A critical race theory analysis of the reflections of Black West African adults on their education in English schools

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ABSTRACT

Educational research relating to students of black and minority ethnic (BME) backgrounds in England often contains a disproportionately high coverage of issues of underachievement at the expense of the educational experiences of the students. Much of the research on educational experiences tends to relegate the voices of students of Black West African (BWA) background as a distinct minority group whose educational needs and experiences are sometimes subsumed under the label African Caribbean.

Using critical race theory (CRT), fused with elements of traditional West African folklore, as a theoretical framework, this thesis critically analyses the narratives of 10 BWA adults as they reflect on their educational experiences within secondary schools in the North West of England between 2003 and 2013. While giving prominence to the voices and perspectives of the participants, this thesis seeks to examine not only the key elements of the experiences but also to focus on the participants' interpretations of the factors that mitigated their educational experiences.

Among the key findings of the thesis are the participants' perceptions that their educational experiences were framed by a profusion of nuanced educational practices that amounted to racial discrimination. Findings of this nature are contrary to the proliferation of anti-discriminatory policies and rhetoric around multiculturalism and inclusion that in the light of these findings instead serve to fuel a resurgence of complacency around the role of race in education in England today. In relation to the findings, this thesis suggests a 'pedagogy of BWA students in English schools' which entails a set of core conditions and principles that should be observed at a

professional level and backed by a stronger political will and commitment to inclusion and social justice.

Dedications

This thesis is dedicated to my father David A Tambi, my sister Gladys N Tambi and ‘twin’ brother Godswill S Tambi, all of late but whose loving memories and legacies continue to be my anchor.

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The participants in this thesis for sharing their reflections on their schooling experiences and in the process 'reliving' some experiences that were not the most pleasant for them. Thanks to their generosity, I have concluded my study with some practical proposals for change which I hope will make a difference to the lives of young people, especially those of BWA heritage.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

1.0 General introduction to this thesis

For students of Black West African (BWA) origin whose histories are tainted with slavery, colonization, racism and other forms of discrimination, effective education can prove indispensable in their journeys towards individual freedom and social justice. The importance of education is underscored by Mandela (2003) who observed that 'education is the most powerful weapon which you can use to change the world'. Lall and Vickers (2009) also observed that 'education is a political tool'. UNESCO's agenda on 'Education for All' is built on the realisation of how crucial education is for the prosperity of individuals as well as communities. The UNESCO International Commission on Education for the Twenty-First Century (Delors et al. 2005) emphasized that education is a public good that should be made available to all. Education can be a central factor in determining human experiences as much as it can be instrumental in challenging status quo, creating new stasis, establishing new interests and forging new hegemonies. People's employability, social networks, and lifestyles continue to be influenced by their educational outcomes. With education being such an indispensable commodity, it is problematic to observe that existing educational literature does not adequately account for the schooling experiences of learners of BWA origin in English schools.

1.1 Identification of the problem

Education is one of the many factors that inspired the settlement of Black Africans in UK (Killingray, 1994 and Adi, 1998). Early migration and population growth of Black

Africans in England since the 16th Century have been influenced by factors like employment, slave trade, exploration by African seamen, recruitment of Africans into the British military and the quest for Western education by wealthy Africans. While the quest for education continues to be a pull factor for recent Black African migration into UK, push factors hinge on the destruction of black civilization (Williams, 1987), European underdevelopment of Africa (Rodney, 1973), the destabilisation of African political and economic sovereignties all of which have arguably led to Black Africans migrating for economic and political reasons. Over many decades, this trend has fuelled the number of Black Africans in England. Between 2001 and 2011, the Black African population in the UK doubled from 0.8 percent to 1.7 percent showing a nominal increase from 484,783 to 989,626 (ONS, 2011).

While the early settlement of Black African populations in England was mostly around the major and coastal cities like London, Liverpool and Bristol (Killingray, 1994:6), respectively, recent demographic trends show significant settlement around Birmingham in the Midlands and Manchester in the North West regions of England, the latter being the immediate setting of this thesis. For instance, between 2001 and 2011, the population of “black or black British Africans” in Greater Manchester rose from 10,255 to 44,691 making an increase from 0.41% to 1.67% of the overall Greater Manchester population. (ONS 2011, ibid).

Education is not only a pull factor for Black Africans in the UK but is also a controversial topic in the discourses about their existence and welfare in UK. In reviewing existing educational literature on Black and Minority Ethnic (BME) groups in England, several gaps in theory emerge. First, a substantial number of studies on the education of BME groups focus on achievement/underachievement giving prominence to statistical and secondary data (Coard 1971; Troyna 1984; Tomlinson

1983, 1986, 2008; Gillborn 1990, 2008, 2009; and Gillborn and Gipps 1996, Crozier 2012). Second, there is a tendency within much of the related literature to homogenise BME populations. Thus, the experiences and outcomes of African-Caribbean students, for example, have sometimes been assumed to represent those of all blacks. Faced with a common monster of racism and marginalisation from a majority white population, BWA and African Caribbean peoples, for example, can often seem to be a homogenous group. However, they are many, albeit subtle, differences between these groups. One of such differences lie in the fact that the history of slavery and colonisation is not the same for BWAs and African Caribbeans. Second, African Caribbean people, as a significant minority, generally have a longer longevity in Britain than BWAs. Owusu-Kwarteng (2017 :3) explains that 'the influx of Black people into the UK in the 1940s was mainly from Caribbean countries. Thus, they became the predominant Black community in Britain, whose experiences were considered representative of other Black populations'. In the student population, most African Caribbean students are third and fourth generations while most BWA students are second if not first generations in Britain. Also, while the history of a lot of African Caribbean young people is linked to the 'windrush', that of BWAs is traced to asylum seeking. These differences account for different lifestyles between these groups. For example, as opposed to some of the descendants of the windrush generation who have hardly been to the Caribbean, a lot of BWA young people move back and forth between Africa and the United Kingdom. Such differences have the potential to mitigate not only lifestyles but also how people view, experience and respond to things like education and racism. Studies in various fields have shown how individual and social histories and journeys impact on how individuals and societies appreciate the

present (Sengor, 2001 and Bersh, 2018). It is therefore important for the experiences of people of BWA and African Caribbean backgrounds to be examined separately.

Few studies privilege the educational experiences of students of BWA heritage as a distinct group. The paucity is a testimony that some researchers write as if these students, in the words of Maori writer Patricia Grace, talking on the dangerous nature of books that relegate the voices of minority ethnic groups, really 'do not exist' (Grace, 1985). Although Grace's observations were primarily directed at the Maori minority in New Zealand, these observations have wider significance as they not only apply to other minorities, but they also highlight the inadequacies of writings that suppress the voices of the subjects. Three decades after Grace's observation, current research topography shows that very little has changed. Except for studies like Rhamie's (2007) that draw on the raw accounts of the students themselves, a general problem unveiled in the literature is a tendency by scholars to relegate the perspectives of students by representing the students as subjects, rather than participants, in research studies.

Culturally relevant pedagogy (Ladson-Billings, 1995), which entails educators using the cultural backgrounds of learners to inform their curriculum, was introduced partly to develop more organic educational accounts that had significant contributions from the learners themselves. However, even when some educators (Borrero and Sanchez, 2017 and Durden et al. 2014) have embraced the idea of culturally relevant pedagogy as a strategy to try and address the educational needs of some BME groups, key gaps persist in some ways. First, the term culturally relevant pedagogy is still very problematic as it remains very loaded and transient. Its meaning can vary according to different people, time, and place. The idea of culturally relevant pedagogy, however appealing it may be, will remain unproductive unless educators

identified what those cultural experiences were in the first place. Existing literature shows little coverage about the specific circumstances of students of BWA heritage. By eclipsing these students under the broader term of black and minority ethnic groups, or by conducting research that sees these students only as subjects rather than participants, the relevant experiences of these students are potentially overlooked. This current thesis generally seeks to address this gap.

1.2 Research focus and relevance

The above section has highlighted the gap in literature concerning the educational experiences of students of BWA origin, as distinct group, within English secondary schools. This thesis sets out to address this gap by focusing on the accounts of ten adults of BWA origin who attended English secondary schools between 2003 and 2013. As these adults had already left secondary school at the time of this research, their schooling experiences were discussed, through interviews, retrospectively. There are always methodological and other issues with interviewees discussing their pasts (Ross and Wang, 2010). These issues have been discussed and addressed further in Chapter Five ahead. Meanwhile, there are many reasons why an empirical study of this nature is important.

By focusing on schooling experiences, unlike studies that have dwelt largely on achievement and underachievement, this thesis seeks to highlight what lies behind the much reported (under)achievement. While such studies (DfE, 2015, Strand, 2015 and Strand et al., 2015) are important, they offer a partial story of students' education. In addition to contributing towards a more comprehensive picture of students' education, this thesis offers an analysis of why and how students achieve or

underachieve. Understanding students' 'journeys' is essential for explaining their 'destinations'.

This thesis focuses on and presents students of BWA heritage as a distinct group of students within schools, contrary yet complementary to other studies that have largely treated black Africans even BME as a homogenous group. The need for a study that is specific to the experiences of BWA minority learners in English schools has been pending for a while. The Swann Report (1981, iii) which remains one of the most influential single investigation into the (under)achievement of minorities, acted on government recommendations and only gave 'particular attention to the educational needs and attainments of pupils of West Indian origin…'(ibid). Data on black African learners in most studies of educational achievement are largely being subsumed under minority ethnic groups (Fuller, 1984; Gillborn and Gipps, 1996; and Gillborn et al. 2012).

By investigating and deriving meanings from the reflections of past students on their schooling experiences, my thesis contributes understanding towards the systemic exclusion and pedagogical dominance that foreruns and paves the way for cumulative inequality and unfairness in British society today (Equality and Human Rights Commission, 2010). In discussing some of the causes of pervasive inequality in British society, EHRC emphasises that a 'disadvantage may be rare but its impact so severe that it needs to be tackled, if only for a small number of people' (EHRC, 2010:7). In the spirit of this emphasis, this thesis sets out to contribute understandings of what new educational systems and structures might be needed to address the educational needs of learners of BWA learners in English schools. It is a militant emancipatory endeavour necessary for stalling ethnic marginalization and for redressing related social injustices.

This thesis also aims to contribute to research that draws on the role of race within education. Race is still a significant determinant in education (Gillborn, 2008) and therefore needs to be given prominence in educational theory, research, practice, policy and political initiatives. Drawing on both anecdotal and scholarly findings, Ladson-Billings (1999: 8) explains that 'despite the scientific refutation of race as a legitimate biological concept and attempts to marginalise race in much of the public (political) discourse, race continues to be a powerful social construct and signifier'. Morrison (1992: 63) also explains that 'racism is as healthy today as it was during the Enlightenment'. Even though these observations were recorded over twenty years ago, they still hold true with the change being that race has assumed different faces and permutations in the contemporary society (Crozier, 2012; and Bhopal, 2014). The momentum that gathered after the Swann Report (1981) up to the turn of the 21st century regarding the injustices that black students face in education has been gradually dissipating in the last ten years even though such injustices persist. More recently as observed by Gillborn (2012), public and political agenda has reconstructed socio-economic location and positioning of class as the main determinant of educational experiences and outcomes and presented students of white working class as the main victims. This reconstruction undermines the persistence of racial factors in education and in doing so, contributes to the continuous disenfranchisement of black students. I agree with Gillborn et al. (2012:122) who explain that focussing on class operates to remove race inequality from the agenda, places white people at the centre of policy debates, and provides the basis for an analysis that shifts the blame for educational failure onto the very students and communities that experience the injustice.

The ability to shift this blame onto the very victims is facilitated by the imbalance of power that perverts educational topographies wherein the people with weaker agencies are rendered voiceless. Contrary to other studies, the approach in this thesis to explore lived schooling experiences from the perspectives of the participants is important as it not only helps to give voice to the 'silenced' but also addresses power-related concerns in education. For example, Michael Apple, an educational theorist specialised in education and power, argues that the decision to define some groups' knowledge as the most legitimate, as official knowledge, while other groups' knowledge hardly sees the light of day, says something extremely important about who has power in society (Apple, 2009 and 1993). Through the medium of this thesis therefore, educational accounts can now be presented not only by an elite class, but also by victimised people who have hitherto been treated mostly as subjects in educational literature.

Still in relation to power issues, this thesis seeks to give prominence to the learner's agency and to seek a new balance of power in relation to the interpretation of educational experiences. In their study of special education legislation in the United States of America, LaNear and Frattura (2007) noted that it is imperative to listen to other voices because 'traditional historical narratives can serve to mask injustices that exist beneath a celebratory surface of statistics, legislative enactments, and judicial decision-making that may present an impression of continuous progress'. This thesis serves to empower learners in telling their own stories, something which hitherto has mostly seemed the prerogative of other agencies.

The repositioning of learners in this way is linked to the concept of 'democratisation of education' (Davies 2002 and Duru-Bellat 2005) which seeks to further possibilities of making the education of any people to be by the people themselves and for their

own benefit. It is in support of this crucial dimension of education that participants have been invited to share through their reflections, their perspectives, motivations, and strategies about their own education.

Furthermore, due to current neo-liberalisation and marketization of education (Davies and Bansel, 2007), students are being constructed as consumers of education. This new identity in turn comes with opportunities for consumers to determine what they want and what they think is good for them. It is this need for consumer empowerment that inspired the agenda for the Institute of Consumer Sciences (ICSs) 2003 International Conference. Hosted for the first time by the University of Wales Institute in Cardiff, this conference determined that students should be taught and educated 'to be and act as informed, rational and prudent consumers' (ICSs 2003). The advantages and disadvantages of commodification of education and the new identity of learners as consumers notwithstanding, make it necessary for students not only to be consumers but need to be 'critical consumers' and co-producers of education systems. Being able to voice their opinions and share their school experiences is a logical pre-requisite to achieving such ends. It is important that if this new trend in education is bedding in, the voices of BWA learners should be accentuated as those of a distinct group of learners with potentially specific needs. Accordingly, if black African learners are not skilled to be critical consumers and co-producers of education, they would remain at risk of further marginalising through neoliberalism and all the forms it takes (Wright, 2013).

1.3 Specific objectives and research questions

This thesis focuses on exploring the reflections of past students of BWA origin on their schooling experiences in English secondary schools between 2003 and 2013. With this focus, it is impossible to avoid discussions related to (under)achievement. However, it is important to emphasise that this thesis is not a study of (under)achievement per se. For richer and more astute accounts of (under)achievement among BME groups see Coard 1971; Troyna 1984; Tomlinson 1984, 1986, 2008; Gillborn 1990, 2008, 2009; and Gillborn and Gipps 1996, Crozier 2012).

In exploring the reflective accounts of past students, the key objective of this thesis is to counteract an existing hegemony that relegates the voices and suppresses accounts of schooling experiences of students of BWA heritage. Given the research problem, the research gaps and particularly this key objective in exploring educational experiences from the perspective of the students, the key research question that this thesis sought to respond to is as follows:

> What messages underlie the reflections of adults of BWA heritage on their schooling experiences in English secondary schools between 2003 and 2013?

Taking a closer look at former students' reflections, this thesis sought to address the following secondary questions:

> How do BWAs define and narrate their past educational experiences?
>
> Based on their reflections, what was the role of race in their schooling experiences?
>
> What key incidents do they consider to have shaped their schooling experiences?

What ambitions or aspirations did they have at the time of their schooling and how do they reflect on these ambitions now?

What do the participants espouse as the most effective inclusion strategies and what are their implications for curriculum and pedagogy?

In line with the key objective of this thesis, these questions are important in complementary ways. First, the 'ethnogenic' (Cohen, et al. 2011:17) approach of exploring experiences from the perspectives of research participants is important as it enriches existing literature with the loaded meanings these research participants assign to their experiences. The meanings individuals assign to their experiences have practical consequences for them as individuals (ibid). The relationship between an individual's perception and the meaning they assign around the perceived experiences are discussed in greater detail under philosophical underpinnings in Chapter Four.

Given that race remains a significant factor in education (Gillborn 1990, 2008, 2009; and Gillborn and Gipps 1996, Crozier 2012), it is important not only to explore but to give prominence to the participants' perception of the role of race in their schooling experiences. By addressing the questions relating to what participants perceived as the best and worst aspects of their experiences and what their motivators were, this thesis would contribute some qualitative explanations that underlie the (under)achievement that seems to be the focus in existing literature. By exploring the strategies that participants espouse as best in achieving more fruitful schooling experiences for students of BWA origin, this thesis is able to present recommendations that would not only be rooted in analysis of data but that would be organic and truthful to the perspectives of the participants themselves. Such

recommendations would also be consistent to the research approach, the theoretical framework and research methods.

1.4 Thesis approach and methodology

As this thesis is concerned with exploring experiences (rather than measuring an external notion of fixed reality) a qualitative approach was deemed appropriate. This approach entailed philosophical and ontological standpoints like 'interpretivism' (Cohen, et al. 2011:17 and Denzin and Lincoln, 2011) that support the understanding of 'conditions that define daily life' (Lincoln, 2011:xii) and help with determining reality from the subjective perspective of the participants.

Hutto (2007:1) clarifies that subjective accounts support the production of rich and thick data that reflect the nuanced details characteristic of people's daily lives. This rich and thick data can be in the form of narratives which essentially are stories retold by the beholder of the experiences in a way. Stake (2005:443) explains that a 'case study is not a methodological choice but a choice of what is to be studied'. For the purposes of this thesis, stories of schooling experiences were gathered from ten case studies. The use of 'qualitative case studies' (Stake, ibid) was considered appropriate in this thesis as it seeks to give prominence to the voices and perspectives of participants, thereby counteracting an existing hegemony that suppresses the voices of the participants.

Compatible with the idea of counteracting the existing hegemony, and giving vent to hitherto supressed accounts and voices, the stories obtained from the ten case studies were analysed through a counteractive approach which sought to establish

how the stories reflect or, more importantly, how they deviate from those constructed and exported by a supremacist hegemony. This approach is clarified by Thomas and Myers (2015:51) who explain that 'case studies as narratives [the latter being stories retold in a certain way] have a function in enabling a recognition and an understanding of where the case differs from what is normal or expected'. In line with this approach therefore, participants' reflective accounts – stories of their schooling experiences - were treated as counter-stories. Solorzano & Yosso (2002: 26) define counter-storytelling as "a method of telling the stories of those people whose experiences are not often told" including people of colour, women, gay, and the poor. The concept of counter storytelling, which is central to critical race theory (CRT) has been further substantiated below and in subsequent chapters.

1.5 Theoretical framework: summary of Critical Race Theory (CRT).

The overriding theoretical framework used in this thesis is CRT. CRT originated in the field of law and emerged as a reaction against the shortcomings of the Critical Legal Studies (CLS) movement in the United States. CLS, which sought to challenge the positivist view and conception of law as being neutral, had failed to acknowledge how race is a central component to the very systems of law being challenged. This was against a backdrop of black lawyers who were questioning the slow pace of racial reform in the USA, and by the widely shared feeling 'that the civil rights movements of the 1960s had stalled, and indeed that many of its gains were being rolled back' (Delgado and Stefancic 2000, p. xvi). In 1989, feeling continuously marginalised and disappointed with the failures of CLS, Derrick Bell, Alan Freeman and other lawyers

of colour left this group and formed CRT. Co-founding member Mari Matsuda defines CRT as:

> The work of progressive legal scholars of color who are attempting to develop a jurisprudence that accounts for the role of racism in American law and that work toward the elimination of racism as part of a larger goal of eliminating all forms of subordination. (Matsuda, 1991: 1331).

Bell (1995: 906) further clarifies that CRT quintessentially embraces 'an experientially grounded, appositionally expressed, and transformatively aspirational concern with race and other socially constructed hierarchies'.

One of the core tenets of CRT that is central to this thesis relates to the concept of counter storytelling. While committing to the centrality of experiential knowledge as detailed through narrative (Solórzano and Bernal, 2001: 314; Taylor, 2006, 74; Delgado and Stefancic, op.cit., xvii – xviii), and contending that whites often fail to acknowledge the experiences of black people, counter storytelling is a methodology developed to relate the racial realities of people of black people. It also provides a means for them to challenge 'the myths, presuppositions, and received wisdoms that make up the common culture about race and that invariably render [minoritized people] one-down' (Delgado and Stefancic, 2000: xvii). Counter storytelling is utilised in this thesis as a tool to access participants' production of and reflections on their narratives of their schooling experiences.

With race at its epicentre, CRT operates on further core tenets which are also important in this thesis. These tenets include non-aberrational racism; interest convergence; intersectionality; critique of (neo)liberalism; emancipation of underprivileged people, and recourse to African culture and heritage. A discussion

of these underpinning tenets, and their application in this thesis, has been presented in Chapter Four.

Since its introduction first to education in the USA (Ladson-Billings and Tate: 1995), and then UK, the application of CRT in education scholarship has expanded significantly. In their study of the place of CRT in education since its introduction, Dixson and Rousseau Anderson (2018) outline the role of CRT in education today. Accordingly:

> CRT in education argues that racial inequity in education is the logical outcome of a system of achievement premised on competition. CRT in education examines the role of education policy and educational practices in the construction of racial inequity and the perpetuation of normative whiteness. CRT in education rejects the dominant narrative about the inherent inferiority of people of color and the normative superiority of white people.

They continue to highlight that:

> CRT in education rejects a historicism and examines the historical linkages between contemporary educational inequity and historical patterns of racial oppression. CRT in education engages in intersectional analyses that recognize the ways that race is mediated by and interacts with other identity markers (i.e., gender, class, sexuality, linguistic background, and citizenship status). CRT in education agitates and advocates for meaningful outcomes that redress racial inequity.

This thesis benefits from this expanded role of CRT in education as it applies the framework to critique the schooling experiences of the participants. In addition to using CRT, this thesis draws significantly on African folklore.

1.6 African folklore and its use in this thesis.

The use of African folklore in research is not novel. For example, Asimeng-Boahene, (2010), Asimeng-Boahene and Marinak, (2010) and Grant and Asimeng-Boahene, (2006) have drawn substantially from African proverbs, which is part of African folklore, in their social and educational studies. Like in CRT, at the heart of African folklore is (counter)storytelling and it is used for didactic as well as functional purposes of resolving dilemmas in traditional communities (Tala 2013, 1989). Featuring as such, counter storytelling is arguably the strongest intersection between CRT and African folklore. Especially given that participants in this thesis engage in counter storytelling of their educational experiences for similar didactic and functional reasons, it was very appropriate for this thesis to draw from this concept. Mindful of the other core tenets of CRT, the narratives of the participants' experiences have been analysed as forms of counter story. In so doing, this thesis has been able to reach deeper and richer understandings of the experiences of students of BWA heritage in English secondary schools. More details on how African folklore has been interwoven in this thesis is presented in Chapters Four and Five.

1.7 'Black West Africa', 'race' and 'schooling experiences'.

This thesis is not a study of any experiences. It is about the schooling experiences of past students of BWA background for whom race is a significant identifier. As such it is important to clarify the terms black West Africa, race and schooling experiences as applicable in this thesis.

West Africa is the westernmost sub region of Africa. With a population of about 349,154,000 people, it consists of countries Like Congo (on the south coast) through to Senegal (on the north coast). In between are countries including Cameroon, Ghana, and Nigeria. The terminology 'BWA' as used in this thesis refers to indigenous non-white people of that sub region. As indicated in the research problem above, the schooling experiences of students of this specific background have received little attention within educational research.

The identification of 'BWAs' as an ethnic entity within this thesis is largely an original enterprise in the sense that while this group exists within the community, it has neither in policy, educational research nor educational practice been so specifically classified. It is important to highlight how BWAs may differ from the rest of Black Africans and how the under-reported schooling experiences of students from this background are potentially different.

Africa is not a homogeneous continent. There are some factors that make for potential differences between West Africa and other main regions of Africa. One of such factors is the dynamics of historical settlement of inhabitants. For example, unlike West Africa, Southern Africa and East Africa have a history of significant non-indigenous African people settling in these regions. In Southern Africa, Zimbabwe, Botswana, and South Africa have significant settlement of whites. East Africa (Kenya,

Uganda, Tanzania) have significant settlement of people indigenous to the Indian Sub-continent. These population dynamics in their various areas have partly accounted for a history of racial conflicts, apartheid, and expulsion of “foreigners”. Considering that history impacts on the present and that “we are products of past events and experiences” (Choi and Suh, 2018: 138), we can expect potential differences between BWAs and these other Black Africans. While it is the parents, rather than my research participants themselves, who might be more predisposed to these different experiences, research has indicated that parental behaviour has important consequences for children's development and identity including how they respond to and interpret life experiences (Laosa, 1982). This would mean that descendants of parents from these different regions might have certain differences which, even if not overt, might inform the way they approach, react to, and perceive everyday life experiences.

Having considered how the identities and experiences of BWA communities might differ from other black African communities, it is important to share some reasons why I focused on this group. In addition to other reasons like the shortage of literature in this area, I have focused on this area for reason linked to my own ethnic background. I was born and raised in West Africa and since living in England for over twenty years, I have mostly associated with children and families of black West Africa origin as opposed to people from other regions in Africa. I have relatively stronger affiliation and knowledge of practices of people from this background. It is not uncommon for factors like these to inform the focus of researchers. For example, success was recorded in researching non-traditional and unconventional forms of marriage when Machoko (2017:85) ‘focused on Zimbabwe because he was born, raised, educated and worked in Zimbabwe which made it easier for him to do research in a country

which he knows the culture and customs of the people'. Further discussion of my influences, role, and implications of being an insider-researcher are presented in my brief autobiography below and in the methodology chapter ahead.

For a thesis that focuses on the experiences of people of a specific racial background, and as a thesis whose theoretical framework is CRT, the concept of race is very important. Whether race is a biological fact or a social construct, 'race is certainly used as descriptor of peoples and as such has enormous impact on the lives of peoples'. (Dalal, 2002:9). The different peoples that are generally classed as different races are indigenous Africans, Caucasians, and Asians. Race is therefore a very important concept in this thesis as it is worth exploring whether the schooling experiences of learners of BWA background were raced. As racism is predicated on the concept of race itself, it follows that racism refers to the discriminatory practices and ideologies directed at peoples from these different backgrounds based on them so belonging.

Schooling experiences, as used in this thesis, refers to the daily interactions, events, episodes, physical and psychological spaces, overt and hidden curricula, people, policies and procedures that students are exposed to and access as part of their education in school. It is worth reminding that one of the questions this thesis addresses is about participants' perceptions around the role of race in their schooling experiences.

My interest in the schooling experiences of students of BWA origin, and the focus of this thesis, originate in my own BWA background, my personal history and professional background. As such, it is necessary to present a brief autobiographical account within the context of this thesis.

1.8 Researcher's brief autobiography

I was born in the South West Region of Cameroon to relatively very wealthy Christian parents. My father was a law graduate and legal practitioner from whom I seem to have acquired a strong sense of fairness and equity right from my birth. After completing primary education from a Presbyterian primary school, I attended Cameroon Protestant College, a protestant boarding college that was acclaimed as the best, most exclusive and high performing college in Cameroon. As this was a boarding college, I socialised mostly with other children who were also from very privileged backgrounds. However, during school holidays I would return to my local community that was a small village about 25 miles away from the main city. For the most part, the children in my local community were from deprived families and hardly had access to most of the privileges that I sometimes took for granted. From a very early age, I felt a sense of injustice why some children would be so wealthy while others were not. As a child, I tried in many ways to mitigate this by building social networks with children from deprived backgrounds, sometimes against parental guidelines. I believe my protestant education and upbringing instilled in me a desire to question things in life.

Upon completion of secondary and college education, I obtained a bachelor's degree in English Language and literature and a Masters degree in Comparative Literature from the same university in Cameroon. I had refused to study law at university because my father, having gained his own law degrees in England in the 1960's, had somehow made me felt any law degree not gained in England was inferior. My father almost glorified the English educational system and I seemed to have believed

everything he said. Afterall, his success in life, signalled by his appointment to senior legal roles, owning extensive real estates, gifting part of this to local schools, affording education for his and other children, privately funding pipe-borne water and electricity for local communities, and living a happy and fulfilled life, somewhat presented as evidence to back his position.

At the turn of the current century I relocated in England where my first employment was teaching in the education sector. I was quick in observing that England was a relatively very wealthy country, in line with my childhood perceptions. However, and contrary to my childhood expectations, there were children in England who did not have equal access to education and while in education a significant number of children did not achieve as expected. This was intriguing and gave me a sense of lack of social justice and equity in the society. I responded to this realisation by seeking and choosing employment roles that enabled me to create and or support inclusive education. This, together with my earlier personal history played a great part in my interest in investing the schooling experiences of learners of BWA background in English schools.

1.9 Structure and organisation of thesis

Having discussed the background and origins, introduced the key objectives of this thesis, offered a concise summary of CRT which is the theoretical framework for this thesis, and presented an autobiography within this first chapter, the rest of this thesis is structured as follows: Chapter Two presents a socio-cultural background and then discusses the policy and political contexts of the thesis. Chapter Three is a review of educational literature related to this thesis. In addition to points raised in Chapters

One and Two, Chapter Three further justifies why this current thesis was imperative. Chapter Four is a discussion of the philosophical and theoretical frameworks for the thesis. Chapter Five, which is research methods and procedures, explains how the philosophical assumptions and theoretical frameworks were operationalised in carrying out the enquiry. This chapter therefore entails a discussion of the methods and procedures that were followed to complete this thesis. In addition to discussing key factors like research population, sampling, methods of data collection, this chapter also covers ethical considerations and concludes with an explanation of how the data was managed and analysed. Chapter Six combines a presentation of the data, its analyses and interpretation, together with a discussion of the findings. Through the findings, this chapter brings to light and discusses the key messages emerging from the reflections of the participants on their schooling experiences. Chapter Seven is the implications and recommendations for theory, policy, and practice. These include a review of pedagogical strategies to better accommodate the needs of students of BWA backgrounds; and the need for revived political will and commitment to inclusive educational practices. Chapter Eight is an overall conclusion of this thesis.

CHAPTER TWO

SOCIO-POLITICAL, ECONOMIC AND POLICY CONTEXTS OF THESIS

This thesis makes a significant contribution to existing educational literature by exploring the lived schooling experiences of adults of BWA origin, highlighting how they are different even though they might have some commonalities with peers from different minority ethnic backgrounds. However, education does not happen in a vacuum. It is framed and hosted by certain contexts that not only shape but also enable the appreciation and give meaning to those experiences. Accordingly, it is important to briefly contextualise the education of BWA students in English secondary schools. To achieve this, this chapter discusses the socio-cultural background of BWA students in England, socio-political trends in England, and some economic trends underlying the English educational system. This chapter also looks at some achievement flashpoints relating to Africa in the diaspora. It is however also important to consider why students of BWA background need to be addressed as a distinct group. This is achieved here by considering the relationship between ethnicity and education.

2.1.1 Ethnicity and education

For over half a century, ethnicity continues to be one of the key variables discussed in the formation of British communities, and in the construction and distribution of social services like education. The outcomes of these services, such as controversial educational achievement league tables, are also presently discussed in relation to these different ethnic backgrounds. Especially with a human history chequered with colonisation, slavery, apartheid, and other forms of racial domination and

marginalisation, it lacks sincerity and integrity for anyone posing under the guise of ethnoskepticism to posit that ethnicity does not matter in the provision of services. With due credence to 'ethnicist fallacies' (Petruso 1995:65) any attempt to obfuscate ethnic diversity in favour of some sort of assimilationist universalism that spurs systematic frameworks of 'one size fits all' is tantamount to a nefarious crusade against ethnic minority groups. In their cross-national study of social work responses to ethnicity in child protection cases, Williams and Soydan (2005) explain when and how ethnicity matters. The high importance of ethnicity has not rendered easy or straight forward the clear delineating and definition of various ethnic groups.

With ethnic backgrounds playing such an important role within social services including education, it is necessary for educational literature to report on the specific ethnic groups. Educational literature that treats BME groups as homogenous could be incomplete, misrepresenting or even misleading in relation to the circumstances of specific ethnic groups. The non-separation of specific ethnic groups and particularly the under representation of students of BWA heritage as a specific group within educational literature is problematic. It may well mean that due to their different social background, the schooling experiences of the students are different from what is dominantly presented in existing literature. The distinctiveness of this group is generated largely from the history, migration and settlement patterns, culture and other characteristic markers of this group that make them different even from other Africans.

2.1.2 BWAs in Britain: a socio-historical background

The identification of 'BWAs' as an ethnic entity within this thesis is largely an original enterprise in the sense that while this group exists within the community, it has neither in policy, educational research nor educational practice been so specifically classified. The closest categorisation of people belonging to this group has been under the term black Africans. To secure a clear definition of this identified group it is therefore helpful to examine how the more generic categorisation of black Africans has come to be defined.

Defining different 'ethnic minorities' in Britain still remains a confusing, contentious and political endeavour. Such a definition cannot be agreed solely by way of geographical location, colour, socio-cultural lineages, or even political orientations. The Swann Report (1985, 61) and some studies based on it have presented minorities under three main classifications: 1. West Indian; 2. Asian (comprising Indian, Pakistani, Bangladeshi, East African and other Asian) and; 3. all other (comprising African and all other recorded and non-recorded descriptions). In current day society, these categories do not clearly define any specific ethnic group especially given that over the past decades ethnic minority groups have been successfully projected as distinctive groups regardless of their fuzzy distinctions and overlapping features. This situation is true of the group of students on whom this thesis is focused.

A functional and more contemporary definition of the term 'black African' is one that is understood as such within the British educational system, and that which is adopted in the 2011 census in the United Kingdom. The term therefore means people with heritage in West, Southern, and East Africa and excludes all people of non-indigenous heritage in these areas. Despite their commonalities, their inherently vast diversity in

culture, language and political history render 'black Africans' a non-homogenous entity. For example, a black African from South Africa has a different history and experience from a black African from Ghana, Cameroon or Nigeria. Even within the latter group of black Africans (from West Africa), there are still differences; but their stronger similarities in terms of colonial histories, continental migrations and experiences make them a separate identifiable group from other black Africans. It is partly for these reasons that this thesis deliberately focuses on BWAs students who arguably fit the definition of a specific ethnic group.

The social history of BWAs in England is marked by historic migration, racialisation, inequality and the struggle for social justice. Contrary to popular media that portray black Africans as recent migrants into Britain, archaeological and literary records show an African presence in Romano-Britain together with evidence that discharged African ex-soldiers settled near York (Killingray, 1994:2). According to Edwards (1990:2), this early settlement of Africans in Britain before the English invaders arrived from Europe 'is a nice irony against racist opinion'. Even though the history of Africans in Britain is traceable back to the Roman period, Adi (1998:2) explains that 'documentary evidence suggests that it is only from the sixteenth century that Africans from the Western part of the continent regularly visited or resided in Britain'. Historically, BWA migration to Britain largely was linked to the trans-Atlantic slave trade. BWA migration to Britain has also been informed by people migrating and settling for reasons linked to recruitment into British Air Force (Lambo, 1994). In addition to a number of Africans who have migrated to England for reasons including education, family ties and business, more recently, a significant BWA population have arrived in England as political refugees thanks to certain global fault lines orchestrating, fuelling and or catalysing political and economic instability in countries like Ghana, Nigeria, Congo,

and Sierra Leone (Bond, 2006). Partly accountable for the more recent migration and settlement of BWAs in England are global economic 'faultlines' (Gokay and Whitman, 2010) that have seen Western countries including Britain looting West Africa's natural as well as human resources (Bond, 2006). This systematic impoverishing of West African states results in some of the push factors that cause people to migrate.

Currently, England is unquestionably one of the most diverse countries in the world and people of BWA origin constitute only one of many minority ethnic social groups. According to the 2011 UK census which recorded an overall UK population of over 62 million people, there has been a steady increase in the minority ethnic population from about 6% in 1991 to about 9% in 2001 and 14% in 2011 and about 10% of those minorities are black Africans (Office for National Statistics, 2011).

It is very difficult to determine with precision what percentage among the ethnic minority population has BWA origin. This has been made difficult largely due to the contentious way in which different groups of people were categorised. Luthra (1997:3) observes that the categories used in England today 'is flawed and inadequate in representing the ethnic and genetic diversity of Britain's population'. For example, in the latest census, the White British census tick box was labelled as 'White English/Welsh/Scottish/Northern Irish/British' and the Black tick box was jointly labelled as 'black/African/Caribbean/ black British'. This makes it difficult to identify what proportion of this group are BWAs.

The settlement pattern of BWAs in England is changing. Contrary to the earlier generations that settled mostly around the major slaving ports of London, Liverpool and Bristol, a significant number of West Africans in England today are settled in inland

cities like Birmingham, Leeds and Manchester. According to the 2011 Census, the population of Black Africans in Manchester (one of the principal cities in the North West of England, where this study is based) increased from 6,655 in 2001 to 25,718 in 2011. In the same time, the black African population in Birmingham rose from 6,206 to 29, 991. This shift is partly explainable by the fact that later populations might have been looking for economic and educational opportunities which these could be found in these other cities. The same is true of the distribution of students of BWA origin who could be found in virtually any part of England today. It is noted that the earliest BWA students in English schools were 'sons and sometimes daughters' of African rulers and merchants who sent their children to Britain to 'learn what they called the "white man's book", which assisted them in their trading activities, including the trade in slaves' (Adi, 1998:6). The situation is different today as these students will be from parents of more diverse backgrounds in terms of class and ideology. Together with the dramatic increase in student population as inferred from the rise in black African population, it becomes more urgent to explore the schooling experiences of learners from this background.

2.1.3 Socio-political trends in England

The presence of BWAs among other Black and Minority Ethnic (BME) groups in England is accounted for by both push and pull factors (Krishnakumar and Indumathi, 2014). Where global instability signals a hike in immigration, there is possibility of increased apprehension and even hostility towards immigrants already in the host country. In Britain race, education, immigration and politics have not only become interwoven (Tomlinson, 2008), but have become the constant topic of debate in politics and social media. The 2014 British Social Attitudes Survey revealed that '77 per cent

of respondents wanted to see immigration reduced either “a little’ or ‘a lot”, while the May 2014 polling by Ipsos MORI showed that 34 per cent of respondents saw immigration as one of the most important issues facing the country’ (Geddes, 2014:289). Strong anti-immigration sentiment compounded by general discontent with politics and politicians is partly accountable for the rising stigmatisation and hostility towards immigrants as well as people of BME backgrounds. In recent years Britain witnessed changing dynamics in racial relations which have sometimes resulted in bloodshed in some towns and cities like London, Oldham, Burnley and Bradford (Gilroy 2010, p. xxi and Shain 2003, p. vii).

In England, terrorism is now a phenomenon discussed not only within government departments but also in institutions of learning. For example, as a result of preventative strand of government’s counter-terrorism strategy (CONTEST) HM Government 2011), there is increased work with institutions of learning to challenge radical and extremist ideologies so as to prevent the radicalisation of learners who are deemed as being at risk (HM Government, 2015). Paralleling the rise and distribution of terrorism, is a growing and persistent ‘islamophobia’ (Housee, 2012; Ekerwald, 2011) expressed as hatred towards Muslims who are mostly from BME backgrounds. While it is necessary to address national and international threats of terrorism, it constitutes an act of racism for people of BME backgrounds to be disproportionately and arbitrarily linked to terrorism.

In addition to the racist perception that disproportionately links people of BME backgrounds to terrorism, partly due to discontent towards immigrants, black Africans are being prejudiced as ‘bogus asylum’ seekers (Zimmermann, 2011) who arrive

Britain to leech on British welfare system. This form of prejudice against immigrants only go to compound the difficulties that some black Africans face in their attempt to settle in England (Sirriyeh, 2013; Wade et al. 2012; Hayes et al. 2004; and Harvey, 2000). In Discussing popular anti-immigrant sentiments, McLaren (2011: 163) explains that '… in 2005 the perception that government had not handled the issue of immigration effectively also significantly affected political trust, with both linear and interactive effects'. It is also argued that the recent majority vote for Britain to leave the European Union was fuelled by strong anti-immigration sentiments (Goodwin and Milazzo, 2017).

The socio-political context, as explained above, is crucial in understanding schooling experiences. In his study of black settlement in relation the experiences of black male exclusion in the British education system, Christian (2008) explains that historical and contemporary black underachievement is mirrored by anti-black discrimination throughout British society. Christian (op cit. 327) argues that

> one cannot divorce the broader anti-black political sentiment from the British education system; the two are interwoven when it comes to understanding the plight of black British school children in history and contemporary times.

In her examination of higher education student experiences, Housee (2008) takes the above point further by showing how race and its wider social constructions impact practically on the "teaching and learning process and issues of student and lecturer positionalities and identities in the Higher Education context". Housee contends that the teaching of "race" and racism should not only be about identity or ethnicity, but should include the development of teaching strategies that are inclusive of black experiences together with the questioning of the "power structures and relations found

in whitearchy and patriarchy". This reinforces the point that any meaningful effort to understand the schooling experiences BWA students cannot be divorce from the social-political contexts.

2.1.4 Economic trends underlying the English educational system.

Alongside the socio-political trends, there are at least two economic factors that have merged with other factors to form a backdrop not only to the schooling of students of BWA origin but to education in England as a whole. One of these is the economic crisis that started around the end of the last decade. This has led to a string of austerity measures including financial and funding cuts in education and social care. The voices of critics who decry this string of measures is made succinct by McKee et al. (2012:346) who argue that austerity is 'a failed experiment on the people of Europe'.

The other significant economic factor is the rise of neo-liberalism. As explained by Bockman (2013:14)

> neoliberalism is grounded in the assumption that governments cannot create economic growth or provide social welfare; rather, by trying to help, governments make the world worse for everyone, including the poor. Instead, private companies, private individuals, and, most importantly, unhindered markets are best able to generate economic growth and social welfare.

Coupled with austerity measures, this neoliberal approach to governing has resulted in the shrinking of services thereby compounding social injustices experienced by people who are otherwise marginalised and discriminated against. Even though neoliberalism has only recently become obvious to many people, it has hardly been sudden. The shift can be traced back many decades. In the last twenty-five years,

successive governments in England have directly or indirectly embraced and consolidated a neo-liberal agenda that has hastened the marketization of welfare services including education. Marketization of education refers to the conscious and intended reduction of government monopoly by contracting educational services to private sector suppliers who in turn provide these services with somewhat religious adherence to the economic forces of demand and supply (Ball 2009 and Rouse & Florian 1998). Educational settings and provisions have been consequently plagued by a culture of managerialism and performativity (Ball 2007). While this systematic shift is couched in borrowed leftist rhetoric, repositioned and exported as the order of the day, or as the 'new common sense' (Apple 2010), there is confounding evidence (Gillborn and Youdell 2000, Ball 2003, Slee 2010, Barton 2005, and Apple 2009) that new inequalities are created, hard earned social justices are eroded and the playing field is levelled to favour factions of the community that possess higher economic and socio-cultural capitals. This potentially has negative impacts on ethnic minority groups including black African students in England whose voices are marginalised and hardly form part of the 'confluence of influence' (Tambi 2012) in policy debates and developments.

2.1.5 Advancement of Africa and Africans in the diaspora: a paradox for underachievement in education

A backdrop that serves to highlight the concerns about the education of BWA students in English secondary schools, if only by way of contrast, are the historical and current advancements of black Africans in the diaspora. Highlights on achievement within the diaspora show that underachievement amongst students of black African origin in

English schools is a paradox. The history of Africa and Africa in the diaspora is chequered but nonetheless marked by certain indices of heroism that only make for irreconcilable discrepancies when compared to the saga of inequalities and underachievement that pervert literature on the education of students of African background in England. For example, civilization started in Africa. Long before the birth of Pythagoras, Africans applied mathematical principles in the construction of the Egyptian pyramids which continue to remain one of the wonders of human history. Timbuktu was one of the earliest places to provide world class religious and academic education and attracted world scholars and leaders like Alexander the Great. In arguing that 'Europe underdeveloped Africa', Rodney (1973) explains how Africa was very progressive until Europeans intercepted such progress through imperialism, colonialism, slavery, and economic and cultural exploitation. In addition, apartheid, which persists albeit unofficially, is arguably one of the factors seen to have intercepted the progress of Africa.

Recent history of Africa in the diaspora saw Barack Obama at the helm of world leadership. Obama (2008) aligns such achievements with the importance attached to education and ability of individuals to persist in the pursuit of their dreams. This importance attached to education and the desire to pursue dreams was exemplified in the eulogies paid to tragic Damilola Taylor, an aspiring ten year old boy of BWA heritage who in 2000 was killed on the streets of London on his way home from a local library. All the above are in stark contrast and paradoxical to the low level of attainment that perverts the academic spectrum for people with black and black African heritage. On the one end of the spectrum we have students who are disproportionately struggling in schools and colleges across England; and on the other end, only about '50 out of 14,000 British professors' (Shepherd, 2011) are of black or

black African heritage. A similar situation is mirrored in the USA where Delgado (2009, p.112) points out that 'sixteen years ago, there were [only] about thirty-five Hispanic law professors, approximately twenty-five of which were Chicano. Today, the numbers are only slightly improved'. Even though these figures from the USA context are not directly about Black Africans, they constitute evidence of how an educational system can systematically restrict the progress of ethnic minority groups. It is not the desire in this thesis to adumbrate the details of this kind of statistics, but these are key indicators that there is something intriguing about the educational and academic experiences and outcomes for people of black ethnic origin.

2.2 Legislative and policy context

Ozga (2000:2-3) argues that 'all research in education to some degree engages with policy. It is difficult to imagine an education project that takes place outside policy'. Shain (2013: 64) also emphasises that 'education policy does not exist in a vacuum. It is shaped by and contributes to wider processes of economic, political and social change'. It is therefore necessary to introduce some key policies and legislature, highlight the socio-economic backdrop from which the policy and legislature have developed, and then show what that has come to mean for the education of BWAs in England.

A key legislation dates to the Education Act 1944 which resulted in the tripartite system of education. This act appeared to change secondary education dramatically as through funded places theoretically every child irrespective of background had the chance to go to the best schools. The inequalities that persisted after this legislation are testimonies to Lowe (1992) who argued that this legislation had no real chance of

impacting on disadvantaged children's circumstances as it was born out of political expediency rather than on some educational philosophy.

In the late 80s, issues of racism and education were reinvigorated with the passing of the 1988 Education Reform Act that introduced a prescriptive and cultural diversity-blind National Curriculum. This act also introduced the Local Management of Schools (LMS) and incentives for schools to opt out of Local Education Authority (LEA) control orchestrated a reduction in the influence of LEAs. These measures, which were the first of their kind, paved the way for more neo-liberal approaches to education services. Gill et al. (1992, eds.) document how these measures amounted to the disadvantaging of minority ethnic background students.

Another important piece of legislation worth mentioning here is the Children Act 1989. According to its duties under this act, Local Authorities are meant to provide for the statutory social care needs (including education) of all children within its jurisdiction. Under the Education Act 1996 and Children and Families Act 2014, depending on parental preferences, schools are required to admit children within their local areas unless such admission would contradict the conducive education of other children or would not mean a judicious appropriation of public resources. Under provisions of the Special Educational Needs and Disability Act (SENDA) 2001 and Equality Act 2010, educational providers are not only required to be non-discriminatory but must make "reasonable adjustments" in response to the needs of learners. In effect, this means that a learner's ethnicity or racial background should not constitute grounds for being disadvantaged. Furthermore, under provisions of Children Act 2004, educational providers must seek to see that children achieve five key outcomes relating to being

healthy, staying safe, enjoying and achieving, making a positive contribution, and achieving economic well-being.

The Academies Act 2010 makes it possible for schools in England to become academies. Academy status affords schools to remain publicly funded while retaining certain autonomies including the ability to diverge from the National Curriculum. Especially given the controversial nature of the National Curriculum since its introduction by the Education Act 1988, it came as a relief for some educational providers to be able to diverge from it under provisions of the Academies Act 2010.

From the above policy framework, it is important to highlight three points for the purposes of this thesis. First, as evidenced in the persisting achievement gap, policy and legislation alone does not redress inequalities in education. It is therefore, in advance of analysing primary data for this thesis, doubtful what impact policy and legislation has on actual schooling experiences. Second, it is important to observe that a neoliberal agenda that seeks to continuously shrink the welfare state underlies education policy in England. With the early Conservative government having paved the way with neoliberal policies like Local Management of Schools (LMS) that served to disadvantage minorities (Gill et al. 1992), there was no change of course when New Labour took over. When Tony Blair became Prime Minister, his speech on 'Education, Education, Education' (Blair, 2001) claiming to reverse inequalities was at best hypocritical due to other measures taken by the government. For example, the government was committed to the 'Third Way' (Giddens, 1998) ideology which sought to reconcile right-wing and left-wing politics by advocating a varying synthesis of the two and in practical terms plunging into a market economy system. This was hardly a system that could restore fairness within an educational system that was already

drowning in historical and ongoing inequality among students of various ethnic backgrounds. Conservative governments, under the guise of so-called 'Big Society' (Powell, 2013 and Fenwick and Gibbon, 2017) continued this neoliberal agenda with the introduction of the Academies Act 2010.

The third point to observe is the trend of 'interest convergence' (Delgado and Stefancic, 2000) whereby the government would allow certain policies that seemed to address inequalities only if those policies also served the government's own agenda. Examples of this include the Education Act 1944, which was politically motivated (Lowe, 1992); the Local Management of Schools which purported to give power to local communities but was rooted in government's neoliberal agenda; and the Academies Act 2010 which pretended to address controversies around the National Curriculum but which mostly served the government's agenda to further shrink the Welfare State. Interest convergence and the need to challenge neoliberalism which are core tenets of CRT have been discussed further in Chapters 3 and 4.

2.3 Chapter conclusion

This chapter has explored ethnicity and education and their socio-cultural, economic, political and legislative backdrops. Threading profusely through this exploration is the concept of race, racism, racialisation all pitted against various responses from agencies in the form of highlights of black achievements, multi-culturalism, and government policy against racism. All these might serve to foster a certain notion that the British society as a whole is post-racial. This position remains very contentious for Paul Warmington, a contemporary scholar of African Caribbean heritage, argues that "we are post-racial in having moved beyond pseudogenetic notions of race;

however, we are not ‘post-racial’ per se” (Warmington, 2009: 281). It is against this backdrop that this current thesis explores the schooling experiences of BWA students in English secondary schools.

CHAPTER THREE

SCHOOLING EXPERIENCES OF BWA STUDENTS IN ENGLISH SECONDARY SCHOOLS: A REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE.

3.1 Objectives of this literature review

The key purpose of this literature review is to locate this thesis conceptually and theoretically in the context of contemporary research on the schooling experiences of black African students in English schools. To achieve this purpose, this review highlights gaps in existing literature, it also emphasises the paucity of literature specific to the schooling experiences of students of BWA origins. In doing so, this chapter argues that existing literature constitutes a hegemony that relegates the voices and suppresses accounts of school experiences of learners of BWA heritage. It further argues that there is a likelihood that in the case of learners of BWA heritage, the factors that learners would consider to be very important to them are being missed or misrepresented within the existing literature.

Given that it is a challenging task to review a field wide enough to include all relevant information yet narrow enough to exclude irrelevant material, strategic decisions and steps were therefore taken to achieve the most effective literature review for this thesis. First, the review was designed to afford coverage, synthesis, methodology, significance and rhetoric; all key aspects which, as Boote and Belle (2005) argue, form the centrality of a good dissertation literature review. Second, careful decisions were taken in relation to type of sources and materials to be reviewed. The central catalogue of university libraries and the British Library Electronic Thesis Online Service (ETHOS) were searched. Other sites searched included Psychinfo, Social

Sciences Citation Index, and Educational Resource Information Centre. The search criteria used ensured that the materials were up to date and closely related to educational experience, education of minority ethnic groups, educational achievement, and issues of equality and diversity in education.

A wide field of subjects and fields was searched. The starting point was to identify those fields and disciplines that have accommodated the debates, history and development of educational matters for black Africans in Britain. Accordingly, this literature review was developed around certain key concepts and fields that include: inclusive education, pedagogy, social justice, minority ethnic groups, sociology of education and current local and global trends impacting on education today. While considering these different trajectories, there was constant need to stay close to the educational experiences of students for as Poulson and Wallace (2004, 26-27) point out, it is important to maintain a clear conceptual focus.

3.2 Key themes from literature search

Findings from the relevant literature reviewed are reflective of the number and variety of different subjects and fields searched. The presentation of these findings is organised under different subcategories and themes. Due to the overlapping nature of these categories and themes such organisation was largely arbitrary but guided by a ‘best fit’ approach that enabled scope for adequate exploration of the topics.

3.2.1 Educational histories and BWA students' experiences

The school experiences of participants in this thesis can in some sense be considered as their pedagogical history and this is connected to what Smith (2005: 33) introduces as 'contested histories'. Like the histories of indigenous peoples, the histories of marginalised peoples are highly contestable because these histories are the oppressors' fabrications and distorted realities. History, which arguably and increasingly is the product of research, is according to Smith (ibid) 'mostly about power. It is the story of the powerful and how they became powerful, and then how they use their power to keep them in positions in which they can continue to dominate others.' Even though this conception of history is born of Smith's study and understandings relating to indigenous peoples, the same can be said of BWA students who strongly share similar experiences of being minoritised, othered and marginalised. This nature of educational research and the positioning of BWA students therefore engender the need for histories to be reconstructed from research patterns that prioritise and privilege the voices of marginalised groups.

3.2.2 (Under)Achievement

Having mentioned earlier that the focus of this thesis is not (under)achievement given that such has already been richly covered through existing studies (like Owusu-Kwarteng 2015; Coard 1971; Troyna 1984; Tomlinson 1984, 1986, 2008; Gillborn 1990, 2008, 2009; and Gillborn and Gipps 1996, Crozier 2012), many salient points still warrant emphasis. These points include the persistence of underachievement; ways to better understand underachievement; the relationship between underachievement and education policy; and the politicised approach to defining the term.

In her study of black attainment in British schools, Wright (2013) explains that an intersectional approach is needed to better understand the underachievement of black students. Drawing on Bourdieu's concept of "habitus", Karl Marx's perspective on power, and Weberian approaches to social stratification, Wright explains that gender and class impact on underachievement and other forms of inequalities.

In further defence for the need of an intersectional approach to understanding underachievement, Wright (ibid) argues that 'the inculcation of neo-liberal education policies with their emphasis on competition and choice is exacerbating existing inequalities'. This point is given currency by Gillborn et al. (2017: 848) who in their study of Black Caribbean students argue that "the Black/White gap is directly affected, often in negative ways, by changes in education policy'. Through their unprecedented study of education policy and underachievement over twenty-five years to 2013, they map out with various details that unequivocally show that 'policy interventions to "raise the bar" by toughening the benchmark have actively widened gaps and served to maintain black disadvantage' (ibid).

In addition to its persistence and its relationship with education policy, the definition of achievement itself remains problematic. Despite being a very important concept that underlies nearly all of humankind's endeavours how the term achievement is defined remains unsettled and sometimes even unsettling. Francis and Skelton (2005) and Gillborn and Gipps (1996) have argued that, especially between different groups, its meaning remains highly complex and contentious than it is widely noticed or acknowledged. In a bid to represent achievement gap in the English context, achievement has been subjected to various definitions through prolific benchmarks. For example, Gillborn et al. (2017: 860) show that 'the period of most dramatic and

consistent reductions in the achievement inequality coincided with the introduction of a new benchmark in 2006'. From this, it is discernible that there is a pro-government engendered commitment to reconstruct the concept of achievement in a way that serves the interest of dominant and hegemonic agencies. This kind of reconstructions do not only defuse the achievement gap, but serve to trivialise, marginalise and even ignore what is important to students of minority ethnic backgrounds.

In addition to the politicising of the concept of achievement, Mahony (1998) observes that the educational system is obsessed with academic achievement defined as grades achieved in assessment. The consequences of such an obsession are exacerbated by the fact that the concept of achievement is 'extraordinarily narrowly conceived … as exclusively reflected by credentials from performance in examinations' (Francis and Skelton op cit, p. 2).

According to hooks (1994) educational achievement should enable the learner to 'transgress'. Freire (1971 and 2004) emphasises that especially in the case of marginalised people, achievement should result in 'emancipation'. From the foregoing, it shows that achievement should be about a positive change. Such change could be operationalized in terms of students being able to progress onto educational courses of their aspirations, being able and ready to be recruited into professions and ranks of their choosing and being able to afford the living and lifestyles they appropriately wish to. These indicators are important because due to discrimination within the wider society, high test scores and grade point averages do not preclude life success for these learners. In line with the critical framework on which this thesis hinges, achievement is considered not only in terms of standardised tests and grade point average but also, and more importantly, with regards to factors like increased

social justice, less marginalisation, and over all emancipation. One could say that it is in line with this view of achievement that current special educational needs reforms as seen in the 'Preparing for Adulthood' agenda tend to focus on 'Outcomes' for learners.

For the purposes of this thesis therefore, achievement is defined as attainments that serve towards enabling somebody realise their goals in life. In the case of young people who feel that they are being discriminated against, achievement should not be measured through the traditional grade scores which in themselves do not always afford transgression or emancipation. Achievement should be measured in terms of a student's acquired knowledge and skills in breaking down factors that pose as barriers to access to development and social justice.

3.2.3 Race, education and social justice

It is not difficult to notice that race, education and social justice are interwoven factors. What is rather sometimes difficult to decipher is the nature of the relationship of these factors. Against this backdrop, Tomlinson (1983, 2008, 2012) has advanced a sustained commitment towards understanding how the educational infrastructure has attempted to respond to the education of ethnic minorities (Tomlinson 1983, 2008, 2012, et al.). Tomlinson offers a detailed and critical political history of race and education in Britain. Fairly recently, Ladson-Billings (2009) asserts with compelling empirical evidence that 'race still matters'. This position is strongly substantiated where related studies in Wales and Scotland show that racial and minority issues still permeate the very fabric of society. This is despite several attempts to minimise the role of race in society. For example, Williams and De Lima (2006: 498) explain that the devolution of central initiatives from Westminster was constituted on the basis of

the ambition to increase inclusiveness and democratic involvement, underpinned by specific equality duties' However, it should be noted that within most studies like the ones mentioned above, concerns specific to black African students have largely been eclipsed by the general category of ethnic minority and, especially in Tomlinson's studies, mostly the experiences of 'West Indians', 'Asian', 'Pakistani and Bangladeshi' students have been discussed.

Wales and Scotland aside, the bleak interplay of race, education and social (in)justice gets even worse when one explores the current situation in England. In discussing this interplay, Gillborn (2008) asks a fundamental question as to whether the relationship between racism and education is a matter of coincidence or conspiracy. With general knowledge that educational injustices have persisted throughout history, further research evidence especially from Gillborn and Mirza (2000), and the current of interest convergence within education policy as explained earlier, it is easy to uphold Gillborn's conclusion that 'education policy is not designed to eliminate race inequality but to sustain at manageable levels'. Race inequality within this context is therefore, by and large, not a coincidence but a conspiracy.

With a focus on the higher education context in England, Housee (2018, 2012, 2011, 2008) has critically explored not only the link between race and education as whole, but also more specifically the role of race in teaching and learning, and the role of race in classroom experiences in particular. While exposing the non-aberrational, yet overlooked, nature of racism within higher education, Housee's work also provide a range of strategies that could be followed to make higher education more inclusive. While Housee's work makes for an arguably unrivalled coverage of racism within higher education in England, there are still elements that give necessity to the current

thesis. For instance, this thesis focuses on schooling experiences of BWA learners in English secondary schools, which remain under-explored in comparison to the experiences of students of other ethnic minority backgrounds.

The position of minority ethnic groups on the 'race ladder', the educational experiences of pupils from this background and the implications of these experiences for social justice have been explored by Archer and Francis (2007). Not only are their findings of an inadequate educational system for minority ethnic groups grounded in extensive related literature, they also present empirical evidence from both pupils and parents from these backgrounds. However, even though they use the term 'minority ethnic' groups, their work is mostly related to British-Chinese pupils and parents. A study that focuses on other minority ethnic groups will therefore be welcome and that is what this current thesis seeks to contribute towards.

Mac an Ghaill (1992: 42) argues that racism is a complex phenomenon and that the educational experiences of black youths need a reconceptualization. However, this argument is based on 'a two-year ethnographic study of black young people, of Afro-Caribbean and Asian heritage', which therefore still renders the experiences of BWA students an unexplored field. Also given that Mac an Ghaill's study was undertaken using (semi)structured interviews during a two-year long ethnography leaves the study with certain limitations. For example, his study covered only a two-year period which is less than fifty percent of the duration of education for young black learners. By relying on semi-structured interviews, the study might have overlooked certain nuanced aspects of learner experiences such as their internal motivations, their perceptions and how they make sense of their experiences. This current thesis which explores lived experiences has the potential of building on Mac an Ghaill's study in

that it covers a longer period of time and affords the participants less restrictive parameters for sharing their school experiences.

A more recent investigation into the experiences of minority groups is exemplified in the study of 'young Asian women's experiences and strategies in contemporary British schooling and society' (Shain 2003). While this study also makes reference to 'black', the term 'is used in its political sense and therefore includes young women of both African/Caribbean and South Asian origin' (Shain ibid: 155). Another study based on a specific ethnic group is that which focuses on the 'educational experiences of a group of African Caribbean and mixed 'race' young people' (Crozier, 2005: 585). Kingdon and Cassen (2010: 406) use the term black in as much wider sense in their study to refer to any social group of people that are not considered as 'whites'. The study by Kingdon and Cassen also highlighted that underachievement persists, with Black Africans achieving as low as 12.5% in GCSE.

While the above studies provide information relevant to the education of blacks and black Africans, they do so with certain limitations. First, the use of the term 'black' remains problematic as it covers a wide range of non-homogenous ethnic backgrounds. Second, the above studies go as far as providing statistical information on achievement but not the educational experiences that lead to such achievement/underachievement. Also, these studies relate to various geographical areas of Britain that have strong demographical and sociological differences. This current thesis complements the above studies in three ways. It focuses on learners of BWA origins who are a distinct group among other blacks or black Africans. This thesis goes beyond statistical presentations of achievement and unveils the qualitative experiences that underlie achievement records. As opposed to most studies like the

ones cited above that explore the national context, this current thesis focuses on learners within schools in the North West region of England.

3.2.4 Educational inclusion, exclusion and inequalities

Even with the changing frameworks within which people access education, for many decades now, issues relating to educational inclusion, exclusion and inequalities have substantially informed educational research, theory, policy and practice. Especially from a 'raced' perspective, these issues have also raised concerns amongst providers, practitioners and consumers alike. Insightful contributions like Fuller (1984); Mac an Ghaill (1988); Gillborn (1990, 1995, 2004 & 2005) are chronicles of inequalities in education. The majority of literature in this area has highlighted many factors like flaws in educational systems and establishments, contestations, counter-contestations and debates about how educational systems and establishments operate, and also how taken-for-granted behaviours like ways of walking and style of speech of some students are racialised and framed as patterns of response to institutional dispositions (Gillborn, 1990). To further account for the practical day-to-day occurrence in educational settings, Youdell (2006) through empirical ethnographic investigation insightfully explores the processes of how concepts, notions and provisions relating to black learners are constructed and enacted in practice within educational settings. Youdell's contribution is quintessentially the subjectification and objectification of inequalities in education. To interrupt these inequalities, Youdell (2006:175) suggests recourse to 'practicing performative politics' whereby actions by institutions and individuals should be analysed and reconfigured with the aim of reversing malpractices or inequalities in education. For instance, according to Youdell, practices relating to the development of the curriculum, teaching strategies

and overall approach to managing the needs of learners need to be reconfigured to make education more inclusive.

Two key points need highlighting from the foregoing works as they help in emphasizing the necessity of this current thesis. First, Youdell's ethnographic work is based on inner city schools in London. This thesis is based in the North West of England which offers a different kind of dynamics that have implications for the experiences of ethnic minority background students. For example, the ratio of ethnic majority to minority groups in London and Manchester is 2:1 and 4:1 respectively. The 'North and South divide' in England also makes for possibilities of nuanced differences in educational experiences. For example, the social and economic chances for children and families living in much more advanced economies like London could be different from those living in places like Manchester. Such differences could in turn affect educational experiences given that family life potentially plays a role in how students approach and interpret school experiences. Second, whereas the aforementioned researchers and scholars suggest a form of remediation that involves mostly institutions and practitioners, this thesis advocates for educational systems that actively empower and involve students themselves in imagining and developing the kind of experiences that they perceive are effective for them within those educational systems.

3.2.5 BWA students and underachievement: nature of nurture?

Except in the case of students of Indian and Chinese ethnic origins who generally outperform other groups (DfE 2018), there are concerns about the school performance of school children from most minority ethnic backgrounds. The historic and endemic nature of this problem makes one to ponder whether the underperformance of these children in school is a function of nature or nurture. In any case, whether intentional

or unintentional, directly or indirectly because of policy and practice, the underachievement of these children generally leaves much to be desired. This problem has continuously been represented in educational policy and research. The persistence of this problem, together with the incommensurately low priority it attracts, makes it seem to be one of those circumstances which, in accordance to CRT, are a 'normal' day to day feature of education.

There is, however, a small fraction of educational literature that focuses on the rare achievement of black students. For example, using the voices of some students, Rhamie (2007) explores some of the holistic factors that influence the educational attainment of black Caribbean students. Factors like the behaviours of teachers and parents, and some agents in the wider community like churches, are presented as having influenced the educational attainment of African Caribbean students. In pointing out these factors and elaborating on how they impact on educational attainment, Rhamie's work supports the view that underachievement is structural and nurtural rather than natural.

While studies like Rhamie's are helpful in giving more insights around the performance some students of African Caribbean origin, it should be noted that it is hardly representative of the performance or experience of children from all other ethnic minority backgrounds. While most learners from ethnic minority backgrounds might share certain common characteristics and experiences, it is possible that differences between various minority groups could transfer into differences in the way they approach and perform in education. Some of these differences lie in the different histories of immigrants in Britain. While many black Africans in UK, for instance, trace their histories into slavery into the UK, children of Pakistani and Bangladeshi origins

might find their history is linked to the post war nation building agenda that led to the massive recruitment of overseas workers into UK (Winder, 2013). More so, people of these various backgrounds and histories have undergone different patterns of racialisation in Britain. For example, children of Pakistani origin and African origin have experienced discrimination due to being unduly associated with terrorism and asylum seeking respectively (Taras, 2012). The fact that different minority groups have also experienced different forms of exclusion and or inclusion in their communities makes it possible that children from these groups will approach and experience education in potentially different ways. It is therefore a worthwhile endeavour for this thesis to focus on the educational experiences of students of BWA origin who have hardly been studied as a specific group with potentially specific needs and experiences.

Another factor that helps to suggest that underachievement is nurtural relates to the concept of achievement and how it is applied in education and other social welfare provisions. Achievement results are derived from assessment processes that are prejudiced against certain races including BWAs. It is therefore an act tantamount to condoning of racism if one were to accept any categorisations and other meritocratic placements that are predicated on those assessments. Existing literature has not sufficiently acknowledged, let alone condemned, such practices related to assessment and achievement. In their examination of one hundred Local Education Authorities in England, Gillborn and Mirza (2000) show how some LEAs systematically engage in practices that not only sustain underachievement but makes wider the achievement gap between White and minoritised students. For example, the study found that a third of local authorities that applied for Ethnic Minority Achievement Grant (IMAG) did not keep attainment data crossed-referenced to ethnic groups. Also, data

from authorities in one large urban area showed that achievement among Black African ethnic minority group was highest at point of entry into school but was lowest at point of leaving school. The above problems and discrepancies serve to give necessity and impetus for this thesis to critically explore students' experiences within educational traditions that tag students with a longitudinal yoke of inequality in the form of ineffective assessment and nonchalant attitudes to achievement.

3.2.6 Inclusive education and minority ethnic groups in England

Inclusive education, as professed, encompasses education for learners experiencing learning difficulties and disabilities; learners at risk of offending/exclusion; learners with emotional and mental health needs and specific learning needs like dyslexia, dyspraxia, and dyscalculia. While addressing concerns in these areas, special/inclusive education has also been a site for discussions and debates about the (under)achievement of learners from ethnic minorities including traveller learners and other groups that were hitherto largely omitted (Meijer and Watkins, 2016). Nonetheless, while inclusive education has fundamentally developed and largely stayed as a critical commitment, and is now an ever-expanding constituency, it is still plagued by at least two limitations.

First, literature on inclusive education is limited by imbalance of focus and coverage. It should be noted that some of its constituents are side-lined, under-represented and marginalised. By its definition of 'special educational needs and disabilities (SEND), the law gives stronger protection to learning disabilities, including physical disabilities, and further side-lines other categories. Except for a few scholars like Gillborn et al. (2012), Phoenix (2009), Gillborn (2008) and Shain (2003), who have given due attention to race, class and gender, it is no wonder that leading scholars in the field of

inclusive education (Len Barton, Roger Slee, Felicity Armstrong, Patricia Potts, Mike Oliver, etc.) have dwelled mostly on the education of learners with 'learning difficulties and disabilities'. Issues of learning difficulties and disabilities still dominate and sometimes eclipse other fields.

The imbalance of attention to all categories of learners who would benefit from inclusive educational practices warrants a dedicated research on the school experiences of learners of black and ethnic minority backgrounds who have largely been relegated. In considering the school experiences of learners from ethnic minority backgrounds, steps should also be taken to avoid treating them as a homogenous group. In the case of black African students, it demands an increased level of awareness, zero-complacency and militancy even on the part of some leading scholars. For example, the continuous use of expressions like 'students of color' (Slee, 2010, page 178) constitutes an invocation, reification and condoning of histories and knowledges that have so far contributed to diminishing the outcome of educational experiences for black African students.

The second limitation in this area relates to the portrayed relationship between ethnicity, culture and language on the one hand, and learning difficulties and disabilities on the other. While the focus of this thesis is not on learning difficulties/disabilities or English as a Second Language (ESOL), it is necessary to clarify in this thesis how the education of students of BWA origin and other black and minority ethnic groups have become entrapped and potentially misrepresented. For reasons including cultural and linguistic differences, unknown concepts, and differences in learning patterns, learners from black and ethnic minority backgrounds have in the past been wrongly diagnosed as having learning difficulties and disabilities.

(Cummins, 1984; Ortiz and Polizoi, 1986; Damico and Hamayan, 1991; Rooney and Schwarz, 1999; Schwarz, 2000).

Mindful of the limitations like the studies discussed above, this current thesis has the potential to advance complementary insights into the school experiences of students of BWA origin. In attempting to investigate the school experiences of black African students, this thesis, supported by its use of the CRT, shows regards for certain historical, cultural and racial sensitivities that have hitherto not been sufficiently given prominence in literatures that claim to address some of the concerns around the education of these students.

3.2.7 Black African students and reasonable adjustments: A case of 'interest convergence', tokenism or policymaker's back on the wall?

The SENDA 2001, among other preceding and subsequent legislation, addresses the education of students experiencing difficulties in learning. For some of these learners, the origins of their difficulties are explained in terms of impairments and disabilities of an individual nature. For others, the origins of their difficulties are structural and explained in terms of social attitudes and environmental dispositions such as low expectations from teachers, prejudice, and consequent low self-esteem. Regardless of whether their difficulties were viewed through individual or social perspectives, the focus and legacy of this legislation had been the need for providers to make reasonable adjustments to provisions so that learning will be more accessible to all learners.

Even though students of BWA origin are not among the groups considered as having special educational needs as defined in legislation, this group of students have

peculiar needs that require reasonable adjustments from learning providers. Examples of such adjustments may include attempts to make the curriculum more culturally sensitive or to vary teaching strategies to reflect the diverse backgrounds of learners. It could be argued that students of BWA origin do not generally experience reasonable adjustments as a matter of course. They do so largely when there is a convergence of their interests with those of the learning providers. For example, African literature or history could be introduced into the curriculum not primarily to respond to the needs of learners with African heritage but because it is of interest to other learners and or the school itself. This is therefore an instance of interest convergence rather than reasonable adjustment. While this is a contentious position to sustain, on many counts there are strong arguments to support such a proposition. First, most institutions express within the rhetoric of their mission statement their moral value to uphold equality of opportunity, so it would normally be in their interest to implement some level of reasonable adjustment that would theoretically support such a mission statement. Second, it is in the interest of institutions to comply with relevant legislation that demand reasonable adjustments. Thirdly, with increasing economic competition engulfing educational providers, it is in the interest of institutions to evidence reasonable adjustment to sustain their economic viability which comes largely from level of student enrolment. This point is more glaring especially in the case of the higher education sector which international students have made the largest foreign revenue attractor in the UK. Unfavourable survey feedback from students will mean that certain institutions will not recruit as many students and that will have financial and resourcing implications (Youdell 2006: 8). Fourth, it could be an efficacious operational mechanism for some institutions to engage in reasonable adjustments.

With all the above reasons, the benefits for institutions to implement reasonable adjustments outweigh those for the students. Arguably, as the impairments of these students in the first place are socially and environmentally constructed within institutions, one can surmise that institutions engage in reasonable adjustments mainly because they are forced to do so or because of a convergence of their interests and those of students. Where this is the case, it means the need for inclusive learning for students of black African heritage is still very high. An investigation like the one undertaken in this thesis is therefore essential in the search for more inclusive education for these students.

3.2.8 Learner-responsive pedagogy: An illusion for Black African students?

Pedagogy is a key concept in education, and it is partly for this reason that one of the objectives of this thesis was to consider the implications of the participants stories on pedagogy. It is also no wonder that the term emerged as one of the key themes in the literature reviewed.

More widely developed in the United States of America, culturally responsive pedagogy is a learner-centred approach in teaching where certain unique aspects of the learner's culture are used to develop a teaching strategy that promotes the learner's achievement and overall welfare (Ladson-Billings 1995; Hefflin 2002; Stoicovy 2002). Given that the history, development and current circumstances of minorities in England are like those of their counterparts in the United States of America in the sense that they are both disadvantaged ethnic minorities, it is possible that black African students in English schools could benefit by the idea of a culturally responsive and special pedagogy. However, while literature on culturally relevant pedagogy is extensive in the USA, it is still relatively very faint in England. Even where

related studies exist, they are dominated by the voices of agencies other than that of the students themselves. Howard (2001) attempts to include students' perception in his discussion of culturally relevant pedagogies but at best these students only share their perceptions of existing culturally relevant pedagogies. In terms of the above gaps, not only will this thesis be focused on black African students in English schools, it will also empower students to take part in conceptualising and designing such pedagogies themselves.

For nearly two decades, one of the most comprehensive discussions of the curriculum (including pedagogy) has been offered by Tanner and Tanner (2006). However, in their discussion of the roles of various agents (teachers, supervisors, administrators, and curriculum specialists) in curriculum development, the contribution of learners in this process is hardly given prominence. The perceptions and potential contribution of black African students to the development of a more responsive pedagogy is one of the key aspects this current thesis seeks to investigate.

Within the sociology of education there is a scholarly community of struggle that foregrounds a discourse of pedagogy for liberation and freedom (Nouri and Sajjadi, 2014; Freire, 1985). In discussing personal experiences of education that were counter-hegemonic and needed a political commitment from teachers, and education that seeks to reinforce domination, hooks (1994) ascribes effective pedagogy to that which affords the transgression from domination into liberation. Seeing the fulcrum of successful pedagogy as 'excitement' both from the teacher and learner, hooks explores this position using a blend of multiple perspectives that draw largely from the 'interplay of anticolonial, critical, and feminist pedagogies' (ibid, p.10). This notwithstanding, such exploration does 'not offer blueprints for ways to make the

classroom an exciting place for learning. To do so would undermine the insistence that engaged pedagogy recognise each classroom as different, that strategies must constantly be changed, invented, reconceptualised to address each new teaching experience' (ibid, page 10-11). It is partly for such reasons that this thesis seeks to provide more insights into the learning experiences of BWA students.

Despite all the relevant studies related to black African students in British schools, there are existing voids that studies like this current one could address. The field of education is constantly changing. Fiscal trends, globalisation and neoliberalism are few of the many factors that have invigorated new cultures of professionalism (Whitty 2008, Powell and Gilbert 2006), managerialism (Boston 1991 and Chandler et al. 2002), accountability (O'Flynn 2007) and performativity (Ball 2003). All these potentially inspire shifts and constitute new arenas in the way experiences are produced and interpreted. As observed through their study of policy, 'these kinds of shifts require not only a rather different kind of analysis, but a set of concepts that are able to grasp hold of the more dispersed, fragmented activity that constitutes education', (Robertson and Dale 2010: 28). It is partly for this reason that this thesis attempts to engage in a devolved structure of analysis wherein students themselves take part in the analysis of their own experiences and therefore play a significant role in the reconceptualization of inequalities and in the development of relevant pedagogies.

3.2.9 Decolonising pedagogies

Current pedagogical enactments, which have been developed without the voices of BWA students, are products of dominant oppressive agents in education. It is true that school settings which are primary sites for educational experiences - are not

simply made up of single hegemonies but are suffused by multiple discursive markets (Youdell *op. cit.*: 176) of prevailing, subjugated, disavowed, marginal and oppositional discourses. However, because pedagogic scenes are structured by a 'dissymmetrical pragmatics' (Readings, 1996: 161), where for example teachers and learners have unequal powers, more powerful voices still succeed to bolster certain hegemonic patterns that serve to colonise BWA students who are the less powerful party. Colonisation, according to hooks (1994) is about conquering the minds and habits of oppressed people so that they internalise and accept inferiority as an inherent trait. As argued by Hart et al. (2007: 500) the dominant voice within this unequal relation is that of the government that forces teachers to operationalize a discourse routed in determinist beliefs in ability-based pedagogy. Predicated on individual deficit perspective, ability-based pedagogy is endorsed, for example, by the National Primary Strategy with target-setting and predicted outcomes based on predetermined abilities. In education where the dissymmetrical relationship that works in disfavour of students, students of BWA origin among others could be subjugated into internalising and accepting their underachievement as a product of some trait inherent to them.

There are multiple suggestions in terms of attempts at interrupting the problematic situation as explained above. One of such is offered by hooks (*op cit*.) who suggests 'invention' as a potential remedial force. According to her, invention is about envisioning and developing new habits of being. Also expressed as part of the objectives of this thesis, is the need to empower the research participants to envision and develop new pedagogies that address their needs more effectively. Another suggestion is offered by Hart et al. (*op cit*.: 500) who argue that 'a radical change clearly depends on the availability of credible, articulated alternatives'. They present a model where some teachers have departed from ability-based pedagogy into more

inclusive pedagogies. For instance, culturally relevant pedagogy that recognizes the importance of including students' cultural references in all aspects of learning (Ladson-Billings, 1995) has been used in various settings around the world to address underachievement among minoritised groups. While such model and approaches address some of the mentioned limitations, I submit that in terms of other associating barriers to learning such a model is not far reaching enough, as it is largely teacher-conceived and led, and still marginalises the learners' voice. In an unusual study of narrative accounts of fifty women serial migrants, Phoenix (2009) calls for the decolonisation of everyday school practices as she argues that schools remain key sites for racialised subjectification. Some significant difference to Phoenix's study and this thesis is that first, Phoenix focused on African Caribbean females whereas this thesis is about people of BWAs heritage. Second, Phoenix used post-colonial and feminist theories a framework for her study whereas this thesis uses CRT thereby foregrounding race and racism. Following a study of underachievement among indigenous students in the Canadian Prairies, Gebhard (2018) has affirmed that cultural approaches that ignore how racism affects achievement are not effective. It is partly for reasons like this one that this thesis seeks to use a racially sensitive approach to engage the learners as much as possible into playing an active role in conceiving and developing their own pedagogy.

As evidenced from the above discussion, there is a strong disposition amongst scholars to see pedagogy as a term mostly related to teacher and teaching strategies. Even work on decolonizing pedagogies have mostly centred on what teachers do (Hart et al. (2007). Such way of looking at pedagogy can obscure the wider meaning of pedagogy which has strong practical implications for schooling experiences. It is

therefore important to clarify the wider meaning of pedagogy and how it is applied in this thesis.

Students learn not only by who teaches them and how they are taught (teachers and teaching strategies) but also through the overall school provision that they are exposed to. In addition to who teaches them, the teaching styles and strategies used, learners learning and learning experiences are significantly influenced by the subject matter, the level of resources, their relationship with staff including non-teaching ones, their relationship with other learners, pastoral support, school policy and procedures and overall school culture. The first set of factors constitute the 'overt pedagogy' while the latter constitute the 'hidden pedagogy'. Schooling experiences are better described by a combination of the overt and hidden pedagogy. It is therefore important that in discussing pedagogy, especially in the context of schooling experiences, one considers its wider meaning. Resigned to its scope, this thesis does not engage in the extended discussion of the 'overt pedagogy', 'hidden pedagogy' and 'hidden curriculum' which have been astutely covered by scholars including Apple (1979), Bennett and LeCompte (1990), and Vygotsky (1993). What is important for this thesis is to see pedagogy in its wider sense. Doing so is in keeping with the critical and counter hegemonic approach inherent in this thesis.

3.2.10 Equality of opportunities / equality of freedom: what it means for black West African learners.

Equality of opportunity might seem the complete answer to questions of discrimination, inequality and marginalisation but that is only true before one scratches past the surface. What does it really mean? Of what good is it to people who have already been marginalised and the opportunities presented do not redress related

inequalities? I concur with Derrick Bell who argues that the agenda of white supremacy is not to eliminate racial inequality but to strategically manage it, and with Phillips (2006) who also argues that the whole idea of 'equality of opportunities' is not good enough. These two arguments seem complementary in the sense that what is demonised in the latter is a strategy in the former – equality of opportunities does not close racial gaps, it only manages it. The gap between two people running the same race with one of them already in front of the other will not close simply by ensuring that they run under the same conditions. As Fergusson (2000) explains, in educational settings, being 'white' is only one of the many forms of capital that works to disadvantage learners from minority ethnic backgrounds. Conversely, this means that a student is already disadvantaged from the outset by them being 'non-white'. In testimony to this state of inequality among students of various ethnic backgrounds, some schools tend to set aside a day or week within each academic year to celebrate diversity. The aim of these 'celebrations of diversity' is partly to respond to concerns of white supremacy within their schools. However, in the light of the scale of the problem, the idea of setting aside a single day or week within a whole academic is lame and at best tokenistic.

3.3 Conclusions and implications of this review with directions for further studies.

As shown in the above review, educational experiences permeate and constitute a very active site within educational research both in UK and elsewhere. Within this identified sub field of research also abounds studies relating to learners from minority ethnic groups. The same is also true of educational research in the USA. However, in their examination of education in the USA, Lewis et al. (2009, p. 264) assert that

‘there remains a hole in the literature on African-American educational experiences with regards to systematic studies of everyday practices and experiences in schools’. A similar statement can be made of educational experiences in the UK where, as we see from the above review, there are still some unheard voices. Even the very latest and high-profile studies in the UK do not sufficiently give prominence to the voice of the learners. For example, in their recent study of the educational experiences of black middle class, Gillborn et al. (2012, op. cit.) focus mostly on the interaction and experiences of parents with the education system and not on the voices of the learner. Their study mostly focuses on Black Caribbean families and not on those of other ethnic minority groups. The educational experiences of BWA students - unveiled through narratives of lived experiences and analysed using CRT – remains a gap in British educational literature. It is this gap in research that this thesis seeks to address. As discussed above, this is an endeavour that has the potential of contributing logically towards improved educational achievement.

CHAPTER FOUR

PHILOSOPHICAL UNDERPINNINGS, THEORETICAL AND METHODOLOGICAL FRAMEWORKS.

This thesis explores the lived school experiences of young people of BWA origin who attended secondary school in the North-West region of England between 2003 and 2013. As discussed in Chapter Three, while issues of achievement and underachievement have received wide attention, the experiences of the learners remain relatively under-investigated and under-reported, with relatively few studies exploring in-depth the reflections of learners on their schooling experiences. The current thesis was therefore designed and carried out as an in-depth investigation of those experiences.

In carrying out the investigation leading to this thesis, there was purposive recourse to several philosophies, theories and approaches. The philosophical, theoretical and overall planning decisions were reached based on 'fitness for purpose' (Cohen, et al. 2011:73). In propagating the fitness for purpose rule, Cohen et al. explain that 'there is no single blueprint for planning research…. The purposes of the research determine the methodology and design of the research' (ibid). This chapter reports on the central philosophical underpinnings and theories that were applied throughout this thesis. Before discussing the theoretical framework of this thesis, I shall first present the philosophical underpinnings.

4.1 Philosophical and conceptual fields

According to Creswell (2013:15), 'whether we are aware of it or not, we always bring certain beliefs and philosophical assumptions to our research…. The difficulty lies first in becoming aware of these assumptions and beliefs and second in deciding whether we will actively incorporate them into our qualitative studies'. While Creswell might be right, it needs to be added that such experience will vary between researchers and even with the same researcher, it would depend on what was being researched in the first place. In the case of this thesis, there was no difficulty in being aware of philosophical influences or in deciding whether to actively incorporate them. The challenge however was on the manner of incorporating these philosophical influences given the relative methodological novelty they bring in the search for further explanations and understandings to educational experiences. Philosophical assumptions and beliefs impact on nearly every aspect of research from what problems are identified, what questions are asked and how data is collected and interpreted. The relevant assumptions and beliefs and how they are applied in this study of school experiences are discussed below.

4.2 The ontological assumptions and school experiences.

Ontology is the study of the nature of being. Ontological questions, for example, are about the existence of truth or reality and the nature of such existence. Ontology further deals with why particular things occur and how they are interconnected. From an ontological standpoint therefore, questions about the existence of experiences and nature of such existence are fundamental. Two broad philosophical schools can be applied in answering the ontological questions about experiences. These schools are positivism and interpretivism. Positivists believe that reality is stable and can be

observed and described in an objective way (independent of the phenomena being studied). Positivists 'ignore or presume its subjects' interpretations of situations' (Cohen, et al. 2011:17). On the other hand, interpretivists contend that reality is fluid and can be fully understood only through subjective interpretations of and intervention in the phenomena being studied. The interpretive (also known as the ethnogenic) perspective, 'concentrates on the ways in which persons construe their world' (Cohen, *ibid*).

Contrary to the positivist perspective, the interpretive perspective further presents with distinguishing features that make it more suitable for application in the study of lived experiences. Blumer (1986) explains that through the interpretive perspective people are not only deliberate and creative in their actions but they act intentionally and make meanings in and through what they do. Through this perspective, event and individuals are unique and predominantly non-generalisable. Interpretivism demands a strong need to examine situations through the eyes of the participants. This resonates with Thomas' (2000) dictum that if people define their situations as real then they are real in their consequences. Morrison (2002) further emphasises this point by explaining that if someone believes there is a mouse under the table they will act as though there was one regardless of whether there is one or not. Likewise, if students in a school perceived for example that teachers had low expectations of them, the consequences of that perception will be real as the students will behave as students of low expectations whether the teachers had low expectations or not. Human behaviour is therefore immensely complex and in turn renders situations and experiences fluid and intangible. Given that this thesis is about past students' school experiences and from their subjective perspectives, it was very logical to use interpretivism as the underpinning ontological philosophy.

4.3 Epistemological assumptions and school experiences.

Closely related to ontology is epistemology. Epistemology is generally seen as the 'theory of knowledge' (Audi, 1998). Burrell and Morgan (1979) further explain that epistemology concerns itself with the very bases of knowledge – its nature and forms, how it can be acquired, and how it can be disseminated. There is therefore a link between ontology and epistemology. Hitchcock and Hughes (1995:21) draw the link between ontology and epistemology by explaining that assumptions about entities and their nature lead to assumptions about ways of researching into the nature of those entities and their nature. The implication for this relationship on research is significant in the sense that …

> …how one aligns oneself in this debate profoundly affects how one will go about uncovering knowledge of social behaviour. The view that knowledge is hard, objective and tangible will demand of researchers an observer role, together with an allegiance to the methods of natural science.
>
> To see knowledge as personal, subjective and unique, however, imposes on researchers an involvement with their subjects and a rejection of the ways of the natural scientist. (Cohen, et al. 2011:6).

Given that part of the objectives of this thesis is to enable the participants share their experiences from their own perspectives, the epistemological stance in this thesis is that knowledge about their school experiences is not 'hard, objective or tangible'. Instead, such knowledge is seen to be 'personal, subjective and unique'.

Closely linked to the ontological and epistemological assumptions adopted in this thesis, is a third set of assumptions concerning the relationship between human beings and their environments. According to Burrell and Morgan (1979), there are two basic positions held in this area and these are 'determinism and voluntarism'.

Determinism explains a situation where people respond mechanically and deterministically to their environment thereby becoming products of their environments. They lose their free will and individual agency and their actions are precluded by external structures. On the other hand, voluntarism explains a situation where people are 'initiators of their own actions with free will and creativity, producing their own environments' (Cohen, 2011:6).

Given that the ontological and epistemological assumptions in this thesis are that knowledge about experiences are personal, unique and subjective, it is possible therefore that the same environment can produce puppets and initiators. It also follows that the same educational setting can produce both deterministic puppets and voluntarist initiators. Prior to gaining access to and analysing the experiences of my participants, it was impossible to decide what kind of relationship they had with their environments. However, in line with taking an ontological and epistemological stance, it was necessary to assume such a relationship. The assumption in this thesis was that it is better for people to be voluntarists. This assumption is compatible with one of the wider objectives of this thesis to empower students of BWA origins in English schools. Regardless of whether the students were puppets or actors within their school experiences, it is intended that by sharing their experiences they will logically become initiators of future school structures.

4.4 Axiological considerations

Added to the ontological and epistemological 'stemology' is axiology (Cohen et al. 2011:3). Axiology is about the values people hold about phenomena and, in research, it influences 'the choice of the problem, choice of paradigm to guide the problem, choice of theoretical framework, choice of major data-gathering and data-analytic

methods, choice of context, treatment of values already resident issue within the context, and choice of format(s) for presenting findings' (Lincoln et al. 2011:116). With personal values having to affect virtually every aspect of research, it is therefore important for researchers to share their backgrounds, beliefs and values and how those have influenced their research. This is even more important here given that this current thesis is rooted in practice and is a product of professional development.

This thesis has been substantially influenced by many years of my own professional journey and development as a practitioner in inclusive educational studies and practice. This journey and development together with my overall identity as a BWA have influenced not only what is being researched now but also how it is being researched. I am therefore ethically bound to share not only some of my own experiences and positions but also some personal and professional interests attached to this thesis. To follow is a disclosure of my personal stance a researcher, which is largely influenced by my childhood as explained in my autobiography in Chapter One.

Partly because of family values, I have always considered education as a powerful determinant of several outcomes in life. Starting off by being born to middle class parents who could afford my education in some of the best schools and colleges overseas, I grew up seeing how most of my peers who did not have similar education or any education at all found themselves in situations and circumstances they testified as regretful. That some of my friends did not have education saddened me and the thought that it was not their 'fault' but lack of economic means upset me even more. With this kind of feeling and experiences I find it necessary to put forward what I seek to call 'a social model of exclusion'. This concept is partly explained through its shared genealogy with the 'social model of disability' by which Oliver (1983) conceptualises

disability as a ‘problem’ located within the society [not the individual]. Accordingly, ‘it is not individual limitations, of whatever kind, which are the cause of the problem but society's failure to provide appropriate services and adequately ensure the needs of disabled people are fully considered in its social organisation’. Likewise, by the ‘social model of exclusion’, exclusion is a function of actions generated by agencies, structures and agenda external to the individuals.

Moving to the United Kingdom from West Africa (and having worked with more than five different further and higher education institutions and in as many different counties) I personally realised that unlike in several African countries where some people do not have the opportunity to go to school, virtually everyone in Britain can attend school or receive an ‘equivalent’ education. The difference I realised was that a substantial number of learners are ‘included’ in schools but ‘excluded’ from the curriculum.

Recent postgraduate education, training and practice as social worker within children and families services, and experience gained from being an Inclusive Education Consultant for various local authorities have also enabled me to see, understand and work within the wider socio-political context that informs life and educational experiences of children in schools in England. Recent senior management roles within further education sector and lecturing within higher education had also deepened my insight into the micro and macro political structures and tension that inform the learning experiences of students at all levels. As a poly-professional in education and social work, I assume a vantage position of insight relating to the intersectionality between education, social welfare and social justice. Together with my experiences overseas, the experience in Britain either orchestrated or gave

impetus to my interest in the learning experiences of learners excluded or at risk of exclusion and marginalisation.

As a BWA settled in Britain, I have close friends and relatives from Africa whose children attend schools in Britain and sooner or later my own children will be part of the educational system. From a very personal standpoint, I am therefore keen to understand the experiences students of BWA origin in English schools.

As someone who has worked in inclusive education and advocated for inclusive practices for over 15 years, I have a professional interest in the experiences of my students. Like like-minded professionals, I am interested in understanding these experiences and in finding innovative and more effective responses to them.

4.5.0 Theoretical Framework: CRT and Traditional African Folklore

While using CRT as its overarching theoretical framework, this thesis (which harnesses various disciplines including social justice, inclusive education, sociology and anthropology) is also strung together by the application of other theories, sub-theories and conceptual traditions.

4.5.1 CRT? What is it doing in a nice country like England?

Organised by Lorna Roberts, the first official international seminar on CRT in England was held at Manchester Metropolitan University in November 2006. The following year at the British Educational Research Association (BERA) Annual Conference, a significant number of papers and symposium were focus on CRT. While still in its developing stages when compared to its birthplace in the USA, (Chakrabarty, Roberts

and Preston, 2012:1), CRT is increasingly being adapted and used in England in many disciplines and particularly to 'explore and challenge the prevalence of racial inequality in society' (Rollock and Gillborn, 2011:1).

Seen in its emancipatory vision to combat inequalities arising from race and other intersectional factors, there are similarities in CRT in the UK and USA contexts. However, in his 'examination of race conscious scholarship and the diverse literature produced in the UK since the 1960s' Warmington (2012) argues that 'the transfer of CRT to the UK context should be understood within this broader context of black British intellectual production'. This helps in rooting CRT in the UK context, giving it an emic quality that enhances its effective use in the UK. However, this formidability has not completely dispelled the criticisms against CRT and it use in the UK context.

4.5.2 Criticism of CRT

In making the case for the relevance of CRT, its supporters are aware of the level of criticism CRT has been subjected over the years. For example, Cole (2009) seeks to question the validity of the central tenets of CRT; Kaufman (2005) feels that CRT has no relevance in the UK context and should be confined to the USA; and Hayes (2013) further contests and seeks to refute the status of CRT as a theory. As pointed out by Valdes, Culp, and Harris (2002, p. 4), "despite the doubts, sneers, and attacks, CRT has not only survived but is also flourishing as it enters its second decade". Many years after this observation, CRT has not only flourished in the USA but has gained more international popularity and recognition in educational and other fields of research. For example, Gillborn (2008, 2015), Ladson-Billings (2015) and Warmington (2012, 2020) have used CRT in explaining racism and inequalities within

the British educational system; Hylton (2005) in the field of sports and leisure; and Daftary (2018) in social work. Having achieved such extensive success only a few decades after its first ever official workshop was held at St Benedict Center in Madison, Wisconsin in 1989, it is no wonder that Warmington (2020:31) condemns the above unguarded opposition to CRT as "a set of rehearsed criticisms … and discourses of derision" rooted in age-old deep-seated aversion to race-conscious social analyses.

Its growing popularity and momentum notwithstanding, CRT is a relatively untapped theoretical resource for educational research. With persisting underachievement among most BME groups and with the schooling experiences of students of BWA backgrounds underrepresented in educational research, CRT presents as a refreshing and complementary critical lens for deconstructing and challenging racial inequality in England including examining the schooling experiences of students of BWA origin in English schools.

4.5.3 CRT: Core Tenets.

In England, as in the USA, there is no single position statement that defines CRT. As it is rapidly growing in popularity, CRT continues to be defined and redefined. However, a common social constructivist perspective on race and a commitment to understanding and interrupting the marginalisation of one group of people by another help in determining some core principles of CRT. Together with their relevance to this thesis, these tenets are discussed below.

A core tenet of CRT that is relevant to this thesis is that:

> ‘racism is normal, not aberrant … is an ingrained feature of our landscape, it looks ordinary and natural to persons in the culture. Formal equal opportunity can thus remedy only the more extreme and shocking forms of injustice … it can do little about the business-as-usual forms of racism that people of color confront every day and that account for much misery, alienation, and despair’ (Delgado and Stefancic 2000, p. xvi).

Examples of everyday racism that go largely unacknowledged and unchallenged are found in different forms of negative stereotyping, prejudice and low expectations on black Africans by consequence of their race.

The ‘normalisation’ of racism is contrasted with and given impetus by the social construction of race which says ‘whiteness is the norm’ (Guess, 2006:649) and creates a binary of racial inequality with white supremacy. In constructively assigning a racial superiority to whites, white supremacy entails socioeconomic and political systems whereby white people, on both collective and individual levels, enjoy a structural advantage over people of other races (Delgado and Stefancic, 1997 and Fine, 1997). This supremacist view of whiteness has served over centuries to create environments that protect and insulate the interests of whites at the expense of other races. Through this, ‘whiteness accrues privilege and status, [and] gets itself surrounded by protective pillows of resources and/or benefits of the doubt’ (Fine, 1997:57).

Racial discrimination is further explained in CRT through the tenet of intersectionality. Initially used to frame and explain the discrimination experienced by African American women (Crenshaw 1995), intersectionality shows how multiple categories of race, gender, class, disability can interplay with the result of leaving certain groups of people disenfranchised. For example, Crenshaw explains how an organisation that claimed

to recruit inclusively from various backgrounds ended up discriminating against African American women. African American men and white women were recruited to show racial and gender representation respectively. By so doing, African American women were being excluded given that African American men had been recruited to represent African Americans while white women had been recruited to represent women. The intersectionality of race and gender meant that African American women were being discriminated against.

Another important tenet of CRT is its application of the concepts of 'storytelling' and 'counter storytelling' (Delgado and Stefancic 2000, page 41). Counter storytelling provides a counter version to narratives, knowledge and beliefs that are generally assumed to be true, but which are in fact not authentic. This characteristic feature is effective for use in this thesis whereby narratives of lived experiences serve as counter stories to common assumptions that institutions of learning are neutral spaces where equality of opportunity, diversity and social justice flourish. For instance, the assumption that basing education on meritocracy makes it fairer could be challenged with counter stories that show that the idea of meritocracy is instrumental in fostering the under-privileging of students of Black Africa origin (Park and Liu, 2014 and Crawford, 2010). This is largely since assessments within the education system are racially biased. The educational system claims to be committed to 'equality of opportunity' for all. However, a critical look at the concept of equality of opportunity (PRCEO 2010) shows that it does not effectively serve the interest of already disadvantaged groups like students of black African origin. Through powerful counter storytelling, CRT seeks to replace such common beliefs with representations of the true nature of educational establishments.

The idea of challenging myths (Delgado, 2000), on which the concept of counter storytelling is predicated, is reflected within the folklore tradition whose early origins are traceable back to griots narrating stories to ensure that the true history and culture of their peoples are preserved and bequeathed for prosperity and posterity. It is very important for learners to be given the opportunity to name their own realities. As Delgado (2000, p. 60) explains, 'the same object, as everyone knows, can be described in many ways. A rectangular red object on my living room floor may be a nuisance if I stub my toe on it in the dark, a doorstop if I use it for that purpose, further evidence of my lackadaisical housekeeping to my visiting mother, a toy to my young daughter, or simply a brick left over from my patio restoration project. There is no single true or all-encompassing, description.' This concept of multiple realities and how beneficial they are to the beholder is closely related to one of Habermas' (McCarthy 1984) three generic domains of human interest – emancipatory knowledge. This involves:

> interest in the way one's history and biography has expressed itself in the way one sees oneself, one's roles and social expectations. Emancipation is from libidinal, institutional or environmental forces which limit our options and rational control over our lives but have been taken for granted as beyond human control (a.k.a. 'reification'). Insights gained through critical self-awareness are emancipatory in the sense that at least one can recognize the correct reasons for his or her problems. (Habermas in McCarthy, ibid)).

A strategy that helps with counter storytelling is the need for users of CRT to have recourse to their indigenous cultures and histories to seek alternative and emancipatory knowledge. In examining the diverse literature in the United Kingdom since the 1960s and identifying some of the dimensions of education that have been

scrutinised by black British scholars, Warmington (2014 and 2012) argues that the transfer of CRT to the UK context should take account of such black intellectual production. Citing the contributions of historical and contemporary prominent blacks like Bernard Coard, Maureen Stone, John La Rose, Paul Gilroy, CLR James, Heidi Mirza, Claudia Jones and Ron Ramdin (to name a few) Warmington (2012: 8) emphasises 'the constant necessity to make visible "hidden" black British intellectual traditions' when considering CRT in the United Kingdom context.

It is therefore appropriate for a thesis that seeks to present the students' version of their lived schooling experiences, instead of those of others, to apply the CRT as its theoretical framework.

Another tenet of CRT is 'interest convergence' or 'material determinism' (Delgado and Stafancic, 2012:8) by which referring to case law *Brown v. Board of Education* Derrick Bell argued that white elites tolerate and encourage racial advances for blacks only when such advances also promote white self-interest. In this instance, Bell explained that Brown's legal victory against segregated education was allowed only because it served the interest of both blacks and whites. Even though these arguments were initially substantiated with claims from the field of law, it is also worth noting that a counter story to some of the educational advances for blacks are potentially engendered by interest convergence. For instance, the USA No Child Left Behind and its UK counterpart Every Child Matters are schemes that benefit blacks and minorities as well as whites. A theory that exhorts such insights is likely to yield greater understandings if applied in the investigation of learner experiences.

Another fundamental tenet of CRT is the notion of a unique voice of colour. 'Voice of color holds that because of their different histories and experiences with oppression,

black, American Indian, Asian and Latina/o writers and thinkers may be able to communicate to their white counterparts matters that the whites are unlikely to know' (Delgado and Stafancic, 2012: 10). As seen from my brief autobiography presented in Chapter One, I am not only a practitioner in the relevant field but also a BWA who, by my unique voice of colour, would be able to communicate insightfully to other people what they are unlikely to know. By upholding the unique voice of colour as a tenet and thereby bringing such benefits, CRT is considered a formidable theory for use in this thesis.

Another key tenet of CRT which is relevant for this thesis is its commitment to emancipation of the underprivileged. This stems from the argument advanced by CRT that 'whites have been the primary beneficiaries of civil rights legislation' (Ladson-Billings, 1999: 13). One of the expected benefits of investigating the learners' educational experiences is that it will foreground educational practices that have the potential to improve the educational experiences of these black African students. This calls for a 'repositioning that [sees] the world through the eyes of the dispossessed and [acts] against the ideological and institutional processes and forms that reproduce oppressive conditions' (Apple et. al. 2010, p. 3). To achieve this, this thesis derives understandings and analyses of educational experiences and expectations that are informed by notions of 'critical pedagogy' (Freire 1971, 1998, 2004).

The success associated with CRT makes it valid theory to employ in a study of this type. First, in the mid-1980s CRT was mostly concerned with critiquing law, society and race but its growing popularity has seen it recently expanded into education and related disciplines. Also, as rightly pointed out, CRT can boast of its contribution towards 'affirmative action policies, provision of truth with issues of urban planning

(that include gentrification/segregation), and equal and fair housing rights to name a few' (Hartlep, 2009, p. 6). It is hoped that the use of CRT in this thesis will reveal 'truths' about learner experiences that will in turn logically lead to the development of relevant policies and practice.

4.5.4 Counter Storytelling and African folklore

As part of its application of CRT, this thesis draws significantly on African folklore in general, and storytelling. Before discussing how it is applied in this thesis, it is important to justify the use of African folklore. First, there are strong links between CRT and African folklore. For example, one of the key tenets of CRT is that African Americans should have recourse to their indigenous African culture as a source for inspiration and rejuvenation. Such a recourse almost naturally leads straight into African folklore for it is a quintessential part of that culture. Another strong link between CRT and African folklore is that they both use counter storytelling to challenge popular narratives. Second, African folklore is because it is a practical step towards decolonising research approaches and methods. The decolonising agenda is part of the wider objective of this thesis that is about people whose histories are linked to colonisation and whose perspectives are central to the thesis. Third, African folklore is a constituent part of the cultural heritage of the research population and research participants. As it is an objective of this thesis to investigate the school experiences from the perspective of the learners themselves, it is also right that the thesis draws from that heritage.

With their intriguing memories and storytelling abilities that allow them to keep alive the culture, history, genealogies and aspirations of their people, in indigenous BWA

story-telling societies ‘griots’ are ‘keepers’ of their cultures. In a similar manner, the participants in this thesis are the keepers of their educational experiences. Given that stories are one of the ways through which people make sense of their worlds by sharing these stories the research participants in this thesis give other people the opportunity to start developing understandings and insights about their experiences.

Furthermore, African folklore which has storytelling at is core, is a vent through which hidden cultures and traditions can gain exposure. The experiences and traditions of blacks in Britain is one that is hidden. For example, by exploring the work of prominent black British (C.L.R. James, Claudia Jones, Ambalavaner Sivanandan, Stuart Hall and Paul Gilroy, Warmington (2014) unveils robust black intellectual traditions that have shaped educational policy, practice, philosophy, and social justice in Britain. Folklore is one way of keeping alive traditions that could otherwise be forgotten.

4.5.5 The purpose of folk tale in BWA tradition

Oral tales serve a wide range of purpose in indigenous BWA cultures and this includes entertainment, moralising, problem solving and emancipation. The African folk tale is story from which crucial elements could be identified. These include the problems or dilemmas facing the community, who the active agents in the community are, what their motivations and ambitions are and how they set about in addressing those problems and or achieving their goals. Examples of tales that serve these functions include ‘dilemma’ tales (Okpewho, 2009:116) and ‘heroic tales’ like ‘The monkey and the leopard’, and ‘The orphan girl’ (Tala,1989). Observing the effectiveness of African folklore in addressing ‘the degraded conditions of social and political life in African societies today’, Okpewho (ibid:119), a distinguished professor in African oral tradition, asserts that ‘we can no longer continue to ignore the message of the metaphors with

which our storytelling traditions are textured'. Similarly, with a backdrop of inequalities within the society, the counter stories of participants in this thesis should not be ignored.

4.6 Researcher reflexivity and methodological implications

Questions relating to the researcher's role, stance, perspective, whether they are an insider or outsider and their overall impact on the research still attract considerable attention in research (Yin, 2018; Finlay, 2002 and Gallais, 2008). Gallais (2008) observes that research has a 'nuanced nature' due to the researcher's own values, beliefs, identity construction, and their overall influence on the research. Preissle (2006: 691) further explains that qualitative enquiries are not neutral activities, and researchers are not neutral. Researchers have values, biases and world views, and these act as lenses through which they view and interpret the already-interpreted world of participants. My personal values and views are largely a product of my personal history, which I have introduced in my autobiography in Chapter One. For instance, in the process of conducting this thesis I had some of my own values and biases that I upheld and could not dissociate from. These include an extreme distaste for all forms of discrimination, and a fervent believe that inclusive education can be very instrumental in narrowing the gaps created through discrimination. Having values and or biases like these can sometimes present as a potential limiting factor for research but as Hammersley and Atkinson (1983:14) explain, reflexivity recognises that researchers are unavoidably interwoven in the social world that they are researching. Reflexivity gives the opportunity for the researcher to recognise and make explicit their interests, values, motivations and inclinations and how all these

factors influence both the interpretation of data and the whole research process (Etherington 2004; Payne 2007).

In discussing different aspects of this thesis, I have wherever necessary used reflexivity to make clear the subjectivities I as a researcher have had in the research process. One of my most crucial subjectivity relates to my assumption that as a BWA, I hold a privileged position in undertaking research for this thesis. This claim is rooted in the notion of 'unique voice of color' (Delgado and Stefancic 2012) which is a key element of CRT. The unique voice of color 'holds that because of their different histories and experiences with oppression, black, Indian, Asian, and Latino/a writers and thinkers may be able to communicate to their white counterparts matters that the whites are unlikely to know'. (Delgado and Stefancic, 2012).

I recognise that reflexivity is not only about my relationship with subject matter but also my relationship with my research participants. For instance, I recognise my relative educational success compared with my participants and the potential impact of power differentials between my participants and me. How this and other factors were managed is discussed in the following chapter on research methods and procedures.

4.7 Chapter conclusion

This chapter has discussed the philosophical underpinnings, theoretical and methodological frameworks applicable to this thesis. Consistent with an overall qualitative methodology, the ontological assumption in this thesis is interpretivist and the epistemological stance is one that sees knowledge as personal, unique and subjective. Some axiological considerations that include the role, influences and stance of the researcher have also been discussed. Building on previous chapters,

this chapter has discussed CRT, its core principles and connection with African folklore, as the central theoretical framework for this thesis. The following chapter extends this theoretical and methodological considerations by discussing the research methods and procedures.

CHAPTER FIVE

RESEARCH METHODS AND PROCEDURES

Having discussed the philosophical stance and theoretical frameworks in Chapter Four, this chapter discusses how these were operationalised to inform the research methods, processes and procedures. Given the contestable nature of knowledge and especially that which is derived through research findings and conclusions, a detailed explanation of the data analysis process has also been provided in this section to show how and on what basis the findings and conclusions in this thesis were reached. This section also covers a discussion of the ethical and political issues encountered in the research process.

5.1 Qualitative enquiry approach

Given the epistemological and ontological stance adopted in this thesis, and assumptions about the phenomenon being that educational experiences are subjective and interpretive, this thesis took the form of a qualitative enquiry. As opposed to quantitative enquiries, qualitative research attempts 'to implement a critical interpretive approach that will help make sense of the terrifying conditions that define daily life' (Denzin and Lincoln, 2011:xii). Denzin and Lincoln (ibid) further note that 'there is no one way to do interpretive, qualitative inquiry. We are all interpretive bricoleurs stuck in the present, working against the past, as we move into politically charged and challenging future'. Methodological decisions were therefore based on a careful selection of compatible methods and strategies that culminated into the achievement of the objectives of this thesis.

The qualitative approach was additionally resourceful in this thesis not only because of its ability to engage the 'moral, allegorical and therapeutic' dimensions of participants' experiences, but also due to the approach's 'avowed humanistic and social justice commitment to study the social world from the perspective of the interacting individual' (Denzin and Lincoln, 2011: xiii). For example, allegorical is in the sense that the experiences of one participant can deliver broader messages about social issues. The approach is therapeutic in the sense that in reliving their experiences through reflections and storytelling, participants could derive some kind of healing (Bergner, 2007).

5.2 Researcher-subjectivities and research methods

Having discussed axiology in the previous chapter as the influence the researcher can have on their research, this section extends that discussion by explaining how, as a research tool, the researcher's 'subjectivity' (Langhout, 2006) affected this current enquiry. In managing my subjectivity in this research, I drew from a range of guidelines including those professed by Robert Yin (born 1941, an American social scientist known for his work on case study research as well as on qualitative research). Yin (2018: 82) suggests 'a list of desired attributes' that not only help in managing subjectivity but also enhance the quality of qualitative research process.

While it is sometimes expected for the researcher to be neutral within the research process, Smith (2005) argues that an insider has a necessary advantage when conducting research with indigenous peoples. Accordingly, research with indigenous people is more appropriate if undertaken by a researcher who is an insider. This argument is strongly supported by Grace (1985) who outlines four things that make

research by ‘outsiders’ dangerous for indigenous peoples. She argues that: 1) research by outsiders does not reinforce indigenous peoples’ customs, values, identity and aspirations; 2) when researchers write about non-indigenous people, they write as if indigenous people do not exist; 3) when they write about indigenous peoples, most of the things are untrue and; 4) they write negative and insensitive things about indigenous peoples. While Grace’s claims might not apply to every piece of research, I agree with Grace that being an insider has certain advantages. While Grace uses the term ‘indigenous peoples’, her argument is applicable to research with BWA students in England. Being a BWA in England, with experiences as shown in my autobiography, gave me a privileged stance within the research processes.

I had a privileged position of being a BWA investigating the lived educational experiences of BWA students. For example, I had capacity to understand and empathise with some key elements of the participants’ experiences. I was familiar with certain comparisons the participants made between their home culture and mainstream school culture. Having this ‘firm grasp of the issues being studied’ is one of the key attributes espoused by Yin (2018: 83). Despite having a firm grasp of the issues, I still had to observe and be sensitive to ‘contrary evidence’ (ibid.)

Despite these insider privileges, certain factors meant I was still an outsider in the research process. These included that I was of a different social and professional standing to the participants; the participants had recently completed secondary school whereas I completed my secondary nearly three decades ago; and the childhood experiences of my participants were in England whereas mine was abroad. Some of the implications of these differences are that my assumptions were restricted and

controlled, and I had the curiosity to explore educational experiences that could only be best understood from the perspective of the participants themselves.

5.3 Research population: students of BWA heritage in English secondary schools

The research population for this thesis is adults of BWA origin who attended an English secondary school between 2003 and 2013. These individuals were, at the time of the research either in further, higher education, employed or otherwise. According to the 2011 UK census which recorded an overall UK population of over 62 million people, nearly 14% are ethnic minorities, and about 10% of those minorities are black Africans (Office for National Statistics, 2011). It is difficult to determine with precision what percentage among the ethnic minority population are of BWA origin. This is made difficult largely due to the contentious way in which different groups of people were categorised in the census. For example, the category White included 'White English/Welsh/Scottish/Northern Irish/British' while Black included 'black/African/Caribbean/ black British'. There has been a steady increase in the minority ethnic population from about 6% in 1991 to about 9% in 2001 and 14% in 2011. To present a clearer picture of profile of the research population, it is necessary to consider several related factors. These include history and patterns of migration and UK demography of black African populations.

The majority of BWAs in UK reside mostly in UK's biggest cities of London, Birmingham and Manchester. The same is true of the distribution of BWA students (Office for National Statistics, 2011).

BWA students do not constitute a homogenous group. For instance, this group includes people who were born in UK and those who were not. It is also made up of students who completed primary school in England and those who might have immigrated into UK after their primary education. While there could be some nuanced differences among students of BWA origin, the focus of this thesis has been on educational experiences during secondary school and not on the differences within this group. Participants were therefore drawn from this wider group, regardless of where they were born or where they attended primary school.

5.4 Sampling and recruitment of research participants

As with most other studies, sampling is one of the most crucial elements of this thesis. Cohen et al. 2011:143 emphasised that 'the quality of a piece of research not only stands or falls by the appropriateness of methodology and instrumentation but also by the suitability of the sampling strategy that has been adopted.' Before deciding as to what sampling approach was used in this thesis, two broad types of sampling strategies namely probability and non-probability or purposive sampling (Cohen et al. 2011: 153) were considered. In probability sampling, participants are selected at random, whereas in non-probability sampling, participants are purposefully selected from the overall population. The latter approach was used in this thesis. By setting the scope for the investigation, some of the parameters for subject participation were already set. For instance, rather than drawing a sample from all over England, this thesis drew participants from North West region of England. Secondly, participants had to be those who had completed school between 2003 and 2013. This ten-year period was a sensitive time in my personal and professional reflections. I reflected on the 2003 death of Victoria Climbie (Laming 2003), a girl of BWA origin who died

due to the failings of services including education. Linked to this death, there was the introduction of the Green Paper 'Every Child Matters, that was later promulgated into legislation as Children Act 2004. I was interested in understanding the schooling experiences of black West students within ten years off these events. After determining the sampling techniques and related criteria, the next step was the actual recruitment of participants.

As was the case with this thesis, it is usually a challenge to gain access when trying to recruit participants for research. Referring to access givers as 'gatekeepers', Van Maanen (1998) explains that such challenge is one that must be addressed before research can take place. Bearing in mind how difficult this process could be, gaining access to participants in this thesis was relatively easy.

Mindful of the fact that people of BWA background who completed secondary between 2003 and 2013 would be in varied post school destinations, a decision was made to recruit from multiple walks of life to capture such diversity. In this way, higher education institutions were approached to capture those who had continued their education into universities. Being venues that attracted a wide range of people irrespective of their educational attainments, local churches, community libraries and community centres were also approached to capture potential participants who might not have continued into higher education. Help was solicited by contacting relevant gatekeepers at universities and churches. For example, as soon as the appropriate members of staff within the institutions contacted were approached, they reviewed the 'Information for Participants' (Appendix C) and were happy for a notice to be put on notice boards inviting people to take part in the research. I observe that this relative ease in gaining access was influenced by the fact that the subject of research

(being educational experiences) had more to do with previous institutions rather than those where the participants were involved at the time of research. More so, the participants were all adults who did not display any vulnerabilities that could prohibit involving them in research. A similar approach was used to recruit from churches and community centres.

In addition to recruiting participants through the above media, a 'snowball sampling' (Arthur et al. 2012: 49) strategy was used. Snowball sampling 'involves asking participants if they are aware of other individuals who would also be interested in participating in the research and recruiting participants via other participants who act as gatekeepers' (Curtis, et al. 2014: 29). Two out of the ten participants were recruited through the snowballing technique. By using multiple recruitment strategies, I succeeded in selecting a dynamic sample from multiple backgrounds that generally reflected the varied post school destinations of learners of BWA background.

5.5 Research Sample

The sample size in qualitative research remains a contentious area even among leading qualitative methodologists. Bernard (2013:175) suggests that '10 to 20 knowledgeable people are enough to uncover and understand the core categories in any well-defined cultural domain or study of lived experience'. Onwuegbuzie and Leech (2007) do not suggest a specific number but advocate precedence from previous studies. Corbin and Strauss (2015) feel that one can still reach saturation with 5 one-hour interviews in some qualitative studies. Based on these guidelines, together with the need to 'identify relevant categories at work …the aspects and features … and shine light into key dimensions and processes in a complex social life' (Neuman, 2011:241), a sample of ten participants was judged as suitable and the

decision was made a priori. A small sample is also in keeping with African folklore whereby griots who are the key custodians of the community's stories are usually few in their numbers. As with the griots, what is essential is to make sure that the participants were 'knowledgeable' (Bernard, 2013: 175) enough to fully fulfil the role of storytellers.

Qualitative studies generally attract more criticism around their potential for generalisation, and more so where a relatively small size sample is used. Even though 'no design is infallible' (Curtis et al. 2014:81), using small samples in research usually attracts criticisms some of which could be unnecessary. One of these criticisms relates to the challenge of generality. In their discussion of the use of small samples, Hodkinson and Hodkinson (2001:10) explain that '… case studies can make no claims to be typical … because the sample is small and idiosyncratic, and because data is predominantly non-numerical, there is no way to establish the probability that data is representative of some larger population.' While the above observation might be true, it is representative of an over-simplistic suggestion that a researcher can either choose between qualitative and interpretive methods that reject all generalisations or quantitative and positivist methods that afford more explicit generalisations. Indeed, as explained by Payne and Williams (2005:296):

> Qualitative research methods can produce an intermediate type of limited generalization, 'moderatum generalizations'. These resemble the modest, pragmatic generalizations drawn from personal experience which, by bringing a semblance of order and consistency to social interaction, make everyday life possible.

The potential of moderate generalisation notwithstanding, it needs to be restated here that it was not the aim of this thesis to make sweeping sociological or educational

statements that stay the same over long periods of time, or across ranges of cultures. Also linked to the ontological stance which professes the subjective nature of experiences, it was never necessary to make such generalisations. The objectives of this thesis lie in bringing out messages inherent in experiences. Concerns about scales and or prevalence are equally worthwhile but are outside the direct remit of this current thesis.

5.6 Cases: Individual participants including their biographies

It is important to introduce the ten research participants for two reasons. First, while this thesis is a study of experiences, it is respectful of the participants to acknowledge through this introduction that there are people behind the experiences. A presentation and discussion of the experiences without a dedicated introduction of the individual participants almost amount to dehumanising of the experiences. Second, the participants are not homogenous. Highlighting their individual identities is in keeping with the core tenets of CRT that relate to the identity of people of black African origin.

In compliance with ethical commitments and in agreement with the participants, the ten participants are referred by pseudonyms derived from popular first names within their indigenous BWA culture of the participant. Henceforth, these participants are known as: Ada, Akwa, Nwadike, Yemi (females), Ade, Besong, Enow, Koffi, Obi, and Tunde (males).

While the participants share and African heritage, it should be remembered that they are individuals. They have individual identities and identity is an important feature

both of CRT and AF that this thesis draws on. More so, these participants live in a society that, as seen in various censuses, has sought to describe them under various ethnic categories. As such, in presenting their brief biographies, I have tried to highlight how they identify themselves. All the participants were born between 1985 and 1995.

Ada

Ada is approximately twenty-three years old and has been living in England since the age of eight. Her parents and four other siblings fled religious persecution in their West African country and have since settled in England as refugees. Prior to immigrating to England, Ada and her family stayed as refugees for one year in another African country where they felt was not safe for them.

Ada's mother worked in Social Care while her father is a private hire-driver. Her parents had no formal qualifications when they moved to England but have since achieved qualifications to Level 3. Ada was in her second year in university reading for a degree in science and hopes to become a medical doctor in the future. Ada explained that by trying to go all the way to become a medical doctor, she is optimising the opportunities her parents never had. According to her, her parents are 'very bright' people and would have done better if they were not stalled by their asylum seeking and refugee status when they first came to England.

Ada self-identifies as a BWA British and explains further that

> Sometimes I saw myself more as a refugee than anything else … may be I just got carried by the stories my parents tell me of how we were poorly treated as refugees….not having much because of restrictions and being called sort of

names. I know people who were called names but who were never refugees…a lot of these people think all black Africans in England are refugees if you see what I mean.

By “all these people” Ada meant non-blacks.

Akwa

Akwa is in her early-twenties and first came to like in England at the age of seven. Her father was already settled here in England before Akwa, her mother and siblings joined him. Akwa has since had a younger brother born here in England. Akwa’s parents are educated to degree level and are both in employment. Akwa was at university reading for a degree in social work.

In explaining that being British was important for her, Akwa said that

> I was born in Africa and that’s it. My parents brought me here when I knew nothing about Africa. Most of the things I know about Africa today is what I have learned just like many other white kids that are born here. I have lived all my life here. My future is here. You can say there is an African twist to that but all I know is that I am British…. I find it funny when people think I am just African.

In addition to being a full-time social work student, Akwa was a relief support worker for adults with learning disabilities and mental health problems. Akwa does this job at weekends and during vacations. Akwa said that although her family is not desperate, she contributes to their financial wellbeing by earning some money herself.

She was very proud of this as she said “if I can help my family while I am still a student what more about when I graduate and get a good job!”

Akwa said she wanted to become an Advanced Mental Health Social Work Practitioner partly due to her belief that blacks are disproportionately represented in mental health diagnoses. She said that as part of her social work training, she had watched where a black man was wrongly diagnosed and sectioned. She feels the black man might not have been sectioned if he was white.

Akwa said she wanted to “go far in life” and getting a social work degree and a good job would only be the “start to that process”.

Nwadike

Nwadike is approximately twenty-five years old. She first came to England as an unaccompanied child, living initially with her extended family and later with her own parents who moved to England some years after. Her parents were educated to degree level in West Africa but since moving to England had gained no further qualifications. Only Nwadike’s mother is in full time permanent employment. Her father does manual labour on irregular patterns through recruitment agencies. Nwadike successfully completed her secondary school. She attempted to further her education at another local high school but dropped out in the first year. Nwadike likes singing and dancing and was working hard to become a popstar in the future.

Nwadike said that while she was black African British, she would like her music and dancing to be reflect her roots and have a universal appeal as well. In her words:

> It's not all about grime and free style even though that still needs women to join in …yes, it is male dominated…what I mean is bring in something like Fela Kuti but liven it up with some crazy dancing. That way you are jazzy and fresh. Tell me … who wouldn't want a bit of that?

Yemi

Yemi is of the same age group as the other female participants but unlike the others who were born abroad, Yemi was born in England. Yemi has travelled several times to West Africa with her parents and like her parents, she feels West Africa is her ultimate home. Yemi is a single mother, not in employment, education nor in training. She hopes to one day go back to school as a mature student and to gain a degree so she can become a social worker. Yemi explained that "people might think I am a black woman … doing nothing with my life … having children and the rest … but I have a focus. Nothing can stop me".

Yemi felt being 'African' was most relevant to her and stated that:

> It was important for me to be seen as Black British West African because that is who I am. I was born here and have acquired British citizenship. But that does not mean that is who I am. I live my life as a BWA and that makes me who I am. I use the term West because there are a lot of people who are black and from Africa but who are different from me.

On one occasion that Yemi went to school having plaited her hair using hair extensions she was told by the student welfare officer to undo it before reporting to school the following day. Yemi felt she was expressing her beauty and culture

through her hairstyle and that an attack on it was a statement against her person and race. Practically, she said it had taken the whole weekend and a lot of money to style her hair and was not able or happy to undo it overnight. Yemi said her parents were equally angered and decided she stayed at home in protest. She did not report back to school for three days and on the fourth day the matter was resolved in her favour. According to Yemi's story, "soon after that incident other children…even whites started plaiting their hair with multi-colour extensions".

Ade

Ade was the youngest participant in the research. Aged between eighteen and twenty-one, Ade was born in England. He moved to Africa where he completed primary school before returning to start and finish secondary school in England. Ade completed secondary school only a few years ago, was studying for a General Certificate in Education Advanced Level and aspires to become an accountant or lawyer. Ade's wish was to open a school in his parents' country in West Africa in the future. Ade's parents are both educated to postgraduate level.

In explaining that she is both British and African Ade explained that:

> Well, I suppose I kind of like was born here and stuff so I think like a black British but then at the same time I still kind of identify like where my parents have come from and that is like part of me like so I do identify myself with that because I am very proud like of my heritage where I am from and stuff and so I suppose I don't want to pigeon hole myself too much.

While in school, Ade, like Besong, had friends close friends that were not only from BWA background. Some of his friends were Asian, white and mixed race.

Besong

Besong was born in England and until completing secondary school he had visited his parents' country of origin in Africa only once. Upon leaving secondary school, Besong decided to attend further education to pursue training into a trade of his choice. He had no desire to go to university as he felt that, having struggled significantly to complete secondary school, higher education was not for him. Besong hopes that through his trade, he will become a business owner in the future, become as wealthy as some of the people who inspire him. Besong says that he is inspired by Aliko Dangote, Bill Gates, Yang Huiyan, Jack Ma and Richard Branson, entrepreneurs who are amongst the richest people in the world.

While Besong explained that he was not particularly interested in specific ethnic classifications, he said he was keen to be a 'Black British'. In saying that "I hang out mostly with blacks, but I have good friends who are whites. I suppose I am more interested in likeminded people. You want to be around people who dream like you and inspire you… people you can share ideas".

Enow

Enow, like some of the other participants was born in England but his parents sent him to complete primary school in Africa. He then returned to England to continue his education. He explained that in his school in Africa he was usually the first in his class in most assessments but when he came to England and started secondary school he started falling behind until he sat only three subjects at GCSE level. He abstained from other subjects in the final year examinations. Of the three that he sat the

assessments, he passed only one. Since leaving school, Enow has neither been in any education, employment or training. His plans were to engage in international wholesale business between Africa and Europe when his family can raise the necessary funds to start up.

Unlike Koffi who was officially excluded from school at certain point, Enow was not excluded; yet he explained that he felt excluded in school.

> ...because of the way I was treated and the vibes I gathered I always somehow felt I was not wanted around. When you are around people would say "go back" meaning you should go back to Africa. This is language that speaks a lot. They would say it as if It wasn't directed at you … that is racist because white people didn't have to go anywhere… only black people or asylum seekers "go".

Enow explained that his experiences "have made me feel stronger as a BWA… I don't want to be something else that people won't welcome you".

Koffi

Koffi was born in England but moved with his parents to East Africa where he lived till about the age of twelve. Except for his father who returned to West Africa, Koffi's family returned to England where Koffi then had the opportunity to attend secondary school in an English school. Since returning to England, Koffi has never visited East Africa. Instead, he has been to West Africa where his parents originally come from. In explaining that England is his home, he also made clear that he cherished the fact that he had the opportunity to "live in and see many other countries apart from the United Kingdom".

Koffi's mother later had a divorce from his father, something that Koffi blamed on unsuccessful attempts by his father to secure a visa to return to England. Koffi explained that the family separation compounded some of the difficulties he faced in school. Koffi explained that he was at some point excluded from school and sent to a Pupil Referral Unit (PRU), on ground of his behaviour.

At the time of interviews, Koffi was a youth worker and was engaged in further training as he was planning to become self-employed as a life coach and motivational speaker. Seeing himself as a BWA British, Koffi explained that "I have seen a lot of kids especially black kids who don't have direction in life. Some are confused and need help. If you can make a good living while helping them I think that is wonderful".

Koffi explained that giving back to one's community is not all about having too much money or the highest level of education. He explained that his own in life "got back straight" thanks to other people helping him, some of whom including members of his extended family who supported him by loving him and giving appropriate guidance.

Obi

Obi was born in Northern Ireland and his parents moved to England when he was five years old. His parents first lived in at least two other European countries before moving to Northern Ireland where they got married. Obi indicated that he did not recall much about his life in Northern Ireland. He had never been abroad since moving to England.

Obi said he regrets the fact that he does not have permanent tattoo marks like his father.

> For those that know, when you see the marks on my father's face you know he is from a certain tribe back home. My parents have told me stories why they had those marks and how important that was for them. It doesn't matter much in England, but I suppose it reminds my father where he is from. I have never been to African, but I am an African at heart. That means a lot to me.

Obi has a network of acquaintances who are both white and blacks but explains that his closest friends are blacks with origins in West Africa like himself. Obi says this is not only a matter of convenience and shared culture but also one of principle as he says he would rather be betrayed by his own kind than give another chance to be trayed by "others".

At time of interview, Obi had graduated with a first-class degree in geological sciences and aspired to live and work either in Scotland or in the Middle East. Obi explained that breaking into the next phase of his life was "going to be tricky" as it might not be all plain sailing. Obi said he was determined to work hard to achieve his goals, which would start with getting the right job.

Tunde

Tunde is one of six siblings and was born in England. He is the only male among his siblings who are all older than him. Both of Tunde's parents have advanced degrees and hold management roles in their professions. After obtaining an honours degree in Education and Child development, he changed his mind on working as a teacher in primary schools and wanted to be a priest. He was affiliated to a number of national and international evangelical projects which he says "keep me going until I am more established". Tunde indicated that even though his parents are Christians and "church goers", they were not happy with his decision to pursue a career in priesthood.

He explained that he since had strained relations with his family. Tunde feels that his family will soon come round and understand that he was doing the right thing. According to him:

> I have always wanted to use my education to serve people…especially those who not never have my level of education. At the end of the day my family always wanted me to grow up and help my people… to help other people. I want to one day prove to them that I can be an evangelical priest, be very rich and help my people all at the same time.

In trying to pursue his dream of becoming a priest, Tunde has travelled to many countries in Europe, Australia, South America and Africa. Tunde explained that wherever he goes, his identity as 'BWA British' is important to him. He explained that he is not happy to be known otherwise because "people thinking that you belong to some group is like giving you a different name. You have to feel disappointed and unhappy with that".

5.7 Intersectionality within the sample.

As seen from mini biographies of the above cases, the sample is not homogenous. While the cases share certain similarities, they also have differences. There is a strong element of intersectionality inherent in the cases. This is in the sense that each case has the potential of representing more than one subcategory of social classification. Like the African American women who in Crenshaw's (1995) work depict people not only of a certain gender (female) but also of a certain race (African American), each case depicts more than one sub classification. For example, in Tunde's case, the classifications are that he is a male and was born in England. This is opposed to Nwadike and Akwa who are females and were born abroad. Other

intersectional variables include whether they attended primary school in England or abroad and how they perceive themselves as individuals. It is possible that their experiences, and how they perception of those experiences, might have been mitigated by the intersection of their multiple identities and characteristics. CRT demands that intersectionality is considered when looking at people's experiences (Crenshaw, ibid). As such and as seen in the following chapter, due regard to intersectionality was observed when analysing the participants' stories.

5.8 Data collection method

In line with the objectives of this thesis, the main strategy of data collection was centred around enabling participants to tell their stories. Delgado (1989) explains that storytelling is a powerful means for creating meaning as well as questioning the status quo. Participants were facilitated to tell their stories. Stories told with selective events sequenced in a specific way constitute narratives for as Hutto (2007:1) clarifies, these are 'complex representations that relate and describe the course of some unique series of events, however humble, in a coherent but selective arrangement'. First introduced in 1987 by the German scholar, F. Schutze, as a special way of collecting data, narratives are mainly biographical in approach whereby participants are asked to recall and recount their experiences. Typically,

> In the narrative interview, the informant is asked to present the history of an area of interest in which the interviewee participated, in an extempore narrative …. The interviewer's task is to make the informant tell the story of the area of interest as a consistent story of all relevant events from its beginning to its end. (Hermanns, 1995: 183).

In the case of this thesis, the area of interest in which the participants participated was education when they were in secondary school.

I recognise that collecting stories of people's life experiences in a face to face medium could have certain implications. The data collection process in this thesis entailed interaction between a researcher who shared many differences and similarities with the participants. For instance, there were differences in terms of age, gender (for female participants), level of education, and status in life. There were also similarities in terms of ethnic background, gender (for male participants), ethnic minority status that also meant a common threat of racism. These dynamics presented with certain advantages as well as potential risks which were managed accordingly. In terms of advantages, I observed that due to our shared ethnicity and cultural references, the participant did not have to belabour certain explanations. By not wasting effort in belabouring certain points, participants could save such capacity for use where it was most needed.

The data collection process could have been affected due to gender differences with a male conducting interviews with females. With due regard to the sensitive nature of the subject under research, I observed that the effect of gender differences would not have been as strong as in a case where a male was collecting data from females on topics like 'sex and sexually degrading practices' (Gailey and Prohaska, 2011). Other potential risks included females not being comfortable to relate experiences where gender might have played a stronger role than race, for example; and the fact that participants might have felt obliged to give socially desirable responses. These and other risks were anticipated and managed by a combination of factors including mutual understanding that the participants and I were 'strangers' who had come

together for a specific purpose and who might never meet again after the encounter. In addition to the whole range of ethical steps taken to ensure a conducive research environment, I reminded the participants of the purpose and objectives of the research by which any account not presented to the best of their recollection would not have been helpful.

While steps were taken to mitigate potential risk factors, I refrain from making any essentialist claims to the data collected being static. Regardless of all the steps taken, it is still possible, however minimal the likelihood, that under different circumstances the stories of the participants might have been different. I am however confident that comprehensive measures were taken to minimise such variations and that any unmanageable variations would have meant insignificant change to the participants' stories.

5.9 Interview Questions

Similar to semi-structured interviews where questions are pre-set with a considerable degree of flexibility in the wording and sequence from one participant to the other, in narrative interviews, 'generative narrative questions' (Riemann and Schutze 1987: 353) are used. Where a narrative relevant to this thesis was needed, a generative narrative question pertaining to that area was formulated. This type of questions, according to Flick (2014: 266), is formulated 'broadly, yet at the same time sufficiently specifically for the interesting experiential domain to be taken up as a central theme. Within pre-set parameters, participants were empowered to lead the interview process. As Curtis et al. (2014:114-115) explain,

> if a participant starts talking about something which you had not previously considered, this is not generally thought to be problematic…this type of interview normally encourages participants to add their own thoughts - after all, this approach believes that it is important to identify what is most significant for the participants.

In the sense of the foregoing, narrative interviews fall within the spectrum of 'structured' and 'unstructured' (Opie 2010: 118, Punch 2009: 146-147) interviews. Unlike structured interviews with stronger stringency on specific questions, wording sequence, and uniformity for all interviewees, unstructured interviews presuppose nothing about the direction of the interview, the researcher tends to follow the interviewee's flow of ideas and different questions are asked in different sequences amongst the interviewees.

From a practical sense, and as was realised in the process of this thesis, the level of structure in interviews is a matter of degree. Terminologies like 'unstructured' are potentially misleading and shy of clarity because however loose, there is always some inherently assigned direction for interview. By the topic and the purpose of the research, the researcher already imposes some structure and parameters within which both the interviewee and interviewer must navigate. The spectrum of 'structuredness' of interviews is therefore a much extended one with some interviews more structured than others and non can be fully unstructured. Rather than focussing on terminologies, attention was paid more to practical steps that were most likely to secure the objectives of this thesis.

By employing an interview method that allowed flexibility, participants were better placed to have control and voice. Being aware that the participants in this research

were past students who fall under a marginalised group of people, I concur with Swain et al. (1998), and Parker and Lynn (2002) who support the view that this group of participants require a method that will not continue to marginalise but that which will instead give them a voice. Participants were able to voice what they considered important to them as opposed to being constrained to selecting only information thought to be important for the researcher. Through using face-to-face open narrative interview meetings (as opposed to other methods) participants were able to engage in self-disclosures and 'tell their own stories' (Barron, 1999: 38).

Interviews lasting between 1 and 1.5 hours each were planned with each participant with the possibility of a follow-up interview weeks after the first. The benefits of using follow-up interviews are exemplified in Malbon's (1999, p. 33) research on 'clubbers', where follow-up interviews were used to gather more data, clarify and substantiate previous data, and seek respondent validation. Only four out of ten of the interviewees were interested in being contacted the second time. While the second interview session was very brief, in some cases just confirming that there were no emergent concerns, the initial interviews were more robust.

Even when the intention was to focus on specific topics of interest, the questions were broad and open-ended to allow the participant significant leeway on how participants choose to respond. The order and wording of the questions depended on the interviewee's response. For instance, if participants talked in generalities, they were encouraged to give relevant examples or more specific details. To obtain as much detail as possible, consideration was given to the nine varieties of questions suggested by Kvale (1996). These included introductory questions, follow up questions, probing questions, specifying questions, direct questions, indirection

questions, structuring and interpreting questions. Regardless of the number of questions asked of each participant, steps were taken to ensure that all the topics are covered and with all the participants being similarly treated.

Participants were facilitated to narrate their experiences and highlight their perceptions in relation to their schooling experiences. In line with the epistemological and ontological stance in this thesis, the perceptions of the participants, however subjective, were their realities. Delgado and Stefancic (op. cit. p. xvii) support this view by explaining that 'our social world, with its rules, practices, and assignments of prestige and power, is not fixed; rather, we construct it with words, stories, and silence [though] we need not acquiesce in arrangements that are unfair and one-sided.'

Drawing on the role and behaviour of the audience in traditional West African storytelling, a technique of active listening was used to facilitate participants to share their experiences. Active listening requires not only confirmation of understanding by the listener but also required the listener to ask relevant questions (Earthy and Cronin 2008: 429). This was easy for me to achieve for as seen from my autobiographical account in Chapter One, I was privileged to have shared references with the participants and their stories. As a child, I also grew up telling and listening to stories as a regular evening event. By realising that I was able to empathise with them, the participants felt comfortable telling their stories. This empathetic relationship between storyteller and listener is very typical of storytelling within indigenous traditional African settings where the audience would sometimes mimic the actions of the storyteller. Depending on the story, questions beginning with 'why' and 'how' may be asked. Sometimes simple questions like 'and then what happened?' could be asked.

All the interviews were tape recorded. This enabled the capturing of everything said in the process. In addition to this audio recording, notes were made on significant gestures, body language and other expressions.

5.10 Participant centredness and interviews

Compatible with the objectives of this thesis which include enabling participants tell their own stories from their own perspectives, a participant centred approach was used in the data collection process. This approach places the participant (their individualities, strengths, perspectives, and interests) at the centre of the interview relationship. This approach derives from the 'person centred approach'. The person centred approach, widely used in many fields like education, social work and their related policies, was developed by Carl Rogers (b.1902 – d.1987) within counselling and psychotherapy relationships.

While the interview process was designed to be participant-led in the sense that they were encouraged to talk as much as possible without being interrupted, not everyone felt able to give detailed information with minimal guidance. It was therefore necessary to facilitate the participant to tell their stories through creating person centred 'preconditions' (Rogers, 1957:95). By these conditions, the interviewer must empathise with the interviewee, has to congruent to them, and show unconditional positive regard towards them.

Creating an empathetic atmosphere entails the interviewer assuming they were in the position of the interviewee and trying to see things from their perspective. The need for empathising is explicit in story telling within BWA folklore. This happens to the extent that when a storyteller is telling a story, the audience mimic the moods and

dispositions of the storyteller in accordance with the story being told. For instance, the audience would produce happy sounds and gestures to accompany joyful stories and vice versa (Matateyou, 1997). This was useful in the sense that if facilitates the storyteller to tell the story in the best possible way.

Being congruent was central to the research process. 'Congruence means that the researcher is what he or she is in the relationship without façade and without any attempt to assume or hide behind a professional role' (Thorne and Sanders, 2013:36). A demonstration of congruence can be very helpful especially for people who have had negative experiences in the past and have become very suspicious of the intentions of professionals who work with them.

To effectively facilitate the participant to tell their stories, it was important to show 'unconditional positive regard' (Thorne and Sanders, 2013: 37) to them. I needed to be non-judgemental of the participant's thoughts, feelings, or behaviours and to show respect for whatever the interviewee considered important to them. Unconditional positive regard is even more important for people who have experienced marginalisation and relegation. The reason for conducting the interview in this way was to give the participants enhanced opportunities to tell their stories efficiently and effectively.

5.11 Discussing past experiences retrospectively

As the participants in this thesis were adults who were in school between 2003 and 2013, it meant that during the interviews, they were discussing their school experiences retrospectively. For example, participants like Ada and Akwa who were in university at time of interview had to discuss experiences that happened over five

years earlier. There are usually methodological issues with participants discussing their pasts. These include the fact that they might not be able to recall those experiences with every detail and their interpretation and perceptions around the experiences might be different from when they were still in school. These factors were however mitigated by the consideration that people tend to remember experiences that were important, impactful, and meaningful for them (Ross and Wang, 2010). More so, the epistemological and ontological stance in this thesis credit the interpretations and meanings that participants chose to give to their experiences, however subjective these may be. Also, the open-ended nature of interview questions with participants which encouraged them to discuss their experiences with minimal interruptions helped in securing the appropriate type of data for the purposes of this thesis. The fact that recalling past experiences could lead to participants 'reliving' negative experiences was also acknowledged and managed as part of the ethical framework in this thesis.

5.12 Data Analysis: Protocol and considerations.

In advance of discussing in detail how data was analysed, it is imperative to remind oneself of the link between case study, story and narratives as applied in this thesis. As mentioned earlier, a case study is not a methodological choice but a choice of what to study (Stake, 2005:443). Given that this thesis is studying qualitative case studies, the data is qualitative in the form of (counter)stories. A story and a narrative are related in the sense that the latter is essentially a representation of the former in a certain way or order. Thomas and Myers (2015:43) recognise the relationship between case study, story and narrative when they emphasised that 'the valency of case study may be constructed by looking at the anatomy of narrative …. Case study

can more unself-consciously look to the anatomy of narrative for the justification of its processes and its conclusions'. Mindful of this vital relationship, it is safe to proceed into a discussion of further considerations and protocol of data analysis.

After conducting the interviews, a collection of stories was ready to be analysed. In line with the theoretical framework for this thesis, these stories were considered as counter stories. Counter stories stand in opposition to narratives of dominance or majoritarian stories (Delgado and Stefancic, 1993). Counter stories, as opposed to majoritarian stories, 'can show that what we believe is ridiculous, self-serving, or cruel. They can show us the way out of the trap of unjust exclusion' (Delgado 2000, 61). As such, the process of analysis entailed comparing the participants' accounts and majoritarian narratives. Some of these majoritarian narratives already identified through the study background and reviewed literature in Chapters Two and Three include the view that Britain is post racial; that multiculturalism has defeated racial discrimination; that anti-discrimination policy means there is no discrimination; and that schools are spaces where all learners can feel safe and flourish.

Holding to the above critical mindset, and in order to widen the scope for meaning making, a further decision was made to see the participants' accounts both as personal and composite counter stories. As portrayed in some studies that have used counter stories as key data (Buras, 2009 and Zwi and Mares, 2015), personal counter stories comprise direct reports of experiences of persons of color and how they experience racial discrimination, insult, injury or disadvantage. Composite stories represent an aggregation and a synthesis of many individual counter stories. Observing the counter stories both as personal and composite meant that analysis and interpretations could be based on individual accounts as well as on the

accumulation of the various accounts. As seen in the study of stories from unaccompanied immigrant children in detention, (Zwi and Mares, 2015), using this approach to analyse the participants' stories also helps in accounting more effectively for the intersectional profiles of the participants.

Grbirch (2013: 218) explains that there are two major orientations to analysing narrative data namely the 'sociolinguistic' and the 'sociocultural' approach. Due to its potential to complement the objectives, theoretical framework and methods used in this thesis, the sociocultural approach was adopted. By the sociocultural approach,

> … lives and stories are narrated as meaningful, coherent entities…. the sociocultural approach goes beyond language structures to the broader interpretive frameworks that people use to make sense of everyday happenings/episodes, usually involving past-present-future linking.

This past-present-future linking was very important in this thesis especially given that some of the data collected was based on the participants' narrative of the perceived impact of their educational experiences on their future lives and ambitions.

The sociocultural approach to narrative data analysis proved very suitable for use in this thesis due to the assumptions underpinning the approach. This approach believes that stories reflect not only culture, ideology and socialisation but that they also provide insights into the historical and political climates that frame the lives of the storytellers. With its potential to extend into the historical and political climates, it was possible within the analysis to draw the link between educational experiences, natural life and conflict.

The connection between educational experiences and the very nature of life which is largely implicated in conflict is more often muted, if not overtly excluded, from many

educational discussions. Right from the outset of the introduction to this thesis, it was made clear that educational arenas are inhabited by various forces coming together where on the one hand we have learners and on the other we have educational providers. The nature of their interactions generates conflict which, as Aristotle explained, is the impetus and very essence of story. This therefore means that, as was the case of this thesis, the coming together of different forces (learners and learning providers) is a generator of experiences and stories. Throughout policy context as seen within the framework of the policy cycle, there is conflict within the contexts of influence, text production, practice, outcome and political strategy. CRT, which is the overarching theoretical framework for this thesis is fundamentally rooted in the existence of conflict. It would therefore have been very limiting and almost an impropriety to attempt an analysis of students' lived experiences without seeking, identifying and sufficiently articulating the substance and role of inherent conflict. In analysing the participants' stories of their educational experiences, data was sifted meticulously to identify the concepts, ideas, aspirations, and other elements that conflict. Efforts were made to determine how these conflicts develop, how the actors reacted to them, how they were in turn affected by the conflict. By treating data in this way, the data was subjected to yield up many of its possible meanings and this in turn enabled a deeper understanding of participants' experiences.

A key factor that helped with the analysis and interpretation of data was my 'sensitivity' as the researcher. Solorzano and Yosso (2002) recall two types - 'theoretical sensitivity and cultural sensitivity' – relevant to counter stories. Strauss and Corbin (1990), in their discussion of the basics of qualitative research, saw theoretical sensitivity as the special insight and capacity of the researcher to interpret and give meaning to data. Bernal (1998), in her early study of feminist epistemology in

educational research, also saw cultural sensitivity as the capacity of individual as members of sociohistorical communities to accurately read and interpret the meaning of informants. As seen from my autobiographical account in Chapter One, my shared background with the participants privileged me to have both a theoretical and cultural sensitivity to the data. This reinforced a unique voice of colour that helped towards the analysis and interpretation of data.

Before outlining the step by step process of data analysis, it is necessary to make two points. The first relates to the timing of data analysis. It is often thought that the next logical step after collecting data is usually to analysis the data. This is only partly true in most qualitative enquiries where, as was the case with this thesis, data analysis commences during the data collection process. Dowling and Brown (2010: 86) emphasise that 'data analysis begins at the same time as data collection begins, even if the former may continue for some time after the latter ends'. Especially with narrative interviews where subsequent questions are shaped by the previous responses from the participant, a level of analysis was already in operation. As the interview progressed, and in subsequent interviews, there was also the need to select significant features for future focus. Referring to this process as 'progressive focussing', Parlett and Hamilton (1976) explain this whole process involves gathering, sifting, sorting, reviewing and reflecting on key points and using all of this to set the agenda for subsequent focussing. I found that this process resonates in the empirical subjective setting where participants access certain experiences, make meanings out of those experiences and then use those meanings to approach future situations or experiences.

The second point relates to the relationship between theory and analysis. The overall analysis process was informed by the theoretical frameworks that underpin this enquiry. As noted by Dowling and Brown (2010:102) 'research entails a dialogue between the theoretical and empirical fields. The theoretical sets up a bias in the way that the empirical is to be viewed; the empirical challenges, questions, asks more of the theory'. By way of fidelity to the objectives of this thesis and consistent with the theoretical and conceptual underpinnings, the process was informed by CRT and relevant contributory elements from BWA folklore. This will become more evident in the step by step process that began with the preparation of the data.

5.13 Preparing and organising data for analysis

Once the data was transcribed from tape recordings, checks were done to ensure that all the data needed had been collected. Following this, a preliminary analysis was undertaken. Grbirch (2013: 22) explains that 'there is some diversity within the literature to how this process of preliminary data analysis might occur, but given that it is idiosyncratic, each researcher must decide what works for him or her'. As for this thesis, this process involved picking out key words, phrases and topics, transposing the data by asking certain questions, noting ideas and creating names for chunks of data, and attempting to re-present the data.

After the preliminary analysis, the data was compiled into narrative segments. Narrative segments are sections of a data that tell a whole story or a specific episode within the entire story. Examples of narrative segments in the data for this thesis included narratives about experiences of teaching, peer relationships, and dealing with difficult situations. Creswell (2007) refers to these segments as themes as they

represent sections or groups of information. As a matter of lexical preference themes are also known in social science research as ‘codes’, ‘categories’, ‘chunks’, ‘expressions’, ‘labels’, ‘thematic units’ and ‘data bits’ (Ryan and Bernard 2003, p. 87). According to Kvale (2007), these themes and codes are consistent phrases, expressions or ideas that are common among the research participants.

Dealing with data thematically involves more than it is sometimes conceived. As outlined by Ryan and Bernard (2003, p. 85) this involves ‘discovering themes and subthemes, (2) winnowing themes to a manageable few (i.e., deciding which themes are important in any project), (3) building hierarchies of themes or code books, and (4) linking themes into theoretical models’.

After determining the narrative segments, or deciding the themes as it were, the next step was to explore the content and context of the story. This stage involved looking at how participants made sense of those experiences, what their emotions, feelings and perceptions were. Where participants experienced similar events, comparisons were drawn between the stories and how they also reacted or responded to the events. Mindful that the approach to this analysis was the socio-cultural approach, links were drawn between the stories and relevant socio-cultural and political structures. While being aware of my own positions and reactions, the stories were then interpreted.

The above process of analysing data is akin to the inductive style of analysis. This means that ‘the categories, themes, and patterns came from the data. The categories that emerged from the field notes, documents, and interviews were not imposed prior to data collection’ (Janesick, 2003: 63). This helped to ensure that the findings were grounded in the data collected. This approach entailed analytic interpretation of data

to focus further data collection and in turn using this to refine developing theoretical analyses.

By reflecting on and making sense of their lived educational experiences, participants were able to engage in the analysis of their experiences. For instance, where participants were asked to comment of the teaching style of their teachers, they analysed the various teaching styles of different teachers and then made comments as to whether they liked the styles or if the styles were effective in their views. Bude (1984) refers to this process as the 'reconstruction of life constructions'. Even though these participants might not have knowledge of the technical and professional language usually used in the scholarly discussions of pedagogy whatever they narrated, and whatever language of expression they used, was considered as their analysis of the relevant experiences. By analysing what is already an analysis, this aspect of this thesis is therefore in a sense, a meta-analysis.

5.14 Identification and management of professed limitations associated with of narrative data

Before discussing how ethical factors were identified, it is necessary to briefly consider some limitations associated with the use of narrative data and how those limitations were managed in this thesis. As with most narrative data, the narrative data used in this thesis was verbal and collected using questions in narrative interviews. There is an array of accusations around the validity of verbal data. Following their examination of nearly one hundred studies between 1940 and 1969, Brown and Gilmartin (1969:288) reported that 'verbal reports are limited to expressions of attitudes, feelings, and opinions rather than to factual amounts of past behaviour and interactions'. Brown and Gilmartin (ibid) also emphasise that

‘sociology is becoming the study of verbally expressed sentiments and feelings, rather than an analysis of human performance’. While this might be a weakness associated with some studies, it was not problematic in this thesis for at least two reasons. First, given the objective of this thesis which has been to investigate what participants made of their experiences, an account of their attitudes and feelings was rather a credit and not a limitation for this thesis. Secondly, the philosophical stance on interpretivity and subjectivity makes such accounts by participants non-problematic.

Foddy (1993) also presents a series of observations aimed at questioning the use of verbal data. Two of these need commenting on in this thesis. The first is the claim that ‘the relationship between what respondent say they do and what they actually do is not very strong’. This is largely a valid accusation especially for positivist studies that seek to unveil some pre-existing ‘stable’ or ‘objective’ reality. However, as disclosed and discussed in preceding sections, this thesis is about the experiences of past students and their perceptions around those experiences. As it is a reconstruction of experiences, it is expected that participants will invest their interpretations upon those experiences. Phoenix (2008 and 2009) attest to narratives and verbal data being suitable methods for studying experiences.

The second observation made by Foddy (1993:4) is that ‘respondents’ attitudes, beliefs, opinions, habits, interests often seem to be extraordinarily unstable’. Variations in participants’ accounts could be because of true variability in their memory process or instability in interpretation of experiences. With the possibility of a myriad of variables that can bring variations to a participant’s account, it is impossible to hold that variabilities could be eliminated. It can rather be managed to minimise the extent or the impact. Bearing this in mind, the participants in this thesis

were given the opportunity to edit their account throughout the development of the thesis, if they thought they had misrepresented any part of their experiences. Through the development of this thesis, none of the participants felt the need to. It was therefore assumed that the accounts they gave months earlier would not have changed if they were interviewed months later.

5.15 Identification and management of political factors

It is difficult to separate research from the wider political agendas that have implications for research. Political factors emerged right from the early stages and these had to be managed throughout the study. The political factors that ensued could be said to be threefold - administrative, disciplinary, and sensitivity to the researched community. The administrative side relate to the link between research study and relevant stakeholders like the university and employers. The disciplinary aspects relate to the link between this research study, inclusive education, and social justice. The third factor relates to being respectful, anti-suppressive and or anti-oppressive to the researched community.

5.15.1 Political considerations – administrative aspects

As with most early research studies, it was necessary to promote this research among all stakeholders who were directly and closely involved. At an early stage, university approval was needed. To achieve this, a research proposal was designed to show not only that the research would be carried out under strict ethical guidelines but also that it would be undertaken with due academic rigour and robustness.

As this is a professional study, it was undertaken while I was involved in relevant practice. While carrying out this research, I was employed within higher education as

Lecturer in Inclusive Education Studies and within various local authorities first as Special Educational Needs and Disability Officer and subsequently as Inclusive Education Consultant. It was observed that even though my research participants were not affiliated to my work, there were substantial connections between my work and research. For instance, the broad focus in each case remained inclusive education and social justice. There were also practical elements like taking time away from work to attend research workshops and seminars. Given therefore that my research was interwoven with my practice, I had to gain the approval of my employers. Especially for courtesy reasons, I also made sure that my colleagues had appropriate levels of awareness regarding my engagements.

5.15.2 Political considerations – disciplinary aspects

Be it directly or otherwise, educational research is highly implicated in the framings and development of the curriculum. Research informs the structure and content of the curriculum and the curriculum is, in turn, the principal source of educational experiences. This therefore warrants that research should be carried out in such a way that reflects a mindfulness of its implications on educational experiences.

Despite its scientific and ethical underpinnings, the act of research constitutes a site for political struggles between various agents who often have incompatible and sometimes polarised interests. Cohen and Manion (2011, p. 48) also observe that 'research and politics are inextricably bound' but in their discussion of the differences between [exploratory] research and [research] evaluation, they suggest that the latter is more implicated in politicization than the former. Contrary to such distinction, I however seek to point out that both forms of academic pursuits are equally implicated just that one is the logical forbearer of the other. If one desires an evaluative research

that will be used for certain motivations like policy making or funding, is it not logical for them to first generate an exploratory research that will form the precursor for any evaluative account? Research findings are therefore best appreciated in the context of an understanding of who produced the research and how the research was carried out. To better appreciate what we already know about educational experiences and to estimate what still needs to be known it is necessary to understand 'who' has produced 'knowledges' about these learners and what 'methods' they employed to arrive their conclusions.

5.15.3 Political consideration – Sensitivity to researched communities.

Anti-suppressive and/or anti-oppressive research practice constitutes some of the main factors that needed to be considered especially given the nature of the researched community. In terms of this thesis, suppressive research is that which [seeks to and] results in research findings that inform, orchestrate and foster the negative understanding about black African students. For instance, research with conclusions like black students are lazy and black students present with challenging behaviour. This kind of research accounts for the default negative stereotype about learners of black African origin. This kind of research almost seeks to establish that learner experiences and educational outcomes are largely dependent on the individual learner. This kind of research professes that a learner's achievement or underachievement is dependent on some factor inherent to the learner themselves. Given that most of the time the educational outcome is that of underachievement, I suggest referring to this as the individual model of underachievement. Through this individual model of underachievement, therefore, the individual student is seen to be solely responsible for their underachievement. It is possible that the current curriculum in schools has partly been informed by findings from oppressive research.

This current thesis was designed to ensure a departure from oppressive research traditions.

5.16 Identification and management of ethical factors

For reasons of moral, professional, legal and logistical nature, this thesis was carried out with very close observation and adherence to ethical guidelines. The ethical framework for this project was informed by the Ethical Guidelines for Educational Research (BERA 2011) and the British Psychological Society Code of Ethics and Conduct (BPS 2009). The BERA Guidelines are comprehensive and would normally suffice in guiding one through research projects like this one. However, due to the nuanced and complicated nature of ethics, and the high necessity to fully observe ethical procedures, I had to additionally consult the BPS guidelines. The British Psychological Society research guidelines are practically intended to guide those carrying out 'roles undertaken by psychologists [which] includes those of colleague, consultant, counsellor, educator, employer, expert, witness, evaluator, lecturer, manager, practitioner, researcher, supervisor or therapist' (BPS 2009, p. 3). Virtually all aspects of this thesis were subjected to ethical considerations and measures, but it is necessary here to discuss how specific aspects were considered and managed.

5.16.1 Voluntary participation and right to withdraw

Participants were recruited on a voluntary basis and their right to withdraw at any point in the development of this thesis was respected. In addition to clearly stating this point in the information to participants before the start of the interviews, at the start and end of each interview session, the participants were further reminded of their rights.

5.16.2 Confidentiality and anonymity

Confidentiality and anonymity (Cohen et al. 2011: p. 90; Swain et al. 1998) are key concepts for ethics in research. While it might be straight forward in other types of research to secure these, it is usually not particularly easy in research that relies on data that are narratives of lived experiences as was the case with this thesis. There was a higher likelihood that participants could be identified since the data they provide is detailed and pertains to their specific and individualised experiences in certain places and at certain times. As Chase (1996, p.45) observed, 'research participants easily recognise themselves in our texts and readers who know them may recognise them, too, even when pseudonyms and other forms of disguise are used'. Whatever the level of difficulty involved here, it is the responsibility of the researchers who use narratives to take every measure to secure and protect the privacy, confidentiality and anonymity of participants and any third parties who figure in their narratives. In the case of this thesis, such measures included using pseudonyms, not mentioning the names of any schools or towns, and using the data only for the purposes of this thesis and destroying all manuscripts at the end of the thesis.

5.16.3 Informed consent

While it is easy to say that participation in this research was by way of informed consent it is important to note that, in practice, this was not a straightforward commitment. Arguably, 'the concept of informed consent is a bit oxymoronic given that participants can at the outset have only the vaguest idea of what they might be consenting to' (Josselson, 1996, p. xii). This notwithstanding, every effort was made to give participants as much information as possible for their consideration before

agreeing to participate in this thesis. Even at this rate it was not possible to guarantee the proceedings in a narrative context because of its very nature. Like in West African oral tradition, storytelling can be an eventful occasion with both the storyteller and the audience experiencing a transformation during the encounter. In the case of storytelling during a narrative interview the interviewee can potentially be over carried by the cathartic effect of the encounter so much so that they can reveal more than they initially agreed or wanted to. It is for this reason that Chase (1996, p. 57) recommends that 'we need to remind ourselves as well as prospective participants that narrative research is a contingent and unfolding process, the results of which we cannot anticipate or guarantee'. However, in the context of this current thesis, issues of this nature were less likely to be problematic due to the interviewer's high level of awareness and de-escalating techniques and experience gained as a counsellor.

In addition to personal skills and experience as identified above, process consent was also secured. Through process consent (McLeod 1996), informed consent was mutually negotiated throughout the course of the research and not only at the beginning. Also linked to this was the fact that participants could choose to withdraw at any time without fear of negative consequence. If a participant withdrew, all data hitherto provided by them was to be immediately destroyed and not used as part of the project.

5.16.4 Ethically determining meanings and interpretation of data

In research, it is very important to interpret data in an ethically appropriate manner. Identifying this as a methodological problem, Menzel (1978) explains that participants' meanings are sources of bias and it is therefore problematic if the researcher exclusively or invariably relies on such meanings in their formulating of explanations

of events. This notwithstanding, the researcher is expected to give their own explanations and interpretations of the narratives. In making any analysis and interpretations, researchers employ their theoretical knowledge and access to literature that can frame the participant's experience within a much larger context'. Despite such knowledge and access to wider literature, the researcher needs to realise that, 'participants enjoy a certain epistemic privilege by virtue of the fact that the story is about their own experience and no one can know an experience as intimately as the one who has lived it. (Smythe and Murray (2005, p. 182).

Steps were taken in this thesis to ensure that data was interpreted ethically. While acknowledging that variations between the participants' meanings and those of the researcher could be conflicting and ethically challenging, I felt this was also a source for mutual enrichment and an opportunity to demonstrate inclusiveness and celebrate diversity. It was necessary for me to engage in what I suggestively call meta-analysis or meta-interpretation. This entails first accepting the participants' interpretations bearing in mind that especially for people whose stories have been marginalised, any action by me not to give the accounts a central place could have been seen as perpetration of relegation and marginalisation. After this initial unconditional acceptance of the participants' interpretations, I then used theory and literature to extend those interpretations. This approach is compatible and complementary to Menzel's (1978) suggestion that to manage the situation one needs to clearly state not only what things mean but also for whom, and to respect both the participants' and researcher's meanings of events.

5.16.5 Pressurising and leading of participants

Employing pressure tactics and attempting to control outcome of disclosure not only constitute unethical practice but can also lead to invalid and distorted descriptions of reality. The extent to which pressure can change performance has been cited in many contexts. In education, Ball (2010, and 2003) explains the 'terrors of performativity' have pressurised teachers to deviate from their souls and professionalism leading to some of them consenting to unethical practices. In some African traditional communities, the case is known of venerated griots who when put under pressure for their performance to yield certain desired outcomes, forfeited their integrity and found themselves recounting different versions of stories about the same events or realities. Of example here is the case where Rwandan griots 'related two versions of a tradition about the Tutsi and the Hutu, one according to which the first Tutsi had fallen from Heaven and had met the Hutu on earth, and the second according to which the Tutsi and Hutu were brothers. Vansina (1981, p. 143) remarks that this is a case of two conflicting versions from the same informants and about the same object. In the light of the above, no such pressures were put on participants during the data collection process. Participants were instead encouraged to recount their experiences without fear of retribution or resentment. It was explained to the participants that no version of their experiences was cherished over others.

5.16.6 Ethical reflection on expected outcomes from findings and conclusions from thesis.

From the outset, it was necessary to engage in ethical considerations regarding any possible outcomes. For instance, it was important to consider what would be the benefits of the findings and conclusions from this thesis. Cohen et al. (2011:75) point out that 'the cost/benefits ratio is a fundamental concept expressing the primary

ethical dilemma in social research'. The research that culminated into this thesis progressed on grounds that the benefits would outweigh the costs. The research informing this thesis also progressed on the consideration that findings would give professionals in education not only new understandings of the needs of BWA students but also some strategies for improving on their educational experiences and achievement. It was also an ethical consideration in hoping that findings from this thesis could also lead to policy development. As Cohen et al. (2011: 52) concur with Burgess (1993), research has an 'inescapable' connection with politics and policy making. Researchers and learners, however marginalised, are potential agents within the context of influence within the policy cycle. In terms of research participants, it was thought that any possible or unavoidable cost to them, however minimal or great, would be outweighed by benefits like deriving satisfaction in having contributed to science and better understanding of the experiences of students.

5.17 Chapter conclusion

Several points are worth emphasising from the foregoing discussion of research methodology and procedures. First, while CRT has been used in previous studies as a lens to explore the education of black and minority ethnic groups, it has not been used before to analyse the schooling experiences of learners of BWA heritage as a specific group. Second, BWA folklore and CRT, converging on their use of storytelling, have been fused to give a richer framework for analysis. Following the detailed methodological procedures discussed above, the next chapter is a thematic representation of the data and analysis of reflections of adults of BWA heritage who attended English secondary schools between 2003 and 2013.

CHAPTER SIX

FINDINGS - Key messages emerging from the reflections of adults of BWA origin on their schooling experiences

"Unless I chose to tell you, you wouldn't know" (Grant, 2000).

Consistent with the narrative tradition in African folk tale, in this chapter I play the role of the storyteller. Based on their experiences, I retell the story of some individuals of BWA origin when they were in English secondary school. In African folk tale, the storyteller forms their own narrative out of events that they need to transmit. In their narrative, they frequently try to imitate the characters and use dispositions and quotes close to those of the characters. Their efficacy and mandate in doing their job is rooted in the fact that they are products of the community and fully understand and can empathise with the circumstances of the characters. In the case of this thesis and justified by my own background as shared in Chapter One, I hold such mandate and 'unique voice of color' (Delgado and Stefancic 2012) to present and interpret the participants' stories. Where griots tend to imitate words and dispositions, in this thesis, I use quotes from participants' stories to substantiate certain points and to honour their voices. Organised in a thematic structure, this chapter presents, analyses and interprets the reflections of the participants on their schooling experiences.

6.1 Substantive educational experiences of students of BWA origin.

The purpose of conducting interviews and collecting data in this thesis was to gather reflective stories of past students to understand their lived educational experiences.

According to Cohen et. al (2011, 551) there are up to seven ways of organising and presenting data analysis. These ways include:

> By groups; by individuals; particular issue of theme; by research question; by research instrument; by one or more of case study; by constructing a narrative that may be in the form of chronology, a logical analysis, a thematic analysis, a series of stories about research findings.

These methods are generally not mutually exclusive, and their suitability depends not only on the type of study and data type, but also on researcher preferences. For the purposes of this thesis, a combination of thematic approach and research instrument was employed as the preferred means of data presentation and analysis. While some of the themes emerged from the literature reviewed, others emerged from the stories of all or most of the participants. Overall, the represented themes were validated by the content of the stories and decided upon by their potential to give a wide spectrum of information to ensure understanding of the experiences. From the main themes, sub-themes were developed to provide more detailed and comprehensive information.

6.2 Race, ethnicity and Identity: How participants identify themselves.

Compatible with the reviewed literature that highlighted race, ethnicity and identity as a key theme (Tomlinson 2012, Gillborn 2008 and Mac an Gail 1992) these concepts featured as a key theme within the participants' biographies and stories. Using as a reference point recent government sponsored census that have used racial and ethnic classifications (for instance 'whites', 'white and black', 'black African', 'black other') which are sometimes contestable yet used widely in the field of education, participants were able to share their perceptions about their identity.

All but one of the participants (Besong) indicated that the term by which they were known had significance to them and that they were disappointed when referred to by classifications that did not adequately reflect who they think they were. As explained by Tunde, one of the participants, “people thinking that you belong to some group is like giving you a different name. You have to feel disappointed and unhappy with that”.

Five categories emerged among the nine participants who discussed their identity within the parameters of race and ethnicity. With at least two in each category, the participants said they were respectively ‘Black British African’, ‘Black African British’, ‘Black British West African’, and ‘BWA British’. Besong, the only participant who felt classifications was of no relevance still said he identified himself as ‘Black British’. Besong’s relatively weak desire to be assigned a specific identity, as seen earlier, is compatible with him being inspired by Aliko Dangote, Bill Gates, Yang Huiyan, Jack Ma and Richard Branson who are people of African and white ethnic backgrounds. However, with 90% of participants insisting their race is more important, their composite account is a counter story to a certain colour-blind political narrative in England that insists class is more important than race or gender and that issues of race or gender could be resolved by addressing concerns around class (Gillborn 2009, Gillborn et al. 2012).

As seen from the above categories, the term ‘Black’ was a general appellation that all participants identified with. However, the variation was whether they perceived themselves as British or African, or West African. Yemi, one of the participants in addition to being African, she was ‘West African’ because there are a lot of people who are black and from Africa but who are really different from me”. Ade, another

participant who felt it was important to be recognised as both British and African and that she did not want to “pigeonhole myself too much”.

It is important to note that place of birth was not a definitive marker of whether the participants saw themselves primarily as African or British. For instance, Akwa who was born in Africa laid more emphasis on being British whereas Yemi and Ade who were born in England felt they were primarily African. What seems to be a stronger marker of identity more than place of birth was participants’ lifestyles. Participants who lean more to being British were usually those who have stronger ties in Britain and tend to plan most of their future life in Britain as well. For instance, Akwa said her strongest link to Africa is that she was born there but other than that, she had spent all her life in England and had very little to do with Africa now and in the future. On the other hand, participants who attached themselves more to being Africans were those that tended to have stronger active ties with Africa and generally planned to return to Africa at some point in their lives.

The variation seen in the participants’ sense of ‘belonging’ and ‘connectedness’ within identifying categories reminds us that homogeneity should not be assumed even among people of the same ethnic origins and cultural heritage. This revelation is opposed to and refutes the suggestion of homogeneity in some of the reviewed literature where such differences have been somehow overlooked. Seen through CRT, this revelation is also a counter story to the view within the wider society that all Africans are “the same”.

Identity is one of the key focal points of CRT. By highlighting the necessity of recourse to their cultural backgrounds, CRT encourages its followers to uphold their identity and use it as a source of inspiration in their struggle for social justice. As Okpewho

(2009:118) explains, ‘writers from the African diaspora have also looked to their African folk heritage for inspiration’. In upholding this fundamental tenet of CRT, one of the early followers of CRT, Federal Judge Leon Higginbotham in declining to disqualify himself from hearing a case declared:

> I concede that I am black. I do not apologize for that obvious fact. I take rational pride in my heritage, just as most other ethnics take pride in theirs. However, that one is black does not mean that he is anti-white. As do most blacks, I believe that the corridors of history in this country have been lined with countless instances of racial injustice…. (Higginbotham, 1974).

The above declaration is echoed in Yemi’s story. In subscribing to certain racial identities, some of the participants showed awareness of related consequences. For example, Yemi explained that identifying herself as BWA should not mean she was or is anti-other ethnic groups. She further explained that instead it should simply tell of who she is and more crucially show that she is aware of certain things that are ascribed to her group, for example, “all the discrimination and all what not…” (Yemi).

Within indigenous African culture, which this thesis draws on, identity is an important marker in people’s being. Traditional empires and tribes were determined in terms of what identities people took. The importance people attach to their identities remains so strong such that people in traditional, as well as in some contemporary, African communities inscribe permanent marks on their faces and other parts of their bodies to mark their identities (Adjovi, 2014). This explains Obi’s (male participant’s) crave for identity marks on his face like his father’s, as a permanent signifier of his sense of belonging and connectedness.

In addition to issues of identity being an important factor within CRT and African folklore, current debates on social integration and multiculturalism in England further highlight the role of people's identities. Success in the trend in commodification of education depends partly on educational providers recognising students' individualities so that they can better customise provision. The current policy drive to democratise education also means that people's identities are very important. For example, the Children and Families Act 2014 ostensibly calls not only for services to be tailored according to children's individual needs but also that children are given the opportunity to participate in shaping their provision and educational outcomes. This has led to specific sections in children's reports in schools and local education authorities to be referred to as "All About Me". These are sections that aim to highlight children's identities – their histories, strengths, needs, and aspirations.

How a student identifies themself has further implications for their education. This is especially the case if one considers that an effective educational provision should recognise and make use of the learner's history, current circumstances and future ambitions or aspirations. If, for example, a learner's ambitions were tied to a return to Africa, as seen in the reflections of some of the participants, then it is important that such desire is recognised and supported by the educational provision made for them. It can be counterproductive for a learner who sees themselves as an African and plans their future in Africa but must deal with an educational provision that relegates or even 'inferiorises' Africa. This can create an internal conflict for the learner and it is generally known that 'challenging behaviour' from students are partly an externalisation or communication of internal conflicts (Chiang, 2008). In investigating school exclusions, Youdell (2006) brings to light the fact that a disproportionate

amount of black African students gets excluded on grounds of challenging behaviour. A potential cause of this is colour-blindness, a racist tendency, that seeks to normalise whiteness thereby ignoring or problematising other cultural norms and values. Evidence of this in this thesis is found in Koffi's stories where he explains how he was excluded from school for similar reasons.

With identity being so important to individuals, it is regrettable and ironic that current ethnic categorisation in England (for example the one used in the 2011 Census) is not detailed enough to recognise people's different identities. Against a backdrop of government rhetoric on multi-culturalism, it is unfortunate that even the Office of National Statistics fails to present a comprehensive ethnic categorisation. This lack of detailed categorisation, and ultimately recognition, permeate the fields of education and social care where services are meant to be tailored to people's individual needs.

If educational and other welfare services must be tailored to meet people's individual needs, then it is important for them to be seen according to how these individuals perceive themselves. The students' educational goals and outcomes should be designed in respect to what they perceive themselves to be. Educational provisions that do not recognise students' identities constitute a mismatch that serves to dislodge individuals from who they are. Logically, this can be a cause not only for behaviour concerns but also a major barrier to persistence and achievement in education. Pragmatically therefore, educational provisions that do not recognise, value and make reasonable adjustments in line with BWA students' identities represent a systematic attack on inclusive education and social justice for these students. It is in line with this need that when advocating for more inclusive education, Giroux, 2003:10) warned that:

> educators … should reject forms of schooling that marginalise students who are poor, black and least advantaged. This points to the necessity for developing school practices that recognise how issues related to gender, class, race and sexual orientation can be used as a resource for learning rather than being contained in schools through a systemic pattern of exclusion, punishment and failure.

As seen in the participants' reflections, they value their identities. Their identities can also affect the way they appreciate education and schooling. This means that the practice of presenting 'blacks' as if they are a homogenous entity, as seen within the literature reviewed in Chapter Three, can be very misleading. It can also serve as a limiting factor in any attempt to make education more equitable. Educational research and practice can be a lot more meaningful if specific ethnic groups were not eclipsed under other groups.

6.3 Perceived impact of race, ethnicity and identity in schooling experiences

In addition to identifying and discussing how participants defined themselves in terms of race and ethnicity, it was particularly important to explore what role, in their perception, race played in their overall schooling experience. Identifying and exploring the role of race was particularly important given that the concept of 'race' is central to CRT, which is the theoretical framework applied in this thesis. Even though in varying degrees, nine out of ten participants perceived that their schooling experience was 'raced'. Narrating instances of racially motivated micro-aggression (Sue, 2010), my participants believed that race had a negative impact on their schooling experiences.

In reflecting on the role of race in her schooling experiences Ada, who was born in Africa and came to England at the age of eight, explained that

> … we live in a racial society. Everything had a racial twist so I don't see how I can separate my education from it. You might say it was all in my head but the truth is that as a black girl in school race has a role in everything that happens to you. If it wasn't in the way teachers treated you… it was in the way other students behaved towards you.

In giving specific incidence they consider racist, Ada explained that:

> I can recall many instances were some student would not sit next to me in the class. Sometimes teachers will notice this and not bother to challenge it…you just know there's no need reporting or making an issue of it.

Further to Ada's perception that her relationship with teachers and peers was conditioned by race, Akwa explained that:

> I have always believed that teachers had a certain expectation from me because I was black. Nobody had to tell you…you just had to sense it in a way that the first thing that came to their mind was that you were a black person and next they would be thinking what can a black person do…

Obi who was born in N. Ireland and has always identified himself as a BWA British explained that in his position, it was necessary for him to constantly remind himself of the interference of race in his schooling experiences. According to him:

> You couldn't go two to three steps without realising that oh! that was due to me being an African. I felt like if you had that mind set you always expect things before they eventually happen and when they do happen you understand them

better. Thinking of it now, I feel like I might have over sensed things but overall it was better than being a fool thinking that race was out of the equation.

An example from Obi's reflection that made him felt he was experiencing racism relates to when he said often times he joined a peer group in conversation and mentioned something about Africa, someone in the group would just say "not about Africa again" and then they walked off splitting the group.

Common among the nine participants who perceived that their schooling experience was raced is also the perception that race played a negative role within such experiences. This perception was expressed most bluntly by Tunde who said:

> I always knew, and events in my life after school have proven so too, that black meant bad and white meant good…that is the way people look at it. It might not be everyone but most people who are not blacks seem to believe or behave like that. People around you always wanted to use race to knock you down. There were also many aspects in school that told you that black is not wanted or they were not thinking a black person would get there so there was no need to do things otherwise …if you see what I mean.

Contrary to the position of the other participants, Besong explained that he did not perceive race to have played any significant role in his schooling experiences. In his words:

> I am aware that my feelings might be different from what you might expect … In short not a lot of people believe me but what I find is that race doesn't really matter in my life. I don't think it mattered when I was in school either. I went to school … went to my classes and played around like

> any other kid…nobody said or did things to me. I made it through school and now I have nearly completed my training. Race is what you make of it and for me it didn't matter at all.

Even though some of Besong's account pertains to his further education experience, his overall reflection clearly indicates his perception that race did not play a part in his schooling experiences. It is important to note that it is Besong who feels that 'identity' does not matter. There is hardly any obvious reason for Besong's perceptions from his shared biography. A plausible explanation to this the fact how racism has become non-aberrant and a permanent feature of the social landscape (Delgado and Stefancic, 2012) so much so that it can go 'unnoticed'.

Contrary to Besong's perceptions, other participants expressed that race played a negative role in their educational experiences. This view is in consonance with the reviewed literature where scholars including Tomlinson 1983, 2008, 2012; Gillborn 2008; Gillborn and Mirza 2000; Housee 2008, 2011 and 2012; Warmington 2012 have emphasised that race remains a key factor in determining educational outcomes. This perception is particularly crucial for, as Hamilton (2018) and Gillborn (2016) have revealed in their various studies of underachievement among African Caribbean students, various forms of competition in schools engineered by contemporary marketisation of education have made it increasingly difficult to pinpoint racism as causal factor of ethnic differences in educational attainment.

As seen from the reviewed literature in Chapter Three, the relationship between race and education continues to feature as an important topic in educational research and theory (Walters, 2012; Housee, 2008, Tomlinson, 2008; Gillborn, 2008). However, what has been in shortage for the most part is the voices and perspectives of learners

themselves. This gap in existing literature has been partially addressed through this thesis as it succeeds in gaining the perception of participants on the role of race and identity in their schooling experiences.

Allowing race or ethnicity to play a role in schooling experiences is not a problem per se because not doing so could in effect be supportive of 'color blindness' which according to CRT is a racist tendency. What was rather problematic in having their schooling experiences raced was the fact that it happened in a way that served to disadvantage the students. This disadvantaged position was epitomised by some teachers having low expectations of students because the students were 'blacks' (Yemi); and the students 'suffering from and battling low self-esteem' (Akwa) caused by staff having low esteem of them. Accordingly, the nine out of ten participants who explained that their schooling experiences were raced felt that they were therefore victims of racism within education. The finding from 90% of the participants perceiving that their schooling experiences were raced and that they were victims of racism is particularly important on two counts. First, further to scholars like Gillborn (2008), Housee (2018), Shain (2013), Tomlinson (2008) and Warmington (2009), who outcry the persistence of racism in education, this current revelation by my research participants adds first hand voice to challenge the popular perception and rhetoric that multiculturalism has redressed racism in education. Second, this finding shows the limitation of policy and legislation. As discussed in the policy and legislative context in Chapter Four, there can be gaps between policy and practice. For instance, Myers and Bhopal (2017: 125) argue that 'schools acknowledge racism formally and publicly, but this does not reflect their informal, private practices'. Such is the intractable nature

of racism that serve to undermine numerous anti-racist legislations, policy, and procedures.

Participants explained that being victims of racism had negative multiplier effects on their experiences. In addition to the material disadvantages of being raced and sometimes excluded, some participants explained that they suffered emotionally as a result. According to Enow, 'it is never a good feeling to know that you are not wanted or in short that you do not belong'. Obi explained that 'every time you see something racist or know you have been treated in that way it knocks you down …. your self-confidence goes….at the end of the day you just have to take it that way and find a way to live with it. The fact is that at the end of the day you still have to do whatever you can do to make up your grades because that is what you are there for'. The emotional impact of racism as expressed by Obi and Enow warrant substantiating here.

First, while it is clear from the literature reviewed in Chapter Three that race still matters in education, the emotional consequences of racism to black African students is a new revelation that has not received enough attention in research.

Second, with participants revealing that they suffered emotionally as a result of racism, it means their safeguarding needs were not met. This goes contrary to at least three of the key outcomes from Every Child Matters (2003) and Children Act (2004) that seek to protect children's emotional wellbeing.

Third, the emotional cost of racism for students of BWA origin compounds other disadvantages that these students are subjected to. For instance, in the case of the

participants, these students are sometimes from migrant families who are already being subjected to some of the hardship associated with migrant families attempting to settle in Britain (Sirriyeh, 2013; Wade et al. 2012; Hayes et al. 2004; and Harvey, 2000). Other forms of disadvantages that racism against students of BWA origin could compound on is the fact that most of the time these students are descendants of parents who are themselves experiencing racism. Further to this, the parents of these students, as seen in the case of some of the participants are usually of working class. Seen in this way, it shows that racism is not a single existing factor – it can coincide or co-exist with other factors like migration and social class. Existing literature explains the intersectionality of race, class and gender but not sufficiently the co-morbidity of race and immigration status. As articulated within CRT, an awareness of this intersectionality is necessary in understanding the role of race in the schooling experience of students of BWA heritage.

A fourth point to note from the accounts of Enow and Obi is that in the mist of adversity students still attempt to work hard to achieve their grades in school. The result of this extra hard work can either be success or underachievement. In discussing underachievement among black and minority ethnic students what is not clear from existing literature is the compounding disadvantages these students face. Existing literature does not also present how much “hard work” some of these students put into their education even if the result is underachievement. By way of success stories like ‘eagles who soar’ (Rhamie, 2007), there is some literature on students who achieve despite huge odds. However, existing literature is still short on presenting just how much more work BME students in comparison with their white counterparts have had to invest before achieving good results.

A further point that warrants substantiating from the Enow's account of working hard against odds relates to the very nature of the fight against racism. Enow explained that each time his self-confidence is knocked down he had to find a way of fighting through towards achieving his goals. This point resonates with Gladson-Billings' (2015) explanation that the fight against racism is not necessarily to win but to maintain the struggle.

With participants perceiving that they were victims of racism and with their reflections being a counter story against the perception that multi-culturalism, legislation have addressed racism in schools, their revelation is also in consonance with the CRT tenet that professes the prevalence of racism. For example, as seen in Ada's reflections, it was almost business as usual for teachers to have low expectations on her because of her race. According to the relevant CRT tenet, racism is ordinary, not aberrational and remains a common feature of the social landscape (Delagado and Stefancic, 2012). CRT further holds that by being ordinary and part of everyday experience, racism has become difficult to identify or cure and only the most blatant forms of discrimination constitute the flashpoints of racism. In the same way that certain legal systems can only address the flashpoints of racism, it could be said that educational policy can only address the flashpoints of racism in education while the day to day forms of racism remain 'normal science' that is not touched.

Given the frequency and nuanced nature of racism as explained above, one can confidently state that the daily schooling experience of the participants was one that was embroiled in racism. Existing literature presents mostly the blatant forms of

racism like prejudice and low expectations from some teachers, but this thesis unveils some of the more nuanced ways through which racism is operationalised in schools.

6.4 Difference and change

Being confronted with difference and change is one of the key messages derived from the reflections of the participants' experiences. The factors that constituted difference and change varied among the participants but there were several factors that resonated with all the participants. Also, probably due to their different personal histories, the participants' response to these factors were also varied.

6.4.1 Experience of subjects and subject matter

Participants indicated that their educational experience was characterised by their immersion into different and new concepts and processes including new subjects in school. For example, participants who went to primary school abroad said that it marked a transition for them to be introduced to new subjects like Information and Communication Technology (computers) which they did not study in their countries of origin. According to Enow (one of the participants) who was studying ICT for the first time:

> It was all so strange and exciting. But I suppose the strangeness was more than the excitement. Things were just so different. If you can imagine what I mean. In the primary school I went to in Africa there was absolutely no computers there.

According to Koffi who was born in England but attended some of his primary education in Africa,

> It seemed as if everything was about computers. Everything you did, everywhere you go there's always computers. All the tutors use computers for different things in their subjects. It was a bit difficult for someone like myself who was not used to it at all. It was exciting and scary at the same time.

For Nwadike (another participant), the difference in subjects was mostly felt in sport, also referred to as physical education. According to her:

> Before, when it was sports, we mostly had football for boys and handball for girls. Some days it would be like long and short distance running. Running was the only sports that boys and girls did together. Here we got introduced to a lot more types of games… I guess, what was really strange for me was cricket and rounders.

As much as these subjects were new and exciting, some of the participants indicated that they were not certain as to how to respond or react to the change of experience. According to one of them:

> You are not sure what to do. To an extent, you want to jump in and learn new things but on the other hand you feel like you don't want to be showing that it is all new to you. Other students pick up on things like that and if they want to get at you on it that can be very uncomfortable if you see what I mean.

Another participant, Ade, who also found the prominence of ICT bewildering indicated that they reacted by avoidance. Ade said:

> Even though Computers was compulsory, I tried as much as possible to avoid it in class or if possible make an excuse not to attend the class altogether. It was difficult. Everything was related to computers … whether in classroom or in the canteen. It was worst when in the canteen they introduced a system

> where you ordered your dinner by selecting from a screen, printing your order and taking it to the serving area. Until I got used to doing it myself, I sometimes didn't have dinner as I would not let other students show me what to do.

In addition to applying various coping strategies, Ada, another participant indicated that they

> spent a massive lot of time at home learning computers. Even at weekends I went to our local library where I could just play with the computers and be shown how to do things. We later had a computer at home but I still went to the local library because at home no one showed you what to do.

Having to work extra hard and even go to the libraries after school and on weekends is not uncommon among children of BWA origin, as was typified in the case of Damilola Taylor, the young schoolboy of BWA origin who was fatally stabbed on his way back from his local library in London in November 2000.

6.4.2 School systems

Participants said it was surprising for them to notice certain differences in the way students were meant to progress from year group to another. Coming from a tradition where students will have to pass yearly assessments before progressing to higher forms, they felt it was odd that in England students were "automatically pushed from one year group to the next". Some of the participants expressed that students in English schools did not have to pass their assessments before being promoted to the next higher year group. They all got pushed through until the last year group where everyone then sits general assessments. In their views, some students tend to underachieve in these final year assessments because they were not academically ready for that level. In the words of Nwadike:

> In secondary school here you can't fail. You just go. You sail through. So regardless of whether you did well or not they put you through. THAT (Participant's emphasis) I think is not good because you are not helping these kids and that's why most of them when they get to Sixth Form they drop out because they can't keep up to the standards compared to back home when you fail they make you do it again that way if you pass it you know you've passed it you can't forget what you've done twice or three times.

Enow, another participant also observed that the organisation of schools in Britain was remarkably different from their expectation. According to them:

> It is totally different. First, the way the education is being … the way the grade is…here they say you have year one year two year three year four but back in Africa we call it like in Junior Secondary School One SS1 SS2. At first it used to be very confusing for me. Even my parents did not understand it. It makes you worry like you don't really know what level you have achieved. You feel more lost when even your parents don't understand it.

Enow further explained that even though his parents did not fully understand the grading system, due to the value they attached to education, they tried to push him to be the best in his class. According to him, his parents put him through "over time learning" whereby he studied "as if that was the only thing in the world to do".

Even for Yemi, a participant who was born in England and attended her local primary school still noted that progression from one-year group to the other was different. She measured the difference in terms of what her parents had prepared her for. According to her, her parents, based on their own school experience in Africa) had told them that progression in secondary school was based on achievement and success on end

of year examinations. When she went to secondary school her expectations were challenged. According to her:

> My father had made me understood that every year you sit an exam to get the next level and that you were all rated from the first to the last in the class according to your exams results. When I first went to secondary I was ready for it in my mind but noticing that that was not the case it kinds of unnerves you… but you kind of also lose motivation to work very hard. I think it works both ways.

Yemi later added that there was no question about motivation. "I remember working my eyes out…when you think of what you want to achieve personally you have to work that extra hard … and that is what I did".

Students working this hard, and the motivation from their families to do so, as explained by Yemi and Enow above is reflective of the high value that several BWA families put in education, as explained by other participants.

6.4.3 Age grouping in school

Another point of difference that students who completed primary school abroad identified was the fact that nearly all the students in each class were about the same age. As explained by Greenfield (2011:52) age grouping in English schools has become an 'infrastructure, accepted culture, custom and practice'. This was largely opposed to the situation in their previous countries which had mixed-age grouping that meant the age of students in the same classroom could vary tremendously with as much as ten years' difference in some cases. The participants indicated that the simple point of noticing that students were placed according to age group rather than educational attainment added to their heightened awareness that they were in a

“different world”. They were by this realisation alerted to the fact that different systems, as opposed to those they were already used to, were in place.

Nwadike felt there were both benefits and shortcomings associated to placing students of about the same age in the same year group. For instance, they said:

> here they group you in your age which is good because it prevents bullying but then at the same time it’s not very helpful because these kids you group them together and you want all age groups to be at the same place so you are just pushing them just pushing them regardless of them passing or not so you are not checking their brain level… That is not helping them at all….. That is not a very good factor in the education system here and then they want to amend everything when they get to Sixth Form.

According to Nwadike, the disadvantages of same age grouping outweigh the advantages. Nwadike feels that because of the way education is organised in Britain, students joining the system from Africa “… tend to be smarter than the kids here if you know what I mean. Yeh so far I think that’s it”. It is also important to note from Nwadike’s reflections her awareness and articulation of the need for safeguarding. According to her, grouping of learning by age is good as it “prevent bullying”.

6.4.4 Different cultural norms

Schools are cultural spaces where cultural norms and affiliations can be enacted and experienced. In English schools, this has largely been the case especially after the Education Act 2002 which emphasised the need for British values and culture to be given prominence with the curriculum. Participants expressed that they experienced a “massive change in cultures” when they started school. For participants who were born in England, they said the change was signalled by moving from the “comforts”

of their families and small primary schools into wider and uncertain areas of life. Despite having attended primary school in England they said the change was still significant for them. For participants who were not born in England, they experienced change at two levels firstly from family into school, and secondly from one country into another.

One of such cultural aspects that was common among all the participants was the need for children to "look straight at an adult and maintain eye contact when they are talking to you". According to these participants, they were more used to situations where, to show respect for adults, children tend to look downwards when spoken to. While in their home cultures child to adult eye contact is seen as a matter of disrespect, in the school culture the reverse is true. The other striking difference was how children referred to teachers and other adults by their first names. One participant explained that "in my culture you don't call an elder by their first name … how dare you? That would show you don't respect them. Here in England, it is all different."

6.4.5 Attitudes towards education

The participants also noted that there was a difference in students' attitudes towards education. According to these participants, when compared with students of black and minority ethnic backgrounds, a significant number of students were not serious about education and took for granted how affluent they were in terms of resources. In a detailed reflection on the attitudes of some white British students, Enow explained that:

> some of them were lazy and they didn't care. And they had to go to school because they had to - compared to back home where you have to go the

> school if you want to become someone like there are kids on the street just playing about and don't have that opportunity but here with the system you have to go to school because if you don't the police contact your parents and you are in trouble so that those students who were reluctant were kind of setting all of us back"

It is not uncommon to notice in most schools, regardless of it being in Africa, Europe or elsewhere that some students would show very little interest in education. However, there are inherent implications when the proportion of such students is remarkably significant and seem to polarise the attitude and interest of a young BWA student. As intimated by Enow, low interest in education expressed by other students can have negative impact on the former's learning. The determination not to adopt such attitude is shown by Nwadike who expressed that "… it was all weird but then you have to stand your ground and be yourself".

6.4.6 Level of resourcing

A further aspect that signalled change for some of the participants was related to the level of resources and facilities investment within their various schools. As explained by Owoeye and Yara (2011: 64), 'school facilities have been observed as a potent factor to quantitative education. The importance to teaching and learning of the provision of adequate facilities for education cannot be over-emphasised'. Following her study of more than three hundred secondary schools in the Delta State of Nigeria, West Africa, Asiyai (2012: 193) also points out that 'the quality of education delivered by teachers and the academic achievement of pupils of any school is dependent on several factors of which school facilities is paramount'. With resources and facilities being so crucial in students' learning, it was no surprise that the participants drew

attention to this factor in their narratives of schooling experiences. This was a common experience both for students who completed primary school abroad before moving to Britain, and for those that attended primary school in Britain. There was however a variation in terms of the magnitude of difference. In comparison to the perceived high level of resourcing in English schools, Enow reflected about the school he attended in Africa:

> ok they say the school is funded by the government but I can tell you even just the lockers and the chairs you use you have to bring it yourself and we were being told erh the education is free … government funding it … you pay for some experiment like erh something in school … they ask you to pay for the locker erhh we are going to be doing some experiment in the lab you have to pay for that which obviously we were being told the government was funding everything.

In contrast to the situation of depravity pointed out by Enow, Ade, another participant explained that:

> Here [England] you've got everything… from computers to books in the library, internet, videos, interactive material, and so on. You can't really complain. There's just so much here that people don't notice.

6.4.7 Change management

From the above reflections, change was a significant factor in the experience of all the students. On a follow-up interview with three of the participants, they explained how they managed or dealt with situations that presented as different from their past experiences or expectations. According to Besong:

> Sometimes you ignore things or pretend like you don't notice a thing. Other times you feel like you need to do something. Overalla it can become too much and you don't know what to do. Some of these things are short lived and you just forget them but others are like there forever.

Obi, another participant, explained that:

> Sometimes you feel like you are lost or on your own. You feel something is wrong or not quite right with you. It's like things are ok but it's you that's different.

In terms of perceiving how change affected their study, one participant, Koffi, indicated that:

> I can clearly remember times when I sat in a lesson or even among my friends but my mind is somewhere else … like in my own world… wandering and wondering how to handle certain things… especially those things which were not dealt with there and then … they always catch up with you somehow. Sometimes it was like if things are annoying you and no one knows you can easily kick off against your friends or even the teacher and still no one will know.

According to another participant, Nwadike:

> For me it was a matter of making decisions about things. One thing that worked for me was choosing my friends … making friends with both white and black kids. It's like sticking to your own kind but at the same time accepting the other side and being part of it. That way I didn't feel like I was different or missing anything.

While for most of the participants the way they managed change did not lead to serious consequences, for Koffi his reactive behaviour resulted in him being excluded from school.

> All I know is that I probably got frustrated and my behaviour changed. I didn't like anything that was happening around me. The worst thing that happened is that I punched another student in the face and got excluded from school. Some people still thought I did that because I wanted to be out of school…. I know that was wrong because I really wanted to be in school with all my friends.

According to Koffi, because of exclusion from school, they stayed two weeks at home, spent three months in a Pupils Referral Unit (PRU) and then got re-registered back in their original school. Conditioned by my early childhood and the resultant upholding of social model of exclusion, as discussed in my autobiography, I wonder whether Koffi was to blame for his exclusion from school.

As seen from the reflections and analysis above, the participants all experienced change in relation to many factors relevant to their educational experiences. Factors that constituted change included subjects taught in school, the overall organisation of the school, age grouping, sub-cultures in schools, and level of resources. At least two points can be deduced from the participants' narratives about change. First, whether an aspect of change was negative or positive; and second, how the participants managed that aspect of change.

By and large, all the factors mentioned by the participants had both advantages and disadvantages and, in some cases, whether an aspect of change was negative or

positive was largely situational. For example, in the case of age-grouping in schools, Gaustad (1995) expressed that mixed-age grouping has great potential especially if it was implemented carefully and knowledgeably planned. In his analysis of the practice of age-grouping in English school, Greenfield (2011) also highlights potential advantages and disadvantages. However, what matters here, which is in line with the objectives of this thesis is what the participants considered to be most productive for them. Their message is clear – age-grouping is a one-size fits all approach that is not necessarily suitable for all learners. Especially given that age-grouping in English schools is not codified but rather part of implicit policies that have cultural values and are reinforced by informal sanctions, the onus is on schools to determine what strategy is most suitable for all its learners. Also given that age-grouping is an ingrained infrastructure of English schools, there is no denial that it would mean a significant challenge for any English school to change such infrastructure. This notwithstanding, for the sake of inclusive practice, it is a challenge worth engaging with. As seen from the reviewed literature, age grouping in school does not feature as an important topic. However, from the participants' reflections, it means something to some people and therefore might be worth further attention in research and policy.

Over twenty years ago, in his study of the behaviour of African Caribbean school males, Sewell (1997) highlighted how young African Caribbean males responded to 'modern schooling' in range of ways including 'conformists, innovators and retreators, or rebels'. Similarly, the participants in this thesis, also tried to deal with change in different ways. Based on their different approaches, the management of change could be conceptualised through four broad suggested models: passive compliance, passive resistance, creative compliance and creative resistance.

Passive compliance explains a situation where a learner adheres or succumbs to change almost unquestioningly. They might or might not like the change and may benefit or not benefit from the change. The key marker here is that they 'accept' the change and therefore adopt conformist behaviours. Passive compliance in this thesis is exemplified where participants Enow, Koffi and Nwadike accepted and complied with change which they describe as "strange" and "scary". Passive resistance relates to a situation where the learner rejects or resists change out right (Sium, 2014). This is exemplified in this thesis where Ade, a participant, rejects through avoidance "bewildering" change orchestrated by the prominence of ICT in her school. With creative compliance, the learner seeks to adapt the existing situation. They seek and initiate ways that the situation could be negotiated or modified to suit their desires or abilities. Creative resistance relates to a situation where the learner chooses not to conform to change. They rather fight back through actively engaging in activities meant to challenge and or subvert the change. Ada's creative action of engaging in extra computer lessons out of school is close to subverting change in the sense that her action would inhibit the potential effects of the change she experiences. In relation to individual student's behaviour, these models of change management can be mutually inclusive and complementary. For instance, the same student might be able to present with different models depending on the given situation that they are dealing with at any given time.

Creative and subversive reactions are not always positive. For example, Koffi's reaction in punching another student resulting in him being excluded from school. Without an intuitive understanding of the motivations of subversive behaviours on the

part of school management systems, some students in schools could be labelled as having difficulties in the area of 'social, emotional and mental health'. Other schools and professionals also use the term 'challenging behaviour' to explain behaviour patterns that they cannot match with perceived rational motifs. As seen in the case of one of the participants in this thesis, school response to what they call 'behavioural difficulties' or 'challenging behaviour' has sometimes included the use of restorative justice strategies, and behaviour therapists counselling from Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services (CAMHS). In a significant amount of cases involving black African students, the school response has escalated into exclusion of the student.

As seen in the analysis of participants' experiences, students' behaviour and dispositions are linked to the changes or events that happen in school for them. How schools respond to the reaction of students has implications in the short term on inclusion and in the long term on social justice.

It is increasingly common that when schools find the behaviour of students irrational and, in most cases classify such behaviours as 'challenging', the student is referred for a diagnosis of 'Behavioural, Emotional and Social Difficulties' (BESD). In line with current Special Educational Needs reforms, these diagnoses are classed under 'Social, Emotional and Behavioural Difficulties' (DfE and DoH 2015). The kind of changes described by the participants in this study mean that students of BWA origin could be more predisposed to react in ways that would challenge some schools. It is no surprise therefore that 'the Black Caribbean, Mixed White and Black African and Mixed White and Black Caribbean groups have a significantly higher proportion of pupils identified as having Behavioural, Emotional and Social Difficulties (BESD) compared to all pupils'. (Bristol LEA, 2007:2). Related to this fact is the realisation

that young people of black minority backgrounds make a disproportionately high percentage of learners within Pupil Referral Units (PRU) in England (Weale, 2015: 1). Existing literature is richer in highlighting the disproportionate number of blacks in Pupil Referral Units (PRUs) but there are fewer explanations as to why that is the case.

The importance for schools to be able to effectively respond to the ways students manage change cannot be overstated. Education providers need to identify and support students who are experiencing change. Intervention to support learners experiencing change is particularly more crucial especially where change has a negative impact on their learning. Thompson and Holland (2006) found that the impact of social change on young people aged between eleven and sixteen can range from negotiating moral authority to functioning within school discipline. There is possibility that some BWA students' disposition in school could be in reaction to the various changes that they experience. It is therefore important for schools to understand and address the social change needs of these students. In discussing the approaches to understanding change and the importance of psychological support in social care settings, Newson et al. (2007) emphasises the need for valuing the uniqueness in individual's experiences.

My observation after close working relationship with many English schools is that there is no consistent approach to settling students in schools. Commonly known as the transition programme, the practice in some schools is more robust while in others it is almost non-existent. A ready defence for this kind of practice is that provision and support are tailored or individualised according to the specific needs of each

student. Such defence would suffice if settling needs of all students were accordingly address. But this is not the case. The situation requires a more conscious effort. It is suggested here that school regulators should intervene by making it a requirement for schools to evidence how they settle in new students, especially those of ethnic minority.

6.5.0 Perceptions of education

Another key theme that ran through the narratives was participants' perception of education. People's perceptions of education have a potential to influence their actions, reactions and attitudes towards education. It was therefore relevant to identify what views the participants in this thesis held in relation to education.

6.5.1 Education is very important

All the participants in this thesis felt that education is of very high value and should be one of the greatest of worldly pursuits. For example, Enow said that:

> Education, I think is very important. It's like the key to be able to do, like yeh to reach your goals. Education is like gives you access, like a pathway to something more.

According to another participant, Besong:

> Education is very … like some people would argue that education is the key to success…. I can go and play football and make all the money or I can go and make music but the interesting thing is that at the end of the day there is nothing better than education.

In addition to viewing education as the key success, participants saw education not only as an essential tool in life but also as a backup in life. One of the participants

explained that “education is one of those things in life you have to do. You have to be educated to be aware of anything happening around you”. In explaining how education applies as backup in life, they argued that “imagine if there was a standstill to everything else and they say everyone go on to a career. Imagine what would happen. So, it is always great to have education”. In explaining why they perceived education as an essential skill for life another participant said

> all these footballers you see … all these people they are illiterates. They don’t know anything and then if something happens they can’t even come out and speak in the open. Some of them can’t even speak to save their lives because of lack of education.

This same point was reiterated by another participant who perceived that “without education it’s like you are in the darkness and what I mean is that you don’t see life”.

Still related to the perceived importance of education, Obi, one of the participants felt that the world today is an “image” of education - that everything is built around the need for education. Obi explained that vital goods and services in life today are produced and distributed in such a way that without education people would not be able to access them. According to Obi, education is now more important than it has ever been in the past. In substantiating his perception, Obi explained that:

> even when it comes to technology, it is part of education so without education you wouldn’t know, so education is like it’s well needed in everything, so you can’t deal without education. Nowadays we are using computers, but our forefathers never lived in a computerised world…. where they could have got away without education you can’t these days.

The participants' perception of education echoes some existing literature. For example, Lall and Vickers (2009), Mandela (2003), and UNESCO (2000). However, these participants have also stressed in their reflections that the type of education they value is one that affords "success". The participants' perception of success is substantiated below in section **6.5.3.**

6.5.2 Education, family values and wider culture.

The perception of education as being very important was found to be strongly connected to family values and wider culture and belief systems. According to participants, such perceptions are inherited from older generations and would need to be bequeathed to younger and subsequent generations. Ade explained that:

> I look back at my family and stuff and my mum didn't really go to university or anything like that and like my mum has worked really hard to get to where she is and she has got a good job but like still like certain things are not accessible to her so my family has like put a really big importance on education and I like carry that along and believe that and I try and instil that into my nieces and nephews like how important it is and yeh.

In relating the experiences of their mother, Ade also perceived that without education "certain things are not accessible".

In explaining how education is valued in the whole family, Nwadike, another participant narrated that "I always wanted to learn like in my family it is something that they push so like I was always kind of geared towards like I wanted to learn like go to school and always have a positive attitude".

Due to the value attached to education, parents of BWA students attempt to give their children the best possible opportunities even if they did not have such opportunities themselves. Obi, one of the participants explained that:

> I didn't gain the education I had as a natural thing. For some people especially white kids it is normal for them just to be in education. For me… oh my God….my parents sacrificed nearly everything for me to go to school. People will not understand but that is the case.

Ada, another participant revealed the same point above in her own words saying:

> My mum left school with…do you know O Levels? She didn't have any further education so she did like any job that she could get just to kind of put food on the table for us to be able to live and go to school.

In support of the perception that parents do their utmost to get education for their children, and how such values attached to education are bequeathed through generations, Nwadike, a participant explained that "education is the best gift you can ever give your children".

Another participant, Koffi, explained that …

> my parents are not that educated to the level they wanted to be. Being the kind of erh they didn't have that kind of support or opportunities so obviously it's their dream for their children to be educated and to become somewhat successful.

The reflections of the above participants suggest and intersection between culture and socio-economic status as factors combining to inform the value that participants and their families hold around education. Their reflections especially as emphasised by Ade, Ada and Nwadike, suggest low economic status makes for greater value on education.

While existing literature, for example Rhamie 2007, showed how parents of African students valued education, the participants in this thesis have shown that learners themselves share the values of their parents.

6.5.3 Educational success and selflessness

According to participants, educational outcome is tied not only to the need to become an “important person” in future but also to their ability to support their families in the future. In different ways, participants felt that their education and subsequent success was not only to benefit themselves as individuals but their families and communities. For example, Nwadike indicated that she takes their education seriously and was studying hard to become a medical doctor, own a hospital and oversee the health needs of their parents and family members. In her own words:

> Like right now my mum is ill and goes to hospitals for tests every now and again. I just want to be a scientist. I would have a private lab running all the tests and making sure that everything is given to her … all the proper medications I don’t care if that is expensive because I will be able to afford it… That’s what I want to do. Be some sort of scientist.

Ada, another participant said she wanted to become a social worker so that alongside contributing to the social service of their community, she will be able to provide and monitor better social care for her family members.

On follow-up interviews with two participants, they indicated that their ambition to be able to look after their families was also part of childhood dreams triggered by the experiences of deprivation that they witnessed their families going through when they

were very young. Since then they had grown and nursed the commitment to break the cycle of injustice in their families.

This selfless perception of the benefits of education is not prominent in recent literature on education but it can be traced back to preliterate indigenous African philosophy of education where as Adetutu Omotoso (2010:225) [noting Akinpelu (1969:179)] explains, an educated person is:

> one who is equipped to handle successfully the problems of living in an immediate and an extended family; who is well versed in the folk-lores and genealogies of the ancestors; who has some skills to handle minor health problems and where to obtain advice and help in major ones; who stands well with the ancestral spirits of the family and knows how to observe their worship; who has the ability to discharge social and political duties.

In this sense education needs to be holistic and be of functional relevance to the needs of the individual as well as the society's.

Participants' view of education as a route to success and their resolve to turn educational success into a mechanism for improving the conditions of their families, together with the fact that they see this as part of a belief system, are mirrored in heroic tales within African folklore. 'These are tales in which the normal life of the fictive community has deteriorated or stagnated and the protagonist takes the initiative at his own expense to restore order' (Tala, 1989:38). The action of the participants could be likened to that of the protagonist who undertakes courageous adventures with the main aim of solving problems within their families and communities and improving on their overall condition. This link between folklore characters and real life people is made clear when Tala (ibid: 39) explains that 'the animal characters in

the tales represent the same dynamics of relations between characters and their environment'.

It is indicative from the above revelation that students of BWA origin tend to know what they want out of education and are ready to willingly access education. This is in contrast with situations where some learners are presented as attending school principally because they have been asked or forced to do so. This is also in contrast with widely held views in schools that suggest that disruptive behaviour and resultant exclusion amongst black African students is since the students do not want to be in school in the first place. It is rather possible that students' disruptive behaviour could be linked to the perception that they are not getting what they want. From the participants' disclosures one can also infer that students are more likely to voluntarily persist in education until they achieve their goals. This situation is also in contrast with the high number of BWA students temporarily and or permanently dropping out of school.

The desire and commitment of BWA origin striving to use education as a means to better not only themselves but whole communities is not novel to recent students. Several decades ago, students of BWA origin studying in English schools and subsequently colleges and universities had such noble commitments. It was out of this commitment that 'the West African Student Union (WASU), the most prominent and enduring of West African student organisations, was formed in the 1920s' (Adi, 1998:2-3). As Killingray (1994:4) explains, members from unions like these 'returned to play an active part in nationalist movements and to become future rulers' in West Africa. Examples of these include Kwame Nkrumah, Joe Appiah and H.O. Davies.

The desire and commitment on the part of students of BWA to see education as a means to access social justice both for themselves, their families and wider communities is not only a cultural obligation for them but also an expectation that resonate with current legislative framework in England. For example, three of the five key educational outcomes for children spelled out in Every Child Matters 2003 and Children Act 2004 are that they should be able to 'enjoy and achieve, make a positive contribution and achieve economic wellbeing' (HM Government, 2003: 6-7).

The desire by the participants to be able to make positive contributions that lead to the overall wellbeing of their communities resonates in both the CRT and traditional African culture. In terms of links to CRT, based on the relative individual attainments and successes of the founders of CRT, it could be argued that what they wanted to achieve through the founding of CRT was not limited to fostering their individual wellbeing. It was, and as it is, for the advancement of social justice for blacks particularly and any marginalised people (Martinez, 2014 and Matsuda,1991). In terms of links to traditional African culture exemplified through its educational model, Okoro (2010) explains that:

> African education aimed at developing the total man and making him or her responsible member of the community. The curricula included physical, mental, spiritual and moral development of the citizens. The thrust of the moral education was solidarity.'

The argument that this model of education is a viable alternative for peace building process in Africa and beyond, adds value to the participants' quest for altruism.

It is paradoxical and quite disheartening that despite having such elevated regard for education a significant number of students leave the education arena without having

achieved what they seemed to have revered. While the situation calls for a critical review of the educational processes and systems that lead to the underachievement, it also provokes a sympathy approach. With that level of reverence for education, it somehow appears that these students do not really set out to fail. On the other hand, hardly any school openly professes to set out to fail its students. With failure appearing to be an unintentional outcome for both the student and may be the school, it is necessary to support both the student and school in seeking redress to the situation.

6 .5.4 Participants' views of achievement

Having seen through the reviewed literature that understandings around the term "achievement" remain contentious, it was important to secure what the participants in this thesis perceived as achievement. Besong explained that:

> It is always important for someone to achieve their goals and of course that is why we go to school. Even though I did not make all my grades in school, I remember my parents, uncles and aunties giving me presents for making some grades. I did even better in high school and made it to uni and here I am today. Achievement is of course important.

Some of the participants explained that achievement meant more than school grades. In Enow's words:

> I feel like I was impatient in school cos all I wanted to do was get in there, get the grades, go to a good university that will enable me be what I wanted to be. For me all the A grades are important but what is more important is completing that journey and achieving your goals in life.

Despite holding such perception about the importance of grades, Enow did not make his grades in school. Since leaving fulltime education, he has not engaged in education now consistent employment. He was planning to try and become an "international wholesale businessman" (Enow).

In the same vein, Ada explained that:

> I didn't go to school to remain there. I went so that I can be somebody in future. There is no need saying you made it in school when you still end up in a life of misery. I think school is just a means and what really matters is one's destination.

Akwa reflected that:

> Some teachers were spot on…for example they will ask you "what do you want to do with your life?" Even as a little child that makes you think…This shows that they understood school was not only about grades but where you end up.

The above reflections on achievement giving more weight to life outcomes than school grades are reflective of the critical perspective to achievement as expressed in the existing literature. For example, schooling is seen as what Mirza (2006) calls a "transformative mantel".

While it is important to have sight of future outcomes in life, participants did not express an equal urgency as to the crucial nature of school grades in getting there. Failing to realise the urgency in achieving certain grades is not uncommon for as Gillborn et al. (2017: 859) explain, 'most GCSE examinations used a system of "tiered" exam papers that effectively reintroduced the dual-status system but behind the façade of a single examination and in a process that few parents and students

even knew existed'. Drawing on a range of studies, Gillborn et al. (ibid) further explain that 'the tiering decisions tend to exacerbate social inequalities'. Given that there is an over representation of black students in the lower tiers which are a weak base for progressing to achieving future outcomes in life, the forging and persistence of an educational system that serves to disadvantage students of minority ethnic backgrounds attracts a critical observation that racism in the English educational system is not a coincidence but rather a 'conspiracy' (Gillborn, 2008).

There seemed to be a religious dimension in relation to participants' perceptions of education. The participants seem to believe in education. It is probably not uncommon for many people to hold education in such a high esteem but such a perception could mean a lot more for people from marginalised backgrounds who fervently believe that education can be used to reverse different forms of marginalisation. Believing that education is so important served as a driving force and motivation for the participants to succeed in school. This perception confirms what is already known through related literature.

As seen from the reviewed literature, the perception of education as a route to better life and working hard to succeed in school resonates with many eulogies that were presented for the BWA teenage boy, Damilola Taylor, who was tragically shot dead in a racially motivated attack as he walked back from his local library in November 2000. Damilola Taylor has been typified as the BWA child who due to their high regard for education would go the extra mile of studying extensively in order to succeed. It could be inferred that it was in pursuit of success in school that he decided to study out of hours by going to his local library.

As well as learners, BWA parents and communities also have a very high regard for education (Rhamie, 2007). In preference to many other pursuits in life, most of these parents will encourage their children to prioritise their education. Correlating with the current surge in BWA personalities in say football and music, certain pursuits like becoming a football star was discouraged and made a taboo in certain families. The BWA community's beliefs, esteem and commitment regarding education is depicted through the fictional story about Obi Okwonkwo (Achebe 1958). Perceiving that education would alleviate them from inflicting misery, Obi Okwonkwo's village decides to communally sponsor his education abroad so that he would return and help the whole community. The high regard for education among Africans is given more prominence in the words of Nelson Mandela (1995) who observed that 'education is the most powerful weapon which you can use to change the world.'

Providing a that meets the needs of learners of BWA origin requires learning providers to recognise the above perception regarding education. Especially in the current climate of education where there is legal guidance (Children and Families Act 2014) for schools to work in partnership with parents, it is important that the views of BWA parents about education be also recognised. However, it is logical to assume that students of African origin receive sub-standard education not because there is lack of recognition of the value of education but because, with education having such high value and used as a "political tool" (Lall, 2009), it is compatible with the fostering of white supremacy for these students to have poor educational experiences. Hence, racism in education is not a coincidence but a "conspiracy" (Gillborn, 2008).

6.6.0 Experience of subjects and subject matter

The subjects that students study at school are a significant part of their experiences. In trying to investigate the experiences of the participants in this thesis, it was therefore crucial to explore the subjects that they studied while in school.

6.6.1 Subjects studied in school

The participants in this thesis indicated that while at school they studied a wide range of subjects. Collectively for the participants, these subjects included information and computer technology (ICT), mathematics, English language, English literature, modern foreign languages (German and French), leisure & tourism, statistics, religion, science and geography. In studying these subjects, the participants aimed to achieve either a General Certificate in Secondary Education (GCSE) or a General National Vocational Qualification (GNVQ). While they studied for generally the same qualifications, they undertook different subjects. This aspect is vividly reflected in the reflections of Tunde, one of the participants:

> I did like normal subjects like English, maths like languages I did two languages German and French, I did GNVQ which is like worth two GCSEs so I did that in Business Studies and Leisure and Tourism erh I did wood work what else did I do I did religion, science as well chemistry, biology, physics and you got like two GCSEs for it. I did ICT as well.

Within this range, participants were able to choose a selection of subjects at the later stages of their schooling. For instance, some of the participants undertook subjects in the sciences while others undertook subjects in the arts and humanities. English language and mathematics were seen to be compulsory subjects for all students. All the participants indicated that they had most-favourite and least-favourite subjects.

Participants whose favourite subjects were in arts and humanities largely had science subjects as their less favourite subjects and vice versa. However, several reasons accounted for why the students chose subjects. The most common of them was related to the way the subjects were being assessed. This is further explored below.

6.6.2 Reasons for choice of subjects

In explaining how their preferred method of assessment informed their choice of subjects, Yemi, one of the participants revealed that:

> I don't really do well in exams. I just like conveying what is in my head and I can't just do that in exams. But with like the GNVQ which is coursework based I just found it better and I was a lot more successful.

According to Yemi therefore, their chances of succeeding in their subjects were strongly tied to the method of assessment. Akwa, another participant too felt that her chances of succeeding were dependent on the method of assessment. She revealed this by saying that "I have really never done well with exams. And yeah it is more about being like active. With coursework you learn actively, you really have to go out and actively do some work yourself you tend to take it in a bit better".

For other participants, the person who was teaching the subject influenced their choices. For instance, Nwadike, one of the participants said that:

> I did like history and stuff and I really really enjoyed that em but then the teacher that was teaching me he left …[laughter] so that is why I didn't pick it for GCSE … yeh so that was my favourite.

For Nwadike therefore, even though history was her favourite subject, she withdrew from taking it at GCSE because she did not like the history teacher. In Nwadike's situation, it is not clear if it would have made a difference if the male history teacher

was female. However, it has been shown elsewhere (Crenshaw, 2015 and 1995) that gender can intersect with other social identifies to influence outcomes.

Subjects with practical elements were largely preferred by most of the participants. For example, they preferred vocational subjects (GNVQs), sports, and subjects involving project work.

In addition to indicating why they chose certain subjects, participants also revealed why they did not choose other subjects. In reflecting on her experience of history and why she did not chose it, Nwadike continued that history was a boring subject. She added that:

> Make it a bit more interesting so people don't fall asleep in it because I fell asleep in history classes because I didn't care it was boring it didn't like it. It wasn't … when something is fun then you want to do it and as kids if that was boring why will I want to do it.

Tunde, another participant who also did not choose history for similar reasons said that apart from "hating the reading the learning of the wars and stuff", he thought history "needed to have a bit of life to it". For other students, not choosing history was due mainly to their perception that the subject matter was not sufficiently diverse in terms of culture.

6.6.3 Lack of cultural diversity within subjects

Participants indicated that there were little or no opportunities within the curriculum for introduction to African history, culture or politics. There was insufficient introduction of Africa in geography, history, literature, etc. Participants felt that this was a shortcoming given because they wanted better introduction to their ethnic and

cultural heritage. Tunde, a participant who said there was not enough diversity explained that:

> although I did enjoy history, I feel that for eg nothing on black history was ever covered so it's like it's kind of skipped over you know some times like once a year in October they do black history and that's it and it's forgotten for the rest of the year.

This shortage in exposure to Black history has also been identified by the Black British scholar, Paul Warmington. For example, as seen in the reviewed literature, it is in identifying this shortage that Warmington (2012) recommends a recourse to black intellectual history especially when considering the history and development of CRT in the UK context. CRT encourages a recourse to history because without this people would find it difficult to produce counter stories which are crucial in the fight against racism. An educational system that systematically divorces minoritized students from their histories, thereby diminishing their ability to produce counter stories, serves the interest of the supremacist culture.

With participants feeling that there was insufficient coverage of African culture in the curriculum, there is therefore a missing link between the education that is offered and the BWA culture. Since its introduction, one of the strongest critiques of the National Curriculum has been its inadequate representation of other relevant cultures. This lack is one that is also replicated in higher education in England for as Ackah (2014, 1) explains:

> there is not a single institution that has a degree programme in Black British studies. If one thinks about the plethora of degree programmes that are offered by UK institutions, it is remarkable that not one of them offers a programme of

teaching and research into the experiences of communities that have been so important to the shaping of the United Kingdom.

In ‘Culture and Schooling’ Elwyn Thomas (2000), an educational psychologist with extensive experience in cross cultural education, emphasises the need for a cultural link in the curriculum and suggests a range of strategies through which the curriculum could be made more culturally diversified. It is therefore disappointing to realise that the English school curriculum still attracts accusations of culture blindness.

The consequences of a Eurocentric curriculum go beyond black African students themselves and present times. Fellow white students are also disadvantaged from culturally biased education. Having learned from school that certain cultures should be marginalised these students, who are potential future leaders and educators, might find it difficult to engage with or have the commitment to develop suitable policies in relation to cultures that they know very little about. As a result, future generations might also be deprived of the opportunity to learn about other cultures. Especially in a world that is increasingly becoming a global village and with various countries having to earn their international influence, a Eurocentric curriculum today has the potential for very long-lasting devastating consequences for England.

From a CRT perspective, the National Curriculum is a hallmark of racism in education. According to CRT, colour blindness is instrumental and an act of racism as it seeks to refute the existence or significance of difference. In downplaying ‘difference’ actions are taken that favour the majority and disadvantage the minoritized groups. In the same way, colour blindness in the National Curriculum means that the interests of minoritized groups are overlooked.

It is wrong to assume that The Academies Act 2010, that allows certain schools to opt out from local authority control and retain some autonomy in developing their own curricula, is an effective response to the shortfalls of the National Curriculum. First, most academies have in practice indirectly remained under local authority control as most have waived their key autonomies in order to qualify for certain streams of public place funding. Second, the act of allowing the formation of academies with phoney powers to develop their own curricula is in terms of CRT an act of interest convergence. The competing interests are that on the one hand BWA students are demanding a diverse curriculum and on the other, the government wants to shrink the intervention of the welfare state in public services. Accordingly, schools have been allowed to opt out of local government control not solely because it purportedly allows for diversity but because if serves the government's interest of furthering neo-liberalism of shrinking the intervention of the welfare state.

The sustained lack of enough cultural diversity in the English curriculum sits within a wider socio-political structural agenda of assimilation. In a study of the role of schools in managing diversity, Shain (2013) traces several decades of social ideologies including assimilation, integration, and multiculturalism and offers a key observation. She observes in conjunction with Grosvenor (1997) that assimilation has been a coherent, consistent and uniform policy goal. Drawing on aspects like 'veiling, 'not being able to speak English', forced marriages and 'extremism', and the solutions proposed – citizenship classes and ceremonies, detention without trial, visa restrictions and the targeted policing and surveillance of 'suspect communities', Shain (ibid) explains how the agenda of assimilation is now compounded by 'the construction of minorities as "problems" to be managed or contained. Citing the

Prevent Strategy, Shain explains how schools have instead of providing comprehensive and enlightening curricula, have reinforced the above ideology.

The above case of assimilation is evidence in my participants' stories. For example, it is based on knowledge of her African roots that Nwadike, one of my participants, can define herself and draw inspiration with reference to Fela Kuti (15 October 1938 – 2 August 1997), a Nigerian multi-instrumentalist, musician, composer, pioneer of the Afrobeat music genre and human rights activist. A colour-blind curriculum that relegates African culture and histories serve to dislodge people from their identities and reservoirs of inspiration. The process of relegating certain histories within the British context is also seen where, as Warmington (2012) explains, not enough prominence has been given to the black British intellectuals. This process is further echoed in a wider racist paradigm where African heroism and ground-breaking successes are not highlighted in the social education. Instead, there is a coordinated agenda to dislodge from such greatness. For example, 'civilization' that started in Egypt is now being described as 'ancient civilization'. What is referred today as modern civilization has built on the civilization that started in Egypt. Eurocentric attempts to break the continuum of civilization are cynical and racist.

While it is necessary to give students the opportunity to develop their knowledge of English and European cultures, and while it is impossible to study everything under the sun, it is also pertinent to acknowledge and respect their dual heritage by giving them adequate opportunities within the curriculum to engage with their ethnic and cultural backgrounds. Failure to diversify the curriculum in this way serves to relegate black African interests at the expense of English and Eurocentric ones. In addition to the curriculum being culturally imbalanced, there is a recent call from the Office for

Standards in Education (Ofsted) for schools to revamp with demonstration of British values in the curriculum. Without an equal call for the demonstration of African values in the curriculum, education for BWA students could easily degenerate into wrong education or miseducation. This systematic stripping of African students of their past on the one hand and dressing them up as caricatures of Western civilisation is a further vindication of Rodney's (2000:264) lamentation that '... colonial schooling was education for subordination, exploitation; the creation of mental confusion and the development of underdevelopment'.

The lack of enough diversity in the curriculum also invokes a central question of 'what knowledge is worth most' that some scholars have sought to answer. Foucault explained that knowledge was principally a product of power and was subject to manipulation. Lyotard contended that knowledge and power are simply two sides of the same question: 'who decides what knowledge is and who knows what is to be decided?' (Benhabib, 2006: 34). In critiquing the controversial education for all agenda, Apple (2009) explains that the question is not only that of 'what knowledge' but also 'whose knowledge'. The sublimation of selected knowledges over others is instrumental in creating anti-African socio-economic and political hegemonies. CRT's commitment to a social justice agenda to remove all forms of subordination of people invites agencies to identify, challenge and redress all forms of discrimination that lead to this.

The relegation of African issues in the curriculum is a discriminatory measure that serves to construct BWA students as second-class students compared to their white British counterparts. This is a potential cause of low self-esteem and self-worth for BWA students. An attack on students' self-worth or self-esteem can have a range of

negative consequences as seen in lived schooling experiences presented by Obi, Enow and Akwa. Self-esteem is linked to many phenomena including depression and suicidal ideation (Rosenberg, 1986), peer rejection and loneliness (Ammerman et al.1993; East et al. 1987). For others, it could lead to disruptive and confrontational behaviour. Even more crucially, low self-esteem has been presented as one of the causes of student not being able to achieve and succeed in education (Hattie, 1992). It has also seen to be logically linked to low life satisfaction (Huebner,1991). It is self-defeating if not hypocritical for school systems to be implicated in causing low self-esteem among some students.

6.7 Experience of teaching and teaching strategies

As discussed in the introductory sections of this thesis, one of the key objectives of this thesis was to empower and facilitate participants to express the type of teaching strategies and approaches that they perceive to be most effective for them. Central to teacher training programmes and to school inspections (Ofsted, 2015), the importance of teaching strategies and approaches to students' development cannot be overstated. It was therefore no doubt that a significant part of the participants' experiences was related to teaching and teaching strategies.

6.7.1 Preferred teaching strategies experienced.

Most participants explained that they preferred teaching that involved "active learning". Otherwise known as kinaesthetic learning style this means learning in action. According to Nwadike, one of my research participants, active learning comes to life when they choose sciences and are taught in laboratories: "… so you work in the lab. As kids go to school…or go to the lab today there's all these things, tubes

you just don't see all these things in the classroom. You've got to go to the lab and play with stuff". Akwa, another participant who preferred the kinaesthetic style said that "the practical part is very interesting because I was always looking forward to go and do something you know you are going to work with something". Akwa also explained that this style of learning also gave them the opportunity to translate theory into practice. According to her, "you know you've learned things but it's about putting it in real life practice". Having the opportunity to learn more through kinaesthetic styles has been identified as one of the many reasons why the participants chose certain subjects in school.

A further example of how the above teaching style was effective relates to a student's experience in English language learning where due to participative active learning like engaging in frequent speaking and listening activities, quickly improved not only their communication skills but also their self-confidence. In explaining how this style of teaching improved his self-confidence, Koffi narrated that:

> because I as a kind of person before I find it difficult like speaking to someone like seeing you first time speaking to you but because of that that's brought a lot of confidence into me which is I can speak to any one now. I can say my mind now if you take it or leave it but I give my own opinion whereas before you will be like should I speak or not but now I just speak so that's the kind of skill you learn in there.

6.7.2 Least preferred teaching strategies experienced

Almost contrary to the kinaesthetic style of presentation, some participants indicated that they did not like subjects like English and history because they were presented in a largely auditory style. Also hinting on what they thought other students disliked,

Besong, indicated that in subjects like English and history, “you just read and read and listen and listen. You know one thing about students is from experience, they don’t like to be told too much stuff”. Enow’s reflection on his experiences shows that he too least preferred a heavily auditory style of presentation. He explained that while a contrary style was preferred,

> … unfortunately we had more of the talking talking talking instead. We barely had workshops in business and history … in English when we had it didn’t last this long. For a moment you have it but before you know it goes back to the blablabla.

Asked whether they had opportunities to make their voices heard in relation to their preferences of teaching styles, the participants replied in the negative, with Ada, one of the participant’s response being “no no … not at all. No chance whatsoever. We went with it”.

It is important to note that English and history are frequently cited as subjects where least preferred teaching was experienced. In contrast, therefore, Ada meant students liked ‘learning by doing’.

6.7.3 Recommended teaching styles and approaches

In addition to what participants experienced as most preferred teaching strategies, they were able to share their views on the kind of teaching that could best meet their needs. Some of the recommendations were unanimous among the participants while others were not.

Four of my research participants recommended a kind of teaching that was underpinned by authoritative classroom management. This recommendation was

informed by their experience and perception that some teachers were too lenient and lost control of classroom to disruptive students. These participants felt that it was not effective for teachers to simply tell disruptive students “don’t do that, don’t do this” given that such students “know at the back of their head that all they are gonna get told is ‘you don’t do this’ so they just do it and get away with it”. These participants recommend authoritative classroom management regimes where teachers use the full range of their powers to discipline and punish students who disrupt the learning of others.

Participants also recommended a teaching approach that will make the classroom experience “fun-filled and exciting”. This recommendation was common to all the participants even though there was variation in what could be considered fun or exciting within the arts and science subjects. For the students who referred to and preferred science subjects like chemistry, biology and physics, they recommended teaching strategies that allowed for frequent use of equipment and interaction with materials and substances.

Another strategy that students recommended was the use of projects as contexts and opportunities for learning and developing. Students felt that teachers should, within the remit of their subjects, introduce projects where students will be able to take part in. All the participants were in favour of this approach but while some recommended individual projects others recommended group projects. An example of an individual project was in ICT where a participant explained that in ICT they had opportunity “to create this database for, it was a project that we had to do … you had to create a database of your choice on whatever... so I chose to create a database for a hair salon for them to store their data”.

A further approach that participants recommended was for the teacher to make themselves more “approachable” to students. Using their experience to show that this approach to teaching was effective, Nwadike explained that:

> the teachers need to be a lot more approachable. And like you know in school they talk at you and not really treat you as like a normal person. You go for the teachers who are more approachable. I went to teachers that were more willing to explain things to me in a way that I will understand what they want me to do I enjoyed those better.

According to Nwadike, even the most knowledgeable and highly trained teacher is useless unless they can share and impart knowledge to learners.

As seen in the participants’ experiences above, the incompatibility in teaching strategies is due partly to the lack of diversity in the teaching workforce (Zeichner, 2003). On recognising this lack of diversity in the workforce, the government in October 2018 published a “Statement of intent on the diversity of teaching workforce” (DfE, 2018).

However, the above insight on teaching approaches gained through the participants’ reflections is hardly conspicuous within existing literature. Part of the reason for this could be the fact that, as pointed out in Chapter One, learners have not been treated as participants in research. For the most part as seen in the reviewed literature, their voices and perspectives have been marginalised as they have been used as subjects rather than participants in research.

6.8 Experiences of inter-personal relationships (learner vs teacher, learner vs learner, learner vs others)

In addition to discussing teacher-student relationship as an aspect of teaching style, it emerged from my research participants' stories that inter-personal relationship was beyond that between teacher and student. According to them, meaningful relationships also occur between students and other students, between students and staff other than teachers. This vital role of relationships could not be more succinctly expressed by James Comer (born 1934, Professor of Child Psychiatry) who professed that "no significant learning occurs without significant relationships" (Comer, 1995). Rare exceptions allowed, this statement is largely true and is emphatically supported by many others like Blum (2005) who sees relationships as 'school connectedness ... the belief by students that adults in the school care about their learning and about them as individuals'. He explains further that 'students are more likely to succeed when they feel connected to school. School experiences are characterised by interrelationships between the people who interact with each other within the school community. Most of the time students tend to interact with other students, teachers, other staff within the school, and external people or professionals with the students interact on a regular or frequent basis. Such professionals can include social workers, educational psychologists, and family support workers. It was no surprise therefore to realise that participants in this thesis talked about their various relationships. Below is an account of participants' stories of their relationships with other students, teachers and other relevant members of their school communities.

6.8.1 Difficulty in building inter-racial relations with other students

One of the common aspects of interrelationships that came from the participants' stories was the relative difficulty for them to build and foster inter-racial relationships with other students. According to Yemi, one of my research participants:

> I found it difficult because my previous school had been really mixed. And there weren't like … I wouldn't say they were racist or anything but it was like I found it quite difficult to relate to them because you know you always want to have you know I don't mind having relationships with any race of people but you still want to have some people who are like the same like you if you know what I mean [laughter].

While it was relatively difficult to form friendship with students from different ethnic backgrounds, it was easy to do so with students from the same culture and background. Yemi explained that they belonged to many peer groups of students who were all BWAs:

> I've never been that sort of person who would like to belong to one group of people. I always just err I suppose I just bounce with different groups. I always just feel like you don't need to kind of pigeonhole yourself like that like you can be friends with anyone. The sad thing was that I could easily make friends only to groups of students who were also from West Africa.

Ade, a participant who went to another school explained her difficulties in forming friendship with students of other ethnic backgrounds by saying that:

> I feel like I get along with everyone so my relationship with them I thought was going to be easy and really good. I am the kind of person that will walk in this room and just talk to someone randomly or make friends. The shy kids I tried

> to talk to them to liven them up. The not very shy kids I will talk to them as well but overall it was difficult reaching those of other races or culture or that sort of thing.

As seen from Yemi and Ade's accounts, it was relatively difficult to form and build inter-student friendships in school and race was an impacting factor. What this reminds us is that there still exist racial boundaries in schools that robe black African students of a better schooling experience. Given that positive peer relationships and a sense of belonging has been shown to support learner outcomes (Abdollahi and Noltemeyer, 2018), it could be inferred that poor relationships in school takes a toll on the achievement of BWA students and other minoritized groups. This is a valid claim for it has been shown that interventions to enhance social belonging in school have led to improved academic and health outcomes of minority students (Walton and Cohen, 2011).

6.8.2 Student and teacher relationships.

Apart from relating to students in a general way group, teachers tend to have opportunities to know and relate to their students on a one-to-one basis. Such a relationship has the potential to affect a student's educational experience. Narratives of participants in this thesis show that the students experienced both positive and negative relationships with their teachers.

In explaining what they perceived as a very positive relationship with their teacher, Ada narrated as follows:

> I used to love my biology teacher. She is till this day she is my best teacher and role model. She guided me to this path where I am now. She is the best teacher I have ever had in my whole life. She was amazing. She was

> exceptionally amazing and she took interest in me. She was there to help every step of the way, not just help, she gave advice.

According to Ada, it was important for her that her teacher saw and valued her as an individual, not part of homogenous group, and recognised her strengths and needs. More importantly for Ada, the teacher was available to support and enhance their learning. For slightly different reasons, another participant also indicated that she had a positive relationship with her teacher. According to Enow, this teacher taught in a sensitive and emotive way:

> It wasn't like she was teaching a classroom, it was like she was teaching her children. That's the way she worked with us. She knew every one of us individually in a personal way if you see what I mean … she guided us like a parent will his or her child. We all flourished both as individuals and as a group. That's what it was.

In contrast to the participants who said they had positive personal relationship with their teachers, half the participants said that they did not generally have a good relationship with their teachers. Besong, one of my research participants explained that

> even though it wasn't as big a school they didn't really have as much time for you as an individual and like you can kind of just get lost in the system if you know what I mean. I kind of felt this was my fate as a black child in the small school because in many cases some of the white kids were family relations to teachers...I felt lost in the middle of all that.

In contrast to Ada and Enow's experience of being valued and treated as individuals, Besong is clear in his perception that being a "black child" contributed to him feeling "lost in the middle". This perception is reflective of the lack of sense of belonging

which minoritized children often experience in school (Howarth, 2006). Especially given that a sense of belonging has direct impact on learner outcomes, (University of Missouri-Columbia, 2019), it is imperative that this negative aspect in the schooling experiences of students is addressed.

6.8.3 Relationship with staff other than teachers

There was a mixture in terms of how participants said they related to non-teaching staff at their various schools. Most participants said they had positive relationship with non-teaching staff. For example, Obi, a participant said …

> …there was the security guard very nice. When you come into school they see you and say "hi" that really meant a lot because you go in knowing that the people who are meant to be looking after you really like you… if you see what I mean.

According to another participant, Nwadike, the positive relationship was not consistent among all the staff. She explained that:

> there was the IT people, the people who you go to if you had problems with the computers or there were the people in the cafeteria. Some of them were really nice some of them were grumpy like it was my fault they were dinner ladies.

There were also participants who seemed not to have noticed the presence of other staff. Asked whether such participants related closely with any other staff apart from their teachers Yemi, a participant, responded that they did "not really remember anyone else to be honest. May be because they meant nothing for me or did nothing for me".

As seen from the reflections on participants' relationships with various people in their school community, most of the participants had significant relationships that were positive additions to their educational experiences. For the others, there were vacancies where such relationships could have potentially improved the learning experience. This situation is a further confirmation of Comer's (1995) view that significant relationships are a pre-requisite for significant learning. Because of a growing need for these type of relationships in the United States of America, Edwards and Edick (2013:1) advocate for a teaching workforce that is trained to be able to build culturally responsive significant relationships with students. This is necessary for according to them 'as the student population becomes increasingly diverse in terms of race, ethnicity, language, socio-economic level, teachers are challenged to meet the academic, cultural and community needs of tomorrow's citizen'.

The ability to build culturally responsive significant relationships should be required not only of teachers but of other people and professionals who have substantial contact with students. As seen in the experiences of participants in this thesis, people who could have meaningful relationships with students include canteen and refectory staff, and security staff. Especially in the wake of increasing demands for educational professionals to address the holistic needs of students albeit via the forming of multi-agency teams, it is worthwhile to identify, value and cultivate the contributions of everyone in a position to make positive additions to learners' experiences.

Closely connected to the concept of significant relationship is the interaction between learner and teacher or another staff. It is usually through interaction that teachers can communicate their expectations to students. Historically, it has been explained that

there is a direct link between a teacher's positive expectation of a student and that student's performance (Obiakor, 1999 and Rodriguez, 2012). However, in her study of Black girls in two comprehensive schools in South London, Mirza (1992:54) contended that there is no direct link between expectations and achievement where low expectations would readily mean low self-esteem and consequently low achievement. Mirza (1992:56) rather explains that a more powerful element between teacher student interaction or relationship is the teacher's ability to restrict or enable access to educational resources according to their prejudices towards the student. This still goes to show that the nature of interaction between students and learner is crucial and therefore should be cultivated and monitored to favour the student's achievement.

6.9 Academic and pastoral support

Support for learning and personal development generally constitute part of regular provision for students. Support is usually provided to students to enhance their academic and pastoral wellbeing. Although in different modes and at different levels, all participants in this thesis indicated that this crucial factor was part of their lived experience. There was remarkable difference in the way the participants perceived support. For some participants, the experience was positive while for others it was negative. Some participants felt they were effectively supported while others thought effective support was lacking.

In terms of the positive experience, one of the participants (Enow) felt that support in his school was great compared to their previous experience abroad:

> they are very supportive here when it comes to disability you get the support here whereas back home you don't get it. Even those who are disabled once you are disabled they think oh God that there is no life for you anymore although the government is trying to have schools for those who are deaf or dumb.

According to Enow, they were supported in many subject areas including English language, mathematics, ICT and science. In addition to being supported academically, Enow also explained that there was effective pastoral support:

> So even if you are struggling with no money or anything if you could speak to the student services department some of them there is no way they can get to school, they give them bus pass everything like that so that is really helpful and it made me completed the course and now I'm going to uni.

According to Enow such academic as well as pastoral support was crucial in enabling them complete school and progress into university.

Contrary to the case of some participants who felt they received adequate support; other participants however had negative experiences of support. Ada explained that because they performed highly in certain subject areas, they failed to get support in areas even when they had missed school for several weeks due to illness. According to this Ada:

> I think they just kind of gave me the work and expected to get on with it because I had shown that I could do my work in the past. Because I remember in English they did a Shakespeare text that I missed and there was work that needed to be handed in on it and he gave me the book told me to read it. Gave me the question; told me to answer it and I just got it

> done. Like I just got it done. Like I think because they had that concept that I can do my work so they didn't think that I needed additional support.

In narrating their experiences, Ada was eager to point out that the school had responsibility to properly assess their abilities in all areas but failed to do so causing them to underachieve. Ada explained that things could have been different if she had requested the school to help but she did not request such help because she did not feel empowered and confident enough to do so.

Ada, a participant who happened to have missed school for several weeks due to illness also explained that they did not get adequate support from school especially when they were recovering at home. In their narrative, Ada explained that:

> To be honest I think they did not just care. It is their subject and their school so they should know who is in their class and if someone is missing for like a long period of time you would think that they would kind of look into that and find ways to support that person. I feel very bitter about this part of school days.

Like the other participant who felt they did not receive enough support, Ada also blamed the school for being the party that should have identified that they needed support and therefore provide the same.

6.10 Critical incidents within their educational experiences

Worth noticing within the narratives of the participants are some experiences that could be classed as 'critical incidents'. As could be expected from people's life stories, the experiences of the participants unfolded under a natural setting where during any day, many formal and informal, planned and unplanned processes

happen. Most of these happenings are usually undramatic but some tend to be more critical and have the potential to dramatically impact on one's personal and academic development. Since Flanagan (1954) first used critical incidents to support the training of pilots many decades ago, critical incidents are now a frequent approach for professional training in nursing (Svensson and Fridlund, 2008), teaching (Watts et al. 1997), psychology and professionalism (Rademacher et al. 2010). It is also common for schools to ask students to complete written exercises based on critical incidents as part of their assessment in subjects like English. The participants in this thesis were able to identify and share critical incidents. Three of these critical incidents have been used in this thesis to gain deeper insights into the overall experiences of the participants.

According to Besong, his critical incident constituted a moment when his personal tutor in a one-to-one tutorial explained to him that a meeting had been scheduled for him and his family because his performance at school was below average.

> I can clearly remember the whole thing like anything. First of all I never liked meetings and now they were telling it was because I was not doing well in school. For a second I thought it was a joke but then I told my little self that these guys don't joke like that. One thing led to the other … from school action to school action plus … at some point I was facing exclusion for my behaviour and so on.

Besong explained that, even though the situation was finally resolved and they successfully left school with eight GCSEs including five A Grades, the situation remained scarring and unforgettable.

Nwadike recalled that for her a critical incident was a school trip organised to key touristic and educational attractions in London. In Nwadike's own words,

> we went to London with my school. It was the best. The best time ever. We just had to pay fifteen pounds for the coach. Imagine going with all your friends to Theme Park. Just imagine how amazing that would be. The places we visited in London were Buckingham Palace, Madame Tussauds, London Aisle and the Houses of Parliament. I still carry memory of these places because even at that early age they made me think.

According Nwadike this event was a critical incident as it made her to start thinking about some key questions related to social justice and how to use their education as a "route to achieving great things". She recounted that some of the questions she started thinking about included what criteria were used to decide who is given a place at Madame Tussauds; how intimidating Buckingham Palace was given that it represented the 'British Empire' and all power and control associated with it; and what kind and level of education people needed to have to become members of parliament and Lords. Eager to explain what this event meant for her, Nwadike recalled that some students failed to be part of the event because their financial contributions had not been paid and others were punished on grounds of their behaviour. Even though the intersection of class and race has been seen to disadvantage some learners, one should still be cautious in concluding that it was due to class that the financial contributions of some learners were not paid. Also, that the behaviour of some students was a reason for being excluded from school trips is problematic especially where it has been shown in this thesis that the mannerism of some students is usually misconstrued as negative behaviour.

A further critical incident worth considering here is one narrated by Koffi regarding the support he received from his personal tutor. Koffi's father lived in Africa while he and his mother lived in England. After final refusal by the Home Office to allow the father to immigrate and reunite with the rest of family, domestic instability escalated into divorce proceedings and the Koffi explained that, the situation caused him emotional disturbance that negatively affected his education. According to Koffi, it was the support he received from his personal tutor that became crucial in his persistence at school.

> I started off with very good attendance but all of a sudden my attendance dipped and I started failing. My tutor asked me about stuff several times but I wasn't saying anything to anyone. I just finally couldn't cope and I left school. I said I was ill but I really wasn't. I just didn't want to bother any more. My tutor would not let go. She was like a detective … she knew something was wrong and was committed to solving it. She was truly there for me.

In recalling how this incident has been critical for him, Koffi explained that:

> These are some of the things you never forget… you carry them with you all through life. It is going to stay with me forever. If I was ever a tutor in my second life I would like to do the same for another person. Students need things like that, it takes just one person to support them in that way, and they live with it for forever.

Koffi's reflections here resonate with the notion that "every kid needs a champion" (Rita Pierson, October 1951- June 2013). Rita Pierson was an educator with specialism in the role relationships play in learning, especially amongst raced and disenfranchised communities in the USA.

Mindful of the role of racial dynamics in education, it was of interest to me to find out the ethnic background of the tutor whose support had been so much acclaimed by the student. The student indicated that the tutor was a female and “she was white”.

Other critical incidents recounted by participants included Tunde taking part in school end of year play, Obi having to change schools due to changes in family circumstances, and Enow losing school friends due to a race being “hated” in school due to national news about rape in one town being perpetrated by suspects from a specific ethnic background.

As seen from the above reflections, there are many aspects of the participants’ schooling experiences that pass as critical incidents. Existing literature shows that critical incidents has hardly been used to appreciate the experiences of the experiences of school age students in general and black African students in particular. However, ‘critical incidents’ is increasingly being used in educational research. For example, Cunningham (2008) has explored critical incidents in relation the life and learning of professionals, and Eliahoo (2016) discussed critical incidents in the light of beginning mentors’ English post-compulsory education. With many aspects of the participants’ schooling experiences passing as critical incidents, there are indications that critical incidents could be used as a viable tool to gain insight into schooling experiences.

6.11 Perceived impact of school experiences on later life chances

Discernible from the narratives was participants’ perception of the overall impact of their school experiences on their post school life. Results from data show a mixed

perception given that some participants felt school prepared them enough for later life while other participants felt otherwise.

Nwadike, one of the participants who was already at university felt that her school experiences did little in getting her where she was. She felt that her success in life and getting into university was largely because of post school experiences. Indicating that most of her school friends had not succeeded to make it to college or university, Nwadike felt that school had failed in doing what it needed to do. According to her, she was an exception to the general trend where most of her school friends from the same ethnic background were not supported enough to aim higher than school. In her own words refuting the positive impact of school, Nwadike explained:

> I don't really think like it is school but maybe it is more of later education because I know the people who were in school like they've not done anything like most of them haven't gone to college and definitely not to university. We got like a lot of kids that hadn't done well…. I think the school sort of hadn't had that positive impact in people's later lives.

Other participants felt more positive about the impact of school in their later lives. According to one of Ada:

> My school sort of laid the foundation. Then my sixth form. Because the school I went to they had a sixth form so I just sort of carried on. My school laid the foundation and my sixth form put the bricks and then I don't know … it's all stuff now.

Enow who seemed positive about his school experiences having a positive impact on his later life explained that:

> It has indeed. It has indeed. If I didn't go to study there I wouldn't be where I am now. So… I still go to them now. Even though I have finished there to see

them and tell them about my progression and they are always happy. They tell me any opportunity that comes your way jump at it so …

The participants' mixed perception about the impact of schooling experiences on their later lives indicate that whatever happen in schools in not the sole determinant of future life outcomes. This view is reflective of some existing critical literature. For example, in the face of persistent wider social inequalities, and drawing on both theoretical and empirical research to critique compensatory education in England since the 1960s, Shain (2016: 10) observes that

> Schools can lead the way but they cannot address the impact of wider social inequalities alone, and certainly not without significant investment … compensatory measures, within social structures that do little to challenge inequality, will always be just concessions.

Shain's call for the development of social structures that challenge inequality and facilitate the achievement of outcomes for disadvantaged groups is validated by evidence of how young black males transform school failure. Wright et al. (2016) explore how young black males use 'community cultural capital' (Yosso, 2005) to transform their negative school experience. Community cultural capital entails a set of community-based resources that disadvantaged groups use to survive and resist macro and micro forms of oppression. These resources called capitals include, aspirational capital, navigational capital, social capital, resistant capital, and linguistic capital. Having recourse to these different forms of capital is in consonance with one of the tenets of CRT that encourages black people to seek inspiration and resourcefulness from their indigenous African cultures.

6.12 Conclusion

This chapter has thematically presented the key messages emerging from the reflections of the participants. Among other key points, a key message running through most of the themes is the participants' perception that their schooling experiences were raced – that some of their experiences amounted to racism. While this perception is generally compatible with existing literature, this thesis has succeeded to bring to the limelight details of how racism is operationalised in schools, especially from the perspective of learners of BWA backgrounds. By substantiating racism in schools, the participants in this thesis have engaged in counter-storytelling and have validated other central tenets of CRT including that racism is non-aberrational and the prevalence of interest convergence. The participants have also suggested some strategies that they feel could be used to make education more inclusive. These suggestions, together with other themes have been discussed further in subsequent chapters.

CHAPTER SEVEN

IMPLICATIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Having presented and analysed the data in the previous chapters, this chapter discusses the overall implications of the key findings of this thesis. Related recommendations are also presented and discussed. Presenting the implications and making recommendations is in line with the moralising and didactic dimensions of storytelling among traditional West African communities whereby stories are told so that lessons could be learned.

7.1 Researcher Reflection: Power, politics, education and inclusive learning

Teaching and learning constitute an arena where numerous forces conglomerate and interact. Typically, these forces could be generally conceived as what the teacher on the one hand, and the learner on the other, bring to the teaching and learning context. The fusion of these forces results in what I call 'the pedagogical experience'. Ideally, the expectation is that from the pedagogical experience will emanate educational achievement for the learner. Unfortunately, in the case of learners of black African ethnic backgrounds, achievement is not the usual outcome. The reverse is true. Evidence of this from this thesis can be drawn from the reflections of Besong and Enow. Besong was discouraged from attempting higher education because of the difficulties he experienced in school and did not achieve well enough; Enow's experiences causing him to sit only for three GCSE subjects is a mark of underachievement. Not only has underachievement given a rationale for current inclusive educational strategies, it is (together with its wider impact amongst

disadvantaged learners) endemic throughout the history and sociology of education (Byfield 2008, Mamon 2004, Wiggan 2007). This thesis has raised concerns over the fact that explanations of the causes of underachievement are dominated by accounts from agencies other than the learners. These dominant agencies have succeeded in dominating by being more powerful than the learners. To continuously be in such powerful position, it is logical that such interpretations and explanations of underachievement are motivated by self-interest and therefore biased.

The 1981 Swann Report documented that learners from ethnic minorities were 'underachieving in relation to their peers, not least in obtaining the examination qualifications needed to give them equality of opportunity in the employment market and to enable them to take advantage of the range of post school opportunities available, page xviii'. The same report also expressed that there is

> 'no single cause … but rather a network of widely differing attitudes and expectations on the part of teachers and the education system as a whole, and on the part of [minority background] parents, which lead the child to have particular difficulties and face particular hurdles in achieving his or her full potential' (page viii).

In relation to these marked causes, this thesis recognises that the experiences and consequent underachievement of learners are mediated by teaching, educational system, family background and, the various policy frameworks that inform these key areas.

In the United Kingdom (as well as the USA), a look at statistics related to 'inclusive' education signals a problem in the education of learners with black African origins. Accordingly, '… students from certain historically excluded minority groups have been

placed in special education programs at rates that are disproportionate to their presence in the student population as a whole' (Harry, 2010, p. 67). It is also argued that this 'high incidence of disabilities represent social constructions by which relatively arbitrary points on the continuum of achievement are designated as disabilities' (ibid). While this point is constantly being contested, it remains true that there are certain behaviours and reactions within some black African students' educational experiences that are 'misinterpreted' and that have negative impact on their education. One of such misinterpreted cultural differences identified in this the stories of the participants in this thesis relates to a situation where, as their own mark of respect, some learners of BWA origin prefer not to make eye contact when teachers are talking to them and such behaviour is misinterpreted by teachers as disrespect or even disability. According to Zeichner (2003), this problem partly stems from the fact that teacher education faculties are overwhelmingly white, with most teachers having little experience of teaching diverse populations. The consequences of this lack of diversity in the teaching force are far reaching for as seen in the reflections of the participants, it affects students' choice of subjects and how students manage to relate with their teachers.

It has been noted that with up to fifty-four per cent, 'black prisoners account for the largest number of minority ethnic prisoners…. [and] between 1999 and 2002 the total prison population grew by just over 12% but the number of black prisoners increased by 51%' (Prison Reform Trust). With educational exclusion and crime having a direct relationship, the number of minority people in prison triggers questions as to the type of educational experiences they might have had. This situation is mirrored in this thesis where according to the reflections of Koffi, one of the participants, he was

excluded from school for reasons he felt were unjust, he spent some time at a Pupils Referral Unit (PRU) before being re-registered in his original school.

While some scholars, in the struggle to improve achievement among black African students, have put forward Eurocentric accounts to explain the plight of African learners, others, as reflected in the CRT tenet that encourages recourse to African culture for inspiration, have proposed the idea of negritude where it is claimed that Africans are imbibed with an indigenous cultural capital from which to resourcefully seek solutions to issues of concern to them. The term 'negritude', first coined by Cesaire in his1939 poem "Cahier d'un retour au pays natal" [Notebook of a Return to My Native Land), relates to the assertion of African cultural heritage and a belief in universal equality. This recourse to African culture is partly exemplified in this thesis through the stories of some participants who explain their sources of inspiration are linked to how they value education and their ambition to help their families and communities – these factors being inherent in their BWA culture. Also seen from the biographies of some of the participants is the fact that they make visits to Africa, a move that serves to keep them grounded in their cultural heritage. While acknowledging the value base of negritude, this thesis problematizes any positions and explanations that exclude the learners' own interpretations and explanations of their educational experiences.

In respect of the above points, it is safe to agree with Leach and Moon (2008, p. x) who emphasise that '… the time is right for reconsidering some of the big questions about pedagogy. Innovative research on the nature of the human mind and learning is burgeoning. New communication technologies give teachers and their students access to modes of working and forms of relationship that were impossible just a

decade or so ago'. In addition, the existing difficulties experienced by black learners and the shortage of educational research from the learners' perspectives mark a clarion call for further investigation into the experiences of BWA students. This timeliness for a thesis like this one is made stronger by the added imperative to consider the learners' perspectives.

7.2 The need for revived political will and commitment

As discussed in the review of literature, there is a strong relationship between education and socio-economic and political ideologies (Tomlinson, 2008). Given that the underlying ideology of recent governments has been one of neoliberalism, it goes without saying that education and related services have been significantly shaped by neoliberal ideas. In an analysis of the history of learning disability (Tambi, 2016), I have shown how services for learning disabled people have been shaped by a sustained neoliberal agenda led by successive governments. This neoliberal agenda has meant that disabled and vulnerable people have been systematically disadvantaged. Most recently, it took the political resignation of a senior government minister for plans to further disadvantage disabled people to be withdrawn from the government's 2016 Budget. This withdrawal or u-turn by the government does not only show the link between social services and socio-economic and political ideologies but is also shows that a political will and commitment is needed to change the direction of policy.

The related literature reviewed in this thesis has also shown that the struggle for social justice for Black and Minority Ethnic groups has socio-political undertones. It also goes without belabouring that decisions about the education of students of black and

West African background are strongly influenced by socio-economic and political ideologies. For instance, I have highlighted the active role of interest convergence and sustained government agenda of neoliberalism. These factors weigh the scales towards inequalities in education being a matter of conspiracy rather than coincidence (Gillborn, 2008). These government actions that have led to further disadvantaging of students of BWA background are therefore seen as intentional and not accidental on the part of governments. I hereby strongly suggest that a revived political will and commitment, with a clear agenda for inclusive education for these students is needed to improve on the educational experiences of students of BWA background.

7.3 Pedagogical implications of findings

As presented in Chapter Three, this thesis sought to observe pedagogy in its wider sense to encompass the overall learning experience that learners are exposed to. In storying their schooling experiences participants have highlighted both aspects that constitute the overt and hidden pedagogy. These factors include extra curricula activities, students' relationship with peers, relationship with non-teaching staff, access to school facilities and amenities, and availability of pastoral support. It shows that the narrow view of pedagogy serves to disadvantage students of BWA background as it would obscure and marginalise vital aspects of their schooling experience. This thesis suggests that a view of pedagogy as one that encompasses all aspects of educational provision is vital in the drive to make education more inclusive.

This thesis further recommends that a person-centred outcome-based pedagogical approach is necessary as part of any meaningful endeavour to improve on the educational experiences of learners of BWA heritage. Since its introduction by Carl

Rogers, the person-centred approach is gaining increasing popularity. There was further emphasis on outcomes through the Children Act 2004 that followed the unfortunate death of Victoria Climbie (Laming, 2003). Failing to follow this approach would mean failing to protect the same kind of learners for whom this law was passed.

The bigger challenge however around person centred outcomes has been to identify which outcomes are person centred for individuals. In the case of my participants, it is a shared outcome emancipation from social injustice. As seen in my participants' reflections, this important outcome is expressed through various indicators like making the transition into desired professions, the ability to support themselves, their families and wider communities. My participants interpret social justice in terms of achieving these outcomes. As this is not a generally expected outcome, it requires a person-centred approach whereby targeted outcomes should be those that are relevant to the individual learners. As part of their educational experiences, learners of BWA origin should have access to a pedagogical approach that targets the achievement of social justice for them. In addition to being compatible with CRT's commitment of emancipation, this approach would be in line with what Paulo Freire professes in Pedagogy of the Oppressed whereby oppressed people need educational experiences that would free them from oppression. Accordingly, this thesis suggests a formulation and development of 'pedagogy of students of BWA origin in English secondary schools'. Such pedagogy would be race conscious, recognise the voice and perspectives of these learners, lead to better achievement in education and ultimately lead to improved social justice.

7.4 Towards a Pedagogy of students of BWA origin in English schools

In a similar way that Freire (1971) presented the 'Pedagogy of the Oppressed' which sets forth some of the key strategies for transgressing oppressed communities out from oppression onto social justice, so too is the 'pedagogy of students of BWA background conceived as a set of principles that should be considered when attempting to address the educational needs of BWA students in English schools. The pedagogy of students of BWA students in English schools is therefore framed by the following key principles.

The first of these principles is to observe that students of BWA background within English secondary schools constitute non-homogenous yet distinctive group of learners with distinct identities and needs. As seen in my participants' biographies and stories, the factors that make them a distinctive group include their racial minority status, their raced experiences, their common BWA heritage, shared attitudes like strong determination to succeed, their altruistic reasons for success, and their regard for their own identities. Factors that make them non-homogenous include their slightly different individual histories where for example some were born in England whereas other immigrated; the different career routes they take; and their different genders.

The reason for observing these similarities and differences is so that these characteristics should be considered in any attempt at making reasonable adjustments to accommodate the needs of students of BWA heritage in schools. Considering these layers of similarities and differentiations would be compatible with appreciating intersectionality which is a key tenet of CRT. Without doing so, it is possible that educators would make the same oversights that amounted to discrimination of women as pointed out by Crenshaw (1995).

The second guiding principle is to observe that students of BWA backgrounds in English schools have extra-ordinary histories and journeys relative to other students. These histories and life journeys could be full of negative as well as positive lived events. These histories and life journeys have the potential not only to influence the way these students respond to emerging experiences, but they also have the potential to influence their world views, aspirations and ambitions. It could be noted or even argued that students from other black and ethnic minority groups also have their specific histories. However, it should be observed that these histories are not the same and therefore have the potential to have varied implications on the students' educational experiences. For example, the histories of students of black Southern African backgrounds would be linked to apartheid whereas those of students with BWA backgrounds would more likely be linked to colonialism and imperialism. In more recent times, the histories of students of BWA backgrounds are linked to political instabilities and sometimes wars that involve these countries.

A third guiding principle that frames the above pedagogy in question is the observation that there is a high and disproportionate level of odds against learners from BWA background in English schools. Some of these odds arise in the wider social systems that include family dynamics and social networks. Others arise in the educational systems and structures. A further set of difficulties, as pointed out by some participants, arise in the participants' experience of change and the need for transitionary programmes for the. The few factors that work in favour of this group of learners should not obliterate or create a façade against the existing odds. Professionals seeking to address the educational needs of this group of learners should not only be aware of these odds but should also seek to address them.

The fourth principle is for educators to observe that the qualitative experiences within the educational process of these students are as important as the quantitative products and outcomes at the end of the educational process. Educational experiences should not be seen to preclude outcomes and outcomes alone are not a true reflection of the educational experiences. High and sometimes exceptional achievements by the students should not be taken to mean that the students had good educational experiences. As seen in the stories of some of my participants, with so much odds against them, the relative success they achieve is as a result of disproportionate amounts of effort. Enow explained how he engaged in "over time learning" while Yemi recalled "working her eyes out". The higher level of input that BWA learners invest in their studies is typified by the Damilola Taylor, the BWA schoolboy who was murdered in London on his way back from doing extra studying in a local library. In Rhamie (2007) we also see that black Caribbean learners find the path to success ("eagles who soar") by investing disproportionately in their studies. The difficult journey to success that these learners undergo is synonymous with that of heroic characters in traditional BWA heroic folklore. For example, in the tale of Sambeng the Friend of All Men (Eba, 1977), the 'kind' brother must thread through seven rivers, seven valleys and seven hills before overpowering the devil (Sambeng) who brought misery to the land.

The fifth principle of the suggested pedagogy of students of BWA background in English schools is the observation that these students for the most part have very noble, philanthropic ambitions in relation to their achievements and outcomes in education. As seen from the narratives of some of the participants, students want to excel in education so that they will be able to achieve their desires of helping and supporting their extended families and wider communities. Examples of these are

seen in the reflections of Nwadike and Ada who respectively wanted to become medical doctor and social worker in order to be able to help their wider communities. This is a rare distinction for these students and a departure from the neoliberal emphasis on the individual rather than the community. The roots of such noble ambitions from the students could be traced to indigenous West African communities where the social welfare of the community was provided by a few wealthy individuals. These communities also would sometimes help in raising and sponsoring individuals who would be able to fulfil such responsibilities. This partly explains the origins of the lack of statutory welfare services in most West African countries. Observing that these students have uncommon noble ambitions, it is therefore very important that professionals do not assume educational outcomes for these students. Instead they should work with the students to understand their ambitions to be in a better position to support them achieve their ambitions.

A further principle of this pedagogy is to observe that every learner of BWA background needs a champion who understands. Most learners can identify a teacher who had a significant positive impact on their learning. One of my participants, Ada, explained that “I used to love my biology teacher. Till this day she is my best teacher and role model. She guided me to this path where I am now”. Existing literature (Paredes, 2014; Comer, 1995; Pierson, 1994) corroborates the key role of effective personal tutoring. Both my schooling experience and research are anecdotal evidence supporting the role of a champion. More importantly, my research participants have shared their reflections on the role of champions. For instance, further to Ada’s comment above, another participant, Koffi, said “my tutor would not let go … she knew something was wrong and was committed to solving it. She was truly there for me.” Like these teachers, a champion should be one who recognises

and supports the learner in terms of their needs, strengths, their expected educational outcomes, and what it takes to achieve those outcomes. In the case of learners of BWA background, it is likely to be one who operates within the CRT framework. In practice, each school should work with the learner to identify and nominate these champions. It should be up to the learners to determine whether to take up the provision.

7.5 Chapter conclusion

In addition to discussing the wider implications of the findings of this thesis, this chapter has also discussed in greater details, a pedagogy of BWA students in English schools – this is a set of strategies that have largely emerged organically from the perceptions and suggestion from the participants. This proposed pedagogy is non-exhaustive and should be work in progress as it has scope for critique and further development. However, it is a groundwork for a more conscious and committed effort to aligning learning provisions to the needs of students.

CHAPTER EIGHT

GENERAL CONCLUSION

The main objective of this thesis was to investigate the stories of young people of BWA heritage who attended English secondary schools from 2003 to 2013. This objective originated in the wider research problem whereby, except for a few, black and minority ethnic students are subjects of educational underachievement within schools. While related literature confirmed that educational inequalities were a very contentious and vibrant area of debate and research (Coard 1971; Troyna 1984; Tomlinson 1984, 1986, 2008; Gillborn 1990, 2008, 2009; and Gillborn and Gipps 1996), there were certain gaps in the literature that necessitated this thesis.

The gaps in related literature included the fact that most literature concentrated on achievement and underachievement among certain BME groups of students and very little on the actual experiences that underlie those achievement and underachievement issues. There was also concern from the literature that most of studies referred to BME students as if they were a homogenous group thereby not sufficiently observing significant and meaningful differences between students of different ethnic and or cultural backgrounds. Some of the studies that managed to differentiate these groups and or dwelled on the actual experiences of students mostly treated the students as subjects of studies thereby offering very little in the way of the students' own perspectives on several key issues (Bhopal, 2014; Rhamie, 2007). To complement existing studies, this thesis focused on investigating the lived schooling experiences of BWA students in English schools, from the perspective of the students themselves. It concluded that contrary to the perceived progress made in the area of equality and diversity, students of BWA origin in English schools continue to experience the curriculum in ways that amount to racial discrimination.

To study these experiences from the perspective of these past students themselves, case studies were used to gain a first-hand insight into the schooling experiences of these students. In investigating these experiences, this thesis focused on the messages generated from the reflections on experiences. To help make sense of these messages, CRT was used as the main theoretical framework for this thesis.

CRT which originated in the Critical Legal Studies in the United States of America in the 1980s, as a theory, has since received growing attention in the United Kingdom and is increasingly being applied in many fields including education. In applying CRT as the critical lens, this thesis drew substantially from the tenet of counter storytelling. In the light of relatively very little literature on the qualitative aspects of underachievement, and in the light of general misconceptions around progress made in the area of equality and diversity, the experiences of the participants served as counter stories to unveil the extent of racism in education.

CRT as a theory in this thesis was strengthened using African folklore. With one of the strongest links between CRT and African folklore being (counter)storytelling, the use of African folklore helped in the explaining and understanding of some of the experiences of the participants. The use of African folklore in this thesis was compatible with one of the principles of CRT which encourages Africans in the diaspora to find inspirations from their cultural backgrounds and consequently African tradition. This juxtaposition of CRT and African folklore was an innovative research recipe that served to produce deeper insights and understandings to the schooling experiences of students of BWA origin in English schools.

The main research question for this thesis was as follows: what are the key messages underlying the lived schooling experiences of students of BWA origin in English

schools? In pursuing of this research questions, data was collected, analysed and interpreted thereby leading to the originality of this thesis and how the thesis has added to the knowledge on 'race and education' and education of students of BWA origin within English schools.

8.1 Research originality and contribution to knowledge

Through its aims, approach and findings, this thesis makes a claim to originality and contribution to knowledge. One of many contributions of this thesis is knowledge towards the identity of BWA students. Through their mini biographies, how they define themselves, how they perceive education and what their ambitions are, my research participants shown that learners of BWA backgrounds are a distinct group. Apart from being a distinct that share a range of similarities, they have differences that make them a non-homogenous group. This knowledge is important not only for further research but also in terms of factors to be considered in the designing and delivery of education.

This thesis has contributed in unveiling participants' perception that their schooling experiences were raced. As these experiences were raced in a way that disadvantaged the participants, participants expressed that they were consequently victims of racism in education. The fact that educational settings have been portrayed as constituencies of racism is not new (Troyna 1984; Tomlinson 1984, 1986, 2008; Gillborn 1990, 2008, 2009; and Gillborn and Gipps 1996; Gillborn, 2012; Gillborn et al. 2016 and Gillborn et al. 2017). However, several reasons make the finding from this thesis urgent and poignant. First, there is a certain recency effect

associated with this current finding. While the presence of racism has been articulated in the past, this has potentially been obfuscated if not supplanted by changes in social trends, recent discourses of equality and diversity, discourses of multiculturalism and recent anti-discriminatory legal framework in England. The finding that students of BWA heritage experience racism in school is contrary to popular perceptions that hold that multiculturalism has curbed racism. For instance, Alan (2011) explains that multiculturalism has answered questions of racism including fostering a sense of belonging among minorities and that the problem of multiculturalism is instead its lack of supporting white populations. Findings from this thesis refute the perception as explained by Alan. Accordingly, the persistence of racism in education shows that multi-culturalism in England and the proliferation of anti-racist legislation are not far-reaching enough in tackling racism. What this thesis has brought to light is the fact that despite all these mitigating factors, and in line with CRT, racism is still non-aberrational in education.

This finding of racism in education is further different from previous ones in the sense that it has hardly been hitherto articulated by the very subjects of the racism. This articulation by subjects of racism brings the added dimension that racism is a conscious experience for students. This point is further supported in this thesis by the participants indicating that they suffered or battled low self-esteem linked to their realisation that they were being discriminated against. This finding of racism, together with its emotional cost, means that the safeguarding needs of participants were not met when they were in school. These shortcomings that compounds other forms of disadvantages experienced by students of BWA origin have received little or no attention in educational literature. This lack of attention could be partly because the problem has never been hitherto clearly identified.

Another key finding from this thesis relates to educational outcomes. Participants revealed that while in school their motivation for educational success was not only to become successful individuals but also to be able to provide for their immediate families, their parents and the wider community. What is particularly important here is the altruistic reasons attached to educational outcomes. Altruism is seen as being in the core of the value systems that drive solidarity and social welfare within traditional BWA communities. In a more detailed discussion in the previous chapter, a link is drawn between this aspect of educational outcome and the altruistic and philanthropic ambition of heroic characters in West African folklore. Both this altruistic dimension to educational outcomes and its strong connections with African folklore have seemingly not been identified or substantiated in existing literature that has for the most part been dominated by accounts of underachievement.

A further key finding from this thesis relates to participants' perception that the subject matter within the subjects they studied was not sufficiently balanced to reflect their BWA background. The extent to which subject matter reflected their ethnic background was a contributory factor in participants' determination of the subjects they liked or disliked most. Not including enough subject matter from black African ethnic background is racist in the sense that it reinforces structurally constructed racial inferiority. The 'one size fits all' approach to key educational elements like subject matter and teaching styles and approaches all resonate with colour blindness, which in terms of CRT is one of the deadliest patterns of racism.

Other findings from this thesis relate to participants' preferences in terms of teaching styles and strategies; how participants managed difficult events or circumstances; and the factors that served as encouragement and motivation for participants to resist

challenges and persist in their education. All these findings have hardly been so clearly articulated in any previous educational literature related to the experiences of students of BWA ethnic origin. As discussed in Chapter Seven, these findings fall at the nexus of confirming some previous related literature, contradicting other previous related literature and providing fresh new insights relating to the schooling experiences of learners of BWA origin. After establishing that there was very little or no previous research specifically on the experiences of BWA learners, this thesis emphasised from the outset that understanding the experiences of BWA students from the students' perspectives was crucial in any meaningful attempt to make education sufficiently inclusive for them. Based on the findings, this thesis has advanced many suggestions and recommendations. One of these recommendations is the need for the development of a pedagogy of BWA students in English schools. If these recommendations are explored in practice they would potentially lead to improved schooling experiences of learners of BWA origin.

8.2 Summary of key strengths of this thesis

This thesis can be credited for several key strengths and contributions it makes to literature related to the education of students of BWA backgrounds within English secondary schools.

The main strength of this thesis is in the presentation of interview material whereby interviewees discussed their school experiences. From the outset, and as substantiated in the reviewed literature, this thesis raised two related concerns. First, the educational experiences of students of BWA background were often discussed, if not eclipsed, under the wider category of black and minority ethnic groups. Second,

reviewed literature also showed a tendency where educational literature often represented students of BWA background as subjects thereby relegating their voices. Through its presentation of interview material that involved participants from this specific background sharing as counter stories their lived schooling experiences, this thesis has contributed in counteracting an existing hegemony that relegated the voices and suppressed accounts of schooling experiences of students of BWA origin.

Where previous studies on the experiences of learners have generally lacked emic perspectives about students of BWA origin, this current thesis has addressed such need in a rarely consistent and insightful manner wherein the research problem, the research question, philosophical perspective, theoretical framework, methodology and methods all have logical links to Black West Africa. This emic perspective has been realised through enabling the participation of past students rather than using them as subjects. Also, while using CRT whose roots are connected to black Africa, there is an unusual fusion with BWA folklore. This has not only helped in bringing an extended dimension to the understanding of problems but also in the understanding of experiences and seeking of solutions.

A further contribution this thesis makes relates to the sheer focus on the experiences of students of BWA backgrounds as opposed to those of black and minority ethnic groups in general. It is important for future studies to focus on specific groups for without doing so certain messages about these groups could be lost within the bigger picture of multiple grouping. In addition to focusing on this group, this thesis has also unusually focused on the educational experiences and qualitative elements of education rather than on achievement, the latter of which is only one of several factors in the educational experiences of learners.

Another unique strength of this thesis has also come from my own rare privileged attributes as a researcher. In addition to having studied issues relevant to black Africans from a literary and humanities perspective and having a sound understanding of the social background that informs the lives of black Africans in England, I have a BWA origin like my research participants. This helped to give me a rounded understanding and interpretation of the experiences of the participants. The findings, conclusions and suggestions within this thesis have been informed by this privileged researcher position.

A further strength and contribution of this thesis relates to the introduction of the pedagogy of students of BWA origin in England schools. In the same way that the principles of inclusive education are relevant to education, so too are some of the principles of this suggested pedagogy. However, further developmental work is needed to develop this pedagogy which, seen through an ongoing pilot scheme, has great potential to make the educational experiences of students of BWA origin more effective.

In addition to the above, the overall contribution of this thesis relates to the findings discussed in 8.1 above. These findings are suggestive of areas and aspects of practice that could be explored further when trying to improve on schooling experiences and make education more inclusive and equitable.

All the above strengths and contributions notwithstanding, this thesis recognises certain limitations of its own. First, while this thesis addresses the schooling experiences of students of BWA origin in English schools, it is inherently and unavoidably limited by way of its scope and focus. For instance, the scope is limited to secondary schools in the North West region of England. As a qualitative study, this

thesis relied on a small number of participants. In addition, to the above, this thesis explored the perspectives of the participants as opposed to those of other stakeholders. However, it should be observed that these limitations are not weaknesses. Instead, the limitations help to map out what has been covered by this thesis and what areas may need further development.

To extend knowledge and understandings relevant to the schooling experiences of students of BWA origin in English schools, and to address some of these expressed limitations, it would be worthwhile for future research to consider focusing on different geographical areas in England. To afford deeper exploration of CRT as an analytical framework, I recommend further studies using a single tenet (for instance interest convergence, the non-aberrational nature of racism, intersectuality) rather than the whole of CRT. Theoretical frameworks other than CRT could be used to carry similar research as this could yield additional findings. As this thesis has suggested and introduced a pedagogy of students of BWA origin in English schools, it would be worthwhile and interesting to engage in studies that would seek to clarify, consolidate, or even challenge such a pedagogy.

8.3 Concluding reflections

The findings from this thesis necessitate some further comments and concluding reflections one of which is around the National Curriculum (NC) which forms the core of the English education system. Even though there has been long standing criticism of the NC, the reflections of my research participants indicate that the NC is still not culturally diverse enough. Spurts of school practices in relation to a diverse curriculum remain tokenistic. Somewhat related to the need to further offer diversity

within the school curriculum, recent governments have pledged to transform as many as possible schools into academies by 2020. According to this transformation, schools would have autonomy in determining their curriculum and would also have less control from Local Education Authorities (LEAs). Superficially, this seems to be the much-awaited answer to the question of making the curriculum more diversified. However, and especially from a CRT perspective, there are serious concerns with this measure. This move by the government, at best, represents a situation of interest convergence - a situation whereby the interest of a minoritized group would be upheld only if it aligned to the interest of the dominant group (Bell, 2005 and Delgado, 2015). The interest of BWA students to secure a more diversified curriculum seem to converge with the government's interest in making advancements with its neoliberal agenda that have so often engulfed education and other related social services.

As much as the above situation is one of interest convergence, it should be noted that this is not simply and solely a case of interest convergence. In fact, the case is worse than that in the sense that as with most educational policies engineered by neoliberal ideologies, the overall outcome of the agenda would potentially further disadvantage students of BWA heritage. For instance, under the new plans, schools are to pursue their own cultures some of which could potentially reverse some of the gains already made in terms securing equality and diversity in education.

Despite an anti-racist legal framework like the Equality Act 2010 which covers education, together with accompanying school policies, the reflections of participants in this thesis highlight the presence of enactments that amount to racism in schools. Despite emphasis on inclusive education in teacher training curriculum, the behaviour of some teachers amounts to exclusion. This list can go on. What this means is that

current structures do not sufficiently address the plight of the BWA student in English schools. The lameness of existing structures in making education inclusive is analogous to the liberalist approach in stemming racism. It is for this reason that CRT insists on the critique of liberalism. Crenshaw (1988) observes that even though the liberal perspective to the 'civil rights crusade' is always and upward pull', it is flawed with failure to understand the limit of current legal paradigms in orchestrating social change. Similarly, current structures aimed at addressing inclusive practice are flawed and in need of more radical changes. Determining these changes is not the single prerogative of researchers, teachers or policymakers. It should be the result of student-led multi-agency meetings convening at local and national levels to reconsider a way forward. This should form part of the political will and commitment and part of the pedagogy of students of BWA heritage suggested in Chapter Six and developed in Chapter Seven.

Education is far more complex than it is widely perceived even by the very people that are meant to understand it most. In the case of BWA students, these complexities lie beyond statistical figures of achievement and underachievement. Given this complex nature of education today, professionals and scholars need not only be able to demonstrate expertise in one cultural perspective. In addition to their primary area of expertise, they need to have insight into other perspectives, particularly perspectives from the learners' domains. This should be a move in educational practice that should be tightly backed by relevant legislation, policies and procedures.

As seen in the stories of the participants, the school experiences for BWA students are a mixture of some positives and overwhelming negatives. Change is therefore necessary. The kind of change needed here is synonymous with the change

demanded by advocates for inclusive education. This kind of change is also synonymous with the type demanded by advocates of civil rights, racial equality and social justice for minoritised black people. It is not the kind of change that can or will happen overnight.

Of potential benefit for anyone engaged in the agenda for making education more inclusive for BWA students in English schools is the following advisory note. In discussing racial equality in education, Ladson-Billings (2015) recommended that the essence of engaging in the fight is not to win (per se) but to struggle. She further explains that struggling for positive change is akin to pushing an elephant that has no inclination to move. On the first day the elephant is pushed forwards a few inches but on returning the following day to continue with the pushing, the elephant has returned to its original position. While aiming at ultimate victory, the immediate focus should be to keep the struggle alive and to galvanise more people to join in the pushing. I hope that this thesis will help in making more people to join the struggle to push for more inclusive education and social justice. The need for personal contribution to this struggle will shape my post thesis continuing professional development (CPD).

8.4 My learning journey and plans for continuing professional development

At the outset of undertaking this research, I thought completion of the research will curb my curiosity and reduce the amount of work I could do further in my chosen field. Having taken several years to complete this research, the reverse is true. While I have deepened my knowledge in the area of racism and education as a whole and in the experiences of students of BWA origin in particular, I have opened new leads for my curiosity and began new professional endeavours whose limits I can hardly imagine. For example, I have begun consultancy work with some secondary schools

to enable them review how they respond to the needs of students of BWA origin. Using as a mandate Ofsted's recent emphasis for schools to give prominence to British values, I am working with these schools to be able to respond more robustly to the needs of BWA students through making the argument that doing so is in fact one of the ways of giving prominence to British values. Responding appropriately to the needs of cultural minority students is not exclusive of British values given that a key rhetoric of those values is celebration of equality and diversity.

As this thesis originates in a professional doctorate programme and forms part of my professional development, it is important to restate my commitment to CPD. A significant part of my post thesis CPD would be to further develop the pedagogy of BWA origin in English schools that has been introduced in this thesis. I would also like to see other scholars working on this collaboratively with me or on their own. This task is necessitated not only by revelations in this thesis but also by current political instability in West Africa. For example, it has been shown in this thesis that a significant number of BWA students in English schools born outside England have an immigration history linked to political instability in West Africa and resultant asylum seeking in England. For example, current political instability in Cameroon (where former British Southern Cameroon are seeking independence from La Republic Du Cameroon) and in Nigeria (where the Igbos are seeking independence from the rest of Nigeria) means that this trend is set to continue. It remains a realistic expectation that the population of BWAs in England would continue to grow and thereby reinforcing the need for an inclusive educational system that would address the needs of students from diverse backgrounds.

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Appendix A

RESEARCH AND ENTERPRISE SERVICES

Keele University

4th April 2013

Theophilus Moma Tambi
Professional Doctorate in Education Programme
The Graduate School
Keele University
Keele
Staffordshire
ST5 5BG

Dear Theo,

Re: 'The Education of BWA students in British schools: Discussing inequalities in education.'

Thank you for submitting the above research proposal for ethical review. The proposal was reviewed at the Ethical Review Panel meeting on Thursday, 21st March 2013. The project has been approved subject to you taking account of the following feedback:

Information Sheet

- The method of reimbursement is extremely unusual, and it may be misconstrued as an inducement. Therefore the panel strongly recommend that this is removed.

I should be grateful if you would address the above point and confirm how you have decided to do so in writing within seven working days.

If you have any other queries please do not hesitate to contact me, in writing, via the ERP administrator, at uso.erps@keele.ac.uk stating ERP2 in the subject line of the e-mail.

Yours sincerely

Dr Bernadette Bartlam
Chair – Ethical Review Panel

CC RI Manager
Supervisor

Appendix B

Theophilus Moma Tambi
Professional Doctorate in Education Programme
The Graduate School
Keele University
KEELE
Staffordshire
ST5 5GB

8th April 2013

Chair, Ethical Review Panel
Keele University
KEELE
Staffordshire
ST5 5GB

Dear Dr Bartlam,

Re: '**The education of black West African students in British schools: discussing inequalities in education.'**

Confirmation of removal of reimbursements for travel expenses

and addition of information regarding measures to avoid financial costs to participants

Following recommendations made by the panel after reviewing the above proposal on Thursday, 21st March 2013 I can confirm that, in agreement to the conditions for the project being approved:

1. All reimbursements of expenses have been removed.
2. Clear information has been added for participants that expenses will not be reimbursed and what measures are in place to avoid financial costs to them.

Please refer to sections in 'red' on the enclosed Information Sheet for details of the above revisions.

The date on the Information Sheet has also been amended to reflect the above revisions.

Once more, thank you very much for approving my proposed research.

Yours sincerely

theotambi

Theophilus Moma Tambi

Appendix C

Information Sheet

The information contained here relates to a proposed academic research project to be carried out by Theophilus Moma Tambi who is a Doctorate in Education student at Keele University.

Study Title: Education of BWA Students in British Schools: Discussing Inequalities in Education.

Aims of the Research

The aim of this study is to analyse the educational experiences of BWA students in Britain. The underachievement of black students in British schools remains a central concern particularly when considering issues around equality and social justice in education. By enabling participants to talk about their experiences from their own perspectives, this study aims to contribute fresh perspectives and understandings on the educational experiences of individuals of a BWA background. A more comprehensive understanding of these experiences will contribute to a better understanding of issues around achievement, equality, social justice and ultimately ways of addressing these factors.

Invitation

You are being invited to consider taking part in the research study 'Education of BWA Students in British Schools: Discussing Inequalities in Education'. This project is being undertaken by Theophilus Moma Tambi.

Before you decide whether or not you wish to take part, it is important for you to understand why this research is being done and what it will involve. Please take the time to read this information carefully and discuss it with friends and relatives if you wish. Please do not hesitate to email me if there is anything that is unclear or if you would like more information at: t.m.tambi@keele.ac.uk

Why have I been chosen?

You have been invited to participate in this study because you meet the criteria of people needed to take part in the study. These criteria include the following:
that you might identify yourself as having a BWA background,
that you have attended secondary school in Britain within the last ten years, and
that you are at least 18 years old.
The study will offer you the opportunity to talk about your educational experiences. You have been randomly selected from a number of people who meet these criteria and nine other people will also take part in this study.

Do I have to take part?

You are free to decide whether you wish to take part or not. If you do decide to take part you will be asked to sign two consent forms, one is for you to keep and the other is for our records. You are free to withdraw from this study at any time and without giving reasons.

What will happen if I take part?

If you take part in this study, you will initially be invited to take part in one interview session. Where necessary, for example if further information or clarification was required on specific information already provided in the first interview, you might be invited to a follow up interview at a later date. Each session will last approximately one hour. During the interviews, you will be asked to talk about your experiences of attending school in the UK education system. Interviews will be oral sessions which will be tape recorded (provided that you give your consent). You will not have to write anything. The information recorded will be transferred onto a password protected computer that no one else will have access to.

The focus of the interview will be on your experiences in education. However, given the nature of the research, there is a possibility that other more sensitive topics may arise during the interview process. Such topics will be explored only where they are volunteered by yourself and are absolutely relevant to the study. Please see section on 'What are the risks (if any) of taking part?' below for further information.

If I take part, what do I have to do?
You will be asked to read all relevant information and then sign the relevant consent forms. This will show that you have read and understood all of the available information and that you are willing to take part and be quoted in the study. This should happen before arrangements are made for interviews to be carried out. After agreeing to take part and signing all relevant forms, you will then need to agree a mutually appropriate interview venue where the researcher will travel to meet you. You should agree on interview venues somewhere in your local area - where only the researcher, and not you, might incur financial costs in getting there. This is because the researcher will not reimburse any travel expenses.

At the interview, you will be asked open questions about your educational experiences. You do not have to disclose any aspects that you do not feel comfortable discussing. The interview will be tape recorded and you will not need to write or make any notes.

After the first interview, you will again have to agree a date, time and place for a second interview with the researcher. The second interview will take a similar form to the first, with the exception that the researcher might ask you to clarify certain points that arose in the first interview.

What are the benefits (if any) of taking part?
There are no actual benefits for you as a participant. However, this will be an opportunity for you to talk to somebody about your educational experiences. You may find that taking part makes you feel as if you have a 'voice' on issues that have been important in your life experiences. The knowledge that will be generated through the study will partly emerge as a result of your own experiences. You will potentially have contributed towards a better understanding of the educational experiences you and other people went through. This might also be helpful towards improving educational experiences for other people.

What are the risks (if any) of taking part?
There are no obvious risks to the participant in taking part. Also given that ethical guidelines and codes of practice for research will be adhered to, steps will be taken to make sure that there is no risk of harm associated with your participation in this study. You will be asked to talk only about those educational experiences you feel comfortable discussing. However, it is possible that in some cases, your recollection and reflection on particular past experiences might be emotionally distressing for you. If this happens, the interview will be discontinued for your own wellbeing. Wherever needed, counselling will be available on the National Health Service (NHS) following further guidelines from the participant's registered General Practitioner (GP). In the unlikely event of counselling being needed it should be arranged somewhere in your local area as the researcher will not reimburse any travel expenses. If you go ahead to take part in this research you are thereby agreeing that in any event you will not ask for, or receive, any reimbursement for expenses.

How will information about me be used?
The information you provide will be collected through the tape recording of interviews. The information will be used to write up a thesis that will be submitted to Keele University. The university will then read and assess the thesis to see if it meets their requirements and standards. Successful theses are usually made available in some libraries for people to read. Following rules of confidentiality and anonymity, the thesis will be written in such a way that no one reading it will be able to identify you as a participant in the research. The information collected from you will not be used for other studies.

Who will have access to information about me?
Throughout and after this study, your anonymity will be fully safeguarded by taking the following measures:
all names shall be removed from the data and any thing within the data that could lead to the identification of participants will be removed. Participants will be coded or given different names to conceal their true identity.
the data will be transferred and stored securely on a password protected computer and normally destroyed on successful completion of the study. However, in some cases, and in line with Keele University guidelines the data will be retained by the principal investigator for up to five years. After the period of five years the data will be securely disposed of.

Given the above, I do however have to work within the confines of current legislation over such matters as privacy and confidentiality, data protection and human rights and so offers of confidentiality may sometimes be overridden by law. For example in circumstances whereby I am made aware of future criminal activity, abuse either to yourself or another (i.e. child or sexual abuse) or suicidal tendencies I must pass this information to the relevant authorities.

Who is funding and organising the research?
This study is not publicly funded. It is carried out in partial fulfilment of the requirements for a research degree in educational studies at Keele University. Where any travel expenses are incurred to and from interview venues, or any other travel expenses arising as a direct result of your participation, the Principal Investigator who is Theophilus Moma Tambi will make a reimbursement.

What if there is a problem?

If you have a concern about any aspect of this study, you may wish to speak to the researcher who will do their best to answer your questions. You should contact Theophilus Moma Tambi on t.m.tambi@keele.ac.uk. Alternatively, if you do not wish to contact the researcher you may contact Damian Breen on d.breen@keele.ac.uk or on 01782 733556

If you remain unhappy about the research and/or wish to raise a complaint about any aspect of the way that you have been approached or treated during the course of the study please write to Nicola Leighton who is the University's contact for complaints regarding research at the following address:-

Nicola Leighton
Research Governance Officer
Research & Enterprise Services
Dorothy Hodgkin Building
Keele University
ST5 5BG
E-mail: n.leighton@uso.keele.ac.uk
Tel: 01782 733306

CONSENT FORM

Title of Project: Education of BWA Students in British Schools: Discussing Inequalities in Education.

Name and contact details of Principal Investigator: Theophilus Moma Tambi, Doctorate in Education Programme, The Graduate School, Keele University, Tel: 01782733556 email: t.m.tambi@keele.ac.uk

Please tick box if you agree with the statement

1	I confirm that I have read and understand the information sheet for the above study and have had the opportunity to ask questions.	☐
2	I understand that my participation is voluntary and that I am free to withdraw at any time.	☐
3	I agree to take part in this study.	☐
4	I understand that data collected about me during this study will be anonymised before it is submitted for publication.	☐
5	I agree to the interview being audio recorded.	☐
6	I agree to be contacted about possible participation in future research projects.	☐

_____	_____	_____
Name of participant	Date	Signature
_____	_____	_____
Researcher	Date	Signature

CONSENT FORM
(for use of quotes)

Title of Project: Education of BWA Students in British Schools: Discussing Inequalities in Education.

Name and contact details of Principal Investigator: Theophilus Moma Tambi, Doctorate in Education Programme, The Graduate School, Keele University, Tel: 01782733556 email: t.m.tambi@keele.ac.uk

Please tick box if you agree with the statement

1 I agree for any quotes to be used ☐

2 I do not agree for any quotes to be used ☐

_____	_____	_____
Name of participant	Date	Signature

_____	_____	_____
Researcher	Date	Signature