that I was the only black girl in the room, and I had to sort of not say much..... keep quiet; but everything you would want to say.....certain things you would want to say, but I could not say it anyway, because I just felt I was only

one person against all these different people in the room and they do not even know what I am talking about.

The Nightmare of Isolation

Zara: I would be the only black girl in the class, and it would be a nightmare, and that is exactly what happened. During that time, remember when I came to this university, I was only eighteen, and remember I was not only coming to this university because of my parents, I was coming because it was the next best thing to do. In my culture there is no gap, saying I will take time out and come back in two years, you do it all in one go, so that was the next thing to do, come to university and get a degree, so that was what I did. I was not aware that I could move to another university or transfer, because if I did I would have done that, but as I said what I expected is exactly what I got

Mary. Do you think it happened because you expected it, I mean because you expected a bad experience you kind of braced yourself for it?

Zara laughed: When I first came here obviously, it was a new experience, I came to the university with a mind of, I am here to do my work, but I also came with the mind that I was going to make some friends, and it was a fresh start, that was the approach I came with. I knew it was a white dominated university but that did not affect me, because I always had white friends, but I also had Black friends in my class at school, so this was a new thing for me, being the only Black. So when I came I knew I wanted to make friends, and I did try, but when the response I was getting, was why is this girl trying to attach herself to us? So it did not really work out, and when I saw that it was not working, that is when I decided to just go in and take each day as it came. I just kept on saying it would be over soon, it is not going to last forever so just get on with it, and before you knew it I was in the second year now looking forward to my final year, but even though it is nearly all over, it is still my university. I have not been to university twice, I have only been once, and this is my university experience. So although it is nearly over, academically it is still there, because unfortunately this is the experience I had at university, so if anybody asked me about what is university like, this is what I will be saying.

Light laughter

Zara would often start her response with a 'light laugh', which I concluded was more of an irony when set in the context of her accompanying response/story. These stories/incidents were often negative in connotation as can be seen by above. These 'light laughter' appeared to be storehouses of disappointments, but I also interpreted it as determination to succeed whatever the prevailing circumstances in to achieve her 'aspirational habitus'. It was often the 'light laughter' or 'huh-huh' I heard on countless occasion from my childhood and in adulthood, when listening to friends, relatives and extended family personal stories of racism experienced in the UK, to this extent this 'light laughter' was therefore very familiar and telling.

Stories of isolation, discrimination and disempowerment

Undoubtedly there were similarities between Zara and my own experience on some levels, as I understood her story of isolation; discrimination and disempowerment; it therefore was an area where we could share our stories, and thus create a collective space ((Dunbar et al, 2002; Ellis and Berger, 2002) and so I shared my experience with Zara:

I understand where you are coming from on so many levels, like you I have never understood the need to socialised in a pub, it is quite a foreign concept to me, most of the socialisation from my childhood onward took place at family homes, social gatherings, at church or in the homes of friends, where food and not drinks was what everyone looked forward too and spoke about. A few older Caribbean men, from my childhood went to the pub, but it was not seen as a place, where young black people or women would gather, and to be perfectly candid the Caribbean men that frequented the pub was not always held in high regard, because of its association with just drinking, and possibly getting drunk, which was seen a irresponsible behaviour very Eurocentric. At university I would often turn down offers to socialise at the pub, I think initially I was perceived as unfriendly, and when I finally explained my reluctance, I was told that I was strange. Ironically on the two occasions I went to the pub, I felt really out of place, as I could not understand the socialising mechanism of being in a pub. I saw some people slowly losing their inhibitions, and I found it most uncomfortable. So I really do understand when you say you did not feel comfortable among the group.

Not part of the university community

Zara: I was just a student here basically. I was not part of the university community 'no way'. I came here to have blast for three years, to have fun, to make new friends, but it was the opposite, apart from getting my degree.It was not nice for me, it may not have been bad be for anybody else, but for me personally I did not like it. Had I know I could have transferred I would have done so to a London university. It was only when some students did not come back at the beginning of the second year, I realized I could have transferred, but by then it was too late as I only had one year left to complete.

More could be done - Black students/Black lecturers

It is a good university the facilities are okay, I just think more could be done for ethnic minorities' 'period', with more black lecturers, with more activities for Black students group. My message to the university organisation is this in future when new students are applying they should organise the classroom and groups so that individuals do not feel isolated and intimidated because they are different, there should be modules that explore other cultures, and just thinking of peoples' feelings and how they would feel in that situation.

Now faced with not achieving the social milieu Zara envisaged, or the friendships expected, Zara nonetheless determined to continue as a solo entity for the duration of her degree, and stated *'I decided to just go in and take each day as it came'*.

Spirit of resilience and resistance

In Zara's narrative about being the only Black student in her class, she identified the issues that rendered her isolated but also displayed a spirit of resilience; resistance and aspiration. I acknowledge this by sharing my own stories of racism, discrimination and stereotyping and isolation. The isolation that I alluded to is similarly shared, and demonstrated by Benjamin (1997) a female academic, writing some nineteen years ago *'In the ivory tower, the voices are shrouded beneath a racist and sexist cloud that is often chilly at white institutions.....African American women, particularly those in white milieus, encounter isolation and non-nurturing environments that affect the promotion retention and tenure process (Benjamin 1997. p, 211)*. I shared with Zara my penchant for working towards social justice that reflected much of my interest within and outside of the university in the past and presently.

Sharing a collective space

Here again, I was able to identify with Zara. I shared my story of being in work situations where I have felt incredibly isolated because I was the only Black face among hundreds of people, and to an extent it is still the same in my current work environment. I have to look at groups of people engaging with each other, and make strategic decisions in terms of what group would be more accommodating of me, and if I get it wrong it could be very uncomfortable, so sometimes rather than experience isolation as well as being uncomfortable, I have it less stressful to opt for the former. I told Zara, that as a Black academic staff I share that experience with her almost continuously. So most of the time when I am on my own, White peers and colleagues just do not understand, so I am apt to be labelled unfriendly, private or aloof, as have been told. Whether it was as a result of the level of transparency with my own experience of isolation, or whether Zara now perceived similarities of family and cultural background, she now felt a certain level of comfortable treading the waters of racism, as she highlighted this incident

Email from lecturer

In my first year at university I was taught by this particular lecturer for one module, I was not taught by this lecturer again therefore I assumed he knew very little about me. Then an incident occurred when I came into a room where this lecturer was, to look for another lecturer. This lecturer from my first year spoke to me very harshly and condemnatory with several accusations as to my supposed behaviour on campus, *he also decided I was on a 'walkabout' instead of being in class. Following the way he spoke to me, he also sent me a very nasty email stating that if he was an employer, he would not employ someone like me. He said that over the past couple of years*

.....I have been wondering around doing nothing, and had I used my initiative I would have gone downstairs to reception and find out exactly where the lecturer I was looking for was. I was left wondering if I had been the topic of conversation between him and other lecturers, because of some of the things he had said. He then proceeded to tell me where I should have been and what time I should have been there. So the point I am trying to make is, without sounding funny, this was a white lecturer, and it almost seems like he was stereotyping me, without getting the facts straight, it seems like, oh, this particular person does not know what she is doing, she is just another black girl, wondering around doing nothing. So when I received this email I did not know..... I was not going to do anything about the email, because I thought what is the point? What is a Black girl going to do? Who is going to listen to a Black girl? The wife of this lecturer is the programme director and I did not want to jeopardise my degree. The whole university is predominantly white, so why would anybody want to listen to me? After several weeks and with the help of another person, I manage to find out that I could do something about the email and the manner in which I was *spoken to*. I was referred to an, 'ethnic and diversity person' (Equality and Diversity Manager), who explained this is something that can be dealt and taken further if I did not believe that the email that was sent to me should have been sent that manner. I was told that there was certain procedure I can take, so I did follow that up, and I did get an apology in the end. But the point I am trying to make is, did the lecturer who sent me this email, did he sent me this email because he thought, judging by the media and the news we hear about black student, that he thought that maybe I was just another black person who he could speak to anyhow.

Resilience and resistance

Again, we see elements of resilience and resistance in Zara's narrative of this incident. Faced with what she perceived as racist and stereotyping behaviour she nonetheless proceed to seek recourse through the appropriate university mechanism recognizing in doing so the programme director (who was currently teaching Zara) and partner of the said lecturer, would obviously have knowledge of this. She was prepared to continue standing on her on and becoming even further isolated from the teaching staff.

Corroborating Zara's encounter

Unknown to Zara I was privy to certain information that corroborated Zara's encounter and the email she received. I knew the lecturer Zara spoke of, and had witnessed negative discussions about Zara from several of my colleagues, mostly about her inability to be part of the group and her 'strange' mannerism. On one such occasion, the discussion involved about four of my colleagues gathered together. I did not participate but felt very uneasy, aggrieved and defensive of the student. I am not sure if they were unaware of my presence then, but at a point one of them approached me to say they really should not have done this, but that they were just having a 'little moan' about Zara. I did not respond because I found the whole episode quite upsetting. These were my colleagues engaging in behaviour unbecoming of their profession and professionalism. I felt the trend of the conversation boarder on racism and a total lack of consideration of what it must be

like for Zara on her own on a day to day, basis at the university. I knew that my quietness and refusal to respond was uncomfortable for them and ended their conversation almost immediately. As Trinh (1989) says, "Silence as a refusal to partake.... it is a voice, a mode of uttering and a response in its own right" (p. 83).

Vulnerability of Black staff and students

My silence that day had more to do with my frustration of the on-going vulnerability of both myself as a Black academic staff, and Zara as the student. Of our respective marginalisation and an even deeper awareness of just how pervasive racism is; of my own inadequacies as a Black member of staff to protect Zara by my very awareness of that conversation; and the tiredness of having to fight almost always on my own, or so it seemed. It was a rude awakening that indeed racism; discrimination and stereotyping 'was alive and kicking' and still the preserve of educational institutions.

Betrayal of trust

This scenario was for me, demonstration a monumental betrayal of trust of by my colleagues; and an even further demonstration of own disempowered status. Since that incident, that particular colleague who approached me about having a 'little moan' about Zara, apologised for her contribution in the general discussion, and we had several discussions about racism and stereotyping.

Email and bullying etc.

Coincidentally, I too had received an email from the lecturer Zara identified in the interview. It was also of an accusatory manner and had insinuations of my ineptitude as a lecturer, with aspersion cast on my ability to have relationships with students. I interpreted element of bullying racism and stereotyping in its contents. However, I surmised that by virtue of whiteness; maleness; majority presence; (Gillborn 2009) and as the partner was the programme director, this individual must believe that he possessed an insurmountable amount of power in relation to me. So like Zara, I was most uncomfortable approaching the programme director as I felt there would be a conflict of interest and chose to raise the matter in another arena instead.

Crossing Borders

Similar to Villenas (1996) though, I experienced 'a fluid space of crossing borders and, as such, a contradictory one of collusion and oppositionality, complicity, and subversion' (p. 729), as I contemplated my role as a Black academic and researcher and the divulging of what I perceive certain 'insider' information, albeit pertinent. Villenas (1996) writes; 'as a Xicana and indigenous woman, I cannot escape my own experiences of marginalisation and dislocation.....at the same time, I cannot escape the privilege afforded to me as a university professors' 'My dilemma was this; to what extent should I reveal this incident to Zara in identifying the similarity

experienced between us. On the one hand, this information provided a real live platform for discussing and dismantling racist and stereotypical perceptions, yet I felt a certain amount of organisational and professional constraint. Zara was still being taught by the programme director; the partner of this lecturer. In the end, I prioritised professional integrity above my own experience of marginalization and dislocation.

Safe space

Nonetheless, in discussing Zara's email, we were able to share how often people make stereotypical statements about us and of how we have to rise above it. We acknowledged those elements of our lives that continue building our resilience like our family's expectations or our belief in our abilities and drawing strength from experiences those who had trod this path before. As I shared my own stories of racism; resilience; aspiration and self-disclosing in the academy by reflecting on my own personal experiences, I affirm as well as legitimize Zara's experiences. I was also reminiscent of something that had happened fairly recently and which was still painful to disclose.

I became aware that three of my white colleagues were giving advice to three white students who approached them on a course which I was teaching and which none of my colleagues had expertise in or taught previously. Although I was seeing two of these colleagues on a weekly basis, none of them divulged this information; however, in class it was obvious that these students were being given different information from what I was suggesting. I found out later that these three colleagues had knowledge of each other's dealing with the three students, but had not said anything to me. Added to this, a Black student who attended the class relayed a conversation overheard from one of the three said student, that she 'was not having any Black person teaching her anything'. The dealing of my colleagues and the three students only came to light in an email much later and is now an ongoing matter to resolve. I shared with Zara the number of times white students would request their work checked by white colleagues when I had marked it, but that I had not been approached by a white student for a second opinion on work that had been marked by a white colleague.

Black people can feel very discourage, when all we are asking for is a level playing field and to recognize that so often, the game is stacked up against us (Rodriguez 2010) realizing that even when you decide to talk back (hooks, 1989), people either give you the "proverbial nod" (Collins 2000) or may not bother to listen. That self-doubt that pervades our thinking that debilitates us from accomplishing what we hope to accomplish, that little voice in our heads that says, "You are not good enough!" As Collins (2000) argues, internalized racism is what really gets in our way.

Because the dominant culture reflect so much of what we are not as a Black people, in the past it has kept us from believing in ourselves, and has resulted in accepting the mistreatment of others, it has kept us from demanding to be respected, and has limited us in pursuing certain goals. Often, this can lead to internalized oppression, leading Black people to believe misinformation about their own ethnic group, eventually believing their mistreatment.

Reflection of the 1st interview process

On asking for her reflection on the first interview process, Zara said:

'I felt good because I was able to tell my story, tell somebody what my journey was like at university, so it was really good. I finally had the opportunity to talk about it. Yes, I think it was quite comfortable, I did not think I was being, well, under pressure to do it, and I did not think it was hurting me in anyway, if anything it was really good to talk about it, and so yes I felt comfortable.'

Therapeutic aspect of interview

Zara was alluding to the therapeutic aspect of the interview, by affording her a platform to talk about her experiences, without pressure, and feeling better afterwards. Though the topic was sensitive Zara nonetheless found it empowering, and thus support Kvale's (2006) view that that the interviewing process can be sensitive as well as powerful. Recognizing this duality of the research process, it was also important for me check Zara feelings.

Reflection on the 1st transcript

Whilst typing the transcript of Zara's interview I was experiencing a number of emotions. I felt a level of frustration that this student's experience emanate from a university that positioned itself in terms of attracting diversity, and yet there were clear examples of Zara being discriminated against by an academic staff that had the audacity to put it in writing to her via email. I hypothesize as to what extent this white male academic staff recognized that he had a certain amount of power over Zara and took advantage of it, being fully aware that Zara was the only Black student in her class, isolated, and not particularly close to any of her peers.

I found myself using the questions I had identified for prompts more at the initial stage of the interview, I think this had as much to do with how I managed and interpreted periods of silence rather than Zara not having much to say. I recognize that that is something I need to be more cognizant of in succeeding interviews. Further on revisiting the transcript I realized that I could have ask Zara to elaborate more on some 'stories'. This is where as the researcher, I need to be careful in the assumptions I may make unwittingly of the similarity of Zara and my own family expectations. I assumed there were some things Zara did not need to explain

further, as we both knew what she was talking about. There is a familiarity with the Zara story that resonated with my own, and as such I employed an unwritten code of 'knowing' when this may well have not been the case. Elsewhere in the transcript when Zara was responded to a question I interrupted on more than one occasion for example. Again, this is something I will need to be aware off.

From the first transcript, I identified some areas where I interrupted Zara's story because of my perceived familiarity and similarity to her own story. In this second interview I was more cognizant of these by allowing Zara to tell her story without my interruption or over identification, yet still with the sensitivity that it is important to share similarities between the researcher and the researched, to this extent the first transcript acted as a 'checks and balances' of sorts . According Rosenthal (1993) while the life history is being narrated to the interviewer (who plays the role of the interested and empathetic listener), the latter does not interrupt the main narrative but encourages the biographer by means of non-verbal and paralinguistic expressions of interest and attention. The interviewer waits until the narrator breaks off the story of his or her own accord, and only then asks questions in the second part of the interview. The interviewer first asks narrative questions on topics and biographical themes already mentioned. In addition, in the last part of the interview or in a second interview the interviewer asks about issues that have not been addressed by the biographer (Rosenthal 1993: 60).

Revisiting my journey

Additionally the transcript caused me to revisit my own journey of being Black, female, and an academic in almost exclusively white universities and of the experiences of discrimination and racism. Thus the question, posed by Benjamin (1997), 'how then has it been for Black academics to live, work and sometimes even claim success in academic institutions? Is still pertinent today (see Williams 2013; Hylton 2012). Benjamin contextualised the situation by asserting that black colleagues have scaled several resisting walls as well as the unrelenting adversaries of racism, sexism, and class, with each as a major confrontation with powerful forces of tradition. Whilst, a Guardian article entitled 'We remain almost invisible' by John Crace in December 2004, stated that the Association of University Teachers (AUT) found that lecturers from ethnic minorities earned less than their white counterparts on similar pay scales. They were less likely to have a senior job, and were more likely to be on insecure short-term contracts. However continues Benjamin (1997) despite universities avowed intention to foster policies of encouraging cultural and ethnic diversity within the institutions, there remain difficulties and discomforts that arise from institutional neglect in relations to patterns of racial stereotyping and expectations that are racist in nature. The conclusion always reached, is that to be a Black academic in mainly white institution is difficult and challenging, but it is exciting and rewarding in terms of pioneering work.

2nd Interview

Workplace problems

The second interview was set up and the areas identified from the transcript continued discussion, however Zara, now a final year student and working, seemed preoccupied with her employment situation, and began informing me of problems in the workplace. It appeared that there was a perception that because Zara was a student she was not taken seriously, additionally Zara was concerned by the attitudes of some of the staff towards the children and the manner they were spoken too. When Zara had raised this issues it was not well received subsequently she felt uncomfortable in this working environment and was now actively seeking other employment. For Zara, there appear to be more pressing issues at hand than the impending interview, and recognizing the level of her employment I supported Zara by providing that collective space; that safe space to express her frustration, to share; to reflect and to recuperate through our respective positive affirmation (Fine et al., 2000; Fine and Weis, 1996).

Affirming each other's experience

I articulated to Zara that when I went back and read the transcript, it brought up a lot of emotions for me, and I wondered if it did the same for her. As I stated my own reaction through sharing our experiences, we were able to create a collective space, and I felt this contributed towards reduce the hierarchy between the researcher and the researched (Ellis and Beger 2002). We affirmed each other's experience in a safe space; we respected each other emotions as the various stories evolved and as we reminisced on others, far from the traditional methodology which suggests minimal human contact and the absence of emotional involvement between participant and researcher.

Resilience

Zara affirmed: I can now stand up for myself, if I saw something that was wrong, 'I think I can speak up now....one of the positive things that have come out of my isolation at university is that it has made me a stronger person. I guess it is a case of what does not kill us, makes us stronger.....'I went back to the whole process of the incident with that particular lecturer, I relieved it again, I reflected on the stance I was able to take with the help. I reflected on how scared I was to be in the same place as that particular lecturer and how powerless I felt when we were in the same room to discuss the things he had said about me. Although the Head of Department and Diversity Officer was there, it was still uncomfortable as I was still a lone Black student. But reading back the transcript I realised that I was stronger than I thought, however when I thought of all the other incidents I still wish I had chosen another university. I shared the transcript with my family when I first received it, they all felt it was a worthwhile cause to be involved with, because it might just bring about change for others if they see what you are writing about.....It made me feel good that

even though I was the only Black girl I was able to succeed, get a letter of apology from that particular lecturer. I am proud of myself that I stayed the course.

3rd Interview

The Restaurant

It was now July and Zara and I had arranged to meet in the park on a Sunday, for the final interview because of the sunny and warm weather. We had arranged to follow this up with a meal at an African restaurant, relatively close to where she lived. However, Zara informed me that she wanted to omit the park and go straight to the restaurant. She was keen to show me the array of African delicacies on the menu. I was a little dubious how this would work especially with recording her story, but I agreed anyway sensing Zara's enthusiasm. Fortunately, because it was early afternoon the restaurant was virtually empty for the next hour and a half or so. Zara had just arrived from church, and seemed in rather good humour. Having now secured a permanent job, Zara said she had a plan for the next five years, to be the manager of a nursery or own her own nursery, and asked what my five year plan entailed. Suddenly she stopped talking, pondered and stated:

Not a single contact

Mary do you know that I have not exchanged a single contact with a single student; no one asked for my details and I did not ask for anyone's,not one single contact for the whole three years I was at university, imagine that she said wistfully.

Respecting the silence

I took time to respect the silence that followed Zara's statement. The silence was not uncomfortable and I did not try to fill it with words. I felt it was more of a recognition an understanding; an acknowledgement of the price we often as Black people, have to pay for our resilience; our aspirations or solo status, and our venture into uncharted waters (Benjamin 1997). This silence provided a space for Zara to revisit her histories and turn margins into places of "transformative resistance" (Gillborn 2011).

Zara's utterance - Revisiting my journey

Zara's utterance caused me to revisit my own journey of being Black, female and an academic in almost exclusively white universities and of the experiences therein. Thus the question, posed by Benjamin (1997), 'how then has it been for Black academics to live, work and sometimes even claim success in academic institutions, is pertinent in a UK today. Like Bhattacharyya (1998); Williams (2013); Hylton (2012) and Bhopal and Jackson (2013), Benjamin (1997) contextualised the situation by asserting that Black colleagues have scaled several resisting walls as well as the

unrelenting adversaries of racism, sexism, and class, with each as a major confrontation with powerful forces of tradition. However continues Benjamin (1997) despite universities avowed intention to foster policies of encouraging cultural and ethnic diversity within the institutions, there remain difficulties and discomforts that arise from institutional neglect in relations to patterns of racial stereotyping and expectations that are racist in nature. The conclusion always reached, is that to be a Black academic in mainly white institution is difficult and challenging, but it is exciting and rewarding in terms of pioneering work.

Space of empowerment

By providing this space and making Zara aware that she was not alone in experiencing isolation, racism and stereotyping; that the possibility of working through the pain exists as well as reminding ourselves of our own self-worth, this opens up a space of empowerment for both myself and Zara.

This interview space became a place for both of us to share our experiences, providing a space of healing and empowerment. Women have historically used conversation with each other as a way to deal with oppression. This space at the library, in the restaurant, in a quiet tutorial room late in the evening became more than simply a space to conduct an interview. Instead, it transformed into a shared emotional space—a physical space in which both researcher and participant share human interaction, divulge personal instances of racism, and share various emotions such as fear, anger, self-doubt as well as strategies on coping. These spaces become spaces of collective transformation, where both participant and researcher share their experiences of racism, recuperation, resistance, resilience and affirmation. For Black women, sharing with other women has been an important way to confront and endure our marginality. Sharing stories with others raises the other individual's consciousness and opens up the possibility for social action (Fernandez, 2002). Conducting interviews in such a way—by reflecting on one one's own personal experiences, self-disclosing, and sharing my own experience of resilience; resistance and racism through storytelling—served as part of a consciousness-raising process through human interaction and meaningful conversation

GESTALT

Unlike scholars who may argue that limiting one's interactions with participants and sharing experience "can distort an interview and distract participants from their own experience to the interviewer's" (Seidman 2006, p. 95), I argue that sharing personal stories about discrimination racial and otherwise, as well as practicing reflexivity during the research process, can serve multiple purposes when interviewing marginalized students. Reflexivity helps researchers explore how our theoretical positions and biographies shape what we choose to study and the approach to

studying it. Reflexivity is also a communal process that requires the researcher to be attentive to the structural, political, and cultural environments of the researcher and participants.

A study on the social mobility costs of attending university found working-class students faced a number of dilemmas that their middle-class counterparts at elite universities and working-class students at new universities did not have to confront (Jetten et al 2008). Such dilemmas include the ability to maintain connections to one's social background, including family, friends and the wider community. However, in Zara's account of her experience, this rarely seem to be the case. There was not 'the disconnection from family and cultural backgrounds' that Wentworth and Peterson (2001, p.10) identified when describing the university experience of working-class and by extension Black students. Rather, Zara displayed the ability to successfully move across two very different fields. Combining strong connections and loyalties to family and home friends. In the interview for instance, one can see examples where Zara drew on the strength the family had to offer as she experienced isolation and discrimination within the university setting. McNay (2008) suggest that students such as Zara, had already begun to engage in processes of self-conscious reflexivity in which self-awareness and a propensity for self-improvement had become incorporated into their habitus.

Drawing on the lived experience of Zara for example, critical race theorists seek to document the voices of marginalized people as well as centre social transformation. Thus placing Zara at the centre of analysis (Valdes, 1998), these approaches allow me to capture the stories and narratives as well as to understand how traditional ways of research serve to limit the educational opportunities of Zara, additionally this approach enabled the turning of margins into places of "transformative resistance" (Solorzano and Yosso, 2001). Thus the identification of storytelling in my interview with Zara, seem almost natural when considering its place of importance in our respective countries of origin, as well as its situational predisposition in providing a venue for the marginalized such Zara to voice her knowledge and lived experiences.

Acquiring a unique perspective at the cost of the pain of racism and oppression, the telling of stories serves many purposes for Black people. Storytelling serves as a powerful means of survival and liberation (see methodological chapter). Storytelling for Zara, not only exposes and subverts the dominant discourse but also serves several theoretical, pedagogical, and methodological purposes (Fernandez, 2002; Solorzano and Yosso, 2001). First, stories (or more specifically, counter-stories) build a sense of community among those at the margins of society by providing a space to share their sense of reality and experiences. Stories build consensus, a common

culture of shared understandings. Second, counter-stories challenge dominant ideology. Last, they can teach people about how we construct both story and reality. As the only Black student in class, Zara was often ignored or 'Othered'. As such, it is imperative that educational researchers provide analytical tools for the critical exposure of race and racism that serves as a source of Othering, as well as allow for the desilencing of marginalized individuals. Explication of both Gail's and Zara's experiences as Black students revealed how they felt "uncelebrated" at a university that claimed to celebrate and encourage diversity. More specifically, their counter-narratives provide opportunities to critically reflect upon their positions of being Black students attending their universities. Furthermore, by telling their stories in their own words, their counter-narratives allow them to contradict the Othering process, and, thus, challenge the privileged discourses that are often found at universities.

Auto/Biographical Narrative Interview Proforma

The intention behind this proforma is to develop a way of recording and reflexively considering key issues in interviews, in relation to a particular person, in a more standardised format (without jeopardising the flexibility of the whole process i.e. more open-ended forms of interviewing and bringing different and diverse interpretations into play, including our differing perceptions of material). It is crucial to immerse ourselves in the material and to allow it to work on us and we on it.

The basic idea is to explore, iteratively, key themes, and any interpretative and conceptual issues raised, alongside bringing into play relevant literatures, and auto/biographical resonances. Research diary material can also be woven into the text. Issues not understood and needing to be explored further should also be included. The point is to be inclusive and to use the document as an evolving, living text, seeking to create understanding of the material as a whole and the potential inter-relationship between different parts of the narrative.

The focus is on four main aspects:

- The themes, which seem important, such as key stories and moments in a life. Explorations of all aspects of a person's life history, including family, educational, formal and informal, and how these have been experienced; processes of managing situations and different identities in play; the interplay of the socio-cultural and psychological in experience and in learning from it; the interplay of past and present as well as future; the role of significant others etc etc. This section could include a summary of any themes to be explored further with the participant in the next cycle of interviews. It might include reflections on how the narrative is structured (is there a sense of drawing on some larger narrative e.g. of the heroic figure in adult education, on a linear journey from darkness to light?); or to what extent is there evidence of being storied as against storying a life, or, connectedly, senses of agency in a life?)
- The second aspect has to do with the process of the interview and observations about the nature of the interaction, including issues of power and possible unconscious processes. What is not being said, and how can this be understood? It includes any reflections on the quality and richness of the narrative material. It is important to include any auto/biographical resonance, and to document any thoughts and feelings as they arise, even from dream material or free association.
- The third, thinking more ethnographically, is about the circumstances of the interview, including interruptions, and general impressions of the setting and what might have been happening around it.
- The fourth is concerned with any sense of a gestalt or overall form and patterning in the material: might there be an emerging theme around the meaning of participation, or to do with the resources a person is drawing on, connecting past with present and possible futures? This is to be done tentatively, more a play of ideas and potential interconnections, as a basis for shared reflection

Please cut and paste relevant (and brief) extracts into the proforma and add any thoughts on content, process, context and 'gestalt'. And weave into the text reference to wider reading and insights from the literature. At an appropriate stage, produce a pen portrait of the person, in a new section before the themes, which acts as a kind of introduction while the themes will provide, over time, a way of structuring the refinement of a case study.

Participant's Name Gail

Address, phone number and email

Interview 1, Jan 2013 - University

Interview 2, June 2013 6.00 pm - Library

Interview 3 - date Jan 2014 - University 6.30 pm

Name of interviewer(s) Mary

Pent portrait (this is developed after an immersion in the text; possibly as a first step in composing a case study chapter). The headers below can then be used as a way of structuring the material in writing it up.

"Ethnic identity development is a complex, multifaceted, and dynamic process. It has both public and private, individual and communal, conscious and unconscious, positive and negative, past and present, cognitive and emotional, expressive and symbolic dimensions" (Gay, 1987 p. 35).

Ethnic identity in interplay with gender, class, and age too. The encounter between the researcher and her subject is multi-faceted across the three interviews. An interplay between two people and different worlds. It is not so much a life history interview, as a conversation that stirs a soul. It has a powerful normative dimension, with the researcher, Mary, wanting Gail to see things in a new light; to become more reflexive about her way of being in the world, how she wears her hair and why she goes to fencing classes. The nature of the research encounter needs to be articulated and theorised.

Gail is a young person feeling her way in the world. Age matters as does the nature of the transitional space called the university, and in the interview. How possible is it to play with stories and be open about the complexity called experience? She is caught between the world of her family (about which she has deeply ambivalent feelings), and the world of university, in Canterbury. A place that seems in some of the narrative to be so different to London. And she is caught in a complex relationship with the researcher, as here and now wrestles with there and then. Where the power and persuasiveness of the researcher forces her to wrestle with questions of who she is, has been and might be in the future. Small things take on a big symbolic significance: this includes having her hair done, possibly to please Mary, but then feeling exposed, as a woman, unattractive. But also able to take a risk.

Small/big things matter in encounters at university and on the street. Of feeling threatened by White men; feeling exposed in a predominantly White space. Of feeling trapped in the classroom, and being stereotyped by a White lecturer. The personal as deeply political as she is asked questions on the basis of colour, and stereotypes. Questions about violence; and Gail longs to be accepted for who she is rather than being stereotyped but the world will not let her, or accept her in that way.

Gender and class rear their heads; as in the possession of absence of material things. As wanting to be accepted and acceptable in the public school that she walks past every day of the week. Longing to be accepted, maybe to act like a phantasmised 'them'; to be one of them. Her story can be read at another more micro level: of feeling alienated from her family of origin; and of wanting to belong and to find a new family; to be more like her cousin; maybe more like Mary as the research unfolds. There may well be warring issues in

her own body: of wanting to be attractive; of wanting to be accepted; but also, in the context of the interview, wanting, increasingly, to question and challenge. Except this is scary. Lee Rigby and the wider world enter the stage: of solidarity with peoples of Muslim faith; and with Nigerians who also can be stereotyped. Guns and Black people are there in the classroom, as is the difficulty of challenging a lecturer. Power matters, in that the lecturer will mark an assignment; there is a constant need to take care.

There is burden in “acting White” because of a “stereotype threat” (Fordham and Ogbu, 1986), but also a feeling that she might be accepted; ambivalence. This can be seen in Gail’s preference of choice of friends, activities, beliefs and attitude. Gail adapted her behaviour to conform to perceived norms (Berkowitz, 2000). As no doubt, she did in the interview, as power was circulating there too.

But the quality of the research relationship does change. Mary’s actions of being open carry deep ambivalence; and Mary herself worries about doing insufficient listening because of the noise, the anger, in her own head. When she, Mary, talks of feeling exposed and confused, as in the incident with her car, and her own relative, Gail comes alongside her; realising that she, Mary struggles too. She has not got it all together either, which gives space for Gail to accept some of her own frailty and messiness.

How to characterise and theorise these research encounters? A characterisation needing to encompass the public and private, conscious and unconscious processes? One person and another. Struggles within the researcher about wanting to set the agenda and to focus on a pre-defined subject (of race and racism) and not to be side-tracked by other matters. Except, thinking intersectionally, other themes enter the stage, and will not go away. This includes the quality of the *inter-view* space itself. What Mary says matters and Gail is trying to process it, which includes ambivalence about doing a 3rd interview at all. Mary has been challenging, maybe too intrusive in wanting Gail to think critically; but ultimately things progress. But there remain two people negotiating the space: Mary as well as Gail. What is it to do an interview, what kind of interview space does this represent? What does it mean to be a researcher? What might it mean to be dialogical? Can power be exercised wisely, empowering and energising the other? Can power also close dialogue down?

Themes

1st interview

Racism at CCCU, as part of a 1st year student presentation

...her presentation as a year one student, new to the university community and the area where the university is based. The statement which propelled me into wanted to explore Gail’s story was this ‘I have experienced more racism here in the last three months, than I have experienced in the total eighteen years I have lived’.

Seeking permission to talk about race

Gail sought my permission to talk about racist experiences.

Family fractures

. When Gail embarked on studying at university I think she envisaged an environment that could to some extent, act as a replacement for the severed relationships with her siblings and parents. However, what she found was a culture inside and outside the university environment which made her aware of skin colour and of racism in a way she had not encountered in her eighteen years of life.

Finding family at college; and a cousin

Anyway at college I was really beginning to come out of my shell. I was doing well academically and was offered a place at a Thames Valley University to do paediatric nursing and although I found maths very difficult and challenging, I was really into extra-curriculum activities, I was into balletand into dancing. There was a small core study group which I belonged to and this felt really good; it gave me a sense of belonging. I was estranged from my immediate family at the time, so this group really satisfied a longing and a need I had.

I also think because I am female, my family does not pay me the same respect as my brothers, they do not think I am particularly smart enough to be a doctor, they do not say it, it is in their actions. I feel as though I am not taken seriously and so I do not say as much as I would like too. I know that my father was very displeased when I gave up paediatric nursing. If only he had asked me, maybe I would have chosen something else like engineering, but I do not think he thought I was smart enough to do that, so he chose nursing, who knows, maybe as a female he thought that that is the best I could do. Who knows may be I would have been a doctor, or even an engineer. He just did not think I could do it. I felt Health and Social Care less challenging...I did not do the research..... I wish I had done something more challenging. I do not think the degree I am studying here is very challenging, and if I had done my research I would certainly have chosen another course. Another friend is studying medicine, and there is a high value placed on it, whereas Health and Social Care, is not really highly thought of. I feel embarrassed when I compare the kind of conversations my friend and cousin have with their university friends to those I have with the friends on my course. There seems to be more substance to their conversation and overall aspirations, and it only serves to remind that I chose the wrong course

My cousin is doing law at University of Kent and she is treated differently to me by my parents, she has dream and aspirations, she believes in me, that is where I get my inspiration from..... my cousin was instrumental in my decision to study at here. We share accommodation here and I also live with her family when back in London. I am more comfortable there than at home. I feel more of an individual and feel my contributions are valued. Whereas at my home my parents just expect me to be recipients of their so called wisdom. At my cousin's home I have a voice and can articulate how I feel. I am listened too.

It is difficult even having a conversation with my mother. I mean she tries, but I just do not feel it. I feel she talks down to me, in a way she does not talk to my younger or older brother. Even when she was talking to me about having a 'boyfriend', she could not come out and say the word, instead she said 'if you ever had a 'friend'. It is so frustrating, why can she just say the word 'boyfriend'. We just never developed that kind of relationship of mother and daughter, that closeness. I guess their lack of confidence in me, and the way they spoke to me, really affected me, because I just cannot talk to them.

Treading two cultures – home and outside

Mary responds: I think it is difficult for those of us whose parents are brought up in another country, with different cultural norms and values, because there are occasions it appears that we exist in a parallel universe when discussion arise on particular topics and themes. It would appear that it is extremely difficult for our parents to see some things from our perspectives as we find it equally difficult to see things from theirs. In respect of choosing careers, they want us to have the opportunities denied to them, and we understand that only too well, however they also expected us to do as they say without questioning, which is something we find increasingly difficult because of the society we were brought up in. Hence differences in accommodating each other's views and opinions are often framed in words such as 'disrespectfulness' by the older generation, and 'parents wanting to lead their children's life' by the younger generation.

Gail's responds: Yes, yes, I totally agree, my parents have lived a different life to me. At the same time they do not speak to me about how they grew up. From conversation I have overheard with others, there is implication that they were wilder than us. I think my parents are over-protective because of how they had lived, and they think they know me, but they do not, because you cannot know someone you do not listen too. For example if I were to tell my mother my entire life story, she would 'kick me out'(laugh). It would not live up to her expectation. Any yet my mother have a tattoo, can you believe that? She had a rebellious past. May be she is protecting me. We live on an estate which is drugs ridden, I would often smell drugs and it was openly used, so I could have gone down that route, but I did not. I think my parents should give me some credit for that. She (mother) does not know how far from the norm I am, because the norm is to smoke 'weed'; the norm is to take drugs, but I have not done any of these things. I do not even drink.

The importance of family to Gail

As Gail began to unfold her story, it became apparent that she has had to overcome many hurdles pre university and since her arrival. Gail story identified how she became an autonomous individual as she navigated through the expectations held by her parents with those she wanted for herself, even in the face of a deteriorating relationship as a result. Having secured a place on a degree course not of her parents' choice, Gail experienced alienation and isolation from them, but was determined to follow her preference of choice in earning her degree. Ultimately this also resulted in a physical separation as it became unattainable for Gail to continue living in the family home. To this extent there was isolation, and although Gail stated that she really did not care if her parents did not trust her to make decisions about her life, she clearly did, owing to the significant amount of time spent talking about her brothers her mother and father and their relationships. When Gail embarked on studying at university I think she envisaged an environment that could to some extent, act as a replacement for the severed relationships with her siblings and parents. However what she found was a culture inside and outside the university environment which made her aware of skin colour and of racism in a way she had not encountered in her eighteen years of life.

Racism on the street

On another occasion, I was walking towards the train station on my way back from the university library, (probably four month after I started university) and there were about eight men standing in a group, as I neared the station I could hear them singing 'on your bike', go back to 'your f----- country'. It was intimidating, it was late and some of them, I think was drunk. I was scared and called my cousin, because I did not know what to do, I felt my life was threatened as I could not predict their next move. I was by myself and really, really scared, I did not know if I was going to be alive or dead. I was being serenaded a racist chant,

yes I was very scared. I just walked on and hoped for the best. There is where I feel that you need that support from other Black students, because a White person would never know what it feels like to experience that kind of fear because of the colour of your skin, thankfully I had my cousin I could reach out to, so yes I can see that having that kind of support is necessary when you are experience particular circumstances.

Mary responds

I sympathised with Gail by stating that I too would be scared in such a situation, and shared my own experience: I was sitting on a bench in the town centre where about five White youths was also sitting, some were smoking. I remember smelling something burning whilst they were laughing and began moving away, but kept turning back to look at me, as a result of their behaviour I became a little suspicious as I could still smell something burning and smoke. Instinctively I put my hands to my head where I discovered a small segment of lighted cigarette embedded in my Afro-hair style. These young men had deliberately set my hair on fire and thought it was funny. That really made me scared

More street racism

Two months later my aunty came to see me for the first time, we were walking over the bridge near the town centre when a young man on a bicycle pass rode by and said, 'move out the way rubber lips'. I was just like 'wow', I was shocked, but I was not going to let that incident colour my view of being here, so I set out to talk and engage with everyone,

Why the stares? Everyday racism?

Last term I was the only Black person in my year, I just thought, 'so you are the only Black person, okay, this is it'. So I decided to go out of my way to make friends with everyone, I wanted Black and White friends Asian friends the lot. I was at university and wanted to be friendly with a wide range and backgrounds of people regardless of race. Yet still I knew from my short time of being here that racism existed. One day my cousin and I were walking when this man kept staring at us. We could feel his animosity. Because of the incident near the train station, I asked myself if he was staring in such a hostile way because we were Black. I mean you have to ask yourself such question, and it is a discussion you cannot have with a White person, because again they would not know what you are talking about, whereas with a Black person you do not even have to explain or describe it, because most of us have experienced such looks

All the girls in the house are White, so basically I got into an argument with one girl over who had used my cup, she then went to a third person and told them I was aggressive towards her, so I called a meeting and asked her why she had used the word 'aggressive' to describe the exchange we had. She then said that she had a bad day, and basically took it out on me, but she could not explain why she used the word aggressive. Since then I have been keeping to myself, because again I am aware that these are labels that are often given to Black people, she did not say I was assertive, which means confident or self-assured, she chose instead to use 'aggressive' which means antagonistic, hostile and violent. She had labelled me in a negative way, so I kept my distance, again retreating to my room like it did when I lived at home.....

I was even told by my flatmates that they do not like the smell of 'Black food' in the flat, and that they all had to open their windows every time I was cooking. This was of course after 'the cup incident'. Again this leads me to believe that I was being discussed in my absence. So I have stopped cooking my traditional food, and stick mainly to English food, which I do not particularly enjoy, except chips. I mean what is Black food? Is there such a thing as White

food? To me this was another example of their racism. When I asked what in particular they did not like about my food, they said everything. No explanation, just everything! This is the reason I am reluctant to display my hair. I feel I will stand out and seen as an oddity if I wear my hair natural. I feel I have no alternative but to wear long extension braids as I would not have to explain why my hair is different or have friends asking me if they can touch it, which I have done in the past, but not here at this university.

Not wanting to be pigeon-holed

I did not select friends based on their colour, I did not think that because someone was Black they should be my friend, because there are still differences between Black people, and different cultures as well, and I did not want to be 'pigeon-holed' into who I should or feel I had to be friends with.

So I am not going to do anything associated with Black people, because I am me, not just a Black female student. There are many things I would not do here, for example I could never wear my hair in a 'natural hair style' it would draw too much attention and my friends and others would ask too many questions, and anyway I do not even like my hair short and curly this is the reason I wear long braids. I think it suits me better.....there is no way I am going natural, no way! I mean I could not be like you. I guess I do not have that kind of confidence, I am always thinking of how I will be viewed by my White friends and other White people.

2nd interview

The black expert, stereotyping and power

At times I am made to feel like the 'Black expert' in class simply because I am Black, and I am not necessarily talking about students, I am referring to lecturers who ask, in my opinion questions that are not well thought through. For example one lecturer wanted the 'Black view' on discipline and Black males. I did not want to be rude, but I thought to myself, is there just one type of 'Black discipline' or one type of Black family dishing out the same discipline. I wondered why she had not taken into consideration different customs and cultures of Black people, even different social class groups, the same way she would have done for White people. So in this respect I thought she was quite ignorant. I felt that she was most inappropriate to facilitate discussion on race and discipline when quite clearly she had not considered the issues herself fully, but I did not say that aloud for fear of being seen as an opinionated Black person. From that time on, I just kept quiet in her class, even though there were other issues I felt uncomfortable about, because of the way she would stereotype different groups and communities in a way she would not White communities. For example, making assumptions that all Black people were affiliated to some church organisation and were 'happy clappy' people in their worship services....She was the same lecturer when the issue of guns and Black people was directed at me from another student to me, did not in my opinion address this well (highlighted in interview one with Gail). So no, I am not comfortable or confident enough to tell her that some of her views are offensive and discriminatory. How can I say that to a lecturer who will be marking my assignment? She might view me as an arrogant Black student, which I am not, so I just keep quiet and wait for that class to be over and dread the next class....

I hear the murmurings of some White students when certain issues arise. I hear their responses on immigration, race, social class and welfare recipients. These sometimes border on racism in my opinion, however they are never challenged by this lecturer, even when some articulate as whole group discussions, for example one student said that she did not intend to

offend anyone, but in her opinion, most welfare recipients were immigrants who came to this country to 'scrounge of the state'. The lecturer replied by stated that was not strictly true, that was all she said

Being constructed as the black student; Canterbury and London in interplay

I remember an occasion where I turned up for a tutorial and we were having a general discussion of my extracurricular activities, when I told the lecturer that I was a keen sports person, she replied 'well that is expected, because Black people are good at that'. May be I was foolish, but her reference to my ethnicity made me realize that before she saw anything else about me, she saw my colour, so for the first time I had to see myself as Gail the Black student, rather than Gail 'a student at this university'

.... mean it is not as though I do not know I am Black, it is not something that consume my day, or it never used to, but since coming here, I have begun to look more closely at how race and my ethnicity seems to be unconsciously or consciously an issue for students, for lecturers and for the community at large. It is something I did not pay regards to in London, and as such it is a bit of a culture shock here, but I am not going to allow anyone to fit me into a box I am not prepared to go into.

Retreating to the flat

I asked the lecturer why the question was not directed at the other White student from London, the lecturer responded that Black people 'according to the media' was more likely to be involved in gun crimes, so the student had asked a valid question in her opinion, however she apologised if I took it the wrong way. I told the lecturer that that question could only be valid if there was conclusive proof that all Black people were criminally minded and therefore hoarded guns. She told me I was getting too emotive. I went back to my flat that evening and could not even extend that discussion with my flatmates. It was then that the isolation really hit me. I felt isolated in the classroom for that particular module anyway, and isolated in the flat, and unprotected in the street of the city. This is why I made the statement in the presentation that I have experienced more racism here in the last three months, than I have experienced in total eighteen years I have lived.

Race for Equality Report

Gail's university experience appear to consolidate those of the findings in the 'Race for Equality' 2011 NUS report, which show that 1 in 6 Black students have experienced racism in their current institution, one third do not trust their institution to properly handle complaints, and one third feel their educational environment leaves them unable to bring their perspective as Black students to lectures and tutorial meetings. <https://www.nus.org.uk/en/news/racism-widespread-across-uk-education-system-report-shows/>

Being stereotyped by a Black student

I was on my way to fencing, when a Black student started a conversation with me, wanting to know where I was going, he seemed surprised that I was going to fencing practice, because he said it was not a sport he associated with Black people. He had made stereotypical judgements, and had also unwittingly stated that there was some sport that was beyond the remit of Black people.

Resistance to a 3rd interview; ambivalence in the relationship?

Mary: I had left a number of email messages for Gail, regarding our third and final interview, but these were met with silence. I surmised that Gail no longer wished to proceed with the interview, and decided not to pursue the matter further. I reflected of the power imbalance in the relationship between myself as the researcher and academic, and Gail as student, and rationalise that may be Gail just did not want to continue the interview process.

.... I wondered if elements of the second interview had proved too painful for Gail, or whether as the researcher I had probably 'probe too deeply' in relation to Gail's view of her ethnicity and comfort level with associating with other Black students. This caused me some consternation as began replaying elements of the second interview and was reminded of Gail's responses. Thus I did not expect to hear from Gail again and surmised that the interview process had come to an end. However, I received an email from Gail early in the new academic year stating that she had been in London over the summer period, but now back on campus, she would like to continue the interview process. Gail provided dates and times of her availability. I followed these up and the third and final interview took place.

3rd interview: Identity and self; struggling with self and identity; here and now, there and then.

It is quite strange because I do not want it to sound like I dislike Black people, I do not want to sound like I have a complex, but it seems like I do not want to talk to Black people, but I would not say that that is the case. With guys and girls it is a bit different. I have a friend who is 'biracial' and we talk all the time, I mean I do not know what she classifies herself as, she is in a way an ethnic minority, I mean it is strange....

I was speaking to the girl that is biracial, and I said to her that I am trying so hard not to be a product of the society I was brought up in. Like I am not rich, some people have parents who have bought their houses; I am not in that category. And then I hear conversation such as 'we moved out of London because it is so expensive'. That is not my life; that is not my class. I portray an image to make sure I feel secure on campus and with other students. I can sometimes be seen as arrogant because I speak a lot, and on reflection, I realized that last year I spoke far too much. For example if no one spoke, I assumed that no one knew the answer and so I would always have something to say. I realize now, that I may have been seen as someone quite pompous who always felt that their voice had to be heard. But when I make sure that I articulate my words, I feel quite good. I was raised quite Western so I do not know how to speak 'my mother tongue'. I know how to listen to it, but I cannot speak it. Basically, I sound like a Westerner trying to speak the language. I am not sure what it is with me, but when I am speaking to my friends, I go into a professional mode, it is like if I have to 'up the ante' in terms of how I speak. I feel I have to come across in a serious manner so they do not think that just because I come from South East London I cannot speak properly. I do not want to come across like a 'commoner'.

(On fencing) I did not choose it because it was a White sport though. However I did think that quite possibly, the public school I pass on my way here may well have a fencing team, and may have thought that it is something I should be acquainted with, just in case I was able to get a job there later or at some time in the future. I guess I associate that sport with a certain type of class that I could be a part of through fencing and that I would be seen as different to the rest of Black people.

With Black boys, I find myself re-enacting the stereotypes, and I am not sure if that was because of where I grew up there were more Black than White males, but for me it is about being safe. So I become acutely aware of my safety if there is a young Black male and he is wearing a hoodie, or if I perceive that he has an attitude. I do the same for White body, but to be honest, it is not the same level.

Changing accents; a persona

I have a lot of identity issues. So when I went to college and this male asked if I went to private school, I thought 'wow' let me keep this up, so I adjusted my accent even more to seem more polished. I thought that guys might like that kind of accents, so I pretty much 'put it on' I do not want people to think I am arrogant, but I think I do sound arrogant. I was talking to another student and she was telling me about her parents' who were both academics, and had both studied at Oxbridge and where they lived, and I thought you had an opportunity to go to Oxbridge and you chose here. I suddenly became aware that whilst I was trying to acquire a different type of accent, she naturally had it and for her it was not a big deal. All the time I was being smart in class answering all the questions she knew the answer. It suddenly dawned on me that the difference between us was the fact that she was comfortable in her skin and I was still trying to impress to find a niche...

The irony is that I feel that I am not really stretched on my present programme. I want to teach at a private school, I want to make money, I do not want to go back to my community however terrible that sounds, I do not want to give back to my community, and I know that that is selfish. I loved doing work experience at the private school, the children were lovely, I remember seeing a child about six years wearing an Aston Martin jacket, this jacket cost more than my entire wardrobe. And I am thinking you want to get a qualification, you want to work in a private school, you want to be like this, and you want to be like that, but this is not necessarily from your background and these children are blessed to have these opportunities, but you will not choose to make a difference in the community where you come from and make an impact.

3rd interview; 'Like a mirror into my soul'

I have not done an interview like this before, so it was strange to see me in the transcripts, I think I am quite an open book, and was quite surprised by some of the things I said, and what that make me look like. I like talking, but of course I never get to see the interpretation or transcript like I have with you, and it is really interesting to see and hear myself on paper. It is like a mirror into my soul, and it is quite strange to see what I sound like. So there are a few things that I would like to change.... It was quite strange to see on paper how I view my family. It felt like it was someone else, but I realized quite quickly that it was what I had said. It was really strange, because I did not realize just how much I spoke about my family. I guess I was looking for an outlet. So it is not just about my experience of racism...

When Lee Rigby died, I suddenly understood what the Asians had been going through with the discrimination levied against Muslim. As Nigerians my family and I thought, 'well what are we going to do now'? We did not even know these people, I did not even know that my country had so many Muslims. Suddenly it was the worst thing to be, if you were a Nigerian. I felt so bad for Muslims because the vast majority are law abiding citizens, and I felt uncomfortable being Nigerian because the spotlight were on these two assailants 'being Nigerian and Muslim converts'. You just could not get away from that fact in the media. Suddenly you feel exposed and vulnerable, suddenly you are no longer British, but a Nigerian,

a foreigner and you are all the same, so I understand and agree with what you have said about stereotyping. But going back to the 'X's and the 'O's' I feel that I have a lot of identity layers. I think my cousin really showed me how layered I am, because with her I can be myself, I do not have to 'over-perform', she accepts me for myself. Even now, whatever I am saying is put on 'accent wise'. I feel the need to do this. I have a bit of an inferiority complex, whereas with my cousin she is confident. I mean I did not feel I was good enough to do law or medicine and she is doing law, so in a way I feel she is better than me, so now I have to compensate. I cannot afford to speak regularly, I have to announce everything I say. It is quite difficult sometimes because we can have a conversation at home and then we can have a conversation outside and I will be two different people.

Gail became a little emotional and said she felt a bit 'teary'.

Gail: It is not just because of my colour, well that is part of it too, but it is also because of my 'class' and what I have not achieved, and that really hurts me. I could not do a particular adjoining professional qualification. I am a really good student, I do not mean to boast, but I am getting 2.1's and first. You have to have GCSE in particular subjects, in order to get on that professional course, and I feel that my past is haunting me because even though I am a bright student I do not have these GCSE and it means that I cannot do what I really want to do.

When I was at school, I thought I would stay in my community and possibly get any kind of retail job. But as you get older your horizon change, I now want more for myself. I was the stereotype because that was all I knew, I guess that is where my cousin and I differ somehow she does not feel she has to impress anyone. She is academic and therefore does not need to impress, whereas I feel I need to impress because I am not as academic as her. You know with fencing or random sport it is so much fun, maybe I do associate it with class and a White sport.

Hair, identity and auto/biography; gender...

You know I said that I would never 'wear my hair' natural, well I tried it. It was horrible; it was not just for me. I guess it put me in a stereotype, it put me in a box. I like straight hair and I tried to love the 'natural hair' but it completely shattered my entire confidence. I remember going into class one day and people was looking at me as if I was crazy, that is not the me that they have seen before. I felt that they thought I had gone crazy. I felt that they were saying 'you have been living a lie all this time, and this is the real you' and it was uncomfortable for me. I was trying to change myself, but it taught me something. I really do like straight hair, if my hair was the texture of a 'mixed-race' person I would probably like it better than straight hair, but that day when I came to the lecture with natural hair, I felt as though I was at the bottom of the pile....

I have never felt attractive. I was certainly not one of the 'it girls' at school, and when I started going to college and had straight hair I began receiving compliments from males, so I knew I had to keep my hair straight for the interest to continue. It was the only time members of the opposite sex took an interest in me. I cannot go back to feeling unattractive. The kind of person I depicted is someone who like different things. However the 'hair thing' was going too far, it was out of my comfort zone.

Process

Auto/biography: the interplay of self and other; whose chip, whose shoulder?

(With reference to the initial presentation) *I thought it was a very profound statement to make, because race as an emotive topic, could affect the dynamics between Gail and her peers; further it could also make others wary and possibly targeted her as someone who had a 'chip on their shoulder'. However, based on Gail's statement, I made the assumption that this was a very brave and courageous individual who dare to be so transparent with peers she hardly knew.*

I shared with Gail that I sympathised with her brother's position as the eldest sibling, I having suffered a similar fate of being set up to be emulated and being reprimanded when falling short. I shared the undue pressure and responsibility of being the eldest child and wondered if in trying to please his dad Zara's brother became frustrated because he just could not continue with a degree he did not choose and possibly had little interest in. Similarly, I understood Gail's position in refusing parental advice in her educational direction. My own father without any discussion made decisions as to the career path his five children would follow. So as the designated banker, I started working in a bank, and absolutely detested it,

What am I doing? Mary reflecting on the 1st interview

In the first interview Gail had spent quite a significant amount of time talking about her family dynamics and of how and why she became estranged from them. Although at the time I could not see the relevance of this information, and thought it distracted from the essence of our own interview, I have now come to realize that her family and current experience has shaped her personality and character and has contributed to a dogged determination to succeed.

Boundary and power issues/what does it mean to do this kind of work?

Reference the 2nd interview, and the Black association; boundary issues and whose story is this?

Mary: Do you think you have anything to gain from joining the African-Caribbean association on campus? Do you see it providing any benefits?

Gail: No I do not see I have anything to gain from joining such an association. What do they do there? Talk about Black issues? I am not interested, I have more White than Black friends, so I do not need that kind of support; I can mix well and therefore do not see the need just to be with Black students only. I been told on many occasions by White friends that I do not speak like a Black person, so would they expect me to speak a certain way?

Reference the 3rd interview, Mary writes

I had left a number of email messages for Gail, regarding our third and final interview, but these were met with silence. I surmised that Gail no longer wished to proceed with the interview, and decided not to pursue the matter further. I reflected of the power imbalance in the relationship between myself as the researcher and academic, and Gail as student, and rationalise that may be Gail just did not want to continue the interview process.

I wondered if elements of the second interview had proved too painful for Gail, or whether as the researcher I had probably 'probe too deeply' in relation to Gail's view of her ethnicity

and comfort level with associating with other Black students. This caused me some consternation as I began replaying elements of the second interview, and was reminded of Gail's responses. Thus, I did not expect to hear from Gail again and surmised that the interview process had come to an end, however, I received an email from Gail early in the new academic year stating that she had been in London over the summer period, but now back on campus, she would like to continue the interview process. Gail provided dates and times of her availability. I followed these up and the third and final interview took place.

The third and final interview took place late in the evening on campus where it was relatively quiet without the bustling of students or staff. I managed to access a small room which was fit for purpose.

Changing relationships in the 2nd interview

No, not really. I need to get to the library now, but I have really enjoyed this interview. Thought I do not really see it as a proper interview, because you let me do most of the talking and allow me to talk about things that are important to me whilst here at Canterbury.

A tutorial, an interview or what? Straddling boundaries; fantasy and the unconscious Talking too much? Anxious to explain or justify?

Mary: I think we take on the stereotypes from the media which informs us that certain types of people are more inclined to commit crimes, and we know where Black males are positioned within this discourse. The stereotype is so pervasive that the government's own research states, the police are five times more likely to stop and search a Black male in comparison to a White male. So your attitude to your safety is not uncommon. I think we are all affected by stereotyping at an unconscious level whether we are Black or White. I was in London and decided to use the cashpoint at about 9pm at night. I became acutely aware that a group of about four young Black men had gathered around my car, with one of them leaning against it. I am ashamed to say, all the stereotypes of young Black men came to the fray. I wondered if I was going to be mugged; I wondered if my car was going to be broken into. I decided to confront them and started walking towards my car which was parked on the opposite side of the road to the cashpoint. As I got closer my young cousin emerged from the small group and hugged me, exclaiming that he recognized my car and was waiting to greet me. University students and church going young men, they had been visiting a friend at a nearby hospital involved in a road traffic accident. As I drove home, I was appalled and embarrassed that I could even have such negative views, what is even more I chided myself that I should know better.

I shared that experience with Gail, because I wanted to show her that we all struggle with stereotyping. However, 'as educators, we must critically analyse their source, rationale and impact on the people doing the stereotyping and on those being stereotyped' Soloranzo (1997. pp 15).

(Gail in response to Mary) I am surprised to hear that coming from you. I thought you were so together. ...I need to be aware of how I am affected by stereotyping, because I am the kind of person who will hear something and run with it.

The power of the process; auto/biographical dynamics

These series of interviews has really challenged my thinking and views on a range of issues, it was difficult for me to accept some of the things I obviously said and why I said it, but it has

been a steep learning curve. I almost was not going to read the transcript because there were too much but I am glad that I did, it gave me a window into my thinking and where my mind is. Ironically I could not speak to my mother about the things I have spoken about with you. It is rather strange how one could speak to peoples that are not that close to them and cannot speak to those who are supposed to be close to them. I am definitely glad I had this experience with you, it took me out of my comfort zone, it pointed things that was wrong with me, things and thinking I need to address. But I was being open, and this was my thought process at the time. I believe I have made some changes, because people change.

Mary, hearing and not listening?

Mary: During the interview, I was listening but I was not hearing, it was only when I started typing the transcript that I heard your emotions and feelings on a range of issues, when it is written in print, it is a powerful record.

Reflection – Gail

I mean, compared to the first year this year has been much better, maybe I am getting used to the environment, but the culture shock of the first year have minimised. I do not think about the people. I know it is not a multi-ethnic area. The first time my cousin and I came here, it just looked like a pensioner's town because of all the greenery and gardens. But going back to the transcript to see what I was saying and how you perceive my perception was interesting. It is quite strange because I do not want it to sound like I dislike Black people, I do not want to sound like I have a complex, but it seems like I do not want to talk to Black people, but I would not say that that is the case. With guys and girls it is a bit different. I have a friend who is 'biracial' and we talk all the time, I mean I do not know what she classifies herself as, she is in a way an ethnic minority.

Gail is beginning to reflect on her position as a Black student and person, in this third interview she is very reflective of her status both in terms of class and race, and readily admits her struggle to find a place where she feels comfortable internally and externally.

Transcript

I had asked her Gail to comment on any inaccuracies when I initially emailed the transcript, or to correct any inclusion which did not represent what she said. I was surprised that she felt these were my interpretation of what she said.

Baring ourselves in interviews

Mary responds: I guess as you have said, it is sometimes difficult to recognize ourselves and our words in print. I was just transcribing what you said from the recording, it was not my interpretation, and I guess that is why you have been given the various transcripts in ensuring that it is a true record of what was said, and if not, for you to identify where inaccuracies are stated. For example your direct words have been taken from the recording. I am happy for you to listen to the recording.

Gail reading the transcript

I wondered if in reading the transcript Gail had realized that her views on some issues had now caused her to reflect.

Mary responds: If it is that you are reflecting on aspect of the transcript where you have spoken of issues of race. I suppose that there are some Black students who feel that they

need to be seen with other Black student to feel more comfortable to share common experience and to associate for the purpose of social activities and issues pertaining to Black students here on campus. I guess you felt you did not need that.

Gail: Yes that is true, but it is not that I do not like Black people the interview sounds like I do not like Black people

Not wanting to be stereo-typed

Mary responds: From listening to you in the previous interviews, I got the distinct impression that you did not want to be stereo-typed, and you did whatever it took for you not to be stereotyped. This was very transparent in your interviews in terms of how you expressed yourself in both transcripts. I do not think that it was a case of you not liking Black people, but rather you felt that all the negative association with being Black was something you did not particularly want to experience on campus. I think that came over clearly in the interviews.

I found myself affirming Gail throughout the interview process, it is as if she had laid bare her soul and now needed direction in putting the pieces back together in a different way.

Mary: Again I am going back to the transcript. Look how you overcame the bullying; look how you addressed the dynamics in your family.

Gail: Yes I know, but that was because of my cousin

Mary: Yes that may be true in part, but you also had to decide to do something about your situation, in other words you had to be proactive in order for there to be movements. You just did not accept what was going on. For me it takes a certain mind-set of determination in choosing not to give up or give in, and you demonstrated that extremely well Gail. Look at your experiences in this area, you could have packed your bags and go back to London, but you made certain adjustments and carried on, that is sheer determination.

Ethnographics

Changing locations; pressures of time in the 2nd interview, but Gail wanting to go ahead....

Gestalt

A dynamic between research and consciousness raising; between doing research and learning; between the anger generated by racial oppression and the need to listen and take care. And a young woman struggling to be a person, a self, as against fitting in with a false identity; a false self, designed to make herself acceptable to the phantasised public school, including in the way she speaks, her accent. Of not wanting to be exposed as the person she fears she might be; unacceptable, unattractive, alone.

Solidarity is created in the encounters, and what does this say about doing research?

As Gail began to unfold her story, it became apparent that she has had to overcome many hurdles pre university and since her arrival. Gail story identified how she became an

autonomous individual as she navigated through the expectations held by her parents with those she wanted for herself, even in the face of a deteriorating relationship as a result.

Having secured a place on a degree course not of her parents' choice, Gail experienced alienation and isolation from them, but was determined to follow her preference of choice in earning her degree. Ultimately this also resulted in a physical separation as it became unattainable for Gail to continue living in the family home. To this extent there was isolation, and although Gail stated that she really did not care if her parents did not trust her to make decisions about her life, she clearly did, owing to the significant amount of time spent talking about her brothers her mother and father and their relationships. When Gail embarked on studying at university I think she envisaged an environment that could to some extent, act as a replacement for the severed relationships with her siblings and parents. However what she found was a culture inside and outside the university environment which made her aware of skin colour and of racism in a way she had not encountered in her eighteen years of life.

Gail has already begun to understand the pervasiveness of racism and its impact on Black students. Because of the legacy of racism, university can be problematic for Black students, particularly where they are in the minority and thus paradoxically more visible (Anderson, 1988; Ladson-Billings and Tate, 1995). For such students, feeling culturally alienated, being physically isolated, and remaining silenced are common experiences. Similar views are also expressed by Datnow and Cooper (1998, 2000) who attest that these feelings (culturally alienated, being physically isolated, and remaining silenced) are often exacerbated when Black students attend predominately White universities. Because of this Datnow and Cooper (1998, 2000) state it is imperative that educational researchers explore the role of race when examining the educational experiences of Black students.

Internalised Racism

I will use the Gail's interviews to discuss theories of Internalised Racism including. In doing so I will be lending in part, from the historical theories of African American identity and Higher Education to those of the UK. For although they are very distinctive (one, being much more established by virtue of the number of years and racism entrenched in law) there are also similarities which can enhance a better understanding of the position of Black students in the UK, and Gail's experience in particular.

Traditionally internalized racism has been defined as the internalization of negative stereotypes or judgements of one's racial group. Although I feel these definitions are useful, they do not capture the complexities of racism. For this reason, I am using a CRT framework to redefine internalized racism as the conscious and unconscious acceptance of a racial hierarchy in which Whites are consistently ranked above Blacks people. Internalised racism goes beyond the internalization of stereotypes imposed by the White majority about Black people. It is the internalization of beliefs, values, and worldviews inherent in White supremacy, that can potentially result in negative self as in the case with Gail. So, when for example Gail expressed her reluctance to be seen with other Black students, or to join an association, it was primarily because of how she perceived it was viewed by her White counterparts, the society at large and the university as a whole. Further her refusal to expose the naturalness of her hair was simply based on what her White friends would think. As a result Gail has worn long extensions braids because according to her this is more acceptable and beautiful than her short curly hair.

For years psychologists such as Lasch (1984) and Hardy (1997) have considered the psychological effects of oppression on the human psyche. Much of this work has found a place in the field of counselling and psychology, where psychologists have strived to understand the consequences of racism on racial minorities in the UK and elsewhere. Although it may be an important premise guiding their work, very few psychologists directly name internalised racism as a lens through which they investigate and conduct research. There are even less scholars who have explicitly centred their research on internalised racism, but among these are the works of Sue (2010) which attest the effects of internalised racism for White people as well as Black people and Lyubansky, (2012) piece entitled ten things everyone should know about White privilege today.

Notion of double consciousness

However writings from the perspective of a Black male academic DuBois in (1897) states "One ever feels his twoness-an American, a Negro; two souls, two thoughts, two unreconciled strivings; two warring ideals in one dark body, whose dogged strength alone keeps it from being torn asunder," (DuBois 1897, p. 194). According to DuBois (1897). African American's have always struggled with how to portray authentic Blackness and still be an American. This notion of double consciousness still persists for both African American and British Black students today, as they struggle to formulate an identity at universities. This struggle can be implied as Gail juxtaposes her presence as a student and person of colour with whom she associated as having cultural capital. Further, in a published social study titled 'The College-Bred Negro' (1900), along with a follow up study; 'The College-Bred Negro American' (1910), DuBois sent a comprehensive survey to African American students, African American college graduates, and academic staff at various types of institutions to access their experiences in higher education. He posed questions regarding the hindrances that they faced on campus and asked White staff questions regarding the institutions attitude toward African American students. DuBois found as would be expected considering the time in which the study was administered, that prejudice and lack of acknowledgement of Black students was the main problem Blacks faced. For its time this research was groundbreaking because it was the first to elicit responses from African Americans discussing the psychosocial barriers to higher education. Although this study is over one hundred years old, there are still elements that are pertinent today in the UK, in terms of how Black students navigate their university communities, and are perceived.

Cross (1991) model of psychological nigrescence on the other hand suggesting that there are five distinct stages Black students go through in their formation of Black racial identity. I would like to examine these in relation to Black students experience at universities, and in particular, Gail's experience. These stages are pre-encounter, encounter, immersion-emersion, internalization, and internalization commitment. The Pre-encounter stage as described by Cross (1991) is the individual seeking assimilation into the dominant culture by absorbing the beliefs and values of the dominant culture. The individual de-emphasizes their own culture looking to seek acceptance into the dominant culture. It would appear that Gail is at this stage as she clearly associates and articulate the merits of being with and assimilating only with white peers. It is how she has been able to survive and make sense of her current learning community.

The Encounter phase is spurred by the social rejection of the Black individual by the dominant culture which causes them to then seek visible symbols of one's own racial identity. This in turn leads to the Immersion/Emission stage in which the Black individual

actively seeks Black peers that exhibit what one believes to be authentic blackness (Cross 1991). Gail is not at this stage, as she clearly does not verbalise any merits in associating with projects that will draw attention to her ethnicity. However during the Internalization stage the individual exhibits a level of comfort within their own racial identity and is able to respect and acknowledge the culture of other racial groups. It would appear that Gail is not yet at this stage, she is not conformable in being identified as 'Black' and assumes negativity towards anything that is associated with it. The last stage is the Internalization-Commitment phase in which the individual has found ways to use racial identity as the "point of departure for discovering the universe of ideas, cultures and experiences beyond Blackness in place of mistaking Blackness as the universe itself" (Cross et al 1991, p. 330). This process described by Cross is what many Black students face at predominantly White institutions where the struggle to find their racial identity. Cross examples is helpful in identifying Gail's own struggle with her identity at the university.

"The Burden of Acting White" or "Stereotype Threat"

"Ethnic identity development is a complex, multifaceted, and dynamic process. It has both public and private, individual and communal, conscious and unconscious, positive and negative, past and present, cognitive and emotional, expressive and symbolic dimensions" (Gay 1987, p. 35). This quote illustrates the unique problem BME students face when forming cultural identity on university campuses. In addition to the general assimilation into campus life, Black student deal with the perceived notion of Black racial inferiority linked to the history of discrimination. This leads to what scholars have deemed "the burden of acting white" or "stereotype threat" (Fordham and Ogbu 1986) This can be seen in Gail's preference of choice of friends, activities, beliefs and attitude. Thus in deference to the social norms theory, Gail adapted her behaviour to conform to perceived norms (Berkowitz 2000).

However, Horvat and Lewis (2003) have shown how the burden of "acting White" can be used in a positive manner. As a result of the alienation experienced by high achieving Blacks at the hands of low achieving peers, there emerges a subculture of students who value education. Students can then find a way to manage their academic success and receive encouragement from supportive peers, allowing them to maintain normal social lives as well as excel academically. It would appear that institutional racism and structural inequality are not taken into consideration in this model and therefore limiting in its explanation. As a result the extent to which Gail see those who have redress to the African-Caribbean associations as low achievers is uncertain, however she clearly sees herself as above average and therefore does not need the support of an association to validate her experience or her presence at the university. I am not sure if this is a positive manner of 'acting White' as identified by Horvat and Lewis (2003). Rather I see it as an individual who has internalise all the negative characteristics of Black peoples and has subsequently decided that she does not want to be in any situation where she will be stereotyped even if this means completely alienating herself from anything associated with 'Black'.

The threat of being stereotyped leads many students to question their academic ability and to fear social marginalization. Social marginalization cannot be overlooked because as a result of the stereotypes associated with "Blackness" many members of an institution expect Black to be portrayed in a certain way. Implying that in a lot of ways being an intelligent Black student with a mind for school and not having stereotypically Black attributes can lead to alienation from members of all social groups, including ones' own. This could clearly be

seen in Gail's interaction with both the fencing teacher and Black student who found it difficult to accommodate Gail's interest in fencing with a sport that is commonly associated with Black people. Further, in the interview Gail attests that the other Black students in her class did not speak to her, apart from one saying hello. This then can be seen as exemplars indicating that Gail could be alienated for being different.

The research of Dipietro and McGloin (2012); Shah, Dwyer and Modood, (2010); Lacourse et al, (2003) although addressing children in schools, is still nonetheless pertinent in illuminating Gail's position. Writing specifically on internalised racism Dipietro and McGloin (2012) attests that some Black children will conform to the culture of their surroundings in order to feel accepted amongst peers, if they feel they can gain acceptance by dissociating themselves from their ethnic group. To this extent Gail was resolute that her White peers and social group offered her the best opportunity to enjoy her student life in an inconspicuous way.

I will relate Gail's experiences and choice to elements of Cultural Capital Theory in educational settings. In a society based upon the ideals in which anyone can achieve any level of success they choose, the education system is entrenched in the idea of meritocracy. One's own merit and individual effort is supposed to be enough to achieve success. However, there are many non-merit based factors that uneven the playing field such as the strength of one's network, inheritance, access to education, as well as race and gender. These factors illuminate meritocracy in the higher education system as the myth that it is. Certain people from certain places have certain advantages that ultimately play major roles in their success or failure. Gail perceived and extrapolated this view early on in her student life and consciously made adjustment accordingly.

Education Faculty Research Ethics Review

Application for full review

1. PROJECT DETAILS

MAIN RESEARCHER	Mary Andall-Stanberry
E-MAIL	Mary.andall-stanberry@canterbury.ac.uk
POSITION WITHIN CCCU	Senior Lecturer
POSITION OUTSIDE CCCU	
COURSE (students only)	Early Childhood Studies and Health Studies
DEPARTMENT (staff only)	ERD
PROJECT TITLE	Aspirational Habitus - A Reflective Auto-biographical Narrative Enquiry of BME Students in HE
TUTOR/SUPERVISOR: NAME	Professor Linden West
TUTOR/SUPERVISOR: E-MAIL	Linden.west@canterbury.ac.uk
START/END DATE OF PROJECT	2011-2013

OTHER RESEARCHERS	N/A
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2. OUTLINE THE ETHICAL ISSUES THAT YOU THINK ARE INVOLVED IN THE PROJECT.

The project aims to engage BME students and in different context around the theme above. I do not perceive specific ethical issues other than those that accompany biographical narrative research more generally, such as the need for respectfulness, and sensitive management of interviews, confidentiality and anonymity issues

3. GIVE A BRIEF OUTLINE OF THE PROJECT in no more than 100 words. (Include, for example, sample selection, recruitment procedures, data collection, data analysis and expected outcomes.) Please ensure that your description will be understood by the lay members of the Committee.

The study explores Bourdieu's concept of habitus, in order to discern the impact of the university experiences on the constructions and re-constructions of the students' identities and explore the processes of compliance or resistance with which students engage in order to position themselves as effective learners. The methodology involves conducting in-depth auto/biographical narrative interviews with up to four students, in exploring how BME students manage the academic in relation to their social selves across two very different types of institution. The research is further concerned with how they navigate and relate to the university both academically and socially in order to develop 'academic ability' and accrue educational knowledge (cultural capital) which they can turn into 'success'. In order to develop an understanding of student experiences and interrelated processes the research has employed Bourdieu's (1990a) concepts of habitus, cultural and social capital.

Bourdieu (1990a) argues that when an individual encounters an unfamiliar field, habitus is transformed. He also writes of how the movement of habitus across new, unfamiliar fields results in 'a habitus divided against itself' (Bourdieu, 1999a). The researcher aims to explore whether there are more nuanced understandings in which the challenge of the unfamiliar results in a range of creative adaptations and multi-faceted responses, which may well

display dispositions of self-scrutiny and self-improvement – almost ‘a constant fashioning and re-fashioning of the self’ but one that still retains key valued aspects the BME student self. For some the process is more about finding themselves than changing and are thus liberatory. Although the students are confronted with their own difference and do at times adapt and reformulate their identities accordingly this is not a passive capitulation. Here the researcher will set out to identify the extent to which BME students have navigated their way through, at times inhospitable but frequently unknown, waters, making or appropriating the space for themselves and hopefully ‘others like them’(Goodwin 2006 p. 103). The research also set out to explore the extent to which the ‘aspirational habitus’ of BME students have contributed in developing resiliency in the journey towards success.

4. How many participants will be recruited?	Four in total: two E&D managers, and two students
5. Will you be recruiting STAFF or STUDENT from another faculty?	NO If yes, which Faculty? IMPORTANT: If you intend to recruit participants from another Faculty, this form must be copied to the Dean of the Faculty concerned, and to the Chair of that Faculty's Research Ethics Committee.
6. Will participants include minors, people with learning difficulties or other vulnerable people?	NO
7. Potential risks for participants: - Emotional harm/hurt - Physical harm/hurt - Risk of disclosure - Other (please specify)	Please indicate all those that apply. YES YES YES There are some risks of difficult feelings being engendered, when people talk about experiences in families communities and in education, but to talk about such matters, in a good enough research space, can be potentially empowering.
8. How are these risks to be addressed?	Potential referral agencies have been identified if people feel they want to talk about issues in more depth, as a result of the study. And there is a clear understanding, which is articulated in the ethical code, and how this is explained, that the researcher has a duty of care towards all collaborators.
9. Potential benefits for participants: - Improved services - Improved participant understanding - Opportunities for participants to have their views heard. - Other (please specify)	Please indicate all those that apply. YES YES YES Giving voice, and being listened to, are fundamental values in biographical narrative

	research and this study will seek to model such beneficial practices
10. How, when and by whom will participants be approached? Will they be recruited individually or en bloc?	Via contacts with colleagues at CCCU and a London university, and with students who have been individually approached by the researcher due to their experiences.
11. Are participants likely to feel under pressure to consent / assent to participation?	NO
12. How will voluntary informed consent be obtained from individual participants or those with a right to consent for them? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Introductory letter - Phone call - Email - Other (please specify) 	Please indicate all those that apply and add examples in an appendix. YES YES YES YES: the process involves a full explanation of the project, its values and the rights and responsibilities of the researcher. See the notes of explanation and consent form at the end of this document.
13. How will permission be sought from those responsible for institutions / organisations hosting the study? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Introductory letter - Phone call - Email - Other (please specify) 	Please indicate all those that apply and add examples in an appendix. YES/NO YES/NO YES/NO Contacts with universities, using long standing relationships with both institutions.
14. How will the privacy and confidentiality of participants be safeguarded? (Please give brief details).	Material is anonymised and is only ever used in full consultation with participants who will see draft material. All data is stored in a secure space at CCCU.
15. What steps will be taken to comply with the Data Protection Act? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Safe storage of data - Anonymisation of data - Destruction of data after 5 years - Other (please specify) 	Please indicate all those that apply. YES YES, as much as is possible or desired YES
16. How will participants be made aware of the results of the study?	By on-going consultation, using transcripts and recordings, by sharing of draft written material; the interviews transcripts and interpretation will be shared as part of building a good research relationship.
17. What steps will be taken to allow participants to retain control over audio-visual records of them and over their	A fundamental tenet is that the material belongs to participants and permission has to be sought, constantly, for its use.

creative products and items of a personal nature?	
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18. Give the qualifications and/or experience of the researcher and/or supervisor in this form of research. (Brief answer only)	Professor Linden West, my supervisor, is an internationally known and respected researcher, and has years of experience of such research.
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Attach any:

- Participant information sheets and letters
- Consent forms
- Data collection instruments
- Peer review comments

DECLARATION

- I certify that the information in this form is accurate to the best of my knowledge and belief and I take full responsibility for it.
- I certify that a risk assessment for this study has been carried out in compliance with the University's Health and Safety policy.
- I certify that any required CRB/VBS check has been carried out.
- I undertake to carry out this project under the terms specified in the Canterbury Christ Church University Research Governance Handbook.
- I undertake to inform the relevant Faculty Research Ethics Committee of any significant change in the question, design or conduct of the study over the course of the study. I understand that such changes may require a new application for ethics approval.
- I undertake to inform the Research Governance Manager in the Graduate School and Research Office when the proposed study has been completed.
- I am aware of my responsibility to comply with the requirements of the law and appropriate University guidelines relating to the security and confidentiality of participant or other personal data.
- I understand that project records/data may be subject to inspection for audit purposes if required in future and that project records should be kept securely for five years or other specified period.
- I understand that the personal data about me contained in this application will be held by the Research Office and that this will be managed according to the principles established in the Data Protection Act.

Researcher's Name: MARY ANDALL-STANBERRY

Date: 12/12/2011

FOR STUDENT APPLICATION ONLY

I have read the research proposal and application form, and support this submission to the FREC.

Supervisor's Name: Linden West

Date: 12/12/2011

CONDITIONS ATTACHED TO APPROVAL BY THE COURSE RESEARCH ETHICS COMMITTEE

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	NAME	DATE
Approved by Course Committee		
Checked by Faculty Committee		

CONDITIONS ATTACHED TO APPROVAL BY THE EDUCATION FACULTY RESEARCH ETHICS COMMITTEE

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	NAME	DATE
Approved by Faculty Committee		

Aspirational Habitus - A Reflective Auto-biographical Narrative Enquiry of BME Students in HE

Notes of guidance and Consent Form

- 1 This research set out to discern the impact of the university experiences on the constructions and re-constructions of the students' identities and explore the processes of compliance or resistance with which students engage in order to position themselves as effective learners. The overarching aim of the project is to explore BME students' experiences of higher education; the impact of these on their learner and socio-cultural identities and the implications for their progress and to explore the extent to which these experiences are 'raced'.
2. Given the potentially sensitive nature of the material you have a right not to answer any questions asked as well as to withdraw from the study at any stage. I will be careful not to push you in directions you do not wish to go.
3. You have the right to withdraw retrospectively any consent given and to require that your data, including recordings, be destroyed. Obviously, it is important that I know your position as soon as possible after reading transcripts (see below). Refusal or withdrawal of consent would normally therefore be within 2 weeks of receiving a copy of your transcript.
4. Confidentiality is a key issue. I will provide you with a Consent Form which will allow you to preserve anonymity if you so wish.. I will take all steps to preserve your anonymity in the presentation of case studies.
5. You will be given a recording of your interviews. I will produce a transcript of the interview, which will be sent to you. This can be edited as you wish and might be used as a basis for subsequent interviews. Copies of the material, including final edited versions of the transcript(s), and the recordings, will be kept in a secure place. Any other access to the material, apart from by members of the project team, will be with your permission only.
6. In general terms these procedures are informed by the British Educational Research Association and they accord with the ethical codes of the University.
8. Thank you for all your help and contribution.

Aspirational Habitus - A Reflective Auto-biographical Narrative Enquiry of BME Students in HE

CONSENT FORM

1. I agree to the material in the recording and transcript being used for study purposes and is, subject to the conditions specified in the Notes of Guidance attached to this form. I understand access to it is restricted to the researcher and supervisor, unless specific, additional agreement is obtained.

2. I request that my anonymity is preserved in the use of the material via the use of pseudonyms etc.

3. Any other comments

Signed..... [REDACTED]

Name (please print) [REDACTED]

Address and telephone number [REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

Email address [REDACTED]

Date [REDACTED]

