Brown Girl in the Ring: What are the Experiences of Senior Female Black, Asian, Minority Ethnic Leaders in Social Work Today?

Hia Jordan

A thesis submitted for the degree of Professional Doctorate in in Advanced Practice and Research: Social Work and Social Care

Tavistock and Portman NHS Foundation Trust

University of Essex

Date of submission August 2023

(With corrections)

Acknowledgements

I would like to express my gratitude to the following:

To all my participants, without whom this thesis would not be possible.

Dr Simon Tucker for his guidance, patience, and kindness.

To the late Professor Andrew Cooper for his insight and quiet inspiration.

Dr Phillip Archard for stepping in and embracing this work at very short notice, and particularly his guidance in editing the thesis.

Dr Anna Harvey for her kindness and support.

My employers for support, advice and motivation throughout the MA and Doctoral journey.

And to my husband Peter Jordan and our children Sam, Sophie and Luca for the love, patience and endurance without whom this journey would never have been possible.

Thank You.

Table of Contents

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS .... **I**

ABSTRACT .... **IV**

CHAPTER 1 INTRODUCTION **5**

PRACTITIONER RESEARCH OF A PRACTICE-NEAR VARIETY 6
BLACK, BAME, BME 10
BAME AS 'OTHER' 13
FINDING A METHOD 17
Autoethnography *18*
Narrative *19*
Psychosocial research *20*
TOWARD AN AUTOETHNOGRAPHIC AND NARRATIVE PSYCHOSOCIAL APPROACH 22
FORMULATING A RESEARCH QUESTION 23
THESIS STRUCTURE 32

CHAPTER 2 EXPLORING FEMALE BAME SOCIAL WORK LEADERSHIP EXPERIENCE AS A REFLEXIVE RESEARCHER **34**

INTRODUCTION 34
Note on material and methodology used *35*
GETTING TO THE RESEARCH 36
Curiosity at work *36*
RESEARCHER REFLEXIVITY IN THE RESEARCH PROCESS 42
CONCLUSION 45

CHAPTER 3 LITERATURE REVIEW **46**

INTRODUCTION 46
LITERATURE SEARCH METHODOLOGY 47
WORKPLACE RACISM AND SENIOR FEMALE BAME SOCIAL WORK LEADERSHIP 49
Race and gender in social work *51*
Race and gender in the workplace *53*
Social class *58*
USING PSYCHOANALYTIC THOUGHT IN THE STUDY OF RACE AND RACISM 59
CONCLUSION 65

CHAPTER 4 METHODOLOGY **66**

INTRODUCTION 66
RESEARCH PARADIGM 66
ONTOLOGY AND EPISTEMOLOGY 68
QUALITATIVE RESEARCH DESIGN 70
PARTICIPANT RECRUITMENT, CONSENT, CONFIDENTIALITY AND ETHICS 73
BNIM-BASED INTERVIEW APPROACH 76
DATA ANALYSIS 78
CONCLUSION 79

CHAPTER 5 THE PARTICIPANTS' LIVED LIVES AND TOLD STORIES **80**

INTRODUCTION 80
LIVED LIVES AND TOLD STORIES 80
RESEARCH PARTICIPANTS AS DEFENDED SUBJECTS 81
LYNETTE 82
Lived life: chronology of life events *82*
Told story *86*
SONIA 90
Lived life: chronology of life events *90*
Told story *93*

Rabindra 96
Lived life: chronology of life events *96*
Told story *98*
Amrit 101
Lived life: chronology of life events *101*
Told story *102*
Yayoi 105
Lived life: chronology of life events *105*
Told story *106*
Conclusion 109

CHAPTER 6 INTERVIEW ANALYSIS FINDINGS 111

Introduction 111
Childhood experience *113*
Parental – maternal (and paternal) – influence *114*
Family life, education and social mobility *116*
Migration as motivation *116*
Professional experience and the leadership role *117*
Emotional experience of the workplace and leadership roles *118*
Structural racism and navigating obstructions *120*
Cross-case analysis 121
Further consideration of the themes identified 125
Links to (neo)colonialism *128*
The significance of class *131*
Considering racism on an intergenerational basis *133*
(Re)considering intersectional identities and the role of gender in the workplace *134*
Summarising the findings of the analysis 142
Conclusion 148

CHAPTER 7 CONCLUSION 149

Introduction 149
Understanding BAME female social work leadership experience 149
Implications for practice 152
Changes in my own thinking (regarding racism) 155

REFERENCES 159

APPENDICES 175

Appendix 1: Interview and analysis example (Lynette) 175
Appendix 2: Interview and analysis example (Rabindra) 214
Appendix 3 Glossary of terms 251
Appendix 4: Ethical review, participant information and consent 254

Abstract

There has been extensive concern with race and racism in social work as a discipline, including empirical enquiry examining the experiences of social workers from Black and Minority Ethnic (BAME) backgrounds. However, insufficient attention has been paid to the experiences of BAME female social work leaders. This thesis reports on a practitioner research enquiry addressing this group's experiences. The study relied on a psychoanalytically informed, psychosocial methodological approach, alongside autoethnographic reflection. Biographical narrative interviews were undertaken with five female BAME leaders working in a local authority adult social care context. Data generated from these interviews were then subject to an in-case/cross-case analysis based on a constructivist epistemological framework. Themes identified from the analysis related to experiences in the workplace and leadership journeys, illuminating ways in which personal and professional biographies converged in the participants' understanding of the demands and challenges of leadership, as well as wider organisational and social forces that had an impact on them as professionals and BAME women, particularly racism. The analysis revealed how the participants were prompted to be attentive to both their inner experiences and work contexts to understand themselves as leaders. The study's principal contribution is in helping to develop psychosocial knowledge that may help inform action to challenge racism and organisational barriers bearing upon the career trajectories of BAME women.

Key terms: Black and Minority Ethnic, leadership, psychoanalytically informed research, psychosocial social work research, race, racism, social work leadership.

CHAPTER 1 Introduction

> "To be black in a white world is agony, if you are black, you are seldom allowed to be an ordinary regular human being. Instead at every turn you are confronted by hidden stereotypes that can spring into life in a flash, push violently into you, destabilise you and make you think, feel and act in ways that are wholly determined from the outside, as if yourself had no say in the matter. This can turn even the most innocuous of situations utterly fraught". (Davids, 2011, p 1).

I have been reminded of this quote on many occasions since I began my journey with this research project. Capturing the stark realities many Black and Minority Ethnic (BAME) people face daily, the quote represents much of what this thesis is about. It expresses many of the sentiments and conflicts that the participants in the reported study spoke about.

This thesis reports an in-depth qualitative study of the experiences of senior female BAME leaders working in the field of social work. The study and the thesis aim to generate a conversation about race in social work leadership, with lived and shared experiences at the centre of this exchange. This is important so that new and emerging BAME social workers can be encouraged to express their views about how painful or joyous the world of social work can be and confront the barriers they may encounter on their journey as they pursue leadership positions. The study explores and aims to understand the values, attitudes, and behaviours that individual BAME female leaders experience and need to navigate to achieve career progression and maintain their leadership roles.

This study focuses on exploring the experiences of senior female BAME leaders by asking a group of leaders to tell their own stories of how they navigated

their career trajectories. It is through these untold stories that the voices of these senior leaders will be heard. This thesis spotlights the experiences of BAME women in the context of social work leadership and seeks to provide a nuanced understanding of their career paths in leadership.

Practitioner research of a practice-near variety

The enquiry, as a whole, can be situated in traditions of practitioner research and practice-near research in social work and social care (Cooper, 2009; Lunt and Shaw, 2017). As a practice-near research project, the enquiry seeks to get close to the emotional and social complexity of experience in social work organisations. It also takes seriously the epistemological challenges involved when practitioner-researchers engage with research participants and make use of their own personal and professional experiences in their endeavours. Following Cooper (2009), the enquiry seeks to provide a richer, more nuanced account of professional experience by engaging with the intersubjective relationship I have, as the researcher, with the subjects (or object) of the enquiry. This approach can give rise to confusion, anxiety and doubt about what ‘belongs’ to whom, but ongoing reflection also affords the possibility of real emotional and relational depth in the research process.

As a report of a practitioner research project, this thesis displays some deviations from the orthodox academic style, with a more ‘active’ researcher voice being displayed, including as part of the reporting of analysis and findings. This is consistent with the reporting of other research studies written by practitioner researchers, where, though a need for methodological rigour remains, the researcher’s positioning in the enquiry and interface between practice experience and empirical enquiry are closely attended to (Lunt and Shaw, 2017).

The first-person writing style also reflects the research process for me as a woman of colour and leader in social work. The style speaks to how difficult and painful thinking and writing about racism has been as a curator of the stories the participants shared; in doing so, I am prompted to share aspects of my own life story.

Contextualising a concern for BAME female leadership experience

This chapter contextualises this research study by describing its background and its aim and objectives. Also addressed are concepts and language used throughout the thesis. A preliminary comment is also provided on the study methodology, epistemological framework, and some personal reflections.

Crenshaw (1989, 1991) wrote widely about Black women's experiences of discrimination, explaining why and how this can be made visible. I was surprised that none of the women who participated in this research had spoken about their experiences in the boardroom. They had never shared their narratives outside of their family and friends. However, all also spoke about a lack of representation which had played a part in these participants' fear of being misunderstood.

Like the earlier work of Showunmi (2021), this study seeks to give voice to women leaders of colour and those from multicultural backgrounds, bearing witness to the stories of BAME female leaders who have, for the first time, shared their experiences by participating in this research despite experiencing workplace discrimination. I hope that the readers of this thesis will use this knowledge to recognise and identify inequalities and challenge organisational barriers that impede BAME women's career progression. It is helpful to understand how the voices of the participants of this research may have been silenced, mainly when they occupied leadership positions. This study can evidence that the phenomenon of silencing

involves a paradoxical position. On the one hand, the leaders in this study share a purposeful voice and efficacy. However, each participant has shared experiences of how their voice can be suppressed, muted or caused to falter. All the participants talked about choices that seemed restricted – a lost sense of agency; engaging in deficit thinking, despite knowledge and experience, wondering if they deserved a seat at the top table; a sense of hypervigilance, questioning decision-making, feeling dismissed and wondering where the next attack may come from; and isolation – each participant was, notably, unable to name her professional support system. At times, the participants used striking metaphors to describe their experience, for example, 'Black don't crack', which seemed related to self-reliance in the boardroom.

Showunmi (2021) observes that organisations are microcosms of the societies in which they are embedded; therefore, work can only be understood in a broader sociocultural context. I would argue that the senior leaders who participated in this study experienced similar power hierarchies, which were heavily gendered, racialised and classed, and that the absence of a professional support system that was representative and relatable was a critical factor which prevented them from feeling and being heard. Furthermore, all the senior leaders in this study felt a need to assimilate and adopt features of their white counterparts to avoid being stereotyped or labelled. Each chose to adapt to androcentric notions of leadership, which allowed them to survive in the boardroom. Being different and needing to adopt 'whiteness' is something that all the senior leaders in this study felt the need to do or, as Showunmi (2021) suggests, 'bleach their identity' to progress in the organisation.

The hope for the work reported in this thesis is that it will aid recognition that change requires self-reflection within BAME communities to acknowledge the

inequalities that also lie within. That is to say that 'internal' racist states of mind have the damaging potential to continue feeding the white majority who hold the balance of power. Only through a difficult process of introspection can we prevent ourselves from colluding with a process of subjugation while recruiting for and demanding that our white counterparts play fair and be just.

The aim of this thesis, as a report of empirical research (and the process of undertaking this), is to generate a conversation on how the intersection (crossing over point) of race and gender impacts the career trajectories of senior female BAME professionals. This is achieved by:

- Developing a methodology suited to this object of concern, attending, in the process, to issues of epistemology and ontology and tools for gathering data, its analysis and interpretation.
- Exploring experiences using a psychoanalytical lens, considering both conscious and unconscious ideation and feelings from a shared and lived experience.
- Contextualising the research study in a critical review of relevant literature.
- Contributing to a vast literature on race and racism via a focus on senior BAME female leadership experiences in the workplace.
- Developing an authentic approach to, first, talk about how BAME female professionals can support themselves and each other to take up and challenge racial discrimination and, second, support organisations to embrace racial equality within their organisational hierarchies and workplace culture.

This thesis is situated within the context of workplace discrimination and equality scholarship and follows a similar tradition to the work of Opara *et al*. (2020), Showunmi (2021), Marsh (2019), Crenshaw (1991), and Subramani (2019). The

study explores the experiences of senior female BAME leaders and why there may be a lack of representation of BAME women within social work settings. The study is positioned within the growing discourse regarding the struggles of organisations to meet targets in relation to diversity and to introduce and support female BAME voices within their senior management positions.

A diverse range of literature debates the lack of female BAME professionals who occupy positions of authority (Ahmed, 2012, 2017; Collins, 1991; Crenshaw, 1991; Davis, 1991; Hooks, 2000; Marsh, 2020). A recurrent theme in this literature is the difficulties in operationalising such research. Ultimately, those responsible for organisational governance often form a homogeneous group different from the communities they serve. This means that such organisational structures are likely to be a space where 'sameness' prevails, which has implications for the prospects for change. In this vein, acknowledging my positionality within this research as a frontline social worker and leader in the field is vital for responding to the unconscious and conscious projections of anxiety around sameness and difference. At times, I have found these anxieties can be unmanageable within an organisational and individual context; and the tension this creates is at the very heart of the research and addressed throughout the thesis.

Black, BAME, BME

Certain terms are essential to define as part of this work. Throughout this thesis, I use the terms Black, BME and BAME to denote a racial categorisation used to refer to non-white and minority ethnic groups.

All the senior female social work leaders interviewed for this research expressed varying degrees of discomfort with the term BAME. It was commented

that social work organisation, statutory and non-statutory alike, could not organise people without some form of categorisation. Most acronyms aimed at describing people who are non-white or from ethnic minority backgrounds suffer from a ‘catch-all’ issue, which, in essence, signifies a type of image problem. By attempting to be an umbrella term officially endorsed by the state, BAME clusters all Black, Asian and ethnic minorities as a monolithic entity. This has the destructive potential to dehumanise its members and can lead to ineffectual policies by grouping different groups of people. Many people categorised as BAME want to be treated as individuals, not members of a tribal minority community, who are primarily defined as distinct to, or separate from, a white majority. Material gathered as part of this research shows this disparity and strength of feeling on the matter; all my participants have found the term BAME problematic to identify with.

BAME is the latest in a long line of terms which can be viewed as functioning to encourage the white majority (them) to understand non-white and ethnic minority communities (us); albeit, sometimes, in the event of racially aggravated world events, it can help us to articulate ourselves. To understand the creation of terms/acronyms, we must first consider why a *them* and *us* dynamic exists in the first place and the ‘work’ that acronyms do.

Put simply, racial terms of reference can conceal discomfort or sensitivity around the categorisation of individual persons. Indeed, it may be said that society is unable to think without these labels. The complexities of working with individuals who represent different cultures and ethnicities, alongside the intra- and inter-differences between communities, requires attention to detail and skill to learn about sameness and difference. In a world that rewards speed over diligence, the prospects for

growing such understanding are limited unless we stop and evaluate how we want to relate more meaningfully to each other.

The roots of the term BAME in Britain resided with the Black political movement of the 1960s and 1970s when large numbers of migrants came from the Commonwealth to rebuild Britain in the wake of World War Two, whereby labour shortages were high in the post-war years, and Britain needed workers. At that time, the term was BME and was seen by activists to generate unity and solidarity between different ethnic groups. Malik (2020) insightfully comments on how the political meaning of terms can, over time, drastically change:

> "When I was growing up, I saw myself as and was seen by others as 'black'. In the 1980s, it was a political term denoting a sense of a common struggle against racism. Over time as identities have become less political and more ethnic or cultural so the meaning of 'black' has changed".

Today, the term BAME primarily serves an administrative function; it signifies no solidarity, commonality or political leverage. Instead, it is this lack of power and authority which renders the term impotent. This lack of political relatedness is highlighted in comments made by the former Health Secretary, Matt Hancock, when asked on *Sky News* in June 2020 how many Black people were in the cabinet, he replied, "We have a diversity of thought" (BBC, 2020). This comment is symptomatic of the lack of engagement that BAME categorisations allow, as, evident in the very top of Government, there has been consistent resistance to truly addressing issues of racial equality. The term BAME has a long and pervasive history in social and public policy, and there is little desire to engage with race thoughtfully and meaningfully.

In a blog published in 2019, the government's deputy director of the Race Disparity Unit, Zamila Bunglawala, made this plain. Bunglawala cited a survey of 300

people from across the UK which found that very few recognised the terms BAME and BME, before commenting that an additional problem was also that the terms BAME and BME are not always associated with white ethnic minorities such as Gypsy, Roma and Traveller of Irish heritage groups, which we know are among some of our most marginalised and disadvantaged communities.

It is also valuable to get to the root of issues in operationalising the term BAME, which complicates the picture further. For example, other commentators on BAME and BME have pointed out that the terms can be generic and fail to address the racial discrimination there can be regarding anti-blackness in the Black, Asian and Arab communities (Davids, 2011; Opara *et al*., 2020).

BAME as 'other'

Issues of ethnic and racial categorisation can run deep amongst BAME social work professionals. While attempting to make a difference in the lives of others, these professionals are subject to 'othering' by not only their clients but also their colleagues.

Kapuscinski (2018) outlines the development of the West's understanding of 'the other' from classical times through the age of enlightenment, the colonial era and then, as he terms contemporary society, "the postmodern global village" (p. 65). Kapuscinski discusses the continued treatment of non-Europeans as alien and a threat, an object of study not yet sharing the world's fate, showing how the other remains one of the most compelling ideas of our time and how, in an increasingly globalised world, humankind continues to think in a polarised way.

The contribution that brought the concept of the *other* to the fore was Said (1978), who argued that the treatment of the other must be understood from a

relational viewpoint. According to Said (1978), otherness, or the Orient, is viewed as irrational and weak compared to the West, which stands superior. This relational understanding of the other aids in an explanation of what it means to be viewed as distinctively subordinate.

A comprehensive body of literature tracks the understanding and conceptualisation of race historically. It is essential to grapple with this historical trajectory to understand the role of racism and racism in Kapuscinski's "postmodern global village". Indeed, as Bulmer and Solomos (1999, p. 13) highlight: "without an understanding of the historical context, it is unlikely that we shall be able to come fully to terms with the question of how racial ideas have emerged out of and become an integral part of specific societies." Furthermore, building on this intention, it is essential to highlight the Enlightenment as a highly significant period in informing our current understanding of race. This period marked a transition to a hyper-focus on rationality and aesthetics and a rejection of superstition. The importance of this historical context is supported by Mosse (1985, p. 3), who argues that "the continuous transition from science to aesthetics is a cardinal feature of modern racism."

Ultimately, this period witnessed the development of the Great Chain of Being to God, which marked a greater desire to categorise human beings. Race became a difference between individuals linked to unchangeable mental and physical traits. This deeply essentialist view of race is epitomised by comments made by Hegel, who maintained: "The Negro represents natural man in all his wild and untamed nature…there is nothing remotely humanised in the Negro's character." (Hegel 1830 cited in Pieterse 1992, p. 34) – a quote which draws our attention to ways binary understandings of race came into existence. The long historical imprint this leaves

on our psyche, passed down generations, has been embedded into services and institutions meant to serve all.

This lack of political language and leverage inevitably takes its toll on the BAME psyche, as minorities constantly must be in a state of hypervigilance and survival mode. By lumping Black, Asian and other minority groups into an amorphous group, who are assumed to have a shared experience of race and racism, supporters of categorisation reinforce the idea that somebody's identity must define their politics.

It is also perhaps prudent to suggest that racism is a lucrative business for those who report on it and those who write about it. In the aftermath of the horrific murder of George Floyd, there appeared to be an outpouring of grief and anger. This event witnessed people from all backgrounds running around with urgency and frenzied purpose akin to a 'paranoid-schizoid' state of mind, detached from aspects of the reality needing to be faced in the aftermath of these events.

The ensuing distress and strong emotions led some to attend marches and carry placards with slogans like Black Lives Matter (BLM). The mainstream media went through a frenzy of allocating BAME broadcasters and professors who specialised in the subject of race and racism. However, simultaneously, time stands still for some of us involved in daily frontline social work. Shortly after that, the COVID-19 pandemic hit with a ferocity that humankind has rarely experienced. I, too, was not immune to the emotional upheaval. I recall an interaction with a tutor on the course that left me distressed enough to think of walking away from my research. The exchange started with a proposal for a workshop following the death of George Floyd and the BLM protests which followed. It appeared to me that this tutor wanted to 'take care' or 'manage' my feelings which, at the time, were very conflicted.

Unable to process my feelings, let alone feel responsible for looking after anyone else's, I wrote to the tutor afterwards:

> "People of colour like me are tired of white people like you trying to make things better; I do not want to join organisations or causes that act to pacify the ongoing discrimination that people like me face daily. I know you mean well, but you cannot make this journey for me. I sit with my distress in the workplace, at home and in wider society. Most days, I cannot breathe, but somehow, I manage to stay alive".

The minute I sent the email, I felt guilt and shame. I liked this tutor, but I could not tolerate the intrusion by a privileged white person who, to my mind, had no idea what it felt like to be me. The apparent desire of this individual to be viewed as 'good' or an 'ally' to Black people runs entirely counter to how deeply entrenched and intransigent the problem of racism is.

So, where does all this reckoning with the issue of racism leave the term BAME? Addressing Black British culture, Boake (2019) writes:

> "Call me black, and I will get a complex knot of pride and insecurity tightening in my psyche. It's a word that reminds me that I am lesser than and different from others, but it is also a source of self-affirmation". (p.7).

Boake (2019) explores how people with darker skin are situated via language. He uses the term 'Black' as descriptive, noting how this can denigrate as much as it defines. As a South Asian, light-skinned ethnic minority woman, I have been labelled, branded, characterised, and referred to by a plethora of names and terminology, though not all of these labels have been derogatory and some of them I have chosen to call myself. However, all have the same effect as part of the linguistic labyrinth, which keeps identities confined in pigeonholes that are no longer fit for purpose.

Finding a method

The enquiry reported is situated within a qualitative research tradition as the central premise of this study is to explore and understand the lived and shared experiences of senior female BAME leaders within a social work setting. Different qualitative methodologists, such as Guba and Lincoln (1994), Hollway and Jefferson (2013), and Denzin and Lincoln (1994), concur that qualitative methods are more often used for specific types of research questions. Namely, they are used to answer or make sense of the 'whys' and 'hows' of human behaviour, opinion and experience. These methods utilise information induced from data (for example, gathered via interviews) to make sense of the world that the research subjects inhabit and consider how these subjects make sense of their experiences and environments.

With these concerns, a qualitative approach is not numbers based or mathematical in its study of phenomena. It can be contrasted with a quantitative methodology, which attempts to investigate and deduce meaning from statistics and measurements and is largely concerned with a 'heavy emphasis' on 'hard data' and empiricism (Guba and Lincoln, 1994, p. 105).

As qualitative research, this study is concerned with "understanding the meaning people have constructed to make sense of their world through the experiences they have" (Merriam, 2009, p. 13). Also, as some authors would suggest is typical of qualitative research, it entails an epistemological stance which rejects a positivist philosophical position (Parkinson and Drislane, 2011).

Amongst a range of different qualitative approaches, this research is based on autoethnographic, narrative and psychosocial methods, owing primarily to my research being influenced by my professional experiences as a senior manager. To put it another way, I used my own lived experience alongside the narratives (stories)

of the research participants. I do this to make sense of how their thoughts and feelings (psycho-) impact the (social) environment around them.

These qualitative approaches are addressed in greater detail in subsequent chapters. Preliminary definitions can, all the same, be provided to acquaint the reader with them.

Autoethnography

Autoethnography is, broadly speaking, a form of qualitative research in which the author-researcher uses written self-reflection to explore personal experience/s. In so doing, connections can be made between their experiences and broader cultural, political and social meanings and understanding. This thesis incorporates different aspects of autoethnography as it developed from my experiences as a senior leader within a social work context and combines an autoethnographic and a narrative storytelling approach, which enable the reader to have a contextual understanding of the researcher's position as well as the participants' stories.

There are many definitions of autoethnographic research, dependent on the type of fieldwork the researcher is engaged in. According to Maréchal (2010, p. 1), for instance, "Autoethnography is a form or method of research that involves self-observation and reflexive investigation in the context of ethnographic fieldwork and writing." Alternatively, Ellis (2004) defines autoethnography as an approach that involves connections being made between the autobiographical and personal and the cultural, social and political. More recently, Adams, Jones and Ellis (2015) have described autoethnography as:

> "a research method that uses a researcher's personal expression to describe and critique cultural beliefs, practices and experiences [and]… acknowledges and values a researcher's relationship with others, shows people in the

> process of figuring out what to do, how to live and the meaning of their struggles”. (p. 2)

This enquiry draws on autoethnography in the context of my own professional experiences within a social work context. Therefore, my subjectivity as a researcher is embraced and not seen simply as a constraint or source of bias.

The autoethnographic approach also interlinks with the biographical narrative interviews undertaken for the study and the embracement of storytelling. By way of the participants’ stories, I have been able to understand the experiences shaping their career trajectories in the context of my own life narrative; that is, the research comprises a co-produced endeavour rather than a ‘single story’ event. For Maréchal (2010), autoethnography is associated with narrative inquiry and autobiography because it foregrounds the linkages between experience and stories as a meaning-making enterprise. Moreover, this foregrounding affords opportunities for reflecting on the process of identification, emotions and dialogue, which aid in a more relational understanding between individuals and groups and differences being understood in a more constructive way.

There are pitfalls to a reflexive autoethnographic approach. The most notable of which is the consideration of subjectivity devolving into self-indulgent or narcissistic analysis. Efforts made to mitigate this risk are addressed during the course of the thesis.

Narrative

Riessman (1993) notes that narrative inquiry or analysis emerged as a broader field of social science in the early twentieth century. This research involves the use of stories or narratives from participants about their experiences as senior BAME

leaders. This data was generated using an approach based on the biographical narrative interview method (BNIM) developed by Wengraf (2004), which is discussed in detail as part of the thesis.

However, as a starting point, it bears acknowledging that narrative is a powerful tool for sharing knowledge about experience. This power is rooted in the fact that narrative is bound to memory and recall of events and experiences. Bruner (1990) influentially addressed this matter, viewing narrative as a non-neutral rhetorical account aiming at "illocutionary intentions or the desire to communicate meaning". Bruner's approach places the narrative or storytelling in time, thus linking memory and temporality.

In my research, there is an intention to mirror this way of knowing. I developed a research question which I then explored using an interview method (BNIM) which elicited data that I then organised chronologically (Polkinghorne, 1995). This chronology allowed for a close consideration of the context in which stories were told and was vital in enabling insight into the ways individual participants made sense of their realities and constructed their experiences (Bruner, 1990).

Psychosocial research

The research reported is also concerned with exploring conscious and unconscious emotional experience, i.e. with psychological processes but within a broader social and cultural context, and a concern that is psychosocial in nature.

The term 'cultural lens' is used to refer to BAME societal experiences from within the communities/backgrounds that BAME persons originate and the society around them. In this research, I wanted to make sense of stories and strengthen the emotional content of what was being conveyed to me. As Frosh and Young (2011)

suggest, psychoanalytical thinking can be employed alongside narrative inquiry to allow for a more nuanced understanding and interpretation while at the same time interrupting ‘fixed’ or ‘settled’ explanations of experience. With this, a reflexive space needs to be created for the researcher and research project, which is especially important to ensure that a structured questioning or interview technique does not delimit what can be understood via the research.

Psychoanalytical theory has been represented as a marginalised body of knowledge in social work and social work scholarship yet providing a vocabulary for emotionality and intersubjectivity in helping relationships (Briggs, 2005). This enquiry engaged directly with the interconnectedness between self, subjectivity, identity and relationships that inform and shape the experiences of senior female BAME leaders within a social work setting. The psychosocial concerns include the use of self, subjectivity and identity, relationships, emotions and intimacy. As Taylor (2017) has acknowledged, the work of a range of theoretical figures in the field of psychoanalysis and social science can be grouped under the term psychosocial, including, latterly, the work of object-relations, Kleinian and post-Kleinian theorists, as well as, more recently, the contributions of critical and social psychologists. The interest in utilising aspects of a psychosocial framework for this study stems from it affording a means to address the traditional psychological concerns of ‘minds’, ‘feelings’ and ‘people’ without “the besetting positivism and scientism of much academic psychology” (Rustin, 2014, p. 198), and attend to what may be conveyed to the researcher in both spoken and unspoken ways.

Toward an autoethnographic and narrative psychosocial approach

This knitting together of autoethnography, narrative and psychosocial methods to consider the experiences of senior female BAME leaders within a social work context is a complex undertaking, not least due to my own role as a researcher using my own story to think about the lived experiences of the participants. Although I would not say that the object of concern for my doctoral research was solely an aspect of my personal biography (see Clarke and Hoggett, 2009), I maintain that undertaking this research and writing about the experience has been transformative for me. As I now view it, this was because the process enabled me to relate my subjective experiences to that of my participants, creating a space for intersubjectivity and intra-subjectivity. Furthermore, I could connect with my thoughts and feelings about what my participants were conveying to me through the transference–countertransference process during their interviews.

Blending these three approaches and frameworks, whilst invariably complex, can lead to an in-depth understanding of research material. As a researcher, using my own story (i.e. via autoethnography) was, at times, problematic in terms of keeping my own narrative separate from my participants' narratives. I was aware that a psychosocial frame of attempting to understand what was being conveyed through the participant interviews needed to be carefully considered as they were conveyed without my feelings, emotions or assumptions contaminating the data analysis process. However, over time, I sought to use my own subjectivity as a 'tool' or resource for identifying themes relating to aspects of our experiences that were shared but also different.

A BNIM-based approach to the interviews also allowed the participants to talk about their experiences without being asked leading questions. This process meant

they could access the memories of their encounters in their personal and workplace journeys and speak of their experiences fully. Then, through an 'in-case' and 'cross-case' analysis, I developed and refined my understanding of the social and emotional experiences of the individual and group of participants. With this, there was a conscious 'slowing down' of the process of data analysis to carefully organise the material when seeking to make interpretations about different meanings. In the way I have reported the research, I hope to help the reader understand the similar yet different experiences of the participants, but also to demonstrate how interconnected the nature of workplace racism is and illuminate the adversities female BAME leaders are confronted with in their everyday working lives.

Formulating a research question

When I began this research project, I found it hard to formulate a specific research question. I found that whatever I wrote would be very (i.e. too) close to my own experiences. I worried that I would be unable to tell my participants' stories in a representative and fair way. I also found myself preoccupied with deep feelings of shame and guilt. These feelings arose in the act of writing and appeared to stem from the fact that writing would inevitably lead to sharing personal experiences that had remained occluded throughout my professional life. Some family members and friends knew my story, but I did not speak about it openly or at work. I was also unaware of how much my experience reflected that of other female BAME leaders in social work and questioned whether I could produce writing that would resonate with any women who took part.

The principal research question for the study is: What are the experiences of senior female BAME leaders in social work? This question opens a frame of enquiry

into the experiences of senior female BAME leaders in the workplace. To support its exploration, I developed a series of sub-questions with the help of my supervisors and seminar group sessions, which were designed to help me identify and focus my central research question so that the use of aspects of BNIM could be optimised in the research. These sub-questions relate to who is being seen, who has the power to see, who is being represented, and who represents.

The research study also attempts to start a conversation from a cultural lens. This means attending to the cultural backgrounds and the experiences of some of the study participants in their countries of origin before moving to, living and working in the UK.

In engaging with the experiences of BAME female leaders, this thesis will also address ways in which ‘race’ and ‘racial difference’ is understood. During the 19th and 20th centuries, the dominant view within science was that race represented biological differences between groups of people (Andreasen, 2000). Today, race is viewed less as biological differences and more as a social construct (Rattansi, 2020; Back and Solomos, 2022; Sangeeta *et al*., 2019; Elliot, 2011; Pincus, 2006). My own experience has been that race is apprehended by many different forms of classification based on the visible markers of otherness (Kapuscinski, 2018; Pincus, 2006; Elliot, 2011), and this is played out in the workplace, where certain groups seek to establish dominance over others to reinforce inequality. Indeed, BAME women, in particular, have been excluded from influential positions in institutions and have limited visibility there because whiteness is the (preferred) norm (Marsh, 2021).

There are, of course, complexities regarding the social construction of race, how senior BAME leaders in social work experience racism, and how prevailing cultural beliefs regarding race are enacted to ascribe visible markers to groups and

individuals. It is, for example, essential to consider how less visible makers of otherness influence career trajectories. These complexities constitute the fabric of this study.

As has been noted already, my specific interest in exploring and learning about the experiences of female BAME social work leaders stems from the fact that I am a female senior social work leader with a BAME background who has faced professional and personal challenges due to race and gender. In my thinking, I have been heavily influenced by the work of Davids (2010, 2011). Addressing "internal racism", Davids (2011) explores how the provenance and nature of individual and institutional racism operate within a broader political and social culture. These 'external' domains impart a force that impacts the human mind and, as he terms it, can engender a "paranoid, us-them construction involving self and racial other" (Davids, 2011, p. 15). This construction, in turn, serves to (re)produce racism as a persistent feature of society and institutions, which permeates the work of the helping professions such as social work. My research follows a similar path to Davids (2011) in that I deviate from the psychoanalytic method of clinical investigation but will be using psychoanalytic ideas to examine the lived experiences of senior female BAME leaders who have to constantly endure different forms of discrimination whilst navigating their senior roles in social work.

I have dedicated a large part of my professional life to social work, with 27 years in the field. My curiosity about gender and race has developed during my career. It dovetails with the profession's concerns relating to social justice, i.e. with social work often serving people who are victims of marginalisation and, therefore, disadvantaged in society. As social workers, we learn about society at its margins. In this thesis, I aim to demonstrate that what happens within a social work context can

often be representative of what happens to people in broader society, not all of whom may be involved with services. I also relate a process of learning about how attitudes, feelings, values and narratives create marginalisation and lead to discrimination.

Inevitably, inequality issues leading to feelings of marginalisation and discrimination are not just restricted to race or gender. There are many other factors, such as age, religion, sexual orientation, political and social beliefs, class, education, health and income, which can impact people's life chances and experiences in a workplace or personal setting. Moreover, I am mindful that I have focused on one specific aspect relevant to my personal and professional experiences in social work. While I am concerned with a broader context and attend to ways thinking on race in the UK has evolved through recent history, along with changes in race relations policies, I am focussing on senior female BAME leaders at a particular point in time.

This being acknowledged, the personal experiences of a group can speak to much more significant issues and processes. One must also be familiar with what has happened in the past to consider contemporary events and experiences properly. In this vein, this study is not a neutral space. Instead, through the study, I seek to present experiences that bear witness to silenced knowledge of how racism operates on an individual and organisational level. As curator of the participants' stories, I am responsible for representing their accounts in a way that respects their individual voices and ways in which their past experience inhabits their experience of the present. In this way, societal hierarchies controlling knowledge and imposing white hegemony are very much operational in contemporary society.

All the study participants carry their cultures with them despite their experiences of being marginalised. Their narratives testify to the stereotyping and

labelling they were subject to by white counterparts, as a form of cultural imperialism and imposition of Eurocentric hierarchies, reinforcing binary categories of gender, with women often being defined by men, excluded from positions of power and considered ineligible for leadership roles.

While race relations policies have been implemented to give BAME communities equal access to economic, health and education opportunities to promote and enhance well-being, significant disparities exist. A recent government audit on race inequality (Cabinet Office, 2018) showed the stark inequalities people of colour encounter in finding employment and career progression, with, for example, a rate of unemployment amongst Pakistani/Bangladeshi persons (11%) that is almost three times that of the white/British population (4%). According to the report, BAME people who successfully remain employed have limited opportunities to progress to senior management positions. The report highlights that while the public sector has a substantial BAME workforce (43%), BAME groups are poorly represented in senior positions. This is corroborated by analysis from the think-tank Green Park (2016), which shows that only 4% of unitary authority leaders are from BAME backgrounds.

While this audit report does not explicitly concern gender or social work/social care, it highlights the inequality faced by BAME employees within the public sector, in which much social work takes place. The complex (and, at times, conflictual) intersections between race, gender and equality are my main areas of interest. My starting point for this research resides within a professional social work context, but I intend to make links between this evidence to a less public, personal journey that will enable me to consider painful experiences that have formed part of my working life and shaped the way I understand myself and society. This understanding has the

potential to inform my interactions with clients, colleagues and my more expansive social network, enabling more responsive exchanges.

In the context of social work, I have found that I am both confused and curious about the lack of people of colour in senior management and that the absence of women is especially striking in a profession primarily populated by this gender. I also recognise there is a palpable sense of social uncertainty, especially in the wake of Brexit and the emergence of the Black Lives Matter movement. This context is where discussions around race and identity can become polarised. Thus, I believe there is a strong need to consider sameness and difference, along with the crude generalisations and assumptions about people of colour, in a society that seems to be regressing. As a frontline social worker, responding to the unconscious and conscious projections of anxiety around sameness and difference can feel, at times, unmanageable, and it is a tension that I have sought to try and examine as part of this work. Providing insightful commentary that relates directly to this issue, Hirsch (2018) writes:

> “This feeling of redefining race, gender and inequality has certain unintended consequences. It feels like we throw around new words and create meaningless identities instead of new ones. I am BAME now (Black, Asian, minority ethnic), the assumption being that’s what I see in the mirror. I have also been told by well-meaning polite folk, both professionally and personally, that they do not see race at all and that diversity is something one can embrace and be”.

My professional and personal experiences resonate with Hirsch’s. The extent to which I seem to function as a ‘container’ or receptacle for others’ projections has motivated me to explore issues around gender, race and inequality and to look at

how these issues play out in a racialised way on a conscious and unconscious level of interaction.

To understand how the discussions around race have evolved through British history, one needs to understand the changing ideology of the state. I would argue that some of the critical factors which have influenced the discourse on race and racism can be traced back to the abolition of the slave trade, the end of imperial rule within the commonwealth and the need for labour following the ending of World War Two (Windrush and Viceroy of India immigrants). Other critical junctures include Powell's 1968 'Rivers of Blood' speech in Birmingham which created an instant inflammatory national debate on immigration, integration and race relations.

Regarding public policy, the introduction of the Race Relations Act 1965, followed by civil unrest stretching from the 1960s to the racist killing of Stephen Lawrence in 1993, along with the Macpherson Report in 1999, marks the primary legislation relevant to this work. More recently, the filmed murder of George Floyd in March 2020 in Minneapolis indicated that the issues of race on an institutional level were still very much prevalent. Legislation addressing these complex dynamics between people of colour, the majority white population, and within organisations has been largely ineffective.

Additionally, during the 1950s and 1960s, discussions on race were primarily defined by colour. Lavalette and Penketh (2012) argue that issues of race and racism, and social work practice were seen by the state and portrayed by the media as negatively dominated by political correctness and multiculturalism. This rhetoric of race and racism being thought of in the context of multiculturalism diluted a good deal of otherwise constructive dialogue on racism by removing the importance of a specific, analytical platform for discussions and instead providing polite censorship

and little to no measurable progress. It may be said that this process has continued in celebrations of diversity in social work.

This prompts the question of where social work, as a profession, stands on issues of race, racism and gender inequalities. Graham and Schiele (2010) argue that although anti-oppressive and anti-discriminatory frameworks in the UK are progressive steps in addressing inequalities, they are limited in their potency to focus on specific issues around race and racism. They suggest that the widespread adoption of anti-discriminatory models in social work has emerged because of the changing state and societal ideologies rather than concerns about oppression. This has impacted the way social work is delivered and the profession itself. Similarly, while Dominelli's work (2002, 2017) on anti-oppressive and anti-racist social work are key training texts for social work education and practice, the absence of anti-racist or race-specific content is further evidence of the minimisation and dilution of the experiences of racism suffered by BAME social work professionals. Curiously, successive regulatory authorities responsible for social work practice and training (General Social Care Council, The Health and Care Professions Council, Social Work England) make little or no explicit reference to the issues of race and racism.

Policies addressing racism and inequality within the social work profession have often been framed under the anti-oppressive or anti-discriminatory framework. In the history of social work, there have often been conflicted arguments on how issues of inequality are to be addressed. The Race Relations Act of 1965 and its various updates in 1968, 1976 and 2000 reflect changing thoughts concerning race. The Race Relations Act 2000 places public authorities under a statutory and legal duty to actively promote race equality in addressing unlawful racial discrimination, promoting equal access to opportunities, and promoting race relations. However, the

striking lack of BAME professionals in senior positions directly contradicts these intentions. Coupled with inequalities, the numbers of female BAME professionals in leadership positions are few and far between.

Spillett (2018), a former director of children's services, comments on the barriers that Black and Asian social workers face in progressing in social services. Noting research that found most BAME workers felt assumptions were made about their abilities and character based on their ethnicity, Spillett points out there are barriers in all aspects of recruitment, selection and daily life within organisations. There is, she maintains, process discrimination, which she defines as a protracted process of recruitment typically accompanied by procedures in which BAME candidates are excluded. Recruitment staff often use their established networks of senior leadership contacts to identify suitable candidates. As these networks are predominantly white, the chances of a potential BAME leader being identified are limited.

Much more can still be said about what happens in social work organisations. Based on my experience in a statutory context, I have found that race awareness training has slowly been replaced by *diversity* as the term *race* has become increasingly politicised by competing agendas. In many ways, I find the struggle to fight racism has lost impetus, glossed over by celebrations of difference, with limited room for race to be foregrounded. Via this enquiry, I attempt to generate a conversation which steers towards a sense of knowing rather than knowing about (Bion, 1962).

Thesis structure

This first chapter of the thesis focussed on introducing and discussing the research question and the synergy of the methodologies that informed the study that is reported on. The complexity of the research question was also explored, alongside my professional experience working as a social worker and as a leader and woman of colour within a statutory setting, including some of my own experience of discrimination because of race and gender inequalities.

The second chapter provides a reflexive account. Via the account, I consider my motivations for pursuing the research and provide critical reflections on the reasons I see this research as necessary.

The third chapter provides a review of literature relevant to my chosen area of enquiry in race and gender inequalities in a social work context. It can be said that this chapter represents the 'searched' literature I made use of. However, as I researched and wrote this thesis, I engaged with other literature and concepts. This was informed by peer-led and supervisory seminars I accessed whilst undertaking the research.

The fourth chapter addresses the interrelated issues of research design, data analysis, methodology and ethical considerations related to the empirical interview-based strand of the research. I consider the scope and implications of the research and its possible impact. I also reflect on issues that have impacted my role as a (practitioner-)researcher and the relationship with the study participants. I address the role of BNIM in the research and how aspects of this method were used to inform the gathering of the data and its analysis via a grounded theory-based understanding.

In the fifth chapter, a ‘pen portrait’ is provided for each of the five participants who were interviewed. These portraits offer a context for their narratives regarding the ‘person’ who took part and their respective backgrounds.

In the sixth chapter, the analysis of the interview data is reported. I also discuss some of the implications of the research for the social work field.

In the seventh chapter, the thesis is concluded. I discuss ways in which insights afforded by this research could be used to inform the support of BAME social work professionals as they navigate their career journeys and ways in which dialogue about race and inequalities could be facilitated without fear of repercussions.

CHAPTER 2 Exploring female BAME social work leadership experience as a reflexive researcher

Introduction

The first chapter established ways in which reflexivity sits at the heart of this doctoral research and the writing of this thesis. In short, reflexivity is fundamental in this research: first, because the enquiry incorporates autoethnographic material drawn from my own experience as a woman of colour and social worker who has worked in leadership; and second, because a reflexive approach enabled me to consider the study participants' accounts and the researcher–researched relationship in terms of intersubjective processes.

On the one hand, it may be said that a reflexive approach is a way of mitigating the risk for researcher bias, i.e. in terms of the way my own presuppositions may lead me to view the object of study in a particular way based on my own experience. On the other hand, it can be considered as something more. That is, a reflexive approach enables links to be made in the boundaries between my participants' narratives and my own, and to acknowledge that, at times, the two overlap.

Psychoanalytically informed psychosocial research has been defined by Clarke and Hoggett (2009) as "a cluster of methodologies" united by "a distinct position" of "researching beneath the surface, so that the discussion goes beyond the told stories, to consider unconscious communications, dynamics and defences that exist beyond the research environment" (p. 2). With this, psychosocial research can be represented as involving a unique iteration of the concept of researcher reflexivity. The role of reflexivity in knowledge production in interpretive social

science has been extensively discussed (see, for example, Charmaz, 2006; Charmaz and Mitchell,1996; D'Cruz *et al*., 2009; Etherington, 2004; Finlay and Gough, 2004; Gergen and Gergen,1991; Hammersley and Atkinson, 2007). Particular to the psychosocial research tradition and the idea of practice-near enquiry (which is reflected in this research) is a concern for unconscious and affective experience in reflexivity, i.e. what is said but also what is conveyed via unspoken means and the use of the clinical constructs of transference and countertransference (Cooper, 2009; Hollway and Jefferson, 2000, 2012; Archard 2020).

In this chapter, I seek to relate my own position as a reflexive researcher in this enquiry. First, I provide what can be described as an autoethnographic, "confessional tale" (Van Manaen, 2016). Through this account, I document my motivations for undertaking this research and significant 'moments' in the research journey and my own personal and professional background. Other moments are, of course, not insignificant (O'Reilly, 2012), but those documented were considered most pertinent to reporting the enquiry and considering the epistemological authority and responsibility of my role as researcher. Second, and more briefly, I critically reflect on how the interview-based strand of the study involved a concern for reflexivity and the ways this helped to understand the material generated in the interviews, whilst avoiding a self-referential account in which participant subjectivity is lost or subsumed into the researcher's arguments and presuppositions.

Note on material and methodology used

My reliance on using a constructivist grounded theory methodology to identify and make sense of the meaning-making activities of the participants (and indeed, my own) followed the work of Charmaz (2006). For Charmaz, constructivist grounded

theory "assumes people, including researchers, construct the realities in which they participate", in essence, it commences "with the experiences and asks how members construct them". As she describes it, working from this standpoint, the researcher endeavours to "enter the phenomenon, gain multiple views, and locate it in its web of connections and constraints" whilst recognising "that their interpretations of the phenomena are itself a construction" (p.187).

Incorporating a concern for reflexivity in research involves generating and analysing data relevant to this concern. I collected notes on my thoughts, assumptions and motivations for embarking on this doctoral project through reflective diaries and kept field or 'process' notes after interviews during the period of time in which I undertook the research. I also shared some (suitably anonymised) material for comment from peers and my supervisors. This was helpful given the risks of insider research and the pitfalls of being too close to (and unable to separate oneself from) the object of study.

Getting to the research

Curiosity at work

When I started the journey of my doctoral research in the autumn of 2018, I was both keen and naïve. I wondered how challenging it would be to tell my story but also felt pressured (by myself as much as anyone) to formulate a proposal for the research and begin writing. I have worked as a social worker in a local authority setting since 1995 and have long been aware of the distinct absence of women of colour in senior roles.

What began as my own observation of workplaces I had worked in developed into an area of personal and professional curiosity. After some trepidation, I began to

bring this up in conversation with my colleagues and peers (Black, minority ethnic and white). Many social workers and support staff I spoke to said they hadn't noticed this lack of representation and questioned why it mattered. Others reminded me that the numbers of female social workers from non-white communities were relatively small, thus it was understandable even fewer occupied senior or management roles. Comments were also made by colleagues about the cultural 'constraints' BAME women experienced that prevented them from progressing. Many staff also appeared reluctant to share their views, and, fairly quickly, I was confronted on the issue and asked, in my own supervision, why I was 'stirring up trouble'. I was instructed to 'get on' with my work and told that having my feet 'in different boats' wasn't appreciated.

The message at this stage seemed unequivocal: that I shouldn't probe further and should refrain from initiating conversations on this topic. This response generated a range of emotions in me. I became fearful that I had drawn attention to myself and that my cards were marked, leading to (potentially) worrying repercussions. I also felt powerless to act, to not compromise my own prospects for career advancement but also caught in a personal conflict about what ideals were being sacrificed in doing so.

There seemed to be few options available to me other than to quietly observe and I found that each day I was reminded again of this contradiction at the heart of the organisations in which social work takes place. The social work profession's identity is tied to a mission to support people to live with dignity and respect. And yet, for all the rhetoric of anti-oppressive practice and social justice, it fails to address a significant injustice that is hidden in plain sight – the absence of female managers from BAME backgrounds in senior management and leadership positions.

This curiosity developed in the social work context where my practice experience has been across a range of areas (including the fields of learning disabilities, substance misuse and adult social care). Social work typically deals with processes of marginalisation and subjugation and what happens within professional social work reflects what happens to people within broader society. Certain attitudes, perceptions, values, feelings and narratives create marginalisation and lead to discrimination. This research reflects my interest and desire to learn about these from the inside out.

Pursuing this felt risky, even foolhardy at times; yet, as I have undertaken and completed this research, I came to view the endeavour as a whole as highly important. In writing up this research, I have found I have become more passionate about BAME women speaking openly and writing about their experiences in the field so as to enable reflection on the powerful ways in which they are excluded and side-lined in organisations, and not afforded the same opportunities that others are.

Privileged positionality as a female BAME social worker

I was born in Calcutta, India, at the start of the 1970s into an upper-middle-class Hindu Bengali family. West Bengal was one of two communist states in India at the time, and my parents were trainee lawyers when my father left to further his studies and qualify as a barrister in London. My mother held two degrees and chose to teach history and law at the state university. My maternal grandparents were involved in politics, and my maternal grandfather worked as a judge.

By all accounts, I was a cherished addition to the family. From an early age, my needs were prioritised, with my maternal grandmother occupying a prominent role in ensuring I was nurtured, especially academically. At the age of six, when I

had learned to read and write, I was sent to boarding school to commence my formal education. As an only child, I followed in my mother's footsteps, attending the same school that she had. Some of what I remember most vividly from my early childhood is of conversations with the adults around me, of being encouraged to ask questions about things I did not understand.

One thing I did not grasp at the time was the level of socioeconomic privilege I was born into. My extended family and peers were from the same echelon of society, and I was unaware of others who had very different lives as members of a different class and caste.

Gender was a different proposition, and my mother was a formidable influence in this respect, instilling in me a sense of self-worth and value. For her, equality began at home. I, by accident of birth, happened to be female but never the weaker sex. My mother also taught me to be open-minded to other cultures, to embrace difference and not be fearful of others who look different or had different beliefs.

In many ways, Calcutta was a vibrant place to grow up, full of history and culture. Looking back, I see myself as lucky to experience such a place during my formative years. For me, traits I have sought to cultivate in myself – resilience, emotional intelligence, and a capacity to tolerate uncertainty – are rooted in my childhood.

Moving to London during early adolescence was an entirely different experience. I had visited previously to see my father but remember these holidays as pleasantly fleeting events. Coming to live in London felt, contrastingly, very strange.

I arrived in August 1984, intent on making a new home alongside my parents, but soon realised the reality of what my parents had hidden from me was that I was (and we were) in the minority.

Both my parents were employed in jobs in the field of law, but which did not reflect their education and training. My mother fared marginally better than my father and seemed more equipped to cope with the racism they were subjected to. He found life very hard.

Very early on in my new life in London, I resolved to myself that I would need to adapt. Like many children of migrant parents, I started to work. I adjusted to the racism at school by quickly ridding myself of a heavy Indian accent and sought to find ways I could generate income and sustain myself. I knew that this relieved my parents from having to worry about me as a financial burden. In many respects, I consider myself fortunate that I arrived at an age at which I was young enough to change, grow and live. I know of others who didn't have this opportunity and suffered as a consequence. Working hard was a way of pulling myself out of the shame and guilt that my parents carried.

Extended family in Calcutta did not know of my family's trials in London and by virtue of the shame my parents felt, I was prompted to pretend to my extended family that all was well. Yet, the reality remained the same. My parents worked hard and were often shortlisted for senior jobs, but the jobs would disappear as soon as their 'Indianness' was revealed. As an older adolescent and young adult, seeing that this was not an uncommon occurrence, I ensured that I continued to assimilate, as best I could, into the wider community, working as much as I could to help with the financial strain my parents experienced.

By the time I was an adult, I was self-sufficient, and I worked to be fleet-footed in adapting to change with circumstances beyond my control. Like my parents, I was painfully aware that being on the receiving end of racism either made you or broke you; there was no other way.

With these early life experiences, it is perhaps of little surprise that I was drawn to study the narratives of other female BAME leaders and the means by which they navigated their way through their career trajectories and displayed resilience in doing so. One of the most challenging elements of undertaking this research has been the disappointment of recognising there are no easy answers, but also how much self-doubt and ambition may lead to one becoming invested in apparent ‘solutions’. Indeed, I would maintain that the further I have progressed with this research, the more this challenge has been apparent. I have been reflecting on how tolerance for ‘the other’ is misplaced when it is reduced to ‘knowing about’ them and their culture – a kind of desire to ‘swallow’ them with empathy. In this way, I view my own positioning in this enquiry as a BAME female social work leader who has directly experienced how the intersections of race, gender and class can impact their professional existence and their sense of their own professionalism. Like the participants interviewed, my experience has been shaped by colonial and neo-colonial legacies in the UK and globally, which have ramifications across generations.

Like Marsh (2020) who has written about BAME representation in the arts, I am also sceptical about how possible it is for members of a dominant (i.e. oppressing) group to grasp empirically and conceptualise BAME experience. This is where 'minority scholars', i.e. those from BAME groups, may be able to (1) understand racialised oppression and the experiences of BAME persons in a more

nuanced way, and (2) are less likely to face distrust from others within these communities (Marsh 2020; see also Anderson, 1993).

Of course, crude assumptions about this privileged minority scholar position can become obstructive when deployed uncritically. That said, the significant issues they relate to can be minimised if they are not attended to or properly understood; they may soon be superseded by an implicit assumption that the lived experience of a white professional can serve as a direct point of comparison with the experience of a BAME social worker.

At times, I have struggled to make sense of the personal and academic journey with this doctoral research and have felt as though I'm not meant to be undertaking it: that my enquiry is somehow fraudulent and not 'proper' research. While a sense of immobilisation has accompanied this at certain junctures, in other ways it served as a reminder to remain close to the material generated in the research so as to capture what was being conveyed through the stories of the study participants and ways this compared to my own experience.

Researcher reflexivity in the research process

The significance accorded to researcher reflexivity in qualitative and psychosocial research was acknowledged at the start of this chapter (as well as the first chapter of the thesis) and is reflected in wide range of methodological literature (Charmaz, 2006; D'Cruz *et al*., 2008; Clarke and Hoggett, 2009; Hollway and Jefferson, 2013; Etherington, 2004; Finlay and Gough, 2008; Subramani, 2019). For Olmos-Vega *et al*. (2022, p. 1), in the context of qualitative research, the concept can be conceived of as "a set of continuous, collaborative and multifaceted practices through which researchers self-consciously critique, appraise and evaluate how their subjectivity

and context influence the research process". This statement reflects the way in which the concept is used within this study and how autoethnography, narrative and psychosocial methodologies have been combined to explore the experiences of female BAME social work leaders. Principles from constructivist grounded theory are part of this (Charmaz, 2015), alongside insights from other writing addressing the practice of reflexivity (Berger, 2015; Doucet and Mauthner, 2002; Engward and Davis, 2015; Guillemin and Gillam, 2004; Hertz,1996; Ives, 2014; Mauthner and Doucet, 2003). Notably, Alevesson and Skoldberg (2004) provide a practical model which places an emphasise that the researcher reflects methodically. Undertaking the research, I sought to use a hybrid approach, reflecting on certain 'moments' of reflexivity to explore my feelings and thought processes, notably those encountered during the process of completing interviews and analysing the interview material.

For this thesis, this has meant using a first-person writing style and including consideration of my own experience. In doing so, I have reflected on potential ethical concerns arising from my own 'positionality' during the research process and engagement with the interview participants' stories. I sought to be able to account for my own subjectivity and consider the intersubjective dynamics in encounters with the participants. To do so, I shared material from the interview transcripts within seminar groups I attended as part of my doctoral course and in meetings with my supervisors. This process of 'doing' reflexivity was sometimes painful and involved consideration of intertwined personal, interpersonal, methodological and contextual matters. I found that I continuously questioned whether I was being reflexive enough and, indeed, what type of reflexivity this was, with the range of definitions of reflexivity, each foregrounding different key issues (see, for example, Schwandt, 2014, D'Cruz *et al*., 2005; Finlay and Gough, 2008). Yet, overall, I found it helped to

recognise heavily nuanced projections relating to the production of racism in organisations and engage with the complicated and messy nature of the participants' experiences.

Furthermore, via a constructivist epistemology, and a process of ongoing personal and methodological reflexivity, I was able to construct meanings from the participants' interviews. For this purpose, I returned to a series of questions for ongoing reflection. Specifically: In what ways might my experience shape the way I undertake this research? What approaches will help me understand what my participants tell me, and how will this help me generate the data I need to explore my research question? What theories will help me analyse the data? Will I find anything unexpected or new? What is my motivation for wanting to conduct this research? What do I want to get out of it? What are my fears?

Via the use of these questions, understanding my participants' stories began with paying careful attention to what was similar and different between my narrative and their narratives. Approaching their accounts in their way, I do not consider my analysis to occupy a *neutral* space; it relies on the stories told by participants and draws on my own experiences. In so doing, it explores feelings and thoughts embedded in the interactions with the participants, which are an integral part of the data generation and analysis, but ultimately entail co-constructed meanings.

This argument also extends to the cultural lens deployed. This terminology captures the fact that participants have comparable backgrounds and are from non-white communities, with a shared identity as senior female BAME leaders in social work. By way of this definition, culture is construed broadly as a set of norms, behaviours, values, beliefs, artefacts, language and attitudes attributed to a group of people (Dodd,1987, Neulip, 2000). As the study progressed, I began to extend this

definition beyond race and ethnicity and included the participants' socio-cultural, geographical and political experiences and my narratives. This meant I could explore my assumptions and biases in the context of others and consider that lived and shared experiences, within professional and personal contexts, may be represented by a particular language or vocabulary, but that this did not guarantee the same meanings.

Conclusion

This chapter has established that this doctoral research enquiry is based on an understanding that qualitative research is inherently a reflexive endeavour. I have sought to situate myself in the enquiry via an autoethnographic account and considered the role of researcher reflexivity in the interview-based aspect of the study. This has served to further illustrate the interconnected nature of my own and the study participants' experiences, and to allow for a recognition that, while the insights generated via the interviews are co-constructed, I was the arbiter of the meanings attributed in the reporting of the research. It is more ethical to report this as a situated understanding, as the analysis reported does not represent some kind of external 'truth' about the material gathered for the research, allowing the participants' stories to be shared in an authentic way.

CHAPTER 3 Literature review

Introduction

This chapter provides a review of literature relevant to the focus of this research: the experiences of senior female Black, Asian and minority social work leaders. Reflecting the practice-near nature of the research, as a practitioner-initiated enquiry, the review serves to contextualise the study in a range of research and scholarship which connects to the overall research aim. As Dewey and Dahota (2016) acknowledge, literature reviews typically have the purpose of identifying and critically appraising research to answer a specific question, but there are different ways by which they can be approached.

I sought to consider research most directly relevant to the concerns of the study alongside other sources relating to the matters of race and racism, particularly from psychoanalytically based and psychosocial perspectives. The critical lens I weaved into this work allowed me to analyse different sources linked to the specific topic and evaluate relatedness to my research question. While it cannot be said the literature review is a definitive account of all the available relevant scholarship, it does address the most relevant ideas, issues and research available linked to the study.

The chapter is divided into four main parts. The first part details the literature search methodology, setting out the strategy used to identify relevant literature, as well as other sources, criteria for inclusion and exclusion, and other considerations. In this part of the chapter, I also include some reflections on the process of writing this review.

The second part of the chapter addresses the experience of racism in female BAME social work leadership. I consider literature addressing how racism is

experienced by BAME social workers, as well as the matters of intersectionality, in terms of race, gender and class.

The third part considers psychoanalytic thinking about racism and how this can be related (i.e. what it might add) to the exploration of the experience of BAME female social work leadership. The focus of this understanding resides with a psychosocial perspective, drawing primarily on ideas derived from the post-Kleinian and object relations tradition of psychoanalysis.

The fourth part provides further reflections on the process of reviewing the literature, and my own experience of undertaking the reading for the review (which supplement the reflections provided in the second part). Via these reflections, I acknowledge ways in which my own thinking changed and briefly describe some of the self-understanding that occurred as a by-product of this task.

Literature search methodology

Simply stated, the aim for the literature review was to gather together and critically consider the ideas, approaches and thinking about race, ethnicity and gender that impact senior BAME female social workers in practice. As Kiteley and Stogdon (2014) note, assuming a 'critical' position in the context of a literature review does not simply mean being negative; rather, the main purpose of a literature review is to examine how a particular topic has been addressed, including considering strengths of extant scholarship and identifying gaps that might be pursued by future enquiry.

In undertaking the review, I sought to follow guidance provided by Hart (2018) which characterises an effective literature review for an empirical research project as selective, identifying work that is relevant to the research and providing a structured discussion of it. A range of electronic scholarly and academic publishing house

databases were searched, including Psych article, Psych Info, SOCindex, EBSCO, Sage, JSTOR, Taylor and Francis, and ETHoS. In doing so, I also set up alerts so that I could be notified of new relevant literature. The inclusion criteria comprised keywords linked to the research question, including race and racism, female leadership, inequality, social work, intersectionality theory, feminist theory, gender and class. I focussed specifically on English-language literature and opted to search for literature concerned with the phenomenon of interest: social work leadership and BAME female leadership, as well as psychoanalytic perspectives on race and racism. I considered key areas such as experiences in the workplace, gender and racial inequalities there and the experiences of Black and ethnic minority social work staff.

Searches involved the use of synonyms and alternative ways of phrasing terms, spelling variants, and combining singular and plural words to ensure comprehensiveness. I combined these using BOOLEAN operators, i.e. AND/OR—for example, of BAME and inequality, workplace and leadership, and gender and race. Whilst undertaking these searches, I kept detailed records and created categories in order to be able to cross reference these with the analysis and discission of the findings for this study. Overall, I was disappointed that there seemed to be a very limited amount of dedicated scholarship addressing the experiences of BAME female leaders within social work, but also felt hopeful that this enquiry would help to fill a gap in this area.

When commencing my literature search, I was initially drawn to various literature which appeared to be related to my research topic. However, the sheer volume of references (over 759,000) was daunting to manage, and I learned quickly to focus the scope to make the search manageable and anchored to the research

question, finding that literature concerned with workplace inequality with specific reference to BAME female leaders was a valuable place to start. Most of the literature sourced was drawn from the United States, Canada and Western Europe, with some sources from South Asia. While linked to the focus of this study, much of this scholarship was from allied health and social welfare sectors.

As this was a practitioner-initiated, practice-near research enquiry, I also sought to immerse myself in the wider field of my concern via relevant media and online sources, including video material, documentaries, newspapers and websites. Engaging with this material during the course of the enquiry enabled me to stay abreast of events in the public arena which related to the research question and to consider the information available to BAME social work professionals.

Workplace racism and senior female BAME social work leadership

Many scholars have discussed how racism is experienced by Black, Asian and ethnic minority staff within social services contexts. Brokmann *et al*. (2001) assert that racism continues to be politically controversial in social work. They note how the difficulties of identifying and measuring how racism operates lie at the heart of the issue alongside the intractable nature of institutional racism, which may manifest in certain attitudes and behaviours towards BAME staff from colleagues and service users.

Addressing the domain of Black female social work leadership in the United States, Rogers and Lopez (2020) argue that despite advances in social work in institutional settings, racism, sexism and divisions based on differences in social class remain, thwarting upward mobility for Black female staff. Further, they make the important point that ‘neutral normative’ practices enable a select group of

individuals to form the leadership of an organisation for an entire profession. Alongside this, Rodgers and Lopez assert that racism is independent of the term diversity and should not be viewed as capturing the same phenomena; indeed, despite celebrations of diversity, racism can often be hidden away, leading to an 'outsider-within leadership' feeling for Black social work leaders.

This point can be linked to a UK context where, as Lowe (2013) suggests, a veneer of equal opportunities hides a hierarchy maintained along lines of race and class, ensuring that leadership remains white, reflecting structures present in wider society and an ideology of white racial and cultural superiority (which can be understood in a historical, socioeconomic and political context of colonialism, slavery and empire).

Wright *et al*. (2021) explore the injustice of racism and the role of an ideology of white supremacy. They explore narratives and symbols which lead to a mindset that 'whites' are supreme and note how academic and social work institutions attribute this to a 'whitewashing' of social work history where the contributions of Black pioneers in the profession are overlooked and written out of the script.

Other researchers writing on the experiences of racism experienced by BAME social work professionals include Lavalette and Penketh (2014) who discuss contemporary issues in modern Britain following major events, in which issues of race and racism were significant, addressing, in the process, the topics of islamophobia, antisemitism, multiculturalism and past as well as present perspectives on anti-racism in social work. This discussion is, essentially, of 'macro' considerations and structural racism. With this focus, the discourse tends to be limited in scope when it comes to understanding the psychosocial dynamics and lived experience of being exposed to racist attitudes and projections. All the same,

the work is germane to understanding how BAME senior female leaders are perceived by their white counterparts, and the continuous process of being viewed with suspicion and feeling like an outsider at work despite occupying a leadership role. This work also provides insights into ways racism inhabits organisations and the burdens of history that BAME social work professionals carry with them.

Race and gender in social work

Exploring the intersectionality of race and gender is a complex task. There are studies which consider this intersectionality of race and gender in the context of social work in the UK. Lewis (2000) and Graham (2007) discuss the issues of race and gender from a Marxist and feminist perspective. They assert that Black and minority ethic women are constrained by entrenched masculinity in the field and forms of governance designed to manage immigrant communities, which serve to constrict career progression.

An extensive exploration of social policy and the role of the state and its impact on a racialised and gendered social work profession, Lewis' (2000) study is an important contribution in considering the issue of BAME female leadership. Lewis examines the significance of state governmentality in creating categories for Black and Asian workers as racialised subjects who are assimilated into British norms. She contends that social work forms one of a "set of agencies and professions" that is "brought into the project of assimilating reconstituted black subjects to a redefined political agenda" (p. 42). This is achieved via a multipronged empirical exploration, beginning at the national and policy level and ending at the experiences of social workers who have had to navigate this complex terrain as racialised and gendered subjects. Although completed and published over 20 years ago, the study has not

lost its significance in terms of applicability and resonance with contemporary events and experience. In particular, Lewis describes the “now you see it, now you don’t” quality of discourse about race in the UK, drawing together psychoanalytic and post-colonial theories and considering a range of class, gender and racial experiences.

The work helps to consider how intersectionality can illuminate what happens to racialised and gendered workers, and how different forms of (race- and gender-based) disadvantage can knot together to impede career progression. My view is that it also illuminates how the construct of intersectionality is, on its own, limited in its reach and may be beneficial combined with psychosocial reasoning. Via such a synthesis, it can help to understand how individuals and groups from a cohort of leaders make sense of their daily workplace experiences.

The literature search established that there was limited research relating directly to the experiences of senior female BAME social work leaders in the UK; however, there were studies from the United States and Canada which focused on the experiences and perspectives of BAME social work professionals (Kikulwe, 2014; Andrews, 2021; Spears and De Loach, 2020). Kikulwe’s (2014) and Andrews’ (2021) studies identified stereotypical perceptions used in institutions towards these cohorts of professionals who were subject to multiple forms of disadvantage which were mediated via predetermined work relations involving colleagues, supervisors and service users. Similarly, Jones (2023) explored how Black female social workers experience the transition from mentee to leadership positions, drawing attention to the widespread stereotyping they were subject to, linking this to the under-representation of Black women in leadership positions.

In different ways, it appears this is not dissimilar to experiences in the UK in and outside of social work, as in Showunmi *et al.*’s (2018) work. This drew from a

broad range of public and private sector organisations and higher education to explore how gender and ethnicity-influenced leadership experiences were defined organisationally as compared to white leadership trajectories in the context of leadership approaches.

Race and gender in the workplace

Looking more broadly at the experience of female and Black leadership in organisations, there are different themes to note. Graham (2007) for example, considers how women are positioned within the labour market, including how they enter the labour market, focussing the discussion on the ethics of care and how social welfare policies reproduce or reinforce gender inequalities in the workplace and wider society.

In a similar vein, a case study concerned with BAME leaders within the arts and cultural field in the UK and Finland examined the intersectional ties of race, class and gender (Marsh 2020). The study explored how these categorisations influence the experiences of BAME arts and cultural leaders, concluding that whereas race and gender are explicit, visible markers of 'otherness' and thus more readily recognised, class can be hidden and covert, not an external presentation, but more part of an individual's (internal) identity. As part of the study, Marsh (2020) observes that the under-representation of individuals from particular racial and class backgrounds and the gender imbalance in these fields is likely influenced by leadership characteristics often defined by white middle-class men and framed as the 'norm'. Marsh asserts that to make leadership more representative, policy must actively encourage cross-cultural exchanges amongst all those involved.

Situated within the domain of workplace equality and discrimination scholarship, the work of Opara, Sealy and Ryan (2020) addresses the workplace experiences of BAME professional women. These authors acknowledge the paucity of research relating to BAME professional women whilst observing how these experiences have an impact on a range of outcomes relating to wellbeing. This work focuses on the intersections of minority ethnicity, nationality and gender, and the findings supplement Marsh's findings regarding misperceived identity imposition. Moreover, the function and workings of *strategic essentialism* are highlighted – defined as a strategy by which differences (within a group) are temporarily downplayed and unity assumed to achieve political goals. Strategic essentialism, as a concept drawn from post-colonial theory, was introduced by the Indian theorist and literary critic, Spivak in the 1980s. Initially, Spivak's (2008) development of the concept was intended for use in relation to cultural contexts where caste was prevalent within South Asian regions. However, it has been adopted by social theorists and researchers to describe identity categories that are understood in terms of underpinning systems of dominance, which may lead to further discrimination for certain individuals. Indeed, it may be applied to the experiences of BAME female leaders within social work, as supported by literature exploring gender bias in social care and healthcare settings.

Rankine (2020) writes eloquently about everyday encounters of racism and the imposition of white supremacist and Eurocentric ideals. She comments on the microaggressions that can occur quite casually, providing vivid examples of the personal projections that persons of colour experience. In this work, she develops different ideas regarding body recall, associative views, and positioning of the Black minority in relation to their white counterparts, illustrating this via images and poems

to bridge the silence, guilt and shame that can surrounds whiteness and racism. She also explores false enlightenment and how blackness occupies white spaces, seeking to confront the forms of racism that are hidden in plain sight and can lead to fraught situations at any given point in time. Rankine's account of these encounters illustrates how racist projections (operating at both conscious and unconscious levels) can lurk within *any interaction* and spring into action without notice leaving a legacy of hypervigilance and fear of speaking up for BAME communities.

Although Rankine's (2020) work is highly important in conceptualising the way racism can permeate everyday encounters between white and non-white populations, her work is concerned with racism in the United States where racism may hold a different meaning in the context of slavery and segregation and a different social structure to the UK. Furthermore, migration patterns into the UK have significantly impacted on the growth and development of racism, which has, in turn, impacted the experiences of racism as lived amongst UK citizens.

Yet, processes of denial (of racism) can operate in both everyday encounters and official documentation and thus be considered part of the lived reality for BAME leaders in the statutory sector. For example, the *Commission on Race and Ethnic Disparities Report* (Commission on Race and Ethnic Disparities, 2021) asserts that the UK's success in removing race-based disparities in education and the economy "should be regarded as a model for other white-majority countries".

In this respect, Field (2019) helpfully charts the lived experiences of different non-white communities in the UK going back as far as the early 1970s. This work evidences that race, sex and social class were core factors that influenced the racism experienced by non-white communities then as they are now. While not workplace or gender specific or related directly to social work, these stories do reflect

the barriers that BAME persons and BAME professionals from other disciplines have faced in society.

Whilst literature on BAME women in leadership in social work can be considered limited when it comes to incorporating psychosocial concerns, workplace inequality studies such as those undertaken by Opara *et al.* (2020) and Wang *et al*. (2020) illuminate aspects of behaviours and experiences that impact career progression for BAME female professionals. Hwang (2007) explores workplace perceptions held by Asian workers and barriers like glass ceilings that hinder career progression. This invisibility of organisational barriers is akin to what Lowe (2013) identifies as organisational cultures which are deeply hidden, invisible and pervasive in the mindsets of decision-makers. Experiences from allied health and social care domains may also closely parallel the experiences of senior female BAME social work professionals. These include the stereotypes that are levelled at them and ways their ‘difference’ (i.e. manner of speech, dress, name) is responded to by white colleagues.

The literature on employment inequalities clarifies ways in which the interrelation between different forms of disadvantage is faced by BAME workers. Contributions such as those provided by Jivraj and Simpson (2015), Wacquant (2022), Platt (2019), and Murray (1990) examine the historical, political, social and economic disparities that exist in and for non-white communities. In this work, evidence is drawn from existing census data and this helps to provide a broad overview of the geographical differences that exist within a UK employment context and employment inequalities in the labour market in a broader societal context.

Research that is gender-specific includes the ethnographic work of McCrun (2020), who examined how socioeconomically disadvantaged Black African

American women negotiated work and life within the inner-city context of Oakland, California. The study describes the emotional and physical toll of life in poverty, underemployment and class struggles and the different types of jobs the participants in the study were forced to engage in. Within a UK context, Khattab and Johnstone (2018) examined the economic, cultural, religious and family factors which bear upon Muslim women entering the employment market by way of two different statistical datasets as well as interviews with women for their views (which, it can be said, limits the scope of the study as an impersonal perspective).

Evans and Bowlby (2000) explored the labour market experiences of Pakistani migrant women in Britain by interviewing 27 Muslim women from the city of Reading, concluding that class and life stage were critical factors in how and when this cohort of females entered the workplace, highlighting how privilege is a rarely discussed aspect of BAME professional careers. Dale (2002) also considered the social exclusion of Pakistani and Bangladeshi women. Dale's work found that although family expectations were a significant barrier for first-generation women arriving in Britain during the 1960s and 1970s, second-generation females appear to see paid work as beneficial to their self-esteem, economic well-being and independence. British-born females from these two communities were found to have greater access to the employment sector, but little was said about what happens in the workplace for those pursuing white-collar positions.

Evidence relating to this is found in a study by Archer *et al.* (2022) who found that some 60 per cent of the 500 women they interviewed reported being subject to racism and sexism, which the COVID-19 pandemic was considered to exacerbate. One can also consider the interrelation between this and the perceptions and experiences of BAME school students where differential treatment can begin early

and then be mirrored within the workplace. Experiences of racism (and the development of coping strategies in response) can begin in early childhood in parallel with ways in which divisions are maintained, including terms of reference that reflect dehumanisation, such as BAME pupils being subjected to different labels such as 'deviant' or 'subnormal' (see, e.g. Mamon, 2004; Wright, 1988).

Social class

Class, it may be said, is a more salient category of difference in the UK compared to that of the United States, and distinctions of class interact with the experiences and lives of minoritised groups in different ways (Eddo-Lodge, 2018). In the UK, experiences of migration and place can interact in critical ways with the 'otherness' Black and minority ethnic professionals can experience in the elitist, rarefied world of senior leadership, primarily occupied by a white majority.

In Western culture, broadly defined, there are two main perspectives enshrined in relation to class, represented by Marxist and Weberian schools of thought. According to Breen and Rottman (1995), both perspectives shared several commonalities, but also key differences in articulating the way distinctions of social class are maintained. Both perspectives share a view of class stratus as, essentially, linked to people's economic situations. However, from a Marxist perspective, class is determined in terms of a relationship with the ownership of production in a capitalist society. On the other hand, from a Weberian perspective, the emphasis resides, instead, with the systems whereby various individuals are assigned positions within a capitalist structure.

In contemporary social science, social class is one of the most used but inconsistently described categorisations among theorists (Côtê, 2011; Evans and

Mills, 1998). Milner (1999) observes that, in a sociological sense, social class is used to signify a social group that is "primarily determined by 'economic' considerations such as occupation, income and wealth" (p. 1), i.e. as an 'objective' categorisation. However, for some theorists, social class confers a particular identity that is determined not only by economic considerations but also other factors. With this, an individual's perceived position about others within a society is important to account for (Côtê, 2011). Kennelly (2003) found that white employers can base employment decisions on negative social class stereotypes (e.g. perceived educational attainment or growing up in a single-parent family) which are often associated with Black womanhood.

Amongst different perspectives on social class, feminist theorists have argued that traditional conceptualisations of differences in social class do not adequately engage with women's oppression under capitalism and the role of patriarchy (Hennessy, 2003). Moreover, while traditional conceptualisations laid the foundations for understanding class, they do not adequately represent marginalised groups' experiences and the 'hidden injuries' (Sennett and Cobb, 1972) they suffer, highlighting the need for further research addressing the experiences of BAME groups, particularly Black women. Collins (1991), for example, notes how notions of social status are founded on the appraisal of the occupational prestige of work traditionally assigned to men.

Using psychoanalytic thought in the study of race and racism

In this enquiry, a central place is afforded to a psychoanalytic framework for thinking about matters of race and racism. This is grounded in an appreciation of racism as a multifaceted phenomenon, involving psychological and social dynamics, and

something that is socially, culturally and historically configured. The framework informing this study relies particularly on the post-Kleinian and object relations tradition of psychoanalysis. By way of its direct concern with the relationship between self and other, this tradition affords a valuable vocabulary for considering relatedness at dyadic and group levels, how profound the trauma of racism can be on the individual and group, and the way racist states of mind can have a remarkable capacity to co-exist with 'support' for ethnic and cultural diversity (see, e.g. Treacher, 2004, 2006).

Malik (2023) argues that the construct of race needs to be understood within a historical context and astutely observes that there is a paradox: the more racism is viewed as abhorrent in society, the more the construct of race appears to be clung to. Yet, when we think about race and racism in the context of social class, we can see how hierarchies of race (and white supremacism) give way to hierarchies of dominance for Black and minority ethnic groups.

Osajima (1993) and Cowlishaw (2004) explore the profundity of the trauma of racism, how it creates anxiety which blocks the capacity to think through painful encounters in everyday life, making seemingly innocuous experiences challenging to process. Their work articulates the tension inherent to the intersectionality of race, gender and class as it impacts the individual and group. The effect and internalisation of racist projections play out in the management of common microaggressions, which individuals and groups must contend with to maintain psychological integrity. Osajima's (1993) and Cowlishaw's (2004) work also highlight that although a psychoanalytic perspective helps in understanding the emotional impact of racism, this should not mean that a historical and societal context is overlooked or reduced to unconscious processes.

Seeking to provide such a psychosocial thesis, Clarke (2003) looks to social theory and psychoanalysis together as a means of understanding the complex nature of racism. He considers how divisive, even explosive, the topic of race can be and the way hatred for the ’other’ can be understood by marrying sociological and psychoanalytical ideas. Via psychoanalytic theory, he considers the organisation of the mind and different defence mechanisms that may be involved in processes by which racism is maintained and intolerable affect defended against (including sublimation, repression and projection). He situates projection and projective identification as central to both psychoanalytical thought and understanding motivations that lie behind racism and means of discrimination (see also Holmes, 2014).

This is then linked, by Clarke, to the contributions of influential social theorists, including Adorno, who made links between human behaviour and capitalist modes of production; Fanon who attributed societal misdemeanours to colonial acts of violence, which brutalised African peoples and caused greater violence; and Bauman who emphasised the fluid or liquid nature of late-modern societies and globalisation, and the upheaval this involved for communities, especially those marginalised in a knowledge economy. Setting these perspectives in the context of psychoanalytic ideas – Freudian, Lacanian and Kleinian, Clarke argues for considering societal and mental components of racism, hatred and exclusion, and understanding the ‘other’ as a social construct, creating a useful foundation from which to consider the lived and shared experiences of individuals from Black and minority ethnic communities.

Similarly, but more radically, Davids (2011, p. 28) contends that internal racism is a universal feature of the human mind, with what he characterises as a

"*paranoid, us-them construction"* involving self and racial other as a permanent feature (Davids, 2011, p. 28). He argues that there is a need for a psychoanalytic account that attends to the race/class divide in the way that the theory of the Oedipus complex attends to the gender divide. Foregrounding the 'agony' of being Black in a white world, Davids observes how being faced by the other can conjure up a gamut of feelings, from fear and loathing to relief, which relate to fundamental human instincts, primitive anxieties and a fear of annihilation.

Davids (2011) provides a theoretical apparatus to consider dynamics in social relationships, which requires application in real-world contexts. This apparatus, nonetheless, provides a useful means of orientation for considering how BAME professionals experience aspiring towards and seeking management and leadership positions. It helps to articulate, in particular, how certain emotions may be experienced in the process, for example shame, guilt, and humiliation, but also how speaking out and discourse around race or racism may be (consciously or unconsciously) avoided for fear of being labelled as hostile, i.e. as the angry Black woman (Motro *et al*., 2021, Opara *et al*., 2020).

In his work, Davids (2011) attends in depth to the influential work of Fanon (1952/1967), who proposed that a psycho-existential complex existed in the mind of the colonised, where idealisation led to identification with the white coloniser against the Black/native self. Davids describes this as the "first detailed account of a racist relationship within the mind of the colonised" and acknowledges that Fanon "recognised that this complex existed on an unconscious level and that through the process of projection in today's modern society could well be used to understand how dark skin confers an inescapable psychic problem: it invites the

projection/introjection of undesirable and unwanted mental content by the white other" (Davids, 2011, p. 108).

Further supporting the insights of Clarke (2003) and Davids (2011), White (2005) attempts to explore the relationship between attachment, race and culture, focussing on how early caregiving relationships can influence the sense of connection between people. This is a helpful argument, but generic in its scope, which can be supplemented by considering other temporal and geographical dimensions to relationships. Keval (2011), for instance, examines the hybrid nature of movement via geography and psychic identifications that relate to place and attempts to understand the perversion of curiosity and concern that feature in co-dependent yet predatory relationships with the racialised other.

Like Davids (2011), Keval (2011) utilises a psychoanalytic lens to examine how racism plays out via processes of splitting and projection within paranoid-schizoid forms of mental functioning – not so much as explanations for why racism exists, but to illuminate the cognitive and interpersonal processes through which racist discourses are invested by individuals and communities.

Addressing the reasons why senior leadership positions in the UK remain predominantly white, Lowe (2013) asserts that failures to address the way primitive anxieties, unconscious racism, denial and projective identification are hidden in the psyches of decision-makers helps support white majority organisational cultures. This argument serves to highlight how professionals from Black and minority ethnic backgrounds can become hypervigilant and compliant with organisational policies and practices, even in leadership positions, so as to avoid rocking the boat, which can be compounded by colleagues' claims that the organisation values diversity or that we live in a post-racial society. The argument may also be linked to ways in

which BAME professionals may “keep on moving” (Armstrong, 2005) between organisations in response to their experiences as professionals and leaders to avoid trouble and personal distress.

Commentary on the process of reading

When I initially started working on the literature review for this doctoral enquiry, I naively (perhaps arrogantly) assumed it would be a straightforward piece of work. Yet, as I continued to undertake searches and read, I found things became much less clear and certain and I wondered whether I had taken on too much, i.e. an excess of issues relating to equality and diversity in the workplace within social work. I also worried about not doing enough and limiting the field of vision for the enquiry, overlooking hidden depths that were potentially vital in the understanding I was seeking to develop.

Alongside this, I found that the process of writing and reading was emotionally draining at times. Over time, I came to see this process as linked to my own experience of painful events of a racist nature I had been subject to and witnessed. Reading about racial inequality left me feeling a sense of dread and at times I felt powerless and overwhelmed.

I also came to recognise that the way I had engaged in this task of reviewing the literature was not simply a product of the research enquiry, but also linked to a tendency I often resort to when anxious: of jumping into an endeavour without looking. I realised that I do this to avoid emotional pain - a hard lesson to learn, but much harder to accept.

While the chosen literature was evaluated in terms of its relevance to the project and psychosocial methodology, I was keen to identify and make use of work

from Black and minority ethnic scholars. Undertaking this work, I have remained aware that relevant work may have been missed and sought to be transparent in describing the process of identifying and reviewing the literature. On this point, I would want to acknowledge that the interplay between race, ethnicity and gender is complex and a focus on depth invariably means something is lost in the range or scope of an enquiry.

Conclusion

This chapter provided a review of literature relevant to the research enquiry, providing a context for the empirical study in terms of earlier related research and a theoretical framework grounded in a psychoanalytically informed, psychosocial perspective. The next chapter provides an account of the methodology used in the empirical interview-based strand of the enquiry.

CHAPTER 4 **Methodology**

Introduction

Chapter 3 sought to contextualise the research in relevant literature, and documented complexities associated with the research questions formulated as part of this enquiry. This chapter is specifically concerned with the methodology developed for the research, addressing issues of ontology and epistemology, as well as how the research was conducted; it also reports how aspects of BNIM were utilised in the research. Attention is paid to how the study can be situated in a specific research paradigm, along with more practical considerations, such as how the participants were recruited, alongside ethical issues, confidentiality, consent and the collection and analysis of interview material.

Earlier in the thesis, I acknowledged some issues associated with being close to the research subject and detailed reasons for writing the thesis in the first person. This chapter supplements some of the reflections provided in Chapter Two regarding how I made use of my subjectivity in the research and considered the intersubjective relationship between myself and the participants.

Research paradigm

It is important to discuss paradigms in research so as to address claims made in the generation of knowledge and the particular standpoint from which a research study is undertaken. According to Guba and Lincoln (1994, p. 107), paradigms are the “basic set of beliefs or world view that guides the research action”. Moreover, paradigms shape the researcher’s philosophical stance and influence one’s choice of methodology and method to conduct research (Kivunja and Kuyini, 2017; Denzin and

Lincoln, 2000). These layers of ontological beliefs, epistemological assumptions, and methodological choices (Rowland, 1995) combined with the consideration of ethics, are, in essence, the scaffolding which supports this research.

Guba and Lincoln (1994) delineated four competing paradigms guiding qualitative research inquiries: positivism, post-positivism, critical theory, and constructivism/interpretivism. Positivism, also described as the scientific method, involves adopting a view that ‘objective’ understanding is possible, i.e. without researchers’ values influencing the outcomes or explanations arrived at in research (Park *et al*., 2020). A tangible reality exists which may be understood from different perspectives, but this does not change the nature of that reality. Post-positivism, also grounded in the scientific method, can be viewed as allowing for greater flexibility in this context, in that it views reality in an imperfectly probable way and human research enquiry as flawed in the way that it interacts with the nature of presenting phenomena. Both these paradigms are primarily concerned with the testing and proving or disproving of hypotheses, i.e. around whether, given the same variables, a situation or condition may represent or be replicated across research studies. By comparison, critical theory, which aims to critique and change society as a whole, is premised on an understanding that the investigator and the investigated are linked in understanding, and that the investigator’s values inevitably affect the inquiry.

This study is not situated within the scientific or critical theory tradition. Instead, it draws from a constructivism/interpretivist paradigm which is premised on a view that there is no absolute truth, only the truth that a person or culture believes and that our understanding of reality is a product of social experience, not an objective truth.

In this study, my philosophical assumptions as a researcher about the nature of reality (ontology) and the nature of knowledge (epistemology) are explored using a constructivist/interpretivist paradigm, as my research is about exploring the experiences of other female BAME leaders within a social work setting. My experience as a leader will likely differ from other senior female BAME leaders. Consequently, questions can be asked about how I view a shared social 'reality' in comparison to another female BAME leader. Whilst there may be commonalities in our respective experiences, there will be differences and no singular 'truth' to establish, and these represent different interpretations of a single phenomenon or multiple phenomena (Guba, 1990, Rowland, 1995, Rehman and Alharthi, 2016).

Ontology and epistemology

There are several versions of constructivism, for example, radical and social. Although some theorists linked to this paradigm believe in intangible mental constructions, others conceive of reality as a product of mental construction based on actions or written texts. Stanley and Wise (1983) usefully distinguish between "the 'deductivist' view of science" where "theory precedes research" and "the 'inductivist' view of science" which "is that theory construction derives from the experience" (1983, p. 48).

This study follows a similar pattern of inducing meaning from the experiences of individual reconstructions of career trajectories within a social work setting, where the intersectionality of gender and race have been present. Constructivism is directly concerned with how people experience the world around them and reflect on those experiences. All participants in this study have developed representations (pre-existing) of the world and incorporate and embrace new experiences to navigate

their leadership positions. As a practitioner-researcher, I was drawn to constructivism as it allows for a subjective perspective and assumes the researcher and participants are interconnected so that findings are considered as co-constructed in the gathering and analysis of the research material. As a researcher, I interacted with the research participants at different times during the project, and this process of interaction and exchange of information developed in a particular context, setting and situations. Furthermore, previous experiences of beliefs, systems, values, fears, prejudices, hopes, disappointments and achievements are foci of this research.

Simply put, epistemology concerns how we come to know what we know; for example, how we know the truth or reality of a situation and how we see the world and make sense of it (Crotty 1998). Historically, constructivism originated from several philosophies; its early development can be attributed to the thought of Greek philosophers such as Heraclitus (“everything flows, nothing stands still”) and Protagoras (“man is the measure of all things”), followed by the Renaissance and the Enlightenment era, with the rise of phenomenology. Kant and Vico, seventeenth-century philosophers, argued that notions of space, time and truth are not fixed entities but created by man. These views were not beyond critique as they were challenging the established Cartesian epistemology; however, the Enlightenment’s claims generated a reaction in Romanticism, involving an emphasis on human experience.

With its roots in philosophy, social constructivism holds the opposite view to objectivism, which conceives of reality as existing independently beyond one’s own mind. My epistemological assumptions aligned to a constructivist stance, essentially from the beginning of this project, as I was interested in exploring the lived and shared experiences in senior BAME female leadership within a social work setting.

Furthermore, I view constructivism as having a social, linguistic and political impact in considering how relationships between racism and gender relate to how BAME persons are thought about. Cooper (2011) emphasises how attending to this interconnectedness allows for an understanding of whole systems of domination, notably in terms of the systemic positioning of Black people through names, descriptions and theories that confer inferiority.

The epistemological assumptions described above impact the methodological choices I made to explore the data that I gathered. This research involved a qualitative methodology as this allowed me to pay close attention to the individual experience.

Qualitative research design

Qualitative research and psychoanalysis share a concern with understanding why things happen in the way they do, and the meanings attributed to experience. Still, the difference between the two resides in how they conceive of this understanding as realised and the methods by which one can do so. Although they both involve something of an emphasis on communication (especially verbal communication), in the case of psychoanalysis, much more importance is placed on what is unintentionally revealed (and what this may indicate about unconscious processes).

Recognising that the central research question for this study was concerned with multiple layers of experience, I was interested in qualitative research methods, which would, I anticipated, help to elicit experience-rich material that was not straightforwardly accessible by other means. I was also drawn to the idea of viewing research participants as ‘defended subjects’ (Hollway and Jefferson, 2000, 2013).

Hollway and Jefferson's (2000, 2013) notion of the research participant as a defended subject, developed as part of their free association narrative interview (FANI) method and is rooted in theoretical principles drawn from Kleinian psychoanalysis (Klein, 1988a, 1988b). Building on Klein's (1988a, 1988b) ideas, Hollway and Jefferson note how anxieties may be mobilised at an internal (i.e. unconscious) level when individuals or groups are faced with circumstances that generate conflict or other unexpected triggers that create fear, flight or fight responses. This seemed important to address for the study, given individuals in leadership positions can be threatened by exposure to feelings and thoughts around the contentious issues of race and gender, and the impact that racism may have had on their career journeys.

The central research question of the study also lent itself to asking participants about experiences they may have been reluctant to discuss, and I was interested in the 'deeper' emotional content of narratives. I considered different structured, semi-structured, and life story interviewing approaches, as well as questionnaires. However, with many of the approaches I considered, I was concerned about positioning myself in the role of 'expert' or 'assessor', potentially 'contaminating' the reflexive nature of the enquiry. Many of the qualitative approaches appeared to offer means to produce a vast corpus of data, but also potentially lose something in terms of depth. As such, I sought a method which enabled me to hold a stance that was akin to a therapeutic frame, not leading participants to follow a particular direction in interviews.

Wengraf's (2004) BNIM assumes that research subjects will respond to interviews with defended (i.e. held) positions and that these are, in essence, defences against unconscious anxiety. A fundamental feature of BNIM is the

development and deployment of a single (interview) question aimed at inducing narrative (SQUIN) which encourages the interview participant to tell their life story.

The SQUIN for the study was derived from the central research question of asking what the experiences of senior female BAME leaders in social work are:

> As you know, I am researching the experiences of senior female BAME leaders in social work today. So, please can you tell me your story; all those events and experiences that were important to you personally and professionally? I will listen, I will not interrupt. I will take some notes in case I have any questions after you have finished. Please take your time, please begin whenever you like.

This is how I began each interview, enabling the participants to consider in a purposeful way where they started their respective stories.

I chose to use principles from BNIM specifically over other qualitative methods of interviewing, for example, Hollway and Jefferson's (2000, 2013) FANI method or another form of semi-structured or in-depth interview, as I did not want to direct the participants' accounts or their thinking. I recognised that I risked participants revealing very little whatsoever but anticipated that the SQUIN and study information circulated prior to interviews would help to prompt participants to share their lived experiences.

A sub-session of the interview then enabled me to purposefully elicit personal incident narratives, and participants to talk in-depth about specific experiences that were significant to them, and for the foregrounding of psychosocial material. I was aware that my curiosity and 'need to know' could have easily transformed these interviews into a therapeutic assessment and sought to avoid this.

For Wengraf (2002), a BNIM-based approach to interviewing facilitates narratives that are individual to the person interviewed and provides insight into

internal and external pressures they experience. When using a BNIM approach, a three-stage structure is involved, with each stage eliciting the recollection of events and experiences from the participant that are indexed in actual events whilst attending to subjective feelings regarding these. My interest in BNIM was influenced by my concern with the stories that BAME female social work leaders tell and what these might reveal about how they experience the workplace and ways their colleagues and managers perceive them. The initial narrative sub-session is entirely improvised after posing one initial question. The most promising cue phrases are noted during this stage. These, then, provide the basis from which the interviewer provides further prompts. If necessary, a third session can then be undertaken a week or month after reviewing the material from the first two sessions, to gather further material on pertinent experiences or views and clarify aspects of the account already given in sessions one and two.

To analyse the material gathered, I used thematic analysis based on CGT and Charmaz's (2015) method. The analysis involved an iterative process of considering how the participants constructed their experience in the context of their senior leadership positions, including the role of their childhood experiences and the relationship between this and their professional survival and resilience in the context of intersectional inequalities bearing on both their personal and professional lives.

Participant recruitment, consent, confidentiality and ethics

In total, I interviewed five female BAME senior social work leaders employed within a single local authority. This modest sample size, achieved via a convenience sampling strategy, was consistent with the study being exploratory research, seeking an in-depth understanding of the lived experiences of a specific professional group.

As Nicholls (2009, p. 639) points out, “the more individualistic the methodology, the smaller the numbers needed and the greater the depth required to achieve ‘sampling sufficiency’”.

For each participant, two face-to-face interview sessions took place over a six-month period, the arrangements for these were negotiated with participants individually via email. After having been identified as prospective participants, informal discussions and correspondence took place before informed consent was obtained from each participant.

All the participants were professionally unknown to me. The inclusion criteria were occupying a senior leadership role (i.e. as a service manager or director), to identify as female and BAME, and to be employed in a statutory social work setting. All five participants were, at the time of interview, senior managers in a single local authority and subject to the same confidentiality and disclosure requirements. Although the participants worked in the same local authority as me, they were not, at the time of the study, connected with my current professional role. All participants belonged, at the time of interview, to adult social care, while my remit lies within public health.

Formal ethical approval for the study was sought and obtained from the local authority and the Tavistock and Portman NHS Trust internal ethical review process (see Appendix Four). Verbal and written consent was obtained from all participants. Participants were also given full access to their recorded interviews and transcripts. The participants were given a choice of withdrawing from the research process within three months of their completed interviews, should they feel unable to continue or wish to have their data withdrawn. I also discussed my professional role

and the potential conflict of interest arising from intentional or unintentional disclosures, which may arise as participants narrate their stories spontaneously.

All the participants were provided with a study information pack. This detailed the purpose of the research, confidentiality arrangements and the right to withdraw from the study. Participants were made aware that the interviews would be audio recorded and that these recordings would be fully transcribed for analysis. They were made aware of procedures put in place to maintain their anonymity. The participants were not connected to each other in terms of divisional responsibilities in the local authority and did not have knowledge of each other's participation.

Due to the study considering personal and painful experiences, process consent was considered highly important and, as an interviewer, at various times I revisited the matter of consent with participants. Participants also had access to local support from the local authority's training and development officer, who was able to advise and signpost participants to support mechanisms if need be.

Alongside this, participants were offered the opportunity to access a debrief session and feedback from the research project periodically. They also had several opportunities to discuss how they felt about taking part. To safeguard my own emotional well-being undertaking the research, I was supported by my doctoral supervisors via regular supervisory input and was able to access support from a training and development officer in my place of work should difficult feelings be evoked.

All participants were made aware that the research project was, at heart, a collaborative exercise. The hope was that learning from this project could inform thinking on race, gender and inequality within social work organisations and the

study findings would help these organisations address inequities in opportunities for progression for BAME staff.

BNIM-based interview approach

As already noted, principles from BNIM were used in this study. According to Wengraf (2001, p. 1), BNIM facilitates narratives that represent “historically evolving persons in historically evolving situations” and “the interactivity of inner and outer world dynamics”. Participants retrospectively tell their whole life stories or stories about particular life events, and this affords an opportunity to give voice to “vanished and mutated times, places, states of feeling and ways of living” (Wengraf, 2004, pp. 1–2).

In accord with this appraisal, the value of a BNIM-based interview approach for this study was in the generation of experience-rich data relating to everyday events and experiences of racism and survival in occupying and maintaining a leadership role as BAME woman. BNIM focuses on storytelling and the lived life, and these stories may not have been easily accessed via semi-structured interviews, which would involve the interviewer, unintentionally or deliberately, directing the interview narrative. As an approach, BNIM also prioritises providing a talking space for participants, and this allows memories of transformative moments to surface whilst accepting that participants’ experience of themselves may involve multiple (professional, personal, cultural) identities which will have had an impact on their experiences of racism as leaders.

By and large, I was able to adhere to the BNIM interview structure. However, due to the research being completed during the COVID-19 pandemic, the timescales for each interview needed to be adjusted due to the lockdown restrictions. BNIM

interviews are comprised of one, two or three sessions. The number of sub-sessions completed is determined by the researcher but may also be influenced by the richness (i.e. depth over superficiality) of the material generated in sub-session one.

Recognising the ethical consideration inherent to asking participants about the topic of racism and gender inequalities in the workplace (and the fact this may evoke painful memories of discrimination and loss), I designed a single question used to induce narrative from the participant's life experience, in its entirety, rather than specific life events. In this way, participants could disclose as little or as much information as they wished. I also deviated from the established BNIM interview protocol by completing the first sub-session by asking the SQUIN and then, in the second sub-session, utilised specific cue phrases to push for personal incident narratives. By meeting twice over a period of six months, trust was built in the relationships with individual participants.

The first meeting incorporated me explaining the project, issues of confidentiality/consent, timescales, and the interview structure, and was vital in setting the tone for the follow-up sessions and for rapport and boundaries in the research relationship. At the second meeting, I invited each participant to talk about their experiences using the BNIM method of narrative interviewing having prepared the SQUIN. This was used to encourage each participant to talk about events that have impacted their individual trajectories in their work and personal background, revealing material rich in specific details. Anything that needed clarifying or exploring further was also discussed. Alongside this, I also invited the participant to provide feedback on the experience of taking part and their hopes, fears and aspirations for them individually and others facing similar challenges.

Data analysis

Interviews were transcribed verbatim and analysed using thematic analysis. I did not follow a BNIM-based analysis for this study, i.e. using the specific strategies set out by Wengraf (2002), principally of panels and twin track interpretation. Instead, I sought to explore patterns in the interview narratives. Then, through a process of in-case and across-case analysis, I identified themes in these experiences, individually and across the sample.

The analysis involved the following stages. I read the transcripts several times to become familiar then immersed in the data. I then coded each transcript and grouped these codes into different subthemes, for example, relating to childhood experiences, family background, early educational experiences, and the impact of migration. In so doing, different themes were identified, defined and redefined via an iterative process to ensure that the detail and subjectivity in the experiences were accurately reflected.

Braun and Clarke (2006) distinguish between two levels of themes: semantic and latent, both of which were incorporated into the analysis. Semantic themes are “within the explicit or surface meanings of the data and the analyst is not looking for anything beyond what a particular participant has said or written” (p.84) In contrast, the latent level looks beyond what has been said and “starts to identify the underlying ideas, assumptions, and conceptualisations—and ideologies that are theorised as shaping or informing the semantic content of the data” (p.84). It was possible to link the identified themes to literature informing the analysis, and thus gain a more reflexive understanding of the effect of racism on the participants’ personal lives and professional trajectories.

Informed by grounded theory, whilst using intersectionality theory as a sensitising lens to the material, I was able to make in-case and across-case comparisons and consider the role of my own subjectivity in the analysis. I was able to incorporate a concern for unconscious, intersubjective processes in the interviews, i.e. unconscious communication revealed in my own (counter-)transference experience in undertaking and analysing the interview narratives (by recourse to relevant concepts such as projection and projective identification).

Conclusion

This chapter detailed the methodology of the empirical research reported in this thesis. I related the methodology to the research question and aims and addressed links between the methodology, and matters of ontology, epistemology and method. This outline complements the close consideration of reflexivity and the co-construction of the interview material in Chapter Two, where I was able to consider non-observable forces affecting the personal and professional attitudes, behaviours and values that female BAME senior leaders face within a social work setting.

These two chapters provide a foundation for the next two chapters, which report the findings of the analysis of the interview material. Chapter Five details the biographical stories collected during the interviews. Pen portraits of these offer an overview of the lived experiences of the participants and their own intended meanings in narrating their experiences. Chapter Six then details the different themes identified across the accounts.

CHAPTER 5 The participants' lived lives and told stories

Introduction

This chapter provides an overview of the participants' biographical accounts, following an adapted version of the BNIM analytic process. After setting out what is meant by this, in terms of what is known in BNIM, as the participant's *lived life* and *told story* and a conceptualisation of research participants as 'defended subjects', an account is provided for each of the participants based on the interviews undertaken and the material gathered. This overview then provides a basis for the thematic analysis reported in Chapter Six.

Lived lives and told stories

In BNIM, as Wengraf (2001) details it, the first stage of the analysis comprises the sequentialisation of the *lived life* and *told story*. Transcripts are produced from interviews and from these, a chronology is developed for the individual participant, i.e. of their lived life which is drawn from the account they gave in the interview. Following this, the nature of the told story is considered.

In this vein, the lived life is, in essence, 'objective' data about the course of the participant's life, significant events and relationships; the told story is, by comparison, a means of conceptualising *how* this lived life is narrated. Participants may give their life stories and describe events and experiences in varying orders of occurrence; hence, the responsibility for ordering this as part of the analysis resides with the researcher.

The 'pen portraits' provided in this chapter essentially provide a means of orientating the analysis and document a gradual and considered way of approaching

the life histories narrated and the meaning of the events. In the early stages, the idea is to be explicitly descriptive and provide sufficient information from which subsequent (researcher-based) interpretations can be assessed. The pen portraits give a ‘live’ sense of what was said and what appeared meaningful in terms of the participant’s own self theory. In this way, there is a shift in writing style used to document the narratives, with the present tense for the lived life and narrated, told story. The told stories varied for each participant so the chronologies presented in this chapter reflect the length and depth of the stories shared during the interview process. All five participants have been given pseudonyms to protect their identities.

Research participants as defended subjects

Due to exploring the experiences of senior BAME female leaders within social work via a psychosocial perspective (which sought to incorporate some concern for unconscious and intersubjective processes), certain assumptions were drawn from ideas regarding the relationship between psychoanalytic therapy and research interviewing and Hollway and Jefferson’s (2000, 2013) FANI method. Specifically, this entailed the use of questions Hollway and Jefferson (2013, p. 51) suggest using when analysing qualitative data, including considering what is noticed by the researcher, why they notice it, how they interpret what they notice, and considering why that (and not another) interpretation.

Alongside this, to understand the trajectory of a lived life chronology, there is a need to consider how external realities impinge on and shape the *self* and how perceptions of this are shaped by intrapsychic processes, and individual desires, fantasies, and defences against anxiety. This means, for Hollway and Jefferson, conceiving of research participants as defended subjects, whose interview narratives

can reveal different defence mechanisms in the way experiences are recounted (see, for example, Archard, 2021; Archard and O'Reilly, 2022).

In the context of this study, this included reflecting on the nature of desire for promotion and career progression, fantasies the participants may have held about what these positions may constitute, and fears about losing leadership positions, and the meaning they attributed to the struggle of obtaining these. It also meant considering how early experiences had a formative influence in participants' lives and how this may have influenced ways they responded to events (in their lives and work) that were beyond their control or involved unfamiliar situations creating anxiety. Hollway and Jefferson's (2000, 2013) position, following core principles drawn from Kleinian/post-Kleinian psychoanalysis, is that fear for the safety of the self leads to primitive forms of defence, which resemble those developed in very early childhood (see Archard, 2020).

Lynette

Lived life: chronology of life events

Lynette is **born in the late 1960s** on one of the smaller islands of the Caribbean archipelago. Her birth mother is in her late adolescence at the time of bearing her and ill-equipped to look after an infant. Lynette is given to her great-aunt to be brought up. Lynette's birth mother leaves for the UK soon after this. She is part of the Windrush generation of emigrants (1948–1971), travelling to England from the Caribbean in response to the UK government's call for workers to rebuild Britain after the Second World War. Lynette's birth father remains in the Caribbean. He has sporadic and limited contact with Lynette as a young infant. It is suspected that he may struggle with alcohol dependence.

1969–1982: Lynette is living within an extended family network and one of 13 children living in the same household. Her family network consists of her great-aunt, cousins, aunts and uncles. Lynette describes a happy childhood and early adolescence in which family, church and school shape her early experiences, and where discipline is seen as important by her caregivers. She is not perplexed by being cared for by her extended family as she says there were many family units, like hers, where birth parents were not physically present for different reasons. Many parents were, at the time, leaving their offspring with extended family whilst they sought employment in the 'mother' states of the UK and United States.

1983: Lynette and her great-aunt receive two letters from Lynette's mother in the UK. In these letters, Lynette's mother requests that Lynette, who is now 14 years old, come to join her in the UK on a permanent basis. Lynette's mother sends Lynette's great-aunt a one-way ticket for her passage to London. Lynette has no memory of her mother at this time; she asks her great-aunt who to look for at the airport. Her great-aunt replies, "When you get to the airport, just look out for someone who looks like you."

1983–1986: Lynette is living with her mother in London. She has three half-siblings. Family life is unsettled. Lynette realises quickly that she does not have a strong bond with her mother and that her mother's intentions for having her come to England were motivated by the fact that Lynette could look after her half-siblings whilst she and Lynette's stepfather work. Lynette describes her role as a babysitter for the younger children. She also says she felt like the odd one out.

1986–1988: Lynette has finished secondary school and obtained a BTEC qualification. She successfully gains a place at a university on the south coast of England to study for a degree in the political sciences. Lynette leaves home and relocates to the city of her university where she works part-time to support herself financially. Lynette reports having multiple jobs. She becomes estranged from her mother.

1988–1992: Following graduation, Lynette signs up to various employment agencies, and works in administration, retail and lots of temporary short-term contracts. She has met her partner and they decide to move in together and back to London. Lynette is still looking for a more permanent career, and a friend working in health recommends she consider working in the NHS. Lynette realises that she could have a professional career and embarks on a diploma qualification in health and social care. Shortly after this, she trains and qualifies as a social worker successfully and embarks on her career in adult social care.

1992–2007: Lynette is working in various social care settings, linked to the NHS but also in local authority contexts. She seeks to develop professionally by managing complex clients as part of her role within a hospital-based discharge team. Lynette gets married at this point and has her first child. She decides to work part-time and has various locum jobs until 2007.

2007–2010: Lynette applies for a permanent senior practitioner role within a local authority setting, in a team where she had previously acted as a locum worker. She is successful and starts her first permanent senior position.

2010–2016: Lynette is co-managing a community-based complex adults' team. Her line manager retires early, and Lynette is asked to step up as acting team manager. Lynette is responsible for a staff team of nine. She is also managing a caseload of complex clients.

At this time, Lynette is also expecting her second child. She decides to move her family to the London suburbs and her husband decides to move into contract-based work as this affords him the flexibility to work from home and contribute more in the way of childcare.

2017–2019: Lynette returns to work at the beginning of 2017 following six months of maternity leave. Due to changes in the organisation, she is promoted to a head of service position. Lynette is not given much warning for this and is just asked to step up at short notice. Lynette knows the position well as she is succeeding her immediate line manager. Lynette finds the situation politically toxic and worries about compromising her own values to fit in. As one of two Black senior female managers, she is worried about being outnumbered and feels under siege, with all of the senior leadership team being white and female. She witnesses a lot of infighting and resolves that she is unwilling to sacrifice her values and ethics any further. Recognising that she needs to save herself to survive, she registers with an agency to test the viability of her going it alone again. Lynette is offered a short-term contract in her first week of signing up with this agency and decides to leave her employment with the local authority.

2019–present: Lynette is employed as an assistant director within an NHS setting. She is a locum worker and more independent. She agrees to participate in this study, in part, because she wants other aspiring female Black managers to learn from her journey. Lynette reports that, with her career, she has needed to make some difficult choices and, at the outset, was not properly prepared for the struggle this entailed. She reports feeling liberated being able to walk away but also that this came at great cost to her emotionally.

Told story

Lynette begins her story by describing her career trajectory and how her core values of wanting to help others influence her decision-making in terms of the choice of social work. She talks quite casually about her upbringing in the Caribbean and how her great-aunt was her main caregiver as her birth mother was too young to look after her. Lynette refers to her upbringing as being influenced by the presence of her great-aunt, the church community and extended family. She talks matter-of-factly about her university career and the different employment experiences she has had and how she found social work. Lynette talks uninterrupted for a while and ten minutes into the first interview session, she opts to pause and return to her childhood.

Childhood: Lynette describes growing up in an extended family setting. Her birth mother leaves her with her great-aunt as she comes to England to work. Lynette's mother is part of the Windrush generation arriving in the UK in 1968. From very early on in her life, Lynette was cared for by her extended family. She reports having no memory of her mother as a young child and can only recall what other relatives and

older cousins say to her about her mother. She is heavily involved with the church and can go to school. Her great-aunt is strict and something of a disciplinarian, but Lynette says she felt happy and secure within her family network. Lynette has eight or nine cousins that she grows up with all of whom have been left with her great-aunt to parent. Lynette remembers that being brought up in an extended family setting was commonplace for many families as a lot of young people like her mother came to better their futures in the UK.

Adolescence and early adulthood: When Lynette is 14 years old, her mother sends her and her great-aunt two letters asking her to come to England. Lynette is initially excited to be reunited with her mother, but she is also full of trepidation as she has no idea what her mother looks like. When she asks her great-aunt who to look for at the airport in London, the reply is simple: “Look for someone who looks like you.” This leaves Lynette anxious, but she is distracted by the excitement of a plane journey and the significance of the situation. Lynette travels to the UK as an unaccompanied minor, but she is spurred on by the desire to meet her mother for the first time and explore life in England. Lynette sounds hopeful and ready to embrace a new life. Soon after her arrival in the UK, her relationship with her mother starts to become fragmented. Lynette is expected to look after her younger three stepsiblings and keep the house, while her parents work. Lynette attends school but she feels she suffers because of her mother’s expectations. Lynette’s relationship with her mother becomes difficult and she begins to consider ways of becoming financially independent so she can leave. Lynette finds a lot of comfort in the church community with which she is involved. She is able to tolerate her mother’s hostility towards her,

but reports having no bond with her mother and accepts that her expectations of England and her mother may have been unrealistic.

By the age of 18, Lynette has obtained a BTEC qualification at school and gains a place at a university in a city on the south coast of England. This is her planned exit from her relationship with her mother and the turbulent household that she entered, unassumingly, at the age of 14.

Adulthood, marriage and employment (and return to employment): Lynette thrives at university; she embraces learning opportunities and for the first time feels liberated and truly independent. She manages to find part-time employment and begins to support herself financially. During this time, she makes a conscious decision to sever ties with her mother and her stepfamily in London. Lynette graduates from university and finds employment as a graduate trainee with various employers. It’s also around this time that she meets and marries her husband. They both decide to move back to London and set up their first home together. Lynette embarks on a diploma qualification and shortly after achieving qualified status as a social worker, she embarks on her social work career. Lynette’s first employment is within an NHS setting and she spends the first ten years of her career as a frontline practitioner. Lynette becomes pregnant with her first child in the mid-2000s. She decides to work as a locum worker once her maternity leave concludes so that she can fit in her childcare needs and, during this time, she successfully applies for her first senior practitioner role. Lynette moves to a local authority setting and feels settled there quickly. Her talent is spotted early and within two years she is promoted to a team manager position. She finds her career progresses rapidly following this and she is made a head of service three years after she first took up her team

manager role. Lynette finds this step to be a huge jump as the workplace dynamics suddenly change, and her role is more strategic than operational.

Leadership – success and conflict: Lynette finds the transition from operational leadership to a head of service position challenging. She is one of two women of colour and the dynamics within the senior leadership team are, for her, toxic. Her new peers seem highly competitive and combative, and Lynette does not find this easy. She is very much focused on the staff and service delivery, and she feels that the other Black female manager is too quick in aligning them both with the rest of the leadership team. Lynette recognises that to be an individual within this group is trying; it is not simply discouraged but also resented. After a relatively short period of time in the role, Lynette decides that she will focus on her work and the operational managers who report to her. She seeks to be professional in her dealings with her colleagues in the leadership team, but tries to avoid socialising with them, choosing instead to spend time with the team she leads or by using commitments relating to her own children as a reason to avoid social events. Lynette begins to realise that she is either not able to or inclined to continue in this position, with the sacrificing of ideals it involves. She successfully fulfils her role as a senior leader but starts to prepare to leave. Lynette and her husband decide to move their young family out of London, and this coincides with Lynette being offered a short-term senior leadership contract within a short distance of her new home. She decides to take the risk and leaves the security of her permanent post for the sake of saving herself. Lynette agrees to be interviewed by me. She doesn’t know what to expect but, at the end of the interview sessions, says that she feels that if more people like her tell their story, then change may have come sooner rather than later.

Sonia

Lived life: chronology of life events

Sonia is **born in the mid-1980s** in London. Her mother is a single parent and a second-generation Windrush child from one of the larger islands of the Caribbean. Sonia's maternal grandparents and family live close by, but Sonia's mother is the sole breadwinner in the immediate family, and Sonia reports that her mother must work many different jobs to keep the family together. Sonia grew up in a relatively affluent white neighbourhood as her mother was keen to keep the family away from the rough 'Black' areas. She can recognise that she is different from her friends as her family are Black and the poorest in the neighbourhood.

1988–2000: Sonia completes her schooling in London. She reports having close ties with her stepsiblings and her younger sister who was born four years after her following the breakdown of her mother and birth father's relationship. Sonia talks dismissively about her birth father who was always absent and could never take responsibility for the hurt he caused her mother. Sonia completes her schooling with a limited sense of direction as to what she will do next. Her mother's view is clear – you finish your education and get a job so that you get paid and then get on with life. For Sonia, there is an absence of professional role models to aspire to.

2000: Sonia is at the local tertiary college, where a range of different courses are offered. She is uncertain what to do. She considers the idea of working as an actress and shares this with her mother who swiftly dismisses this ambition, pointing out negative aspects of the creative industry and reminding Sonia of some the limitations she perceives her as having. Sonia accepts this rebuke but attributes it to her

mother's experience of discrimination and inequality coming from a poor working-class Black background, a scarcity of employment prospects, and her mother having experienced a great deal of racism. Sonia is influenced by a friend who is signing up for a health and social care course, and decides to do the same, open to see where this will take her – a blind risk. Sonia feels the drift following this into social work is, essentially, accidental. Sonia is also working part-time in retail and helping her mother out with bills and expenses.

2000–2002: Aged 18, Sonia completes a higher national diploma in health and social care. Her friend who had recommended the course dropped out earlier and Sonia finds herself looking at the possibility of applying for a university place to study social work. Her college tutors are impressed by her work ethic and sheer determination and so she is encouraged by her tutors to apply. Sonia reports that neither her extended family nor her mother actively encouraged her to go to university, as their experiences had guided them to find paid employment as quickly as possible after finishing school. This also largely reflected the racism they had faced in seeking employment and their lived experiences determining their life choices in this way. Sonia applies to several universities but is only offered one interview in the southeast of England where she is successful in obtaining a place on a qualifying course in social work.

2002–2005: Sonia begins her university education. She is the only Black student on the course. She notices that she arrives on her own and must settle into student life without any input from her mother. Sonia feels the imbalance between herself and other students. She is not discouraged by this and sets about establishing herself on

her course. She also finds part-time employment to support herself as her student loan doesn't stretch far and her mother would not be able to offer any financial support. Sonia recognises increasingly that she is different from her peers in terms of class, race and privilege. She harnesses her lack of social class, money and status by working hard and focusing her energy on earning money so that she can keep up with her white peers. Sonia is determined not to let her disadvantaged background be a barrier. Sonia graduates and qualifies as a social worker in 2005. She moves back with her mother and embarks on her social work career.

2005–2015: Sonia starts her job in the voluntary sector then quickly moves to the NHS to work in a multi-disciplinary team. She reports working hard without having to compromise her ethical values or principles. She talks about learning about professional boundaries and how to keep her eyes wide open and her mouth shut. She reports that she never compromised herself, but also sought to steer clear of controversy. Sonia states that she felt nurtured and cared for at work, something that she lacked growing up as her mother was always away working. Sonia is promoted and appointed as senior practitioner in the team in which she began her social work career.

2016–present: Sonia successfully applies for her current managerial post. She experiences a culture shock in her new role as she finds out that she is one of very few BAME female professionals in such a post. The local authority senior management team are all white and she is at odds with herself as she is accustomed to a more representative organisation in her previous position. Sonia faces difficult challenges in her role. She is constantly having to address emergency or crisis

situations and reports being up against it. She reports that for many, like her, there is no invite to the 'top table' of leadership, but you struggle to get there despite the odds. Sonia terms this the 'Guinness effect': like the Irish dry stout beer, the top layer is always white with a few black bubbles getting through every now and again.

Told story

Early childhood/parental expectations: Sonia begins her story in a reflective way, stating clearly that her choice of career as a social worker was, for her, accidental and that she really wanted to be an actress. However, her mother intervened and put an end to the idea, citing numerous, mainly negative reasons why a career in acting was a non-starter. Sonia believes that her working-class background played a major role in the lack of opportunity presented in terms of educational achievements and career aspirations. Sonia felt that being Black on top of that was an additional barrier. Sonia describes her early childhood experiences as bittersweet. On the one hand, her mother was very hardworking and wanted the best for her girls and the family. Yet, on the other, due to her own lack of education and choices growing up, she was not able to properly appreciate the value of education and employment in professional positions. For Sonia, the message was to get a job, be renumerated for this and get on with life (as swiftly as possible after finishing school). Sonia felt that although her early childhood was not perfect, it was life-affirming. Her relationship with her father remained strained as, in her eyes, he deserted her and her younger sister when they were infants following his separation from their mother.

Adolescence and early adulthood: Sonia describes growing up Black in a predominantly white neighbourhood. She is very aware that her friends in the

neighbourhood are much better off than her financially. Her mother works several jobs to keep the family afloat. Sonia finds part-time employment as soon as she can so that she can help and be less of a burden on her mother financially. Sonia also cares for her younger sister and attends school. Sonia sees herself and her sister are different to their peers, that is, as being “different to ordinary kids. I had a lot of responsibility, so I grew up quickly”. Sonia describes not talking about feelings as just trying to survive was the priority. She also describes a family network where there were no role models in professional jobs to look up to because everyone she knew was busy trying to make ends meet. Money (or the lack of it) is significant.

Adulthood and employment: Sonia reports that she ‘fell into’ social work because she copied a friend who had signed up for a course in health and social care, following her mother’s disapproval of her pursuing acting as a career. Sonia describes a successful time in further education where she identified with a course with which she could connect. She describes struggling at times as she was young and naïve but, overall, she excelled and passed her course, which served as a gateway to access a degree in social work. Sonia readily acknowledges that she was encouraged by her college tutors to apply for university and that her mother and extended family never expressed an opinion about her choice to want to further herself in pursuing this. Sonia believes that this apathy was possibly a product of experiences of racism which restricted their life opportunities. Sonia is the first person in her family to access university education. Although her mother was not able to support her financially, Sonia sought to ensure her time at university was well spent. She became financially independent and was able to support herself and qualify as a social worker.

Sonia's early career is marked by a series of jobs in the voluntary and statutory sectors. She reports learning about personal and professional boundaries, and how to manage her own anxiety when things go awry at work. Sonia recognises that she can be quite easily led by what she is feeling, in an instinctive way, and, during her early career, she engages in a process of learning how to trust her professional judgement. Sonia soon finds success and, as a senior practitioner, she learns more about working at a senior level and the challenges of the workplace. Sonia describes growing professionally and personally during this time, as most of her managers were from BAME backgrounds themselves and she felt nurtured and cared for. Sonia spends ten years before she applies for her senior leadership role. There, the situation is reversed and, as a BAME professional, she is in the minority. She feels out of her comfort zone and struggles with the transition.

Leadership: success and conflict: Sonia has been a senior leader for the last four years with her current employers. She plans to stay for a while longer before she attempts to find a new direction for her career. This thinking is inspired by Sonia's experiences as a senior leader and the constant 'firefighting' she has been compelled to engage in. She feels increasingly restricted in her role with decreasing resources and cuts in social care, which have very real effects on the frontline. Sonia feels under siege. Her hope is that her next move in her working role will provide her with a quality and pace of life.

While Sonia acknowledges her successes as a senior leader, she feels that social care organisations have adopted practices which create an insular environment where BAME professionals can feel isolated and intimidated quickly. If they are viewed negatively by their senior managers, then their career chances

become circumscribed so that they stay stuck in positions that they have outgrown. There is, for Sonia, a sense of 'knowing your place above which you will not rise'. In this way, Sonia's working life is challenging at times but she doesn't want it to prevent her from developing, personally and professionally. She plans, when the time is right, to eventually move in a different direction. Sonia is of the view that challenges are compounded when you are Black, female and in a position of power because your white counterparts are suspicious of your integrity, so you end up watching your back on an ongoing basis.

Rabindra

Lived life: chronology of life events

Rabindra is **born in the early 1970s** in India, near the capital Delhi. She lives with her mother, father and two sisters, in a middle-class household. Rabindra is the youngest child. Her mother is a homemaker and her father an executive who works for a private company. Her parents have a strong work ethic and education is a priority in the family. The age gap between all three sisters is less than two years, and all three sisters are very close.

Between 1974–1989: Rabindra begins pre-school while her two older sisters are in reception and year one. She is keen to be alongside them. She then completes her primary and secondary schooling, with all three siblings remaining at the same institution. Rabindra passes her end of school (year 12) exams and is accepted for university.

1990-1995: Rabindra attends university and completes an undergraduate degree in the field of social science. She consolidates her studies by embarking on a master's degree to enhance her chances of meaningful employment. She completes this degree in social work and social policy and does very well, obtaining first-class honours. It is around this time that she meets her future husband through friends. He is also completing postgraduate studies, but in information technology and finance. He has already secured an internship with a foreign investment capital firm and is expected to travel abroad to take up the post.

1995–1999: Rabindra lives with her husband's family in India. She works for a non-governmental organisation and has begun to establish an identity for herself in the workplace. Her husband is nearing completion of his two-year internship and has been offered a posting in London. With this opportunity, the couple leave India to work in England towards the end of 1999.

2000–2006: Rabindra is employed as a locum social worker in London. She is building her portfolio of employment in different settings and moves between contracts and roles every 18–24 months.

2006: Rabindra bears a son and is a full-time mother for a period. She has a short break from full-time social work but then continues to practice on a part-time basis. Rabindra and her husband are very keen to maintain a connection to their roots in India so return to see family most holidays.

2009–2019: Rabindra returns to full-time social work when her son starts full-time nursery and continues when he begins school**.** She works in various senior positions on a contract basis.

2019–present: Rabindra takes on her first senior leadership role on an interim basis. A permanent position is not something that appeals to her at this time.

Told story

Rabindra begins her account with her career trajectory. She talks about how she has worked as a frontline social worker for most of her time in England as a locum practitioner. She reflects on how she has coped with racism, but she does not speak directly about the emotional impact it has had on her. She appears emotionally detached from incidents she experienced that were clearly inappropriate and painful and repeats that her approach is to deal with them in a pragmatic way. Rabindra appears to have a philosophy (or attitude) she maintains which helps her to walk away from situations that she perceives as hazardous or dangerous, and this is a recurrent theme throughout her narrative.

Childhood /early adolescence: Rabindra describes growing up in a fairly traditional Indian middle-class family. Her parents were keen for their children to be well educated so they would be financially better off and able to sustain their independence. Rabindra acknowledges that she was fortunate (even lucky) with this because her father wanted his girls to have better lives and to be independent. She recognises that some of her peers were not so fortunate and subject to arranged marriages after completing college. Rabindra values her power to earn and is keen

to increase her worth financially. She has a strong maternal role model in her mother who, although a homemaker, held the view that she and her sisters' purpose was not simply to be good wives but that economic independence was of equal importance. Rabindra describes a happy childhood where she was supported and nurtured.

Adolescence and early adulthood: Rabindra completes school and successfully gains admission to university to study for her first degree in the social sciences. Like many of her peers, she travelled to the city from her home in the suburbs to attend her graduate studies in Delhi. She stays in hostel accommodation and is able to learn to live independently away from the family home. This is unusual in India as most girls have more limited opportunities available to live independently, particularly considering the deeply stratified distinctions of caste, as well as income, class, family standing and status. Rabindra is from an 'ordinary' middle-class background and, while religion and caste are relevant, her parents endeavour to ensure that Rabindra and her sisters are not constrained by this. Her father is progressively minded in this way, and her mother is also very supportive. This enables Rabindra to achieve educationally, which is key in her having her own income and economic freedom.

Adulthood, marriage, and employment and return to employment: Following the completion of her university education and subsequent marriage, Rabindra begins working for a non-governmental organisation in India. She migrates to England in the early 2000s to join her husband and begins her social work career here. From very early on in her work, Rabindra becomes aware of the presence of racism. She endeavours to adopt a pragmatic approach to deal with unacceptable behaviour in the workplace. It is unsurprising that she shies away from challenging this as she

prioritises being able to remain in gainful employment (as a greater desire to her). She silently observes and moves on when the next appropriate career progression opportunity presents itself. She is focused and becomes somewhat emotionally distant from her white colleagues. She does not identify the racism as abuse, but comments instead on the ignorance of her peers and colleagues. Rabindra is clear that she does not want to come to work just to fight with her colleagues, she hopes that by adopting a 'neutral' stance she can avoid being targeted or labelled as a troublemaker. Rabindra does not bring up the humiliation she is subject to, but hints that she 'stays away from the whole thing' as a way of coping. Her social work career in England is comprised of different locum contract posts, which, in itself, speaks to a way of avoiding attaching to any form of permanency (which has, in her experience, just led to difficulty and pain).

Leadership: success and conflict: Rabindra is currently employed in a senior leadership role in a local authority setting. This is an interim post and she reports no ambition to stay in the post should it be offered to her as a permanent position. Should her husband be offered another posting outside the UK, she wants the flexibility to move with him and does not want to be duty bound to an employer. She is also explicit that she believes social workers are not adequately paid and her intention is to move into organisational consultancy in the private sector where she feels her skill set will be better valued. Rabindra is motivated by a strong desire to improve this situation. The constant striving to earn more inevitably leads to a transactional way of thinking which she seems, herself, to be aware of. While locum posts are paid more highly, they carry with them varying degrees of permanency, and this is what appeals most to Rabindra. Rabindra believes that organisations like

local authorities are tokenistic in what they can offer in terms of equality of opportunity and meaningfully dealing with racism.

Amrit

Lived life: chronology of life events

Amrit is **born in the late 1950s** in a state in the northern United States to South Asian parents. Amrit's mother and father both work in academia.

1959–1971: During her early childhood, Amrit completes her primary schooling in the United States, and her parents are very much part of the local university community. Her father is appointed to his first associate lecturer post following the completion of his PhD.

1972–1977: Between the ages of 13 to 18, Amrit is sent to boarding school in the UK and completes most of her secondary education there. Amrit's parents decide to educate Amrit and her older brother in England as they are travelling between academic posts and feel that their children's education should not be disrupted by multiple moves.

1978–1983: Amrit obtains admission to and completes her undergraduate degree at a prestigious Russell Group university in England. Having completed her undergraduate studies, Amrit takes up a paid position with voluntary service overseas and travels to Zimbabwe to work a three-year contract teaching English.

1983–1986: Amrit embarks on her master's degree and completes her social work training. She qualifies as a social worker and begins her social work career.

1987–1989: Amrit is working for a large local authority; she is quickly promoted to project management and begins a senior practitioner role, holding a senior social worker position from 1990 to 1999.

2000–2005: Amrit leaves statutory social work to pursue locum social work and takes on some locum project management positions, as well as part-time teaching posts in higher education in health and social care courses.

2005–2020: Amrit works in an academic setting, teaching social work.

2021: Amrit is planning to retire but continues to work in a pastoral social work role in a university on a part-time basis.

Told story

Amrit begins her account in chronological order. She starts from her childhood and traces her narrative back to her birth and her early childhood in the United States. She talks about her formative years and the experiences and opportunities she had, and how her parents were very keen for the family to have as many interesting (educational) opportunities as possible so that Amrit and her brother can optimise their life chances. Amrit charts her early experiences of racism as a young child growing up amongst a white majority. She speaks about her early experience and how her parents dealt with discrimination and her mother coped with being viewed

as different. Amrit also speaks about her own experience of racism in the context of her work experience abroad in Africa, where she is confronted by an unfamiliar kind of colonial racism – a revelation for her. She speaks about different periods of her life where she has encountered racism, giving different examples of this.

Childhood/early adolescence: Amrit has a privileged upbringing being born into and raised in an upper-middle-class South Asian family. Her mother and father are academics and find employment opportunities in the United States. Amrit and her older brother are nurtured and afforded many opportunities to succeed academically. Both her parents also invest a lot in her emotionally and Amrit is a very much wanted daughter. Amrit is aware that she is different from her white peers, and the family experience different subtle forms of racist behaviour from neighbours and her parents' work colleagues. Amrit describes the skilful way in which she perceived her mother as protecting her and her brother from the potential harm they could have suffered. She feels she is able to grow and develop in a secure way, and the family's education, relative affluence and ethos of hard work and integrity contribute to her childhood being overall a happy experience. Amrit is exposed to different learning opportunities through travel and education, and this enables her to develop a stronger sense of her identity and to value knowledge about, and from, others from an early age.

Adolescence and early adulthood: Amrit is sent to boarding school so that her schooling is consistent, and she does not have to move around with the parents' changing academic posts. She thrives at school and doesn't worry too much about the separation from her parents or brother. Her parents are developing in their

careers at this stage, and they are able to spare their children the constant pressure of moving between schools as these careers develop. Amrit is able to learn new languages and experience a variety of opportunities that help her develop emotionally and academically. Amrit can make meaningful choices from early on and does not feel restricted by her gender or the colour of her skin. Amrit has varying degrees of exposure to being treated differently but has strong coping mechanisms and describes feeling able to identify and challenge racism.

Adulthood, marriage and employment: Amrit completes a master's degree and her social work training. Upon qualifying, she spends the first three years as a frontline social worker. She is promoted shortly thereafter and works in various senior social work and project management roles for the next ten years. During her time as a frontline social worker, she faces numerous occasions when stereotypical assumptions about her are made by colleagues and managers. She is able to manage these and draws on her past experiences to contend with them. During this time, she faced potential opposition from her family on her choice of life partner. Amrit described this disapproval as short-lived and based on potential conflicts associated with social class, economic wealth, and family status, and not based on race or colour. Amrit was able to negotiate these and, in the end, both families were able to reconcile their differences to ensure that the union was supported. Amrit displays resilience in standing her ground and not accepting discrimination. Her convictions enable her to navigate her way through complex forms of discrimination in her professional life.

Leadership: success and conflict: Amrit's success with leadership positions is also marked by conflict. She struggles with the dissonance between management and direct practice, where good ideas can be tested but seldom translate to the commitment of meaningful resources to bring about change and address inequality. Amrit is quickly disillusioned and makes a considered decision to leave and save herself from becoming cynical or bitter. She recognises that she is burnt out emotionally after she leaves and takes up locum roles, which afford her the independence to explore employment opportunities that are different to statutory social work. She expands her skills and knowledge by working in the NHS and voluntary sector, eventually settling in academia where she feels she can teach future social workers to challenge the status quo. Amrit encounters more sophisticated forms of racism, but she seems more able to recognise this readily as there is a familiarity that she is aware of from her early experiences of growing up around university communities.

Yayoi

Lived life: chronology of life events

Yayoi is **born in the early 1970s** in Hong Kong. Her mother is Chinese and her father is English. Her father is a businessman and her mother a homemaker and the primary caregiver for Yayoi.

1973–1986: Yayoi begins her primary education in Hong Kong. In 1984, her family temporarily relocate to London after her father gets a trade envoy role. Yayoi attends school in London for a period; her mother bears two children.

1986–1990: Yayoi completes her secondary schooling at an international school in Hong Kong.

1990–1993: Yayoi completes an undergraduate degree in the social sciences.

1993–1996: While still living with her parents in Hong Kong, Yayoi works for a voluntary agency helping dissident families fleeing mainland China due to persecution by the authorities.

1996–1999: Yayoi relocates to England with her family due to escalating conflict in Hong Kong. Yayoi completes a master's degree in social work and qualifies as a social worker.

2000–2005: Yayoi works in a specialist social work post, working with the Chinese community addressing gang violence.

2005–present: Yayoi works as a senior manager in a local authority setting. She is responsible for strategic commissioning and operational teams.

Told story

Yayoi begins her story from the time she and her family arrive in the UK in 1996. She talks about her dual heritage, with her mother being Chinese and her father English. She clarifies that leaving Hong Kong was a sudden decision her parents made, a decision that she found initially difficult to accept. Yet, she realises she is not safe left

behind on her own and accompanies her parents to England. Yayoi talks openly about her formative years, and the conflicts involved in straddling two cultures and the challenges this creates on a personal and professional basis. She can reconcile her feelings regarding this and knows they help her become more resilient. She speaks about the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic and the devastating effect this had on her and the wider Chinese community that she identifies with.

Childhood/early adolescence: Yayoi is born into a dual heritage household in Hong Kong. Her parents have a relatively privileged life, and her mother is a homemaker who looks after Yayoi during her early years. Yayoi is aware of her mixed heritage and, from an early age, she is immersed in both cultures. Her parents provide for her emotionally and financially, and Yayoi's early life is settled. She is aware of her grandparents in mainland China but has limited contact with them due to the political difficulties between the territories of Hong Kong – then still a British colony – and mainland China. Communications are restricted and monitored so her early memories of her extended family are limited. Yayoi describes a close relationship with her mother. Her father was away on business for lengthy periods of time, working in the textile trade. Yayoi does not think negatively about his absences as many other families lived similar lives to hers.

Adolescence/early adulthood: Initially, Yayoi attends the local primary school which is dual medium, Cantonese and English, before the brief spell in London with her father working there. Yayoi is fluent in both languages as she transfers to secondary schooling where the main language is English. She attends the international school also attended by most of her peer group. Her father is a

prominent figure in the local business community and part of the local English ex-patriate 'set'. Yayoi completes her secondary education and remains in Hong Kong to study for a social science degree. She attends a British university based in Hong Kong, meeting a wide range of peers from all corners of the globe. She appears to move between her Chinese and British heritage quite effortlessly in this context.

Following completion of her undergraduate degree, Yayoi secures her first employed position within a charity setting. She begins to help displaced families arriving in Hong Kong fleeing political persecution. During this time, she is still living in the family home and is confronted with having to make a sudden decision to leave her home and her life in Hong Kong. Her parents realise that the political mood is rapidly changing and that the family's interests are unsafe and under threat in Hong Kong; relocation is the only option. Reluctantly, Yayoi is forced to decide to leave for the UK with her family. This move is unplanned and has an impact on Yayoi. She reports feeling distressed and resisting the move but having no choice in the matter.

Adulthood and employment: Yayoi arrives in the UK at the age of 26. She embarks on a master's degree so that she can work in the UK as a qualified social worker. She begins to rebuild her life, but this is difficult. She has two younger siblings who adjust to life quickly, but it takes Yayoi some time to come to terms with the new environment. Yayoi completes her studies and succeeds in securing her first social work post. She has mixed feelings about this role and while she experiences some elements of covert racism, she is robust enough for this not to impact her professional standing. She is focused on her work and begins to develop professional networks which help her integrate into UK life whilst maintaining a close

relationship with her family. Yayoi successfully applies for a leadership post in 2005 and she has been in this job since then.

Leadership: success and conflict: Yayoi has been a senior leader for the last 16 years. She is explicit about her experiences of racism in the workplace. However, recent events relating to the COVID-19 pandemic supersede her previous experiences of racism and she becomes the target of some disturbing behaviours and language. These experiences cause Yayoi to re-evaluate her future within social care. What seemed like distant worries have now become a reality. She acknowledges the impact of this, drawing parallels between her own experiences and those of her Black and Asian colleagues. Very swiftly, what was out there, happening to others, is now something that is confronting her, and she is disturbed by this as these encounters are a reminder of her experiences in early adulthood when she did not feel in control of her life. She draws on parallels between that time and the present and how the pandemic has reignited feelings of helplessness and fear. Yayoi is uncertain about what the future holds for her.

Conclusion

This chapter has provided overviews of each participant's biographical narrative, providing detailed pen portraits that were developed from the interviews conducted with the study participants. As touched on at the beginning of the chapter, representing the lived lives and told stories of the participants is an essential aspect of an analysis that stays close to participant's theories about their own experience, and can be considered important in limiting the potential for an expert-driven application of psychosocial thinking.

In the process of representing these lived lives and told stories, the account given in the chapter also illuminates how the participants' selves developed during the course of their personal and professional lives. With this, what is brought into sharp relief is the need for psychological (internal) safety when the social (external) world does not provide it, or reliability or trust. Indeed, it is clearly evident that a theme of survival could be identified in all the participants' interviews. What appeared to hold them in their senior management positions was a combination of a need to survive and a determination to be recognised for the knowledge (experience and skills) they brought to senior leadership and management roles. The participants also identified sources of support and earlier experiences that sustained them in their work despite a multitude of barriers.

The next chapter builds on the account provided in this chapter by detailing the themes identified across the interviews completed for the study.

CHAPTER 6 Interview analysis findings

Introduction

The aim of undertaking and analysing interviews with five senior female BAME social work leaders was to explore, via their professional and personal stories, how they navigated the journey to occupying senior leadership positions. The enquiry, as a whole, is a synergy of autoethnography, narrative and psychosocial approaches. The interviews provided a way to capture the inner experiences of these leaders, how they responded to external workplace conflict and turmoil, and how their experiences were impacted by gender-based discrimination and racism.

Chapter Five provided an overview of the participants' narratives via pen portraits. This chapter extends the analysis, considering the importance of the individual's biographical experience and taking forward psychosocial concerns relating to internal psychic conflict, ambivalence, loss and disappointment (Roseneil, 2006).

In undertaking an analysis of the interviews together, I realised that my initial plan was naive and that I did not anticipate how labour-intensive the process would be. I opted to undertake a thematic analysis as it allowed for flexibility in identifying patterns within the qualitative material generated, and, in Braun and Clarke's (2006) estimation, it is not tied, as an approach, to a particular epistemological or theoretical perspective.

This chapter focusses on the interviews collectively. In so doing, it establishes personal experiences which contributed to the participants choosing social work as a career and spotlights influences which were significant in them establishing their

professional identities, which led to them becoming leaders and, with this, the interplay between race, gender and leadership.

In developing the analysis, I considered the nature and impact of any inequalities they faced in achieving their roles compared to their white counterparts, what their life histories suggested about their experiences, aspirations, and hopes and fears for the future; and the psychosocial factors supporting or hindering them in their career trajectories. I also considered what motivated and sustained them amid the contextual pressures of experiences of sexism and racism and complex relationships at work; the impact of these pressures and pain and how have they understood this in terms of their own feelings and beliefs about themselves; and how they were sustained in their professional careers. Notably, the analysis highlighted the significance of early childhood experiences, which appeared to motivate and sustain them in pursuing leadership positions.

The chapter is structured into five main sections. In the first two sections, I provide an overview of the narratives together then explore the similarities and differences between them by reporting the cross-case analysis. In the third and fourth sections, I consider the themes identified further and focus specifically on intersectionality and gender and racism in the workplace. In the fifth section, I summarise the key findings of the analysis.

Considering the participants' narratives as a whole

In addressing the study participants' narratives as a whole, different psychosocial factors which have impacted their ability to access opportunities to develop personally and professionally can be considered, particularly the impact of racism (personal and institutional). Examples of psychosocial factors that relate specifically

to this analysis include social support, work environment, social status, stress, hostility, job control, hopelessness, displacement, self-worth, self-esteem, confidence, family breakdown and a range of different socioeconomic and socio-political factors.

My impression of the five study participants were that they were all strong female senior leaders of colour. They presented as confident and thoughtful women, but who could seem to, sometimes, equate emotionality (or at least talking about or acknowledging some feelings) with a potential weakness that could disadvantage them as senior leaders. However perilous their journeys had been, each wanted to share their experiences in the hope that understanding these experiences would help future leaders of colour in some way.

Childhood experience

In response to the initial interview question, most participants began with their early experiences, and the two that didn't (Sonia and Lynette) quickly returned to this. All the participants talked about early childhood experiences which influenced their later journeys in social work. Sonia and Lynette spoke about being the children of migrants and how a sense of survival had impacted the development of their sense of themselves from an early age. They also talked openly about feeling displaced and how being cared for by others – and caring for others – had enabled them to heal. Lynette stated:

> "I suppose I have always been interested in helping people, so in terms of my core values helping people is what I do. …I think my career path and journey has taken many twists and turns, so the journey has not been a linear one like a straight line. I grew up in the Caribbean with my great aunt, umm…'cause

> my mum at the time was very young when she had me and she didn't feel she could look after me at that time. So, I don't know whether wanting to help someone comes from this time when I wasn't able to help myself but was helped by someone else".

In this way, early life experiences appeared to be significant in enabling each of the participants to develop a sense of self-worth and, subsequently, a capacity for tolerating uncertainty. These early childhood experiences appeared to provide a template for the ways they responded to challenges they faced in the workplace. This was consistent throughout the interviews as participants frequently made sense of their present experience by referencing their past. Even the participants who experienced what seemed to be less secure childhoods, there was a strong sense of resilience, growth and autonomy.

Parental – maternal (and paternal) – influence

All five participants spoke about their parents during the interviews. Two participants, Lynette and Sonia came from single-parent family backgrounds where their fathers were absent, and both had relationships with their mothers, who had strong work ethics but could be quick to criticise their children's ambitions. As Sonia put it:

> "I have reflected on my journey as a social worker, and I guess my choice of career was an accidental one. I really wanted to be an actress as a young adolescent, my friends were all off to college and one of them had got herself on a health and social care course. I told my mum that I wanted to be an actress…well …she slapped me down by saying "You're black. Who do you know that are successful actresses?" So, I named a few, and she said they are all American and you are not American! So that put a stop to that and closed the door on any such aspirations".

Lynette, who was, aged 13, sent for by her birth mother shares a not dissimilar narrative:

> "A lot of Caribbean youngsters had similar experiences, so I didn't think that my story was odd. I stayed with my mum for two and a half years. I had no bond with her or my new half-siblings so relationships within the family were difficult. I was often used as a babysitter for the younger children; I was the oldest. There were four of us and I was the odd one out. My biological dad and I lost contact; he had a drinking problem and didn't come to the UK. So, I was on my own, so I learnt to make the best of my situation, [but] I grew up very quickly".

All five participants spoke about parents who worked and were industrious. Three out of five of the participants' parents worked in helping professions or professional care or education, and the fathers of the other two participants (Amrit and Yayoi) worked in business. All the participants were, from an early age, influenced by their parents instilling a value base and strong work ethic, which appeared to sustain them in their later careers as senior leaders.

Pursuing a professional career enabled each of the participants a means of avoiding dependence on others for financial support. Two participants, Amrit and Yayoi were from wealthy backgrounds. For Amrit and Yayoi, career development has had a different meaning and was also related to experiences of self-development and career-related status. For all the participants, parental influence was central in supporting an enhanced socio-economic status, maintaining and enhancing expectations and values. While participants had parental expectations placed on them for employment or education, each participant appeared to be able to find a way to develop themselves individually so that, later in their career, they were better

equipped to take on senior roles. In doing so, they also appeared to be able to identify where power and control were located in an organisational context and circumnavigate institutional barriers which stood in the way of their progression.

Family life, education and social mobility

For four of the participants, family life was, overall, a beneficial experience which instilled values and ethics which remained intact throughout their careers in social work. A strong work ethic was viewed as the way out of – or a means of avoiding – poverty, and education was seen as a means of creating opportunity. Sonia, for example, came from a Black working-class background with limited professional role models to aspire to. Sonia accessed education successfully and was the first person in her family to attend college and university. Not only does her journey represent a desire to achieve a professional role but it is also representative of a desire for a different type of life.

All but two of the participants used education to escape or avoid limited opportunities with education or employment in their communities or traditional gender-based roles. Not all the participants were influenced by situations of poverty or lack of opportunity to pursue opportunities that would be meaningful for them. However, those that were not influenced by this were keen to fulfil intergenerational aspirations on behalf of their parents or to do better for themselves.

Migration as motivation

Four of the five participants referred to themselves as children of migrants from the commonwealth and either second or third generation whose parents had been invited by the British Government to come and work in the country after the Second

World War. Only one participant (Yayoi) arrived later, but all had migration in common. In this respect, they had witnessed their parents struggle for employment and were keen to develop themselves socially and economically.

All the participants appeared to need to resolve some of their own vulnerabilities from the past. By choosing social work, they appeared to feel less helpless and empowered as they helped others (i.e. the users of services and communities they served). This transformational change allowed the participants to take positive risks, consequently improving their own social and economic standing.

Although the theme of migration was an important common denominator, there were clear differences in how the participants experienced this. Lynette and Sonia were from African Caribbean backgrounds. However, their lived experiences were very different and their experiences of racism in the workplace also varied. For example, Lynette was born and brought up in the Caribbean, whereas Sonia was born and brought up in England. This difference impacted how each individual experienced racism and their responses to dealing with their situations, attesting to how the lived and shared experiences of migrants are further impacted by the geography of birth, socioeconomic class and access to education, which was well evidenced in the case of all five participants' accounts.

Professional experience and the leadership role

All the participants' social work careers suggested strong desires to give back to the communities from which they originated, belonged to and with whom they have lived and shared experiences. All the participants also moved into senior leadership roles, having served time on the frontline. Each participant acknowledged that as a BAME female professional, inequalities are multi-layered and not easily identifiable. There

was universal agreement that being female and a woman of colour constitutes a compound challenge due to both gender and race-based biases within organisations. All participants agreed that racism is heavily nuanced and that although controversial, the shade of black or brown (colour) you are also impacts the roles offered as stereotypes and unconscious bias are in the mix. Although the motivation for leadership amongst female BAME social work professionals is varied, their experience was that there can be limited unity amongst the few that are at the top as they too become defended and insulated from the success they have fought so hard for; they become like their white counterparts – detached and out-of-sync with the work that is needed to address racism, in self-reflection and advocacy.

Emotional experience of the workplace and leadership roles

For the participants, the most frequently shared experiences reflected journeys of survival and resilience. The participants talked candidly about where power was held in the organisations in which they worked and how their professionalism was often viewed with curiosity and contempt. This was dealt with by suppressing feelings of humiliation and guilt or using their professionalism to circumnavigate painful thoughts and insulate themselves from racism. This is highlighted well in the following recollection of Rabindra’s when she encounters her manager's response to a case discussion:

> “I remember my first senior post in a local authority which was outside of London, where the population were mostly white and so were the staff teams. The first time I gave advice on a complex case my manager consulted with the legal department to make sure what I was saying was true! I asked her about this, and she said quite clearly that she didn’t know some of the

> legislation I was quoting, and that she needed to be sure. She said something like …. “How do people like you know about these things?”. I was too shocked to react and just walked away from challenging her as I was on probation and did not want her disapproving of me or me being seen as a troublemaker, so I just focused on my work, picked my self-respect off the floor and got on with the job. I stayed in that team for 18 months and moved on quickly as I was able to use that experience to learn quickly. I think when I have experiences like that, I say to myself that my knowledge and skills will protect me from taking things personally. I mean, how can you take things to heart all the time? It will stop you from doing your job and then the client suffers. So, my focus is the work, getting the experience and moving on. That’s why I find locum work so attractive – I just go in, do a professional job and don’t have to be with people I have very little in common with. I think overall this strategy sees me through and has worked so far in the way that I have controlled my own career progression”.

Feelings of frustration and anger were present in all the participants’ narratives. They all felt, at times (and often for long periods), powerless in their senior positions as a minority without a collective voice. The organisation is viewed as omnipotent and all-powerful, and questioning the status quo is not only seen as a naïve act but also perilous and potentially highly detrimental to one’s career. Lynette highlights this:

> “I think I meant the struggle to get that post can be soul-destroying. You have to be able to bear humiliation and pain, otherwise, forget it. I got lucky; I filled posts that others did not want. I was keen to develop myself and what seemed like a challenge to others was an easy ask for me because I learnt early on to be inclusive of the staff team around you as they are your greatest resource. My experience with my fellow BAME female colleagues is that by the time they have reached senior management climbing fatigue has set in – you have no energy left to fight for anyone else. Talking generally, being a

> woman of colour at the top is a step too far for some organisations – they see it as a risk as opposed to an asset. So, the status quo continues”.

Structural racism and navigating obstructions

The participants talked about structural racism and the way this is refracted through layers in organisational bureaucracies and the acts and comments of colleagues, which also acted as barriers to career progression. All five participants found ways to navigate these obstructions because they were able to use their knowledge and skills to learn from their peers and colleagues: to keep themselves ‘under the radar’ and comply with ‘rules’ that served discriminatory functions. Sonia comments:

> “Sometimes you have to play the game. You can get called out for playing the ‘race’ card or for having a ‘chip on your shoulder’. Being a strong female Black leader can be seen as aggressive rather than assertive. My white counterparts can make throw-away comments like, you’re tall, your pretty, you’ve got a nice tan and not think anything of it. They are not in tune with the fact that I am a human being just like them. I would never dream of making personal comments in a professional setting, but it feels like what’s incoming can be overwhelming, so I just let it go. So, it’s dangerous; you have to maintain your integrity at all costs otherwise your cards are marked, and you just stagnate. It’s triple jeopardy if you are Black, female and in a position of power. Your white peers are suspicious of you, and you have to watch your back”.

As a group of individuals who have successfully accessed senior leadership roles, the participants all encountered emotional experiences which have amplified their determination to harness earlier learned life experiences of survival (positive and negative) and defend themselves against discrimination and failure. Indeed, these experiences appeared to compel them to work harder and act smarter to try to

circumnavigate racism within their respective organisations. There was also a strong identification with ideas of having control over their destiny and fate, and not letting others decide their futures.

Cross-case analysis

This section examines the similarities and differences between the five different participants' accounts, having established themes evident in each of the participants' accounts, and some overarching themes representing the accounts of all five participants in the first part of the chapter.

In this second section, I provide a comparative analysis of the participants' accounts, considering the experiences in common that influenced and impacted their leadership journeys and what influences were unique to each of them. The analysis is organised into early childhood experiences, young adulthood and education, and career and leadership trajectory.

Lynette's and Sonia's accounts shared the following similarities. With *early childhood experiences*, both were from African Caribbean working-class backgrounds. Both were from single-parent families where fathers were absent, and both were brought up within an extended family network, including aunts, uncles, cousins and grandparents. Both participants had relationships with their mothers that could be characterised by ambivalence on the part of their mothers. They both viewed their mothers as role models but also as discouraging or impeding them in some way. A strong work ethic was evident in both their narratives, and both displayed a recognition that they differed in class and income from their white peers. In both their narratives, there are themes of survival, growth and hope, alongside a sense of deep uncertainty and anxiety about their future lives. Their stories reveal

anxiety about surveillance of some kind, which appears to impact their sense of themselves and their relationships with others.

Regarding *young adulthood and education*, both Lynette and Sonia demonstrate a desire for education, which each sees as their way out of poverty and a means to combat discrimination. While adulthood represents a conflictual experience for both at times, in their accounts, there is a strong sense of them having aspirations beyond the work expected for them and for something more than the employment their mothers engaged in. Both see education as a progressive factor and while they experienced some race-based barriers, by and large, their learning experiences were positive and involved the creation of opportunities to progress positively.

In their *careers and leadership trajectories*, Sonia and Lynette have similar experiences. Both talk about ‘shades of blackness’ in senior leadership circles and what this means in terms of career progression. Both understand that they are in the minority in their leadership positions and feel they must be hypervigilant in watching themselves and ‘checking’ their emotional reactions. They both felt ‘in the line of fire’ and that any challenges they made could be interpreted as them being ‘the aggressive Black women in the team’. Both recognise that racism in the workplace can be highly nuanced and thus difficult to challenge, not least because a great deal of power and control resides outside of them. They both find that, by the time one reaches the upper echelon of leadership, ‘climbing fatigue’ (as Sonia describes it) sets in and the emotional energy required to challenge inequality is greatly depleted.

Lynnette and Sonia both find a limited sense of unity among BAME senior female managers which they attribute to BAME women being hugely outnumbered and insufficiently politically organised to meaningfully challenge established

hierarchies, which are dominated by (privileged and predominantly male) white leaders. They also both talked about the legacy of slavery and how their experiences of racism were influenced by their African Caribbean heritage and Windrush, which had a profound impact on families, especially for children separated from their parents. They talk about the impact on their parents coming to England and the racism they faced when they arrived, and the dissonance between this treatment and the recruitment propaganda which prompted them to travel to pursue a better life. Reflecting this, there is a strong sense of displacement in their accounts.

Rabindra's, Amrit's and Yayoi's experiences shared the following similarities. In terms of *early childhood*, all three were born outside the UK and arrived in the country as young adults. All three came from households where both parents were present and had middle-class backgrounds. Rabindra and Yayoi had limited experience of racism in their homelands of India and Hong Kong, and were part of the majority populations there. They described settled childhoods marked by relative affluence and a comfortable standard of living. Indeed, Rabindra, Amrit and Yayoi all hailed from families with a stable economic income, which allowed for exposure to educational opportunities and different sources of inspiration for learning. They also all benefitted from parents who were supportive of their intellectual endeavours, which appeared to serve as a buffer for challenges in education and workplace learning later in their lives.

With respect to *young adulthood and education*, Amrit, Yayoi and Rabindra found many positive experiences which could be linked to strong family support, which stemmed from attuned early caregiving relationships (and ways of engaging in the wider world that were suggestive of secure styles of attachment). Yayoi was alone in experiencing enforced repatriation later in early adulthood. Despite this

being a very painful experience, she seemed able to manage it and make use of the sudden displacement and ended up by developing a slightly different, but robust identity. All three of these participants exhibited a strong sense of self.

They all saw education as a way of acquiring knowledge for the purpose of pursuing meaningful careers that involved professional development and some degree of personal fulfilment. They used their educational experiences to enhance the tools available to them to access these opportunities (and not solely as a way to progress from a particular socioeconomic position).

They also did not always view racist behaviour simply as a response to individual or group prejudice toward skin colour alone but as interlinked with socio-political phenomena. Yayoi, in particular, saw it as a recognition of physical attributes, i.e. of looking Chinese and being persecuted for bringing COVID-19 into the UK (following the assertion of the United States president at the time that the virus was a ‘China virus’).

In regard to their *careers and leadership trajectories*, the accounts of Rabindra, Amrit and Yayoi also indicated they used professionalism as a defence against accepting that racism alone is the barrier that inhibited success in their careers. Rabindra and Amrit identified a lack of honesty and transparency as barriers to progress while Yayoi described a sense of powerlessness (and surrender) in her experience. All three talked about the role of stereotypes and established hierarchies which prevented females from achieving leadership roles, and that they do not perceive racism as the sole factor. They, nonetheless, display emotional resilience: they are confident to challenge but also prepared to move on to preserve their dignity and integrity.

Further consideration of the themes identified

Through the in-case and cross-case analysis of the experiences, what is spotlighted is how the participants found the means to navigate complicated life and career trajectories and survive in leadership positions. Each participant's account has unique and specific markers of experiences. Nonetheless, as a group, there are shared narrative trajectories which seem to unify their accounts and which relate to their resilience and fight for survival in a world that sees and hears them as different. Their stories are skilfully told and give a sense of robustness (sometimes brittleness) in responding to this world, but they are narratives that express painful memories and the maintenance of an internal sense of equilibrium.

In their responses in the interviews, the five participants explored the foundations (or building blocks) that helped them to embrace their vulnerabilities and develop coping strategies for leadership roles. Based on the analysis, I would argue that these experiences, particularly those from early life, helped them to better recognise racism and effectively manage both micro and macro aggressions in their work, even (albeit to different degrees) the unconscious dimensions of this. The strategies for coping ranged from hypervigilance or alertness to circumspection in interactions with their white counterparts, which enabled them to continue functioning professionally.

There is a cost to hypervigilance, mistrust and striving for survival, and the participants all reported having exit strategies and tended to move on from posts so that they did not get caught in conflict or have to withstand discrimination for too long. There were individual (and collective) sacrifices to preserve their integrity, respect and personal sense of self. For the participants, the opportunity to talk about their experiences of this meant recalling memories that seemed to have been hidden

and they were not ones they would disclose to professional colleagues. Still, each chose to complete their interview as they felt it was important for future emerging leaders to know that the journey ahead can be perilous and is not be pursued lightly; the impact of racism they experienced was cumulative and cannot be attributed or identified to a single point of contact. All five participants individually gave accounts that highlighted the intersectional ties of geography, class, race and gender and how these impacted their life chances.

Via the process of the cross-case analysis combined with the broader appraisal of the themes identified, the commonalities in the participants' attributes and experiences can be distilled further but also expanded upon. I organised these in the following way.

Lynette and Sonia both have African Caribbean backgrounds, were brought up within an extended family network in early childhood, their respective parents separated during infancy, and they experienced absent fathers. They were raised by strong female maternal carers (but were the subject of ambivalent treatment by their mothers). There was a strong working-class ethic and ideals in their low-income backgrounds. Growing up, they had limited aspirational (i.e. professional) role models and employment was seen as a way out of poverty.

They share a view that education is a necessary way of obtaining qualifications to gain meaningful employment and they are both the first in their families to attend university. Both view higher education as beneficial despite this sentiment not being held by their families.

Sonia and Lynette talk openly about 'shades of blackness' and conclude that the lighter someone is, the more likely they will be to climb the leadership ladder. Both speak about there being no unity among senior BAME managers. They find

that by the time they make headway up the leadership ladder, climbing fatigue sets in and the few BAME women that become senior leaders have a tendency to transform into their white counterparts (possibly for purposes of self-protection).

In terms of the role of structural factors, the role of migration and displacement is evident. The colonial legacy of patronage and African-Caribbean links to the UK via slavery and Windrush migration is discernible. Lynette and Sonia were both second-generation children of the Windrush, but they still carried the stigma of not being fully integrated into British society. Racist treatment and institutional racism ensured that they and their parents had been prevented from accessing economic and social opportunities they would have been able to avail of if they were white.

There are also various themes relating to affect and emotion, namely of hypervigilance, survival, surveillance, projections from white peers, resilience but also fear and pain, power-control, humiliation, mistrust and uncertainty and autonomy.

In the case of Rabindra, Amrit and Yayoi, they are from South Asian and Southeast Asian backgrounds, raised in households where both parents were present and played roles in their care from birth and throughout early childhood. All were born into middle-class or upper-middle-class backgrounds and had access to learning opportunities from very early in their lives. Their parents had professional backgrounds and an emphasis was placed on academic learning.

All three of these participants were able to access university education fairly straightforwardly, and this was seen as something accessible and possible for them. Moreover, education was viewed by their families as a way of establishing one’s

legitimacy in the world and part of a process of lifelong learning, not just a means to an end, and important for women as a gender.

With respect to leadership experiences, these three participants talked about white privilege and how they were viewed with suspicion by their white counterparts. All three challenged racist behaviour and attempted to formulate alliances to safeguard their positions. They also talked about stereotypical views and expectations from colleagues and their senior management counterparts and how they planned to escape their individual experience of racial injustice.

With regard to structural factors, migration and the strange nature of coming to and working in the UK only to face racial discrimination is most apparent. Also evident in their experience is accepting employment with lower status, and income and professional qualifications from outside the UK being either not recognised or considered inferior. These three participants express a profound lack of trust in other professionals and political organisation to challenge workplace discrimination.

With themes relating to affect and emotion, the following are most salient: humiliation, fear, anger, fatigue, survival, alliances, exit, strategy, shame, guilt, surrender, diversity, destiny, faith and a need to keep moving.

Links to (neo)colonialism

Developing the analysis in this way afforded the means to identify ways in which the participants cope with being subjected to racism and how these were determined by how they saw themselves and the communities they belonged to or identified with. In turn, other influences became more visible, notably intersectionality with geography and the impact of displacement caused by migration.

Links can be made from this to the type of imperialism on the continent with which the participant was identified. For example, the two participants whose families were African Caribbean diaspora had an additional history of slavery to contend with, so their relationship with Britain was very different from that of the South Asian and Southeast Asian participants, where the mechanism of oppression was trade and indentured labour. Further, the routes of migration and the context of the reasons that populations from ex-colonies arrived in Britain (pre- and post- the two World Wars) shaped attitudes and relationships that developed over time and in geographic spaces. While most contemporary migration from the African Caribbean can be traced back to Windrush, South Asian and Southeast Asian migration have a shared history of populations arriving by sea on ships (such as the SS Ranchi and the Viceroy of India) which transported substantial amounts of migrant labour to fill the labour shortages post World War II. This being so, the movement of migrants between Britain and her colonies existed long before the onset of the First World War and can be successfully traced back to the early sixteenth century and the expansion and emergence of land, sea and air trade.

The way in which the past histories of the participants and the experiences of their ancestors permeates the present was discerned by the participants. Lynette, for example, commented that:

> "Coming from a Caribbean Island where Black is the majority and white isn't, what you have is the nuances of different shades of black or colour. So, the reference points of race for me weren't about being Black or white; interestingly, what shade of colour was more important. Over the years I have noticed that there is an assumption in the Black community that if you are fair-skinned you get more opportunities than people who are darker-skinned and I think this comes from slavery. I think this is because white landowners slept

with local Black women who were dark-skinned and then they had 'offspring' who were fair, or light-skinned and then these children were treated differently. They had more rights and privileges in society because you were in a relationship with your master. So, this tiered colour filter meant that the lighter you were the more chance you had of accessing a better life. I consider myself Black but because of my fair skin, they look at me differently. In the Caribbean it's not a simple Black-white divide; it's more complex and the shade of black you are makes a real difference, as well as the church you go to. Does that make sense? I think my individual experiences compared to the group experience are more nuanced, so I don't always have a shared experience with those Black people who were born in the UK – it's totally different".

Broadly stated, the communities from South and Southeast Asia have different relationships with Britain. When they arrived in Britain during the pre-war period as merchants and traders and post-war, as skilled migrant labour who had been trained in industries in the occupied territories, they were much in demand by their colonial masters, who sort to employ them. The decline of imperialism and the onset of neo-colonialism via world trade has replicated these relationships of patronage and servitude.

My argument is that this relationship finds form in the boardroom where Black senior leaders (including the participants) encounter their privileged white colleagues as the new guard of oppression. Rabindra, for example, highlights this when saying:

"I think white colleagues were intrigued by my presentation; they were used to poor Indians and, even then, they just grouped all South Asians together. I think it came as a revelation to them that I was able to enunciate my vowels and punctuate my sentences. I think I was viewed as a snob, but I never let that get to me. I was interested in the work, and I was very focused and challenged their casual racism. I never shared personal details and I didn't

> subscribe to the drinking culture of going to the pub to unwind after work. So, I missed out on the office gossip! I remember one service manager eyeing my Mulberry bag. She said “How can someone like you afford that?” I replied by saying that I’d stolen it from Harvey Nicks. You should have seen her reaction; I think she choked on her humble tuna sandwich. Well, she knew never to ask me again. I got used to the stares when I dressed well and the silence when I spoke. The thing with racism is that it can be invisible and non-verbal so someone like me just doesn’t pay it any attention apart from instances when someone is obviously verbally racist and uses language explicitly. I think I rolled all the little things that happened and put them in the bin, psychologically speaking. It was a coping thing, you know”.

The significance of class

Social class was also an influence on the participants’ career trajectories. The two African-Caribbean participants where from working-class backgrounds, where education was seen as a value-added tax on personal betterment – a means to an end to gaining well-paid employment so that they and their families could alleviate their economic hardships.

Social class can be considered with respect to the ‘hidden injuries’ of different generations’ aspirations, when working-class parents work hard to provide greater opportunities for their children (Sennett and Cobb, 1972). Sonia’s mother is a source of inspiration for hard work and attempts to provide a better life for her children. Yet, Sonia feels thwarted by her mother in seeking to pursue a career in performance.

For Sonia and Lynette, access to educational opportunities were their career success. In contrast, the way in which positions of class are configured are very different for Rabindra and Amrit. Rabindra is from a middle-class family and her parents make an early decision to ensure she and her two sisters all access a high level of education to maximise the potential to be economically self-sufficient as

adults. Rabindra is supported to become independent and not to depend on making a good marriage. As she comments:

> “I grew up in India, so from a very young age my parents taught me and my sisters to work hard at school and achieve. Education was a way out of your social and economic poverty. It’s something that people in the West don’t appreciate. My father went to work every day, my mother stayed at home as her role was confined to that of wife and homemaker and she was confined by her gender. My father was determined that his girls would all be educated and economically independent. Not all Indian families back home can do this, so education is a privilege, not an entitlement. I have been very lucky that my parents were able to sacrifice a lot to give me an education. My parents educated me and my sisters so that we could be economically independent. That’s still unusual, as in India women are still married off early and their careers suddenly end. So, my parents were very keen that I was self-made”.

In a not dissimilar vein, Amrit, whose parents were both academics, makes the following connection:

> “I think my confidence came through my education. I think white colleagues were intrigued by my presentation; they were used to poor Indians and, even then, they just grouped all South Asians together. I think it came as a revelation to them that I was able to enunciate my vowels and punctuate my sentences. I think I was viewed as a snob, but I never let that get to me”.

These experiences point to ways that attitudes to dealing with racism in the workplace in later life develop in unique and nuanced ways. Rabindra uses professionalism to shield herself from the humiliation she experiences there. She comments that:

> “When I started to practice in the early 2000s people like me were rare on the frontline so clients would ask where I was from. There would be a curiosity initially, but we would move on to the task at hand and get the job done. I

always focused on the job because taking things personally doesn't help in the long run. I did challenge some views but always with humour; my view is if you make people feel uncomfortable then they don't engage with you, so I worked hard at developing my skills. When I moved into a senior role three years down the line, the comments were more subtle. Racism was always there but then it got combined with your skill set, and your knowledge base and at times it took people a while to see beyond the colour of your skin, your accent. I have a very heavy accent, but I try to deal with it in a pragmatic way, neutral way…I try not to take it personally because it's the way people have been brought up in this country".

Considering racism on an intergenerational basis

Differences that were evident between Rabindra, Amrit and Yayoi also confirm that experiences of racism intergenerationally vary and significant events in society can lead to sudden exposure. Yayoi's narrative illustrates this well. She comments that:

> "Most people didn't know how to be overtly racist towards the Chinese till President Trump announced that COVID-19 was the China virus, so now I get abused regularly especially if I have my mask off. I have experienced real hostility on the tubes, out shopping with my kids. I get stared at and hissed at. I have stopped going out, unless I have to. My parents are elderly now and they too have noticed a difference in the way people view them. I think I sound paranoid, but I know the looks, the person moving away from the seat next to me on the tube… all the signs are there. That's why I said in the beginning …. this is a bad time for me. I think I wasn't prepared for the backlash on a personal and professional level.
> I am really sad about how things have developed. At work, I hear odd comments aimed at the Chinese problem. I think people forget that I am Chinese, and I am equally affected by the virus".

With experiences of racism on an individual and group level being intertwined with socio-political and historical processes, the participants were forced to develop

strategies to maintain their sense of self and professionalism. At times, they have suffered emotional injury. However, arguably because they are from communities that have been (and continue to be) oppressed, their (personal and professional) survival seems instinctual.

(Re)considering intersectional identities and the role of gender in the workplace

Occupying a leadership position is invariably challenging. Yet, for the participants, being subject to racism hindered their ability to progress and lead. Consideration can also be given to the role of gender. Quite strikingly, a limited amount was said by participants about this, and it was noticeable primarily by its absence. None of the participants talked explicitly about their gender being a challenge (with the most significant threat being racism and its impact).

Of course, this being the case does not mean that gender is unimportant (or any less important) in the workplace experiences of BAME senior female leaders. Indeed, it can be said that the connection between racism and gender is talked about differently and can be easily missed (the absence of research relating to BAME professional women appears to reflect a failure to consider it important). Sonia and Lynette both talked briefly about how gender had played a role in their career pathways and reflected on their motivations. For Lynette:

> "My experience of my fellow BAME female colleagues is that by the time they have reached senior management climbing fatigue has set in – you have no energy left to fight for anyone else. Talking generally, being a woman of colour at the top is a step too far for some organisations – they see it as a risk as opposed to an asset. So, the status quo continues. I can't think of anything specific other than at a senior managers' meeting when a BAME female manager spoke about some of the LA's stance on equality issues, she was

soon gone. Her 'outburst' was seen as being disloyal by the leaders and she was relieved of her duties. I think you learn early; you see things happening around you and you keep your mouth shut. So, there is no 'sisterhood' sister or so to speak".

This experience can be linked to the effects of stereotypes attributed to particular groups of BAME women, i.e. of Black women as dominant, aggressive, and angry and Chinese women as competent and submissive (Opara *et al*., 2020). At the same time, there is a shared relatedness that could be better and more collectively represented, as Opara *et al*. (2020) argue. All the participants are compelled to inhabit 'white spaces', and they have little choice but to defend their integrity (and to try and remain psychologically 'intact'). Lynette also says:

"I have learnt so much in my career. I have been disappointed by the lack of solidarity between the few senior BAME female leaders; they all seem to compete between each other to show off their skills in the hope that they may get the next bite of the cherry but to me that's a false economy – no one is looking out for each other. My experience has shown me that when the few BAME females do reach the top they all hold their positions. You don't help your own because you become colour-blind and out of tune with your race. You become like them – the white senior managers who are unable to see the person and see the shading. It's really sad but it's the reality, for sure. I left my job because I refused to tow the line, I asked too many questions, and I wasn't willing to play the game. I am much happier now I am working as a locum manager doing short-term contracts, I am not getting bullied, and I can walk away at any time. I have my freedom and that's very important as I haven't lost my principles. I know I am one of the lucky ones – not all BAME staff are in a position to walk away so they stay, swallow their values and turn into their white counterparts. It's a huge price to pay. I don't think the situation will change anytime soon".

These experiences of feeling ‘othered’ are common and, for the participants, developing the capacity to endure micro-aggressions of racism is a necessity to build their resilience and sense of self. However, how each individual has chosen to address their experiences differs, so the strategies employed are multiple. For example, Rabindra relies heavily on her professionalism to avoid connecting to the emotional content to keep herself going and use her knowledge and skills to progress. Her conscious decision to remain as a locum worker is indicative of a need to keep moving (and may also be considered a survival strategy). She is very much aware of the existence of racist micro-aggressions, which she seeks to avoid.

> “Umm... like I said before, I don’t get involved with people on a personal level when I am working. I have a mindset of keeping to professional boundaries. That way when people behave badly or are racist, I put it down to them and their lack of knowledge and exposure. White colleagues in this country are very limited in their menu choices when it comes to mixing their likes and dislikes of someone. I don’t let them have anything of me so when they come up with hurtful things I stay out of the conversation. When the Brexit vote happened, some colleagues made some comments like “…You must feel dreadful about being in a country like Britain” or “I am ashamed to be British”. I was careful in how I replied as I did not want to offend anyone, but I did think it was interesting that colleagues felt the need to either express their concerns or their shame. Not one person asked for my views. I avoided the whole situation by maintaining my neutrality as these were the very same people who ridiculed my accent and mistrusted my decision-making. So, people like me learn very fast early on in their careers to protect themselves. I mean, who wants to come to work in a team where you are having to fight with your colleagues for a basic level of survival? I just stay away from the whole thing; it’s what works for me”.

There were differences in how the participants maintained their integrity emotionally, which appeared linked to experiences in a particular position in terms of social class and other (personal and childhood) experiences of racism. Rabindra, who came from a more privileged South Asian background, responded differently to racist microaggressions in the workplace than Amrit, who was also from a middle-class background, but less privileged than Rabindra. Rabindra commented that:

> "I got used to the stares when I dressed well and the silences when I spoke. The thing with racism is that it can be invisible, and non-verbal so someone like me just does not pay it any attention apart from instances when someone is obviously verbally racist and uses language explicitly. I think I rolled all the little things that happened and put them in the bin, psychologically speaking. It was a coping thing".

In different ways, though, the tendency of the participants was to reflect on their own presentation in everyday life so as to deflect such 'attacks' and minimise the prospects for humiliation. For Rabindra:

> "I think I was always well spoken, and I held my own authority. It's something that I learnt from my upbringing. My parents always taught me to stand up to injustices even when the costs were high. So, I chose my battles well. I didn't want to win the war – that was beyond me. Also an army of one is easily overpowered".

The need to be hypervigilant in this manner can create a sense of mistrust, which may compromise alliances between senior female BAME leaders as 'climbing fatigue' sets in, and some opt to leave their leadership roles when realising the personal and professional cost of remaining in them. In grappling with this, the participants seemed to be sustained more by experiences earlier in their lives. All five participants had strong female role models in their families, who, in different

ways, encouraged, influenced and challenged them to develop coping mechanisms to tolerate anxiety, disappointment and rejection.

There is a similarity between Lynette and Sonia in their experiencing strong maternal presences in their early childhoods. Sonia's mother, who is lone parent, is a strong presence in her childhood home, and Lynette is brought up by her great-aunt who she is inspired by. While both participants had absent fathers, carrying the memories of these maternal figures appeared to have a fortifying effect on them to tolerate uncertainty and racism in social work. In a different way, for the other three participants, for whom parents were present in their childhoods, all reported experiencing nurture and saw education as a means to improve life chances.

Thus far, it has been established that gender and gender-based inequality is somewhat flattened or 'squashed' by the impact of racial discrimination in the participants' accounts. Yet, there is a crossover in terms of the way they are viewed as women and people of colour within their workplaces. For Lynnette, for example:

> "Talking generally, being a woman of colour at the top is a step too far for some organisations – they see it as a risk as opposed to an asset. So, the status quo continues".

While there are many similar experiences, there are differences between participants from the same racial and ethnic backgrounds, which could be connected to the intersection of class, age, education and migration history. For example, Rabindra and Amrit were both from South Asian backgrounds, and barriers in their leadership journeys impacted both due to structural racism, race, class and gender bias and race-based stereotyping. However, the way they approached this was different and reflected differences in social class. Rabindra comments that she has:

> "Heard stories of workers being racially abused but I have not been affected by that so far. My experiences have not been very negative; I think I have

> been lucky in this. I know racist experiences exist, but I think I have compartmentalised things and attempted to try and connect with those who may not behave well. I think when you decide to settle in a foreign country you need to be prepared to work with assumptions and stereotypes. For me, it's not about blaming and complaining. I focus on doing a good job, so I tend to stay positive and not make race or racism a central theme in my way of thinking."

This quote gives a strong sense of rationalisation as a way of defending against painful experiences. Rabindra seems to 'ally' herself with her professionalism, which functions as a means of avoiding thoughts about the painful psychic reality of humiliation and struggle – a flight to reason and positivity.

This is not an uncommon experience as, faced with racist projections, it would be reasonable to assume that all five participants have developed ways (conscious or unconscious) to divert, suppress and defend against being seen as a troublemaker or aggressive colleague to maintain their professional roles.

Amrit's stance is not dissimilar in this respect. She states:

> "As a social worker, I faced many assumptions about what I was, who I was and where did I come from. White colleagues used to try and befriend me, and non-white colleagues, mainly Asian and Black, would step back. I never answered any personal questions, and I never feared my decision-making. I knew the law inside out and if a manager felt the need to flex, I was clear about the inappropriate nature of their query. I think 'they' were more scared of me than I of them".

However, there are differences with Rabindra's approach. Whereas Rabindra opts to rely primarily on her professionalism to tackle racist comments, Amrit 'humanises' her response, relying on humour and interpersonal skills and learned sensibility. All

the same, both are not immune to the effects, which appear to unsettle and lead to a certain brittleness in the way they are prompted to conduct themselves.

For Sonia and Lynette, as African Caribbean women, there are clear parallels in their approaches, but also differences which appear to be directly shaped by the impact of racism on their careers. Lynette, who is slightly older in her mid-50s, comments:

> "In my case, I was determined and resilient from an early age and I wasn't put off, so I pursued opportunities even when I didn't succeed and made sure I learnt from each rejection. I knew I was good at my job so for me I just kept working hard and trying. Talking generally, I know as a person of colour that you get treated differently and being a woman on top of that is a step too far for some organisations that prefer employing men anyway. But I think that there's a wider societal issue of how women of colour get treated and this is down to stereotypes that other people have of what your role should be. I don't think professionally this will change anytime soon".

It can be said that this quote reflects Lynette's considerable experience as a senior leader and the extent to which she had developed the ability to reflect on her workplace experience and relate this to, as she puts it, 'wider societal issues'. In her early 30s and a relatively young senior leader working within a community mental health setting, Sonia, by comparison, stresses the need to sometimes 'play the game' and the risks of being reprimanded for 'playing the race card', coming across as superior, or 'aggressive rather than assertive' as a Black woman. She is troubled by personal comments white colleagues make about her appearance, being 'tall', 'pretty' and having 'a nice' tan. Her impression is that, for them, these are perfectly admissible comments, but for her, it is dehumanising. She is labelled as pretty but can also be viewed as 'ruthless' for challenging others. This is a term that perturbs her as her professional integrity is important to her, not least in not 'climbing over

people' to progress. This can be linked to comments she made about her experience during her time as a student social worker:

> "So, I worked throughout my course, and this gave me a new kind of independence. I was self-sufficient and, unlike my peers who had to beg, I wasn't begging for anyone or anything. I think I developed my 'Teflon' skin and I have maintained that till today…for me it's survival. When you are the only Black person on your course, no one is going to fight your corner, so you learn extra quick to defend yourself…Black don't crack baby!"

Acknowledging these considerations, it seems highly important to account for the breadth of diversity within the BAME category. These differences may be attributed to age, class, caste, religion, economic and social status, physical attributes including skin colour, accent, height, weight and any other characteristic that may be considered an aspect of individual identity. Moreover, BAME women have their own understandings of these, and will see their Black and Asian heritage in different ways based on their own experiences of them, the racism they have been subjected to, and ways their best efforts are thwarted (simply as leaders, or to bring about transformative change). For Yayoi:

> "Well, I have seen many colleagues of colour being ignored when they make helpful solutions to improve community relations. There is an unsaid resistance to wanting to do anything meaningful as real improvement takes time and money, both of which local councils don't have. So, some things may get commissioned but it's always short term and feels tokenistic. I have seen colleagues of colour leaving senior leadership teams once they have been identified as being vocal; most were also interim staff with no security of tenure so most of us keep our mouths shut and just get on with our jobs. There is no fair or just way of addressing racial inequality because the leadership team are all white. There is no scope to have a debate; the few Black and Asian professionals that are present soon learn to safeguard their own positions. Most are men anyway so there is a huge divide. I think you

> learn fast to play the game as there are no winners, just breaking even will do. It's so hard to even get a manager's role that, when you do, you are so grateful that you don't want to rock the boat. So, you do your job well and don't give them any reason to complain; they have the power to get rid of you very quickly if you fall out of line. So, I stay under the radar, look after my team and go home. I am happy with that".

Summarising the findings of the analysis

This analysis reveals a range of different things about the experiences of senior BAME female leaders in social work in a contemporary UK context. Perhaps most notably, the participants' accounts reveal the racism experienced in the workplace on an individual and group basis, and different forms this can take. Most of the participants talked openly about the need to survive and their commitment to doing well in their professional roles, for which they needed to develop a means of coping and managing, and ways of remaining psychologically intact so as to carry out their leadership duties. All the participants spoke of external support away from their workplaces and formative personal and professional experiences appeared to be significant in developing these.

The analysis also illustrates how racism is a complex phenomenon, taking many forms which can be conveyed and expressed in subtle ways. This means that it is often not properly detected, and constructed in highly variable ways, leading to defensive organisations in individuals, organisations and cultures, where self-preservation supersedes any will or effort to address behaviours that serve to manipulate, control and discriminate. The five participants talked openly about being hypervigilant as senior leaders.

With respect to intersectionality, the analysis finds shared experiences amongst the five participants as BAME senior leaders despite differences in terms of

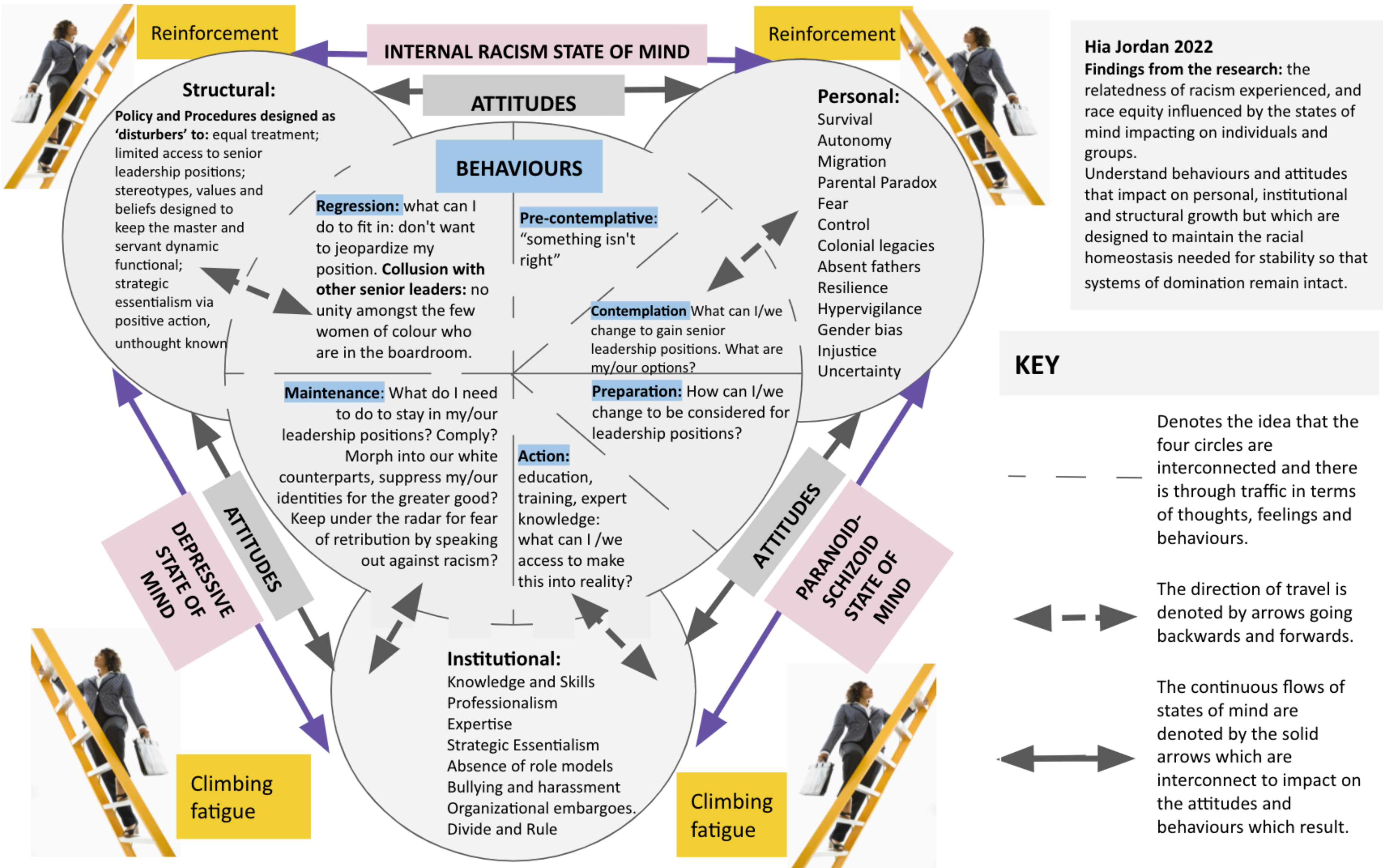
background, class and ways in which challenges were responded to in the workplace. Strikingly, the issue of gender-based discrimination seemed to be 'flattened' or side-lined by racism, which left little room for other forms of inequality to be reflected upon. The term climbing fatigue was also used, indicating the weariness that set in for them as leaders and the strong 'pull' on them to act like their white counterparts or move on from their posts to preserve their positions and avoid humiliation, shame and guilt.

Three of the participants, who hailed from more middle-class backgrounds, appeared to fare marginally better than the other two participants from working-class backgrounds, at least in terms of tolerating the tumult of their professional experience and continuing in their roles. With this, exposure to educational opportunities and strong parental influences appeared to play a role, as well as ethnic backgrounds, cultural norms and values, and economic and social factors. For the two participants from working-class backgrounds, this background seemed to drive them to pursue their roles, but also left them somewhat more exposed in unpredictable forms of subjugation or undermining of them in the workplace.

Honneth's (1992) theory of recognition articulates a human need to be recognised as a human subject. It is a theory that is germane to the participants and their struggles with the impact of racism in their everyday lives. Honneth proposes three spheres of human recognition: love, law and solidarity. He argues that the law provides a legal framework to ensure a form of recognition. It also creates rules that create operational influences between the three spheres. Love is a substate which promotes care and attention, and the sphere of solidarity is a form of social valuation in which a person's qualities and capabilities are recognised in a fair and just way.

In different respects, it can be said that all the participants are fighting for recognition under British conditions to maintain their sense of self-worth (see Fig 1, below). The internal contours of their vulnerabilities are well hidden so that they can remain intact and operational in their senior leadership roles. This is a meaningful consideration for thinking about how discourses of anti-racism can sometimes appear polarised and divided and fail to acknowledge the struggle for recognition that othering creates.

Figure 1



The diagrammatic representation in Figure 1 provides a visual illustration of the relationship between behaviours and attitudes that arise from racist projections (individual and group) and the states of mind produced in the process. Considering this process as cyclical and interconnected, I conceived of it via this analysis but in reference to the contribution of Davids (2011) addressing how an individual can carry an internal racist state of mind which holds intergenerational unknown or known thoughts (as in the work of Bollas, 1989), as well as di Clementi's (2012) work on processes of decision-making for change. This process is one that enables systems of domination to take hold on both conscious and unconscious levels. This is, of course, a 'static' representation of a complex, fluid process, with emergent properties. It can be best explained by the three aspects that comprise it.

The first aspect is the outer margins of the model, which identify three states of mind that impact the attitudes on the individual or group that result from experiencing a racist projection. These states of mind are not fixed and can be active and operational simultaneously, leading the individual and/or group to behave in ways that would not be congruent with interactions when a racist projection is not present. The paranoid schizoid label relates to the activity or 'doing' part of the mind, the depressive state of mind relates to the thinking mind, and the internal racist state of mind refers to an 'occupied' state of mind. Narratives regarding experiences of race and racism are viewed as 'stored' inter-generationally and passed down (or bequeathed) from person to person via a legacy of colonialism. Alongside this, neo-liberal assumptions regarding racial equality and the prevalence of a paranoid 'us-them' dynamic is denoted, whereby the person in receipt of a racist projection will respond in both conscious and unconscious ways. The flow of projective processes

between these three states influences behaviours which will, in turn, influence decision-making.

The second aspect is the main circle in the middle of the figure which represents behaviour and is divided into six subsections characterising the cognitive-affective processes an individual or group engages in when considering their reaction and response. The components are also fluid, so a person thinking about an incident may occupy the pre-contemplative phase for a period then accept or acknowledge that something painful happened and begin considering the action to take. For many experiencing racism, there will be concern with what might be done to approach the issue, and preparation will, in this context, assist in taking action, and then taking further steps so that a position can be protected. The process of regression denotes individuals and groups who seek to maintain their hard-fought-for positionality but end up engaging in collusive practices or thinking as climbing fatigue sets in (i.e. whereby the lack of representation and progressive actions cause BAME professionals to not ‘rock the boat’, thereby reproducing the system of dominance).

The third aspect is the three outer circles, which are connected, in various ways, to the first two aspects. These personal, institutional and structural factors relate to the life experiences of individuals and groups as they navigate racism, and how this influences them in their responses, reactions and action. The ladder graphic at the bottom of the diagram shows how climbing fatigue is present throughout the process of trying to progress as a BAME female leader and how an internal racist state of mind can be established and reinforced depending on the success or failure of these endeavours.

Conclusion

This chapter detailed the analysis of the interviews completed for this study. It ended with a summative overview of the findings and discussion of their diagrammatic representation. The next chapter will draw from these findings in considering the implications of this enquiry for future research and social work practice, and I will provide some closing reflections on undertaking this work.

CHAPTER 7 **Conclusion**

Introduction

This chapter brings the thesis to a close by reflecting on the contribution of the enquiry as a whole and the implications (and limitations) of the study for professional practice and further research. I also provide some (final) reflections on the experience of undertaking the enquiry as a practitioner researcher with a shared identity with the study participants. And I detail how my own understanding of workplace racism (and racism more generally) has evolved whilst undertaking this work.

Understanding BAME female social work leadership experience

The principal contribution of this enquiry resides in illuminating the experience of social work leadership amongst BAME female social work staff. Although there has been extensive concern with race and racism in social work as a discipline, including empirical enquiry on the experiences of social workers from BAME backgrounds, insufficient attention has been paid to the experiences of BAME female leaders (indeed, it may be said that BAME women are under-represented in research as they are in leadership roles).

In this way, this enquiry filled a gap in current knowledge by gathering together and bearing witness to the narratives of female BAME social workers in leadership as these professionals' backgrounds and trajectories are currently not adequately represented in the field of social work. The enquiry also sought to enrich (or deepen) understanding of this experience by way of a psychoanalytically

informed, psychosocial methodological approach and combining autoethnography, narrative and interview-based methods.

Considered via the lens of intersectionality, race, gender and class were identified as predominant themes in the study participants' accounts and these appeared central in shaping their professional experiences and sense of their own subjectivity. This acknowledgement of subjectivity also seemed important to attend to in the ways that personal and past experiences influenced their abilities to remain in senior roles despite a multitude of challenges.

This study's participants did not explicitly refer to gender as a significant barrier to career progression. What was more readily apparent in their accounts was the dominant impact of racism, including how particular categorisations (along racial lines) influenced their career trajectories but were also present throughout their professional and personal lives. Analysis of their narratives also testified to ways in which forms of race, class and gender-based oppression and discrimination intersect and can reinforce one another and compound challenges faced in (and outside of) the workplace. Notably, the issue of class became more apparent over time during the research, initially via consideration of access to education and training opportunities. Class also seemed highly pertinent to the ways participants grappled with racist projections from white counterparts as they navigated their leadership journeys. The analysis established that the ways the participants dealt with racism was dependent on different factors and the extent to which they had been disadvantaged by aspects of their work environment but were also supported by particular relationships and formative experiences during childhood.

The participants' narratives also attested to the pressure that they were subject to in their roles as BAME women. There were many episodes of racism and

all-too-common instances of undermining, leading to struggles to remain emotionally 'intact' and a sense of hypervigilance at work. At other times, the participants spoke about situations where responses from their white counterparts had left them feeling as though their grasp on a shared reality was somehow 'off' and they should not trust what they were hearing or seeing. In these situations, powerful racist projections appeared to be at play which could arise unexpectedly, catching them off guard and prompting them to do or say something ('mad') that they considered out of character. The participants reported situations of what may be described as (following Laing (1960)), 'crazy making'. These situations appeared to speak to both how internal states of mind and defences influence behaviour. They also arguably reflect how much is at stake for the loss of control, power and authority for the white majority when BAME female professionals become leaders, and the subterranean quality of resistance to them occupying such roles (while diversity may be ostensibly 'embraced' by an organisation).

With respect to limitations, the enquiry sought an in-depth understanding of the experiences of senior BAME female social work leaders, and this involved interviews with a small sample of leaders (five). Consequently, the findings of the analysis are not reliably representative of the experiences of BAME female social work leaders in other contexts. Yet, as has already been acknowledged, the development of generalisable claims was not the aim of this study, but rather insight into the nature of this experience. Future research enquiries in this area may attempt to recruit a larger number of participants. Such work may also build on some of the methodological learning from this enquiry to see if similar themes are identifiable. The life-course perspective that this enquiry involved, in the use of a biographically based form of research interviewing, could, for example, be further developed to

explore the experiences of BAME female social work leaders at different times in their careers via a longitudinal study.

There are also clear links between the analysis and the findings of other research regarding the experience of BAME women in the workplace, which evidence ways that workplace racism is not confined to a social work setting but permeates many work settings (Marsh, 2020; Opara *et al*., 2020). The experiences of the study participants (like my own) can also be linked to dominant cultural beliefs around race and forms of classification based on visible markers of otherness (a way for individuals who believe in racial categorisations to assume a position of dominance over others, to reinforce inequality). As Marsh (2020) characterises it, the social construct of race prompts members of society to treat each other in divergent ways and the social construction of race can greatly influence a person's lived experience at work. The study findings evidence this through the narratives of the participants and my own experiences of racism in the workplace.

Implications for practice

At a general level, the findings of this enquiry reinforce the importance of anti-racist approaches in social work leadership and indicate these are vital in strengthening understanding and identifying problems that may impede progress. Yet, the findings also point to the need for critical reflection on how these approaches are developed so as to avoid the cause of anti-racism and transformative change being mollified by claims to allyship from white social work professionals.

In a valuable contribution that confronts the contradictions and limitations inherent to white feminism, and writing as Pakistani women, Zakaria (2021) explores how, with a premise of liberation, Muslim women can become the object of pity,

discomfort and avoidance. For the study participants, being pitied and claims to allyship from white colleagues appeared to obstruct their own endeavours, even precipitate them 'moving on' from an organisation and the status quo there being maintained.

In different ways, this enquiry foregrounds the complexity of the phenomenon of racism in the (social work) workplace and the range of theory and ideas (and voices) that can be valuably brought to bear on the issue. At times, I found the enquiry seemed to push at the seams of the design I had conceived for it. At others, I worried about fault lines emerging and what might be missed trying to make use of (but also being pulled in different directions by) the perspectives of different cultural theorists, academic researchers and political activists. In this way, I consider the enquiry being, in essence, a means of continuing a conversation on race and racism in social work. Primarily, what the enquiry contributes to this conversation is a means of helping to articulate the role of relationships and the bidirectional relationship between BAME professionals' inner experiences and the organisational and social context. With this, the development of psychosocial approaches appears to be key to understand (in practice and research) the interconnectedness between individuals and groups, personal and professional identities, and how stereotyping is defended against by BAME social work professionals at conscious and unconscious levels. Recognising the uniqueness of individual responses and the role of social class can be incorporated into such a concern. The analysis also highlights the role of psychoanalytic theory as a vocabulary for affective states and intersubjective processes. While the Eurocentric basis of this theory needs to be critically engaged with (as well as the perils of essentialism), this theory constitutes a resource for

attending to organisational psychodynamics that contribute to processes of subjugation in a highly reflexive way.

As a professional, a specific way in which I have sought to take the findings forward is in the development of an experiential workshop for social workers and social care professionals on anti-racist practice. This workshop aims to help the attendees explore race, identity and personal and professional values and the way these have an impact on practice. It seeks to engage them in a process of reflection on what it means to practice in an anti-racist way and the role of self-reflection on values and ethical considerations in this as a means of challenging views and processes that reinforce inequities of access and misrecognition of BAME groups. The workshop does not attempt to steer clear of addressing the complexity of racism and includes consideration of how individual notions of cultural competence and unconscious bias alone can hinder progress. As part of the workshop, attendees are encouraged to consider who they are (i.e. their backgrounds and identities), what they do in their professional roles, and how these align with organisational and social work values and ethics. Moreover, in a similar manner to a psychoanalytically based work discussion group, the attendees are provided with a reflective space to think about what can be done by them, as individuals and a collective, to influence change in the organisations and teams in which they work.

This workshop has been commissioned by the local West London teaching partnership and, more recently, become part of mandatory training on anti-racism in the local authority. The workshop takes a half-day and, primarily, involves discussions between attendees. Facilitating the workshop on several occasions, I have been struck by how the attendees have been surprised that it is not instructor-

led and that the dialogue that emerges is grounded in the experience of everyday situations, including micro-aggressions that are encountered by BAME professionals.

The workshop is designed in a way that supports the attendees to feel safe to discuss the pressures they face at work to regain a sense of the self in self-reflection. The workshop continues to evolve and, thus far, feedback from attendees has highlighted its value, which has resulted in it being recommissioned. Recognition of the role of the personal and professional 'self' has also been important in highlighting the prospects of burnout and the 'climbing fatigue' that senior female BAME leaders can experience at work.

Changes in my own thinking (regarding racism)

In different respects, my thinking about the matter of racism (in and outside the workplace and social work) has developed in significant ways while undertaking this doctoral enquiry. At the same time, other aspects of my thinking and perspective remain essentially unchanged; or rather, I have felt revitalised in views I held at the start of the work.

From my personal perspective, in contemporary society and most working environments, racism and individual emotional experience in groups are largely left unattended to. Moreover, my impression is that most of the dominant white majority remain unaware of their own prejudice, which has painful repercussions for subordinate groups who do not hold positions of power or authority. Hence, a neutral position is, by my estimation, not possible to conceive via the established (i.e. white, Eurocentric) terms of reference and a great deal of care needs to be taken to avoid ‘enlightened’ emancipatory action simply serving to privilege whiteness and assuage white guilt about racism.

I have been influenced a great deal in my thinking by the work of South Asian writers, such as Roy (2017) and Sen (1991), who seek to tell the stories of women of colour and shed light on the injustice endured by these women. These injustices are visited differently on individuals but can confront women in professional and leadership positions in ways that parallel the experiences of women that are not in these positions. Like others, I think that the legacy of colonialism can be disrupted by the narratives and stories we tell about our lives and experiences as persons of colour (see, for example, the work of the Black British artist, Claudette Johnson).

Completing this work, I remain disturbed by the way in which racism takes so many different forms. While it may be said that overt racism is nowadays considered unbecoming, even unfashionable, it can find expression in subtle forms and internalised responses and remains omnipresent in society.

For example, as I reached the end of writing the thesis, with the invasion of the Ukraine, I began to feel a sense of uncertainty and fear that was uncannily similar to a sense that gripped me when I began the research. My thoughts were drawn to the wider socio-political context, and I became preoccupied with worries about (my own and others') annihilation. In the *Guardian* newspaper, commentary highlighted the compassion expressed by European citizens for white Ukrainian refugees fleeing the Russian onslaught, but how a worrying level of discrimination was being reported for non-European-heritage refugees fleeing also (Howden, 2022). This commentary observed how a compassion for refugees only seemed to have been rediscovered for the 'deserving' white refugees, with other news reporting and media outlets represented as having 'fallen into the trap' of separating these refugees from those who are underserving. It described the way in which the praise for Ukrainian citizens had been "laced with references to supposed exceptional

qualities such as pluck and fighting spirit". Yet, these references were "heard and understood by Syrians, Afghans and others" who had been "received with brutality at some of the same borders" and, not without a sense of irony in the case of Syria, "after fighting the same aggressor".

For me, this enquiry speaks to the intransigent nature of processes of othering, and how forms of oppression and subjugation can become intensified at times of uncertainty. Indeed, I would argue there is a striking paradox in social work as a profession. The value base of social work is, at its core, concerned with addressing social injustice. Yet, the profession still needs to find a way to create equality for BAME women within social work and care organisations. Through a combination of 'progressive' workplace policies, which maintain strategic essentialism, BAME women are kept in a position of relative powerlessness, where we hope we will one day be properly recognised for our work. Because the subject of racism is not easily spoken about, it is swept under the carpet, rendering the initiator of the conversation mute. This means that, for change to happen, there is an onus on all to bear the burden of this dialogue and start by considering the language through which the experience of racism is made intelligible. I believe that, in doing so, BAME women in social work must engage in a dialogue about the dialogue they have with themselves.

At a recent Tavistock and Portman symposium in February 2022, a powerful closing presentation was provided by Dr Nini Fang from the University of Edinburgh. Speaking about voices from the margins, Dr Fang reflected on the self-questioning she engages in, as a woman of colour with a minority ethnic background, when speaking and presenting to others and her ruminations on what they see and hear as she speaks. As she described it, "I am worried that you are not liking the sound of

my voice, the look of my face. I am worried that you are thinking, ‘Who is she?’ and ‘How dare she take up that position as someone who has something to say to us?’”. Continuing with this theme, she spoke about how she was, in this situation, “not only addressing an unknown audience whom I have not engaged with before, but also an imagined audience inside of me – Would some of you think I am ‘taking too long’ or that I should just ‘cut it short’? Should I?”.

What Dr Fang said very much resonated with me. Like her, I, too, experience an inner voice, which was a consistent presence during my doctoral studies. I think attending to this voice is essential in understanding the impact of racist projections and the forces that exert an influence on individuals and groups, as well as the illusory nature of some ‘progress’ regarding racism. BAME researchers need to engage with these inner voices in their work (as they relate to external ‘audiences’). They also need to consider the inner voices of BAME social work professionals and develop ethical methods through which this internal dialogue can be elucidated and theorised.

References

Adams, T., Jones, SH. and Ellis, C. (2015) *Autoethnography*. London, Oxford: University Press.

Agnes, B. and Aymer, C. (2008) 'Black social work students and practitioners survival strategies', *Journal of Social Work Practice*, pp. 113–117.

Ahmed, S. (2012) *On Being Included: Racism and Diversity in Institutional Life*. Duke University Press.

Ahmed, S. (2017) *Living a Feminist Life*. Duke University Press.

Akhtar, S. (2014) 'The mental pain of minorities', *British Journal of Psychotherapy* 30(2), pp. 136–153.

Allen-Meares. P. and Lane B.A. (1990) 'Integrating qualitative and quantitative data collection techniques, *Journal of Social Work Practice.*

Alvesson, M. (2003) 'Methodology for close up studies—Struggling with closeness and closure', *Higher Education*, 46(2), pp. 167–193.

American Psychoanalytical Association (2023) *Psychoanalytic Terms and Concepts Defined*. Online Resource.

Andersen, M.L. (1993) 'Studying across difference: Race, class, and gender in qualitative research', in Stanfield J.H. and Dennis M.R. (Eds.) *Race and Ethnicity in Research Methods*. Sage Publications, pp. 39–52.

Andreasen, R.O. (2000) Race: biological reality or social construct? *Philosophy of Science*, 62(3), DOI:10.1086/39285 Available at: https://icpla.edu/wp-content/uploads/2014/08/Bion-W.-Notes-on-Memory-and-Desires.pdf. (Accessed 5 May 2020), pp. 653–666.

Archard, P. J. (2020) 'Reflections on the completion of a psychoanalytically informed interview study involving children's services professionals', *Social Work and Social Sciences Review*, 21(3), pp. 107–126.

Archard, P. J. (2021) 'The psychoanalytically-informed interview in social work research', *Journal of Social Work Practice*, 35(2), pp. 191–203.

Archard, P. J., and O'Reilly, M. (2022) 'Psychoanalytic therapy and narrative research interviewing: some reflections', *Nurse Researcher*, 30(3), pp. 28–35.

Archer, C., Sison, B. and O'Mahony, L. (2022) 'Bodies of/at work: How women of colour experienced their workplace and have been expected to perform'. *Journal of Intercultural Studies*. DOI 10.1080/07256868.20222128091

Armstrong, D. (2005) *Organisation in the Mind*. Routledge Press.

Aveyard, H. (2014) *Doing a literature review in health and social care – a practical guide* (3rd ed.). Open University Press.

Aymer, C. (2002) 'The dilemmas for black social work professionals: therapeutic implications', *Journal of Social work Practice*, pp. 15–21.

Back, L. and Solomos, J. (2022) *Theories of Race and Racism. A Reader.* London: Routledge.

Bhugra, D. (2020) *Oxford Textbook of Migrant Psychiatry*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Bion, W.R. (1967) 'Notes on memory and desire', in R. Lang (ed.) *Classics in Psychoanalytic Technique*. New York and London: Jason Aronson Inc, pp. 259–260.

Biondi, G. and Rickards, O. (2002) 'The scientific fallacy of the human biological concept of race', *Mankind Quarterly*, 42(4), pp. 355–388.

Bochner, A.P. (2014) *Coming to Narrative: a personal history of paradigm changes in the human sciences*. Walnut Creek, CA: Left Coast Press.

Bolaji, W. (2021) *Tiger! Tiger! What is the experience of trauma and transition into adulthood of African and asylum-seeking care leavers?* PhD thesis. University of Essex.

Bolas, C. (1989) *The Shadow of the Object: Psychoanalysis of the Unthought Known*. Free Association Books.

Bonnett, A. (1997) 'Geography, race and whiteness: Invisible traditions and current challenges', *Area*. (29), pp. 193–199.

Bower, M. (2005) *Psychoanalytic Theory for Social Work Practice: Thinking Under Fire*, Routledge.

Braithwaite, B. (2018) ‘Black, Asian and Minority ethnic female nurses: colonialism, power and racism’, *British Journal of Nursing*, 27(5), pp. 254–258.

Braun, V. and Clarke, V. (2006) ‘Using thematic analysis in psychology’, *Qualitative Research in Psychology*, 3, DOI 10.1191/1478088706qp063oa, pp. 77–101.

Briggs, S. (2005) ‘Psychoanalytic research in the era of evidence-based practice’, in Bower, M. (ed.) *Psychoanalytic Theory for Social Work Practice*. London: Routledge, pp. 15–29.

Bruner, J. (1990) *Acts of Meaning*. Harvard University Press.

Bulmer, M. and Solomos, J. (1999) *Racism*. OUP Higher Education Division

Chakravarty, C. and Chaudhuri, S. (2017) *Tagore's Ideas of the New Woman: The Making and Unmaking of Female Subjectivity*. (1st ed.) London: SAGE Publications, Inc. Available at: <https://dx.doi.org/10.4135/9789353280345>

Charmaz, K. (2000) ‘Grounded theory: Objectivist and constructivist methods’, in Denzin N.K. and Lincoln Y.S. (eds.) *Handbook of Qualitative Research*. Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE, pp. 509–536.

Charmaz, K. (2006) *Constructing Grounded Theory: A Practical Guide through Qualitative Analysis*. London: SAGE.

Charmaz, K. (2008) ‘Constructionism and the grounded theory method’, in Holstein J.A. and Gubrium J.F. (eds.) *Handbook of Constructionist Research*. New York: Guilford Press, pp. 397–412.

Charmaz, K (2011) Grounded theory methods in social justice research’, in Denzin N.K. and Lincoln Y.S. (eds.) *The SAGE Handbook of Qualitative Research*. Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE, pp. 359–380.

Charmaz, K. (2015) ‘Grounded theory’, in: Smith J.A. (ed.) *Qualitative Psychology: A Practical Guide to Research Methods*. London: SAGE, pp. 53–84.

Charmaz, K. (2017) The power of constructivist grounded theory for critical inquiry. *Qualitative Inquiry* 23(1) pp. 34–45.

Charmaz, K. and Mitchell, R.G. (1996) ‘The myth of silent authorship: Self, substance, and style in ethnographic writing’, *Symbolic Interaction,* 19(4), pp. 285–302

Clarke, S. (2002) ‘Learning from experience: psycho-social research methods in the socialsciences’, *Qualitative Research*, 2, DOI:10.1177/146879410200200203, pp. 173–194.

Clarke, S. and Hoggett, P. (2009) *Researching beneath the surface: Psycho-social research methods in practice* London: Routledge.

Commission on Race and Ethnic Disparities. (2021) *Commission on Race and Ethnic Disparities: The Report.* https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/974507/20210331_-_CRED_Report_-_FINAL_-_Web_Accessible.pdf

Cooper, A. (2009) ‘Hearing the grass grow: Emotional and epistemological challenges of practice-near research’, *Journal of Social Work Practice*, 23, DOI: 10.1080/02650530903374960, pp. 429–442.

Cooper, A. (2012) ‘The self in social work practice: Uses and abuses. How to do relationship- based social work’, *CSWP/ Essex University Day conference*. Southend, 13 January. Available at: https://www.yumpu.com/en/document/read/22204117/the-self-in-social-work-practice-uses-and-abuses-andrew-cooper. (Accessed: 5 May 2020).

Cooper, A. (2018) ‘The use of self in social work practice’, in Bower, M and Solomon, R. (eds.) *What social workers need to know. A Psychoanalytic approach*. London: Routledge, pp. 109–123.

Cooper, A. (2020a) ‘Analysing Data 1: From raw data to theorisation’. Tavistock and Portman NHS Trust. Unpublished paper.

Cooper, A. (2020b) ‘Analysing Data 2: Unconscious processes’, Tavistock and Portman NHS Trust. Unpublished paper.

Crenshaw, K. (1991) ‘Mapping the margins: Intersectionality, identity politics, and violence against women of colour’, *Stanford Law Review*, 43(6), pp 1241–1299.

Cummings, U. (2018) *Social Positioning in Social Work Practice: Stories of Hopes and Struggles among Racialized Minority Workers*. *Theses and Dissertations (Comprehensive)*. 2049.https://scholars.wlu.ca/etd/2049

Curtis, S. (2017) ‘Black women’s intersectional complexities: The impact on leadership’, *Management in Education*, *31*(2), pp. 94–102.

Dale, A. (2002) ‘Social exclusion of Pakistani and Bangladeshi women’, *Sociological Research Online,* 7, (3).

Davis, A.Y. (1981) *Women, Race and Class*. Random House.

D’Cruz, H., Gillingham, P. and Melendez, S. (2007) ‘Reflexivity, its meanings and relevance for social work: A critical review of the literature’, *The British Journal of Social Work,* 37(1), pp. 73–90.

Denzin, N.K. (1978) *Sociological Methods: A Sourcebook,* New York: McGraw-Hill.

Denzin, N.K and Lincoln, Y.S. (1994) *Handbook of Qualitative Research*. Thousand Oaks,California: Sage.

Denzin, N. K and Lincoln, Y.S. (2000) *Handbook of Qualitative Research*, Thousand Oaks,California: Sage.

Denzin, N. K and Lincoln, Y.S. (2005) *Handbook of Qualitative Research*. Thousand Oaks,California: Sage.

Devichand. M. and Wendling, M. BBC World Service: *Black Lives Matter: The Story of a Slogan*. (4th Feb 2016) Available at: https://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/p03gzydx

Dominelli, L. (2002) *Feminist Social Work Theory and Practice*, Routledge.

Dominelli, L. (2017) *Anti-Racist Social Work*, Routledge.

Drislane, R. and Parkinson, G. (2011) ‘Qualitative Research’ in *Social Science Dictionary*, 1st ed. [online] Athabasca University and ICAAP. Available at: <http://bitbucket.icaap.org/dict.pl>.

Eddo-Lodge, R. (2017) *Why I am No Longer Talking to White People About Race*, Bloomsbury Press.

Ellis, C. (2004) *The Ethnographic I: A Methodological Novel about Autoethnography*. Rowan Altamira.

Ellis, C. (2007) 'Telling secrets, revealing lives: relational ethics in research with intimate others', *Qualitative Inquiry*, 13, pp. 3–29. DOI:10.1177/1077800406294947

Etherington, K. (2004) *Becoming a Reflexive Researcher: Using Our Selves in Research*. London: Jessica Kingsley.

Fakhry Davids, M. (2011) *Internal Racism: A Psychoanalytical Approach to Race and Difference*, Palgrave Macmillan.

Fang, N. (2022) Closing Address (unpublished speech), Tavistock Annual Conference.

Fanon, F. (1952) *Black Skin, White Masks*, trans. Charles Lamm Markman. New

York: Grove Press, 1967.

Fanon, F. (2007) *Black Skin, White Masks.* New York: Grove Press**.**

Finlay, L. and Gough, B. (2008) *Reflexivity: A Practical Guide for Researchers in Health and Social Sciences*. Oxford: Blackwell.

Freud, A. (2018) *The Ego and the Mechanisms of Defence*. Routledge.

Freud, S. (1908–38) *The Sigmund Freud-Ludwig Binswanger Correspondence*, Standard edition Volume 10:155. London: Open Gate Press, 2000, p. 276.

Freud, S. (1920) *Beyond the pleasure principle*, Standard edition Volume 18. London: Hogarth Press, 1955, pp. 3–64.

Freud, S. (1926) *Inhibitions, Symptoms and Anxiety*, Standard edition Volume 20. London: Hogarth Press, pp. 75–176.

Freud, S. (1963) *Fixation to Traumas – the Unconscious,* Standard edition Volume 16. London: Hogarth Press, 1955, pp. 273–285.

Freud, S. and Breuer, G. (1955) *Studies in Hysteria*, Standard Edition Volume 2. London: Hogarth Press, pp. 1–335.

Freud, S. and Jung C.G. (1906–13) *The Freud/Jung Letters: The Correspondence between Sigmund Freud and C.G. Jung*, London: Hogarth Press with Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1974, pp. 1–705. Available at: https://ia801707.us.archive.org/24/items/FreudJungLetters/The-Freud-Jung-letters-

Frosh, S. (2010) *Psychoanalysis Outside the Clinic: Interventions in Psychosocial studies.* Basingstoke: Macmillan International Higher Education.

Frosh, S. and Baraitser, L. (2008) 'Psychoanalysis and psychosocial studies', *Psychoanalysis,Culture and Society*, 13, pp. 346–365. DOI: 10.1057/pcs.2008.8.

Frosh, S. and Saville Young, L. (2011) 'Using psychoanalytic methodology in psychosocial research: researching brothers', in Mason, J. and Dale, A. (eds.) *Understanding Social Research: Thinking creatively about method.* London: Sage.

Fryer, P. (2018) *Staying Power: The History of Black People in Britain,* London: Pluto Press.

Gemignani, M. (2011) 'Between researcher and researched: An Introduction to countertransference in qualitative inquiry', *Qualitative Inquiry*, 17(8), DOI:10.1177/1077800411415501.a, pp. 701–708.

Gergen, K.J. and Gergen, M.M. (1991) 'Toward reflexive methodologies' in Steier F. (ed.) *Research and Reflexivity*. London: SAGE, pp. 76–95.

Gov.uk. Cabinet Office (March 2018) *Race Disparity Audit: Summary Findings from the Ethnicities Facts and Figures Website*, https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/race-disparity-audit,

Gov.uk. (March 2021) Commission on Race and Ethnic Disparities: https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/974507/20210331_-_CRED_Report_-_FINAL_-_Web_Accessible.pdf.

Graham, M. (2007) 'The ethics of care, black women and the social professions: Implications of a new analysis', *Ethics and Social Welfare*, 1(2), pp.194–206.

Graham, M. and Schiele, J.H. (2010) 'Equality of oppressions and anti-discriminatory models in social work: Reflections from the USA, UK', *European Journal of Social Work* 13(2), pp 231–244.

Grant, A.J. and Zeeman, L. (2012) 'Whose story Is It? An autoethnography concerning narrative identity', *The Qualitative Report*, 17(36), pp. 1–12. DOI https://.doi.org/10.46743/2160-3715/2012/1735.

Guba, E.G. and Lincoln, Y.S. (1994) 'Competing paradigms in qualitative research', *Handbook of Qualitative Research*, 2, p.105.

Hammersley M. and Atkinson P. (2007) *Ethnography: Principles in Practice*. New York: Routledge.

Hart, C. (2018) *Doing a Literature Review* (2nd ed.). Sage publication.

Higgins, J.P.T., Thomas, J., Chandler, J., Cumpston, M., Li, T., Page, M.J. and Welch, V.A. (Eds.) (2022). *Cochrane Handbook for Systematic Reviews of Interventions Version 6.3*. Cochrane. Available from www.training.cochrane.org/handbook.

Hirsch, A. (2018) 'Afua Hirsch on Race and Identity in 2018', *The Evening Standard* https://www.standard.co.uk/lifestyle/esmagazine/afua-hirsch-on-race-and-identity-in-2018-a3748571.html

Hollway, W. (2009) 'Applying the "experience-near" principle to research: psychoanalytically informed methods', *Journal of Social Work Practice*, 23, DOI: 10.1080/02650530903375025, pp 461–474.

Hollway, W. and Jefferson, T. (1997) 'Eliciting narrative through the in-depth interview', *Qualitative Inquiry*, 3(1), DOI: 10.1177/107780049700300103, pp. 53–70.

Hollway, W. and Jefferson, T. (2000) *Doing qualitative research differently: Free association,narrative and the interview method*. London: Sage.

Hollway, W. and Jefferson, T. (2001) ‘Free association, narrative analysis and the defended subject: The case of Ivy’, *Narrative Inquiry*, 11(1), DOI: 10.1075/ni.11.1.05hol. pp. 103–122.

Hollway, W. and Jefferson, T. (2008) ‘The Free Association Narrative Interview Method’ in Given, L.M. (ed.), *The Sage Encyclopaedia of Qualitative Research Methods,* Sevenoaks, California: Sage, pp. 296–315.

Hollway, W. and Jefferson, T. (2013) *Doing Qualitative Research Differently: A Psychosocial Approach* (2nd ed.). California: Sage.

Honneth, A. (2010) *The I in We Studies in the Theory of Recognition*, Polity Press.

Howden, D. (2022) ‘Separating those fleeing into “deserving” and undeserving’ is immoral and a betrayal of European values’, *The Guardian*.

Hwang, M.J. (2007) ‘Asian social workers’ perceptions of glass ceiling, organizational fairness and career prospects’, *Journal of social service research*, 33(4), pp. 13–24.

Iheduru-Anderson, K., Okoro, F.O. and Moore, S.S. ‘Diversity and inclusion or tokens? A qualitative study of black women academic nurse leaders in the United States’, *Global Qualitative Nursing Research* 9 (2022): 23333936211073116.

Javadi, M. and Zarea, K. (2016) ‘Understanding Thematic Analysis and its Pitfalls’, *Demo*,1, DOI: 10.15412/J.JCC.02010107, pp. 33–39.

Johnson, P. (2019) *Black Artist’s Exhibition Talk: I came to dance*. Oxford Museum of Modern Art.

Jones, T.K. (2023) *Black Women Social Workers Transitioning from Mentee to Leader: An Interpretive Phenomenological Analysis.* Doctoral dissertation. The Chicago School of Professional Psychology.

Kaushik, A. (2017) ‘Use of self in social work: Rhetoric or reality’, *Journal of Social Work Values and Ethics*, 14(1), pp. 21–29. Available at: https://jswve.org/download/2017-1/14-1-articles/21- Use-of-Self-in-Social-Work-.pdf. (Accessed: 4 February 2021).

Kikulwe, D.K. (2014) This is what we know: Working from the margins in child welfare.

King, N. (2004) ‘Using Templates in the Thematic Analysis of Text’, in Cassell, C. and Symon, G. (eds.) *Essential guide to qualitative methods in organizational research*. London: Sage Publications. DOI: 10.4135/9781446280119.n21, pp. 256.

Kiteley, R. and Stogdon, C. (2014) *Literature Reviews in Social Work*. Sage Publications.

Laing, R.D. (1960). *The Divided Self*. Penguin.

Lavalette, M. and Penketh, L. (2008) *The Sage Encyclopaedia of Qualitative Research Methods.* Sevenoaks, California: Sage, pp. 296–315.

Lavalette, M. and Penketh, L. (2013) ‘Race, racism and social work’, in *Race, Racism and Social Work.* Policy Press pp. 1–16.

Lee, J.J. and Miller, S.E. (2013) ‘A self-care framework for social workers: Building a strong foundation for practice’, *Families in Society*, 94 (2), pp. 96–103. DOI: 10/1606/1044-3894.4289.

Lewis, G. (1997) *Living the Differences: Ethnicity, Gender and Social Work*. Open University.

Library database www.ebsco.com : website search engine for keyword searches related to race, ethnicity and inequality in social work.

Lincoln, Y.S. and Guba, E.G. (1985) *Naturalistic Inquiry*, Beverly Hills: Sage.

Lloyd, E.S. and Bowlby, S. (2000) ’Crossing boundaries: Racialised gendering and the labour market experiences of Pakistani migrant women in Britain’, *Women’s Studies International Forum*, 23,(4), pp. 461–474.

Lowe, F. (2013) ‘Keeping leadership white: Invisible blocks to black leadership and its denial in white organisations’, *Journal of Social Work Practice*, *27*(2), pp. 149–162.

Lunt, N., & Shaw, I. (2017). Good practice in the conduct and reporting of practitioner research: Reflections from social work and social care. Practice: Social Work in Action, 29(3), 201-218.

Malik, K. (2020) 'Don't call me BAME. We need a new political language', *The Guardian*.

Malik, K. (2023) *Not so Black and White*. Hurst Publishers.

Mamon, S. (2004) 'Mapping the attainment of Black children in Britain'*, Institute of Race Relations*, 46(2), pp. 78–91.

Marechal, G. (2010) *Encyclopaedia of Case Study Research*. Sage Publications, pp. 43–450.

Mbarushimana, J-P, and Robbins, R. (2015) '"We have to work harder": Testing assumptions about the challenges for black and minority ethnic social workers in a multicultural society', *Practice* 27(2) pp. 135–152.

McGilchrist, I. (2021) *The Matter with Things, Vol 1 and 2*. Perspectiva Press.

McKinsey and Company Lean In (2022) *Black Women Leaders are More Ambitious but Less Supported at Work.* Forbes Online Study. Available at https://forbes.com

Miller, D. (2022) 'Using constructivist grounded theory to examine the experiences of Black British female managers: A worked thorough example', *Qualitative Report*, 27(10), pp. 2135–2156.

Moore, T. and Simango, G. (2021) T*he Anti-Racist Social Worker: Stories of Activism by Social Care and Allied Health Professionals.* St Albans: Critical Publishing.

Morgan, M. (2020) *Black Women in Leadership: The Complexity of Intersectionality.* Online publication. https://repository.uel.ac/uk

Mosse, G. (1978) *Toward the Final Solution: A History of European Racism*. New York: Howard Fertig.

Motor, D., Evans, J.B., Ellis, A.P.J., and Benson, L. III. (2022) 'Race and reactions to women's expressions of anger at work: Examining the effects of the "angry Black woman" stereotype', *Journal of Applied Psychology,* 107(1), 142–152. https://doi.org/10.1037/apl0000884

Nayak, S. (2015) *Race, gender and Denzin the Activism of Black Feminist Theory*, Routledge.

Nayak, S. (2021) 'Racialised misogyny response to 44th Foulkes lecture'. *Group Analysis*, 54(4), pp. 520–527.

Nouman, H. and Azaiza, F. (2022) Challenges underlying the involvement of social workers from minority groups in policy practice. *Australian Social Work*, 75(4), pp. 445–457.

Obasi, C. (2022) Black social workers: Identity, racism, invisibility/hypervisibility at work. *Journal of Social Work*, 22(2), pp. 479–497.

Olmos-Vega F.M., Stalmeijer, R.E., Varpio, L. and Kahlke, R. (2022) 'A practical guide to reflexivity in qualitative research: AMEE Guide No. 149', *Medical Teacher*, DOI: 10.1080/0142159X.2022.2057287

Opara, V., Sealy, R. and Ryan, M. (2020) 'The workplace experiences of BAME professional women: Understanding experiences at the intersection', *Journal of Gender, Work and Organisation*, 27(6), DOI: 10.111/gwao.12456, pp. 1192–1213.

O'Reilly, K. (2012) *Ethnographic Methods*. London, Routledge.

Osuebi, J. (2023) *Social Work in the Face of Intersectional Racism: Still I Will Arise.*

Ozturk, M.B. and Berber, A. (2022) 'Racialised professionals experiences of selective incivility in organisations: A multi-level analysis of subtle Racism', in *Human Relations*, 75(2), pp 213–239. Sage Publications Inc.

Pendleton, J., Clews, C. and Cecile, A. (2022) 'The experiences of Black, Asian and minority ethnic student midwives at a UK university', *British Journal of Midwifery*, 30(5), pp. 270–281.

Pieterse, J.N. (1992) ‘Emancipations, modern and postmodern’, *International Institute of Social Studies*, 23(3), pp. 5–41.

Platt, L. (2011) *Inequality between Ethnic Groups*. Joseph Rowntree Foundation.

Polkinghorne, D.E. (1995) Narrative configuration in qualitative analysis. *International Journal of Qualitative Studies in Education*, 8:1, DOI:10.1080/0951839950080103, pp. 5–23.

Prochaska, O. and Di Clemente, C. (2012) The stages of Change. Social work tech.com (Internet source) http://socialworktech.com

Rattansi, A. (2020) *Racism: A Very Short Introduction*. (2nd ed). Oxford University Press.

Rattansi, A. (2000) ‘Racism, class, sexuality and ethnicity in post imperial Britain’, *International Journal of Post-Colonial Studies* 2(1), pp. 118–138.

Riessman, C.K. (1993) *Narrative Analysis*. Sage Publication.

Rodgers, S.T. and Lopez-Humphreys, M. (2020) Social work leadership: Grand challenges for Black women. *Social Work*, 65(4), pp. 397–400.

Rollock, N. (2021) ‘I would have become wallpaper had racism had its way: Black female professors racial battle fatigue and strategies for surviving higher education’, *Peabody Journal of Education*, 96(2), pp. 206–217.

Roseneil, S. (2006). ‘The ambivalences of Angel’s “arrangement”: A psychosocial lens on the contemporary condition of personal life’, *The Sociological Review*, 54(4), pp. 847–869.

Roy, A. (2017) *The Ministry of Utmost Happiness. An Ordinary Person’s Guide to Empire*. Penguin Press.

Rustin, M. (2014) ‘Psychosocial studies: Transitional space or new discipline’, *Journal of Psychosocial Studies*, 8(1).

Ryan, M.K. (2022) ‘Addressing workplace gender inequality: Using the evidence to avoid common pitfalls’, *British Journal of Social Psychology*.

Said, E. (1978) *Orientalism*, London: Pantheon Books.

Sangeeta, C., Atkin, K., Craig, G. and Flynn, R. (2019) *Understanding Race and Ethnicity, Theory, History, Policy, Practice* (2nd ed.). Bristol Policy Press.

Scott, J. (2010) 'Quantitative methods and gender inequalities', *International Journal of Social Research Methodology,* 13(3), pp. 223–236.

Sen, N. (1991) *A Journey Among the Women of India*. Ballantine Press.

Sennett, R., and Cobb, J. (1972). *The Hidden Injuries of Class*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Showunmi, V. (2021) 'A Journey of Difference: The Voices of Women Leaders. Front. Educ. 6:548870. DOI: 10.3389/feduc.2021.548870

Showunmi, V., Atewologun, D. and Bebbington, D. (2016) 'Ethnic, gender and class intersections in British women's leadership experiences', *Educational Management Administration and Leadership*, 44(6), pp. 917–935.

Shukla, N. (2016) *The Good Immigrant*, London: Unbound.

Spears, Y. and De Loach, T. (2020) 'Black women's resistance to whiteness in social work', *Social Work and Policy Studies: Social Justice, Practice and Theory*, 3(1). Published by openjournals.library.sydney.edu.au

Spillett, M. (2018) 'Are you culturally competent?', *Professional Social Work* (April issue), BASW pp. 24–25.

Spivak, G.C. (2014) *Postcolonial Theory and the Spectre of Capital*. Verso Books.

Stevenson, S. (2018) 'The group as a psycho-educational medium for the teaching of anti-racist practice on social work trainings', *Journal of Social Work Practice*, 32(3), pp. 337–349.

Subramani, S. (2019) *Practising Reflexivity: Ethics, Methodology and Theory Construction*. Sage Publications. DOI: 101177/2059799119863276.

Tagore, R. (1922) *Women and Home*. Scroll Press.

Taylor, S. (2017) 'Psychosocial Research', in Gough, B. (ed.) *The Palgrave Handbook of Critical Social Psychology.* Palgrave Macmillan UK, pp. 225–241.

Tedam, P. (2021) 'To shield or not to shield? There should be no question—Black African social workers experiences during COVID-19 in England', *The British Journal of Social Work*, 51(5), pp. 1720–1738.

The Campbell Collaboration (2020) Accessed 10 Mar 2022) Campbell systematic reviews: policies and guidelines, Version 1.7, pp. 5. Available from: https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/page/journal/18911803/homepage/author-guidelines.

Treacher, A. (2004) 'Equal opportunities matter', *Group Analysis*, 37(1), pp. 109–120.

Treacher, A. (2006) 'Something in the air: Otherness, recognition and ethics', *Journal of Social Work Practice*, 20(1), pp. 27–37.

Tyner, J. (2015) *Race and Racism*. Kent State University.

Wacquant, L. (2022) *The 'invention' of the Underclass (part 2), Lessons from the Tale*. Cambridge Polity.

Wainwright, J. (2009) 'Racism, anti-racist practice and social work: articulating the teaching and learning experiences of Black social workers', *Race Ethnicity and Education*, 12(4), pp. 495–516.

Wang, W. and Seifert, R. (2020) 'BAME Staff and Public Service Motivation: The mediating role of perceived fairness in English local government', *Journal of Business Ethics*, 161(3), DOI: 10.1007/510551-018-3953-8, pp. 653–664.

Weinberg, M. and Fine, M. (2022) 'Racisms and microaggressions in social work: the experience of racialized practitioners in Canada', *Journal of Ethnic and Cultural Diversity in Social Work*, 31(2), pp. 96–107.

Wengraf, T. (2001) *Qualitative Research Interviewing*. Sage Publications.

Wengraf, T. (2004) *The Biographic-Narrative Interpretive Method – Short guide*.

West, K., Greenland, K. and Van Laar, C. (2021) 'Implicit Racism, colour blindness and narrow definitions of discrimination: why some white people prefer "All lives matter" to "Black lives matter"', *British Journal of Social Psychology*, 60(4), pp. 1136–1153. DOI: 10.1111/bjso.12458.

Williams-Scales, C. (2020) *A phenomenological study investigating Black women employees aspiring to mid-level healthcare leadership positions.* Doctoral dissertation, Colorado Technical University.

Wilson, K., Ruch, G., Lymbery, M. and Cooper, A. (2008) *Social Work: An Introduction to Contemporary Practice*, Harlow: Longman, pp. 752.

Wright, K.C., Carr, K.A. and Akin, B.A. (2021) 'The whitewashing of social work history: How dismantling racism in social work education begins with an equitable history of the profession', *Advances in Social Work*, 21(2/3), pp. 274–297.

Zakaria, R. (2021) *Against White Feminism,* Penguin.

Appendices

Appendix 1: Interview and analysis example (Lynette)

Introduction:

H (Hia): Good Morning Lynette. Thank you for agreeing to see me today and do this interview. As you know, I am researching the experiences of senior female BAME leaders in social work today. So please can you tell me your story; all those events and experiences that were important to you personally and professionally? I'll listen, I won't interrupt. I'll take some notes in case I have any questions after you've finished. Please take your time, please begin whenever you like... (pauses for 2–3 secs)

L: I suppose I have always been interested in helping people, so in terms of my core values helping people is what I do. Umm…I think my career path and journey has taken many twists and turns, so the journey has not been a linear one like a straight line. I grew up in the Caribbean with my great-aunt, umm…coz my mum at the time was very young when she had me and she didn't feel she could look after me at that time. So, I don't know whether wanting to help someone comes from this time when I wasn't able to help myself but was helped by someone else; also, growing up with my great-aunt, 'church' (makes inverted comma hand signs) was a very big part of my life, so I don't know if that was an influence. So, workwise it has never been about money – it's always been about helping people. So, I have had lots of different jobs with people before arriving in my current position. I did my first degree in international relations (laughs), but before that I did a course in health and social

care. I did different jobs in administration after graduation and three or four years after doing lots of agency jobs I thought what am I doing with my life? (Laughs). I need to do something which feels like I am going somewhere meaningful; that's when I started to look and through a friend who was a radiologist who suggested I look on the NHS website I found physio, OT and social work training courses which really appealed to me, so I signed up. After I qualified, I did various jobs with children, neurology and mental health patients. During this time, I also met my husband and had my first child. During my maternity leave I decided to work part-time. A job came up in social services, so I applied and got my first social services position as a frontline practitioner and quickly after I became an accidental manager, so sort of landed positions as people who weren't very good left. I was able to learn from these managers how 'authoritarian' management and managers often failed in their tasks and goals so my aim was to be different, so my style is collaborative and inclusive which focuses on getting the best out of people (service users, staff and colleagues), not "it's my way and if you don't like it then there will be consequences" which doesn't always get the job done. Umm…I think that's how I have come into management, and I really like it! (Laughs out loud). I like to see how services develop and how people grow – 'you are only as strong as your weakest link'. It's important to recognise that for people to get a really good service a manager must acknowledge that their workers are the most important asset so that they in return will provide the best to the wider community. I always think …what if that was me, my mother or my grandmother … (8:26minutes)

I think I am drifting a bit, so going back to my upbringing, I remember receiving two letters from my mum when I was 14 years of age. I had no photograph of my biological mum, but I was told that I looked like my mum. I remember in the

Caribbean getting our first TV, landline and sitting on the porch looking at family photos but I never saw any pictures of my mum, so when she sent for me, I was worried about not recognising her. My great-aunt was very casual about the whole thing; she just said “When you get to the airport in London just look for someone that looks like you”! At the time I was just a young girl, and I had no bond with my mum so had no idea of what to expect. My mum had sent for me, and I wanted to come and live with her but beyond that I did not have any expectations. I was excited to go on a plane but looking back I had no idea of what lay ahead. A lot of Caribbean youngsters had similar experiences, so I didn’t think that my story was odd. I stayed with my mum for two and a half years. I had no bond with her or my new half-siblings so relationships within the family were difficult, I was often used as a ‘babysitter’ for the younger children; I was the oldest. There were four of us and I was the odd one out. My biological dad and I lost contact. He had a drinking problem and didn’t come to the UK. So, I was on my own, so I learnt to make the best of my situation. I grew up very quickly. I completed my BTEC and went to [name of university] to study international relations. I found [name of university city] very mixed, and I somehow blended in. I did lots of agency work to support myself as by this time my mum and I were estranged. I did not have an easy time as I was working and studying. I am nearly 6ft tall and light skinned so people around me never really used race to put me down – it was my height that was the problem! [Laughs out loud].

When I took up my senior management post, I was one of two people who came from a ‘Black’ background. My colleague who was also female like me used to joke that President Obama had paved the way for us in a borough where the senior management layer was mostly white and unusually female. I don’t think I am overly tuned into the race thing coz I am not generally. Coming from a Caribbean Island

where black is the majority and white isn't, what you have is the nuances of different shades of black or colour. So, the reference points of race for me weren't about being Black or white; interestingly, what shade of colour was more important. Over the years I have noticed that there is an assumption in the 'Black' community that if you are fair skinned then you get more opportunities than people who are darker-skinned and I think this comes from slavery. I think this is because white landowners slept with local Black women who were dark-skinned and then they had offspring who were fair or light skinned and then these children were treated differently. They had more rights and privileges in society because you were in a relationship with your master. So, this tiered colour filter meant that the lighter you were the more chance you had of accessing a better life. I consider myself Black but, because of my fair skin, they look at me differently. In the Caribbean it's not a simple black/white divide; it's more complex and the shade of black you are makes a real difference as well as the church you go to. Does that make sense? I think my individual experiences compared to the 'group' experience is more nuanced, so I don't always have a shared experience with those black people who were born in the UK; it's totally different.

So, managing a service is complicated; it's not always about race. It's difficult to identify just one factor like race that prevents someone from being successful. I think there is some element of women of colour not being supported or seen in a way which identifies leadership qualities so from the start they are not given the opportunities that grow them professionally. So very few female BAME professionals make it into senior leadership roles. This absence of role models means that in the local authority that I work in most of the senior female leaders are blonde and white so no role models for Black staff to 'aspire to'. So, no support to develop and no

female Black role models means that BAME staff often think senior management is worth pursuing as you are never seeing anyone like you and that the effort needed is not worth the struggle as you would never get past the post.

In my case, I was determined and resilient from an early age and I wasn't put off, so I pursued opportunities even when I didn't succeed and made sure I learnt from each rejection. I knew I was good at my job so for me I just kept working hard and trying. Talking generally, I know as a person of colour that you get treated differently and being a woman on top of that is a step too far for some organisations that prefer employing men anyway. But I think that there's a wider societal issue of how women of colour get treated and this is down to stereotypes that other people have of what your role should be. I don't think professionally this will change anytime soon. In the local authority where I work positive or affirmative action is being introduced but, in my opinion, this is tokenistic as it leaves people like wondering whether we are being given opportunities so that the organisation can feel better about itself and is compliant with a central government quota exercise and are being seen to be taking action but have no intention of being fair. It also leaves Black professionals feeling suspicious because they are confused about the status of their progression – am I being promoted because I am Black or do they really respect and value my work? So that's a difficult one. I believe that it's definitely my job to support young BAME social workers to follow their dreams and not be put off by the struggle but I know many will drop out.

I have learnt so much in my career, I have been disappointed by the lack of solidarity between the few senior BAME female leaders. They all seem to compete between each other to show off their skills in the hope that they may get the next bite of the cherry but to me that's a false economy – no one is looking out for each other.

My experience has shown me that when the few BAME females do reach the top they all hold their positions. You don't help your own because you become colour-blind and out of tune with your race, you become like them – the white senior managers who are unable to see the person and see the shading. It's really sad but it's the reality for sure. I left my job because I refused to toe the line, I asked too many questions and I wasn't willing to play the game. I am much happier now I am working as a locum manager doing short-term contracts, I am not getting bullied, and I can walk away at any time. I have my freedom and that's very important as I haven't lost my principles. I know I am one of the lucky ones. Not all BAME staff are in a position to walk away so they stay, swallow their values and turn into their white counter-parts – it's a huge price to pay. I don't think the situation will change anytime soon.

Umm…I think I am running out of puff; can we have a break? (Interview paused for 10 mins.)

Break: 10 mins, during this time Lynette gets up and leaves the room and comes back with two coffees. She sniffs, I am not sure whether she has been crying. I feel the need to ask:

Sub-Section 2:

H: Are you okay Lynette?

L: Yes, thank you, today has been intense, I am glad you said to keep my diary light for today.

H: You said: “I don’t think the situation will change anytime soon”; are you able to say a bit more about this? Is there a specific event or events that make you think this?

L: Well, social care is changing and becoming more like a commercial enterprise, everything has a price and, oh yeah, ‘BREXIT’. I was having to ask staff that I had managed for years about their residency status – now that’s a dreadful task for any person to have to do. I voted to stay so I was not comfortable about this. I know many ‘Black’ people voted for Brexit but you can see why. The immigrant population that came here because of the empire are protective about British values being lost, they are more inward-looking than the motherland their forefathers left behind… the motherland has moved on but the land of embarkation has been stood still so people are tricked into voting to leave because they think they will be better off not letting the new wave of migrants in, especially from poorer parts of the world. I have had huge arguments about this with my in-laws who are Chinese. They think that the new folks coming to the UK are not contributing to the economy just claiming benefits. It gets me mad because I know this is not true. I know colleagues who are highly skilled that work really hard. It’s not okay to tarnish an entire group with the few that take liberties. I could go on about this – it makes me very angry. I get that we need to change our ways of trading and look at new ways of surviving, but this is a crazy time. Why would anyone want to leave Europe? Also it brings back old memories of empire and this is racist too, so it is all one big mess. I think we are going backwards, and politicians are playing people off against each other so that they are totally dazed and confused. I think we are blind walking into disaster, and no one

actually knows what will happen. I don’t have anything else to say. Can we stop now?

H: Of course. Thank you for your time today; it’s been very helpful to hear your story. I’ll be in touch if I need any clarification.

L: No, thank you. Hope your research goes well.

Sub session two:

H: Hi Lynette, thanks for agreeing to see me again, I had some further questions from our first session in March 2020. Are you okay to start?

L: Fire away. I really enjoyed our first meeting – don't hold back!

H: You said that your childhood and early teens were spent in the Caribbean with your great-aunt. can you say a bit more about that time?

L: Umm...it was a long time ago; I don't have much memory of me as a baby as my mum left me with my great-aunt when I was a year or so. I know what I have been told…like a lot of my cousins whose parents came to the UK to get jobs at that time. I remember growing up with lots of cousins and extended family members. We all behaved really well and going to school and church were the two big things in the house. My great-aunt was strict but not in an overt way. I was a very compliant child and I never gave anyone any trouble as I saw what '*discipline*' looked like and I wasn't up for a beating either at school or at home! I remember the sea and our porch which overlooked the beach. The house was very modest but had a porch which ran around it, so every room had a view. I used to sit and play all day long and like I said there was always plenty of family to keep me busy. There was a real sense of community. It was laid back as well but there were firm boundaries that you didn't cross like backchat your elders and manners…oh yes you had to have manners. Oh man…I had so much fun.

H: You said, “I became an accidental manager, sort of landed positions as people who weren’t very good left”. Could you recall a particular event from this time?

L: Yeah…I sort of fell into it. There were lots of ‘bad’ managers around me and when they left, I was sort of asked to ‘act up’ and so after a while got confirmed in place. I always had a strong work ethic and I think this is what kept me going – clients first, then workers then the office. I think sometimes I come across peers who were desperate to climb the ladder. Uh oh I am not one of those. I am laid back and see what happens kinda girl. I don’t like the feeling of chasing something for the sake of it. I can respond quickly to clients and the team but when it comes to my own career I am in no rush. When I was asked to be a Manager for the IA team I had very little experience of managing a duty team, so I asked to shadow the manager who was leaving. I quickly realised the reality of that post so declined the offer. So I am not in a hurry. I think I am cautious. So far I have been lucky – the team I had before was a good learning curve.

H: Can you recall the time when you were asked by your ‘real’ mum to come and join her in the UK, particularly that journey from the Caribbean to the UK. You said you had no photograph of her and when you asked your great-aunt about this, she replied by saying: “When you get to the airport in London just look for someone who looks like you”.

L: Oh yeah…that’s a funny story as I had no memory of her face, zero, nada. We didn’t have a camera so no one in the family had a proper photo. In the Caribbean, photos don’t last long because it’s so hot… so, the vague images I could see her in

didn't give me a profile that I could see her clearly. Whenever I asked about her everyone would say that I looked like her, so I just had that in my mind. When she sent for me that's when I began to think of what she may look like! I think I was nervous and curious at the same time; you know I was actually going to live with her, and I had no idea about what she actually looked like let alone what she was like! My great-aunt didn't really go into it – she made sure my suitcase was packed with clean clothes for church and that my shoes were clean. I don't think it occurred to her to do or say much more than that. I was luckier than most – at least my mum wanted me. Some of my friends were forgotten about or so it seemed. My mum sent for me so I thought foolishly that she must love me to want me to come and stay with her. I questioned very little; I remember feeling very excited about going on a plane. We used to run along the beach following planes as they came into land on the island and, now, I was actually going to be in one! Wow! My friends thought it was a crazy idea but that's all I could think about. I don't remember having any worries. On the plane it all felt very strange, but I was a teenager and I think I just took it in my stride.

H: You said, "I don't think I am overly tuned into the race thing coz I am not generally. Coming from a Caribbean Island where Black is the majority and white isn't." Can you say a bit more about that?

L: That's very easy to explain: when you grow up in an island setting where you are in the majority and white isn't the focus shifts to nuances of what shade of black you are, but there is no getting away from the fact that the lighter you are the more opportunities come your way. But at least you see people like you. I think this type of thinking for people in the Caribbean comes from slavery. I think the situation in the

UK is nuanced differently. The legacy for West Indians in the UK is a shared colonial one not like the African or Indian slaves who were brought to the cane fields. I think that, for my generation, coming to the motherland was associated with a better life not like in slavery when you were imprisoned and coerced into boats and you left behind a reasonable life for a life worse than death. Does that make sense? It sounds a bit dramatic, I know, but I don't know how else to explain it. Also, I think the UK has old culture, so unlike the USA or Caribbean where you got your independence, here the racism is more sophisticated, so you don't always know that you are being treated badly or differently. So, I think my individual experiences compared to the group experiences with those Black people who were born in the UK is totally different.

H: You said managing a service is complicated. It's not only about race; it's difficult to identify just one factor like race that prevents someone from being successful. Can you think of a specific reason/example of that?

L: In my experience, you have to support staff to achieve their goals and ambitions. I think there is some element of women of colour not being supported or seen in a way which identifies leadership qualities so from the start they are not given the opportunities that grow them professionally, so it's no surprise that you don't have representation. So BAME females with potential are just not identified, and this has a ripple effect and impacts on how the lack of role models and lack of opportunity remains static. In my experience, the few of us that make it through are left feeling isolated and lost as the top layer is predominantly white with the odd BAME individual but even this is predominantly male so there is a definite gender and race

bias embedded there too. I get annoyed just thinking about this; it's not rocket science, is it? But BAME women managers don't help themselves either: the struggle is so difficult that by the time you get some status and rank, you have to keep fighting to have your say, even at the top table, because the colour combination at the top is a variation of white (Laughs loudly). That sounds bad – scrap that! I think that's one of the reasons I decided to leave and take up locum posts again. That way I have a measure of control of what I will and will not tolerate. I think this pandemic has been good for me as I have had plenty of work but on my terms. I think after a while you have to choose between the 'fight' and your own sanity. I think I have chosen to preserve myself and maintain a dignity which was fast disappearing in my last post.

H: You said you were disappointed about the lack of solidarity between the few senior BAME female leaders. Can you think of a specific incident relating to this?

L: I think I meant the struggle to get that post can be soul-destroying. You have to be able to bear humiliation and pain, otherwise forget it. I got lucky; I filled posts that others did not want. I was keen to develop myself and what seemed like a challenge to others was an easy ask for me because I learnt early on to be inclusive of the staff team around you as they are your greatest resource. My experience of my fellow BAME female colleagues is that by the time they have reached senior management 'climbing' fatigue has set in – you have no energy left to fight for anyone else. Talking generally, being a woman of colour at the top is a step too far for some organisations – they see it as a risk as opposed to an asset. So, the status quo continues. I can't think of anything specific other than a senior manager meeting

when a BAME female manager spoke about some of the LA's stance on equality issues. She was soon gone – her 'outburst' was seen as being disloyal by the leaders and she was relieved of her duties. I think you learn early; you see things happening around you and you keep your mouth shut. So there is no 'sisterhood' sister, so to speak.

H: You said: "I don't think the situation will change anytime soon." Are you able to say a bit more about this? Is there a specific event or events that make you think this?

L: I have been disappointed by the lack of solidarity between the few senior female colleagues that I have worked with. They all seem to compete with each other to show off their skills in the hope that they may get to climb the next rung of the ladder, but that's so selfish coz you're stronger [as] part of a collective not as an individual but that doesn't seem to resonate with BAME women in management positions. It's like they become colour blinded by the struggle they have and they want others to also have that experience. It's just mad but that's how it is and I don't think this will change unless you have legislation that force employers to evidence their decision-making when they are recruiting but also I think BAME professionals need to organise into a more collective voice otherwise we remain tokenistic and that can only be bad as far as I am concerned. So, I got out and now I have control over my what contracts I take and what I reject. I am still working at a senior level but on my terms. I have learnt that in big organisations you can sacrifice your dignity and integrity and to me its slavery all over again; yeah man, I am so over that.

H: Thank you Lynette. Is there anything else you would like to add?

L: Well, thank you man. It’s been strange meeting during COVID-19 – last time we were free! I hope I see you again when all of this is over.

H: Thanks again Lynette. (Interview ended)

Transcript	Reflections	Themes/categories
L: I suppose I have always been interested in helping people, so in terms of my core values helping people is what I do. Umm…I think my career path and journey has taken many twists and turns, so the journey has not been a linear one like a straight line. I grew up in the Caribbean with my great-aunt, umm…coz my mum at the time was very young when she had me and she didn't feel she could look after me at that time. So, I don't know whether wanting to help someone comes from this time when I wasn't able to help myself but was helped by someone else; also growing up with my great-	This the start of Lynette's lived life. She starts what feels like a chronology; the absence of emotion is clear. She takes a very matter of fact position about her situation, in general terms. She tells me that her journey is not linear. I feel the projection of sadness and her sense of keeping her feelings away from the chronology of events. She is almost animated; the narrative is a list as opposed to how she felt as a 'child' being left. There is an unstated eagerness to reassure me that she was and is okay about life events. She uses the term	Survival, growth of resilience despite being brought up by 'relative strangers'. Deep sense of wanting to care for others just as 'others' had cared for her when she wasn't in a position to help herself. Strong Christian values – her faith is her saviour on one level but keeps her away from experiencing emotional pain or feelings of abandonment. A sense of being earnest, authentic as to why she in turn helps people, a justification perhaps of the shame and guilt she may

aunt 'church' (makes inverted comma hand signs) was a very big part of my life, so I don't know if that was an influence. So, workwise it has never been about money – it's always been about helping people. I think I am drifting a bit, so, going back to my upbringing, I remember receiving two letters from my mum when I was 14 years of age. I had no photograph of my biological mum but I was told that I looked like my mum. I remember in the Caribbean getting our first TV, landline and sitting on the porch looking at family photos but I never saw any pictures of my mum, so when she sent for me, I	'helping' and she sees her church community as the same. Her faith is what carries her through. There is an underlying sense of helplessness as Lynette is not really sure about what happened to her as she was 'left' when she was a baby. Corrects herself to engage in her own story, talks openly about her own experiences and she has mixed emotions about seeing her biological mother as she has no visual or emotional sense of her.	be carrying of being a child of a mother who was perhaps too young to understand her own needs – 'a kid having a kid'. Uncertainty which is filled / contained by the church and her extended family network. Curiosity, anxiety, hopefulness. This early part of the childhood narrative conveys a sense of C's needs or existence as a child going largely ignored as the underlying construct is one of survival and resilience. There is a

was worried about not recognising her. My great-aunt was very casual about the whole thing. She just said "When you get to the airport in London just look for someone that looks like you"! At the time I was just a young girl, and I had no bond with my mum so had no idea of what to expect. My mum had sent for me and I wanted to come and live with her but beyond that I did not have any expectations. I was excited to go on a plane but looking back I had no idea of what lay ahead. A lot of Caribbean youngsters had similar experiences, so I didn't think that my story was odd. I stayed with my mum for two and a half years. I had no bond with	This part of the narrative is becoming more emotional and less animated as Lynette is remembering for real; her body language is relaxed and she looks up and away when she is accessing her memory bank. It feels like she is going back to the Caribbean. She talks casually about her great-aunt's casual description of what and who to expect when she lands in the UK, but she's quick to defend this as she says that a lot of youngsters like her had similar experiences. This part of the narrative carries a real sense of	sense of lack of control on Lynette's part and the adults entrusted with keeping her safe are making some very adult decisions about her. Lynette is neither seen nor heard in the arrangements that are made on her behalf, like her passage to London. A sense of not being in control but not having any say in the matter – displacement. Managing expectations: fantasy vs reality. A real feeling of displacement which triggers a sense of

her or my new half-siblings so relationships within the family were difficult. I was often used as a 'babysitter' for the younger children; I was the oldest. There were four of us and I was the odd one out. My biological dad and I lost contact. He had a drinking problem and didn't come to the UK. So, I was on my own, so I learnt to make the best of my situation. I grew up very quickly. I completed my BTEC and went to university to study international relations. I found university city very mixed, and I somehow blended in. I did lots of agency work to support myself as by this time my mum and I were estranged. I did not have an easy time	lack of support for Lynette's transition to a new life and a new society. There is also a sense of a loss of childhood as she is expected to be the carer of her young stepsiblings without any prior warning or negotiation. Lynette's sense of resentment is further fuelled by the lack of a maternal bond and the loss of her father to alcohol addiction. So, she learns to make the best of her situation by surviving. The narrative continues to reflect Lynette's capacity to change, grow	survival, very much evident in Lynette's early life as an infant. A sense of powerlessness over which she has very little control of self or others. A sense of loneliness. Life in the Caribbean on reflection seemed like a better bet. Resentment /resignation to the life fate has dealt her. Surviving uncertainty, responding to unexpected challenges. A sense of achievement, despite the odds. Race as a component comes into the forefront of the story

as I was working and studying. I am nearly 6ft tall and light skinned so people around me never really used race to put me down – it was my height that was the problem! (Laughs out loud.) When I took up my senior management post, I was one of two people who came from a 'Black' background. My colleague who was also female like me used to joke that President Obama had paved the way for us in a borough where the senior management layer was	and live. The final moment comes to separate from her mother and rather than sadness there is a sense of relief, a revelation that Lynette is going to be okay. This part of the narrative moves very quickly into the debates about what has impacted on Lynette has an individual and as part of an exclusively female dominated senior leadership team. She is very self-aware and recognises that she is one of two women of colour within this group. She references President Obama for paving the way for people of colour like her to obtain senior	from now on as Lynette begins to enter the world of work and eventually leadership. Use of humour as a metaphor to disguise psyche pain. The complexities of leadership and the roles/masks that senior female leaders often have to adopt as survival strategies. Explicit links to early childhood experiences and the growth of resilience, which start at an early age and serve well in senior leadership. Interesting reference to Obama but no direct

mostly white and, unusually, female. I don't think I am overly tuned into the race thing coz I am not generally. Coming from a Caribbean Island where Black is the majority and white isn't, what you have is the nuances of different shades of black or colour. So, the reference points of race for me weren't about being Black or white; interestingly, what shade of colour was more important. Over the years I have noticed that there is an assumption in the 'Black' community that if you are fair skinned you get more opportunity than people who are darker skinned	positions of power. First signs of reluctant acceptance that a race divide is present and not as explained as before. This recognition is quickly followed by a sense of denial or cognition dissonance. You get a real sense of Lynette not wanting to fully accept that race is a dominant factor in her career trajectory but her rationale of race being subtly nuanced is very valid. Although Lynette is quick to point out her own exclusive experience, there is an important feeling around the different shades of black, and the way	reference to gender. Obama is seen as asexual/nonbinary in terms of gender. Recognition of white domination within senior management layer of local authority. This is the first formal acceptance of such a phenomenon. Denial, a sense of cognitive dissonance to protect psyche pain. Shades of blackness

and I think this comes from slavery. I think this is because white landowners slept with local Black women who were dark-skinned and then they had ‘offspring’ who were fair, or light-skinned and then these children were treated differently. They had more rights and privileges in society because you were in a relationship with your master. So, this tiered colour filter meant that the lighter you were the more chance you had of accessing a better life. I consider myself Black but because of my fair skin they look at me differently. In the Caribbean it’s not a	people react to you because of this. Historical justification of why the narratives of race have developed in the way they have and transferred to modern-day society and that the debate on race is therefore not linear but highly complex and nuanced as regions of the commonwealth were treated differentially by their respective colonial masters. Recognition of how this had played out in an organisational and church context for	Links to slavery and colonialism and the subtle way this plays out in society and why it is important for Lynette. The value of light over dark throughout history. The uncomfortable reality that even amongst Black, Asian and ethnic minority groups light skin is the preferred option as dark is associated with deviance and unworthiness. An awareness that skin colour may have impacted on her career opportunities. A shift from her previously held belief that she was perhaps not

simple Black /White divide; its more complex and the shade of black you are makes a real difference as well as the church you go to. Does that make sense? I think my individual experiences compared to the ‘group’ experience is more nuanced, so I don’t always have a shared experience with those Black people who were born in the UK; it’s totally different. So, managing a service is complicated – it’s not always about race. It’s difficult to identify just one factor like race that prevents someone from being successful. I think there is some element of	Lynette, an acceptance that because of her ‘light skin’ she may have had better opportunities. The narrative at this stage shows an understanding of Lynette’s personal experiences and the conflict which exists from being categorised. Intergenerational/ geographical variations Narrative shifts back to other inequalities that impact on career trajectories. There is an overall acceptance that women of colour do not progress in the same	that tuned in to the whole ‘race thing’ – some early embers of self-realisation perhaps. Group versus Individual conflicts. A sense of belonging but at the same time there is a separation setting in. Themes of sameness and difference. Themes of personal and professional conflicts. Themes of an ambivalence dance between pre-contemplative and contemplative states of mind.

<table>
<tr>
<td>women of colour not being supported or seen in a way which identifies leadership qualities so from the start they are not given the opportunities that grow them professionally. So very few female BAME professionals make it into senior leadership roles. This absence of role models means that in the local authority that I work in most of the senior female leaders are blonde and</td>
<td>way but there is an underlying attempt to explain or rationalise these inequalities. There is a regression back to a denial of the core which is the fundamental cause which is the accident of one’s birth into a non-white world.

This part of the narrative reveals an internal and external conflict. The internal pain of having to build resilience as a</td>
<td>An acceptance albeit conflictual that race does play a role but is not as important on a sole trader basis.

Resignation to the inevitability strong links to feelings as a child when Lynette had no real choice about her future in the UK.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Transcript</td>
<td>Reflections</td>
<td>Themes/categories</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>white so no role models for Black staff to ‘aspire to’. So, no support to develop and no female Black role models mean that BAME staff often think senior management is not worth pursuing as you never see</td>
<td>consequence of birth and an external battle with societal stereotypes which are also interplaying with Lynette’s expectation of self and</td>
<td>Themes of are we moving on or standing still.

Quitting while ahead.</td>
</tr>
</table>

anyone like you and that the effort needed is not worth the struggle as you would never get past the post. In my case I was determined and resilient from an early age and I wasn't put off, so I pursued opportunities even when I didn't succeed and made sure I learnt from each rejection. I knew I was good at my job so for me I just kept working hard and trying. Talking generally, I know as a person of colour that you get treated differently and being a woman on top of that is a step too far for some organisations that prefer employing men anyway. But I think that there's a wider societal issue of how	expectation/acceptance by others. Narrative goes back to childhood where Lynette began to grow her resilience and strength to cope with rejection. Narrative turns to enduring differences as a female of colour. The gender inequality that favours men over women but to add race and women doubles the layer of inequality and feeds	Survival, resilience, self-belief; work ethic: endurance. Failure follows success and vice versa. Strong work ethic to endure race inequality. Organisation defences that keep women of colour from achieving success in the workplace. Power differentials between the two genders;

women of colour get treated and this is down to stereotypes that other people have of what your role should be. I don't think professionally this will change anytime soon. In the local authority where I work positive or affirmative action is being introduced but, in my opinion, this is tokenistic as it leaves people like wondering whether we are being give opportunities so that the organisation can feel better about itself and is compliant with a central government quota exercise and are being seen to be taking action but have no intention of being fair. It also leaves Black professionals feeling suspicious because they	stereotypes and hierarchies of power differentials within organisations. Lynette addresses the issue of positive affirmative action and how this further impedes women of colour from progressing as the approach is often viewed with suspicion and contempt. Lynette recognises that organisations introduce these measures to feel better about themselves – self-affirmation rather than shared agenda to improve the lives of non-white professionals.	added layer of inequality when race is introduced. A sort of double whammy. Organisation attempts to address racial inequality perceived as tokenistic. Interplay of power and race. Themes of suspicion, mistrust and fairness.

are confused about the status of their progression: am I being promoted because I am Black or do they really respect and value my work? So that's a difficult one.	Feelings of being undervalued at work, organisation motivation behind promoting Black staff.	Respect, ethical values of meritocracy.
I have been disappointed by the lack of solidarity between the few senior BAME female leaders. They all seem to compete between each other to show off their skills in the hope that they may get the next bite of the cherry but to me that's a false economy; no one is looking out for each other. My experience has shown me that when the few BAME females do reach the top they all hold their positions. You don't help your own	Lack of solidarity between BAME female leaders due to established work cultures embedded in senior leadership teams. The narrative shifts towards what happens to individuals who are looking out for themselves as going against the collective can be a problematic, isolating experience.	Themes around combative competitiveness. Themes of colour-blind thinking emerging. Survival of the fittest. Themes of morphing in to look, feel, hear and sound

because you become colour blind and out of tune with your race. You become like them – the white senior managers who are unable to see the person and see the shading; it's really sad but it's the reality for sure. I left my job because I refused to toe the line, I asked too many questions and I wasn't willing to play the game.	The narrative is very revealing on this part as it highlights the struggle of the individual BAME female leader and the toll it takes on one's mindset. The inevitability of the impact of the shading spectrum of the colour Black.	like your white counterparts. Sacrifice your own identity. Themes of defiance as ethical values are challenged.
I am much happier now I am working as a locum manager doing short-term contracts, I am not getting bullied and I can walk away at any time. I have my freedom and that's very important as I haven't lost my principles. I know I am	Exit strategy, keep the peace and move on respectfully. Don't upset the apple cart. It's not you, it's me analogy to get out of the toxic situation.	Themes of autonomy, resilience, reclaiming self, independence and ultimately feeling free. Regaining control. Re-establishing control. Survival instinct.

one of the lucky ones. Not all BAME staff are in a position to walk away so they stay, swallow their values and turn into their white counter parts – it’s a huge price to pay. I don’t		Freedom.
Transcript	**Reflections**	**Themes/categories**
think the situation will change anytime soon. L: well, social care is changing and becoming more like a commercial enterprise, everything has a price and, oh yeah, ‘BREXIT’. I was having to ask staff that I had managed for years about their residency status. Now that’s a dreadful task for any person to have to do. I voted to stay so I was not	Commentary on the impact of Brexit and the re-imaging of BAME communities. Also highlights the complex relationships that white communities have of ‘new immigrants’ arriving in the UK during recent times. The political propaganda and the disconnection from real life, the idealised view of the	Themes emerging – displaced communities, misplaced loyalties. Emerging propaganda, the era of fake news, the re-politicisation of race as a toxic tool to be used to divide and rule.

comfortable about this. I know many 'Black' people voted for Brexit but you can see why: the immigrant population that came here because of empire are protective about British values being lost. They are more inward looking than the motherland their forefathers left behind… the motherland has moved on but the land of embarkation has been stood still so people are tricked into voting to leave because they think they will be better off not letting the new wave of migrants in, especially from poorer parts of the world. I have had huge arguments about this with my in-laws who are Chinese. They think that the new folks coming	motherland (UK) by first generation migrants. The created conflicted within communities, creating multigenerational conflicts within households. The retelling of history to heighten public and private anxiety. The rebirth of 'otherness' on a micro and macro level in society. The growth of populism and right-wing politics.	Redefinition of truth when facts are 'de-faced' and truth becomes a commodity easily bought and sold on the open market; modern day slavery explicit links with colonial exploitation and slavery. Political apathy, distrust and disbelief amongst individuals and groups. Where truth are lies and lies are truth. The decay of simplicity.

to the UK are not contributing to the economy just claiming benefits. It gets me mad because I know this is not true.		

In-case analysis

This the start of Lynette's lived life. She starts what feels like a chronology; the absence of emotion is clear. She takes a very matter of fact position about her situation, in general terms. She tells me that her journey is not linear. I feel the projection of sadness and her sense of keeping her feelings away from the chronology of events. She is almost animated; the narrative is a list as opposed to how she felt as a 'child' being left. There is an unstated eagerness to reassure me that she was and is okay about life events. She uses the term 'helping' and she sees her church community as the same. Her faith is what carries her through. There is an underlying sense of helplessness as Lynette is not sure about what happened to her as she was 'left' when she was a baby.

Lynette begins her story by saying that she has always wanted to help people and that her career pathway wasn't a linear process. She talks about her upbringing in the Caribbean within an extended family network. Her birth mother came to the UK as a Windrush immigrant to look for employment in the late 1960s and left Lynette with a great-aunt who was able to look after her. Lynette says:

> *I grew up in the Caribbean with my great-aunt, umm…coz my mum at the time was very young when she had me and she didn't feel she could look after me at that time. So, I don't know whether wanting to help someone comes from this time when I wasn't able to help myself but was helped by someone else; also, growing up with my great-aunt, 'church' (makes inverted comma hand signs) was a very big part of my life, so I don't know if that was an influence.*

As such, early on Lynette is aware of being 'helped' out of her sense of 'helplessness'; her church community and faith are also an extension of caring for

and being cared for by others and this serves as a strong motivation for Lynette searching for a meaningful career where she could give back. The first part of her story is a condensed summary of her early upbringing, her core values and her subsequent career journey; however, she changes pace 10 minutes into the interview and resets her narrative. She says:

> *I think I am drifting a bit, so, going back to my upbringing, I remember receiving two letters from my mum when I was 14 years of age. I had no photograph of my biological mum, but I was told that I looked like my mum. I remember in the Caribbean getting our first TV, landline and sitting on the porch looking at family photos but I never saw any pictures of my mum, so, when she sent for me, I was worried about not recognising her. My great-aunt was very casual about the whole thing; she just said "When you get to the airport in London just look for someone who looks like you"! At the time I was just a young girl and I had no bond with my mum so had no idea of what to expect.*

This correction allows Lynette to engage in her own story. She talks openly about her own experiences; she has mixed emotions about seeing her biological mother as she has no visual or emotional sense of her. This part of the narrative is becoming more emotional and less animated as Lynette is remembering for real. Her body language is relaxed. She looks up and away when she is recalling this memory. It feels like she is going back to the Caribbean.

She talks casually about her great-aunt's description of what and who to expect when she lands in the UK, but she is quick to defend this as she says that a lot of youngsters like her had similar experiences.

Lynette's journey to the UK aged 14 is filled with hope and uncertainty as she describes feeling excited and conflicted about meeting her biological mother for the first time. She says:

> *…at the time I was just a young girl and I had no bond with my mum so had no idea of what to expect. My mum had sent for me and I wanted to come and live with her but beyond that I did not have any expectations. I was excited to go on a plane but looking back I had no idea of what lay ahead. I stayed with my mum for two and a half years. I had no bond with her or my new half-siblings so relationships within the family were difficult, I was often used as a 'babysitter' for the younger children, I was the oldest. There were four of us and I was the odd one out. My biological dad and I lost contact he had a drinking problem and didn't come to the UK. so, I was on my own, so I learnt to make the best of my situation.*

This part of the narrative carries a real sense of lack of support for Lynette's transition to a new life and a new society. There is also a sense of a loss of childhood as she is expected to be the carer of her young stepsiblings without any prior warning or negotiation. Lynette's sense of resentment is further fuelled by the lack of a maternal bond and the loss of her father to alcohol addiction. So, she learns to make the best of her situation by surviving. Lynette completes her education and gets to university where she thrives on her newfound independence and autonomy. The narrative continues to reflect Lynette's capacity to change, grow and live; the final moment comes to separate from her mother and rather than sadness there is a sense of relief, a revelation that she can and is going to be okay. Lynette can navigate her career trajectory in a skilled and managed way – her earlier childhood and early adolescence give the resilience to tolerate uncertainty and take risks. When she moves into senior management roles the narrative moves very quickly

into the debates about what has impacted her has an individual and as part of an exclusively female dominated senior leadership team. She is very self-aware and recognises that she is one of two women of colour within this group. She references President Obama for paving the way for people of colour like her to obtain senior positions of power. These are the first signs of reluctant acceptance that a race divide is present and not as explained or understood as before.

This recognition is quickly followed by a sense of denial or avoidance: you get a real sense of Lynette not wanting to fully accept that race is a dominant factor in her career trajectory but her rationale of race being subtly nuanced is very valid. Although she is quick to point out her own exclusive experience, there is an important feeling around the different shades of black, and the way people react to you because of this. She says:

> *I don't think I am overly tuned into the race thing coz I am not generally. Coming from a Caribbean Island where Black is the majority and white isn't, what you have is the nuances of different shades of black or colour. So, the reference points of race for me weren't about being black or white. Interestingly what shade of colour was more important. Over the years I have noticed that there is an assumption in the 'Black' community that if you are fair-skinned you get more opportunity than people who are darker skinned and I think this comes from slavery. I think this is because white landowners slept with local Black women who were dark-skinned and then they had offspring who were fair, or light-skinned and then these children were treated differently. The had more rights and privileges in society because you were in a relationship with your master. So, this tiered colour filter meant that the lighter you were the more chance you had of accessing a better life. I consider myself Black but because of my fair skin they look at me differently. In the Caribbean it's not a simple Black /White divide. It's more complex and the shade of black you are makes a real difference as well as the church you go*

> *to. Does that make sense? I think my individual experiences compared to the 'group' experience is more nuanced, so I don't always have a shared experience with those Black people who were born in the UK. It's totally different.*

This is an important area to consider as the intergenerational experiences of immigrant populations vary according to their entry point to the UK and what their unique lived experiences were before and after as it will often form the basis of the values and ethics and their relatedness to the host country or port of embarkation. Lynette is a second generation Windrush migrant who was born and brought up in the Caribbean. Her experiences would therefore be very different to third and fourth generation peers whose values and ethics would be shaped by accidents of geography and birth in the UK.

Lynette describes the historical justification of why the narratives of race have developed in the way they have and how these have transferred to modern-day society. The debate on race is therefore not linear but highly complex and nuanced as regions of the commonwealth were treated differentially by their respective colonial masters. She also recognises how this has played out in an organisational and church context for her, and an acceptance that because of her 'light skin' she may have had better opportunities. The narrative at this stage shows an understanding of Lynette's personal experiences and the conflict which exists from being categorised.

As Lynette explores her career experiences, the narrative shifts back to other inequalities that impact on career trajectories. There is an overall acceptance that women of colour do not progress in the same way but there is an underlying attempt to explain or rationalise these inequalities. There is a regression back to a denial of

the core which is the fundamental cause – the accident of one's birth into a non-white world.

This part of the narrative reveals an internal and external conflict. Her narrative goes back to childhood where Lynette began to grow her resilience and strength to cope with rejection and abandonment. The internal pain of having to build resilience because of birth, and an external battle with societal stereotypes, also interplay with Lynette's expectation of self and expectation/acceptance by others. She says:

> *In my case I was determined and resilient from an early age and I wasn't put off, so I pursued opportunities even when I didn't succeed and made sure I learnt from each rejection. I knew I was good at my job so for me I just kept working hard and trying. Talking generally, I know as a person of colour that you get treated differently and being a woman on top of that is a step too far for some organisations that prefer employing men anyway. But I think that there's a wider societal issue of how women of colour get treated and this is down to stereotypes that other people have of what your role should be. I don't think professionally this will change anytime soon.*

Throughout her career trajectory, Lynette has been very aware of her own position as a female senior leader of colour. She recognises the complexities of being restricted by her race and gender, and she explores the reasons why this may happen and the dynamics which are created as a result. Her narrative turns to enduring differences as a female of colour. The gender inequality favours men over women but adding race to being a woman doubles the layer of inequality and feeds stereotypes and hierarchies of power differentials within organisations. Lynette addresses the paradox of positive affirmative action and how this further impedes women of colour from progressing as the approach is often viewed with suspicion

and contempt. She recognises that organisations introduce these measures to feel better about themselves – self-affirmation rather than shared agenda to improve the lives of non-white professionals.

Lynette also recognises the distrust and disharmony that exist between senior female leaders of colour and the lack of solidarity between BAME female leaders due to established work cultures embedded in senior leadership teams. The narrative shifts towards how individuals who are looking out for themselves and going against the collective can be a problematic, isolating experience. Feelings of being undervalued at work and the organisational motivation behind promoting Black staff are also key factors which impact on more female Black professionals remaining silent about their experiences. Lynette ends her story by talking explicitly about the lack of solidarity between BAME female leaders due to established work cultures embedded in senior leadership teams. She describes the inevitability of the impact of the shading spectrum of the colour Black. Lynette talks about her exit strategy, keeping the peace and moving on respectfully so as not to upset the apple cart. She uses the “It’s not you, it’s me” analogy to get out of the toxic situation. She ends by saying:

> *I have been disappointed by the lack of solidarity between the few senior female colleagues that I have worked with. They all seem to compete with each other to show off their skills in the hope that they may get to climb the next rung of the ladder, but that’s so selfish coz you’re stronger as part of a collective not as an individual but that doesn’t seem to resonate with BAME women in management positions. It’s like they become colour blinded by the struggle they have and they want others to also have that experience. It’s just mad but that’s how it is and I don’t think this will change unless you have legislation that forces employers to evidence their decision-making when they are recruiting but also I think BAME professionals need to organise into a more collective voice otherwise we remain tokenistic and that can only be bad*

as far as I am concerned. So, I got out and now I have control over what contracts I take and what I reject. I am still working at a senior level but on my terms. I have learnt that in big organisations you can sacrifice your dignity and integrity and to me its slavery all over again – yeah, man, I am so over that.

Appendix 2: Interview and analysis example (Rabindra)

Introduction:

H: Good afternoon, Rabindra. Thank you for agreeing to see me today and do this interview. As you know I am researching the experiences of senior female BAME leaders in social work today. So please can you tell me your story – all those events and experiences that were important to you personally. I'll listen; I won't interrupt. I'll take some notes in case I have any questions for after you have finished. Please take your time. Please begin whenever you like… (2–3 secs) pause:

R: It's been a long journey; I think every experience has shaped me. I didn't start as a senior manager; I was a frontline social worker for many years, so I learnt from the bottom up. I think I learnt from my colleagues and the interactions with the clients, so the experiences were very different. When I started to practice in the early 2000s people like me were rare on the frontline so clients would ask where I was from. There would be a curiosity initially, but we would move onto the task at hand and get the job done. I always focused on the job because taking things 'personally' doesn't help in the long run. I did challenge some views but always with humour. My view is if you make people feel uncomfortable then they don't engage with you, so I worked hard at developing my skills. When I moved into a senior role three years down the line, the comments were more subtle. Racism was always there but then it got combined with your skills set, your knowledge base and at times it took people a while to see beyond the colour of your skin, your accent. I have a very heavy accent but I try to deal with it in a pragmatic way, neutral way… I try not to take it personally because it's the way people have been brought up in this country. I tell myself I am in

a foreign country and it may be difficult for people to understand me. I don’t converse in the same way so I will just work hard and hopefully people will judge me by my work.

I work as a locum, so I am always trying to improve on my work ethic and skills. I have learnt not to get involved in office politics and just focus on the job. I have worked in various settings and picked up observational skills. Most of my senior managers have been white – I don’t have a problem with that. I have worked in teams where there are some BAME managers and that’s nice to see but, overall, my experience has been positive. Also, social work is a small part of my professional life, so I am not into playing politics. I have noticed that some BAME professionals take everything so personally they can’t get beyond that point. I have heard stories of workers being racially abused but I have not been affected by that so far. My experiences have not been very negative, I think I have been lucky in this. I know racist experiences exist, but I think I have compartmentalised things and attempted to try and connect with those who may not behave well. I think when you decide to settle in a foreign country you need to be prepared to work with assumptions and stereotypes. For me it’s not about blaming and complaining. I focus on doing a good job, so I tend to stay positive and not make race or racism a central theme in my way of thinking. The UK has definitely changed in the last few years, with Brexit and BLM, but I know about these issues because of the news. I have no personal experiences of feeling discriminated so as a locum I have moved every two/three years into jobs and learnt new things. I know a lot of Indians like myself have had similar career journeys. I know a lot of Indian medical staff who have progressed rapidly in the NHS because their skills are wanted. The same is happening in the IT industry; my

husband was head-hunted to work here in the UK, but in social work it sometimes feels like a deliberate stop, so you don't see many BAME senior managers. I tend to think of jobs that I didn't get as 'not being ready for it' not because I am Indian and that's why, but I have heard that it happened for people that way. That makes me sad.

I just try harder; I think many Indians have a strong work ethic. This comes from my value system and my strong spirituality which drives me. My parents educated me and my sisters so that we could be economically independent. That's still unusual, as in India women are still married off early and their careers suddenly end. So, my parents were very keen that I was self-made. My spirituality also helps me to cleanse myself of negative thoughts. So, I see opportunity happening for a reason not in a negative way, so I am able to move forward and focus on learning. I believe in energies – having a good aura around you. I think as an Indian I turn racism into just a factor which can stop you if you let it, so I have always made opportunities work for me. I do want to leave social work and work in the private sector where I can earn more for my family. I think social care is not properly paid. That's why senior people like me want to move onto the corporate sector. I think my skills are transferrable. In social work it's the survival of the fittest and it's going to get tougher. I don't want to just stay and lose my skills; I want to carry on achieving.
I think I am coming to the end of my thinking; do you have any questions?

Sub session two:

H: You said that, when you moved into senior roles, the comments were more subtle. Racism was always there but then it got combined with your skills set, your knowledge base. At times it took people a while to see beyond the colour of your skin, your accent. You said “I have a very heavy accent; but I try to deal with it in a pragmatic, neutral way… I try not to take it personally because it’s the way people have been brought up in this country.” Can you remember a specific example which highlights this experience?

R: I remember my first senior post in a local authority which was outside of London where the population were mostly white and so were the staff teams. The first time I gave advice on a complex case my manager consulted with the legal department to make sure what I was saying was true! I asked her about this, and she said quite clearly that she didn’t know some of the legislation I was quoting, and she needed to be sure. She said something like …. “how do people like you know about these things?” I was too shocked to react and just walked away from challenging her as I was on probation and did not want her disapproving of me or me being seen as a troublemaker, so I just focused on my work, picked my self-respect off the floor and got on with the job. I stayed in that team for 18 months and moved on quickly as I was able to use that experience to learn quickly. I think when I have experiences like that, I say to myself that my knowledge and skills will protect me from taking things personally. I mean how can you take things to heart all the time – it will stop you from doing your job and then the client suffers. So, my focus is the work, getting the experience and moving on. That’s why I find locum work so attractive. I just go in, do

a professional job and don't have to be with people I have very little in common with. I think overall this strategy sees me through and has worked so far in the way that I have controlled my own career progression.

H: You said, "I know racist experiences exist, but I think I have compartmentalised things and attempted to try and connect with those who may not behave well". Can you remember an event which highlights this?

R: Umm... like I said before, I don't get involved with people on a personal level when I am working. I have a mindset of keeping to professional boundaries; that way when people behave badly or are racist, I put it down to them and their lack of knowledge and exposure. White colleagues in this country are very limited in their menu choices when it comes to mixing their likes and dislikes of someone. I don't let them have anything of me so when they come up with hurtful things I stay out of the conversation. When the Brexit vote happened, some colleagues made some comments like… "You must feel dreadful about being in a country like Britain" or "I am ashamed to be British". I was careful in how I replied as I did not want to offend anyone, but I did think it was interesting that colleagues felt the need to either express their concerns or their shame. Not one person asked for my views. I avoided the whole situation by maintaining my neutrality as these were the very same people who ridiculed my accent and mistrusted my decision-making. So, people like me learn very fast early on in their careers to protect themselves. I mean who wants to come to work in a team where you are having to fight with your colleagues for a basic level of survival. I just stay away from the whole thing; it's what works for me.

H: you said: “I just try harder.” Can you say a bit more about your work ethic.

R: I grew up in India, so from a very young age my parents taught me and my sisters to work hard at school and achieve. Education was a way out of your social and economic poverty. It’s something that people in the West don’t appreciate. My father went to work every day, my mother stayed at home as her role was confined to that of wife and homemaker and she was confined by her gender. My father was determined that his girls would all be educated and economically independent. Not all Indian families back home can do this, as education is a privilege not an entitlement. I have been very lucky that my parents were able to sacrifice a lot to give me an education. So, in return me and my sisters have made sure that they are well provided for. The only thing I have is my labour, so I use that to improve my situation. I know that some of the people I went to school and college with were not so lucky, so I thank God every day that my work allows me to provide for my family. Back home your position in life is designated by accident of birth. The caste system along with how much wealth you have basically dictates your life chances. So, I consider myself lucky. I belong to the middle class so my life chances were sufficiently positioned so that I could find a way to improve my family’s wealth and position. There are inescapable inequalities in the Indian culture which are further added to by religion and gender, so I am constantly swimming upstream, so it’s my work ethic and belief that the only way out of ‘my lot’ is to continue to strive in the face of adversity. I am not Bollywood or trust fund level, so I just try harder and hope to maintain my family. That’s all – I hope it makes sense.

H: You said the “UK has changed in the last few years with BREXIT and BLM”. Do you have any specific experiences of changes that have affected you?

R: Well, for me it is about my personal identity and growth. I don’t identify with the term BAME. Firstly, I am not Black, and Asian is a very broad gauge. When people ask me where I am from, I always say India. I am proud of my country and what it stands for. I think there is a lot of ‘in-house’ racism in this country between how fair- or dark-skinned you are. In India the differences in people follow this skin colour thing but other things like religion, caste, height and family name are also in the mix. I think in India everybody looks like me in colour terms, so the other things become more important. Also, I have noticed that in the UK, Indians are more Indian than those back home! (Laughs aloud). I think communities become inward-looking when they are a long way from the motherland. Back home, Indians are having a ball; society is traditional but evolving in a modern way. I think Indians have a different relationship with the British. I think that’s because there is a conservative crossover between the two cultures and Indians value certain British traits. I don’t know much about Brexit as it has not affected me directly. I have watched BLM issues on TV and the killing of George Floyd, but I think America is very different. I have friends in the US – their experiences are very different. US Indians are very wealthy because in America you must pay for everything so there’s no real welfare. So, all my friends have sent their children to private school, and all have very well-paid professional jobs. I think in the US being poor is problematic so many Indians only go if they know they will have jobs to support themselves. I don’t think I would like to live in the US; I have been on holiday and that’s enough. I like the UK despite the problems. My son goes to a nice private school, I am happy in my job and as a family we are settled. I

think that’s enough for me. BLM and Brexit matters don’t really affect me, but I do hear other people talking about this. To be honest I don’t really know or want to know too much. Racism happens; BLM is a hot topic right now but in the long run you must just make a living and get on with life. I don’t have anything else to add.

H: Can you say a bit more about not identifying with the term BAME.

R: I don’t like the term; it rhymes with lame or tame. I have a specific identity and I have a community that I belong to. The problem with BAME is that people from the commonwealth are all being pushed together but culture and race will always be specific, so why pretend that its one homogenous group? You can’t achieve equality by coming up with an acronym. I also think that the term being an umbrella for all groups is misleading as in my experience most of the content is heavily African / Caribbean led but not in a way that sparks one’s curiosity. For example, I am not interested in food, or Black history or fashion or hairstyles exclusively. To me the discussion needs to have a broader appeal and one which is interesting to follow, something that may inspire me to visit the place or learn more about a particular aspect. So, for me it doesn’t appeal. I find the topics are repeated and whoever is responsible for designing the content in the chapters on cuisine and music and fashion just got stuck and didn’t finish the book! It’s frustrating to say if the BAME staff network did something on Gandhi, I’d be interested in learning about his early life in Africa, the land, the people the part of Durban that he lived in etc, etc. but what I get is the same repeats which I know about already so it’s just boring. The bigger problem is that the corporate side of things wants a quick tick-box exercise to say to themselves “Look at us, how inclusive we are!” I think in my experience the people

that can really make a change are only interested in their own legacy-building formulas; this way the status quo remains intact. So, no thank you, I know who I am and that is not BAME.

H: You said that “Indians in the UK are more Indian than Indians back home.” What makes you say that?

R: Yes, this always makes me smile. You see, back home people are so embracing of the West! I mean my friends and family really focus on the freedoms that I have and the life I have been living. But here the mood music is so different. Most British-born Indians cling to cultural practices that existed in the 70s! I mean the temples and all that have all evolved and with the times, but here you have an orthodoxy which has remained as if standing still in time. Also, certain communities are very insular. Their exposure to all matters South Asian, I would argue, is via Zee TV. C’mon year – how can this be? I don’t live in Bollywood so why would I think like that?! Or be like that! I find these stereotypes very frustrating and the political correctness that goes with all this nonsense keeps the conversations muted. How can white people see us if we don’t see ourselves? I think our own communities need to take their responsibility as well. I am frequently embarrassed when my own community turn their backs on development; it’s like they too are stuck in this profiling. I think unless we are part of the same race, i.e. humankind, then we will continue to have these conversations without realising we have been on mute all the time. Bus! Bus! That’s my rant done. (Laughs out loud)

H: Thank you very much for your time.

R: I think I am feeling quite energised now!

H: Thank you Rabindra. That was very interesting. Do let me know if there's anything else that comes to mind after today. I would be happy to meet up again. Thank you again.

Transcript	Reflections	Themes/categories
It's been a long journey; I think every experience has shaped me. I didn't start as a senior manager; I was a frontline social worker for many years, so I learnt from the bottom up. I think I learnt from my colleagues and the interactions with the clients, so the experiences were very different. When I started to practice in the early 2000s people like me were rare on the frontline so clients would ask where I was from. There would be a curiosity initially, but we would move onto the task at hand and get the job done. I always focused on	R starts her story as a career narrative. She talks knowingly about her professional experiences in a chronological way, so she lists her career trajectory, not going anywhere near her feelings. She talks around her feelings rather than how she felt at key moments. She alludes to being a rarity but doesn't say why. She talks about 'curiosity', But she doesn't expand on this. She rationalises rejection by sticking to 'not taking things personally'. She talks	Sense of struggle and pain. Resilience and tolerance. Emotional content is suppressed as there is no room for psyche to tolerate pain. The experience of racism is subtle, but the feelings generated are quickly rationalised. A sense of denial which creates a space for R to feel safe. Her focus is externalised: the job, they, them, never 'me'. Use of humour to circumnavigate deep

the job because taking things 'personally' doesn't help in the long run. I did challenge some views but always with humour. My view is if you make people feel uncomfortable then they don't engage with you, so I worked hard at developing my skills. When I moved into a senior role three years down the line, the comments were more subtle. Racism was always there but then it got combined with your skills set, your knowledge base and at times it took people a while to see beyond the colour of your skin, your accent. I have a very heavy accent but I try to deal with it in a pragmatic way, neutral	about challenging views with humour. This extract feels overwhelming protective of her need to stay intact, so that she can protect her psyche from experiencing pain and humiliation. She focuses on being a professional leaving out the human element of recognition. It's a coping mechanism that BAME professionals often force themselves to subscribe to as the daily micro aggressions that they face are too painful to bear. Strategies BAME professionals adopt to	feelings of shame and guilt. Reliance on knowledge and skills to wash away feelings of resentment, anger and fear. Feeling the need to rationalise the way one speaks rather than question the reaction of others. A strong sense of 'othering'. Rationalisation of why people may be a certain

way… I try not to take it personally because it's the way people have been brought up in this country. I tell myself I am in a foreign country, and it may be difficult for people to understand me. I don't converse in the same way so I will just work hard and hopefully people will judge me by my work.	avoid emotional pain in the workplace. A strong sense of survival. Making sense of racism, so that bearing the burden of hurt becomes manageable.	way because of their exposure to 'others'. Fear of feeling judged so denial of what is fundamentally going wrong, taking the blame for those who are unable or unwilling to understand.
I work as a locum, so I am always trying to improve on my work ethic and skills. I have learnt not to get involved in office politics and just focus on the job. I have worked in various settings and picked up observational skills. Most of my senior managers	Coping strategy to keep moving before the organisation, individual or group become intolerable. Safety first, elements of denial around the impact of racism on self, blame lies with BAME personnel	Feelings of flight before fright. Denial, Blame. Minimisation of impact of racism on self. Regression and denial.

have been white; I don't have a problem with that. I have worked in teams where there are some BAME managers and that's nice to see but, overall, my experience has been positive. Also, social work is a small part of my professional life, so I am not into playing politics. I have noticed that some BAME professionals take everything so personally they can't get beyond that point. I have heard stories of workers being racially abused but I have not been affected by that so far. My experiences have not been very negative; I think I have been lucky in this. I know racist experiences exist, but I	for taking things too 'personally'. Externalisation of racism happening elsewhere, a sense of relief that self-experience of racism is limited, so it happens to 'others'. This extract highlights the recognition of how R is conflicted by the experiences of racism and attempts made by her to justify the	Externalisation of pain. Curious paradox, where career progression is seen as a positive and at the same time wanting to leave the profession. Conflict within self. Feelings of resignation – if I must work with racism, it won't be part of my narrative. Perhaps this is too painful to bear.

think I have compartmentalised things and attempted to try and connect with those who may not behave well. I think when you decide to settle in a foreign country you need to be prepared to work with assumptions and stereotypes. For me it's not about blaming and complaining. I focus on doing a good job, so I tend to stay positive and not make race or racism a central theme in my way of thinking. The UK has definitely changed in the last few years, with Brexit and BLM, but I know about these issues because of the news. I have no personal experiences of feeling discriminated so as a	projections of racism that are incoming. Again, rationale for behaviour is provided as a way of 'getting on' with the job. Not making racism a 'central' theme. Impact of BREXIT but minimisation of impact on self. Use of Locum pathway to avoid getting hit by the racism bullet.	Denial, well-constructed defended armour to disassociate from allowing self to acknowledge, let alone accept discrimination at any level. Keep moving – that way you may dodge the racism bullet. Sense of fear, not making racism a central theme to existing, perhaps indicative of a denial and coping strategy. Paradox of being brought up in a conservative

locum I have moved every two/three years into jobs and learnt new things. I just try harder; I think many Indians have a strong work ethic. This comes from my value system and my strong spirituality which drives me. My parents educated me and my sisters so that we could be economically independent. That's still unusual, as in India women are still married off early and their careers suddenly end. So, my parents were very keen that I was self-made. My spirituality also helps me to cleanse myself of negative thoughts. So, I	Strong work ethic and faith counter strategies to cope with painful feelings. Paradox of strong women but they get 'married' off due to cultural inequalities. Use of spirituality as a coping mechanism. Use of the term 'cleanse' as if to suggest contamination/infliction. Putting a spin on the everyday micro aggressions that stand in	culture and striving for economic, social and gender equality yet being in a Western so-called progressive world and the reality being the exact opposite. Cleansing oneself of negative thoughts – perhaps an explicit link to avoiding psychic pain. Overwhelming sense of wanting to move away from social work, perhaps a response to feeling disempowered but also planning an exit so that it enables one to feel that one can walk away from a profession which

see opportunity happening for a reason, not in a negative way, so I am able to move forward and focus on learning. I believe in energies. – having a good aura around you. I think as an Indian I turn racism into just a factor which can stop you if you let it, so I have always made opportunities work for me. I do want to leave social work and work in the private sector where I can earn more for my family. I think social care is not properly paid; that's why senior people like me want to move onto the corporate sector. I think my skills are transferrable. In social work it's the survival of	the way of career progression. Acknowledgment of social work not being valued as a professional. Looking to survive. Need to carry on achieving, the need to survive rather than stay and fight. Direct experience of racism but explained	promotes social justice but fails to employ BAME females as leaders. The struggle to achieve as a means to self-improvement. Feelings of a struggle rather than an invitation to the top table. Fears of losing skills. An acknowledgement of experiencing pain and humiliation but quickly overtaken by feelings of fear of being identified as being a troublemaker.

the fittest and it's going to get tougher. I don't want to just stay and lose my skills. I want to carry on achieving.	away by fear of being identified as a 'troublemaker'.	Fear of disapproval. An immersion into work to avoid the pain of being humiliated.
I remember my first senior post in a local authority which was outside of London where the population were mostly white and so were the staff teams. The first time I gave advice on a complex case my manager consulted with the legal department to make sure what I was saying was true! I asked her about this, and she said quite clearly that she didn't know some of the legislation I was quoting, and she needed to be	A humiliating and unjust experience of racism triggered by R sharing knowledge and skills. Feelings of anger and resentment quickly superseded by dread of disapproval. Fear of being under the scrutiny of senior managers who are suspicious of knowledge and skills.	Feelings of disbelief and shock quickly replaced by a sense of powerlessness. Continuous themes of being neither seen nor heard by managers or peers. A keen sense of isolation.

sure. She said something like …. “How do people like you know about these things?” I was too shocked to react and just walked away from challenging her as I was on probation and did not want her disapproving of me or me being seen as a troublemaker, so I just focused on my work, picked my self-respect off the floor and got on with the job. I think when I have experiences like that, I say to myself that my knowledge and skills will protect me from taking things personally. I mean how can you take things to heart all the time? It will	Feelings of disrespect, fear of raising suspicions. Using work to focus away from pain and hurt. Use of knowledge and skills as a protective factor. De-personalise traumas so it becomes externalised. Use moving on as a strategy to avoid painful interactions or conversations. Honesty about why the need to move on is made explicit. Acknowledgment of feeling different but using	A compression of feelings and well managed ways of avoiding confrontation at all costs. Using boundaries to protect self and assist survival. Taking flight when fright kicks in. Tried and tested formula which works. Control issues, to stay sane. Need to set the agenda and not be the victim. A sense of sadness, not able to attach to

stop you from doing your job and then the client suffers. So, my focus is the work, getting the experience and moving on. That’s why I find locum work so attractive; I just go in, do a professional job and don’t have to be with people I have very little in common with. I think overall this strategy sees me through and has worked so far in the way that I have controlled my own career progression. Umm... like I said before, I don’t get involved with people on a personal level when I am working. I have a mindset of keeping to professional	professionality as a cover story to avoid acknowledging the reality. Boundaries to safeguard around racist attacks or feel pain. Rationale offered as to why people may behave badly, somehow justifies the behaviours on display that are deeply hurtful. Rationale offered for white colleagues; strategy for staying neutral.	colleagues or peers, perhaps fear of being put down, or singled out. Rationale offered for offensive behaviours; reluctance to accept reality. Avoidance. Staying non-confrontational to preserve sense of self. Making sure to remain separate. Under the radar; no use in fighting back as this is

boundaries. That way when people behave badly or are racist, I put it down to them and their lack of knowledge and exposure. White colleagues in this country are very limited in their menu choices when it comes to mixing their likes and dislikes of someone. I don't let them have anything of me so when they come up with hurtful things I stay out of the conversation. There are inescapable inequalities in the Indian culture which are further added to by religion and gender, so I am constantly swimming upstream, so it's my work ethic and belief that the	Keeping a low profile, working under the radar, keeping to what works. No sense of challenging back. Racism attributed to lack of knowledge; white colleagues seen as limited in their scope to embrace others. Ironic as in the East the West is seen as a beacon of freedom, a progressive environment; however, R's experience would suggest the opposite.	seen as being a troublemaker. Defended response to needing to accept why white colleagues' ignorance may be. Reality for BAME professionals who have to deal with everyday micro aggressions. There is no justice there's just US – but so few that its safer to put up and shut up. Clash of cultures, wishing to fit in but also wanting to be different.

only way out of ‘my lot’ is to continue to strive in the face of adversity.		Challenge is to keep afloat.
Well, for me it is about my personal identity and growth. I don’t identify with the term BAME. Firstly, I am not Black, and Asian is a very broad gauge. When people ask me where I am from, I always say India. I am proud of my country and what it stands for. I think there is a lot of ‘in-house’ racism in this country between how fair- or dark-skinned you are. In India the differences in people follow this skin colour thing but other things like religion, caste, height and family name are also in the mix.	Acknowledgement of limitations of own culture. Bound by religion and caste. A certain resignation to status, to my ‘lot’. Examples of resilience. Survival in an adopted homeland far away from the motherland. Personal identity versus collective identity. Conflict of cultures, the inequalities that exist between people of colour. Shades of Black.	Survival of the fittest. Conflicts around individual identity and group belonging. The term BAME seen as negative, homogeneous. Contradictions on various levels. Acknowledgement of the interplay of variables that also impact on opportunities impacting on BAME female professionals at home and abroad.

Also, I have noticed that in the UK Indians are more Indian than those back home! (Laughs aloud). I think communities become inward-looking when they are a long way from the motherland. Back home, Indians are having a ball; society is traditional but evolving in a modern way. I think Indians have a different relationship with the British. I think that's because there is a conservative crossover between the two cultures and Indians value certain British traits. I don't know much about Brexit as it has not affected me directly. I have watched BLM issues on TV and	Preference of lighter shades to darker tones. Connecting other factors such as faith, caste and physical attributes. Contradiction of migrated communities being more insular than those back in the motherland. Development is arrested as the need to preserve identity, culture and tradition are protected against a backdrop of oppression and survival. Current political context, but a denial of personal impact.	Paradox, of migration and communities which become inward-looking as a matter of survival whereas motherland communities change, grow and evolve. Differentiation between home and away communities. Impact of Brexit then BLM. The problem with BAME as a term of reference. Lack of unity. Lack of representation.

the killing of George Floyd, but I think America is very different. I don't like the term; it rhymes with lame or tame. I have a specific identity and I have a community that I belong to. The problem with BAME is that people from the commonwealth are all being pushed together but culture and race will always be specific, so why pretend that its one homogenous group? You can't achieve equality by coming up with an acronym. I also think that the term being an umbrella for all groups is misleading as in my experience most of the content is heavily African	The term BAME seen as negative. A term aimed at categorisation of a spectrum of people takes away individuality. Dislike of BAME – associated with attempting to classify people into categories like the caste system. Commonwealth vs US Differences of experiences between peoples of different continents.	Link between differential experiences of UK and US colonial histories. Differentiation between two different experiences of colonisation: one derived from enslavement, the other associated with occupation. Generalised way of discussing race. UK and US discourse on race relations on divergent courses. Stereotypical approaches to addressing race inequalities. Feelings of isolation and indifference.

/ Caribbean led but not in way that sparks one's curiosity. For example, I am not interested in food, or Black history or fashion or hairstyles exclusively. To me the discussion needs to have a broader appeal and one which is interesting to follow, something that may inspire me to visit the place or learn more about a particular aspect. So, for me it doesn't appeal. I find the topics are repeated and whoever is responsible for designing the content of the chapters on cuisine and music and fashion just got stuck and didn't finish the book!	Bias of race relations in the UK. Stereotypes in place so that the conversations are channelled in known ways. Bias towards looking at certain racial groups. Feelings of exclusion not inclusion. Limited to certain topics so appeal of participation is limited. Stereotypical scope so feelings of exclusion result.	Internal racism. Inability to explore feelings of self in relation to others. Disassociation with establishing a collective identity. Stereotypical assumptions about BAME cultures and identity. Fragmentation of identity. Dilution of culture and individual identity. Deep feelings of resentment and frustrations resulting in disassociation from reality. Attitude of keeping self-intact.

I find these stereotypes very frustrating and the political correctness that goes with all this nonsense keeps the conversations muted. How can white people see us if we don't see ourselves? I think our own communities need to take their responsibility as well. I am frequently embarrassed when my own community turn their backs on development; it's like they too are stuck in this profiling. I think unless we are part of the same race i.e. humankind then we will continue to have these conversations without realising we have been on mute all the time. Bus! Bus! That's my rant done. (Laughs out loud)	Frustration and feelings of discontent resulting in a disconnected view. No **Transcript** unified voice as R feels ignored politically, intellectually and culturally. Acceptance of communities not accepting responsibility for their futures. Critical observations of conversations on race. Culture and identity are hijacked by lack of community cohesion. Splintering effect on people of colour feeling	Othering the white community helps in maintaining status quo. Preservation of self beyond needs of community. Limited emotional investment. Minimum intervention, maximum gain.

	under siege. So white privilege prevails. Divide, rule and conquer.	

In-case analysis

Rabindra begins her story with her social work career. She talks about starting as a frontline social worker in the UK in the early 2000s, working her way up to senior leadership posts over a three-year period. She says:

> *It's been a long journey; I think every experience has shaped me. I didn't start as a senior manager. I was a frontline social worker for many years, so I learnt from the bottom up. I think I learnt from my colleagues and the interactions with the clients, so the experiences were very different. When I started to practice in the early 2000s people like me were rare on the frontline, so clients would ask where I was from. There would be a curiosity initially, but we would move onto the task at hand and get the job done. I always focused on the job because taking things 'personally' doesn't help in the long run. I did challenge some views but always with humour; my view is if you make people feel uncomfortable then they don't engage with you, so I worked hard at developing my skills.*

Rabindra starts her story as a career narrative. She talks knowingly about her professional experiences in a chronological way, listing her career trajectory, not going anywhere near her feelings. She talks around her feelings, rather than how she felt at key moments. She alludes to being a rarity herself but doesn't say why.

Rabindra talks about curiosity, but she doesn't expand on this theme. She rationalises rejection by sticking to 'not taking things personally'. She talks about challenging views with humour. This extract implies an overwhelming protectiveness, a need to stay intact, so that she can protect her psyche from experiencing pain and impending humiliation. Instead, she focuses on being a professional, leaving out the human, compassionate element – that recognition of suffering. It's a coping mechanism that BAME professionals often force themselves to subscribe to as the

daily micro aggressions that they face are too painful to bear. She goes on to explain that:

I have learnt not to get involved in office politics and just focus on the job. I have worked in various settings and picked up observational skills. Most of my senior managers have been white – I don't have a problem with that. I have worked in teams where there are some BAME managers and that's nice to see but, overall, my experience has been positive.

Rabindra rationalises her experiences as a series of strategies that BAME professionals adopt to avoid emotional pain in the workplace. There is a strong sense of survival, and working as a locum also allows her to keep moving before the organisation, individual or group become intolerable. She is unable to make sense of the racism as the burden of hurt and humiliation would be a strike against her ego. Instead, she adopts a stance of denial and suppression – elements of denial around the impact of racism on self – so that she can put safety first. For Rabindra, blame seems to lie with BAME personnel for taking things too 'personally', closely followed with externalisation of racism that happens elsewhere – a sense of relief that her experiences of racism are limited. That is, it happens to 'others' not her. There's further evidence of a detachment from the reality of racism when she says:

My experiences have not been very negative; I think I have been lucky in this. I know racist experiences exist, but I think I have compartmentalised things and attempted to try and connect with those who may not behave well. I think when you decide to settle in a foreign country you need to be prepared to work with assumptions and stereotypes. For me, it's not about blaming and complaining. I focus on doing a good job, so I tend to stay positive and not make race or racism a central theme in my way of thinking.

Rabindra does not stray from her belief that it's her strong work ethic and spirituality that keeps her focused in the workplace. She talks candidly about having positivity around you and not letting 'racist experiences' get in her way. Further, she puts this optimistic show of strength and work ethic down to her South Asian upbringing and says:

> *I just try harder; I think many Indians have a strong work ethic. This comes from my value system and my strong spirituality which drives me. My parents educated me and my sisters so that we could be economically independent.*

As the interview progresses, Rabindra appears more open when asked specific questions around her experiences of racism in the workplace. She can remember specific incidents and how she managed to turn a negative experience into a learning one. She says:

> *I remember my first senior post in a local authority which was outside of London where the population were mostly white and so were the staff teams. The first time I gave advice on a complex case my manager consulted with the legal department to make sure what I was saying was true! I asked her about this, and she said quite clearly that she didn't know some of the legislation I was quoting, and she needed to be sure. She said something like …. "how do people like you know about these things?". I was too shocked to react and just walked away from challenging her as I was on probation and did not want her disapproving of me or me being seen as a troublemaker, so I just focused on my work, picked my self-respect off the floor and got on with the job. I stayed in that team for 18 months and moved on quickly as I was able to use that experience to learn quickly. I think when I have experiences like that, I say to myself that my knowledge and skills will protect me from taking things personally. I mean, how can you take things to heart all the time? It will stop you from doing your job and then the client suffers. So, my focus is the work, getting the experience and moving on. That's why I find locum work so attractive. I just go in, do a professional job and don't have to*

be with people I have very little in common with. I think overall this strategy sees me through and has worked so far in the way that I have controlled my own career progression.

This direct experience of racism is explained away by fear of being identified as a 'troublemaker'. This incident is a humiliating and unjust experience of racism, triggered by Rabindra sharing knowledge and skills. Feelings of anger and resentment are quickly superseded by dread of disapproval and fear of being under scrutiny from senior managers, who are clearly suspicious of her knowledge and skills. She supresses feelings of disrespect and uses her work to focus away from the pain and fear of raising further reprisals. She de-personalises the incident so that she can avoid painful conversations and interactions. There is some acknowledgement that she is different, but she uses her 'professionality' to avoid facing reality so that she can remain intact psychologically. Rabindra comes across as 'well-defended' and, given her struggle to maintain her integrity and self-respect, this is no mean feat. She is forced to react flawlessly; that is, to demonstrate pitch-perfect understanding and impeccable professional standards, whilst rationalising with compassion for staff that manage her. Throughout her narrative she talks with great insight about her family background, her upbringing in India and the inequalities of gender, class, caste and socio-economic factors that have shaped her opportunities in life. She acknowledges her parent's wisdom to see the value of her and her sisters' education, so that they could maintain their independence and be self-sufficient. She acknowledges this by saying:

There are inescapable inequalities in the Indian culture which are further added to by religion and gender, so I am constantly swimming upstream, so it's my work ethic and belief that the only way out of 'my lot' is to continue to

strive in the face of adversity. I am not Bollywood or trust fund level, so I just try harder and hope to maintain my family.

Rabindra's views on her lived experiences of racism are often intellectualised in a kind of practical detachment. She uses this strategy to guard against painful experiences so that she can cope in the workplace and not let her standards slip. She talks about boundaries:

Umm...like I said before, I don't get involved with people on a personal level when I am working. I have a mindset of keeping to professional boundaries. That way when people behave badly or are racist, I put it down to them and their lack of knowledge and exposure. White colleagues in this country are very limited in their menu choices when it comes to mixing their likes and dislikes of someone. I don't let them have anything of me so when they come up with hurtful things I stay out of the conversation. When the Brexit vote happened, some colleagues made some comments like… "You must feel dreadful about being in a country like Britain" or "I am ashamed to be British". I was careful in how I replied as I did not want to offend anyone, but I did think it was interesting that colleagues felt the need to either express their concerns or their shame. Not one person asked for my views. I avoided the whole situation by maintaining my neutrality as these were the very same people who ridiculed my accent and mistrusted my decision-making. So, people like me learn very fast early on in their careers to protect themselves. I mean, who wants to come to work in a team where you are having to fight with your colleagues for a basic level of survival? I just stay away from the whole thing; it's what works for me.

There is also a sense of Rabindra constantly having to caretake the feelings of colleagues who appear not to understand the impact they are having on her. This is the peculiar but real shared experience of BAME professionals, who somehow feel they need to caretake their senior colleagues' feelings and carry out the manual

lifting to preserve other people's ignorance. Rabindra talks knowingly about the impact of Brexit and BLM, but she says both are examples of identity politics:

> *…well, for me it is about my personal identity and growth. I don't identify with the term BAME. Firstly, I am not Black and Asian – this is a very broad gauge. When people ask me where I am from, I always say India. I am proud of my country and what it stands for. I think there is a lot of 'in-house' racism in this country between how fair- or dark-skinned you are. In India the differences in people follow this skin colour thing but other things like religion, caste, height, and family name are also in the mix. I think in India everybody looks like me in colour terms, so the other things become more important.*

Rabindra can cite other important factors that may impact on female BAME professionals, but she is clear that she does not identify with the term as it's a 'broad gauge'. She highlights that the specific categories of discrimination can differ within certain minorities. This theme of being categorised runs throughout her narrative. She attributes racism to lack of knowledge on the subject: white colleagues can seem limited in their scope to embrace others. Ironically, in the East, the West is seen as a beacon of freedom, a progressive environment; however, Rabindra's experience would suggest the opposite.

All the same, Rabindra discusses the irony in this disparity, suggesting parallels within her own culture which restricts assimilation. She says:

> *Also, I have noticed that in the UK Indians are more Indian than those back home! (Laughs aloud). I think communities become inward-looking when they are a long way from the motherland. Back home, Indians are having a ball; society is traditional but evolving in a modern way. I think Indians have a different relationship with the British. I think that's because there is a conservative crossover between the two cultures and Indians value certain British traits.*

This is a contradiction (paradox) of migrated communities being more insular than those back in the motherland. Development is arrested as the need to preserve identity, culture and tradition are protected against a backdrop of oppression and survival. While Rabindra acknowledges the current political context, there a denial of this on a personal impact basis.

Rabindra is also clear about her views on the term BAME. She feels frustrated with this, viewing it as broad and crude. She says:

> *I don't like the term; it rhymes with lame or tame. I have a specific identity and I have a community that I belong to. The problem with BAME is that people from the commonwealth are all being pushed together but culture and race will always be specific, so why pretend that its one homogenous group? You can't achieve equality by coming up with an acronym.*

She explores the term with great sensitivity because the term holds little meaning for her as a category. She discusses complex issues of race, culture and personal identity and how the conversation is biased in its approach. She speaks of stereotypes and generalisations which fail to address why structural inequalities exist in the first place, and how measures to address this imbalance remain largely tokenistic. This is a reoccurring theme that Rabindra reiterates. She is not alone in her thinking. She ends the interview on an optimistic note – she sees herself as part of a human race, where your work is rewarded on an equitable and equal basis, irrespective of race or gender. She appears to have come full circle.

Early childhood themes: Rabindra was born and brought up in suburban India. She is one of three sisters. Her parents encouraged all their children to achieve educationally. The family are middle class, and Rabindra's parents are very keen for

their girls to be self-sufficient economically. The family have a strong work ethic and Rabindra carries this diligence throughout her career developmentally. The family have a strong faith. Rabindra is spiritual and believes strongly that her faith will carry her through adversity in life. She describes a secure and happy childhood; she has strong role models who she aspires to be like, and her upbringing was secure. Rabindra is aware of inequalities that exist in Indian society due to caste, religion and gender but she is largely protected by her parents from experiencing uncertainty and pain. So, what she experiences in early childhood was well insulated from the harsh realities of life around her. All this because she was, by accident of birth, born into a middle-class family, that could provide for her and sees the value of educating females. Undoubtably, Rabindra's insulation from wider society in her formative years, in conjunction with her empowerment through education, allowed her to develop the cognitive capacity that can later be used to understand racial discrimination suffered, through proper reflection on historical and cultural contexts from which these incidences occur. This runs in parallel alongside the development of compassion for Rabindra's colleagues that seems to know no bounds.

Adolescence and early adulthood: Rabindra completed her education in India and started employment. She met her husband at university and for the early part of her adulthood was living within an extended family network. She had a secure income, and her husband had specialist skills, which he was able to convert quickly into employment with an international company. His skills remain highly sort after. He successfully migrated to the UK to secure his family's future. Rabindra followed her husband and began her social work career in the UK in the early 2000s. She quickly learnt how to manoeuvre herself through the UK social work market. She began as a frontline social worker but decided very early on not to stay too long in one post. She

spends time moving around positions and, after three years, secures her first senior role. Her locum posts serve as good training to avoid complicated relationships in the workplace.

Career trajectory: Rabindra's career trajectory is punctuated by locum posts. She actively avoided getting attached to people, places or organisations. There was very little emotional attachment to the workplace and there was an expressed desire to keep moving. Rabindra does not see her future in local authority social work. She sees her professional identity as fluid and marketable in any organisational setting where human beings work. She believes that she can change, grow and adapt to any industry needing her skills, as her professional experiences are transferrable and technically adaptable to most industries. Rabindra's strategy in dealing with racism in social work has largely involved intellectualising. This thoughtful, measured compartmentalisation allows Rabindra to move rapidly through the ranks. She is not concerned with the group or collective dynamics. For her, it is ultimately about survival at all costs, including denial of self.

Reflective summary: How did I feel doing the interview? I was very apprehensive about this interview. The interviewee and I shared a commonality – I was worried about an 'over-identification' happening on both parts and could potentially blind me from any insights. Luckily, I needn't have worried, as I found it hard to relate to Rabindra. She seemed quite defensive and initially hard to engage in the interview. In my opinion, she was able to rattle off a chronology, but unable to 'open up' entirely. There were glimmers of emotion, but these were quickly replaced by a well-constructed script that Rabindra repeated. It felt almost intrusive on my part to probe such a well put together professional, who was determined to control the process in a very determined way.

After the interview, I was emotionless too; or, rather, I didn't really know what to feel. I searched for meaning in the subsequent days as I transcribed the interview. But, even then, the armoury that Rabindra had created around her experiences seemed impenetrable. Her voice seemed unanimated, and the interview seemed like cardboard. I hadn't anticipated feeling this uncertainty, devoid of emotion. I had thought that by listening and then transcribing her words, I could somehow connect to a feeling, but on this occasion, I just felt left out. There was a coldness about the interview that left me puzzled. It was as though there were other professionals listening in – the conversation was sanitised.

I wondered if that was how Rabindra often felt in the workplace – left out in the cold, while her colleagues laughed at her rather than with her, all those times that she felt humiliated and powerless to respond, in fear of losing her livelihood. Also, I sensed her anger and resentment at me for asking the questions that she had worked so hard to avoid, because that would mean feeling, and that was to be avoided at all costs, as the minute you've felt, you show your vulnerability and they've got to you. Angry people can easily come across as overemotional; their judgement is viewed as poor, clouded by this emotion, and quickly we perceive them as irrationally aggressive. They've won and that was never going to be an option for Rabindra. I realised then that I too had begun to judge her show of unflawed strength – and I attempted to stop – almost tripping over myself to recognise that Rabindra's story was equally valid, even if I was not able to relate to it fully.

Appendix 3 Glossary of terms

Countertransference

This refers to the psychoanalyst's feelings and attitudes towards the patient: his/her reaction to the patient's transference, how his/her own experiences impact his/her understanding of the patient, and the analyst's emotional responses to the patient.

Defence mechanisms

Defence mechanisms are used by the ego as a way to deal with unconscious nconflict. Operating at an unconscious level, defence mechanisms help to reduce negative feelings (e.g. anxiety and guilt). Common defence mechanisms include repression, denial and projection.

Defended subject

This describes a person/s response to anxiety. Responses may include avoidance, denial or sabotage when required to fulfil tasks or when asked about behaviours. The work of Melanie Klein is, in particular, associated with this terminology.

Denial

Denial is an individual's refusal to accept or confront certain (or all) aspects of a given reality in order to avoid potential feelings of discomfort. It exists on a continuum as it can be seen as just a normal reaction to a stressful event or to severe psychosis. While commonly defined as a type of defence mechanism, denial plays a role in all defence mechanisms. Freud also referred to it as disavowal.

Fantasy

Fantasy loosely refers to an imagined situation that expresses certain desires or aims of the imagining individual. It can occur at the conscious level, also known as a daydream, or unconsciously, sometimes referred to as *phantasy*.

Oedipus complex

Freud used the Greek myth of Oedipus to illustrate a childhood developmental stage, occurring between the ages of three and six, when a child desires to have the parent of the opposite sex all to him/herself, to the exclusion of the other parent. In the myth, Oedipus kills Laius, who he does not realise is his father, and then marries his widow, Jocasta, who is actually Oedipus's mother. The term 'counter-Oedipus' generally designates the complete set of parental displays of the father's or mother's own oedipal conflict. Thus, in these displays, we can expect to find themes of incest and murder.

Projection

The unconscious transfer of feelings, thoughts and language between two or more people. These can be both spoken and unspoken.

Projective identification

Relates to the discharge or transfer of unwanted or intolerable feelings of anxieties from one person to another; this can be both spoken or conveyed in an unsaid way through body language, look, tone of voice. These feelings thoughts and language exchanges can happen when the person/s are aware or unaware of what they are trying to convey or not.

Transference

Transference is the projection onto another person (e.g. the analyst) of feelings, past associations or experiences. This is an important concept in psychoanalysis because it demonstrates that past experiences impact the present. Interpreting transference in the psychoanalytic setting can shed light on unresolved conflicts.

Unconscious

Sigmund Freud proposed that there are three parts (levels) of the mind: the conscious, preconscious and the unconscious. The unconscious is the part of the mind that stores feelings, thoughts and urges unaware to the individual. These mental contents and processes often influence the conscious experience even though we are unaware of their existence.

Appendix 4: Ethical review, participant information and consent

Tavistock and Portman Trust Research Ethics Committee

If you have any queries regarding the conduct of the programme in which you are being asked to participate, please contact:
Paru Jeram, Trust Quality Assurance Officer pjeram@tavi-port.nhs.uk

The Researchers
Hia Jordan
xxxxxxxxxxxx
xxxxxxxxxxxx
London xxxxxxxxx
Phone: xxxxxxxxxx

Consent to Participate in a Research Study

The purpose of this letter is to provide you with the information that you need to consider in deciding whether to participate in this study. I would like to invite you to take part in a small in-depth research study. Before you decide you need to understand why the research is being done and what it would involve for you. Please take time to read the following information carefully. Ask questions if anything you read is not clear or if you would like more information. Take time to decide whether or not to take part. If you would like to take part, please email on jordan_h1@sky.com . You will be given a hard copy of this information sheet to keep and will be asked to sign a consent form.

Project Title

Brown girl in the ring: what are the experiences of senior female BAME leaders in social work today?

Project Description

The aim of this study is to explore the experiences of senior female BAME leaders in a social work setting. The project is designed to explore with my research participants their professional and personal stories of how they navigated themselves into senior leadership positions within a social work setting. I am hoping that I will find new narratives on the interplay between race, gender and leadership. One of the perceived benefits of taking part will be an opportunity to talk about your lived-experiences of working as a senior female BAME leader. It is considered beneficial for you to be given an opportunity to feel heard and listened to and to make known your experiences so that others may learn from them. Your authentic narrative being documented may be felt as an important contribution to the field of knowledge within the study: how your professional trajectory has been influenced

and impacted on, what has been beneficial and what continues to be barriers to further progression.

Confidentiality of the Data

The audio recordings will be transcribed for analysis. The case studies will be anonymised and only the interviewee will be able to recognise their story. Interviewees will have the choice of having copies of their audiotape and the written transcript for their records. The data will be GDPR compliant and only used for the purposes of this research. Participants are invited to take part in two one-to-one interviews with the researcher. Interview one and interview two take place on the same day, 30 minutes apart. The combined interviews – one and two, will last approximately 30–90 minutes. Interview three will remain optional for the participant and will take place a week after the first interviews (if needed). All interviews will be completed in a location of your choice; this can be agreed prior to the interviews going ahead. All interviews will be audio recorded to aid verbatim transcription and analysis of the interview material. You will be free to decline the audio recording as you should feel comfortable with the recording process at all times and are free to stop recording at any time.

When you agree to take part, your information will be kept safe.

- Your personal information will be replaced and pseudonymised (real name only known by the researcher) and this will be the process throughout the study, during transcription and while discussing your story in the panel during analysis.
- Confidentiality will only be broken if the researcher has a strong belief that there is a serious risk of harm or danger to either the participant or another individual (e.g. physical, emotional or sexual abuse, concerns for child protection, rape, self-harm, suicidal intent or criminal activity) or if a serious crime has been committed.

HOW WILL INFORMATION YOU PROVIDE BE RECORDED, STORED AND PROTECTED?

- The audio files will be uploaded within 12 hours and stored safely in a computer file which has a two-factor protected password. The recording will be deleted from the recording device once the file is uploaded. The above information adheres to the data protection law which protect your rights; for this study this process is necessary for research purposes.
- You can request a copy of the information we hold about you. This includes the audio recordings.
- The researcher will be performing the transcribing. Once transcribed specific excerpts of the transcriptions (written) or recordings (audio) will be shared with the analysis panel.
- Your non-anonymised data in the signed consent forms and audio recordings are retained as part of the research process on my computer within the university whereby only I have access.

WHAT WILL HAPPEN TO THE RESULTS OF THE STUDY?

- The outcomes of this research project will be disseminated in the final doctoral thesis, peer reviewed journals and conferences.

WHAT IF YOU HAVE A COMPLAINT?

- If you wish to direct your complaint to someone within the research team, you should contact the supervisor Dr Simon Tucker email stucker@Tavi-Port.ac.uk.
- If you have any concerns about your treatment as a research participant in this study, please contact Simon Carrington, Head of Academic Governance and Quality Assurance at the Tavistock and Portman (academicquality@tavi-port.nhs.uk).

Location

This will be negotiated at the participant's preference. As the BNIM interview method asks the participants to share their experiences of their professional trajectories, so that participants are comfortable from the onset they will be given the opportunity to choose a location which they feel appropriate in.

Remuneration

Non-applicable – participants are voluntarily giving up their time to participate in this project.

You are not obliged to take part in this study and are free to withdraw at any time during tests. Should you choose to withdraw from the programme you may do so without disadvantage to yourself and without any obligation to give a reason.

Annexe 2
Consent to Participate in an Experimental Programme Involving the Use of Human Participants

Brown girl in the ring: what are the experiences of senior female BAME leaders in social work today?

I have the read the information leaflet relating to the above programme of research in which I have been asked to participate and have been given a copy to keep. The nature and purposes of the research have been explained to me, and I have had the opportunity to discuss the details and ask questions about this information. I understand what is being proposed and the procedures in which I will be involved have been explained to me.

I understand that my involvement in this study, and particular data from this research, will remain strictly confidential. Only the researchers involved in the study will have access to the data. It has been explained to me what will happen once the experimental programme has been completed.

I hereby freely and fully consent to participate in the study, which has been fully explained to me. Having given this consent I understand that I have the right to withdraw from the programme at any time without disadvantage to myself and without being obliged to give any reason.

Participant's Name (BLOCK CAPITALS) ……………………………………………………………….

Participant's Signature.

Investigator's Name (BLOCK CAPITALS) ……………………………………………………………..

Investigator's Signature ……………………………………………………………………………………

Date: ………………………….

The Tavistock and Portman NHS
NHS Foundation Trust

The Tavistock and Portman NHS
NHS Foundation Trust

Tavistock and Portman Trust Research Ethics Committee (TREC)

APPLICATION FOR ETHICAL REVIEW OF RESEARCH INVOLVING HUMAN PARTICIPANTS

This application should be submitted alongside copies of any supporting documentation which will be handed to participants, including a participant information sheet, consent form, self-completion survey or questionnaire.

Where a form is submitted and sections are incomplete, the form will not be considered by TREC and will be returned to the applicant for completion.

For further guidance please contact Paru Jeram (academicquality@tavi-port.nhs.uk)

SECTION A: PROJECT DETAILS

Project title	Brown Girl In the Ring: What are the experiences of senior female BAME leaders in social work today?		
Proposed project start date	2019	**Anticipated project end date**	**2020**

SECTION B: APPLICANT DETAILS

Name of Researcher	Hia Jordan
Email address	xxxxxx
Contact telephone number	xxxxxxxxxxx(Mobile) or xxxxxxxxxx(work)

SECTION C: CONFLICTS OF INTEREST

Will any of the researchers or their institutions receive any other benefits or incentives for taking part in this research over and above their normal salary package or the costs of undertaking the research? **YES** ☐ **NO** ☐ If **YES**, please detail below: None
Is there any further possibility for conflict of interest? YES ☐ **NO** ☐ If **YES**, please detail below: None

FOR ALL APPLICANTS

'Is your research being commissioned by and or carried out on behalf of a body external to the trust? (for example; commissioned by a local authority, school, care home, other NHS Trust or other organisation).	**YES** ☐ **NO** ☐ **NA** ☐

*Please note that 'external' is defined as an organisation which is external to the Tavistock and Portman NHS Foundation Trust (Trust)	
If **YES**, please supply details below: Not applicable	
Has external* ethics approval been sought for this research? **(i.e. submission via Integrated Research Application System (IRAS) to the Health Research Authority (HRA) or other external research ethics committee)** *Please note that 'external' is defined as an organisation/body which is external to the Tavistock and Portman Trust Research Ethics Committee (TREC) If **YES**, please supply details of the ethical approval bodies below **AND** include any letters of approval from the ethical approval bodies:	**YES** ☐ **NO** ☐ **Not applicable.**
If your research is being undertaken externally to the Trust, please provide details of the sponsor of your research? Jane Royes, Senior CPD Officer Training and Development , Royal Borough of Kensington and Chelsea, Kensing Town Hall, 8 Horton Street , London W8 7NX	
Do you have local approval (this includes R&D approval)?	**YES** ☐ **NO** ☐ **NA** ☐

SECTION D: SIGNATURES AND DECLARATIONS

APPLICANT DECLARATION

I confirm that:

- The information contained in this application is, to the best of my knowledge, correct and up to date.
- I have attempted to identify all risks related to the research.
- I acknowledge my obligations and commitment to upholding our University's Code of Practice for ethical research and observing the rights of the participants.
- I am aware that cases of proven misconduct, in line with our University's policies, may result in formal disciplinary proceedings and/or the cancellation of the proposed research.

Applicant (print name)	
Signed	
Date	

FOR RESEARCH DEGREE STUDENT APPLICANTS ONLY

Name of Supervisor	Dr Simon Tucker/ Professor Andrew Cooper
Qualification for which research is being undertaken	Doctoral programme, PHD

Supervisor – • Does the student have the necessary skills to carry out the research? **YES** ☐ **NO** ☐ ▪ Is the participant information sheet, consent form and any other documentation appropriate? **YES** ☐ **NO** ☐ ▪ Are the procedures for recruitment of participants and obtaining informed consent suitable and sufficient? **YES** ☐ **NO** ☐ ▪ Where required, does the researcher have current Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) clearance? **YES** ☐ **NO** ☐	
Signed	
Date	

COURSE LEAD/RESEARCH LEAD • Does the proposed research as detailed herein have your support to proceed? **YES** ☐ **NO** ☐	
Signed	
Date	

SECTION E: DETAILS OF THE PROPOSED RESEARCH

1. Provide a brief description of the proposed research, including the requirements of participants. This must be in lay terms and free from technical or discipline specific terminology or jargon. If such terms are required, please ensure they are adequately explained (Do not exceed 500 words)
The proposed research project is based on this question: **Brown Girl in the Ring: What are the experiences of senior female BAME leaders in social work today?** The question itself is multi-layered and poses many themes within itself, in this context the research question itself is complex and in order to give me some focus I have decided to formulate some secondary questions which will allow me to have a conversation with myself and my research participants and although my project will have a clear beginning and an end, the space in-between is where So how did I start thinking about my research question? In terms of setting a time frame for my research question while I am primarily focused on the experiences of senior female BAME social workers today as this is where my practice experience is located. I have considered a broader context and examined briefly how thinking on race in the UK has evolved through history and the race relation policies that have emerged as a consequence to enable BAME communities to have equality of access to economic, health and education opportunities to promote and enhance well-being. Furthermore, in order to look at what is happening today one must be familiar with what has happened in the past. The Chartered Management Institute recently published a summary of the Government's audit on race inequality; their summary is as follows:

“The race disparity audit report published by the government in 2016 revealed the stark inequalities that people of colour face in finding a job and climbing the career ladder. The race disparity’s ethnicity facts and figures website, a new government resource about the employment, education, housing and standard of living faced by BAME people is almost double that of white British adults. In 2016 the group with the highest rate of unemployment was Pakistani/Bangladeshi 11% compared with 4% within the white British/other category.”

According to the report BAME people who have been successful in staying in employment their opportunities to progress to senior management positions are limited .The report highlights that while the public sector has a substantial proportion of BAME 43% employed within the sector, BAME people are under-represented at senior levels. Further findings from think-tank Green Park and Operation Black Vote show that only 4% of unitary authority leaders are from BAME backgrounds”. (https://www.managers.org.uk)

While the Government report is not gender or social work specific it highlights the issue of inequality, which faces BAME employees in the public sector, within which social work sits. The complex and often conflicted relationship between race, gender and equality is my main area of interest. Placing this within a professional social work context where these issues are readily evidenced is my starting point; relating this to a personal journey which is less public enables me to consider painful experiences which form part of my narrative but impact perhaps on my understanding of self and society in a more informed way.

In a social work professional context I am both confused and curious at the lack of senior management of people of colour. The absence of service personnel at senior positions within social services is striking and what is more worrying is the absence of women. Given the current social uncertainty in the wake of Brexit where discussions around race and identity tend to be polarised I am eager to understand where the constructs of sameness and difference lie and how society seems to be regressing into crude generalisations and assumptions about people of colour. As a frontline social worker responding to the unconscious and conscious projections of anxiety around sameness and difference feels at times unmanageable within an organizational and individual context and its this tension that this essay will try and examine. In her insightful article published in the Evening Standard (March 2018) Afua Hirsch the social commentator and blogger writes:

“This feeling of re-defining race, gender and inequality has certain unintended consequences. It feels like we throw around new words and create meaningless identities instead of new ones. I am BAME now (Black, Asian, minority ethnic), the assumption being that’s what I see in the mirror. I have also been told by well meaning polite folk both professionally and personally that they do not see race at all and that diversity is something one can embrace and be.”

My professional and personal experiences have been very similar and it is this projection of difference that has motivated me to explore the issues around gender, race and inequality and look at how these issues play out in a racialised way on a conscious and unconscious level of interaction.

My specific interest in exploring and learning about the experiences of female BAME social workers stems from the fact that I am a female social worker from a BAME background who has faced professional and personal challenges from a race and gender perspective. Although most of the current research considers the institutional hindrances and the interplay between the individual and the system my interest is concerned with looking in depth at the individual experiences to understand the impact of internal and external factors that have contributed to the experiences of senior BAME female leaders who have managed to take up their roles in spite of these. By focusing on the experiences of individuals my hope is to learn about what made the difference to them in their success or in what ways do they still feel thwarted in their endeavours and perceive the impact of prejudice, how does this inform them in their leadership roles and how well are they doing now?

The context or setting for my curiosity is from a social work setting as this is where the majority of my practice experience is based. Social work often deals with issues which lead to people feeling marginalized and disadvantaged both from a worker and client point of view, however what happens within a social work context can often be representative of and translatable to what happens to people in wider society not all of whom may be involved with services. I suppose it is these attitudes, perceptions values feelings and narratives that create marginalization and lead to discrimination is what I am interested in and attempting to learn about. Of course inequalities issues leading to feelings of marginalization and discrimination are not just restricted to race or gender as there are many other factors such as age, religion, sexuality, sexual orientation, political, social beliefs, class, education, health and income which can impact peoples life chances and experiences in a work place or personal setting and I am mindful that I have focused on a narrow field.

I aim to recruit six participants for my research project and use these as case studies to explore the impact of race and gender which have impacted or influenced senior female BAME leaders in the trajectories. I intend to use the biographical interview method also known as the BNIM interview method to induce a narrative of the individuals experience or life history from which I will through focus groups and seminars look to establishing themes of similarities and differences which I am hopeful my data subjects will be able to explore and talk about. The BNIM process is designed to illicit both conscious and unconscious thought narratives as it relies on the interviewer asking a single question which is narrative inducing and not lead by the interviewer. The data subjects are not lead down a particular route instead they are left to talk for as little or as much as they want. There are advantages and disadvantages to using this ‘free style’ method of interview and I will look to discussing this further in the next few sections. I may also use the free association interview or FANI method to follow up on the BNIM interviews if I encounter defended and resisted subjects and need a more conversational or interactive interview method to illicit a response.

I have further explored my data collection in the preceding methodology section of this form.

2. Provide a statement on the aims and significance of the proposed research, including potential impact to knowledge and understanding in the field (where appropriate, indicate the associated hypothesis which will be tested). This should be a clear justification of the proposed research, why it should proceed and a statement on any anticipated benefits to the community. (Do not exceed 700 words)

I hope to re-negotiate and challenge the assumptions that may influence the current discourse on race and gender inequalities. So following on from the primary research question that I have asked, some of these secondary questions would be:

- What were the inequalities that senior BAME female leaders faced in achieving their roles compared to their white counterparts?
- What do the life histories of senior BAME female leaders tell us about their experiences, aspirations, hopes and fears for the future?
- How have psychosocial factors supported or hindered senior BAME female leaders in the trajectory into their role?
- What motivated them, what sustained them amid the contextual pressures of sexism, racism and organizational defences.
- What were the impacts and how have they understood this in terms of internal feelings and self-beliefs and what was the nature of their resilience?
- What sustained them in pursuing their journeys?

The benefits of my research could be potentially wide-ranging, it could allow for a new language and platform for race and gender to be viewed and explored whilst challenging current thinking on the matter which seems to be confined within a post-colonial or neo liberal dialogue.
It may provide a new approach to challenging BAME thinking on how culture and diversity can lead to discrimination unintentionally by adopting 'positive action' type policies which are counter-productive in the longterm as they do not address structural or internal constructs of self on how the individual and group dynamics play out in organisations and society.

3. Provide an outline of the methodology for the proposed research, including proposed method of data collection, tasks assigned to participants of the research and the proposed method and duration of data analysis. If the proposed research makes use of pre-established and generally accepted techniques, please make this clear. (Do not exceed 500 words)

Research Design: How will I go about researching my questions?

My proposed research design is qualitative. Having looked at qualitative research and psychoanalytical perspectives my view is that both aim to explain why things happen but that the difference lies in what and how they aim to tell us about what the subject matter may be saying and why. This difference I think is the key to understanding what is being said and what is unintentionally revealed (unconscious feelings).

The research method upon how I may go about exploring my question is framed around, is at present informed by adopted a mixed methods approach using the Free Association Narrative Interview (FANI) method developed by Holloway and Jefferson (2000) and the Biographical narrative interview method (BNIM)as developed by Tom Wengraf (2004) to interview participants. The first method assumes that people will come with their defended (held) positions and that is a defense against unconscious anxiety, the second

method offers a single narrative question which allows the participant to tell their life story. The BNIM approach is specifically structured over three stages with each stage eliciting events and experiences of the participant in an objective –what you did and a subjective what you felt basis. My interest in these particular approaches is influenced by the narratives or stories that individuals carry with them and the feelings this generates on an internal and external level. The experiences of BAME senior social workers frame how they feel their way through the workplace and how in turn their colleagues and managers perceive them.

There is also a wider debate around perceptions which exists in society on how BAME senior social workers are viewed and how employers can sometimes mimic societal structures within a workplace setting, perhaps unintentionally re-creating a sense of marginalization which BAME social workers are further exposed to. I may also employ discourse and thematic analysis methods to interpret the data that I collect. The following structure is a plan of how I may go about designing my research:

Participants/Sampling:

I am aiming to interview six participants and present each story as a case study which I will then interpret using a mixed methods framework. My research design draws on 25 years of relationship-based social work, working with substance users whose life histories offer insight into their experiences and subsequent life choices. My aim is to employ similar approaches to capture more about the experiences of senior BAME female leaders in order to learn more about their lived experiences of past, present and anticipated futures and establish connections (if any) between theses shifting landscapes. I hope to provide the reader with an account of experiences which are close enough to feel real and move emotionally rather than be forgotten about. My aim is to recruit six participants from within a local authority setting. I have a targeted and random sample of possible participants identified via personal and professional networks. My plan is to formally invite participants to my research project once the necessary permissions are in place and I am able to progress.

Data collection:

I will meet each participant three times over a period of six months. This project will aim to foster a nurturing relationship based on trust in which a genuine two-way dialogue between researcher and participant can take shape. The first meeting will incorporate:

- An introductory meeting, explaining the project, issues of confidentiality/consent, timescales and the interview structure
- Participants will have a clear project sheet to explain their right to withdraw at any stage, use of recording equipment and how data will be stored and transcribed.
- Participants will also explicitly know that they can stop at any point , ask for the recorder to be turned off or decide to withdraw from the project.
- Participants will also be informed that they will be given a pseudonym to ensure anonymity.
- Participants will also have the option of giving written or verbal (recorded) consent.

This first meeting will be crucial has it will set the tone, rapport and boundaries for our future work together.

At the second meeting I will invite each participant to talk about their experiences using the BNIM method of narrative interviewing. I would have prepared my carefully constructed SQUIN (single question aimed at inducing narrative) that would then generate a process with which each of the participants in which they will start to talk about events that have impacted on their individual trajectories thus tapping into memories which would reveal data which is rich in specific details for that individual. As the BNIM process invites the participants to tell their story without interruptions or prompts the researcher's silence gives the participant freedom to tell their stories this giving the participants to define the terms of the research. Thus I make no claims for generalizability and instead I will be able to suggest that an in depth study of an individual life has a value of its own and this learning can help us to understand something of the lives and experiences of those who are in similar circumstances.

At the third meeting I may pursue a more interactive method of interviewing if needed and use the FANI approach if participants have found it difficult to articulate painful events. I may also invite the participants to give me feedback on how participating in this project felt for them and what their hopes, fears and aspirations for themselves and others faced with similar challenges could be like.

I will keep a reflexive journal throughout my project detailing my observations, thoughts and feelings during encounters with participants throughout the data collection. The journal will provide another layer of experience and be used to explore the transference/countertransference between myself and the participants and inform me on my positioning as a researcher and reveal unconscious biases that may be present.

SECTION F: PARTICIPANT DETAILS

4. Provide an explanation detailing how you will identify, approach and recruit the participants for the proposed research, including clarification on sample size and location. Please provide justification for the exclusion/inclusion criteria for this study (i.e. who will be allowed to / not allowed to participate) and explain briefly, in lay terms, why this criteria is in place. (Do not exceed 500 words)
5. Will the participants be from any of the following groups?*(Tick as appropriate)* ☐ Students or staff of the Trust or the University.

☐ Adults (over the age of 18 years with mental capacity to give consent to participate in the research).
☐ Children or legal minors (anyone under the age of 16 years)[1]
☐ Adults who are unconscious, severely ill or have a terminal illness.
☐ Adults who may lose mental capacity to consent during the course of the research.
☐ Adults in emergency situations.
☐ Adults[2] with mental illness - particularly those detained under the Mental Health Act (1983 & 2007).
☐ Participants who may lack capacity to consent to participate in the research under the research requirements of the Mental Capacity Act (2005).
☐ Prisoners, where ethical approval may be required from the National Offender Management Service (NOMS).
☐ Young Offenders, where ethical approval may be required from the National Offender Management Service (NOMS).
☐ Healthy volunteers (in high risk intervention studies).
☐ Participants who may be considered to have a pre-existing and potentially dependent[3] relationship with the investigator (e.g. those in care homes, students, colleagues, service-users, patients).
☐ Other vulnerable groups (see Question 6).
☐ Adults who are in custody, custodial care, or for whom a court has assumed responsibility.
☐ Participants who are members of the Armed Forces.

[1] If the proposed research involves children or adults who meet the Police Act (1997) definition of vulnerability[3], any researchers who will have contact with participants must have current Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) clearance.
[2] 'Adults with a learning or physical disability, a physical or mental illness, or a reduction in physical or mental capacity, and living in a care home or home for people with learning difficulties or receiving care in their own home, or receiving hospital or social care services.' (Police Act, 1997)
[3] Proposed research involving participants with whom the investigator or researcher(s) shares a dependent or unequal relationships (e.g. teacher/student, clinical therapist/service-user) may compromise the ability to give informed consent which is free from any form of pressure (real or implied) arising from this relationship. TREC recommends that, wherever practicable, investigators choose participants with whom they have no dependent relationship. Following due scrutiny, if the investigator is confident that the research involving participants in dependent relationships is vital and defensible, TREC will require additional information setting out the case and detailing how risks inherent in the dependent relationship will be managed. TREC will also need to be reassured that refusal to participate will not result in any discrimination or penalty.

6. Will the study involve participants who are vulnerable? YES ☐ NO ☐

For the purposes of research, 'vulnerable' participants may be adults whose ability to protect their own interests are impaired or reduced in comparison to that of the broader population. Vulnerability may arise from the participant's personal characteristics (e.g. mental or physical impairment) or from their social environment, context and/or disadvantage (e.g. socio-economic mobility, educational attainment, resources, substance dependence, displacement or homelessness). Where prospective participants are at high risk of consenting under duress, or as a result of manipulation or coercion, they must also be considered as vulnerable.

Adults lacking mental capacity to consent to participate in research and children are automatically presumed to be vulnerable. Studies involving adults (over the age of 16) who lack mental capacity to consent in research must be submitted to a REC approved for that purpose. Please consult Health Research Authority (HRA) for guidance: https://www.hra.nhs.uk/

6.1. If YES, what special arrangements are in place to protect vulnerable participants' interests?

If **YES**, the research activity proposed will require a DBS check. *(NOTE: information concerning activities which require DBS checks can be found via https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/dbs-check-eligible-positions-guidance)*
Not applicable.

7. **Do you propose to make any form of payment or incentive available to participants of the research? YES ☐ NO ☐** If **YES**, please provide details taking into account that any payment or incentive should be representative of reasonable remuneration for participation and may not be of a value that could be coercive or exerting undue influence on potential participants' decision to take part in the research. Wherever possible, remuneration in a monetary form should be avoided and substituted with vouchers, coupons or equivalent. Any payment made to research participants may have benefit or HMRC implications and participants should be alerted to this in the participant information sheet as they may wish to choose to decline payment.
8. **What special arrangements are in place for eliciting informed consent from participants who may not adequately understand verbal explanations or written information provided in English; where participants have special communication needs; where participants have limited literacy; or where children are involved in the research? (Do not exceed 200 words)**
Not applicable.

SECTION F: RISK ASSESSMENT AND RISK MANAGEMENT

9. Does the proposed research involve any of the following? *(Tick as appropriate)*

☐ use of a questionnaire, self-completion survey or data-collection instrument (attach copy)
☐ use of emails or the internet as a means of data collection
☐ use of written or computerised tests
☐ interviews (attach interview questions)
☐ diaries (attach diary record form)
☐ participant observation
☐ participant observation (in a non-public place) without their knowledge / covert research
☐ audio-recording interviewees or events X
☐ video-recording interviewees or events
☐ access to personal and/or sensitive data (i.e. student, patient, client or service-user data) without the participant's informed consent for use of these data for research purposes
☐ administration of any questions, tasks, investigations, procedures or stimuli which may be experienced by participants as physically or mentally painful, stressful or unpleasant during or after the research process
☐ performance of any acts which might diminish the self-esteem of participants or cause them to experience discomfiture, regret or any other adverse emotional or psychological reaction
☐ investigation of participants involved in illegal or illicit activities (e.g. use of illegal drugs)
☐ procedures that involve the deception of participants
☐ administration of any substance or agent
☐ use of non-treatment of placebo control conditions
☐ participation in a clinical trial
☐ research undertaken at an off-campus location (risk assessment attached)
☐ research overseas (copy of VCG overseas travel approval attached)

10. Does the proposed research involve any specific or anticipated risks (e.g. physical, psychological, social, legal or economic) to participants that are greater than those encountered in everyday life? YES ☐ NO ☐ X
If **YES**, please describe below including details of precautionary measures.

11. Where the procedures involve potential hazards and/or discomfort or distress for participants, please state what previous experience the investigator or researcher(s) have had in conducting this type of research.

All of the Participants will be given an introductory pack outlining purpose of the research, confidentiality arrangements and the right to withdraw from the project at any given point.

Participants will know explicitly that the BNIM and FANI interviews will be audio recorded and transcribed into script so that the data can be analysed.

Participants will be given clear feedback about the project through out its progress and the findings.

Participants will know explicitly that their recorded narratives will remain confidential and that these recordings will be anonymously transcribed and shared with them if requested.

The six participants have already been identified and are fully aware of the scope and aims of this projects. All six participants are not connected in terms of divisional responsibilities and will have no knowledge of each other's participation. The location, time and date for each interview is protected with individual participants and there is no scope for accidental exposure. All participants have capacity to consent and understand what's being asked of them and what the research is about.
12. Provide an explanation of any potential benefits to participants. Please ensure this is framed within the overall contribution of the proposed research to knowledge or practice. (Do not exceed 400 words) **NOTE:** Where the proposed research involves students of our University, they should be assured that accepting the offer to participate or choosing to decline will have no impact on their assessments or learning experience. Similarly, it should be made clear to participants who are patients, service-users and/or receiving any form of treatment or medication that they are not invited to participate in the belief that participation in the research will result in some relief or improvement in their condition.
Participants will have the opportunity for individual feedback once the project is completed so that they can share in the findings that they would have contributed to. The learning that this project may inform what will hopefully be future discourse on race, gender and inequality within the social work landscape and senior leaders should be able to implement and use the findings to engage their BAME workers ona more meaningful way and offer equality of opportunity to all rather than the few.
13. Provide an outline of any measures you have in place in the event of adverse or unexpected outcomes and the potential impact this may have on participants involved in the proposed research. (Do not exceed 300 words)
The participants will have full ownership of their data from start to finish. Participants will be aware that they can withdraw from this project at any point of the process and with full confidence that their decision will be respected.

14. Provide an outline of your debriefing, support and feedback protocol for participants involved in the proposed research. This should include, for example, where participants may feel the need to discuss thoughts or feelings brought about following their participation in the research. This may involve referral to an external support or counseling service, where participation in the research has caused specific issues for participants. Where medical aftercare may be necessary, this should include details of the treatment available to participants. Debriefing may involve the disclosure of further information on the aims of the research, the participant's performance and/or the results of the research. (Do not exceed 500 words)

Participants will have access to occupational health and counseling services should there be any issues around emotional well being needs or specific issues that may emerge as an unintended consequence of participating in this project.

FOR RESEARCH UNDERTAKEN AWAY FROM THE TRUST OR OUTSIDE THE UK

15. Does any part of your research take place in premises outside the Trust?

☐ **YES,** and I have included evidence of permissions from the managers or others legally responsible for the premises. This permission also clearly states the extent to which the participating institution will indemnify the researchers against the consequences of any untoward event

16. Does the proposed research involve travel outside of the UK? No

☐ **YES,** I have consulted the Foreign and Commonwealth Office website for guidance/travel advice? http://www.fco.gov.uk/en/travel-and-living-abroad/

☐ **YES,** I am a non-UK national and I have sought travel advice/guidance from the Foreign Office (or equivalent body) of my country of origin

☐ **YES,** I have completed the overseas travel approval process and enclosed a copy of the document with this application

For details on university study abroad policies, please contact academicquality@tavi-port.nhs.uk

IF YES:

17. Is the research covered by the Trust's insurance and indemnity provision?

☐ **YES** ☐ **NO**

18. Please evidence how compliance with all local research ethics and research governance requirements have been assessed for the country(ies) in which the research is taking place.

NOTE:

For students conducting research where the Trust is the sponsor, the Dean of the Department of Education and Training (DET) has overall responsibility for risk assessment regarding their health and safety. If you are proposing to undertake research outside the UK, please ensure that permission from the Dean has been granted before the research commences (please attach written confirmation)

SECTION G: PARTICIPANT CONSENT AND WITHDRAWAL

18. Have you attached a copy of your participant information sheet (this should be in *plain English*)? Where the research involves non-English speaking participants, please include translated materials. YES ☐ NO ☐

If **NO**, please indicate what alternative arrangements are in place below:

Not Applicable.

19. Have you attached a copy of your participant consent form (this should be in *plain English*)? Where the research involves non-English speaking participants, please include translated materials.
YES ☐ NO ☐

If **NO**, please indicate what alternative arrangements are in place below:

Not applicable

20. The following is a participant information sheet checklist covering the various points that should be included in this document.

☐ Clear identification of the Trust as the sponsor for the research, the project title, the Researcher or Principal Investigator and other researchers along with relevant contact details.
☐ Details of what involvement in the proposed research will require (e.g., participation in interviews, completion of questionnaire, audio/video-recording of events), estimated time commitment and any risks involved.
☐ A statement confirming that the research has received formal approval from TREC.
☐ If the sample size is small, advice to participants that this may have implications for confidentiality / anonymity.
☐ A clear statement that where participants are in a dependent relationship with any of the researchers that participation in the research will have no impact on assessment / treatment / service-use or support.
☐ Assurance that involvement in the project is voluntary and that participants are free to withdraw consent at any time, and to withdraw any unprocessed data previously supplied.
☐ Advice as to arrangements to be made to protect confidentiality of data, including that confidentiality of information provided is subject to legal limitations.
☐ A statement that the data generated in the course of the research will be retained in accordance with the University's Data Protection Policy.
☐ Advice that if participants have any concerns about the conduct of the investigator, researcher(s) or any other aspect of this research project, they should contact Simon Carrington, Head of Academic Governance and Quality Assurance (academicquality@tavi-port.nhs.uk)
☐ Confirmation on any limitations in confidentiality where disclosure of imminent harm to self and/or others may occur.

21. The following is a consent form checklist covering the various points that should be included in this document.

☐ Trust letterhead or logo.
☐ Title of the project (with research degree projects this need not necessarily be the title of the thesis) and names of investigators.
☐ Confirmation that the project is research.
☐ Confirmation that involvement in the project is voluntary and that participants are free to withdraw at any time, or to withdraw any unprocessed data previously supplied.
☐ Confirmation of particular requirements of participants, including for example whether interviews are to be audio-/video-recorded, whether anonymised quotes will be used in publications advice of legal limitations to data confidentiality.
☐ If the sample size is small, confirmation that this may have implications for anonymity any other relevant information.
☐ The proposed method of publication or dissemination of the research findings.
☐ Details of any external contractors or partner institutions involved in the research.
☐ Details of any funding bodies or research councils supporting the research.
☐ Confirmation on any limitations in confidentiality where disclosure of imminent harm to self and/or others may occur.

SECTION H: CONFIDENTIALITY AND ANONYMITY

22. Below is a checklist covering key points relating to the confidentiality and anonymity of participants. Please indicate where relevant to the proposed research.

☐ Participants will be completely anonymised and their identity will not be known by the investigator or researcher(s) (i.e. the participants are part of an anonymous randomised sample and return responses with no form of personal identification)?
☐ The responses are anonymised or are an anonymised sample (i.e. a permanent process of coding has been carried out whereby direct and indirect identifiers have been removed from data and replaced by a code, with no record retained of how the code relates to the identifiers).
☐ The samples and data are de-identified (i.e. direct and indirect identifiers have been removed and replaced by a code. The investigator or researchers are able to link the code to the original identifiers and isolate the participant to whom the sample or data relates).
☐ Participants have the option of being identified in a publication that will arise from the research.
☐ Participants will be pseudo-anonymised in a publication that will arise from the research. (I.e. the researcher will endeavour to remove or alter details that would identify the participant.)
☐ The proposed research will make use of personal sensitive data.
☐ Participants consent to be identified in the study and subsequent dissemination of research findings and/or publication.

23. Participants must be made aware that the confidentiality of the information they provide is subject to legal limitations in data confidentiality (i.e. the data may be subject to a subpoena, a freedom of information request or mandated reporting by some professions). This only applies to named or de-identified data. If your participants are named or de-identified, please confirm that you will specifically state these limitations.

YES ☐ x NO ☐

If **NO**, please indicate why this is the case below:

NOTE: WHERE THE PROPOSED RESEARCH INVOLVES A SMALL SAMPLE OR FOCUS GROUP, PARTICIPANTS SHOULD BE ADVISED THAT THERE WILL BE DISTINCT LIMITATIONS IN THE LEVEL OF ANONYMITY THEY CAN BE AFFORDED.

SECTION I: DATA ACCESS, SECURITY AND MANAGEMENT

24. Will the Researcher/Principal Investigator be responsible for the security of all data collected in connection with the proposed research? YES ☐ X NO ☐
If **NO**, please indicate what alternative arrangements are in place below:

25. In line with the 5th principle of the Data Protection Act (1998), which states that personal data shall not be kept for longer than is necessary for that purpose or those purposes for which it was collected; please state how long data will be retained for.

☐ 1-2 years ☐ 3-5 years ☐ 6-10 years ☐ 10> years

NOTE: Research Councils UK (RCUK) guidance currently states that data should normally be preserved and accessible for 10 years, but for projects of clinical or major social, environmental or heritage importance, for 20 years or longer.
(http://www.rcuk.ac.uk/documents/reviews/grc/grcpoldraft.pdf)

26. Below is a checklist which relates to the management, storage and secure destruction of data for the purposes of the proposed research. Please indicate where relevant to your proposed arrangements.

☐ Research data, codes and all identifying information to be kept in separate locked filing cabinets.
☐ Access to computer files to be available to research team by password only.
☐ Access to computer files to be available to individuals outside the research team by password only (See **23.1**).
☐ Research data will be encrypted and transferred electronically within the European Economic Area (EEA).
☐ Research data will be encrypted and transferred electronically outside of the European Economic Area (EEA). (See **28**).
NOTE: Transfer of research data via third party commercial file sharing services, such as Google Docs and YouSendIt are not necessarily secure or permanent. These systems may also be located overseas and not covered by UK law. If the system is located outside the European Economic Area (EEA) or territories deemed to have sufficient standards of data protection, transfer may also breach the Data Protection Act (1998).
☐ Use of personal addresses, postcodes, faxes, e-mails or telephone numbers.
☐ Use of personal data in the form of audio or video recordings.
☐ Primary data gathered on encrypted mobile devices (i.e. laptops). **NOTE:** This should be transferred to secure UEL servers at the first opportunity.
☐ All electronic data will undergo secure disposal.
NOTE: For hard drives and magnetic storage devices (HDD or SSD), deleting files does not permanently erase the data on most systems, but only deletes the reference to the file. Files can be restored when deleted in this way. Research files must be overwritten to ensure they are completely irretrievable. Software is available for the secure erasing of files from hard drives which meet recognised standards to securely scramble sensitive data. Examples of this software are BC Wipe, Wipe File, DeleteOnClick and Eraser for Windows platforms. Mac users can use the standard 'secure empty trash' option; an alternative is Permanent eraser software.
☐ All hardcopy data will undergo secure disposal.
NOTE: For shredding research data stored in hardcopy (i.e. paper), adopting DIN 3 ensures files are cut into 2mm strips or confetti like cross-cut particles of 4x40mm. The UK government requires a minimum standard of DIN 4 for its material, which ensures cross cut particles of at least 2x15mm.

27. Please provide details of individuals outside the research team who will be given password protected access to encrypted data for the proposed research.

Not Applicable

28. Please provide details on the regions and territories where research data will be electronically transferred that are external to the European Economic Area (EEA).

Not Applicable

29. Will this research be financially supported by the United States Department of Health and Human Services or any of its divisions, agencies or programs? YES ☐ NO ☐ Not Applicable.

If **YES** please provide details:

SECTION J: PUBLICATION AND DISSEMINATION OF RESEARCH FINDINGS

30. How will the results of the research be reported and disseminated? *(Select all that apply)*

- ☐ Peer reviewed journal x
- ☐ Non-peer reviewed journal
- ☐ Peer reviewed books
- ☐ Publication in media, social media or website (including Podcasts and online videos)
- ☐ Conference presentation x
- ☐ Internal report
- ☐ Promotional report and materials
- ☐ Reports compiled for or on behalf of external organisations ☐ Dissertation/Thesis
- ☐ Other publication
- ☐ Written feedback to research participants x
- ☐ Presentation to participants or relevant community groups
- ☐ Other (Please specify below)

SECTION K: OTHER ETHICAL ISSUES

31. Are there any other ethical issues that have not been addressed which you would wish to bring to the attention of Tavistock Research Ethics Committee (TREC)?

Not applicable.

SECTION L: CHECKLIST FOR ATTACHED DOCUMENTS

32. Please check that the following documents are attached to your application.

- ☐ Letters of approval from any external ethical approval bodies (where relevant)
- ☐ Recruitment advertisement
- ☐ Participant information sheets (including easy-read where relevant)
- ☐ Consent forms (including easy-read where relevant)
- ☐ Assent form for children (where relevant)
- ☐ Evidence of any external approvals needed
- ☐ Questionnaire
- ☐ Interview Schedule or topic guide
- ☐ Risk Assessment (where applicable)
- ☐ Overseas travel approval (where applicable)

34. Where it is not possible to attach the above materials, please provide an explanation below.

The six identified senior BAME leaders who have agreed to participate in my project will do so in their own time and venue.

The six identified senior BAME leaders will have anonymity and interviews will take place out of hours in a mutually agreed venue.

The Six identified senior BAME leaders will be anonymous to each other and there will be minimal risk of identification unless they choose to self –identify publically with the research.

I have full permission from Jane Royes my training and CPD officer to undertake this research.