A Psychotherapeutic Understanding of Black Identity in Workplace Contexts

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Glossary of Terms

In this document, I will be using particular words and phrases throughout. I offer a glossary of these terms and their working definitions. Other transcultural terminology will be explained as and when necessary within the text. Additionally, I will be using the terms respondents, participants and co-researchers interchangeably to mean one and the same. The glossary is as follows:

- ***Black*** will refer mainly to people with known African heritage and those who can be discriminated against because of their skin colour, e.g. Asians.

- ***White*** in the context of this research is used to represent people who are in the majority and who are not likely to experience racism as a result of their skin colour.

- ***Race*** is used to describe a group of people with common ancestry and distinguishing physical features, skin colour, etc. e.g. term used to denote black and white people. Essential to this definition is the fact that the word is also a social construct used as a political concept and pawn by the power-dominant group in maintaining the oppression of minority groups (d'Ardenne & Mathani, 1990; Phillips & Rathwell, 1986).

- ***Minority or minority group*** is used in the sense as defined by Wirth (1945): "a group of people who, because of physical and cultural characteristics, are singled out from others in society in which they live for differential and unequal treatment, and who therefore regard themselves as objects of collective discrimination...Minority status carries with it the exclusion from full participation in the life of the society". (p.347).

- ***Black/white relations*** will refer to problematic, 'dependent' and historically entwined dynamics embedded in this dyadic relationship and contributing to difficulties relating to power and powerlessness and of the dominant and dominated.

- ***Racism*** is any behaviour or pattern of behaviour tending to systematically deny access to opportunities or privileges to members of one racial group while perpetuating access to opportunities and privileges to members of another racial group (Ridley, 1989). Jones (1972, 1981) specifies three forms or levels of racism. Racism can be ***individual*** (actual behaviour that is discriminatory in nature); ***institutional*** (includes the intentional or unintentional manipulation or toleration of institutional policies that unfairly restrict opportunities or targeted groups; ***cultural*** (a subtle and pervasive form of racism which includes the individual and institutional expression of the superiority of one race's cultural heritage and concomitant value system over that of other races).

- ***Institutional racism*** is a term used to define the collective failure of an organisation to provide an appropriate and professional service to people because of their colour, culture or ethnic origin...seen or detected in process, attitudes and behaviour which amount to discrimination through unwitting prejudice, ignorance, thoughtlessness and racist stereotyping which disadvantage minority ethnic people.

- ***Racial oppression*** is the experience of collective and/or varied forms of racism e.g. individual, institutional and cultural racism, together with other occurrences of related harassment such as bullying, scapegoating, sexual and racial aggravation. The term highlights issues of power and powerlessness and dynamics involving the dominant and dominated.

- ***Identity wounding*** is a term used to describe deep hurt and offence caused to one's sense of self by the experience of being targeted or singled out for negative and unfavourable treatment.

- ***Black identity trauma*** is a term used to describe negative and harmful effects caused by racism and racial oppression which can have damaging effects on the sense of self and one's security of being in the world.

- ***Workplace difficulties*** is a term covering hugely diverse interpersonal situations ranging from personality and attitudinal conflicts to more complex and enduring situations arising from diverse forms of harassment. These can include bullying, scapegoating, sexism, classism, patriarchal dominance, homophobia, heterosexism, xenophobia, ageism, disability prejudice and other discriminatory and oppressive practices, e.g. my concept of 'workplace oppression'

- ***Workplace oppression*** (Alleyne, 2004), is an intercultural term used specifically to describe and include silent forms of racial prejudice experienced by black and other minority ethnic workers in the workplace. The term highlights the unrelenting nature of these hidden aspects of workplace difficulties, which have the potential to cause deep distress and ultimate damage to workers' identity and self-esteem. The *grinding down* nature of these experiences is concerned with issues of power and powerlessness and of the dominant and dominated.

- ***Workplace stress*** in the context of the black experience is twofold. It arises from the general and 'normal' everyday demands and challenges of the workplace **and includes** an ever-present anticipation, caution and preparedness in meeting negative experiences (real, perceived or a mixture of both) in relation to one's race. Such experiences are received as racial 'assaults' e.g. micro and macro aggression. The combination of

these two factors differentiates the experience from the more familiar understanding of stress.

- ***Microaggressions*** is a term used by (Russell, 1998) to describe covert racial assaults. These instances stem often from subtle, automatic, non-verbal exchanges by Whites that are down-putting of Blacks. Their capacity to 'stun' the receiver invariably results in shame and hurt.

- ***Macroaggressions*** are similar to microaggressions in many respects but differ in that they are directed at black people as well as the individual.

- ***Stigmatic stress*** refers to the kind of stress that arises out of the act of 'being marked' (singled out for unfavourable and discriminatory treatment) and where 'the marked' is pushed into a state of hyper-vigilance and over-sensitivity.

- ***Black on black discrimination*** is a term used to describe the ways in which we [black people] act out upon each other, internalised negative views and beliefs about our race and ourselves in such ways, as to hinder and prejudice collective and interpersonal relationships. Black internalised oppression, (believing that the stereotypes and misinformation about one's group are true) is a major contributing factor to this damaging dynamic.

Abstract

Sustaining cohesion in working groups, in businesses or institutions, is often fraught with problems. Increasing work demands may intensify levels of stress, thus diminishing a worker's contentment in their job. The dynamics of the group can exert pressures on individuals to conform to the norms of the dominant culture, and may pose further problems for group relations. When racial difference is added to the picture, it may be the trigger for further troubles, as old and comfortable ways of upholding a culture - essentially that of the dominant group - break down or move into crisis, as an additional challenge has to be faced. The solidarity of the dominant group, hitherto asserted in benign ways, may turn a simple difference into a 'threat', or create an 'enemy' perceived as problematically 'different' from the rest.

This research has examined the phenomenon of racial difference through the stories and experiences of a section of the workforce who have found themselves outside the 'pack'. They were invited to share and discuss their experiences. Their evidence forms the backbone of this enterprise.

The study was conducted in three institutional workplace settings – the NHS, Social Services and Education. The aim was to gain deeper understanding of the nature of stress observed in this particular group, and to understand the effects of stress on the individual's sense of self and identity. The approach is designed to fit well with a person-in-environment perspective and seeks to scrutinise the experiences of black people in predominantly white workplace settings.

Drawing on the qualitative research methods of Phenomenology, Hermeneutics and a Heuristic Enquiry, the study aims are to:

a) *explore the experiences of being black in the workplace*
b) *examine the impact of these experiences on the well-being of the individual*
c) *identify causes (external and internal) that contribute to 'workplace oppression' (my term) and trauma*

d) *give expression to the unspoken, unspeakable, unsayable*

e) *develop knowledge that is transferable to working with issues of black identity wounding*

f) *offer a therapeutic strategy for managing black identity trauma through a culturally sensitive and effective model of helping*

The underlying principle running through the research and the writing of this final document is that it was not a study done ***on*** black people, which would have necessitated a comparative research approach with a contrasting group, but research done ***with*** black people, sharing stories emanating from their and our everyday experiences. As the researcher, I saw myself as a privileged 'insider', researching as well as being researched. Taking up the position of 'insider-researcher' was going to be qualitatively different. This location would offer the unique position of being not only the insider-researcher, but the *cultural insider-researcher.*

It was important that the methodology challenged oppression rather than perpetuate it, and within this framework, there was a collaborative approach to designing the study, obtaining information, giving voice to the unspoken and testing out the analysis of the evolving data.

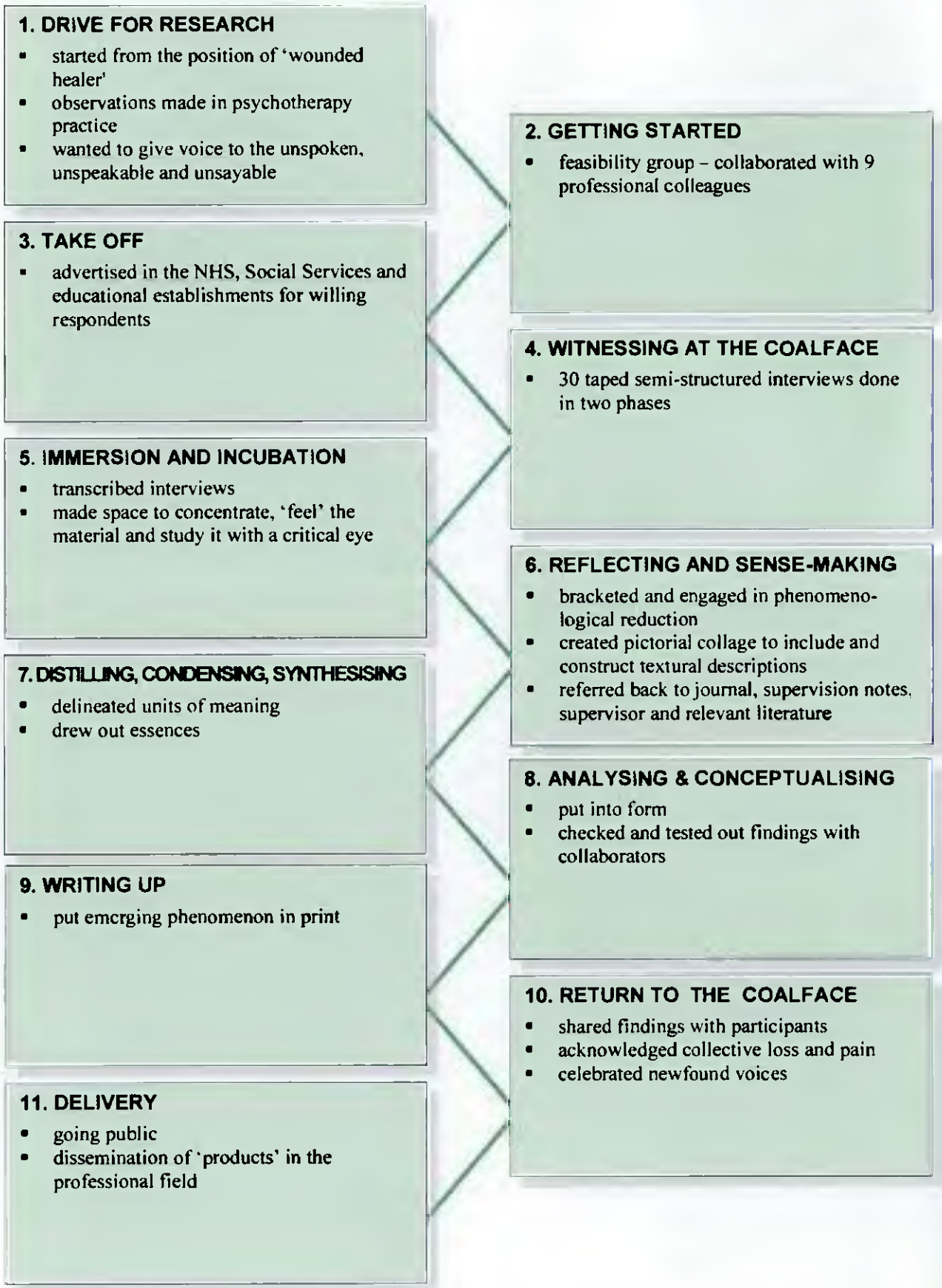
A mixture of personal and professional reasons has driven my passion for this enterprise. From the personal, direct and indirect experiences of racial discrimination and a determination to do something were important. From the professional perspective, meeting similar such experiences in clients' stories and being disturbed by the hold and extent of their effects, increased my drive to investigate the phenomenon, develop new understanding and share this knowledge. From an educational perspective, there seemed to be a need to widen the discourse on racism to include the theme of *subtle racism* and its impact of the self. The research attempts to deal with this latter theme, as it reports on the problems of black workers whose stories describe what it is like to be defined as 'different'. In their accounts of what they experienced, the subtle phenomenon of racism was shown to generate

external and internal stressors, which contributed to difficult interactions, fragile relationships and effects to health.

The study's analysis reveals a dialectic between internal and external aspects of racial oppression and an emphasis on internal matters. In this scrutiny, the inner dynamics of what black people themselves might also be bringing to these situations are explored. This thesis highlights subtleties and complexities of a historical legacy that continues to shape black people's interactions with the white other. The main finding concerns what I call 'the internal oppressor', which George Bach's work (1985) highlights as the inner enemy, that can be more formidable a foe than the most manipulative or oppressive associate.

The 'flow chart' in **Table 1** that follows will show at a glance, the various stages of my journey throughout this project.

Research Journey Flow Chart



Chapter 1: Overview of the work

1.1 Personal Introduction

My own background and social circumstances can easily qualify me as a cultural refugee; one who has travelled from a so-called third world country to the western world for better educational opportunities. I emigrated from Guyana (West Indies) to the United Kingdom in 1975 and moved straight into nursing quarters in Kent following a brief orientation period with an uncle and aunt who resided in South East London. Coming from a former British colony with a family upbringing that embraced traditional and colonial values I brought with me some old principles, one of which was an unquestioning respect for white people. I was very naive. As a UK immigrant, my colonial upbringing had initially left me with immature assumptions about racial equality and acceptance by the 'mother country'. I came to train in nursing as many black Caribbean women did at that time, and was a general and psychiatric nurse for many years in the National Health Service (NHS). This was a tough experience where racial and cultural prejudices together with institutional discriminatory practices were overt and commonplace. Although institutional racism (Macpherson Report 1999) was not officially recognised as a problem, it was the established status quo and tolerated culture in this and many institutions.

Ironically, it was within such circumstances, that I progressed to the senior position of ward-sister of a psychotherapy unit within a large hospital setting. I managed an all-white team who although cooperative and pleasant to work with, nevertheless seemed to hold a quiet grudge against being supervised by a black person. My decision to leave the NHS after eleven years service was for reasons of its declining working conditions for staff and the ever-presence of subtle discrimination in daily work life. A counselling training and subsequent employment in inner city London offered opportunities to work in specialist counselling areas such as addictions, student counselling and HIV and Aids.

Working within the drug and alcohol field was an isolating experience. From a culturally mixed clientele who sought counselling from the organisation, I found myself skilfully deployed to work exclusively with people from my own cultural group, i.e. black clients. This matching which was done purely on the basis of race – a process which enabled my white colleagues to avoid working with this group - only served to "imprison both [me] the professional and the client in [our] own racial and cultural identity" (Kareem, 1992). In this 'ghettoised' position, I would endure repeated supercilious comments when clients were being referred such as, *'you would surely find this cultural problem of interest'*. Such patients frequently turned out to have quite intractable problems leading to heavy drinking and drug use or they presented with personal distress, which made them appear 'difficult'. In the eyes of my white colleagues, 'difficult' became transformed into 'culture', the personal into racial, and the psychological into something alien. Colleagues who perpetuated this culturally divisive practice were unaware of exercising inappropriate power and denying those culturally different clients an equal and fair service.

A subsequent position as counsellor working with 'disadvantaged' students in a government-aided training consortium exposed me to different kinds of racial and cultural biases and intolerances. These were situations in which black on black discrimination, black male patriarchal dominance and sexism were widespread. Alongside these experiences were other prejudices that existed among other cultural minority groups (gays, lesbians, people with disabilities, Vietnamese, Gypsies) where there were perpetual tendencies to create and maintain a hierarchy of oppression amongst these groups. Ironically, in this situation, black people seemed to want to hold onto a strange ownership of being the worst oppressed 'victims'. There was also 'black on black discrimination', which was mainly based on in-group prejudices held by black people about their own. These individuals embraced 'Afrocentric' beliefs and other value-based systems (Akbar, 1979; Baldwin, 1980, 1981a), which they felt made them more 'authentically' black than those who expressed a certain individuality and independence within their own blackness. The differences in these groupings led to cruel labelling, exclusion, favouritism and damaging black on black dynamics.

Similar such experiences of creating hierarchies and divisions also existed in the field of HIV/Aids. Particularly vexing to black workers was the way in which the British media had portrayed the disease by a collective blame and scapegoating of black Africans who were branded the sole cause and propagators of the aids pandemic. Coupled with this blaming culture, which infected workplace culture, was the experience of black staff (including myself) who were treated as automatic suspects and carriers of the virus. Because of this widespread ignorance, prejudice and discrimination, a large part of my work in the HIV/Aids field was involved in educating nursing and medical personnel about the realities of the disease.

Although each of these work episodes were in themselves difficult and painful to negotiate, none was as tough as my professional training as a counsellor and psychotherapist. Of particular note were the preparatory experiences to train as an analyst at the Institute of Group Analysis. Especially difficult was the analytic group experience, in which I found myself to be the only black member. I attended an expensive group analysis twice weekly for three years. Throughout this experience, I felt subjected to subtle and repetitive assaults, which seemed specific to me as an ethnic minority member. The whole encounter left me feeling traumatised and very unsupported in the group. It was as if I understood the word 'trauma', especially in the collective sense with regard to my race, for the first time. On reflection, I still wonder whether better facilitation, aided by an understanding of the virulent nature of projective identification in groups, could have helped us as group members to make sense of what was going on.

My other trainings as counsellor, psychotherapist and clinical supervisor bore many resemblances to the experiences just described. In each of these learning environments, I endured a specific set of significant and interrelated encounters. General feedback from culturally conscious sections of the counselling and psychotherapeutic world loudly acknowledges the fact that black students (and to a similar extent, other minority ethnic students) still go through such experiences in training. Highlighted below is a flavour of these negative [and common] occurrences:

- I often found myself the lone black and the only minority ethnic member on training courses.

- In instances where there were two black members, the majority group dynamics evolved in strange ways where one person, (me usually), slowly gained the label of being the *bad* black and the other, the *good* black. Black/white group phenomena consistently showed the perceived 'bad black' as being forthright, outspoken, confident in including issues of race and culture in the dominant discourse, challenging other's comfort zones and not afraid to debate on issues of racial difference and other sensitive issues. A noteworthy oddity about the perceived *bad* black was the occurrence of them being often, darker in complexion and comparatively more strikingly 'ethnic' than the perceived *good* black.

- I often experienced sketchy inclusion of race and cultural issues on training programmes and felt aggrieved enough to raise my concerns.

- Through raising these concerns, I subsequently felt burdened and responsible for carrying and in some instances, teaching my peers and white tutors on issues of race and cultural diversity.

- I often experienced a further sense of burden when placed in a position of dealing with patronising or stereotypical comments made on aspects of race and racism.

- I often experienced a lack of adequate and constructive critique of Eurocentric theories and concepts in training when it came to discussing the human condition in all its complexity and richness of difference.
- I often felt the draught of not being positively mirrored and included, and as a consequence, endured long periods of isolation, alienation and, at times, even low-level depression.

- Such feelings of isolation and alienation in my group analytic experience led to a slow process of shutting down and a sense of despondency. Subsequent paranoia and mistrust of what was meant to be a helpful process contributed to feelings of being unsafe [and strikingly for me, needing my mummy]; a grave indication of being relegated to an infantile inner space.

The tone and severity of these experiences may cause disbelief to the reader. For some, there may even be a sense of puzzlement that such well-intentioned training programmes with very well intentioned training personnel can unwittingly contribute to such negative experiences for a minority of their consumers. My own psychotherapy practice evidences this silent experience through the stories of past and current students in training. Black male trainees speak of feeling psychologically emasculated by a perceived sense of having to "tone down" their maleness in order not to appear threatening. Others feel they if they did not 'blend in', they will make life difficult for themselves. In the worst-case scenarios, black students with little or no support, leave training prematurely, whilst others soldier on damaged and with regrets of having battled through a grinding mill experience.

In reflecting on my overall experiences, I feel I was *saved*, **in part**, from this 'damage' by my long held curiosity about, and subsequent awareness, of black/white dynamics whilst growing up as a child growing up in Guyana, South America. Such curiosity was aroused mainly in my adolescence through being taught by white Voluntary Service Overseas (VSO) teachers throughout my secondary education, having white neighbours, which was unusual for the 'ordinary' Guyanese person, and observing my father's egalitarian working relationship with white foreigners. These collective experiences, I feel, have put me in good stead for a psychological foundation of possessing endurance and resilience with life's challenges.

Part of the legitimisation for conducting my research and for writing this document is a commitment to giving voice to an insider's experience that is both known and continually observed in clinical practice and one which I believe deserves a rightful

place for the unspoken, unspeakable and unsayable to be rigorously addressed. That means that in my role of the researcher and researched, I am not only a witness, bearer and educator of these experiences, but also a conduit through which 'sufferers' can therapeutically negotiate their psychological difficulties. Ultimately, my hope is to create a positive impact on therapeutic thinking and practice both within the field of counselling and psychotherapy and in personnel practices in the workplace.

Conclusion

It may be appropriate for me to mention in closing two personal aspects influencing this work. First, I come from a large family where I am the eldest child, and the circumstances of my family's life meant that I, as an adolescent girl, spent a good deal of time looking after younger, more vulnerable siblings. Then in addition, I am a member of an ethnic minority – a black person living in Britain – who has therefore inevitably seen some of life from a difficult angle. I think these two experiences have helped me to be very observant, develop a closer understanding of the disadvantaged, and a readiness to empathise with the under-dogs of life and those struggling and suffering at its margins. I see this as enabling me to tune into the deeper, unexpressed emotions of other people, and see goodness and beauty in all living matter. I think my past as a caring sibling and my later life as an immigrant have both helped me to take an interest in the silent and unseen dramas of life. My professional education came later, but I think it rests, like everything else, on an in-built readiness to listen to the quiet sufferings of others, to pay attention to the subtle and silent dynamics of interaction, to notice the absence of human witnessing – and also to trust the soul's capacity to be resilient and resourceful following trauma. From the deep pathos of such effects there comes, for me, life itself.

These two personal experiences directed me towards the helping professions and my current role as a psychotherapist. Now, I put to further use both my personal and

professional knowledge-based experiences in this investigation, allowing me to visit each of these areas during this complex and unfolding process.

1.2 How it all began

As a black woman living in Britain, I am particularly interested in exploring the lives and experiences of the marginalized and oppressed in society, especially those of black people. I have made our experiences – both internal and external - the focus of my study because, since the 1960's, it has been my belief that a wide range of empirical studies and other texts have been short-sighted in limiting their focus to the macro and external issues of racial oppression. What has been lacking in my view is sufficient attention paid to issues associated with internal and intrapsychic dynamics.

Counselling and psychotherapy are not exempt from criticism of paying little attention to these areas. There is a noticeable gap in the literature, and when present, there is a tendency to deal with their complexities in simplified or pathological terms. Paying full attention to how black people construct their reality and give it meaning demands a more robust scrutiny of issues relating to the internal and external, historical and present and micro and macro levels of the subject. My own interest as a researcher, psychotherapist and 'wounded healer' (Jung, 1951) resides in the effort of trying to understand how these various tiers all interrelate and shape black identity.

In the multi-layered issue of black racial oppression, I want to suggest that there should not be a divide between external oppression and internal issues. The internal here is conceptualised in terms of how black people relate to and handle the negative impact of racial oppression, and their ability to determine its influence on how personal ontological security is appropriated, disrupted and contested. My concern with this project is gaining a fuller understanding of what the oppressed may potentially be bringing to oppressive situations. In the same way we have concerned ourselves with such issues as emotional and sexual abuse, and the potential for its

'victims' to perpetuate or act out their abusive patterns on themselves and others, I believe that similar thinking may have therapeutic resonances with the theme of racial/cultural oppression and the effects from internalising its impact.

Thus, the research project is concerned with the internalising aspect of black people's experience of discrimination (a form of abuse) and its effects on Self and interpersonal relating. Thinking analytically about the psyche's capacity to handle trauma has proved a useful tool in focusing on areas of the personal in relation to racial oppression and trauma. Here I have conceived personal in a number of ways, as a mode of self-description; as part of my process of theorizing; as part of my choice of methodology.

In this study I have implicitly challenge objectivism (Harvey, 1989) and instead look to my own world and knowledge as a black woman, as well as our own world and our own knowledge as black people, to throw light on my process in this study. From this post-modernist perspective, I want to go beyond a tacit knowledge of these issues. I am conscious however, that I want to do this is in a way that is not exclusive and excluding, as I am mindful about the constraints of absolute truth and believe that knowledge is always questionable.

1.3 Background to the research

The research idea was conceived in private psychotherapy practice and later went through its gestation and delivery in the 'field'. Observation over fifteen years of working with black clients had consistently shown recurring patterns of negative effects to psychological health and sense of self. These experiences were taking place in the work context (and society at large), where amongst the 'normal' challenges and pressures of a modern workplace culture, black individuals were also having to wrestle with issues of race and cultural conflicts in these predominantly white settings.
Overwhelmingly race issues mattered in all cases, with clients discussing these difficulties in psychotherapy. Being aware myself of the complexity of race-

dynamics, and of the nature and effects of overt, covert, intentional and unintentional and corporate aspects of racism, I was nonetheless puzzled by a clear pattern of effect on black workers health and capacity for resilience. I wanted to further my enquires into the specific nature of stress these clients were suffering and investigate into the origins of its deep effects on black identity and all its related issues. As I look back on my psychotherapy work, I cannot recall a single case amongst my black clientele where unprompted references to actual or perceived difficulties in black/white relations were not mentioned or discussed at length. Such a trend suggested and dictated a clear focus for my investigations. Race clearly mattered and I wanted to examine the subtleties of black workers experiences in the specific context of predominantly white (workplace) settings.

As a psychodynamic psychotherapist who is interested in unconscious process, and as a black person who has had to become conversant with issues of race in its complex and ever-changing manifestations, I was particularly keen to discover more than what is generally known and established about black and white relationships (in the British context). Black clients in psychotherapy consistently identified experiences of '*subtle racism*' where issues of power and powerlessness and of the dominant and dominated prevailed, and these key components of their experiences began to suggest that there was an important dialectic between racism and the particular kind of workplace stress they were experiencing. I wanted to examine these observations and they have now become an important source of evidence to corroborate the research investigations.

My original research statement for investigation was loosely formulated as: "Those who are unable to survive oppression bring an internal unresolved oppressor which interfaces with the external oppressor" (January 2002). Early research seminar sessions on the doctoral programme provided a rich opportunity to observe, learn and test out this project theme. Following my considered reflections on the varying responses from a predominantly white peer and tutor group, I changed the thesis title to lessen what appeared as personal subjectivity in determining the focus of the work

and rephrased it to allow space for engagement in a more natural and evolving process in the research.

The choice of area for investigation has followed a definite pattern throughout my personal and professional career and has created a sense of continuity for the research project. To date, all my professional work has guided me to areas of oppression – mental health, 'disadvantaged' students, drug and alcohol addiction, HIV and aids, gay and lesbian issues, black issues, refugee and asylum seekers – all areas which include those who are positioned in the margins of society. Such personal and professional interests must, I feel, indicate something about me and who I am. I have always been interested in the '*hyenas*' of the human jungle; those who are on the margins and who have to find a way of creating their legitimate space amidst prejudice. My previous academic work for my diploma in counselling, clinical supervision training and Masters Degree in counselling and psychotherapy, has all addressed areas of race and black identity.

This project is a natural progression of this theme with advantages for deepening discovery and gaining new knowledge as a person and practitioner, and sharing such benefits with the wider field of psychotherapy and the human resources area of employment.

1.4 Aims of the research

This study aims to:

(a) explore the experiences of being black in the workplace.

(b) examine the impact of these experiences on the well-being of the worker.

(c) identify causes (external and internal) contributing to 'workplace oppression' and trauma.

(d) to articulate the hidden realties of a phenomenon and open awareness to the unspoken, unspeakable and unsayable.

(e) generate new knowledge and a shared language for working with aspects of black issues and particularly black identity wounding.

(f) raise awareness and broaden perception of who we are [as black people] and promote individual self-development, professional advancement and collective change.

(g) assist managers and human resources personnel to gain better awareness and competence in managing race conflicts in organisations.

(h) offer a therapeutic strategy for managing black identity trauma through a culturally sensitive and effective model of helping.

The outcomes of this research will be of value to counsellors and psychotherapists who could be expected to meet issues of black-identity wounding in their practice. The 'products' of the research disseminated through (1) published academic papers, (2) transcultural training video and (3) policy guidelines for working therapeutically with workplace harassment, are all aimed at practitioners gaining a deeper understanding of identity trauma as experienced by black people (and other minority ethnic groups). These texts are intended to help counsellors and psychotherapists acknowledge the impact of such invisible injuries and develop an appreciation for and confidence in working with its complexities.

At the very heart of the study was an attempt to give black workers' issues a proper and authentic voice through their own rich stories of work-life in the three institutions selected for this study. My intention was, as always in the process of counselling and psychotherapy, to facilitate the unfolding of naturally evolving data and present it in an honourable and helpful way to aid further learning in the area being investigated. The hope was that the findings could help towards creating useful guides and directives to some of the important ontological questions raised by interviewees, and those still unanswered questions within organisational management concerning black/white dynamics. It is my intention to help filter the research findings through as many relevant administrative and legislative channels, with a key aim of bringing about a renewed attention to this area of difficulty in the workplace.

Although the study was primarily focussed on one specific racial group, i.e. black people, it was hoped that its findings may also be of value to other minority ethic groups whose experience of societal prejudice and discrimination are similar.

Chapter 2: Research Methodology

2.1 Rationale for Approach

In this chapter, I discuss my methodological approaches to the research. Choosing and arriving at helpful approaches was an emerging process. I will discuss the significant influences prefiguring my methodological search and show how I arrived at a pluralistic methodology enabling a liberatory research process. I make explicit the area of ethical considerations and identify what were the important considerations in undertaking an 'insider's' research activity.

I shall therefore present:

a) My choice of School for locating the study
b) My choice of method: a *trinity* embracing phenomenological, hermeneutic and heuristic approaches
c) My considerations for ethical mindedness

a) My choice of School for locating the study

As mentioned previously, this research grew out of my work and life experiences as a black woman in Britain and all the challenges therein both good and bad. Influenced by these factors, I wanted to find the best way to approach the research questions in which the focus was on experience and meaning. The literature consulted (McLeod, 2001; Silverman, 2000), verified that such work called for qualitative methods. I was not attracted to quantitative methodologies for the reason that their search was mainly for scientific objectivity through a statistical logic and commitment to the principle of value neutrality (Cicourel, 1964; Garfinkel, 1967), however the decision of which qualitative method to choose was a laborious and thought provoking process. What enabled my choices was a clear acknowledgment of the fact that the study was about how to explore intensely lived personal experiences of a marginalized section of our society in a particular context.

Particular determinants were based on the general assumption that behaviour is ultimately derived from an individual's interpretation of his/her social world (Stern, 1985). This underlined the appropriateness of my choice of a qualitative research approach capable of facilitating an excellent opening into that world of the respondent group. Closely related was the psychological viewpoint that in any relationship, both sides will bring issues of their own to the interpersonal dynamics of that alliance. The study's topic involving worker/management relationship was no exception to this rule. I therefore concluded that a qualitative investigation was infinitely a more appropriate way to go about capturing these elements, as a quantitative survey would have required a much larger sample and therefore would not have been appropriate to engage with the core personal issues at the heart of this work. Also, important was the fact that quantitative approaches would have offered less scrutiny to unconscious dynamics and processes within these relationships.

I was also clear that I wanted a research paradigm which was able to embrace complex and subtle intercultural experiences. Values and principles influencing my methodological choice were that it:

- *could acknowledge the complexity of diversity*
- *was a process that acknowledged power differences and dynamics*
- *facilitated articulation of experiential and tacit knowledge*
- *could value stories and anecdotes as legitimate knowledge*
- *could value the cultural individual and cultural collective*
- *could act as a liberatory tool and a catalyst of change*
- *became a process that allowed me to understand from the inside out*

- *would value unconscious dynamics and its interpretation in interpersonal interactions*

Finding the right school for this study seemed critical. I needed a discipline that would not be afraid of (and ideally, one that would welcome) the challenge of investigating such topical (and contentious) issues. For example, I did not want to be a part of a process that disempowered the interviewees, for many of whom negotiating issues of power and powerlessness were everyday struggles within own lives. It was important therefore that the power within the research process – at all levels – should rest with participants and be facilitated through their voices. I needed a school that valued the fact that in researching race and oppression, a black researcher would find it difficult to come to the process with a 'value free' stance. I needed to choose a school able to recognise the position of the 'insider-researcher' having cultural connections and pre-knowledge of the respondent group, whilst needing to maintain ethical distance. I wanted a school that acknowledged such difficulties of privilege and possessing tacit knowledge whilst being challenged to remain open to new knowledge and discoveries.

I thought it unlikely that any one school would be able to address such specific needs. The likelihood of a pluralistic approach seemed inevitable and the best way to address multifaceted issues of the researcher as 'insider', the human enquiry itself, and scrutiny and interpretation of unconscious processes within intercultural and interpersonal interactions. A methodological 'triangulation' (Mason, 1996) emerged as the approach that would compliment and corroborate the tenets of the research aims. The concept of the "researcher as *bricoleur*" (McLeod, 2001), fitted my choice of wanting to transcend the confines of any specific genre and not impose a pre-determined method of conducting the study.

b) My choice of method: a *trinity* embracing phenomenological, hermeneutic and heuristic approaches

I reflected on the fact that my training is psychodynamic, which is an approach geared towards interpreting unconscious material and phenomena in the work. Within my practice, such a phenomenon was present in the room with black workers who were experiencing and dealing with difficulties in the workplace. Their difficulties suggested a presence of a wounding that was real and one that needed deeper exploration before putting into an interpretive frame. The focus for the research naturally became an investigation which would explore this unheard voice, because until the voice was heard, there was no use in interpreting. This strategic frame clearly offered a rationale for showing my analytic strategy and the process by which I could highlight the material to show the phenomenon and the preceding trauma.

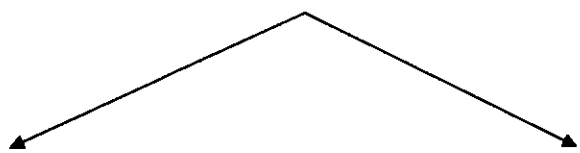
As previously stated, a number of factors, both personal and professional, have dictated the focus on understanding black identity in workplace contexts. Such a focus also needed to confront the presence of racism in all its forms. Engaging in this discourse required an acknowledgement of the fact that overt racism and racial discrimination have been reduced due to laws, policies and the changing cultural climate aimed at stamping them out. Open, explicit and unconcealed discriminatory behaviour are steadily becoming practices which are no longer acceptable, fashionable or tolerated. Racism however, has not disappeared; it has in my view and experience, simply taken on new and subtler forms. Its mutation is difficult to perceive unless one is fully conversant with its dynamics and has experienced it directly.

In the above contexts outlined, it seemed untimely – even unnecessary – within such a small research project, to do a comparative study contrasting white workers experiences. I felt there was more therapeutic mileage in examining the phenomenon that had shown itself to be persistent and pervasive in my investigations, and try to understand its workings from the respondents' own reality and from my privileged

position as insider-researcher. I therefore chose the following qualitative methodology to showcase the phenomenon.

A qualitative research design

Phenomenological Methodology



Heuristic paradigm **Hermeneutic paradigm**

The study was conducted through a method of triangulation – a three-part and three-fold process I refer to as the trinity. Qualitative methods utilising Phenomenology (Husserl, 1960) and Hermeneutics (Gadamer, 1975), together with a Heuristic backdrop (Moustakes, 1990) and a concluding narrative analysis (Riessman, 1993) were chosen to create an inclusive approach. My willingness to take on the challenge of pluralism in my methodology, although daunting, was familiar as my intercultural psychotherapy practice requires knowledge of a range of theoretical approaches and the competence to select from any of these to meet the client's needs.

I had initially considered a much larger sample and had plans to include a quantitative analysis of stress to highlight the frequency and specific nature of this phenomenon in black respondents' experiences. I subsequently decided against these plans based on my Learning Agreement feedback, which suggested that my project was already a substantial piece of work that probably exceeded the demands of a medium sized final project. The feedback required me to consider a "cut off" point in my explorations.

The ability to be flexible in my choice of methodological integration, yet being mindful of key issues of integrity within it, was paramount. A breakdown of the approach is as follows:

Phenomenology (Husserl, 1960; Colaizzi, 1973, 1975, 1978; Benner, 1994) **and Hermeneutics** (Gadamer, 1975), were chosen as methods because of their complementary epistemological positions. They seemed best suited to my preferred style of enquiry and matched my own personal and professional value base. Both methods deal mainly with linguistic material, utilising language-based accounts that are in essence parallel to the process of dynamic psychotherapy where the practitioner is always interested in discovering what is behind the manifest content and in the unconscious realm. Phenomenology and Hermeneutics both assume an active, intentional construction of a social world and its meanings by reflexive human beings (McLeod, 2001). As researcher and *'insider'*, privy to similar experiences held by the interviewees, I was aware that such familiarity could easily become a threat to the process of natural evolving discovery and new knowledge. I needed an approach that would keep this in check whilst honouring its authentic presence in the work.

I found this in phenomenology which seeks to set aside any assumptions about the inquiry, and build up a thorough and comprehensive *description* of the 'thing itself'. Its approach of involving an 'in-dwelling' in the phenomenon until its essential features reveal themselves (McLeod, 2001), was further helped by an exhaustive descriptive phenomenological analysis (Colaizzi, 1973, 1975, 1978). However, I was aware that describing the phenomenon was not going to be enough.

Hermeneutics provided an added dimension to the descriptive data and a different tact in handling the rich material. It has been the preferred method used by phenomenologists and psychotherapist to explore *meaning* behind description within human interaction. Exploring the meaning behind the phenomenon was an effective way to gain essential and deeper understanding of human phenomena. This

understanding, according to researchers, is always from a perspective and always a matter of interpretation (Benner, 1994; McLeod, 2001; Messer, Sass & Woolfolk, 1988). As researcher/practitioner in this study I was aware therefore that I could not be totally free of pre-understandings or 'prejudices' because of my many positions. Being a member of the very community I was collaborating with, a 'victim' and wounded healer myself of workplace oppression, a psychotherapist working with patients who have worked through the traumas of workplace oppression, and an individual who is both conscious of being in and active within a political world could not be abandoned. Therefore, to be 'value free' in the research was attempting the impossible. I was challenged to find a way of immersing myself in the 'text' (respondents' experiences in the workplace context), whilst holding my own beliefs and opinions in suspension, so far as the insider-researcher can, for the duration of the study, so that new meanings were free to surface from the expressed texts of the respondents world. I found the paradigms of phenomenology and hermeneutics (which lent to an interpretative analysis), answering this dual position quite effectively. The hermeneutic phenomenological craft of 'intuiting' or spending time dwelling on the text, analysing the meaning of the phenomenon and then describing it in detail, became the key research task taking place within a heuristic backdrop.

The heuristic element of the research has honoured my roles as black woman, psychotherapist and someone who has personally been affected by workplace and other institutional oppressive experiences (the latter contributes to the insider-researcher's position). I felt this approach would allow for my inclusion and immersion in the whole process, whilst being intensely committed to the phenomenological stance of waiting until the research question was illuminated or answered. Moustakas (1967) argues that it is essential that researchers engage in the equivalent of a personal journey, a 'journey of discovery', which draws upon all their resources and capacity to know and learn. He goes on to say, qualitative discoveries cannot be forced: there is always a degree of waiting and patience, and a requirement for a readiness to be surprised (Moustakas 1967, 1990a; Douglass and Moustakas, 1985).

One of my reasons for doing this research was to achieve just this – to go beyond what I knew - and therefore the heuristic steps of compiling the data, refining the method of analysis, 'condensing' the research text, analysing, checking, writing and theorising were able to facilitate this goal. Within this approach I was pleased that personal aspects of the researcher would be embraced within the heuristic frame; the wounded healer from her own experiences of workplace oppression, and my thirst and passion to understand the pedagogy of oppression (Freire, 1970). The outcome of the three research methods worked out as being an experience of harmonious fusion.

I include the hermeneutic epistemological position (McLeod, 2001) as an indication of further influences on my research design. This criterion is rooted in 'consensus criterion', which holds that truth is inter-subjective and refers to beliefs that are shared and upheld by a group of people. I include this position to honour all other unsupported, yet valuable and authentic sources of information. I also refer to elements of ontological hermeneutics (McLeod, 2001), which allow for an understanding of people's existence and meaning given to such experiences from multiple horizons, as constituted by their cultural and historical context. These sources include:

- *a life-time of anecdotal evidence relayed by black people about real, felt experiences of racial oppression.*

- *what is generally known amongst black people to be prevalent within our everyday experiences*

- *the possession of a seemingly well-developed 'sixth sense', that allows me [us] to 'know' discrimination, even when we are not able to pin down and articulate the problem objectively*
- *material from scores of black clients in private therapy who have dealt with issues of black identity wounding and racial oppression*

- *evidence from facilitating clinical supervision with counsellors and psychotherapists who are working with issues of racial oppression in themselves and in their clients*

- *evidence drawn from consultancy work with organisational groups who have tackled race issues head on in individual, team, and on-going work programmes*

The unsupported data from all the above sources is a clear testament to an important area of study in race and oppression and its widespread effect. This focus does not however ignore the fact of the group's great resilience to deal with adversity both historically and in the present.

In embracing both the epistemological and ontological positions such hermeneutically informed studies therefore showed that they had a better propensity for a holistic inclusion of all these aspects and enabled the drawing of much more wide-ranging conclusions. This inclusion has produced an analysis which has yielded a greater depth of understanding of the research enquiry.

c) My considerations for ethical mindedness

The consideration for ethical mindedness was a carefully scrutinised area of this enterprise. As already indicated, because of my position as black researcher, working with a black respondent group, and engaging in what I have previously termed, an 'insider's' inquiry, this has raised and presented particular ethical challenges. I would like to address each of these areas as I met and dealt with them. They were:-

- ***The researcher's non-maleficence***

I strove to maintain this ethical position, which is essentially about doing no harm, by holding a strong desire to avoid all possible (and unwitting) chances of re-

wounding the wounded and re-oppressing the oppressed. Built into the contract with interviewees was the opportunity for them to feel free to utilise a contract of very brief (3 sessions) personal support offered by me, or by a recommended other, should they feel the need for such a space following any emotional distress surfacing after being interviewed. This service was made explicit and offered free of charge. Approaching this project from the positions of both researcher and *insider* had heightened my awareness of the need to honour the conduct of non-maleficence with respondents and collaborators throughout the whole process. Being reminded of the fact that I was writing about a subject of oppression and identity wounding – both very 'close to home', – had increased my alertness for keeping this stance. Additionally, approaching the research topic from the perspective of both 'wounded-healer' and researcher (with 'power'), provided poignant reminders of what I needed to guard against in the work.

- ***The researcher's beneficence***

This stance, which is doing good for others, was integral to my research aim and was achieved by trying to create at all times, a space for the unheard voices to be heard and the silence of a particular suffering be made constructively loud and noticed. I feel I have honoured this position by representing interviewees' authentic voices as truthfully as possible, whilst maintaining ethical mindedness for their confidentiality, anonymity and sensitivities.

- ***The researcher's creation of autonomy***

I approached the area of autonomy, which concerns issues of fully informed consent, with a transparency that included open discussion, negotiation and mutual agreement. Interviewees were made aware of what they were signing to agree to and permission was given for them to take part-ownership of the process. Those who did not want to disclose such things as their age and the few who were concerned about issues of confidentiality, were made to feel free to exercise personal choices which made them feel comfortable. In every instance, I offered clear descriptions as to how their stories and voices were going to be used and gave details of how the material would be published. All interviewees' cooperated and collaborated with the clear

outlines of the contract and their open engagement with the task contributed to a trusting and relatively trouble-free process.

- ***The researcher's fidelity***

I understood this consideration to be one of being fair and just. I strove towards fulfilling this principle by ensuring that all collaborators and respondents had received something positive from their involvement in the project. To be entrusted with confidential and sensitive information made me especially mindful – as I would normally be in my role as a psychotherapist – of the need to treat such material with the utmost sensitivity and respect. I approached the consideration of fidelity by maintaining equal treatment of the collaborators involved in the feasibility workshop and repeated this approach with volunteers taking part in the interviewing process. The requirement for fidelity proved a bigger challenge for reasons of my position as 'insider', and being a black researcher working with other black people. Collaborating with black people in the exploration of their experiences in the workplace also reminded me of the negative (and harmful) impact of societal constructs on race. In view of this clear fact, I endeavoured to view all the project's collaborators from a reflexive position of genuinely wanting to understand the essences of their true, lived experiences, whilst being careful not to support society's notions and biases of this group. To do this would be a betrayal of my insider-researcher position.

Conclusion

Maintaining ethical mindedness throughout this project was regularly kept in check by consultations with 'critical friends' with whom I shared my concerns, and from whom I was able to get constructive critique of my decision-making processes. The position of 'creative indifference' often served to keep my passion and countertransference reactions intact, whilst being immersed and purposeful in the research activity. I strove to double-check my intent and ethical position in the research by keeping an up to date journal to which I constantly referred throughout

the process. I feel that the maintenance of a rigorous ethical approach has enabled me to achieve a high level of critical enquiry in my research.

Being aware of the power inherent in my role as a psychotherapist to influence and have influence projected onto me by others, I was very mindful of the data collection being presented as a true and unbiased account of black workers experiences. This was important alongside the added ethical task of determining meanings that they ascribed to these experiences. The very act of respondents reflecting in a relaxed manner enabled them to think in a very focused and open way about their work. Very frequently, the research process almost appeared as if the respondents were using it as a therapeutic encounter. This made me very aware that the researcher's boundaries needed to be intact to avoid temptations of straying into the familiar therapist mode. These issues highlighted the frame of the research process in which black on black encounters presented a particular challenge.

Being black researching black issues also lead to reflections on the fact that, as my theoretical perspectives are rooted in a psychodynamic tradition with an overarching intercultural perspective, it would have been a betrayal to use a strict analytic strategy by just interpreting what was seen and emerging from the research. I did not want to replicate the context of people having things done to them informed by a paradigm in which their subjective experiences and voice would not be heard. As a result my chosen strategy, the research operation was clearly going to present a tension, whereby I would be in the privileged position of being the conduit for the voices of the workers, but needing to stand back. I would also be closely scrutinising the workings and dynamics of black/white relations in work contexts of which I have personal knowledge, but needing to be open at the same time to unheeded and subtle aspects in these relationships. Having to be true to what was being observed in the work scenarios and being mindful of how I represented those in positions of difficulty and powerlessness were also major challenges. Moving between these frames in this research presented a particular challenge for me as a black researcher working with black interviewees.

In reviewing the process of thinking through and deciding on my methodological approach, I was aware that each strategy taken alone would have fallen short of the task of understanding *being* and *existence*. A solely hermeneutic approach would be accused of lacking a creative edge, because it can only speak of what people have assumed existence to be (McLeod, 2001). A purely phenomenological approach would not be capable of dealing with the realisation that being human is to interpret the world and that people are interpreting beings (McLeod, 2001). Added to this was the fact that the psychoanalytic psychotherapy school to which I belong would not naturally permit me to meet the world without interpretations. Therefore, by appreciating the limitations of both phenomenology and hermeneutics, I opted to combine them both and this way benefit from their individual strengths. Heiddegger (1962) himself had seen the fusion of these two approaches as the heart of his esteemed work; a marriage that enables movement between interpretation and description.

I believe my chosen methodology involving phenomenology, hermeneutic and heuristic principles was an appropriate combination for scrutinising the dialectic between intrapsychic and extrapsychic factors relating to race, interpersonal relationships, identity issues and trauma. I see the research yielding findings that would be of more relevance to black people, however, as previously indicated, I see the outcome as also having application to wider inter-cultural work involving other minority ethnic groups who face similar experiences and difficulties in our society.

2.2 A Review of the Literature

My theorising involved thinking with the field text. That meant going beyond this material to develop concepts. This entailed giving shape to what emerged from the study and expressing my ideas more formally. I thought about theory as having and using ideas; and sharing these 'tools' with practitioners and managers to aid cultural competence.

I was prepared to engage in creative intellectual work and to speculate about the field text in order to have ideas. I was also prepared to try out a number of models of conceptual thinking to link my ideas with those of others, and so to move conceptually from my own research setting to a more general level of analytic thought. My analysis of the text was informed by participants' sense-making of their own experiences and my own ideas about what was going on. The ideas I drew from were influenced by my understanding of, sympathy with and curiosity in relation to particular "schools" of thought.

I consulted literature to explore the values of equality, anti-oppression, empowerment, wholeness, transformation and psychological change. I drew on theories of, (a) racism (b) liberation, particularly black feminist perspectives and a black perspective framework; (c) theories on personal/collective development and social change; (d) social psychiatry that linked discrimination and illness; (e) psychoanalytic thinking and race (f) concepts relating to group and organisational analysis; (g) theories of trauma and, (h) theories of black identity and self-concept.

(a) Theories of racism

The search for theories of racism revealed substantial information on all forms and expressions of racism from both British and American perspectives. These included anti-oppressive/anti-discriminatory practices (Ahmed, 1991; Braham & Rattison, 1990; Clifford, 1994; Dhillon Stevens, 2003) studies in elite discourses and the anatomy of racism (Goldberg, 1990; van Dijk, 1993), history racism (Ross, 1982; Gilroy, 1987), and so on. However, there was notably less American material and strikingly an absence of rich British text on the subject of subtle racism in workplace contexts. The key refrain in all the text consulted, suggested that race does matter in society and certainly in the workplace. Nonetheless there has been, in my experience, a tendency to dismiss the issue with comments such as; *we all know about this stuff; everyone knows black people have a hard time, so what?; isn't it a bit old hat to keep banging on about it?*. These comments can come across as no less than denial at

best, and at worst, indifference to an obvious problem that is not just black peoples' but one of all humanity. Emerging material in the UK mainly in the form of Trade Union reports, national surveys and studies done within Social Services sectors, acknowledge more stridently the fact that racism has not gone away. There is a slow but growing recognition of the additional fact that what we are faced with in the wake of overt discrimination is its reincarnation – subtle racism.

Over the past two decades, there has been a trend towards racism becoming politically incorrect. Overt expressions of racism have become increasingly socially unacceptable in Britain. Blatant signs of racial prejudice and other explicit acts of racism are frowned upon and they have generally become undesirable, untrendy behaviours not to be tolerated in society. Edsall and Edsall (1991), whose US studies parallel changing attitudes in Britain, feel that, "there has been a public repudiation of racism and a stigmatisation of overtly racist expression, which has now led to a general cultural norm against racism." The same appears true for the British context.

However, it appears that whilst overt racism is now publicly repudiated, racism has become more subtle, and equally damaging. The hypothesis put forward by various American writers (Bynon, Cleary, Hamilton et al, 2001) suggests that, while many white people proclaim egalitarian values, their cognitions and behaviours are still influenced by prejudices that are buried deep within their psyche. This leads to the possibility that those who perpetuate and those who experience racism may have different interpretations of events that involve racism. It follows that those who are exposed to racism systematically and experience it are in a good position to detect it if they have both knowledge of normal behaviour for particular situations, and a general knowledge of racism. Countless more references can be mentioned here, but for reasons of word count, this section will be brief.

b) Theories of black liberation and black feminist perspectives

Esteemed writers such as Akbar (1996); Cobbs & Grier (1968); Freire (1970), hooks (1995); Lorde (1984); Morrison (1987); Rodney (1984); Walker (1983), have all addressed issues of black liberation from their own specialist angle, namely, from generalist, feminist and pedagogic perspectives. Significantly, many of the works by contemporary black American women writers have overtly addressed psychological trauma in the wake of contemporary feminist movement sanctioning the disclosure of private matters and secrets in public space. These writers were able to enter that space and create a literature addressing subjects that were still taboo in the area of writing about race. A key theme in most of these works addresses an important ontological question for black people:

> **How does one move from a passive 'victim' positioo, where things are 'done' to one, to ao active position where one is exercising choice and playing an active part in the path of one's life?**

Their varied wisdom can be summarised thus:

> **The task for black people is to educate themselves for critical consciousness.**

By this they mean, the ability to show independence of mind by reasoning for oneself, and developing the emotional capacity to:

- Acknowledge the scale of the problem and name it
- Find and value self
- Recover self- worth and learn self-love
- Re-frame notions of blackness

Freire (1970) says that subjects - not objects - must enter into commitment to the struggle for liberation, but what is this process by which we move from object to subject? Fanon (1986) suggests being '*actional*' to help unhinge from the painful

historical past and tune out expressions of black rage and pain. hooks (1996) reminds people of colour not to see blackness solely as a matter of powerlessness and victimization, rather there is a need to have a deeper understanding of institutional racial oppression in all its facets and the way it over-determines patterns of black/white social relations. She goes on to say that there is a strong challenge for us as black people to locate black identity from other multiple locations, not simply in relation to white supremacy (p. 248). hooks challenges the notion of a stereotypical monolithic black culture which is perpetuated in both black and white sectors of our society. She firmly suggests that, *"narrowly focused black identity politics do a disservice to the complex and multiple subjectivity of black folks"* (p.247). She also address a crucial area of black interpersonal interactions in the white world through the concept of '*dissimulation*' (hooks, 1995). This is a form of masking that black folks have historically used to survive in white supremacist settings. As a social practice, it has promoted duplicity, the wearing of masks, hiding true feelings and intent. The resulting dual personality has undermined bonds of love and intimacy and has encouraged the over-evaluation of duplicity, lying, masking (p.143). Using these helpful concepts to explore the data enabled the process of clearer theorising and conceptualising.

I drew on these texts and ways of thinking to affirm the study's work, my research ideas, my sense-making of the data and the challenge of thinking through a creative approach to addressing issues of oppression, black identity wounding and healing.

(c) Theories of personal/collective development and social change

There were many theories to learn from and include here. The contrasting theoretical views of two notable writers, Mead (1934) and Fanon (1986) seem particularly relevant and important to include. These theoretical views seem to parallel the symbolic black and white of societal thinking and in so doing they highlight modern and post-modern perspectives on the self and human relations.

George Mead's (1934) views, which I feel were coloured by his time and experiences, suggested that we live our lives in constant internal dialogue with what he called the *generalised other*; the generalised other representing the sum total of what the world expects of us, or takes as normal and acceptable. Unlike other theorists addressing issues of the self in society, Mead found this process non-pathological, indeed benign and normal. The process he described was a dialogue, an ordinary, non-repressive, non-stressful conversation that was constantly being held between us and the world. The *generalised other* was thus not a repressive collective figure, nor reductive or exercising abusive power. It spoke quite legitimately for the world of other people and their values, and engaging with it was a civilising process.

In direct contrast to Mead, Fanon's view on this internal dialogue and engagement with the *generalised other* is summed up thus, with specific regard to black/white relations:

"*When the Negro makes contact with the white world, a certain sensitising action takes place. If his psychic structure is weak, one observes a collapse of the ego. The black man stops behaving as an actional person...The goal of his behaviour will be the Other (in guise of the white man), for The Other alone can give him worth...self-esteem*" (p.154).

Likewise, for the white man, he states:

"the Negro is a phobogenic object, a stimulus for anxiety...phobia is a neurosis characterised by the anxious fear of an object...which must have certain aspects...It must arouse...both fear and revulsion" (1986, p.154).

Fanon's view of the black and white self and human relations screams the point that the Other is experienced as either a repressive figure (for blacks), or one which arouses the primitive and therefore fear (for whites). His view sums up a world where human relations are based on control, power and powerlessness, repression, and shame-based neuroses.

I would contend that, whilst both conceptual views of the world would seem to have their own implicit merit, we are greatly influenced by the naked realities of our socio-cultural-political circumstances which inevitably disrupt Mead's benign (albeit wishful) way of seeing and being in the world. The reality of human relationships for the oppressed and the oppressor matches more closely Fanon's perceptions of the stark truths of our world today. I see Fanon's work as the fundamental basis for understanding the pedagogy of black oppression.

Relating these contrasting theoretical concepts to the study enabled me to develop a more comprehensive understanding of external relational factors and intra-psychic issues leading to the phenomenon I call '*the internal oppressor*'.

(d) Theories from social psychiatry and linking discrimination and illness

According to McKenzie (Bhui, 2002), a psychiatrist at the Royal Free and University College Medical School, the research linking discrimination to illness and medicine has revealed some worrying and unaddressed concerns for black and white professionals in the medical field. In his chapter 'Understanding Racism in Mental Health, he states:

"Racism is a fundamental cause of disparities in health. Its myriad effects and links to other forms of social stratification lead to it being both obvious and masked. Its boundaries are indistinct because it is internal as well as external, individual as well as ecological, and shunned while being an integral part of dominant culture ideology. Its investigation is important and yet part of the

spider's web that traps the best thinkers of ethnic minorities in contemplation instead of action" (p.83)

With regard to these external stressors, he points out:

"The perception of threat and the level of control are important in the production of stress. Both are influenced by personality, history, culture, social buffers, the media, the place of the individual in the social strata and the type of threat. Control may be exerted by action to get rid of the stressor or by adaptation. Adaptive responses may decrease in the short term but may lead to harm in the long term". (p.95).

He asserts:

"The effects of racism on health are complex; both socio-economic class, and psychological coping style affect the association between high blood pressure and the experience of racism. Added to this, the experience of racism is not uniform for different members of an ethnic minority group. It depends on residential area, socio-economic class and skin colour. Darker skinned individuals are more likely to experience racism than those who are lighter skinned. There is also an interaction between skin colour and socio-economic status: darker skin has been shown to be associated with the experience of more racism in lower socio-economic groups but not higher socio-economic groups." (p. 88).

Similar research evidence from the United States shows that some of these health effects also have impact for other minorities such as gays and lesbians and people with disabilities. This evidence can help us better understand the presence of subtle, quiet acts of discrimination and racism and the effects these negative experiences can have on those who are exposed to it. These studies have also investigated possible causes for the links and correlation between various external factors and impact on the personal. However, few have offered in-depth critique of the personal and its

link with intra-psychic factors and dynamics. As McKenzie himself notes briefly, *"the historical links between the oppressed and the oppressors are important"*, but this area in his and other academic writings is not expanded upon fully. The paucity of material has highlighted a gap which I have tried to redress in this study.

Other psychiatrists like Fernando (1991, 1996), Burke (1984) and Phillips and Rathwell (1986), have also addressed similar issues of health, race and ethnicity. They argue cogently that psychiatric imperialism at a global level and racist ways of work at an individual level need to be combated in order to enable us to move forward into truly culturally based concepts of mental health.

I borrowed the ideas and conceptual thinking of these practitioners and writers to affirm the findings in my work and enable me in the process of gaining comprehensive understanding of the phenomenon arising out of the study.

(e) Theories of psychoanalytic thinking and race

To date, much written material on race and specifically black/white relations has tended to address **external** issues and such topics as cultural imperialism, social and political inequalities, racism, crime, mental health and education. In counselling and psychotherapy, where it is expected for such discourses to be more focused on the **internal**, material is very limited. Existing literature has given some attention to familiar themes through the repetition of debates and counter-debates to the point where we can now expect any current discourse to include recognizable themes along the following well-worn lines:

- ***racism as splitting, projection and projective-identification*** *(Dollard, 1937, 1938; Money-Kyrle 1960; Hinshelwood, 1989; Rustin, 1991; Young, 1992; Timimi, 1996; Ward, 1997; Gordon, 2004). These texts follow arguments and counter-arguments that suggest the above named concepts are ways by*

which individuals may sharply compartmentalise people and relationships in the external world into good and bad and polarise their responses accordingly. Corresponding processes of idealisation and denigration are inherent in these racist attributions. Additionally, any unwanted feelings and responses are placed outside of the self to protect against fear and anxiety (usually irrational).

- ***racism as concerned with dynamics of the Oedipus Complex*** *(Chasseguel-Smirgel, 1990) - Nazi genocide is referred to here as a clear example. This concept is concerned with a Freudian notion that all revolutionary conflict in society stems from feelings of desire (a wish to posses the other) and hostility that are acted out in sibling rivalrous groups.*

- ***racism as an irrational process*** *and therefore a form of neurosis if held onto (Rustin, 1991). This belief suggests that irrationalism derives from preconceptions about others not observed as facts. Such feelings can form judgements, strong opinions and corresponding actions in the face of the truth. Such destructive narcissism could lead to pathological organisations of the personality with the corollary of irrational thinking and neuroses.*

- ***racism as sibling rivalry*** *(Sterba, 1947), which presents a way of understanding how and why black people are made to represent sibling rivals and be infantilised in the presence of white people*

- ***racism as a manifestation of sexual jealousy*** *(symbolized by historical lynching practices and present day black male disempowerment), and a concept also associated with objectification of black people as primitive, the physical, shit and evil (Berkeley-Hill, 1924; Fanon, 1968, Vannoy Adams, 1996).*

- ***racism as a response to modernity*** *(Frosh, 1989a, 1989b; Sarup, 1996) racism in this context is cultural imperialism and exploitation and therefore highlighting issues of power and powerless and the dominant and dominated.*

- ***racism as boundaries and boundary drawing*** *- a way to fix the other, to assert and maintain sense of absolute difference between self and other" (Gordon, 2004) . As an exception, this perspective has struck me as a refreshing addition to the body of available text.*

Included in this list are other psychoanalytic thinkers who compare historical black/white relations to such situations as child labour, which was ubiquitous in the past or to the sexual abuse of children, as well as contrasting it with the oppressive conditions, and also the exploitation of working classes under early capitalism.

To date many counselling and psychotherapy trainings addressing race still focus on the theme of unlearning racism. This focus is usually geared to the majority group – that is, white participants. As a consequence, they have something to gain from participating in anti-racist and anti-discriminatory practices. Black participants lose out in my opinion. Little attention is paid to the inner dynamics of race and racism and its effects on those who live with the stigma of historical oppression and who have to survive its perpetual stigmatisation on a daily basis. It is in this gap that literature is needed, and necessary for a more holistic approach to the subject.

In spite of the paucity of such diverse material, black people have acknowledged, albeit quietly and defensively, that, "we have stuff to deal with in our own backyard". This statement clearly points to an awareness of inner unresolved issues within us and widely recognized as part of "our" [black people's] ongoing agenda. Yet despite this collective recognition, like the silence of psychoanalysis with regard

to race, the statement seems an echo, relegated to a mere wish fulfilment. The intention to actualise its goals and aims seems plagued by widespread psychic inaction and malaise. The situation in my view, has contributed to certain prevailing beliefs and stances that prove limiting and restricting to our [black people's] general growth and development.

The above conceptualisations about race, and racism in black/white relations were all supportive and invaluable in addressing subtleties, complexities and unconscious issues relating to black workers experience in the workplace.

(f) Theories and concepts relating to group and organisational analysis

The study has highlighted how commonly held organisational practices and cultures unwittingly support potentially deleterious forms of transference and countertransference enactments. Because of the caring and people orientated nature of the work environments studied, (the NHS, Social Services and Education), where the challenge of working with ill-health, social, mental and educational needs make extreme demands and bring particular challenges to the staff group, it is possible that these enactments may help disguise, discharge or exacerbate tensions within these work environments. The hermeneutic research paradigm for this study allowed for a psychoanalytic investigation of these semi and unconscious process to be scrutinised in some depth. Obholzer & Roberts (2000) ideas on individual and organisational stress were helpful. Shur's (1994) theory on countertransference enactments in organisations provided a deeper understanding of how workers and institutions actualise their primitive internal worlds. Additionally, Bion's (1962, 1967,) theory addressing issues of containment in groups was invaluable in throwing further light on organisational dynamics.

In the three work environments studied, staff held anxieties and impulses invoked by severely ill and disturbed patients, as well as having to be the parent dealing with demands of teaching, coaching, guiding, disciplining. Such work settings seemed to

unconsciously support regressed modes of functioning, in particular the projection (Freud (1937), re-introjection, projective-identification (Klein, 1964) and splitting (Freud, 1937) of primitive internalised object relations. Bion's (1967) 'containment' is difficult under these circumstances and in institutions where hierarchical structures and power dynamics contributed to well-defined stratifications of the dominant and dominated, it was possible for the aforementioned structures to collude with these difficult, undesirable and unwanted dynamics as they played themselves out amongst the staff group.

How can staff rid themselves of these unwanted dynamics? Individual, corporate and collective psyches tended to naturally respond by ridding their undesirable and unbearable aspects through forms of splitting and projecting these unwanted bits into convenient containers; a process known as projective-identification.

Projective identification is a clinical-level concept, derived from "phenomenological references, all of which lie entirely within the realm of observable psychological and interpersonal experiences" (Ogden 1982, p. 9). He delineates three phases involving both intrapsychic and interpersonal elements.

In the first phase, a projector fantasizes about ridding himself of a split-off component of his internal world, experienced as intolerably threatening to the self or as in danger of being destroyed. He then exerts pressure on the interpersonal recipient, attempting to induce the recipient to feel his unwanted feelings. The projector needs to believe that the self or object component is located inside the recipient. In the last phase, the recipient may partially identify with and enact the projected component.

My decision to include the theory of organisational dynamics in this study was important to the process of understanding the subtle context in which issues of 'workplace oppression' was taking place.

(g) Theories on Trauma

According to one leading clinician in the trauma field, Judith Herman (1992), long term or chronic stress is likely to be more traumatic if it occurs under conditions of captivity. Although black people in the context discussed in this study are not in this actual position, the sense of captivity, i.e. imprisonment and loss of freedom is powerfully felt in the narratives and stories told. Correspondingly, other studies have shown that there are similar experiences and effects of oppression in other marginalized and stigmatised groups.

In a q online feature, (November 23, 2000) highlighting the impact of gay-related stress, research has shown that gay men can suffer 'traumatic and stigmatic stress' (a form of post-traumatic stress disorder), negativity of beliefs, low self-esteem issues, hyper-arousal (which includes hyper-vigilance), self-control issues, and trust and intimacy problems as a result of living in a prejudiced society. The psychological issues affecting this minority group can compared quite closely with those seen in my study, and in both cases, they were able to contribute to traumatic character development.

In Professor Gill Starker's seminar (doctoral programme, March 2004), my awareness of trauma was greatly increased by texts and experiential work that covered a transtheoretical approach to trauma. In her stimulating lecture offering perspectives from biological theories, theories on information processing, cognitive theories, psychodynamic theories, Lacanian theories and treatment implication, I understood that initially the word trauma in western society was used as an explanatory concept and a metaphor for any psychic pain or psychological distress (Hacking, 1995). Later, cumulative evidence from longitudinal and prospective studies (Wilson and Raphael, 1993) and others, confirmed that trauma is predictive of psychopathology, given the generic mechanism which create faultlines in psychic functioning. From my study, I was able to theorise that the process of internalising racial oppression and the 'damage' arising in this process appeared to be creating a faultline. Within this psychic space, the internal oppressor (my concept) also

appeared to be thriving in respondents' interpersonal functioning. Starker's seminar helped with a deeper understanding of the obvious connection with PTSD following exposure to trauma. It was also useful to have a concept explicating different forms of trauma and the kinds of dysfunctions likely to arise; for example, sexual abuse trauma has been linked with borderline pathology (Herman, 1992) while physical trauma has been implicated in anti-social behaviours (Marshall, 1999) and early emotional trauma has been associated with almost every psychopathology on Axis 11 in DSM 1V, (Meares, 2000).

These inputs confirm that black workers experiences as they have been described by them in the study can, over time, lead to a form of identity and cultural trauma. A focus on resilience, that is, attention to therapeutic approaches that help restore psychological health and state of grace, is then of critical importance.

(h) Theories on black identity and self-concept

Theories on racial identity were constructed to answer basic questions such as "Who am I?" They have also helped us understand how far individuals identify with their racial group membership. Such theories have embraced anthropology, theology, philosophy, psychology and sociology, and have placed different emphasis on the influence of nature and nurture.

With regard to racial identity, there was greater recognition from American social scientists during the era of the civil rights/Black Power movement in the 1960's of the need to study the impact of racism and ethnocentrism on the psychological development of individuals. Early models were proposed to explain black racial identity. These suggested that racial identity was a personality type (Cross, 1978; Vontress, 1971). Later theorists proposed that the acquisition of racial identity was a stagewise process in which a person moves from one level of development to another, depending on what is happening in their environment (Helms, 1984; Sue and Sue, 1990).

The notion of identity is contested and complex. Qualifying the concept by such issues as race, ethnicity, gender, social class, religion, sexuality and regional differences, are arguably complex determining factors. Many theorists agree that society and stereotypes impact identity and those who have specifically addressed racial identity and minorities also believe that racism is a factor in shaping the sense of self.

One such notable theorist William Cross (1971) developed one of the first and most popular stage theories of racial identity development. Cross first published his Nigrescence model as a representation of the various stages individuals traverse in becoming Black oriented. As it was first presented, this model suggested that black people move from a self-hating to a self-healing and culturally affirming self-concept as their black identity develops. However, although a useful model, the model was challenged as not necessarily one that showed identity development, i.e., movement forward and improvement of the self, but rather people's worldviews, ideologies and value systems changing during Nigrescence. Such change was hotly debated as not always leading to progress and self-development.

As a result, Cross revised his original model and consequently defined the process of Nigrescence as the transformation from a pre-existing (non-Afrocentric) identity into one that is Afrocentric (Cross, 1991). The revised model consists of five stages: **Pre-Encounter Stage, *Encounter Stage, *Immersion-Emersion, *Internalisation, *Internalisation-Commitment.* Although useful as a developmental model, I have been critical of its use, as it has been employed by ineffectual facilitators as a simplified and convenient tool to authenticate their teaching abilities and competence on race issues. It has raised the serious question of the danger of using models as recipes in the absence of proper contextualising all of the subject's important and relevant tenets.

Other theorists who have developed models to help us understand the development of persons of colour include, Maxim (1993, 1994), focused on black children's development, and Banks (1992).

Conclusion

I found the activity of doing the literature search an enjoyable process. I describe it as such because the material affirmed the findings of my research and in other instances, raised many questions that were unanswered by the study, thereby suggesting pathways for future post-doctoral work. I was also aware that comparatively little has been done here in the UK to address internal and unconscious issues of race and black issues in particular. Contrastingly, much research and general self-help literature is regularly carried out and disseminated in the public realm in the United States. I was surprised and reassured to see that I was not alone in thinking, feeling and experiencing the things that are related to my research topic. This was very validating and authenticated my endeavours. On the other hand, I was saddened by the fact that here in the UK, whilst there seems to be more of a general sense of racial and cultural integration, as compared to the US, the subtlety of institutional and corporate racism is more insidious and damaging. As yet, there appear to be no comparative studies between the UK and US to confirm this widely held observation in the black community. I am reminded by my literature search that there is an urgent need for more ethnographic studies that focus on race matters that will highlight and elucidate deeper understanding of race and mental health phenomenon. The paucity of evidence in this important area has clearly signalled the pursuit of further work on these critical issues.

Chapter 3: The 'Special' Challenges of Undertaking Qualitative Research

3.1 Writing from and about our experience

A key factor amidst this study was the fact that I have found myself researching and writing from the position of 'insider' and 'outsider'. These two contrasting positions, although difficult to balance, were in many ways no different from the work of therapy with black clients. In this therapist's role, I see myself as the person who witnesses, provides support, understanding and empathy, whilst also adopting a professional distance and openness in order to be able to challenge, confront, and facilitate the client's empowerment. A similar stance was also required in my approach to 'insider's research enabling full engagement with the respondents, whilst being at a distance to observe, engage in sense-making and interpret what I was making sense of in these processes.

Immersing myself in the project, whilst being called upon to move between the positions of, 'insider' and outsider', 'I' and 'we', 'them' and 'us', proved a major challenge, but necessary for the skill of reflexive processing.

My own experiences of racism had constantly reminded me of the fact that I was not entirely a neutral player in the research and that its activities were powerful enough to stir up my own issues. I was aware of being critically vulnerable to exploring these matters whenever they arose. For these reasons and others, the challenge for ethical mindedness was paramount in both the research process and the writing up of its activities.

I have tried to write accessibly and truthfully for both a white and black audience. However, I have found this task both difficult and strengthening at the same time. A testing time was experienced in handling feedback in this area. In the process of writing and publicising my work comments from a section of the white audience

suggested toning down my writing. Contrastingly, feedback from some sections of the black audience complained that I might be "sanitising our experiences". From one black reader came the comment, "it wasn't raw enough". Trying to maintain a balance in my locations as insider and outsider was difficult in terms of the challenges presented in handling cultural sensitivities and racial biases. I found strength in returning to my sense of integrity and remaining open to constructive feedback and possibilities.

I want to be a knower, but what I know must be accessible to others and particularly to those who provided me with the opportunity to develop my research text. It is a long step from theorising and writing for an academic audience to grounding my research and its true findings in a medium accessible to a wide audience, particularly in this instance, both a black and white audience. These challenges have all been part of this journey in writing from and about a black experience and of being black myself.

3.2 Locating myself as the Researcher

The impact of researching racial oppression has made its mark on who I am today. My unconscious attempts to sublimate its negative effects can be charted through a work history that shows a natural gravitation towards areas addressing oppression in one form or another. This pattern occurred right up until the point where I made a conscious decision to become independent and self-governing by seeking self-employment.

I place value on these experiences and on making sense of their impact and transformatory effect, because, like hooks (1989), I feel that it is important to distinguish between habits of survival used to withstand racial assault (covert and overt) that are no longer useful. Rather, there is a need to examine the traumatised self from a critical standpoint and move away from the psychic space that breeds pervasive learned helplessness and powerlessness.

I have taken a stance in the research process that is narrative, reflective and biographical and have included some autobiographical accounts of myself, as researcher and wounded healer and accounts from the people whose views were sought and whose stories I have documented. This work is therefore about the use of Self in research and writing and, at the same time, is a reflection on the use of Self and personal experience in a process of unveiling some truths and the co-production of knowledge.

The whole is a circular process (Steier, 1991). The Self, the "I", is part of writing and research, and interacts with ideas and people, but "I" can also stand back and reflect critically on that process. This process necessitates skills in self-awareness and the capacity to be introspective and reflective and I drew on my previous and current personal/interactive/communication and other human and professional skills (as a black woman, psychotherapist, trainer and facilitator) in my conscious use of Self. The psychotherapeutic skills contributed both to my development and to containing me to work with the research process.

I approached the research in a spirit of openness, even uncertainty, about its likely course and direction. Part of the process, as I saw it, was the need to negotiate meanings with participants and allow frameworks for understanding to evolve through time. The use of Self played an important part in the unfolding of realities. In developing self-awareness, a watchfulness for the influence of and use of Self in a research situation has meant acknowledging my responsibility for the overall quality and integrity of the research and for safeguarding the anonymity, confidentiality and general welfare of the participants involved.

Conclusion

In the research and the process of writing up this document, it was not my intention to take a powerful position of having or knowing all the answers, but rather to take a position that was derived from the researcher's and writer's process and its inherent

biases and value judgments. As my subject is about addressing race and minority issues, I do not see societal and personal tenets as being outside the political domain. I do not hold to some notion of this work representing a value-free research. I did not want to end up speaking from the perspective of a privileged narrator, neither did I want to take a stance tantamount to saying that the researcher/writer can become a kind of representative or spokesperson for black groups. I am wary of the value of reducing all the diverse voices of a discredited group to a single voice, thus the need to adopt a reflexive position throughout has been essential.

Chapter 4: The Research Project

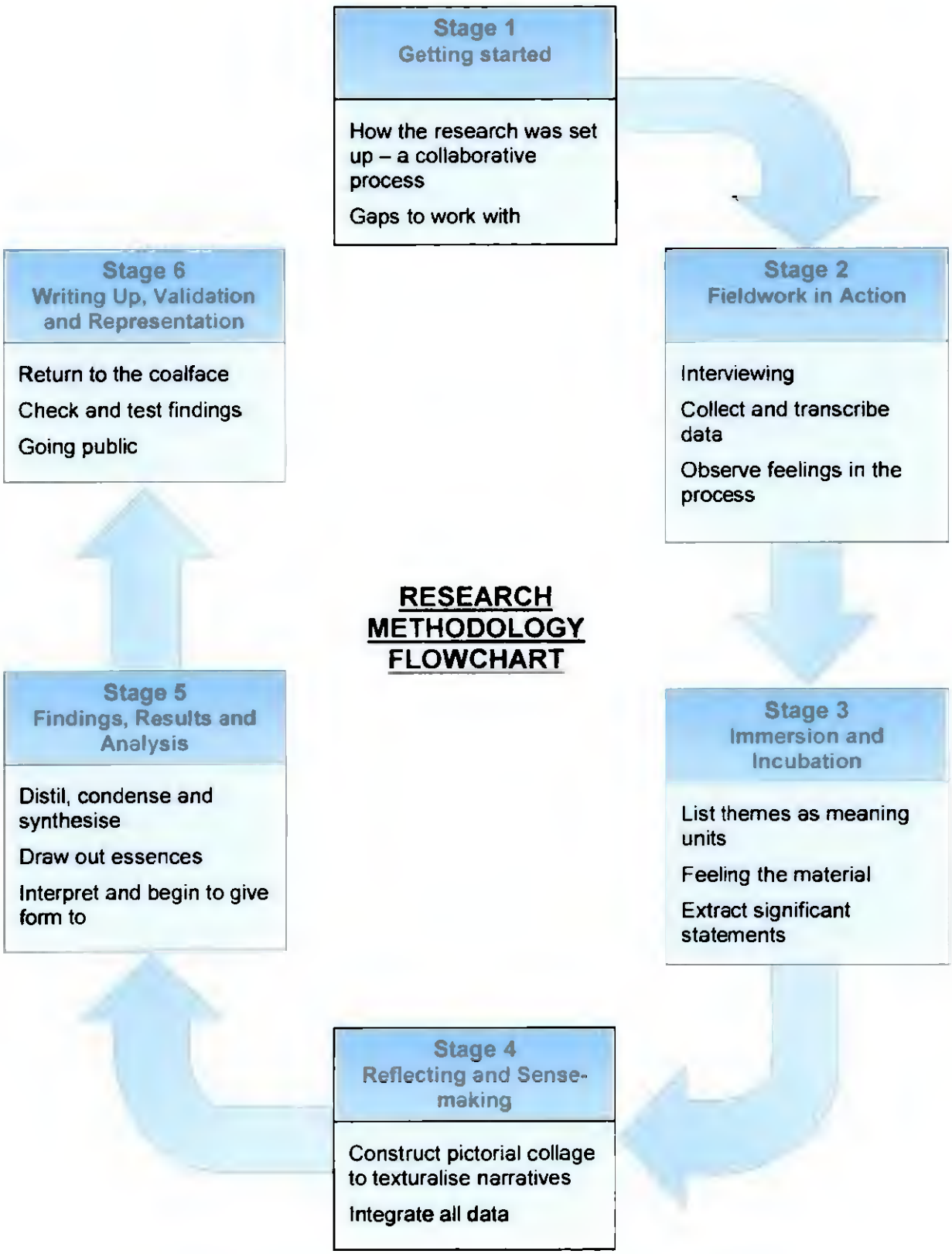
Introduction

In this chapter, I will give an account of the collaborative process that has spanned six stages and been executed over a period of nearly two years (Jan 2003 to October 2005). I will also lay out the analysis of the data, the emerging results and the process for validation and reliability of the findings.

In stages **4.1** to **4.4,** the collaborative process is outlined in some detail. **Stage 4.1** describes how I got started by showing how the project was set up and the gaps with which to work. In Stage **4.2** I describe the various stages of the fieldwork in action and how I felt. In Stage **4.3** I describe what it was like and what was involved in the immersion and incubation periods. In Stage **4.4** I describe my reflecting and sense-making processes. Stage **4.5** offers an analysis of the data. Stage **4.6** discusses issues relating to validation and representation, and Stage **4.7** offers the results.

The flow chart that follows is a pictorial representation of the six main stages of the research work. The trinity of Phenomenology, Heuristics and Hermeneutics is shown as the method employed for engaging in the evolving process.

Table 2


RESEARCH METHODOLOGY FLOWCHART
Stage 1
Getting started
How the research was set up – a collaborative process
Gaps to work with
Stage 2
Fieldwork in Action
Interviewing
Collect and transcribe data
Observe feelings in the process
Stage 3
Immersion and Incubation
List themes as meaning units
Feeling the material
Extract significant statements
Stage 4
Reflecting and Sense-making
Construct pictorial collage to texturalise narratives
Integrate all data
Stage 5
Findings, Results and Analysis
Distil, condense and synthesise
Draw out essences
Interpret and begin to give form to
Stage 6
Writing Up, Validation and Representation
Return to the coalface
Check and test findings
Going public

The Research Project

Although the focus of this chapter is to present what I did, it is difficult not to include how I did it. Therefore there is some overlap between content and process, and in outlining the details of how I conducted the research, I offer some reflective comments by way of my own sense making of the process. Any data used in this chapter is taken from my notes, my journal and from the tape recordings.

My dilemma in writing this very central section is how I might reveal with integrity, the various stages through which this study has passed. How do I appropriately honour and value research activity and experiences which, at one time, I struggled to articulate and conceptualise? How can I recount this research in a way that allows the range of feelings experienced at various stages of the study - pain, anger, anxiety, excitement, pleasure among others - to emerge? Having struggled with these dilemmas, I decided not to try to resolve them, but simply to remain conscious of them as I did my writing.

4.1 How the research was set up

In this research, I was clear that I wanted the activity to be a collaborative activity which sought to describe, decode, translate and illuminate the naturally occurring phenomena of black people in their work contexts. Having decided on this aim, I then asked the questions, why did I want to do this, for what purpose, for whose benefit and for what gains? To all four questions, the answer was to give voice to an unheeded area of race relations in the workplace. The mode of achieving this was going to be through the voice of those who were at the coalface of the experience. This approach dictated a methodology that would facilitate such work and the decision to do face-to-face semi-structured taped interviews seemed to best way to achieve the goal.

To create my sample, I went about choosing three workplace institutions that were frequently mentioned by psychotherapy clients experiencing workplace difficulties and their damaging effects. I chose these settings also because of my own knowledge and experience of discrimination in them (both personally and professionally). I identified and chose three well-known establishments representing the caring professions - the National Health Service (NHS), Education and Social Services. I settled on these institutions because they have been known traditionally to invite black labour from overseas. As a consequence, black people, especially women were attracted to these opportunities. My own professional career had begun this way in the NHS at age nineteen having newly emigrated from the Caribbean.

The next step involved planning how to enlist interested black and Asian workers who were comfortable with being interviewed for 1 ½ hours in a one to one semi-structured interview.

Before proceeding, I first engaged in a feasibility group; a half-day collaborative process with colleagues to design the interview questions. The meeting consisted of ten black women who occupied professional backgrounds such as psychotherapy, counselling, psychology, and research. Several of the women were researchers and academics themselves. They were formally invited to help formulate a set of unbiased and open questions to be used in the semi-structured interviews. The group was assisted in a process of discussion about the research topic to bring out the ethical dilemmas for doing black-on-black research. Discussions included developing the criteria for selecting participants, obtaining informed consent, insuring confidentiality and obtaining permission to record and publish. As a group, we streamlined our diverse responses, ideas and suggestions and arrived at ten, non-biased and open-ended questions (*see Appendix 2, page 198), which would allow the interviewer the opportunity to probe deeply, to uncover new clues, to open up new dimensions of a problem and secure vivid, accurate inclusive accounts that were based on the worker's personal experiences.

This collaborative effort was an extremely productive meeting in which we achieved the aims of the session through a process of sharing, illumination and constructive feedback. Acknowledgement of the importance of the study was noted, particularly as there was clear recognition that no one present on the day had themselves escaped experiences of racial oppression, either directly or indirectly. I felt this meeting was a reciprocal process, in which I was able to get what I wanted, and give back through creating a creative space for energetic and meaningful discourse. Collaborators expressed that they were able to take aspects of learning from the day back to their individual practices and apply to their own personal situations.

4.1a Start of the fieldwork and gaps to work with

Having reviewed the results from the feasibility group with my supervisor and formulated my final ten open-ended questions (which included a 'Life Line' to help punctuate significant experiences in the respondent's personal development), the interview consent form and 'Research Request' invitation (*see Appendix 3, page 202). I set about contacting the three stated organisations from which the interviewees were drawn. I chose the workplaces based mainly on their convenient geographical location. Formal invitations were sent to three Higher Education colleges in South London, two East and North London Social Services departments and two central London National Health Service (NHS) departments, requesting individual interviews with black and Asian staff to talk about their work experiences.

I received positive responses from all college Heads who circulated my invitation en masse to all their black and Asian staff. In one instance, a college wanted to distance itself from the research investigation and required that I sign a disclaimer to this effect. In the main, I experienced full cooperation and was encouraged in two instances to share the study's findings with the heads of personnel.

Social Services, although helpful, did not directly assist in the interview arrangements. Instead, permission was given to approach individual staff; a process

helped by my pre-acquaintance with some managers for whom I had done training and other consultancy work in the past. The process of acquiring willing participants for the interview process was facilitated by this indirect, but effective approach.

In the case of the NHS, my formal request to interview was flatly refused with a brief explanation that such research was not permitted. I found myself feeling more hurt than disappointed at this, particularly as in one instance, the refusal had come from a black female NHS representative whom I promptly dismissed as not being thoughtful about my request and just following white management's instructions. My swift response in this instance alerted me to possibilities that I may still have a degree of unfinished business with the NHS; an institution where I had suffered the 'brand of trauma' I am investigating.

I subsequently acquired my respondents by word of mouth. This approach, although successful, was somewhat difficult as some people who volunteered clearly wanted to support the study and others took part because they had had past tenuous links e.g. attending my training courses. Thus, the implication being that I was mindful of issues of familiarity and collusion. I endeavoured to maintain an ethical mindedness in these collaborations by re-stating the research's aims and objective intentions whilst aiming to retain a level of professional purposefulness in each encounter.

All respondents made contact by phone and e-mail. Arrangements for the place and time to meet were agreed upon and interviews progressed at regular intervals over a period of 6 months.

During this time, I received four enquiries from white staff within education who wanted to be included in the research. However, I assessed that the general motive seemed clearly one of a knee-jerk reaction to being left out, e.g. one enquirer questioned, "why are black people having this privilege and not us", and another rationalised, "work is stressful for everybody these days...what's so different for them?" I felt the consequences of following up such reactions might detract from the

particular line of enquiry and create additional agendas that would not be able to be addressed in this project.

A specific suggestion from an advisor to, "*consider bringing together the white enquirers into a group...discuss two or three themes of workplace stress as experienced by black workers and facilitate their reactions...see what sense they make of it...*,' - did not sit comfortably with me. Such an idea in my view was in danger of creating parallel power dynamics where white people were making decisions on **validating** black peoples' real experiences. The proposition felt wholly wrong and one that would go against all personal values and principles of logic and equality. I was sharply reminded that even well-intentioned advice needed to be critically reflected upon and challenged.

There were gaps to work with at this stage of the research, and the impact of some key areas will be reflected upon more fully in Stage 4.2a. However, a main point concerns the fact that fewer black men, Asian and Indian workers responded to the request to be interviewed. Thus this situation contributed to limiting the diversity of experiences and responses that could have widened the parameters of the study.

A gap, and one that must be considered for post-doctoral work, is a study that includes the experiences of Britain's wider minority ethnic groups in workplace settings. Such a piece of work would have had to take into account members of white minority groups, e.g. Gypsies, Eastern European migrants, Australians, white South Africans; refugees and asylum seekers; all such groups who may feel outsiders for varying cultural, and racial reasons. I was very clear that I did not want to engage in such a wide focus for a small doctoral project and concluded that a comparative study of any kind was also inappropriate for what I wanted to focus on.

I was clear from the start that I wanted to do a definitive study on black people's experiences in the workplace and be able to acknowledge that aspects of its findings may indeed relate to other groups facing similar difficulties. The drive to investigate what I had previously observed and worked with in counselling and psychotherapy

practice over nearly two decades, was a major determinant for the thrust and principal focus of the inquiry. Additionally, I was a knowledgeable *insider* who could bring an exceptional perspective to the work. For me a study highlighting the dialectic between internal and external dimensions of subtle racism was very much an essential addition to the discourse on race issues. I saw the subject as filling a significant gap confirmed by the scarcity of literature and research available within the British context. For these reasons, I was certain of my choice not to do a comparative study contrasting the experiences of white workers, and, I was assured in my thinking as confirmed by Husserl, (1931, p 129), that any observable phenomenon represents a suitable starting point for an investigation. My perception of the appearance of this worrying *thing* (black people's negative and damaging experiences from workplace oppression), was not an empty illusion, but the essential beginning of a phenomenological observation to which I was seeking valid determinations, open to anyone to verify.

Stage: 4.2 The field work in action

Engaging in the initial process of creating a comfortable atmosphere and easy rapport for conducting the interviews was akin to the process of psychodynamic psychotherapy and therefore approached with a sense of familiarity and relative ease. The main differences for me were the aims, goals and ethical requirements of collaborating at this particular coalface.

My position as interviewer was to be informal, yet purposeful and focussed. I was mindful not to give in to the tendency to prompt or collude; a process which I found difficult, as many of the stories were familiar and reminiscent of my own, people I know of and those of psychotherapy clients. All respondents signed a consent form, agreeing to the terms of confidentiality as outlined in the contract and my professional mindfulness of their anonymity and use of the data. I fully discussed with each consenting interviewee how the final project material would be used, presented and publicised, and we agreed the following:

- I would use key themes emerging from the data to identify common patterns, areas of commonality and evidence of any emerging phenomenon;

- I would borrow their actual phrases that described feelings, experiences and sense-making of what's was going on and happening to them in the workplace;

- I would independently select vignettes from stories to illuminate workplace experiences, honouring at all times, the researcher's due care to preserve their anonymity;

- I would choose related culturally specific anecdotes and colloquialisms that would add texture to the data identified for publication;

- They would be privy to all published material if they so wanted, and would be randomly selected to offer feedback on the findings and conclusions

The interviews covered areas such as their work history, full exploration of these work experiences, cultural identity and social adjustment in this society, racism, family and personal history, future hopes and expectations.

The initial interview invitation which stated specifically that I 'had a particular interest in looking into black and Asian people's experiences of work-place stress and its effects on health and sense of self,' was reviewed with the help of supervision feedback. Mindful of the fact that I did not want to pre-empt the interview process, I reworded the invitations in a more general way requesting interviewees to talk more generally about their work experiences. It was interesting to note, but not surprising that the before and after interviews showed little difference in terms of what workers

chose to talk about and were experiencing in the workplace. In almost all the cases, interviewees referred to race as a definite linked difficulty to their workplace experiences.

Further adjustments were made after conducting the first few interviews. I responded to feedback from 'critical friends' to relax a bit more during the interview process so as to allow myself to engage more with people's feelings. Applying this to the process gave further permission for interviewees to *feel* rather than just offer accounts of their experiences.

Interviews took place over a period of six months. Each lasted ninety minutes, was tape recorded and transcribed to capture the respondents' own words. I felt my position as a black researcher who might be seen as someone cognisant of the issues addressed, had made it easy for respondents to relay their experiences in an uninhibited way. In turn, this atmosphere of trust and safety facilitated very elaborate responses to the initial questions asked. In some instances, not all of the individual ten questions needed asking.

The sample size was not predetermined. All direct responses were taken up, creating a sample group of thirty black workers. They were drawn from the three stated institutions that were chosen for geographical convenience. Five men and twenty-five women came forward, their ages ranging from 28 to 59 with the majority in their late 30s to early 40s. Of the thirty respondents, fifteen were managers, the remaining fifteen in non-managerial positions. Eighteen worked in educational services (psychology departments and college or university settings); six were from social services (children and families, mental health and training departments) and the remaining six were from the NHS (nurses, midwives, health visitors). About half the respondents working in education and social services settings had previously held jobs in the NHS as students and qualified nursing staff. The overwhelming majority of participants were black Caribbean, black Africans, black British born (in this order), three of whom were from mixed parentage backgrounds. There was also one Chinese man and two Asian women taking part in the study.

I reflected on why there was such an over-representation of black people in the sample group. I felt the under-representation of Asians participants was possibly connected to societal experiences and responses to race. Traditional stereotypes of black people and Asians, until the recent events of terrorism and climate of Islamaphobia, had created splits in the perception of these two groups. Blacks were perceived as more aggressive, difficult and problematic. Asians were viewed in a less threatening light and categorised as passive, submissive, and meek. Compared to their Asian counterparts, black people seemed more vulnerable to experiencing difficulties and as a consequence had more to complain about.

In examining this point from another angle I turn to an old Caribbean ditty which I, amongst many young black Caribbean children, used to repeat innocently in the playground. This rhyme was an innocent aspect of childhood play, but reveals how negative racial stereotypes are introjected in ways that can shape identity and selfhood: The rhyme reveals an ever-present preoccupation in black consciousness with skin colour and its representations:

If you are white, you are right
If you are brown, stick around
If you are black, get the hell back

Inherent in this strange little ditty is a manifestation of deep internalised racial oppression and a belief system that suggests in no uncertain terms that skin colour and skin tone matter. In certain parts of the Caribbean, the more profound meanings of the ditty are played out in the creation of a racial hierarchy amongst black and Indian peoples. This hierarchy has historically placed black people at the bottom, thereby creating further complexes in individuals and difficulties in inter-group dynamics. Such distinctions were enforced in historical and anthropological writings (Barker, 1978; Pieterse, 1992) and have continued to feed racial stereotyping and ways in which each of the two groups is related to in today's society.

Stage 4.2a How the process felt

My reflections on the whole fieldwork process are mainly positive. I was very surprised to note that in every case, ninety minutes did not seem enough and interviewees' feedback indicated that they found the process facilitative, non-judgemental and helpful. Some even found the process therapeutic and cathartic enough to take action to re-open their cases. One person decided it was time to change her job and for another a change in career path seemed highly likely.

All but two people were able to wind down satisfactorily from the emotional upset stirred up by the interview session. Both requested to see a counsellor, a process I was able to organise with relative ease and swiftness. The results were positive in both instances.

Alongside the above positive reflections and general challenges for the researcher, there were distinctive factors that raised particular challenges for me as a black researcher working with black interviewees. Some distinctive factors were concerned with-:

- *the potential to get caught up in and blinkered by respondents' stories and, in so doing, running the risk of colluding with their experiences from the destructive nature of subtle racism at work*

- *a need to maintain a mind of my own, which was a challenge necessary in the presence of us as black people seemingly having a well-developed 'sixth sense' to sniff out discrimination even when we are not able to confirm and verbalise its presence (a 'gift' akin to that of black slaves who were able to secretly communicate with their eyes in times of threat).*

- *the ability to recognise dangers in making premature assumptions based on the fact that one might have been through similar*

experiences, and as such, guard against fostering such expressions as, 'we black people', 'you know what I mean', 'it tends to happen to us, It's our lot' its 'they or them' when referring to white people.

- *the need to keep a professional distance with interviewees who had a regular tendency of becoming over-familiar and over-friendly in the such black on black situations*

- *balancing the interviewing approach in such a way that it was both warm and friendly, as well as purposeful and boundaried at the same time*

- *an ability to manage personal feelings and reactions that instinctively arose in instances where interviewees were clearly negligent and contributing to the problematic work situation, but who themselves had unrecognised attitude problems*

I embraced all the aforementioned issues as inevitable challenges for black on black research. Such challenges increased my alertness for ethical mindedness in the midst of being true to the nature of the enterprise.

I approached the interviewing process as two continuous blocks of fieldwork, with, as previously described, adjustments to the formal invitation that did not name the experience I was investigating, i.e. stress, and a relaxation of my initial business-like approach to the interviewing procedure. On reflection, I do have regrets in choosing to work with such a large sample (30 people) and engaging in bulk interviewing for the purposes of collecting and analysing data. Again, on reflection, I feel that a saturation point would have been comfortably reached after ten or twelve interviews. A smaller sample size would have been less taxing and might have allowed deeper textural scrutiny of data. To have achieved the experience of working comfortably

with the same sample size of 30 respondents, I would, in hindsight, have adopted a more truncated and staged approach to the whole process.

I elected to transcribe all thirty taped interviews soon after each interview session. This activity was a time-consuming process, during which I felt swamped and weighed down by the sheer fact of dealing with trauma issues. The burden of the work was compounded by my having to think through how to deal with the abundant data. Constructing a detailed grid (*see Appendix 3, page 201) that highlighted all recurring elements within the narratives assisted the process later on in listing themes into meaning units.

Approaching the enterprise as one continuous process also posed challenges for maintaining objectivity in the face of the phenomenological pursuit. My strong wish for integrity and validity dictated that I did not seek such impossibility, but rather strove for an ethical mindfulness that was constantly moving towards such a position.

Stage 4.3 Immersion and Incubation

This was a period of getting into and feeling the material and engaging with the experiences of interviewees, their language, metaphors used, and observing patterns within our racial group. The immersion and incubation period that spanned a further six months was a time to be patient with the unfolding process. Immersing myself in the data from 30 taped interviews was perhaps the most challenging aspects of the research project alongside the final writing up stage. The "flooding" effect that was brought about by being a witness to a deluge of 'live' trauma issues, i.e. workers difficulties and pain, proved very costly along the way. I still reflect on whether I could have avoided the consequences of suffering severe and continuous back pain, three mysteriously slipped discs, and a clinical diagnosis of hypertension, the latter for which I am still taking medication.

In hindsight, it might have been a pleasanter journey had I adhered to supervisory guidance to stage the process of interviewing, which would have allowed a more relaxed approach to this immersion stage. I can only explain the action I took as over-eagerness to get on with things, and as anxiety over not wanting to lose opportunity to interview any of the willing respondents. The idea of asking them to wait for several weeks or months seemed risky at the time and I feared could lengthen the process unnecessarily.

I relied heavily on my supervisor's guidance and suggestions for ways of organising, analysing and synthesising the material. I also felt the need for complementary support that could provide a more intimate focus on specific concerns relating to black on black research. At this point, I became more aware of the subtleties in working with a white (middle-class) male supervisor. I was conscious of the fact that I chose my supervisor because of his clarity and sense of organisation, his ability to be fluid and exploratory, his openness to discussing black issues and forthrightness in challenging me in these and other areas. I held the tacit knowledge that he was interested in my work to agree to the supervisory arrangement. Nonetheless, alongside this effective support, I also felt the need for a black input.

To this end, I secured private additional help (approved by the course leader at that time) from a black female academic from Brunel University with a longstanding research background in organisational behaviour. She was someone who showed a keen interest in intercultural issues and had published in areas of ethics, diversity and inclusion. I felt this additional support could provide a different space to experience a particular resonance (including critique) to my own voice in the work. The subtleties of this kind of reciprocation seems confined, in my opinion, only to those in the know or who are at the coalface. In this supervisory relationship, I could focus more on the dilemma of sorting out how I was situate myself in the stories – where to place myself and how much and what of me to include. A small but important example was whether to use 'we' and 'us' as oppose to 'they' and 'them' when referring to black people. As noted in the document, I have opted for the former

because it felt right to do so. Geertz (1988) captures my difficulties in his statement: "being there in the text is even more difficult than being there in the field".

The incubation period was an important stage of the research journey for giving representation to multiple voices (but seemingly collective in nature) and engaging in reflection on the gathered data, as well as my relationship with the co-researchers (interviewees) and my various supervisory support structures.

Stage 4.4 Reflecting and sense-making

Coming through the struggles of the immersion and incubation stages and beginning to find form in the data, was an evolving process. This was assisted by a helpful suggestion to construct a pictorial collage to texturalise the narratives. Interviewees' stories presented as rich material personalised by anecdotes, metaphors, and colloquialisms familiar to Caribbean and black British culture. It seemed important to capture some of this in a creative way. The collage (Table 3) offered on page 77, shows some of my symbolic representations of aspects of interviewees stories. The collage portrays the interplay between internal and external stressors and their contribution to the particular nature of workplace stress addressed in this study.

This creative exercise was a fun thing to do following the heavier work of the previous stages. The collage helped to build up and construct descriptors that assisted the process of conceptualising and synthesising essences within the data. These essences were divided into internal and external stressors.

For the exercise, I chose several poignant images taken from magazines, newspapers and old journals. These were put together to bring out emphases and texture in the material. For example, when interviewees spoke about *the grinding down experience* at work, which invariably was a negative aspect of workplace difficulties, my initial and very apt image of a grinding mill, seemed better represented by the black round head being pushed into a square 'white' box. The image captured for me, the powerful experience of transformation – being turned into something that you were

not and the oppressive way such dynamics operated. Linked to the respondents' references to black history and slavery, were images of chains (not shown in the collage), and knives which represented their experiences of wounding. Also significant, were instances when interviewees spoke about perceptions around their race and culture. Some said they felt singled out in a negative way (represented by the mocking figures pointing at the strange half-human figure), whilst others talked about being seen as so different as to be regarded as aliens (as represented in collage). Both images indicate negativity and the presence of fear with regard to blackness.

Others images incorporated in the collage were the eye, which represented what interviewees felt was the silent witnessing of their stress; a brown gingerbread man (my conceptualisation) to represent black workers' experience of infantilsation and expressed feelings of brittleness and vulnerability. The image depicting the truncated growth of a mature tree seemed to represent social factors, such as racism, contributing to fault-lines and internal weaknesses, which in turn stunted personal growth and progress. I was struck however, that the roots of the tree were intact, suggesting perhaps that although black workers did have a raw deal, they were not totally destroyed in the process. This latter image seemed also to encapsulate black workers experiences of being emotionally fractured by workplace oppression but still not loosing it altogether. The cover page for this document is also a direct response to this particular observation and what can be viewed as resilience at a cost.

Table 3

Collage – Interplay between Internal and External Stressors

Stage 4.5 Analysis of Data

Introduction

This section will present the findings from my fieldwork and the results derived from processing the data. The findings contributed to understanding what black workers were experiencing in the workplace and what factors were involved in their specific experience of stress. Methods combining **descriptive and interpretative phenomenological analysis** were used to enable an understanding of the phenomenon relating to the black experience in workplace context. Descriptive phenomenological analysis according to (Colaizzi, 1973, 1975, 1978), asserts that human experience is an essential and indispensable constituent of human psychological phenomenon and that describing this experience enables the researcher to make contact with the studied phenomenon. This process guards against the researcher imposing hypotheses, theories and models to explain the phenomenon. Describing the process was not enough and only provided one important half of the understanding of the phenomenon. Interpretative phenomenological analysis (IPA) (Benner, 1994) was employed to get to the meanings in the experiences held by the participants. IPA is phenomenological in that it wishes to explore an individual's personal perception or account of an event or state as opposed to attempting to produce an objective record of the event or state itself. At the same time, while trying to get close to the participant's personal world, IPA considers that one cannot do this directly or completely. Access is dependant on the researcher's own conceptions which are required to make sense of that other personal world through a process of interpretative activity.

Descriptive and interpretative phenomenological analysis was achieved through the layered stages as outlined below.

1. Narratives, conventionally termed *protocols*, were listened to on tape in order to get a general feel of the material. Each interview was then transcribed verbatim to capture all narrative context and participants' experiences of workplace difficulties in the three chosen work institutions.

2. Each protocol was revisited and had extracted from them, phrases or sentences that directly pertained to the investigated phenomenon. Significant statements found to be repeating in several protocols were highlighted to begin the process of making formulations. Examples extracted from the interview questions are included below.

3. The aggregate formulated meanings in these statements were put into clusters to form 'meaning units'. A division of meaning unit took place whenever there was a propensity of evidence to support the phenomenon. A complete listing of 'meaning units' is presented. (See Tables 9 & 10, pages 95 and 101 respectively)

4. 'Meaning units' were referred back to the original protocols in order to validate them. This was achieved by asking whether there was anything contained in the original protocols that wasn't accounted for in the clusters, and whether the clusters of themes proposed anything which wasn't implied in the original protocols.

5. All defined meaning units were examined, organised, and transformed into disciplinary language, i.e., language that suits and is in accordance with the discipline of psychodynamic psychotherapy. This step involved using creative insight to leap from what the participants were saying to what they meant. This precarious process was carefully handled so as not to impose conceptual theories at random, but illuminate unconscious and hidden contexts and horizons of the investigated phenomenon. My several years of experience as a professional psychodynamic practitioner, in which holding the many voices of a client and the boundaries between them is a central part of practice, provided me with the skills to manage this part of the research process. Interpretation of the material enabled the

phenomenological process to go beyond what was given in the original data and at the same time, stay with it. (See table 12 on page 109 for a pictorial illustration)

6. The transformed meaning units were structured into six constituents (theoretical components) and the content was described within each constituent. Only constituents that were defining to the phenomenon were included.

The findings will now be presented in layers to show the phenomenological process of both describing and interpreting the emerging data that has contributed to deeper understanding of black people's experience of cultural wounding in workplace contexts. I have tried wherever possible to maximise the exposure of the participants' voices. The understanding emerging from their narrative has offered in-depth psychotherapeutic knowledge of black identity in workplace contexts.

Layer 1 - Factors shaping identity of the worker

Table 4

Question 6	Examples
In order for me to get to know the person behind the profession, can you recall any incidents, situations, experiences from childhood that played a significant part in shaping who you are today?	***Early experiences*** ▪ I felt free as a child ▪ Looking back, there were a lot of good role models for us as black kids in the Caribbean – my mother, our teachers, my grandmother, the church ▪ I was left in the West Indies at an early age

	▪ I thought my grandparents were my real parents...they were nice to me. It was a wrench to leave them ▪ I never knew my father. He left my mother when I was a baby. They had an abusive relationship ▪ I experienced abuse by family members back home – I was beaten by my aunt and sexually abused by a cousin ***Situational examples*** ▪ when I later joined my parents in England, I didn't quite know who they were, to me they were like strangers ▪ transition to UK was difficult, I didn't get on with my parents nor my brothers and sisters who were born here ▪ my parents separated – had to deal with a new step dad ▪ home and school life were challenging and difficult ***Negative subjective experiences*** ▪ my early experiences of racism had a lot of impact and were very wounding – they made me mistrust white people ▪ I experienced racism at a very young age e.g., "the first time I was called a nigger, I was just five years old. It was by an older white woman" ▪ From another respondent, "I remember this white lady who lived across the road from us. I use to see her everyday. She refused to hold my hand in church when our pastor asked the congregation to join hands and pray. I was only eight at the time". ▪ I experienced racism at school from both teachers and peers; racist name-calling, put-downs, racist bullying – when I told my teacher I was wanted to be a doctor, she said I was aiming too high and that I should know my place. ▪ although I was bright, I was demoted in school ▪ teachers only saw black children as potential athletics, secretaries and serving people in jobs like nursing. We were not encouraged to achieve academically ▪ our parents were more concerned with survival, not

	having a quality of life and what that entailed ***Positive subjective experiences*** • You learn how to survive very quickly when these things happen to you – you develop this sixth sense for who you could and should trust and who is against you • Racism from teachers only made me more determined – I had this thing that I was going to show them • I've become stronger as a result of what I've been through

1. Summary: The statements and themes emerging from the above question, although mixed in terms of positive and negative experiences, do show a preponderance of fractured family lives, broken attachments, experiences of being left and abandoned, and exposure to abusive situations, both in the home environment and in society at large. However, we also see the effects of such difficult and negative experiences leading to a resilience, inner strength and determination to carry on in the midst of adversity.

2. Interpretation: Closer examination of the above statements and themes do indicate major issues with physically and emotionally absent fathers. One significant effect of this situation in my view is a possible confusion with authority figures. There is also apparent difficulties with personal identification (borrowing identity *from* someone else), which may result from an observable absence of positive black male role models and introjects, together with the experience of multiple mothering from aunts, grandmothers, cousins in the absence of the 'real' mother, which may have interfered with the experience of having a stable psychological base that is necessary for the development of a clear sense of self.

Layer 2 - Workers' relationships with others in the workplace

Table 5

Question 2	Examples
How would you describe your relationship with peers, management and clients?	***Subjective Experiences*** ▪ You get the feeling that you are invisible. They don't really see you and value you in the same way as they do their own ▪ Although I am seen as hardworking and productive, people keep referring to the fact that I always speak my mind and that I am a dominant speaker. It makes you feel your strengths are negative ▪ I feel patronised a lot of the time. Because I am Chinese, people assume you cannot speak English." I get more hassle from black students who are very rude and feel they have one over you ▪ They see me as the trophy. Whenever there is trouble with students, particularly the black ones, they know they can count on me to sort it. The problem is you become stuck in the role. You get known only for one thing in the end and its limiting ▪ The relationship with my colleagues is bittersweet. They fight for you and abuse you just the same ▪ My relationship with peers and management is mixed. Some are decent, respectful and encourage you. Others, including my Asian manager, treat black people like we are stupid – like children –

	not capable. She nitpicks because she can't deal with strong black women ▪ My relationship with black colleagues is good. We support each other. Relationships with white staff is kind of OK, but only based on work – there's nothing else. Sometimes I feel I hate white people because of their gloating ▪ I feel patronised a lot of the time and left out of things ▪ I was told I had too much pride for my own good. They wanted to beat it out of me ▪ The students value my work highly, but with peers and management, there was always something not right with my work. The constant questioning made me feel insecure. I started to question my work ▪ Grey suits don't understand youth culture and particularly the culture of black students. Sometimes you get treated just like one of the students, like you are not a grown man. A lot of us blacks are made to feel like we are children ▪ Management want to keep you under their thumb and control you. My boss has been in his job for 30 years and he doesn't like the fact that I am young, black and more qualified than he is ▪ There is a lot of competition between me and my black manger...more from her to me. There is so few of us around...it seems like when we get promoted, we feel we have to behave just like white people to prove ourselves ▪ When I told my manager that a white patient had refused to see me because she wasn't expecting to see a black health

	visitor, I was shocked when she took the patient's side and didn't support me". I felt very let down. These are some to the insults I have to put up with daily White middleclass people found it difficult to be taught by me initially. I felt a lot of hostility in the way they challenged and I fell into the trap of trying to prove myself over and over again

1. Summary: This overview suggests some discernible issues for black workers in predominantly white work settings. Significantly, there is an ambivalent relationship with white colleagues and management which indicates a definite *them and us* dynamic. There is also a predominance of experiences from workers who feel unsupported and misunderstood by management and marginalised in their contributions.

2. Interpretation: Repeated experiences of unequal treatment and being marginalized appear to have contributed to a heightened negative focus on issues of difference, including race. Black workers appeared to be struggling with ongoing issues of self-doubt in response to a lack of proper and full acknowledgment of their worth. This repeated challenge to their self worth contributed to a grinding down experience amidst the perpetual need to survive and be included. The above examples also revealed that the stultifying experience from what I would term, racial infantilsation, had contributed to a deep sense (not always discernable) of being stuck, not progressing, remaining dependent and not enjoying entitlements to be fully functioning adult workers. Placed in this disadvantageous position, workers were caught up in responding with adolescent-type responses of rebellion, acting out and regressed behaviour.

Layer 3 – How workers felt others saw them at work

Table 6

Question 3	Examples
How do you think you are seen in terms of your work responsibilities and as a colleague?	***Subjective Experiences*** ▪ I was capable but difficult, couldn't be influenced ▪ I was told I was too qualified ▪ people thought I was too self-assured, cocky ▪ they saw me as powerful, unapproachable, prickly ▪ it was said that she doesn't mix well and has clear sense of her personal boundaries ▪ some complained that I can be moody and had an attitude ▪ they treat people like me as untrustworthy ***Mixed Perceptions of Worth*** ▪ I was respected for being straightforward, blunt, and someone who spoke her mind, but not liked for this ▪ I was seen as a dominant speaker on race issues and a force to reckon with ▪ everyone knew I was a hard worker, capable, *the trophy* but I still got hassled ▪ I was pigeon-holed as the one who was good with black clients and students ▪ I was confident, but seen as loud ▪ I felt I had a role where I could be relied upon for dealing with difficult and potentially explosive situations, but in the end that was all I was known for ▪ they said I was thorough but slow

1. Summary: Again, the emerging themes show responses to and perceptions of black workers and their contributions as mixed – both positive and negative. However, the preponderance of responses was notably negative, often showing a wariness and even fear of blackness. Some of these responses appeared evident even when the black worker had proved to be capable and effective in their work.

2. Interpretation: Even though workers strengths were acknowledged in the three work contexts, they frequently appeared to be qualified by conditions, e.g. powerful *but* prickly, capable *but* difficult, thorough *but* slow. Such qualification of workers strengths would in my view, create an atmosphere of conditional or grudging acceptance of their worth. The consequence for such working conditions is that workers may get caught up in wanting to prove their worth, doubting their worth, or becoming indifferent to their contributions in the end. Either effect will have the tendency to diminish or damage.

Layer 4 - Factors influencing workers' employment experience

Table 7

Question 4	Examples
Can yau describe your employment experience and the key contributing factars influencing this experience?	***Situational Experiences*** ▪ When I started here in 1996, it was like stepping back in time. The place was run by ex-army white men and women, *the knights of the round table or grey suits as some of called them.* They banded together and you just knew your place. Ours was

	definitely at the bottom. These people wielded power and there was a definite pecking order. We were always in the firing line for the worst pecking. I could never keep my mouth shut. That's not me. I remember when I complained that white staff under me were not cooperating - they resented having a black manager - I got no support. Some of them fraternised with the bosses and took stuff back to them. You could see the trap slowly being set, so they could get rid of you". I fell into the trap. I am still fighting my case that's been dragging on for the past 2 years. It's a nightmare and definitely taking its toll. [Ramsey] ▪ I have to conform to a large extent. This is embarrassing for me because my workmates and friends who know me, know this is not me. I mean...it's like living with two personalities, you are one way at work, which not your true self and a different person outside. I suppose black people have to live this double personality all the time to survive. [Steve] ▪ I am the only black in the group and the racism is very subtle. There was an absence of any teaching about race. When it was my turn, I took it upon myself to do my presentation on race issues. From that moment, people were hostile towards me. I was treated with that ice cool reserve. Everyone kept me at arms length. I was

	left out of things, meetings happened with me, other people got day releases for courses, I was denied - people stopped saying hello, they chose not to look me in the eye". It was as if I was sent to Coventry. [Shungu] • Whenever they talk about black people it's always the negative things. They never talk about anything positive. It's always that we are aggressive, angry, difficult, carrying an attitude or we are threatening in our attitude, a problem or victims. It's annoying and frustrating because you can't keep picking them up on it every time. You wear yourself out. And its not just these things, it's the subtle racial jokes, and stuff that get's ignored and left out of the case discussions that's important to black clients treatment and their welfare. [Kim] • You just know if you cross certain boundaries, you are going to make life tough for yourself. I've never allowed that to happen to me. This is not slavery times. But I feel the powers that be still want to keep us black people in chains. If they keep you in check then you are no bother to them...you are not a threat. As soon as you start to shine, they feel threatened. It's hard to move up. Black staff aren't encouraged to move up. I think a lot of us put up with things because of the money and it's hard to get another job that pays as

	well as this. [Niki]

1. Summary: From the examples highlighted above, there is manifest evidence to show that black workers experience in the workplace is fraught with ongoing difficulties. Some of these appear to stem from the mere fact of being black and different. Others relate to hidden, subtle institutional dynamics that are undermining, and others still which seem to form part of the general fabric of the cultures within the institutions. These experiences clearly mirror macro societal issues and are played out in the microcosm of daily work life.

2. Interpretation: In the situations described above, black workers appeared to have developed a 'sixth sense' for sniffing out difficulties where racial tension may (or may not) exist. This would be as a result of their hypervigilance and hypersensitivity to everyday events. The significance of their descriptive language also suggests a connection between present day events and an oppressive historical past by whites. As a consequence many workers appeared to be caught up in a constant war of attrition as a means of defending against the negative, stereotypical perceptions held about their black identity and racial group as a whole. In these environments, it seemed inevitable that workers would 'wear' protective personas to negotiate daily experiences at work. Adopting such stances wore them out and also appeared to have contributed to a coping 'false' self that was then switched off once outside of the work environment. It seemed that they were only able to resume their 'true' real self in the world where they felt comfortable, not judged and secure. The duality of these two distinctive selves has lead to an interpretation that black people adopt dual personalities in predominantly white societies in order to survive and have a quality of life, and that such a 'schizophrenic' ontology is a 'normal' aspect of black life. The diminishing of black people's role and worth in the workplace seemed also to contribute to two distinct survival stances; a reactive and adaptive stance. Together or separately, these positions contributed to combative, cautious and mistrustful interactions in the workplace between black and white staff. Employment

experiences were showing classic projective identification dynamics where workplace enactments and re-enactments were ever-present and disabling.

Layer 5 – Impact of workplace experience and effects on health

Table 8

Question 5	Examples
In terms of your employment experiences, can you describe the effects on you: (psychologicolly, physically, emotionally, mentally, spirituolly)?	***Subjective Feelings*** ▪ I became so pre-occupied with what was going on, I couldn't leave it alone. I took it home, bored my partner stiff and even dreamt about my manager. The situation just took over my whole life and I'm ashamed to say that I started to hate white people. I kept going over in my head what I could have said, how I should have handled it. All these shoulds and if onlys...the whole thing became a frightening obsession. [Jomoke] ▪ The pain of being repeatedly exposed to derogatory comments and getting nowhere when I complained made me detach myself from everything. It started to affect how I was doing my work. [Steve] ▪ I started getting regular tummy and back pains and found it difficult to concentrate. I even scarred my

	self with a hot water bottle, because I had forgotten it was there. My friends were concerned I wasn't going out. Crying a lot didn't help, it only made me feel worse when I realised I had to go to work the next day. [Beverley] • For me the effects were many. I wasn't sleeping well. I put on three stones because I was comfort eating. Initially, I was taking sick leave, but not enough for them to notice. Then it became obvious to everyone that something was up. I got into a cycle of feeling safe at home and exposed at work. [Allili] • Psychologically there is a barrier with my white colleagues. I don't give out as much. I don't feel I loose out though, because I have the church, my family and my community work. [Kim] • I knew I was clinically depressed when I was crying at home, being argumentative with husband and always shouting at my kids. In contrast, I was passive at work and doubting my abilities. Psychologically, I felt powerless. No one seemed able to stop my manager. [Nuzhat] • Everything (work stress) was getting on top of me and weighing me down. There was nowhere else to turn. I was crying so much, I worried that I would have a breakdown. I was at my lowest at this point. Some days it felt so seductive to just slide under the water [when having a bath] and go to sleep forever.

	[Jay] ▪ Where there was so much tension at the back of my neck, it affected the flow of blood to my head. I suffered from a lot of headaches. The hair doesn't grow well in that area now. The eczema was bad as well. I've been more ill in this job than I can ever remember. Swallowing a lot of hurt, upset and frustration had to come out somewhere – in my body I guess. [Bernie] ▪ Meditating every morning before going to work revived my faith to help me through each day. I could have easily lost faith in all humanity if it weren't for these support systems and the wisdom of the likes of Ilyana, hooks and all those strong women (black self-help writers). They helped me feel more comfortable in my skin and my consciousness as a black woman. [Lorna] ▪ If it weren't for the support I got from a trusted few – both black and white – I would have felt totally depersonalised. [Arlene] ***Other Effects*** ▪ I felt ashamed when I wasn't able to cope ▪ The whole situation left me feeling damaged and I still have a lot of anger over that ▪ At times I was in deep fear of being destroyed ▪ I suffered agoraphobia, panic and anxiety attacks ▪ It shocked me that I was becoming mute

	I am having to settle with being pushed into early retirement

1. Summary: The diminishing and negative effects from the above themes are overwhelming and troubling. There is evidence of wide-ranging health effects which have a drip-drip effect that grinds the individual down into a powerless place.

2. Interpretation: The catalogue of multi-dimensional health effects from the felt experiences of *workplace oppression* suggests a discernible difference between everyday stresses in the workplace and general bullying experiences. The differences in my view are that overarching and intrinsic to these difficult experiences is the race dynamic and the fact that they also present as a problem in the wider social context, carrying similar profound impact black mental health. The relationship dynamics in the above black/white themes suggest clearly that race does matter in the workplace and is a central element in addressing trauma and workplace conflict for black workers.

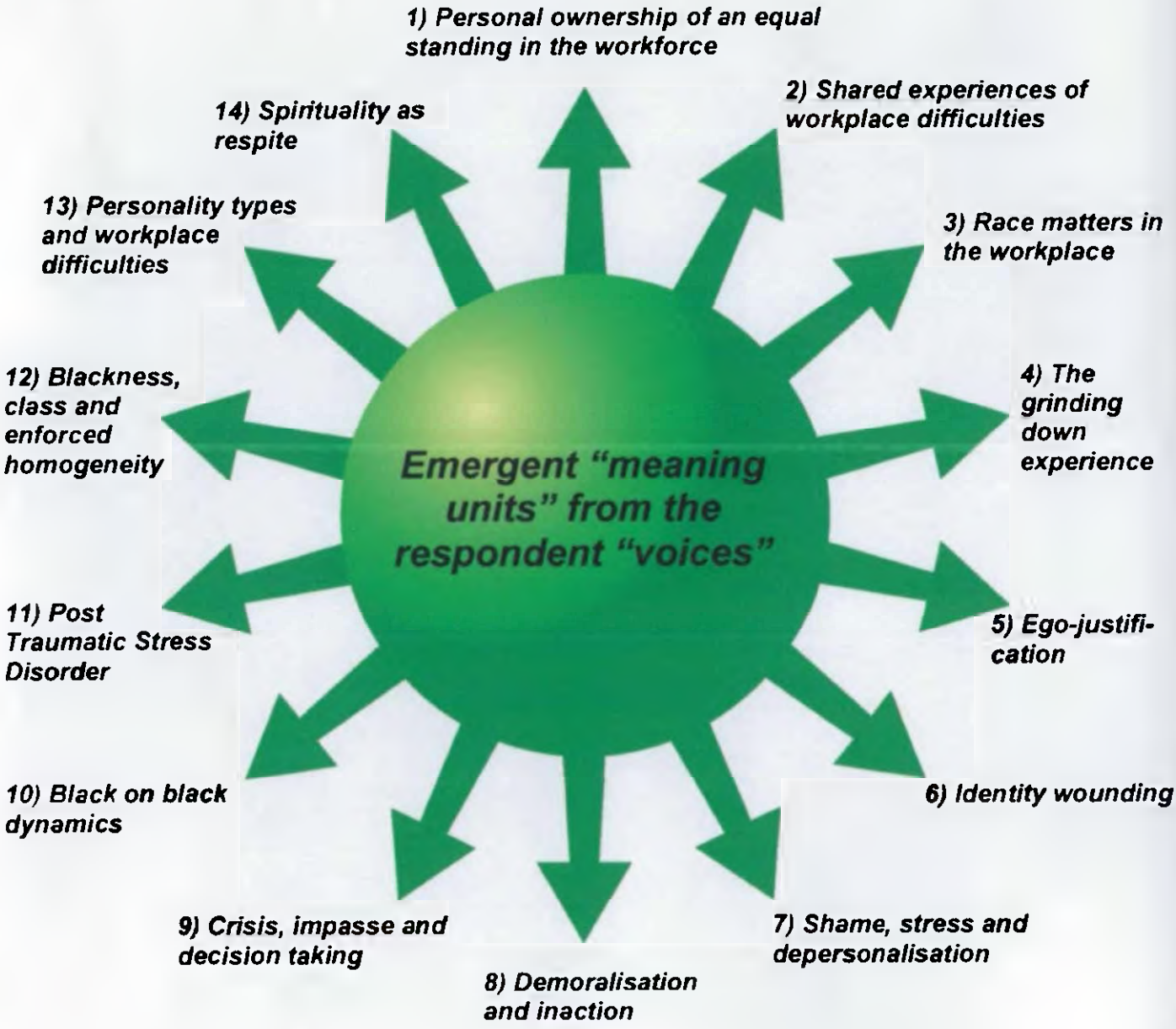
The caring professions from which respondents were drawn – the NHS, Social Services and Education – were faithfully perceived as institutions that would naturally and reciprocally care for all staff. Workers disappointment with this expectation of care seemed to add quite heavily to the duplicitous nature of these environments and further compound the cynical and mistrustful attitudes held by black staff.

Layer 6 - Linking clusters of themes into meaning units

From the process of highlighting all relevant phrases and sentences from the thirty interviews, a grid was used to harness all the key emerging and recurring themes. (See Appendix 4, page 202). These key themes were further linked to show significant patterns relating to the context of the phenomenon. I have listed these as fourteen significant '*meaning units*' in Table 4 below.

Table 9

14 Meaning Units



I will describe each meaning unit to show how I arrived at my interpretation, sense-making and relevance to the phenomenon.

Summary of 14 'meaning units' relating to the phenomenon

1) Personal ownership of an equal standing in the workforce

All respondents felt they were qualified and capable (and in some instances more so than their white counterparts) to carry out the jobs they were assigned and made responsible for managing. *"They value me because I am not just a teacher, I am a mediator and an effective staff governor"* – *"I knew my capabilities, but only when it was convenient to them, I was left in charge"*.

2) Shared experiences of workplace difficulties

All respondents without exception experienced unrelenting stress, a sense of vulnerability, anger, hurt and a mistrust of white colleagues and management, as the engine of workplace oppression revved up. Oppression is used in this context to describe any situation (intentional or unintentional) that hindered the black worker's progressive functioning in the job. *"I feel patronised a lot of the time, sometimes you get the feeling when you speak that they are thinking this gorilla can talk"* – *"In the first semester, I was given lower level classes than the post-graduate level I can teach... all my work was double marked and double checked"*.

3) Race matters in the workplace

Twenty-eight of the 30 respondents felt that race was a definite contributing factor to their workplace difficulty. *"I knew race was at the bottom of it, but they tried to pin it on my work"* – *"I was surprised when I came back from sick leave, only to discover that my desk was moved to a back room, I don't think they would have treated white staff like that"*.

4) The grinding down experience

Most respondents described events at work in terms of a grinding down or confidence-sapping experience, leading to feelings of powerlessness, low self-esteem and feeling a victim. *"My situation has been going on for four long year..., people won't understand how humiliating and demoralising it is to have someone less qualified than yourself constantly check your work, vet the letters you send out and who keeps bossing you around...things are so bad at the moment,, I am even beginning to question my own confidence".*

5) Ego-justification

A majority of the respondents felt they were pushed into situations where they constantly had to justify their actions in order to maintain integrity. Ego justification became a natural defence mechanism against being devalued. *"Back home I was very respected and always looked up to – here, you are nothing – just another black face"- "I got this far because I am well qualified with lots of experience – god only knows how some of them got promoted to these high positions."*

6) Identity wounding

All respondents felt they were compartmentalised in negative, stereotypical ways that offended their sensibilities, sense of fairness and dignity. *"I was told the course was not for people like me" – "We are always seen as angry...black people don't monopolise anger" – "Whenever we are spoken about, it's always the dark stuff, as if we are one-dimensional" – "Dealing with pain and suffering are by no means my only raison d'etre" – 'this experience has taken away something precious... my trust in people is no longer there."*

7) Shame, stress and depersonalisation

In the three institutions, black workers discussed common experiences of stress that included deep tension, anxiety, poor concentration, and tendencies to be less efficient. Many also developed mood swings, depression, tearfulness, comfort eating or withdrawal from food, irritability and paranoia, feeling deskilled and fearful of reprisals. Several of the respondents talked about becoming mute (silenced) at work

e.g., *"In the end, I chose to say little...opening your mouth was dangerous...after a time, it was as if you didn't exist for them."* There seemed to be a consensus that these experiences contributed to 'an attitude' which most often took away from any natural warmth and personal commitment to care.

8) Demoralisation and inaction

All respondents suffered demoralisation as the above-mentioned work difficulties became intractable and seemingly impenetrable. *"I got to the point where I didn't know who I was...it's a bad thing when you start questioning who you are"* – *"I was physically sick at the thought going to work"*.

9) Crisis, impasse and decision taking

Of the 30 respondents, nine were forced to take their case to Employment Tribunals. These nine workers felt successful in vindicating themselves and seeking justice. The remaining 21 respondents chose to battle on in the workplace with increasing high cost to their health. This was manifest in their chronic cynicism.

10) Black on black dynamics

The findings highlighted black on black dynamics as a further factor complicating 10 of the 30-workplace difficulties. Black respondents described concerns and had criticisms over some black managers using the same template to manage black staff. It was felt that these were based on the 'norms' of white managers and their dealings with black people. These black managers were seen as *"selling out"*, a term used to indicate a process of being **transformed** into the white system. One respondent felt her manager *"was identifying with the aggressor"* – a displacement of one's own experience of abuse by repeating or perpetuating further acts of abuse on others.

11) Post Traumatic Stress Disorder

Twelve of the 30 respondents were medially diagnosed with depression and post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD). The latter diagnosis was given to those whose stress symptoms had persisted even after their cases were successfully closed. These 12 respondents described feeling silenced to the point of becoming mute and others

were engaged in endless fights to get their voices heard. My professional knowledge of PTSD presentations tallied with respondents stories. A diagnosis of PTSD is recognised when there is presence of three factors (1) re-experiencing situations that highly stresses the person (2) avoidance and withdrawal (3) hyper-vigilance and hyper-arousal. Only some of these symptoms have to be present and be continuing for a minimum of a month to qualify for a diagnosis. This diagnosis was evident in the 12 cases.

12) Blackness, class and enforced homogeneity

In 9 of the 30 respondents Class issues presented in curious ways. Class was described by black workers in terms their particular differences that did not fit with commonly held stereotypes of black people. Three respondents described instances where they were called "uppity black" because they spoke a certain way, held unusual interests and had good deportment. In one instance, it was even assumed that a black female must have had a white partner to be the way she was; an implication that she was refined by this white Other. Other differences were described in terms of such black individuals being singled out and 'used' against other blacks – a divisive dynamic to create sibling rivalry in the black group. Four black workers felt penalised and made the subject of harsh envious attacks. They were accused of being *"too qualified for your own good"*. It was felt that there was an unconscious attempt to homogenize black people – *i.e. "they see us all the same"*. All of these experiences raised issues for diversity and the uniqueness of black individuality to legitimately coexist in the group.

13) Personality types and workplace difficulties

The findings did not indicate a definite kind of black person who was more prone to experiencing workplace difficulties of the kind described in this study. However, two 'character types' (term used loosely and not in the clinical psychological sense) were featured on the opposite ends of the 'personality-type scale'. At one end, there was the very articulate, challenging and assertive black individual who was more likely to be singled out and branded aggressive or the 'difficult' one. Such an individual

was more likely to be vocal in their complaints about the presence of real (or perceived) racism operating in the workplace, and would often speak up for themselves and on the behalf of others. They were frequently seen as a threat – *"a thorn in the backside of management"*. Management appeared more likely to use Draconian methods to silence such individuals. At the other end of the scale, the picture of the quieter, compliant, unchallenging, *"I will do whatever it takes for a quiet life"* type seemed to be as easier to be manipulated, overlooked, seen as the *"good black"*, and be marginalized in the workplace. Whatever the personality of the worker, the findings brought out a clear point - that the nature of workplace difficulties for black workers were often subtle, insidious and heavily veiled with civility and complex defensive 'political' postures and manoeuvrings from the other side.

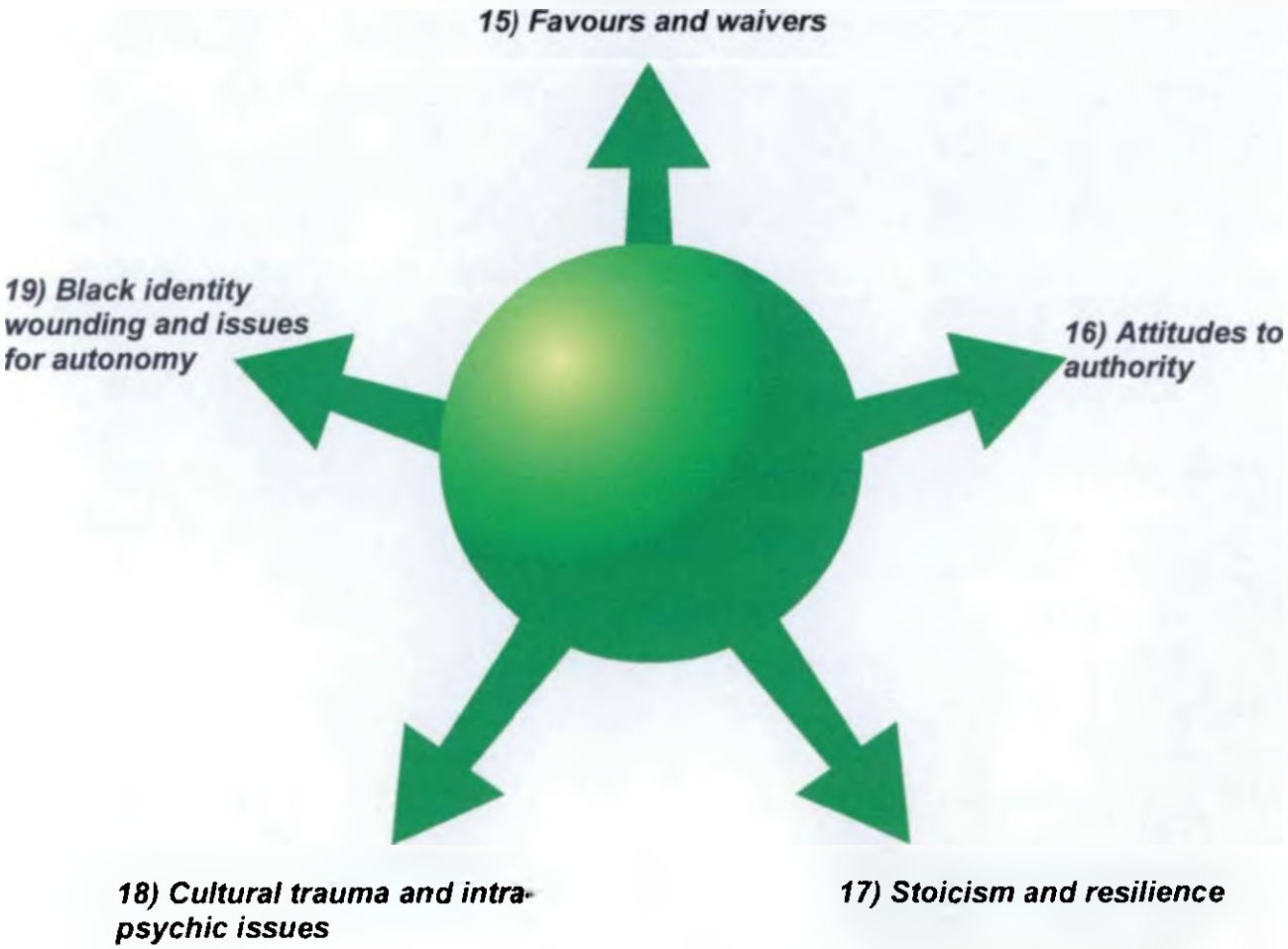
14) Spirituality as respite

Twenty-eight of 30 respondents stated that they relied heavily on their spirituality to help them through difficult and trying times at work, e.g. *"I used to go off to meditate to help me get through the day"*. Spirituality was discussed in terms of having an internal protector that shielded one from the impingements of the outside world e.g. *"I always went out with my wings"*, and also as a solid belief in the goodness of humankind that allowed forgiveness of others, e.g. *"I was brought up to love my fellow brother and sister"*. Spirituality was a self-soothing mechanism that helped ease the hurt experienced from others fear, ignorance and prejudice, e.g. *"forgive them for they know not what they do"*. For others, it was a trusted, inner guiding voice or a strong religious faith - a belief in God. Unexpectedly in the findings were the works of well-known black women writers – Alice Walker, Maya Angelou, bell hooks, Toni Morrison, Iyanla Vanzant, Jackie Holder, Audre Lorde, whose voices of reasoning, empowered hope, wisdom, comfort, and guidance to black female respondents in particular. Black males on the other hand did not have this kind of respite and seemed emasculated by the traumatic experience at work.

Further examination of the protocols, assisted by the picture emerging from the collage, (See Table 3, page 77) revealed other results that seemed more specific and pertinent to black workers. I saw these as factors workers personally brought into the difficulties and conflicts at work. These personal issues were apparent in influencing the course of events for better or worse. A summary of these personal factors are listed below in Table 10.

Table 10

Workers Personal Issues



Again, I will describe each of the five meaning units to show how I arrived at my interpretation, sense-making and relevance to the phenomenon.

15) Favours and waivers

Eighteen of the 30 respondents admitted to stretching the boundaries and taking liberties at work. Persistent lateness (jokingly referred to as doing black time), not feeling guilty about *"taking a sickie"*, stealing time to do personal business, assuming no one would notice boundaries were being broken, asking for favours and waivers on the job, were all common examples relating to this point. Many respondents talked about this in a casual manner, justifying their behaviour in terms of being treated unfairly at work, therefore earning the entitlement to get back at authority, *e.g. "if you treat us like delinquents, then we will behave like delinquents"*. Authority in this context was seen as a faceless white body that wielded power in an unjust and discriminatory manner.

16 Attitudes to authority

Twenty-three of the 30 respondents discussed authority issues in very ambivalent ways. On the one hand, people did not mind being told what to do, however, agreeing to do things was seen as *"doing deference"*, *"giving way"*, *"giving over personal power"* and autonomy. There seemed to be a definite confusion and ambivalence towards authority and a prejudice towards its role and function. Several respondents were resigned to any possible negative impact their prejudice in this respect might have for interpersonal relationships and genuine collaboration at work.

17) Stoicism and resilience

Twenty-eight of the 30 respondents remained resilient amidst the prevailing difficulties. However, many felt they had no power to make a difference to workplace difficulties and therefore settled for an unfulfilled work life. It was evident that the choice to remain in this position had led to resentfulness and personal energies being distracted into continuous wars of attrition. Many respondents chose to stay in their difficult work situations because *"I've given many*

years of service", and *"I want to hold on to the satisfaction of building up good relationships and helping my clients"*. Looking forward to a secured pension was also another factor. Others still felt they could not risk leaving their jobs because of the lack of guarantee in securing other jobs with similar good pay.

18) Trauma and intra-psychic issues

In 18 of the 30 respondents, the appearance of prominent personality constructs featured quite highly. These were observed in the way certain values and beliefs systems were upheld and shaped people's lives and thinking. These systems created cultural doctrines that produced unbending, even rigid views and stances in life. The appearance of inflexibility in collaborative, interactive situations appeared to be the result. See Appendix 1, page 196, for a sample of these significant life scripts; scripts which raised the question of whether they were worthy entitlements or impediments to progress.

19) Black identity wounding and issues for autonomy

A large majority of the respondents appeared to share a common mindset. There was a predisposition to **waiting to be given** opportunities, openings and permission to be 'actional' (exercising personal agency), e.g. *"they only make it available to a certain kind" – "your face has to fit" – "you have to have the right colour skin to get through" – "it's all for people who are pushy"*, as opposed to **actively taking** opportunity, initiating, leading, creating openings and being more self-governing. The recurrence of this theme in respondents' stories and attitude highlighted real difficulties with entitlement, personal rights and self-actualisation (seeking one's full potential). Several admitted to being *"too naïve and too trusting of others"*.

Layer 7 - Creation of pictorial collage to include, build up and construct textural descriptions of workplace difficulties

Workplace difficulties or more specifically workplace oppression were described and discussed in very significant and noteworthy ways by the participants. Many used

symbolic language, colloquialism, common sayings known within the black community to describe their experiences. Often these were punctuated by historical references to slavery and black people's position in white colonial rule. I wanted to capture these elements in order to give texture to the rich narratives.

A pictorial collage (See Table 3, page 77) helped achieve this aim and also made clear the interplay between internal and external stressors. These fun exercises assisted the process of integrating all the key elements of the data and move the development of the phenomenological process along to the stage of interpreting and synthesising essences within the significant themes.

Layer 8 - Reflect, analyse and construct a composite textural-structural description of the meaning and essences of black workers experience

Up to this point in the project, I had spent many hours in company of the tape recordings, my journal and supervision notes, memoranda, etc. and had my own experiences stirred up from the immersion process. I had many thoughts, numerous ideas and still more questions about the research phenomenon concerning what happens to black identity wounding in a workplace context, and the silent suffering of those who strive for resilience in these situations. I read and re-read my notes and summaries until the anger and pain at what I was witnessing and stirred by my own experiences, subsided and I began to see patterns emerging.

I am aware that I may have chosen themes emerging from the interviews because they seemed 'interesting' since (for example) they were familiar or confirmed my opinions. I believed that some themes resided in my head from my thinking about the research purpose and the field text, creating links, as I understood them. The crucial factor was that I was seeking a more developed explanation for why the black experience in workplace contexts had such a profound negative effect on so many. Because of my deep interest in organisational dynamics and the unconscious underlying issues and dynamics of human interaction, I could see an emerging

picture highlighting a significant dialectic between internal dynamics and external experiences of racial oppression.

As part of the process of reviewing the material, I had to readdress some of the concepts and notions I had brought with me into the research, such as how we construct our experiences into 'positive' and 'negative' and notions of success. I found I had to shed my own ideas and preconceptions with wanting to accentuate the positives. This was because I noticed a preponderance of 'negatives' being told; negatives that had higher vibrancy in the everyday lives of the black co-researchers and I worried about adding to a view that all that happened to blacks was suffering. As one co-researcher reminded me when she reflected on being black "*suffering is not my raison d'etre.*" Particularly striking in the response to the question, "*What did you learn from the experience*", participants did not conceptualise what was going on in terms of positives or successes as such, but asked questions about how we as black people could be more self-actualising and maintain our hybrid vigour in the midst of ever-present social challenges.

Essences within the nineteen 'meaning units' were further condensed and separated highlighting internal and external workings of the phenomenon. The enquiry was clearly taking on a shape that directed the interpretative phenomenological analysis towards addressing a complex relationship between intra and extra-psychic factors, and the internal and external reality based factors of the phenomenon of black identity wounding in workplace contexts.

External factors were largely represented by:

- white (usually male, middle-class and traditional) management structures
- subtle but virulent forms of black/white work conflicts
- institutional racism (power, powerlessness, dominant and dominated)

Internal factors were related to:

- feelings, reactions and stances adopted by black workers to deal with workplace difficulties
- stoicism and capacity for resilience in the face of adversity
- cultural wounding to sense of self and identity

The relationship between external and internal factors appeared to be having much influence in shaping the worker's experience of stress and trauma in the workplace. However, although it is important to note that this study is based on a relatively small sample and the results cannot be generalised, repeated themes in respondents' stories showed commonality in effects on the Self from the impact of a shared workplace experience.

The table below highlight clusters of themes showing interplay between cause and effect and the possible extent to which wounding and damage is experienced. Sections a, b, and c, are presented as a longitudinal as opposed to a corresponding list of factors.

Table 11

Cluster of themes relating to internal and external stressors

(a) **External Stressors** ▼	(b) **Internal Stressors** ▼	(c) **Impact and implications for the black self** ▼
▪ Pressure to conform ▪ Being 'marked' ▪ Feeling excluded from	▪ The development of an ambivalent and cautious pre-transference relation -ship with white people	▪ Somatisation of stress of a physical and emotional nature ▪ Hyperarousal and hyper

mainstream activities and opportunities ▪ Others projections ▪ Racial and cultural stereotyping ▪ Racist jokes ▪ Vigilance of managers ▪ Feeling invisible ▪ Living a crisis ▪ -orienta-ted existence ▪ Having to constantly defend one's worth ▪ 'Stigmatic stress' ▪ micro/macroaggressions ▪ Not made to feel an equal ▪ Racial infantilisation ▪ Subtle, quiet and silent forms of racism ▪ Overt racial discrimination	▪ Anticipation of victimisation, discrimination, being ostracised, and devalued because of one's race ▪ Post-colonial context for 'marking' and internalised oppression ever-present ▪ Transgenerational transmission of trauma manifest in an attachment to the historical past ▪ Resilience in the face of the 'grinding down' process of workplace oppression ▪ Black identity wounding ▪ Uncertainty of outcome in workplace difficulties and feelings of powerlessness ▪ Having to swallow feelings ▪ Living two selves; one for work and one home and community ▪ Challenge to manage	-sensitivity in black/white interactions ▪ Voice silenced ▪ Questioning of self-worth ▪ Stress symptoms in all its manifestations, which included notable effects of panic attacks, psychosomatic, complaints, clinical depression, late-onset diabetes, hypertension, and ME symptoms (chronic fatigue syndrome) ▪ Black identity wounding arising from enduring resilience at a cost ▪ Self-esteem issues and crisis of self-worth ▪ Enmeshment with a historical past and its implications for moving on in the present.

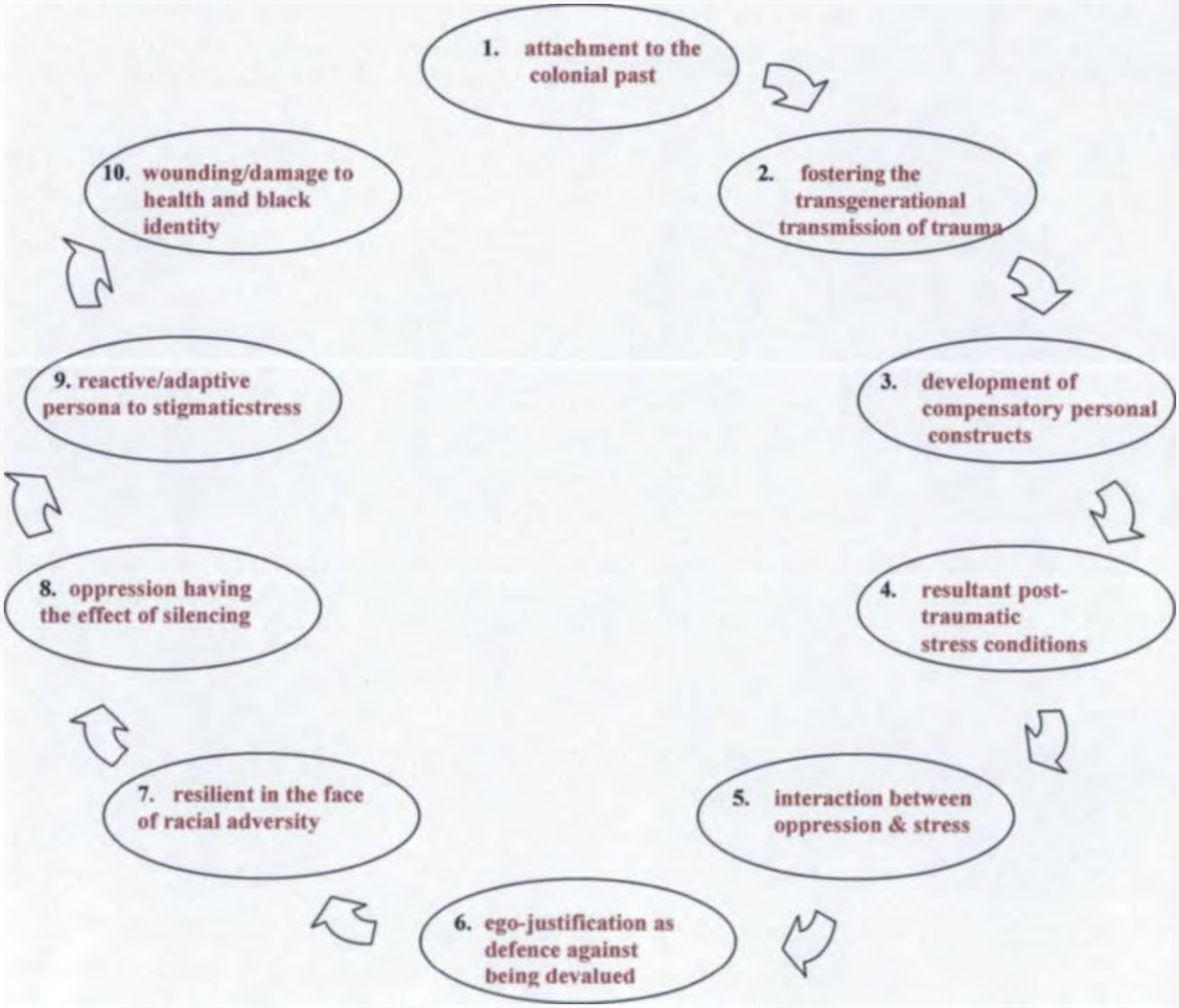
	the imposition of a negative public identity and the struggle to preserve a private and true identity	

Synthesis of the above summaries was now identifying a specific characterological feature of workplace stress. This feature was shaped by the above significant set of internal stressors, overlapping and compounding the effects from external stressors. The combined pressures from 'inside' and 'outside' were sufficiently impactful to have a profound effect on black workers health and well-being. The dynamics of this phenomenon enabled me to distinguish its nature from 'ordinary' everyday workplace stress.

The table below is included to show the developmental progression of interactions between internal and external stressors. The sequence clearly shows interplay between the two areas that contributes to an impasse that renders black workers powerless and stuck.

Table 12

The relationship between internal and external factors – a developmental view



Summary

In the above diagram, the developmental process was worked out by standing back, noting the emergent processes and getting an overview of all the significant elements that were illuminating a deeper understanding of black/white relations in the workplace. This overview was able to link all of this chapter's work together in the summary offered below.

I offer my processing that led to steps 1 to 10 (as depicted in the above diagram). A key issue relating to an **attachment to the colonial and historical past**[1], was seen to be played out in black people's present day functioning. This finding was clearly evidenced in the language and symbols present in interviewees' personal stories. Confirming this observation was also from the fact that the problematic nature of attachment was mainly with white people – a dominant resident group from whom respondents experienced discrimination and negative judgement. Even when such treatment was from non-white colleagues, there was always an implication (from the protocols) that these individuals had been transformed by and had sold out to the system. Evidence of **fostering transgenerational trauma**[2] was extrapolated from the expressed texts and pain coming through the narratives. The evidence of such pain inducing somatic reactions and complaints acted as further confirmation. This evidence was discerned as believable because of my insider's knowledge of surviving as wounded-healer in similar such situations. **Development of compensatory personal constructs**[3] were perhaps the most vivid psychological themes that were drawn mainly from the examples set out in Appendix 1, page 196. **Resultant post-traumatic stress**[4] was gauged from the way interviewees constantly harped back to the past, either through inferences or actual reference to slavery and white power and dominance. This revisiting suggested the presence of unfinished business and experiences of re-wounding in difficult black/white encounters. Overview of the material showed that the severity of work stress was not originating only from common everyday stress factors but by a definite connection and **interaction between stigmatic stress and feeling oppressed**[5]. Reactions of **ego justification**[6], **stoicism**[7], **being silenced**[8], and made powerless were all evidenced by

the felt experiences expressed in interviewees stories and observation of other textural factors such as a dejected manner, emotional pain, and from some interviewees a sense of resilience and determination evident in difficult and depressing situations. The resultant **reactive/adaptive personas to stigmatic stress**[9] and consequent diminishing, **wounding/damage to Self**[10] was clear to see during engagement with respondents at the coalface. Reactive and adaptive personas were observed in the way some workers were left almost permanently angry by their experiences. Indications of damage to the Self and black identity were visible in the beaten down, embittered and depressed auras worn by some individuals, whilst they were striving to maintain resilience in the face of adversity.

As researcher privileged to this abundant evidence, the interaction between an unforgotten historical past and present-day racial/cultural discrimination was seen to be inextricably linked and fused. The picture was formed by the realities currently at play in work settings, and a clear sense of black individual's attachment to a painful past and its propensity to conflate with the present. It was this complex binary of internal and external, historical and present, that distinguished the phenomenon from everyday stress or experiences of bullying as we know it, and subsequently identified it as a different experience, which I have termed workplace oppression.

Stage 4.6 Validation, Reliability and Representation

Validation, according to the interpretation of Hammersley (1990, p.57), is the extent to which an account accurately represents the social phenomena to which it refers. Reliability on the other hand refers to the degree of consistency with which instances are assigned to the same category by different observers or by the same observer on different occasions. (Hammersley, 1992, p.67).

Denzin and Lincoln (1994, p.100) break down validity criteria into internal and external validity. They suggest like Hammersley, that internal validity is the degree to which findings correctly map the phenomenon in question. External validity is the

degree to which findings can be generalised to other settings similar to the one in which the study occurred.

In this study, I sought to demonstrate issues of validity through various methods:

a) by offering full and transparent documentation of the whole methodological procedures.

b) through a process of 'member checks', which involved returning to the coalface to get participants opinions and views about the findings.

c) through feedback from colleagues both black and white and 'critical friends' who journeyed with me. A sample of their feedback can be found in Appendix 11, pages 209).

d) through an ethical-mindedness to honour the true voices of the participating group by airing as much of their own words as possible in the writing up of the work.

e) by presenting sufficient evidence to illuminate and elucidate the phenomenon.

f) through meeting and noting in my literature review, the works of other writers both here in the UK and in America, who have addressed similar themes and concerns of identity and selfhood in other marginalized minority groups.

g) through public recognition of the findings which have been disseminated through published papers, invitations to give talks at conferences and contribute to further ethnographic research studies. Other recognition has been established through a request to

write up a policy document on workplace harassment for the British Association for Counselling and Psychotherapy and a commission from Leicester University to make a transcultural training video for counsellors and psychotherapists.

My findings are based on critical and diligent investigation of all the data and have not depended upon a few well-chosen examples to arrive at the end analysis. In many ways, the research has resembled an ethnographic study producing voluminous and complex information from which I have disseminated and distilled an important unheeded dimension of human interaction, which can be utilised for the enrichment of transcultural counselling and psychotherapy, and the development of anti-discriminatory workplace practices and policies.

I assess the extent to which the study's findings can be replicated as high. This view is based on the acknowledgement of the fact that other established research efforts have validated the presence and negative effects of racial prejudice and racism in our society. The final criterion for reliability and validity was measured by the extent to which I showed an ability to stand back, evaluate and appraise the data. In adopting this position throughout the research, I feel I have been able to unravel complex workings of the internal adversary, which allow for a deeper understanding of the bigger picture of racism and racial identity wounding. I feel my study is very different in this respect and for this reason, unique in its approach and what it has to offer to both black and white practitioners who are interested in advancing their knowledge and practice in working with race, racism, identity and trauma.

Chapter 5: Results and Outcomes of the Study

5.1 Outcomes of the Study

The outcomes of the study are presented as both concrete and intangible 'products' which can be utilised in the fields of counselling and psychotherapy. Intangible outcomes are concerned with what I have gained as a person and as a practitioner. Concrete evidence can be measured by the following:

1) Evolving concepts for understanding black identity wounding from the impact of subtle forms of racism

2) Publications of clinical papers (*see Appendix 5, page 203 for copies)

3) Training video contract (*see Appendix 6, page 204) for formal invitation and proposal)

4) Contribution to creating policy guidelines for dealing with harassment in the workplace (*see Appendix 7 for BACP contract, page 205)

5) Contributions to educational data bases (*see Appendix 8, example on page 206)

6) Talks at conferences, seminars
(*see Appendix 9, page 207)

7) Participation in further external research projects (*see Appendix, page 208)

1) Evolving Major Components for Understanding Black Identity in Workplace Contexts

This section explores six major components which have evolved from the process of putting all the aforementioned research activity into form. These areas are set out

below. All of the six components highlighted, barring the phenomenon of 'workplace oppression', have been located as semi-conscious and unconscious dynamics operating within black individuals.

I arrived at these psychotherapeutic formulations through a phenomenological research process which showed a clear dialectic between internal and external factors of the black experience in workplace contexts, and the presence of a trauma resulting from the conflict within. My striving to understand the aetiology of this trauma experience was made clearer by the links and connections to the individual's history, social and work circumstances, and their position in British society. These combined elements have helped with my interpretation of the phenomenon as that which is different from 'ordinary' stress, and one which would be more appropriately termed 'workplace oppression'.

Workplace oppression was confirmed by the presence of multiple factors of power and powerlessness that situated race as a central signifier in workplace conflict. Fraught dynamics leading to ambivalent and dependent black/white relationships pointed to issues of cultural enmeshment and the dysfunction inherent in these associations. The corollary of cultural shame, black identity wounding and unavoidable challenges for healing and moving on, emerged as key associated themes. Six major components for understanding and working transculturally with cultural trauma were born. These are opened up below to give a deeper understanding of their relevance for transcultural practice. The six areas are as follows:

a) 'Workplace Oppression' (***External)***
b) Black Identity wounding (***Internal)***
c) Shame (***Internal)***
d) The Internal Oppressor (***Internal)***
e) Cultural Enmeshment and Black Ontological Security (***Internal)***
f) Trauma, healing and achieving a state of grace (***Internal)***

a) 'Workplace Oppression'

Emerging from the participants' stories was a clear pattern of events which, when analysed, highlighted a silent form of discrimination I term *subtle racism.* This external phenomenon, although not new to its recipients, seems largely unacknowledged in the workplace and in society. In the United States, former president Bill Clinton addressed it by publicly acknowledging its presence and harm. In his 29 March 1997 weekly radio address – Federal News Service - as quoted in Russell, 1998, he remarked:

"...racism...is not confined to acts of physical violence... Everyday [black people] and other minorities are forced to endure quiet acts of racism – bigoted remarks...job discrimination... These may not harm the body, but...it does violence to their souls. We must stand against such quiet hatred just as surely as we condemn acts of physical violence."

The research study has acknowledged many of my long-standing observations in psychotherapy practice and has confirmed these by the findings within the study. I concluded that subtle and silent acts of racism contributed over time, to a particular form of experience for black workers. I describe this experience as 'workplace oppression' and use the term in a deliberate sense to address silent forces and other complex organisational dynamics that give rise to difficulties involving dynamics of power and powerlessness and issues of the dominant and dominated. The similarity of experiences amongst participants has been so pervasive, that it has led me to be able to identify and map a series of events, rather like stages of an escalating force on an object. I have come to think of this as a spiral of events that starts with a seemingly minor incident and then escalates to enormous proportions.

These escalating events are described below.

SPIRAL OF EVENTS

Table 13

SPIRAL OF EVENTS (Alleyne, 2004)

Microaggression* - term coined (Pierce, 1978) and used by (Davis, 1989), Bell (1994) and (Russell, 1998) to describe racial assaults that are subtle, stunning, often automatic, non-verbal exchanges by Whites that are down-putting of Blacks. The resulting effect is shame and hurt. ***Macroaggressions**** are similar to microaggressions in many respects but differ in that they are directed at black people as well as the individual.

SPIRAL OF EVENTS - Description of stages 1 to 6:-

Stage 1. Micro and macro-aggressions

At first, there seems to be a minor difficulty - like a casual put down, a joke, a stereotypical comment or minor exclusion. For example, a black worker may be publicly corrected, notices a white person never makes proper eye contact when speaking to them, feels deliberately ignored or excluded from normal pleasantries, or experiences a lack of support when normally it would be expected. These were all experienced as acts of microaggression (Russell, 1998), and although they appeared seemingly minor events, the impact on the worker over time was considerable.

Such indignities, according to Russell (1998) can be experienced as violence to the soul, and in turn cause deep wounding, shame and feelings of infantilisation. Within the work context, when such occurrences persisted, the recipient registered that something was going to be difficult from there on with a white colleague or their manager. The potential cohesion that may have been present in their relationship was threatened. The black worker became cautious, vigilant and hyper-sensitive to future possible wounding or hurt. And, such examples of micro-aggression continued. Respondent no. 11 summed up, *"you came to expect a certain way of being treated...it's the drip-drip effect that eventually takes its toll"*.

There are also examples of macroaggression (Russell, 1998) that occur alongside the experience of microaggressions. This refers to seemingly minor attacks on the person's group or culture. In the work context, such examples were found in the over-usage of adjectives such as, aggressive, angry, scary, frightening, threatening, and difficult, when referring to or describing black people or it was felt through the stereotype of viewing black men only in terms of the physical and dangerous. Such words and narrow perceptions of blackness seem to 'mark' the individual and create labels that caused wounding. When these situations occurred, e.g. a manager being reported as saying, *"what is it with you people...you don't seem able to deal with*

being told what to do", they are experienced as both a collective assault on black people who, as seen in this statement, reduced to a monolithic group, as well as a direct insult to the individual to which it is levelled.

Stage 2. The worker responds

Examples of micro and macroaggression may continue and eventually the worker responds. Reactions might be overt, that is attempting to do something about it, or handled by a complete withdrawal from the situation. This is a form of adaptation to circumstances. When it was the former, a number of respondents reported a common reaction from the other which was expressed in terms of: "*You are being too sensitive*", or "*you must have a chip on your shoulder*", or, "*you are being difficult*". The worker's hurt was not recognised with such dismissals and on some level, the individual then turned their pain inwards. Over time, the position of adopting either a reactive or an adaptive response invariably led to a pre-occupation with external difficulties. In some instances, participants experienced impotence and a feeling that no one believed them. This added a secondary trauma to the original hurt.

Stage 3. Mistakes/Slip-ups

As the worker becomes more pre-occupied with their situation, they start to make mistakes in their work. Their manager may notice their slip-ups and highlight them in an exposing manner. As this situation continues, respondents reported feeling a deep sense of unfairness, harassment and even victimisation. Worker became engaged in much ego-justification, which was usually a defence against being devalued and a reaction to feeling powerless at work. Compensatory behaviours were developed to deal with these difficult experiences, such as trying too hard to deliver, retracing and re-checking their steps and agonising over what was expected of them.

Stage 4. Management's response

Respondents' experiences suggested that management either adopted a complicit role in these difficulties, thereby leaving the worker unsupported and undervalued, or they over-reacted, showing lack of appropriate know-how to manage these situations in a fair and competent manner. Some workers reported receiving 'penalties', e.g. increased work load and being transferred other departments, for challenging the status quo. Others described 'conspiratorial' managerial efforts that sought to set them up to fail, e.g. one respondent who felt she was set up to fail complained that, "*out of the blue, I was given an additional eight schools with four staff each – an additional thirty two people to manage! – they knew I wouldn't be able to cope, but they expected me to deliver*". Few respondents reported receiving fair and just treatment in a consistent manner.

Stage 5. Crisis

At this stage, events have spiralled to a crisis. The individual is extremely distressed and unhappy, and both sides (worker and management) may become entrenched in their individual positions. A manager may issue a formal warning and instigate unusually quickly actions for disciplining the worker. In such situations, respondents' choices for action were categorised in three following ways:

a) they felt completely powerless and became withdrawn – in time, leading to a form of adaptation

b) they became indifferent (for example, working to the minimum standards and withdrawing all generosity)

b) they fought back – sometimes over-reacted and , sometimes, shouting, 'racism!'

In the latter case, even though racial discrimination might clearly be a part of these work events, closer scrutiny of some respondent's stories indicated that it was not the whole story. However, there was a tendency for some black workers to blanket their problem with the accusation of racism and this in turn served to create more entrenchment.

By this stage, attendance at work is erratic with more and more time taken off for sickness. Usually the worker has seen their GP and often they will have been prescribed sleeping tablets and/or anti-depressants. In the study, there were surprising similarities in medical conditions suffered by workers. These include:

- chronic fatigue syndrome, very similar to ME
- late onset of diabetes amongst men and women
- hypertension
- mood swings and personality changes

6. Impasse

Respondents' stories showed that these work events spiral to such an extent with little sign or indication of matters moving towards a position of resolve. There is a sense of deadlock at this point where investigations gradually fizzle out and ground to a halt. Communications cease as both sides become entrenched in their own positions. The worker's fight begins to feel futile and energy wanes. Up against these obstacles, they were left to deal with matters in a strange place of nothingness and stalemate. An increased sense of powerlessness and depersonalisation took over and deepening ill health was the result in such situations. During this impasse which frequently continued for months to years in many of the interviews, it seemed there was no alternative but for the worker to:

- retire from work on medical grounds,
- accept the reality of being dismissed from work and/or

- fight their battle in a law court.

Yet, with proper understanding and handling of these situations, it would seem all of this suffering could be resolved much earlier.

The following case study is representative of this cycle of workplace oppression. It offers a bird's eye view of spiralling events typical of the black worker's experience.

Case Study 1

Mavis is a 37 year old black Caribbean woman who was born in Jamaica and came to this country as a child. She works as ward-sister on a Unit for the elderly. She manages a predominantly white female staff group and one black nursing assistant. Mavis has cherished a previous reputation for being professionally capable, a hard worker, conscientious and respected. She is known for speaking her mind and is sometimes seen as difficult for this reason.

Mavis has always felt that her white staff did not like being managed by her. This was manifest in several ways. Her management strategies were constantly questioned and debated, instructions to staff were deliberately disregarded and she frequently faced subtle challenges by some of them who appeared to support white patients' complaints about not wanting to be bathed or touched by Mavis or the black nursing assistant. On one occasion, Mavis reported over-hearing one of the white nurses saying that she (Mavis) was too qualified for her own good and that if she wanted to boss people around she should go back to where she came from. The final insult came in the form of an incident. Mavis reported for work one day to find a drawing of a gorilla on her coffee mug. This upset her terribly and when she challenged her team, she was met with a collective silence. One person commented later that she thought someone must have been playing just an innocent joke. Such situations continued and the lack of intervention from management to support Mavis's with these difficulties – most of which highlighted elements of racial prejudice – began to eat away at Mavis. The cumulative effect of these assaults produced silent and hidden injuries.

A once confident and competent manager, she now started to make mistakes at work, take time off regularly for emotional stress and depression and she felt less generous in her duty to care. Over the next eight months, relationships on the ward

> broke down even further and management stepped in and took action against Mavis's ability to manage. During the next year, she remained on long-term sick leave whilst being embroiled in a bitter battle to fight her case. Mavis eventually retired on medical grounds before she was even 40. She was diagnosed as clinically depressed and suffering from severe stress. Since then she has had a mild stroke and has developed late onset diabetes. She has been in therapy for four years.

The above case study is a typical example of the kind of workplace difficulty endured by black workers across all professional levels and grades. Whilst it is important to acknowledge the fact that demanding and hierarchical work environments can be extremely stressful for all who work in them (regardless of race), the findings reveal that the specific nature of such stress for black workers is significantly notable. The extent and impact of trauma on Mavis's physical and mental health, and the significance of race as an important signifier in the unfolding problematic events, qualifies her experience as something more than everyday stress. My research indicates that the elements within the case study although shocking, are not uncommon for black people in the workplace. Like tinnitus (constant ringing in the ear), they are shown to be commonplace and prove to be distressing for the sufferer, but silent to those around. These quiet acts of *oppression* remain an unheeded dimension in the discourse on race relations in our society. Although very subtle and seemingly insignificant in form, their effects are powerfully damaging.

Elaborations and Concluding Commeots on Workplace Oppressioa

The study has showed that although workplace oppression for black workers was not **overtly** about race and cultural differences, interpersonal conflict in black /white relations was frequently set off by subtle, silent and "not so easy to pin down" incidents. Such incidents frequently targeted a racial or cultural signifier of the black person's identity e.g. their accent or manner. As seen in the case of Mavis (page 122) these incidents, which start with no more than minor annoyances, some

unintentional, some intentional, tend to go on and develop into more major incidents that are deeply painful and harmful to the recipient.

Participants' stories pointed to workplace cultures that covertly fostered collusive management structures when dealing with difficulties involving black workers. Respondent No. 16, described her sense of "*management closing ranks*" when she challenged the status quo.

The data also highlighted examples where conflicts had turned into unusually long and bitter battles with poor and unsatisfactory outcomes. In some instances, it also appeared that black workers experienced more severe disciplinary action than did their white counterparts. Several respondents described having strong feelings of organisational conspiratorial tactics aimed at putting them under undue pressure; the intent being to set them up to fail. The "*setting up to fail syndrome*" was articulated by Respondent No. 7, who expressed: "*they know they just can't get rid of you...the law wouldn't allow it these days...so they put pressure on you to make damn sure you don't cope*". This worker described receiving formal notice of disciplinary action instituted unusually soon after a complaint was made against him. He was upset that little or no management effort was deemed necessary to investigate the complaints in full.

The above situations, whether real, perceived or a mixture of both, do give clear insight into the work climate as experienced by this racial group.

The data showed there were different dynamics operating within the three organisational cultures. For example, Social Services and Education seemed more open to, and active in, embracing complex issues of working with difference and diversity. In contrast, the National Health Service appeared to be slower and less forthcoming in meeting these challenges head on, as endorsed by the negative response to my invitation to interview and workers' experience of oppressive workplace practices.

Three key elements appeared as contributing factors to workplace oppression.

- ***subtle racism manifested by micro and macroaggressions***
- ***the grinding down experience***
- ***complex organisational dynamics***

These elements were seen to be operating within the three institutions namely, the NHS, Social Services and Education).

- ***Micro and macroaggression ('quiet', subtle acts of racism) further elaborated***

Studies from the United States have explored concerns about 'invisible harm' stemming from 'the persistence of racial affronts' as a present day reality of Black life (Russell, 1998). Russell notes that although racial affronts are usually no more than minor annoyances, some however, whether intentional or unintentional, are deeply painful (1998, p.138). Russell authenticates these occurrences that have previously been dismissed by some as trifling and insignificant, with proper labels and descriptions to validate their existence.

Russell (1998) offers examples of these racial assaults that include:

- *a White person who refuses to hold an elevator for a Black person*
- *a White person who will not make direct eye contact with a Black person or a White person who enters a business office and assumes that the Black persan she sees is a secretary or a janitor*
- *a cab driver who refuses to pick up a Black passenger*
- *a White person who refuses to give directions to someone Black*
- *and a White sales clerk who offers assistance to a White patron in line behind a Black patron*

Microaggressions are not the only assaults that black people have to contend with, in addition, "macroaggressions" are attacks, insults, or pejorative statements made against black people in general which may offend the individual. Macroaggressions have a far greater potential for more harm than microaggressions as their messages are unequivocal: Black people are inferior. Russell (1998) states that when these group affronts become major news, they become part of our national racial consciousness.

The following nationally reported incident of micro and macroaggressions are illustrative:

***Example of microaggression (Wider British context)*:**

> *The Guardian newspaper (October 8th 2004), ran a sports headline that read:* "Piers says penitent Spain coach should be charged". *Spain's national football coach caused an uproar and great offence by his reference to Thierry Henry as a "black shit". Despite being caught on camera with the harangue, "tell that negro do mierda [black shit] you're better than him", whilst trying to motivate Jose Antonio Reyes, he claimed not to be a racist. Typical of those who commit these assaults was his defence: "In the first place I want to clarify that I never intended to offend anyone, and for that reason I have a very easy conscience". "Second, what I said can only be understood in the context of the team and a training session, in which I am obliged to motivate my players to get the best results." As part of that job, I use colloquial language, with which we can all understand each other within the framework of the football world". Some senior members of the Football Federation coming to his rescue conceded it was "unfortunate". However, the Spanish media and others referred to the incident as "[just] a joke that should have stayed on the training pitch...and if things like this were...to be blown out of proportion...we're going to end up training behind closed doors".*

> *The incident has caused much protest amongst the French squad who demanded that the Spanish manger be sued for "racial aggression".*

This excellent example of microaggression, although very overt in nature, is typical of the racial indignities black people face daily on a continuous basis. Of all the possible 'insults' that could have been chosen, the obvious cultural signifier in Thierry Henry's case – his race – is isolated for abuse. The choice of abusive term is by no means accidental, as the alleged intent is to denigrate and make worthless, the black player. Left unchallenged, such instances of racial assault become the tolerated group culture and consequently become the norm in such settings. Workplaces are no exception. The minority individual in such circumstances, faced with three clear options, can choose to challenge the status quo on his/her own, swallow their hurt feelings which can gradually lead them to a position of becoming subsumed into the culture and/or or they may choose to leave. Those who refuse to toe the line very frequently end up isolated, or become scapegoats.

There are other concerns for the effect of macroaggressions.

Example of macroaggression (British context)

Respondent No. 8, a black qualified psychotherapist and trainer, recalled a situation from one of her continuing professional development day events. At this conference, a senior and well-respected white male psychoanalyst was alleged to have made a public claim that blacks and Asians were, "*not suitable candidates for psychotherapy...*" [because]..."*they lacked ability to introspect*". He is alleged to have also said that they..."*were more concrete in their thinking...and therefore respond much better to cognitive/behavioural approaches and other prescriptive methods of treatment*".
In this alleged example, there are sweeping generalisations about two black British minority groups. The statement places every individual of each group into a homogeneous box that does not allow differences to coexist. This example of macroaggression at its worst is arrogant, misleading and dangerous. The 'aggression'

within the statement is not physical, not noisy, not overtly threatening, not even apparently harmful. However, the reality is a quiet offence; one that creates and strengthens stereotypes that can affect important decisions about minority ethnic services and delivery of treatment. The assumption is also politically damaging to the efforts to achieve equal opportunity for all.

In the American context, the approach to dealing with subtle racism is organised due to research efforts and proper consultation and planning. The Kaleel Jamison Consulting Group (www.kjcg.com) as an example, assists organisational leaders in creating high performing organisations that are worthy of the commitment, energy and talent of their people. In one of their training publications, 'Subtle Racism in the Workplace' (Katz, 2001), they offer a list of experiences voiced by people of colour in the American workplace setting. Their views highlight quiet acts of racism, (not dissimilar to those in the British context). These acts stem from an entrenched culture, practices, beliefs and value systems. A selection of views are as follows:

- *I am expected to know other people of my race in my organization, industry, city, state, country and worldwide, and speak on their behalf*

- *My errors are long remembered and are seen as representative of my race. My successes are soon forgotten and viewed as exceptional acts for someone of my race.*

- *I am expected to assimilate into the majority culture and ignore my own, except during my designated "month" (e.g. "Black History Month, [Ramadan])*

- *My manager did not give me feedback for a year. When asked why I wasn't coached on the concerns she had, I was told she was afraid of my response.*

- *When a white man stole some computers, he was quietly fired. When a person of color stole some clerical supplies, the police arrested him at work, he was fired and the whole organisation knew about it.*

- *In my organization, people of color need "stars" to succeed, but I see very average white people getting promoted.*

- *They are very few people of color in my organization who are considered "high performers" or "high potentials".*

The Kaleel Jamison Consulting Group note in their publication that many managers and workers who perpetuate these behaviours would be loathe to think that racism informs their actions as most see themselves as supporters of diversity and inclusion. Others, they point out pride themselves on being "colorblind" (not seeing the person's colour) – which in itself is a sign that differences are being ignored rather than acknowledged, understood and leveraged. They conclude with the view that regardless of the motivation of these unintentional acts, the messages people of colour receive are largely the same: the deck is stacked against you, you must excel to be viewed as equal, the organisation sees you as a "type" (often a "stereotype") instead of an individual, your identity is a hindrance to your career, and you need to break through a brick wall of assumptions in order to succeed.

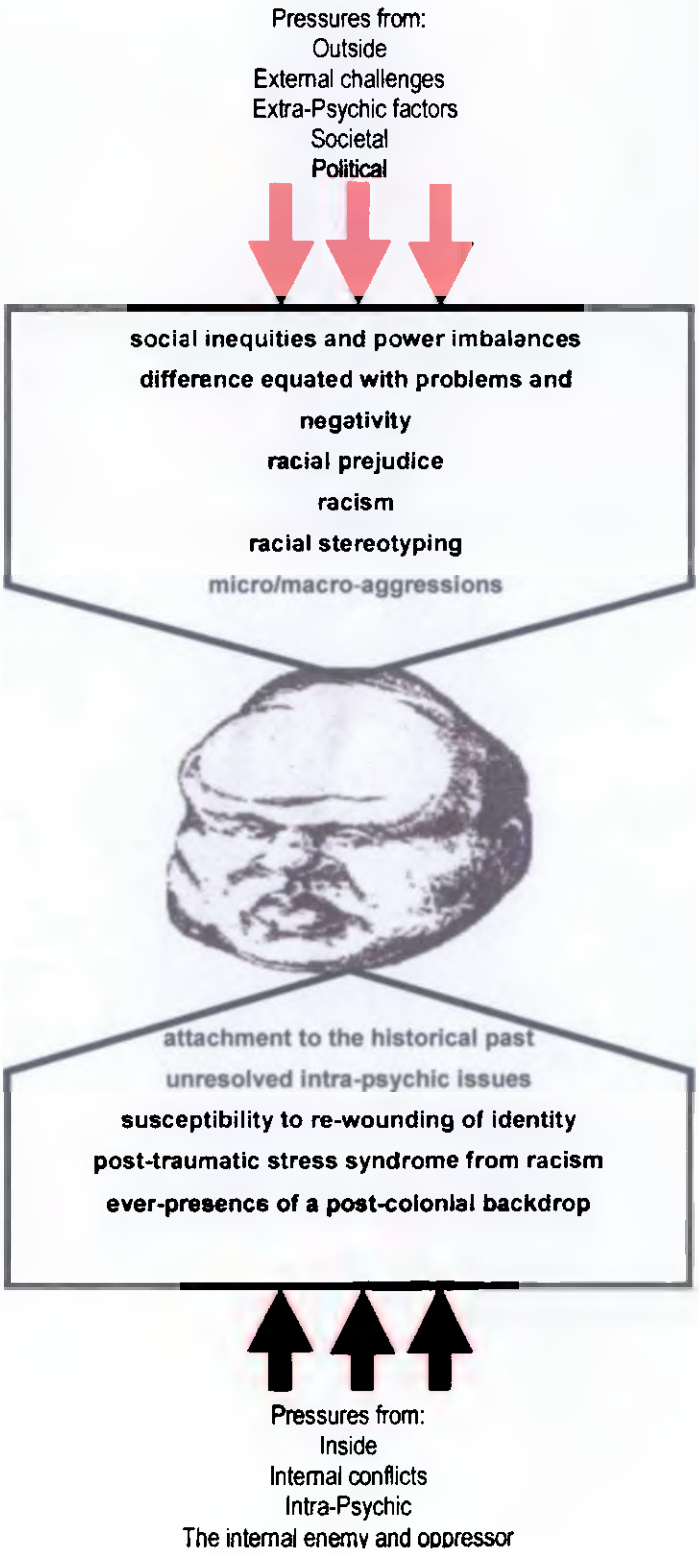
My research analysis concurs in many ways with the American experience. It would seem that regardless of geographical or cultural context, being black exposes the person to negative challenges to their race and can lead to particular kinds of pressures that become pervasive.

With such evidence confirming black peoples' experience in the workplace and society at large, the influence and impact of external factors (social, political, cultural and organisational) became empirically conclusive. Alongside this external force were internal factors and stressors, already highlighted in Tables 6 and 7

(pages 86 and 87 respectively). The diagram to follow is a pictorial summary of internal and external factors that contribute to the grinding down experience leading to workplace oppression.

Table 14

The Grinding Down Experience



The external aspect of the grinding down process appears to have unconscious and conscious elements to control and disempower. Commonalties in the respondents' stories reveal these subtle organisational forces and their tendency to be oppressive and infantilising.

Central to any form of oppression are the dynamics of power, control and powerlessness. I became interested in the notion that the main aim of any act of oppression is not only to control, but also **to transform**. This is to make the same and/or convert the Other into a form that is easy to manipulate or manage.

It could be said that racial oppression is aimed at cutting others down to size. Sampson's (1993) dialogic account of human nature highlights an often-ignored facet between individuals and groups. Within the context of power and race, he states, "*dominant groups and individuals create serviceable others whose creation gives both the self and the other the very qualities that define human nature*". He goes on to say, "*the other is a figure constructed to be serviceable to the historically white dominant male group...and...in order to provide this service, the other cannot be permitted to have a voice, a position, a being of its own, but must remain mute or speak in ways permitted by the dominant discourse*". He concludes that, "*the other is an essential presence without whom the dominant protagonist could not be who they claim to be*" (pp.13, 19).

Here lies one of the key dynamics to understanding the nature of black/white oppression and those of other minority oppressions. Sampson's (1993) account of power dynamics might also help us to understand organisational slowness and resistance to change when it comes to issues of equality and effective diversity management in the workplace.

The grinding mill image raised for me many ideas, questions and conundrums for the relational aspects of control, power and powerlessness in worker/management

relationships and black/white dynamics in particular. For example, some of these appeared thus:

- *the grinding action involves two forces with a third dimension being trapped or crushed in the middle*

- *the process of grinding is one of using force to press something into another shape or form*

- *in black/white dynamics we need to ask who does the grinding and for what purpose?*

- *what are the benefits/gains of having a transformed product, that is, what is the purpose of 'racial' transforming?*

- *what is the end product of transformation?*

These can be useful questions to address in understanding the bigger picture of black/white oppression. The questions raised may also have useful application to other areas addressing difference and diversity, namely male/female relationships, status positions and roles in large organisations, sexuality issues, disability, and class differences.

- ***Complex organisational dynamics***

Working in groups, businesses or institutions is rarely experienced without some conflicts, challenges or problems. When people come together for a common purpose, sustaining cohesion is fraught with difficulties. There are factions, splits, diverse interests and differing priorities, creative as well as destructive. This highlights for us the challenge of being both an individual and part of the group, of having both similarities with others as well as differences. Sometimes, it seems as if

our relationship with our self is mirrored in our relationship with our work and with the organisation we work in. Experiences of positional power in organisations can mirror early experiences of when adults had power over us as children and those other experiences of power we encounter in social, cultural and political establishments.

Within such organisational settings, which, in the British context, represent a microcosm of society at large, it is a well-known fact that black and other minority ethnic groups easily become containers for projected, unwanted and negative feelings from the Other (Obholzer and Roberts, 1999; Shur, 1994). My argument is that within this process of 'projective-identification' (Klein, 1964), aspects of the individual's internal trauma may "hook" onto external element of oppression, thus setting a rather complex scene for the re-enactment of oppression in the workplace.

Such primitive repressions can be enacted on both sides (black and white) and my study has shown that in the context of the workplace, such dynamics can persist over long periods, leading to harmful experiences of depersonalisation and powerlessness, particularly in black individuals. This particular observation was so common amongst interviewees, that it became clear to see that not only external oppressive forces were at play, but also other factors such as the influence of what workers brought in personally that lent intensity to the situation

b) Black Identity Wounding

The particular nature of workplace difficulties illuminated in this research, can confront minority workers with major challenges to their identity.

Although social science research has acknowledged the debilitating effects of workplace stress (Rick, 1998; Markham, 1995), my literature search has indicated

that not much attention has been given to minority status stress and especially stress experienced by black people in the British context. While American research has excelled for many decades in assessing racial identity attitudes and African self-consciousness, as well as in researching race and psychological functioning among African Americans, (Hughes & Dodge, 1997; Locke, 1992; Hacker, 1992,), it is glaringly evident that by comparison, little has been done here in the UK to address multidimensional aspects of similar issues. However, some British literature has appeared. Fernando, (1991, 1996) and Burke, 1984; have dealt with race and mental health. Maxime, (1993, 1994) and Banks, (1992) have focussed on black identity and children, and Cross (1971, 1978) has addressed racism and identity. These texts have begun to open up and keep alive the debate within the British context. Such debates occur notably in the Education and Social Service arenas.

One task emerging from this study has been to examine the relationship between racial identity development, black self-consciousness and psychological well-being and second, to consider the links between these relationships and perceived stress. It became increasingly evident that identity development or establishing a stable sense of self-concept was an essential developmental task and crucial to how black people handled impingements from the outside world. Perhaps the most cited work on identity development is that of Erik Erickson. According to Erickson (1963), identity formation consists of two components: ego-identity and self-identity. Essentially the formation of these two components, the latter of which includes racial identity, results in positive outcomes for healthy ontology.

Sarup (1996) takes the analysis of identity a stage further. He suggests that identity is ***a mediating concept*** between the external and internal, the individual and society, theory and practice. Identity then is a convenient 'tool' through which we try to understand many aspects of our lives - the personal, the political, the racial, the philosophical, gender, class, sexuality, and so on. Sarup (1996, pp28-43) refers to the '*it is*' and '*I am*' aspects of identity, which can become entangled when there is continuous discord between the two. Sarup suggests that the 'it is' aspect of identity is a public identity that is created out of a set of misinformation, misinformed

perceptions and stereotypes of an individual or racial group. This social construct of identity is usually negative. It is one from which people tend to relate unless they are prepared to make closer connections and attachments. The 'I am' aspect of identity is the private part that most accurately resembles and represents what we feel, think and know about ourselves. The stark contrast between how one is perceived in public and how one sees one's private self, can differ widely and contribute to an inner state of dis...ease.

Societal perceptions of blackness carry many negatives and the impact on black people is varied. Some have come to expect this negativity and have adjusted to it through a process of transcendence. Others are made angry and are forced into being reactive. For others, the discomfort of living with this split can lead to an inner disturbance, particularly if there are present or latent difficulties connected to other aspects of their lives. Respondent no. 25 who works as a psychologist summed it up thus: "*Illusion plays a very important part in creating identity. It con be someone's truth. When that goes, one is left shattered, even depersonalised...this is the way I have been left*". The puncturing of one's truth can destabilise one's sense of ontology (way of being in the world).

The findings sadly indicate that while some black workers are proactive in dealing effectively with workplace oppression, an overwhelming majority chose to stay unusually long in these unhealthy work environments, suffering increased costs to their health, personal esteem and effectiveness in the job. Respondent no. 11 comments seems to represent this position of adaptation when she says "*I like my work, I get a lot of satisfaction from one to one and doing groups and the money is great, I don't think I will get a salary like this anywhere else – so it's a matter of putting your head down and seeing only what you want to see*".

A number of black (and white) writers addressing issues on black identity and race relations have tended to focus mainly on the political and social elements. A few have pointed out the short-sightedness of this discourse. Dr. Robert L. Johnson and Dr. Steven Simring as examples state in their book, Race Trap: Smart Strategies for

Effective Racial Communication in Business (Harper Business, 2000), that when it comes to race relations, the real battleground is personal - not political. Their premise is that most of the articles and books addressing the subject of race, fail to address how individuals need guidance in developing more productive negotiations in avoiding the "race traps." Their contribution on the topic offer quite specific ways of communicating effectively in these challenging situations. Both Dr Johnson and Dr Simring in my view, get closer to the heart of the matter, by shifting the over-worked focus of racism and racial inequality away from merely pointing out their existence, to addressing the equally important related area of empowerment for black people in handling these situations both individually and collectively.

Other respected writers and educators (hooks, 1996; Akbar, 1996; Lorde, 1984; Cobbs & Grier, 1968), who address the theme of black identity issues, emphasise the task for black people to educate themselves for critical consciousness. By this they mean the ability to show independence of mind by reasoning for oneself and having emotional literacy to be more culturally and racially competent. In hooks' (1996) '*killing rage, ending racism*', she reminds people of colour not to see blackness solely as a matter of powerlessness and victimization, rather that there is a need to have a deeper understanding of institutional racial oppression in all its facets which over-determines patterns of black/white social relations. She goes on to say that there is a strong challenge for us as black people to locate black identity from other multiple locations, not simply in relation to white supremacy (p.248). hooks challenges the notion of a stereotypical monolithic black culture which is perpetuated sadly in both black and white sectors of our society. She firmly suggests the point:

> ..."*narrowly focused black identity politics do a disservice to the complex and multiple subjectivity of black folks. While I am deeply committed to a politics of black self-determination that seeks to maintain and preserve our unique cultural* [heritage], *I know that the project of cultural conservation need not negate our diasporic wonderings into worlds beyond traditional blackness. The nationalist insistence that black identity must be 'saved' by our refusal to embrace*

> *various epistemologies (ways of knowing), cultures, etc., is not a movement away from a Eurocentric binary structure"* [Euro scepticism as we know it today's Britain] (p.247).

Fanon (1986) also comments on difficulties for black identity development thus:

> *"When the negro makes contact with the white world, a certain sensitizing action takes place. If his psychic structure is weak, one observes a collapse of ego. The black man stops behaving as an actional person. The goal of his behaviour will be The Other (in the guise of the white man), for The Other alone can give him worth." (p.154)*

Although Fanon first wrote his views in 1952, their relevance to today's circumstances is just as poignant. Black people operating in predominantly white settings, e.g. workplace context and educational training environments develop a certain kind of healthy awareness – 'a sixth sense' – for the presence of racial prejudice and discrimination, which can prepare them to manage its effects. However, it has been my experience that the individual whose sense of self is validated only or mainly in terms of them being black, will have a different sense of personal consciousness activated when in the presence of white people. The psychic structure may be more prone to being upset or off-balanced by racial affronts (subtle or overt), and consequent emotional states of hyper-alertness and hyper-sensitivity will be developed to cope in these encounters. The research findings suggest that such mental states are capable of causing interruptions to "coherency" (feeling of being at one with oneself)" and "continuity" which are both related to Kohut's (1997) grounded sense of self. When environmental stress deriving from micro and macroaggressions are superimposed upon such individuals, they can experience a psychic collapse.

It has struck me that when Fanon (1986) wrote...*if his psychic structure is weak, one observes a collapse of ego. The black man stops behaving as an actional person.*

The goal of his behaviour will be The Other...(p.154), he was thinking in a deep and analytical way about this very phenomenon concerning black ontology and issues of 'self-actualisation' (Rogers, 1961).

It is my belief that the issues discussed, when seen to be impinging on the racial self, and subsequently internalized over time, can lead to a sedimentation of hurt; an intra-psychic process that can contribute to deep identity wounding and ontological insecurity.

Psychic catastrophe, from the beginning of psychoanalysis, tells us that a person could potentially contain the experience in his own mind, as unconscious phantasy, as memory or, alternatively, as some distorted defensive version of his/her experience of psychic catastrophe. Black people's struggles, which include live historical discontents and its present day realities, may contribute in my view, to a similar kind of psychic disturbance, from which results the kind of intense effects seen in black workers during the study.

c) Shame

The theme of cultural shame was perhaps the single most important variable overarching much of what was seen and understood to be happening in the psyche of black workers. Such shame indicated the presence of narcissistic wounding (used here in the strictest clinical sense to mean self-hate that is internalised and projected outwards in a critical, blaming or damming way). These verbatim statements highlight this unheeded emotion in the black experience:

"As black people we don't seem to come together and sustain anything that's good for any length of time."

"We give lousy service and we are not patient, no wonder we are not good in business...we expect to get rich quick...we are not like the Asians who seem to struggle for years in their little corner shop...before you know it, they own the whole block with their food shops and restaurants...we always want it ta happen today".

We get too familiar with each other [as black people] and short-change our own ...it's like we expect little so of each other and for ourselves, we end up giving little back."

"I had to catch myself the other day ...I was doing just the same as my white colleagues, thinking he [the black manager] was up to no good."

"I know I am driven...no matter how much I do and achieve, I always feel I need to do more...always going that extra mile...giving just that little extra to be noticed...it's neurotic."

"Sometimes in meetings, my voice feels so out of place...I can't describe it...it's deep...and the difference sets you apart...alienates you...you know what I mean. My family think I sound like the powerful Maya Angelou [respected black writer and poet] but at work people make you feel odd... you are seen as aggressive and scary...its enough to give you a complex."

The above examples suggest in my view, shame, which is an emotion that requires some explanation. Shame is described in the Oxford English Dictionary as "*a painful emotion caused by a strong sense of guilt, embarrassment, unworthiness, or disgrace*". In psychoanalytic terms, it resembles emotions like jealousy, envy, spite, love, hatred, and pride. It might be related to feelings such as, 'I cannot see myself as I want others to see me'. This would become an introjection (Rycroft, 1972), that is, the taking in or internalisation of external influences, such as judgement by others with a resultant defensive structure.

Shame has been described as "a reaction formation to exhibitionistic wishes." (Jacobson, 1964, p.100). In this sense, it is a rigid defence structure built into the

character and used against the risk of being humiliated, a risk viewed as continually present in cultural oppression.

Shame is interwoven with issues of narcissism, though the two realms are by no means identical. It is the veiled companion of narcissism. Shame stems from internalised conflict with an external authority (society) and guards against the boundary of privacy and intimacy. Shame in this sense, protects the innermost vulnerable bits of the self and defends against anxiety which threaten to destroy an integral image of the self.

Shame threatens our individual relationships with each other and this is deeply felt in the black community in forms where we act out our feelings of indignation, anger, and frustrations at other black people who "show us up" (Lipsky, 1987). This acting out of is often taken out on those closest to us. This dynamic destroys our relationships with each other and lead to some of aforementioned black-on-black conflicts in workplace settings.

The effects of shame show their result in our relationship with our children who face fierce criticism from black mothers and fathers whose intention of 'disciplining' is mixed up with notions of obedience and submission and compliance. The need to control and fear of being "showed up" in front of others, invariably leads to aspects of parenting which destroy any development of self-confidence in black children.

Shame has played a large part in creating difficulties for our [black] group in sustaining any collective effort. This situation may explain the fact that as black people "*we don't seem able to come together and sustain anything good*" (comment from research respondent), and it may also be due in part to criticisms of each other, not trusting one another, suspicion, competition, rivalry and blame. Many a group efforts appear to end prematurely and or aborted because of an apparent loss of faith in ourselves.

Shame can lead to cultural isolation, which is the withdrawing from other black people. Consequently, we act out our hurt, embarrassment, fear, dislike and mistrust by dividing ourselves amongst each other and creating hierarchies. Such divisions occur among African Caribbean people, British born blacks, African Nationals, mixed-heritage individuals, and Indians/Asians. Further divisions are created in the way we label each other. Characterizations such as "house slave", "coconut", "field niggers", are terms still used amongst black people nowadays to divide and rank us within a social order. Shame has left us with complexes about skin colour and its representations summed up in this rhyme previously included in this document:

If you are white, you are right
If you're brown, stick around
If you're black, get the hell back

(a rhyme I uttered in the school yard)

Shame and its resultant cultural isolation also finds expression in our semiconscious and unconscious choices in partnership and close friends, in our social pursuits and affiliations, in our choice of dress and general taste, in our accents, family names and in our sense of identity as a whole. Cultural shame and its complex manifestations is a major theme that can present both the white and black therapist with immense difficulty.

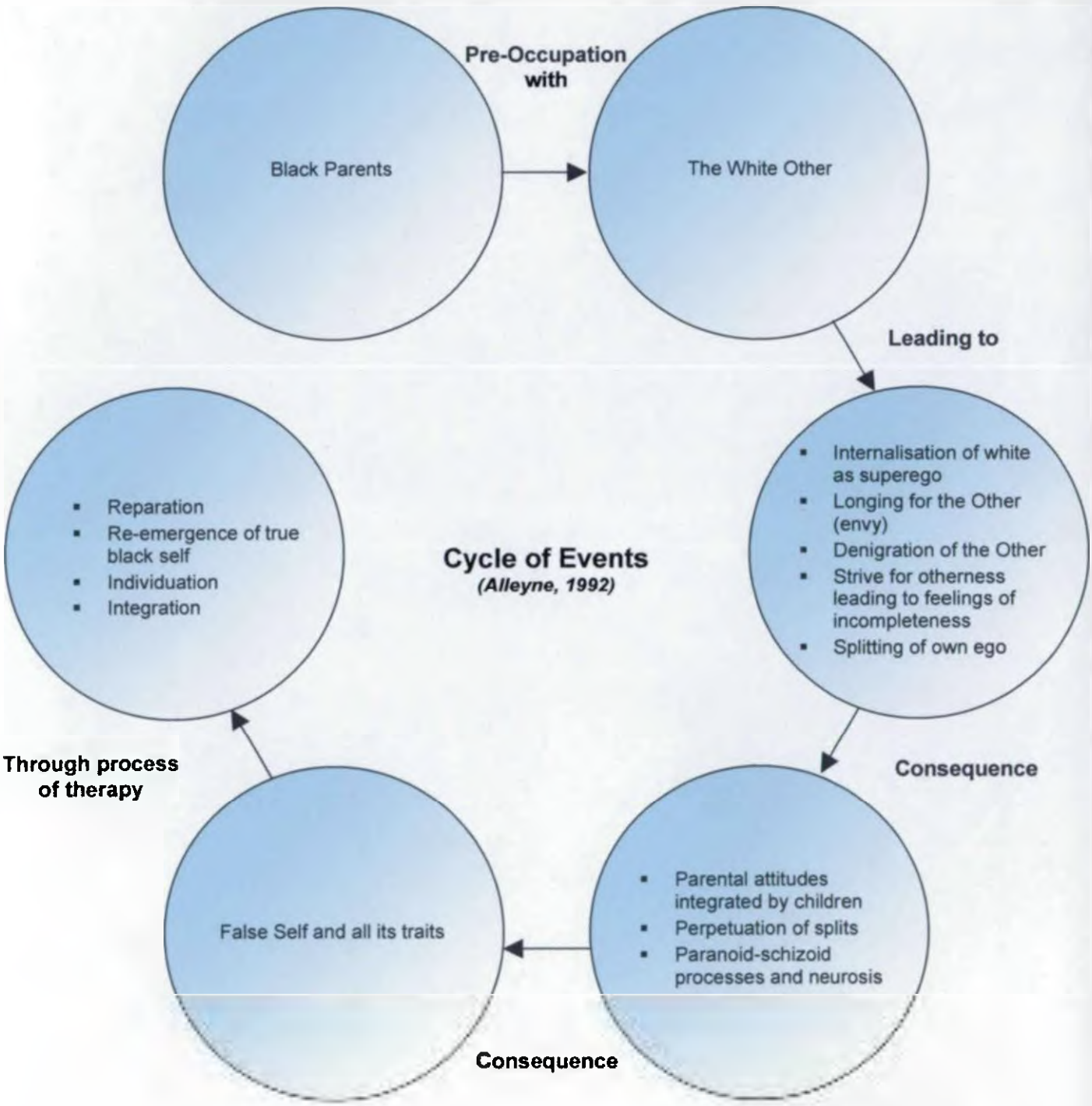
Cultural shame has been a major theme overarching much of my work as a psychotherapist and as a black person. The ongoing process of dealing with my own issues of shame has without coincidence, led me to become more alert to its presence in psychotherapy practice and in complex issues relating to black/white dynamics.

In addressing these said issues I include a table from my Masters Degree dissertation in which I constructed a diagram – "**Cycle of Events**" (Alleyne, 1992, University of

Hertfordshire), to depict the workings of cultural shame and internalised racial/cultural oppression.

Table 15

The Re-Emergence of the True Self... The Black Experience in Relation to the White Other



In the above diagram, **Cycle of Events** (Alleyne, 1992,) I argued the points that through the generations, it was possible for us as black people to perpetuate certain false self-traits by carrying around internalised negative patterns of cognition about ourselves in relation to the white Other. I suggested that this complex internal process could lead to internal disturbances and *false* self-traits. The relevance of the *false-self* concept thus becomes an important construct in understanding black people's struggle for individuation and healthy negotiations in predominantly white settings. I also argued that as it was not possible to erase our history from our identity, its facts and consequences should serve as crucial lessons from which we learn to be more progressive in our relationships and lives generally. This is what I term a reflexive identity, not for survival, but for enjoying a quality of life.

The psychological effects of black/white historical attachments, coupled with the virulent aspect of modern day racism, appear to have affected this *moving on* process and the actualisation of the full black potential. Within this arrested state, I have suggested in my MA dissertation that negative self-traits develop within a dependent *false* persona, suppressing the identity and individuation process for black people. The thrust of my Master's thesis was based on the belief that a 'psychological metamorphosis'- a reframing of impeding historical life scripts - was a necessary process for black folk to negotiate when dealing with these shame-based neuroses and 'false' self structures (i.e., manufactured coping personas). Again, I return to the need for a reflexive identity to help with the moving on process.

In psychotherapy, views on the *true* and *false* self (Winnicott, 1958) and truth and authenticity, are highly contentious issues, and as such, I am mindful that some psychoanalytic readers would immediately declare having problems with them. However, I embrace the Winnicottian stance that distinguishes the *true* and *false* self thus; he states that the latter as a defensive structure, a 'false' *adaptation* to an *environment* which has not met the needs of the '*true*' self during the formative months of infancy.

Historical experiences for both black and white may have left the former with issues of shame and inferiority complexes and the latter with feelings of power over others and superiority complexes.

How do we deal with shame? We are cautioned to be aware that shame cannot be analysed away, but an emotion that needs to be faced and owned by the shamed. Working through shame can be an entry point to the transpersonal realm and a path leading to a fuller realisation and understanding of one's true self. Returning to the study, many participants appeared to deal with shame by either externalising its effects or rationalising its impact. Rationalisation lead to forms of adaptation to life circumstances. Externalisation had the effect of pushing individuals into projective re-enactments with different Others and into positions of stuckness. Examples of how respondents handled shame by adopting either position are included in the following verbatim scripts:

"I am not interested in theory – I go by my instincts" (a rationalisation through denial from two counsellors)

What's the point in trying – you'll only get no for an answer" (adaptive response from a youth worker)

"I am not interested in promotion – it forces you to conform to the system - I don't want to loose who I am as a black person" (rationalisation from a psychologist)

"You can't afford to show vulnerability - people will walk all over you" (rationalisation from a nurse)

"When things get too much, I just walk away"(rationalisation/adaptive response from a nurse)

"You take me as you see me - what you see is what you get – like it or lump it" (rationalisation from a college worker)

"This is who I am – I say what's on my mind - ain't changing for no one" (rationalisation/adaptive response from an ancillary staff in a college setting)

"I am not putting myself out for no one" (rationalisation/adaptive response from an admin worker)

Wurmser (1981) suggests that in working through shame, the less vulnerable one feels about ordinary threatened parts of the self, or, to put it in more psychological terms, the more solid and conflict-free the narcissistic investment in self-evaluation becomes, the less one will fear exposure and hence shame. If we are confident in our value of life as a whole, of its integrity and true wholeness, then we have less need to shield it against certain kinds of exposure. Wurmser's view applies aptly to racial and cultural shame. His views have enable me to identify the psychological protection, e.g. protective personas that workers wore and needed to, in order to shield against the constant bombardment of racial impingements in their work environments.

Kaufman (1989) states that shame can be healed through building the interpersonal bridge in the therapeutic relationship. He describes initial steps in the therapeutic process which are to accept and validate the client's feelings of shame about themselves and what has happened to them. He cautions against denying their self-belief which will only serve to re-shame the shamed. In reversing internalised shame, he stresses the importance of restoring shame to its interpersonal origins, through *disidentificaiton* with any negative external figures, and replacing them with a new identification model. Within this relationship, needs must be accepted and validated and the original pain around defectiveness of self must be worked through. Acceptance of a need to do this work can allow for the dissolution of shame bonds, and makes shame more conscious.

Depending on where we (as black people) have had our upbringing, be it here in the UK or back in the Caribbean or Africa, it is my belief that we have all been exposed to various kinds of edicts geared to elevating the white race. I am suggesting that this indoctrination has contributed to a white internalised superego which has also been heavily influenced by colonised parental introjects. Few of us have escaped this experience which has shaped our adaptation to our environment. The differences in adaptation however, are as varied as the countries and home environments from which we come, and perhaps too, it is this variance that has contributed to the

differences observed in black people utilising coping strategies to manage conflict in the workplace.

d) The Internal Oppressor

Observable data from this study has clearly identified factors that contribute to workplace oppression. As already demonstrated, such oppressive workplace experiences appear to be heightened by powerful memory imprints connected to a painful historical heritage. This inescapable past, although a distant four hundred years ago, seems still to be having the effect of creating a persistent post-traumatic syndrome. Notwithstanding the fact that such a view can be easily dismissed as defunct or 'old hat', the data does suggest that the nature of black people's historical past is ever capable of impinging on here and now experiences and functioning. Thus, with every occurrence of racial bullying, harassment, scapegoating or other oppressive experience, these psychological scars and wounds are potentially re-opened.

The historical past and its effect on the present is not entirely new thinking. We have only to look at the works of Lifton (1996) who examines the impact and effects of Hiroshima on its peoples, and Dale (1988), Karpf (1996) and Schaverien (1998) whose works deal powerfully with the effects of the holocaust and various aspects of Jewish identity. These writers have shown in their different works how collective memory with its painful imprints can continue to transmit trauma and grief through generations of an oppressed group or race of people. Schaverien's (1998) work in particular provides us with a powerful analytic account of the legacy of the holocaust and Jewish identity, which mirrors the black experience in many regards.

Although it is not my intention here to equate, rank or categorise any of the world's crimes on humanity, it seems important to emphasise that there are areas of commonality in dealing with collective trauma with specific regard to identity formation, understanding of self and the process of healing.

Particularly striking in the study were questions raised by seemingly strong, emotionally capable and educated individuals, as to why they were becoming powerless to dealing with situations at work. This important phenomenological question begged a further question of what else was going on in the picture.

Respondent No 30 described her disrupted expectations of getting promotion thus: "*as black people, we have always had to deal with crises...we are a crisis-orientated people...things get in our way and we learn to cope with our heads held high...I've been through a lot worse before this, but I don't understand why I am not coping now*". In this statement, she speaks of the 'I' and 'we', that is, the individual and the collective. Her deep sense of loss, grief and puzzlement are apparent. The inclusion of 'we' in her narrative, a way of speaking which mirrored the style of many of the research respondents, suggests a clear link to the past and the placing of a special importance on a collective identity.

Also significant, was the large number of black female respondents who prided themselves in the unquestionable ownership of '*the strong black woman*' image. This female persona is well known in the black community and seen as invincible; able to take on and deal with whatever life throws at it. These women although able to cope with varied difficult situations, appeared psychologically disorientated, dislocated and made powerless by their traumatic work experience. They seemed also to be looking to their roots for consolation.

Attachment to the past and its apparent contribution of a post-traumatic syndrome were further evidenced by the views of a majority of the respondents. Such views indicated a certain familiarity with personal constructs adopted to describe their pain and their lot: Examples of these constructs were:

- *"I don't do deference where white people are concerned"*
- *" you can never trust the white man's intentions"*
- *white people will never get accustomed to, nor comfortable with a black person in a position of power"*
- *"people will always see your colour first and personality second"*
- *"no matter how hard you try to succeed, people will always want to beat you down"*
- *"we always have to work twice – even three times as hard to get to where we want or be on par with the white man"*
- *"we don't seem able to come together and sustain anything good as black people"*

These examples (and numerous others) that presented as life scripts and absolutes, did seem to determine respondents' personal drives, values, sense of relatedness, views of the world and relations with the white Other.

Many respondents referred back to slavery and colonialism when describing their work difficulties:

- *"this is modern day slavery"*
- *"white management still want to keep black workers in chains"*
- *"we are always put in the position to serve, to assist, be the side-kick for white people; its seldom the other way round...some things haven't changed from our fore-parent's time'*

This evidence suggested a significant correlation between the past and present, history and present day realities.

In my role as psychotherapist, such data was clearly suggesting a therapeutic challenge for us as black individuals to embrace the importance of our history, whilst cultivating the need to be reflexive. The latter is having a sense of our history which is in continual development for self-awareness, and thus ideally a self-assurance

leading to a degree of liberation. For those groups who have historically experienced wide-scale oppression over the generations, the need for reflexivity is even greater. Throwing off the shackles of the past and emerging from the entanglement of historical briars is still, in my view, an important modern day (therapeutic) task for the black Diaspora and other oppressed groups. I will go as far as to say that a reflexive identity will only begin at the point where unconscious identification and fixation with aspects of one's history cease.

Akbar 's (1996) comments concur with this view:

> "*our [black people's] progress is still impeded by many of the slave-based characteristics...The objective of the discussion is not to cry 'victim' and seek to excuse those self-destructive characteristics created by slavery. In fact the objective is to identify the magnitude of the slavery trauma and to suggest the persistence of a post-slavery traumatic stress syndrome, which still affects the [black person's] personality. It is not a call to vindicate the cause of the condition, but to challenge Black people to recognize the symptoms of the condition and master it as we have mastered the original trauma*" (p.25).

The evolving data and analysis to this point was clearly suggesting the presence of an internal enemy, which I have termed the '*internal oppressor*' (Alleyne, 2004).

The '*internal oppressor*' (a noun not to be confused with the internalised abuser), and which is distinct from internalised oppression (a process), is an aspect of the Self which appears to carry around and through the generations, historical and intergenerational baggage. Much has been written about internalised oppression, Lipsky (1987), Lorde (1984), hooks (1995), Freire (1970), which is the process of absorbing the values and beliefs of the oppressor and coming to believe that the stereotypes and misinformation about one's group are true (or partly true). Such a process can lead to low self-esteem, self-hate, the disowning of one's group, and other complex defensive behaviours in relation to one group. Although this concept

has been fully explicated in the works of the aforementioned writers, only few, (Lorde, 1984) as an example, have dealt specifically with the concept of the oppressor within our self – the internal oppressor.

In terms of black/white relations, the internal oppressor seems to have the function of creating a post-slavery/post-colonial backdrop that colours our (black people's) dealings with the white Other. It influences our inter-relational and attachment dynamics with this Other. The *internal oppressor* feels an ever-present force that rests within the shadow of psyche, but lies dormant for the most part. Only when this aspect of the Self is in contact with an external oppressive situation, real, perceived, or a mixture of both, are the historical batteries re-charged, opening up old wounds, that can lead to the wounding of the Self and identity. Prejudices, projections, inter-generational wounds and the vicissitudes from our historical past are all aspects of this inner tyrant - the *internal oppressor.* They are kept alive through the transgenerational transmission of trauma (passed down from generation to generation).

Alongside these aspects of the internal oppressor are other factors such as our narcissistic injuries, our personal unresolved difficulties where power and domination feature as themes, and those difficult and painful experiences unresolved within our own family dynamics. The nature of the internal oppressor appears to be the sum total of these characteristics and which rests in the shadow of the Self. As borne out by the research, for black African, Caribbean and black British peoples specifically, the overarching backdrop of a post-slavery/post-colonial context and the baggage of [our] black people's internalised oppression, seem able to play a crucial part in shaping pre-transference relationships and attachment patterns to the white other. The picture created here is one of the past and present as well as internal and external factors being inextricably linked and fused. How black individuals manage this internal phenomenon seems to be a key factor in their ontological health and security.

Suggesting that the significance of black people's history is a crucial factor contributing to the impact of invisible injuries experienced in workplace would constitute a comparatively small part of a very complex picture. More to the point, I argue that it is the person's **relationship** with their history, and especially to the part they recognize as their own, that is the issue in question.

e) Cultural Enmeshment and black ontological security

Black people's relationship with their history and its impact on present day functioning, presented clearer answers to key themes in the research. The specific nature of this relationship warranted fuller analysis.

Fusion of one's historical past with one's present functioning can look and feel like co-dependent states and more specifically, difficulties with *enmeshment* (Minuchin, 1974). An over-investment in this historical past, particularly one where the wounds of the collective trauma are not forgotten, can adversely determine a person's ontology (rooted sense in the world) in any given situation. Enmeshment as a psychoanalytic concept can help with a deeper understanding of why this is so.

Enmeshment is unavoidably linked to the concept of Self. For example, mother and young child are likely to be functionally enmeshed temporarily at the 'expense' of father – but later the situation will reverse to leave mother less proximal and father more engaged. This is a normal state of affairs in most family systems and it allows the child to experience both parents and negotiate the process of individuation in a healthy fashion.

Dysfunctional enmeshment according to Minuchin (1974), is a disorder producing developmental arrest that leads to a difficulty in disengaging from internal objects, for example, one's mother or father. In the case of black/white interpersonal

relationships, I am suggesting that the internal parental *object* is the coloniser. Enmeshment of this kind will prevent or hampers the change, growth and individuation process of the colonised. Enmeshed states undoubtedly create patterns of parent/child and symbiotic attachments where both sides continually seek mutual advantage through each other. For the parent (coloniser) it may be the need to exercise power by keeping the child (the colonised) in an infantilised position. For the child, there might still be ambivalent needs to be looked after and also be independent whilst having someone to fight against. Inherent in these inter-relationships is evidence of projective identification previously addressed in this document.

The vicissitudes of the colonial era have clearly left both black and white parties dependent on each other, creating forms of co-dependency with an identification through the Other. It is my view that this state of affairs has left black people with more struggles to negotiate when it comes to the important process of differentiation; an analytical term used here to describe the process of separating out and emerging gracefully autonomous. The stronghold and effects of colonialism have much to answer for in this tragedy. For the Other who is in held in the child position, being alone and autonomous will be underpinned by catastrophic fantasies of individuation (Jung, 1923) and being oneself. The tendency would therefore be to settle for what is safe and comfortable - a state of dependence and waiting to be given opportunity - whilst feeling dissatisfied, frustrated and even enraged with one's stuck position.

From a cultural 'object-relations' (Klein, 1948) perspective, this point can be understood by a powerful comment made by Respondent No 30, who felt that "*as black people, we seemed unable to initiate and be self-governing unless validated and monitored [kept in check] by the white man*". Enmeshment breeds dependency and immaturity due to the developmental deficits arising from this unhealthy union. The way out of the enmeshed state is to separate out, seek autonomy, and self-sufficiency. Separation in the black/white context however, is not to be interpreted as separatism, isolation or alienation from the white other.

Co-dependence and enmeshment would clearly suggest then that there is a propensity for us as black people to seek self-definition through the white Other, whilst also being extremely critical of this Other. This tricky ambivalent situation can lead ultimately to difficulties in experiencing oneself as separate in one's own identity. Dependence of this kind coupled with the angst from carrying around historical baggage can create a focus and preoccupation with the white Other that can lead to connections (both cultural and spiritual) with the individual self becoming more elusive. Enmeshment and co-dependence in this context can become a disease of lost self-hood. To utilise one's personal energies in continually tracking the parent (the white Other) can create a dynamic that heavily influences pre-transference connections in any given situation. It can also lead to an over-sensitivity and anticipation of racial and cultural conflict even when they are not present. Respondent no. 4 demonstrates this point, *"I always carry a healthy disrespect for white people because I can never trust them"*.

From an analytic perspective, attacks on the cultural and racial skin raise serious issues of 'containment' (Bion, 1962, 1967; Winnicott, 1965, 1967) and one's psychic equilibrium. 'Containment' in the context of workplace oppression is about having to keep powerful external impingements at bay whilst continuing to maintain one's state of grace in an environment that is the source of the trauma. This is an extremely demanding mental process and key ontological task requiring a particular mastery. As we are not taught this ontological skill, which is the ability to maintain one's cultural equilibrium in extreme circumstances, the challenge for resilience will remain a lifelong pursuit.

f) Trauma, healing and achieving a state of grace

How do we heal from the effects of historical co-dependency and enmeshment? Furthermore, how can black workers interrupt the spiral of events when faced with the impact of workplace oppression? The task seems to rest in our endeavour to

understand and action the necessary work involved in separating out what issues are ours as black people, and what belongs to the white Other. Although, history has caused these areas to become inextricably linked and meshed, the job of sorting out the internal and external, the personal and historical, the past and present, all seem of utmost importance. Most writers, such as hooks (1995), Akbar (1996), Lorde (1984), Cobbs & Grier (1968), Rodney (1984), emphasise the task for black people to educate themselves for critical consciousness. By this they mean, the ability to show independence of mind by reasoning for oneself, and having the emotional literacy to do things differently. Being '*actional*' (Fanon, 1986) is a necessary intrapsychic stance to help unhinge from the painful historical past and tune out the expressions of black rage and pain.

In hooks' (1996) '*killing rage, ending racism*', she reminds people of colour not to see blackness solely as a matter of powerlessness and victimization, rather there is a need to have a deeper understanding of institutional racial oppression in all its facets that over-determines patterns of black/white social relations. She goes on to say that there is a strong challenge for us as black people to locate black identity from other multiple locations, not simply in relation to white supremacy (p.248). hooks challenges the notion of a stereotypical monolithic black culture which is perpetuated sadly in both black and white sectors of our society. She firmly suggests the point that, "*narrowly focused black identity politics do a disservice to the complex and multiple subjectivity of black folks. While I am deeply committed to a politics of black self-determination that seeks to maintain and preserve our unique cultural* [heritage], *I know that the project of cultural conservation need not negate our diasporic wanderings into worlds beyond traditional blackness. The nationalist insistence that black identity must be 'saved' by our refusal to embrace various epistemologies (ways of knowing), cultures, etc., is not a movement away from a Eurocentric binary structure*" [Euroscepticism as we know it in today's Britain] (p.247).

In our intercultural interactions, Rodney (1984) reminds us that in real life there is the need to have a relationship with the rest of the world and there are contradictions, good and bad in every group. The notion of a unitary black collective and Self are

dead concepts, serving no purpose in our ever-changing times of fluid diasporic identities and the coming together of cultures on grounds of commonality.

The key to breaking the spiral of events of workplace oppression rests with the worker and his or her ability to take action as soon as clear signs and evidence of oppressive dynamics are occurring in their midst. These dynamics should be assessed for their ability to threaten or actually hamper state of grace, rightful entitlements to opportunities and freedom to exercise individuality within reason. It feels important also that every effort should be made to fight against becoming silent. The simple act of talking to as many trusted people about one's experience is key to remaining grounded and having others bear witness.

The following steps are suggested to help clients experience the separation process - of unhinging from painful attachments to a historical past. It has been my experience personally and in private practice to endorse such work as useful in helping to broaden understanding of the experience of cultural trauma and it effects on the human condition.

Essentials for recovery – a personal perspective

- ***Learning to work through the historical core issue:*** This self-awareness teaches us how to engage with our past without forming an obsession about it or letting it consume us. The balance is to have the past in a very boundaried place with the necessary emotional space available to foster growth and movement forward. Tied to this work is the key factor of working through the historical core issue of internal shame as described on pages 139-143.

- ***Learning to live from our inner lives:*** In the transgenerational transmission of trauma from slavery and colonialism, one possible

effect is the way it serves to interrupt black people's sense of "coherency" (feeling at one with oneself) and "continuity" (Winnicott's (1960) state of going on being). This experience, which seems hard wired within the psyche can leave a people rudderless and disconnected from their roots and centeredness. I suggest that it is possibly from this disempowered psychological position, that we have become entwined with the white Other over the generations. Such co-dependent or enmeshed relationships can leave us with an unhealthy focus on this Other and our outer life in a very unhealthy manner. Returning to our core self in ways that radicalise our thinking, habits and restore continuity and coherency, can all enhance quality of life even in the face of racial and cultural domination. As Paolo Freire (1970) suggests, the process of moving from *object* to *subject* will transform the oppressed person whereby he or she is no longer a mere object responding as surrounding social forces direct, but one who is seeking to deepen and regain their full humanity. He points out that for the oppressed to be able to achieve this, there is a need to perceive the reality of oppression not as a closed world where there is no exit, but as a limiting situation which they can transform.

- ***Getting our needs met:*** Enmeshed and co-dependent relationships are unhealthy alliances that suffocate, stunt growth and create dependency. Realizing true needs requires meeting the challenge of separating out, whilst bearing the anxiety of having to be autonomous. Cultural enmeshment can lead to a state of 'spiritual' crisis. Getting one's needs met can allow for a reclaiming of a spirituality (may not have anything to do with religion) that enhances the core sense of self.

- ***Maintaining a state of grace:*** When we are battle-weary, we stop learning. Maintaining a state of grace for black people is about

> engaging in the important work of living life in a more fully functioning and flourishing manner in spite of the scars of life's traumas. Achieving a state of grace is not just about surviving. It is about keeping alive our distinct hybrid vigour, which is the process of delighting in all that makes us potent, resilient and powerful. Reclaiming and celebrating more regularly that which is good, beautiful and true to our spirit can serve to repair and heal the soul.

Conclusion

The works of Alice Walker's *The Color Purple* and Toni Morrison's first novel, *The Bluest Eye*, as well as the more widely acclaimed *Beloved*, all address issues of love and black psychic trauma. These black women writers address many of the above issues with regard healing for recovery. The essence in all their works and the guidelines I offer from the work of this study is encapsulated by Carl Jung (1964), who put it quite simply and succinctly, that if you find the psychic wound in an individual or a people, there you also find their path to consciousness. For it is in the healing of our psychic wounds, that we come to know ourselves - and I would add, our ultimate potential. The wisdom in this profound concept underpins in my view, the work that is to be done in connection with cultural identity wounding and healing. As echoed in my own family circle, there is still much we need to do in our own backyards!

2) Publications

Five publications have resulted from the research work:

► **'Black Identity and workplace oppression'**. In *Counselling and Psychotherapy Research*, July 2004, Vol 4 No 1: 4-8. (*see Appendix 5, page 203 for copies)

This paper is primarily aimed at counselling and psychotherapy practitioners whose clients experience workplace conflict with its resulting stress and trauma. The paper reports findings from the author's doctoral research, studying black workers in three workplace settings.

► **'Race-specific workplace stress'**. In *Counselling and Psychotherapy Journal*, October 2004, Vol 15 No 8: 30-33. (*see Appendix 5, page 203 for copies)
This paper examines common experiences of work-related stress affecting black people in predominantly white institutions. The paper addresses less visible kinds of discrimination ('modern racism') and other dynamics of positional power in these settings.

► **'The internal oppressor and black identity wounding'**. In *Counselling and Psychotherapy Journal*, December 2004, Vol 15 No 10: 48-50.
In this paper, the author puts forward the concept of 'the internal oppressor'. This is a deep-seated, long-established aspect of black identity which operates alongside more immediate elements in current experiences of racial oppression. It is to be distinguished from internalised oppression. (*see Appendix 5, page 203 for copies)

► **'The internal oppressor – the veiled companion of external racial oppression'**. In *UKCP the psychotherapist*. Issue 26 Spring 2005.
This paper reworks the theme of the internal oppressor and workplace oppression for a mainly psychoanalytic practice based audience. *(see Appendix 5, page 203 for copies)

►**'Invisible Injuries and Silent Witnesses - the Shadow of Racial Oppression in Workplace Contexts.'** In *Psychodynamic Practice. Individuals, groups and organisations*, August 2005, Volume 11 No. 3: 283-299 (*see Appendix 5, page 203 for copies).

This psychodynamic paper is an extended version of the topic covering issues of subtle racism and black/white interpersonal dynamics in workplace contexts.

3) Training video contract

I have been commissioned by Professor Sue Wheeler, Director of Counselling and Psychotherapy Programme University of Leicester to make a transcultural training video that will be addressing a wide range of intercultural topics, one of which will include issues of race dynamics in black/white relationships. This formal proposal is a collaborative effort, which has begun in August 2005 and is scheduled to complete in late 2006.

4) Contribution to BACP policy guidelines and clinical practice

I have agreed a paid contract with the British Association for Counselling and Psychotherapy, to write the information sheet guidelines for 'Harassment in the Workplace'. This document will offer specific information and guidance to counsellors and psychotherapists working with diverse clients who are experiencing harassment in the workplace. The document has been accepted by the Editorial Board and is to be published soon.

5) Contribution of research findings to educational databases

My published papers are included in the various Equal Opportunity websites, e-libraries and educational data bases: An example of these are:

Black and Asian therapists on-line www.blackandasiantherpaists.co.uk

The Online Resource for Psychotherapy www.allaboutpsychothrapy.com

Electronic Library for Social Care (eLSC) www.elsc.org.uk

Research Library at the Commission for Racial Equality (CRE) www.cre.gov.uk

British Association for Counselling and Psychotherapy (BACP) www.bacp.co.uk

It was pleasing that in many instances, the above organisations had initiated request for permission to include my research papers for dissemination to the public. Responses and feedback from these sources have been helpful in both echoing the voices of the respondent group and confirming the usefulness of the project's findings.

6) Talks at conferences, seminars

Apart from talks delivered at various teaching events, workshops and tutorial inputs at various educational and psychotherapy settings, I have to date, been invited as keynote speaker to address the Guild of Psychotherapists' 2003 Winter conference on the theme of 'Race and Culture'. My paper "Listening in Colour" (*see appendix 8, page 206 for synopsis) addressed the key issue of teaching and learning that recognised and appreciated issues of difference and diversity. Recently I have also been asked to give a paper at the Maya Centre's, a North London Counselling organisation, whose academic lectures are scheduled to run in 2005 to 2006. (*see invitation in Appendix 8, page 206) Conference lectures will be addressing the theme of 'Resilience: a Psychoanalytic Exploration' and will be attracting both counsellors and psychotherapist who are committed to working effectively with issues of diversity and difference.

Additionally, I have felt privileged to be invited by a senior and well-respected colleague, Dr Elaine Arnold, to address her sixth annual 'Separation and Reunion Forum' conference on the central theme emerging from my research. I have been asked to contribute a workshop to this professional event organised for counsellors and psychotherapists in November 2005 and was please to have my suggestion of the conference title, 'Internalising the Historical Past: Issues for Separation and Moving On' accepted. I attach the conference details in *Appendix 8, (page 206).

7) Participation in further external research projects

Some post-doctoral work has already been created in the guise of an invitation to collaborate with a group of senior research fellows and coordinators on a research project addressing discrimination in the mental health workforce. This project, which will be funded through Sainsbury Centre for Mental Health, Workforce Development Unit, will in many ways build on some my research work. (see *Appendix 9, page 207 for invitation).

5.2 Dissemination

The present research can be said to have contributed to new knowledge in terms of the novel body of responses provided by the hitherto silenced voices of black workers. Very little research has focussed on black workers experience in the workplace from the point of view of oppression and stress or oppression and wounding to identity. Co-researchers' contributions have provided a rich body of information and conceptual knowledge that have important implications for greater inclusivity and better representation of diversity issues in the workplace. The present research can also play an important role in contributing to the drive to adopt a more reflexive and dynamic approach to issues of thinking about and addressing issues of black/white dynamics in psychotherapy practice. The published work of the research has motivated colleagues to, open up the debate on issues of tackling racial discrimination in institutions, organise specific research into various areas of discrimination and mental health and enable counselling and psychotherapy students to reference their academic work with new and up to date bibliographical details. The latter has been requested by students through various educational e-libraries and via my own web site: www.aileenalleyne.com

Additionally, impact of the study on the wider psychotherapy community has prompted scepticism from a small minority of white professionals. This minority seemed to choose their 'lens' for reviewing the data, very much in the same way I believe that research, regardless of the strict methods by which it is conducted, will invariably reflect the value systems and schema of the decision-makers in that process. In this study, I was that decision maker, a position I held and which allowed me the dictate and freedom to focus on what I felt was important to me and for the field of counselling and psychotherapy. Mental preparation throughout this journey has helped me to reconcile the fact that I would be dealing with mixed and even cynical feedback and that was something I would have to take in my stride.

Sadly, a few have been quick to see the study as blaming, criticising and even attacking white people. To such individuals, I can only say that they have completely

missed the point. The study's findings are in fact a huge wake up call for black people. Others still have insisted that validity of my research could only be properly measured by a comparative study with a 'white control group'. From this small group, doubts were expressed about my notions of entangled attachments in black/white relationships. Such doubts were expressed in terms of, "*this alleged attachment that you talk about is a myth... isn't it?*", and, "*it* [my thesis*] can be used for corruption*". Others who found engagement with the subject of race difficult, created distracting discourses that were plagued with misunderstandings and displacements. Whilst these reactions were initially deflating and frustrating, they were indeed not surprising and affirmed my expectations of having to dare in my endeavours to give a candid voice to the unspoken, unspeakable, and unsayable.

Throughout this project, I have reconciled to the fact that the study will generate mixed reactions, responses and feelings and that this was of course, part of the cultural challenge in the wider community. I am reminded of Professor Portwood's Metanoia lecture in which he stated that doctoral projects should have disputation – that is, giving a lead into a new order. He cautioned that such projects could be viewed as subversive. I would hope my work is seen to have such disputation but in no way disloyal to a real cause.

5.3 Competencies gained and contributions made

I will refer to the programme's "Level 5 Descriptors" as a guide to show how Level 5 capabilities were demonstrated throughout the doctoral journey, and how they have contributed to further professional knowledge and therapeutic practice. I will also incorporate my other learning from the Specialist Seminars (*see Appendix 10, page 208 - Specialist Seminars document). .

From a **professional context**, I assess that I have demonstrated in this research project, a personal awareness of individual and collective differences, with a specific focus on race. I have also demonstrated how this work is relevant and necessary to effective counselling and psychotherapy practice. My focus on race and identity,

which are specific areas of vast complexity and an ever-changing nature, are assessed as having the capacity to broaden the scope for deeper understanding of more subtle and intrapsychic aspects of intercultural work. I have shown full awareness of an ethical understanding required in such work with careful scrutiny to the ethical dilemmas likely to arise. Throughout this project, I have strived to maintain a high level of responsibility, collaborating with others in the work. I see this commitment as following me in my ongoing professional work and personal development. All of the aforementioned factors are evidenced by my paper publications, the BACP collaboration concerning production of information material, and in my present work of contributing to video training material for counsellors and psychotherapists.

I have assessed increased **professional knowledge** from the perspective of gaining deeper understanding of such complex issues as race, identity and trauma and demonstrating this knowledge in the reflexive way I have addressed these areas in this final document and my paper publications. I have evaluated, albeit within the limits of my current research understanding, that I have opened up and made public the need for practitioners and their clients to take better heed of the more subtle and invisible aspects of psychic wounding in particular regard to race issues (and experiences connected with such cultural signifiers as class, gender, sexuality). Evidence of developed knowledge is fully demonstrated in the Specialist Seminar Document, *(See Appendix 10, page 208), where, to name a few key areas, I have gained, (a) a more holistic approach to embracing and managing multicultural systems, (b) a deeper understanding of transmissional and transformational learning both from an individual and organisational perspective, (c) a respect and excitement for the responsibility of helping to bridge the gap between research and practice, and (d) an insightful and personally rewarding experience to examine trauma and attachment issues from a rigorous theoretical perspective.

Increased knowledge is evidenced by paper publications that have been well received, and by contributions to the field with updated training and educational material (still in progress), invitations to speak at conference, and to participate in a government supported ethnographic research project (scheduled for later in 2005).

Throughout this research journey, as previously underlined, engaging in the process of doing 'insider's' research has played a crucial part in helping me to acquire, analyse, apply and evaluate my professional knowledge. I feel I have demonstrated this by showing an ability to observe, engage intimately and empathise closely, whilst at the same time, being able to stand back, reflect, and have a mind of my own. Because of this position, I have also gained better insight into where there are gaps to addressing issues in the field and where there are limitations and benefits to choices in further research work.

Assessment of **professional practice** can be evidenced in subtle and profound ways; in the consulting room, in personal supervision and job satisfaction. Clients, both black and white appear to have been dealing with the key area of identity and personal worth more openly and effectively. For white clients from all backgrounds and persuasions, although difficulties are not necessarily about their race, scrutiny of the Self is being addressed from the perspective of looking at work of their internal enemy, or internal adversary; which is the internal dynamic of the *internal oppressor*. Many of these clients are able to look back on significant family edicts/scripts, values and beliefs systems and see how such unresolved generational baggage continue to influence and affect present day functioning. Similarly, black clients who are struggling with issues of feeling stuck and who are nursing damaged self-worth are facilitated to engage in effective challenging of the internal oppressor where it is carefully explored and work with. The value of this work has contributed to an increased sense of being an effective change-agent and a more culturally competent practitioner.

Evidence of professional practice can be measured by increased abilities to self-appraise, be reflexive, questioning and open. Having to describe, explain (sometimes justify) and test out my work repeatedly throughout this journey has increased personal communication skills and creative ways of presenting the material to 'critical communities'. I have reconciled to the fact that this challenge is (and will continue to be) an ongoing and inevitable accompaniment to my chosen research area as it has proven to be one that generates fierce disputatious discourse.

In demonstrating an effective combination and use of research methods, I was mindful of the fact that qualitative psychotherapy research was still criticised for its capacity to validate and quantify outcome beyond the study of process. My alertness to this undervaluing notion was not to restrict myself only to a careful scrutiny of the phenomenon, but to exploit the active work of bringing new understanding of the topic area into all relevant applications for effective practice.

I assess my findings to be useful, not from following a phenomenological methodological recipe, but from knowing what each stage of the process was intended to achieve. Like Goffman, (1968b), who is quoted in McCloud, (2001), as being first in the list of qualitative 'citation classics', and whose study had employed a light methodology – no member checks, no employing audits, limited category definitions – he *knew what he was doing* because he *had something to say.* I feel I have cultivated such an approach in this study, because I too have something important to say.

Conclusinn

The demonstration of the project's ability to satisfy the Level 5 assessment, although successfully achieved to a high standard for this project will continue to be a process that will follow me in further work. I foresee professional competencies and further contributions to be an ongoing process of engaging in post-doctoral research projects and other work of a therapeutic and educative nature.

Chapter 6: Critique

6.1 Method

Looking back to where I started this journey, I remind myself of why I chose to investigate the topic of understanding black identity wounding in workplace contexts. First, I wanted to explore a phenomenon that was observable within my private psychotherapy practice and wider personal experiences and get a deeper understanding of its workings and psychological impact on individuals. Secondly, I envisaged this understanding as helping me with the resolution of my own conflicts and difficulties experienced in various work institutions and during my counselling and psychotherapy trainings. The drive and benefits of the work were going to be for both professional and personal reasons. Within the scope of the research, I created the necessary conditions needed for exploring issues of subtle racism, shame and cultural wounding and gave concrete form to the unspeakable and the unspoken.

Reviewing situations as a participant observer was likely to be problematic because of the impossibility of reviewing such situations 'as if' one were occupying a neutral or uninvolved position. The problem of bias and of distortion would be magnified if the content to be reviewed involved inter-personal and conflictual material. The major consequences that followed were, (a) that reporting and reviewing such material will contain high subjective component, (b) there will be no single objective 'truth' of situations irrespective of how carefully 'evidence' for the points presented may have been constructed and, (c) that the position from which such experiences are reported is variable, in the reporter does not occupy a static role. Both my reporting position and my role as insider-research varied and this influenced – from moment to moment – my understanding of the situations described.

Acknowledging such variability helped to reduce a pressure to prove the 100% accuracy of reported experiential experiences and allowed situations to be

appreciated more realistically as dynamic inter-personal engagements between black and white people.

The methodology was in keeping with my tension of being inside and apart. My choice of phenomenology provided the right conditions for the research because it was non-invasive and non-oppressive. It allowed for thicker description giving more information on which to base interpretations and was non-judgemental. It allowed each individual to relate their experiences through their own template and not through mine or through theories or through expectations. Phenomenology also offered challenges for me in my role in being able to identify with the participants whilst at the same time act as informed facilitator of their voices.

6.2 "Cultural insider-researcher"

The position of being a black researcher with 'inside' knowledge of the investigated area clearly had its advantages and disadvantages. It posed challenges for the "bracketing off" notion in phenomenology where issues of confluence, congruence, identification and projection would be met and needed careful addressing. Respondents were not just a source of data. Being familiar with the culture, customs of the participants and having a pre-knowledge of black life in the UK, provided an opportunity to recruit participants easily and be privy to 'insider's' information that would not normally be trusted to a stranger. Yet being 'known' had its shortcomings. Previous knowledge or hearsay between the narrator and the interviewer ran the risk of creating expectations and preconceived ideas. Having mutual interests and sharing a 'cultural likeness' with many of the participants, although helpful in establishing trust and respect and alleviating tensions and apprehensions, also provided challenges for maintaining distance to analyse the data.

Insider research challenged the idea that researching the meanings and interpretations we make of people in social situations can be objective. I reconciled this with the fact that I was researching my own racial group which could offer a unique perspective

because of my knowledge of the culture, history and people involved. However, I also realised that I would face issues of credibility when reporting my research findings to an external audience. The ability to conduct credible insider-research involved role and boundary management and the awareness of and ability to be neither over-bounded nor under-bounded. It was an ever-present concern about what degree could and should these dangers limit one's research activities and dissemination efforts. As insider-researcher I felt I gained access to information that would often remain off limits for an outside researcher. This privilege offered me the advantage of focussing on the uniqueness of my own case as opposed to the outside researcher who often focuses on comparative perspectives. Passion for the plight of the people involved and the causes of their struggles are all issues that influenced my judgement and the type of information gathered. As researcher, I am a scientist in pursuit of knowledge. However, I am also a human who wants to engage in the drive to change and improve situations. It was therefore important to emphasise accountability in the research process and for this task, the work was achieved by democratising the process - by empowering those who are the "subjects" of the work.

The experience of negotiating the role of insider-researcher has been such an interesting challenge, that if a black doctoral student were to seek advice on managing this research position, I would offer the following. Checks done for working towards 'good' insider research are based on methods of analysis that refer clusters of emerging themes back to the original protocols in order to be validated. Returning to the coalface where participants can comment on the findings will have to be done. It would also important to maintain all the right conditions for understanding meaning and the significance and impact of constructions of meaning, the reflections on links between theory and practice, making knowledge shareable and its perceived usefulness and relevance to psychotherapy practice. The learning, insights and contribution to an improved understanding of one's topic will come from immersion in the everyday experiences of one's participants, the iterative cycles of interaction between data gathering, reflection, analysis, interpretation and application, and the unique perspective all this offers in revealing the phenomenon

and its impact. Insider research will therefore enable observations and learning to be grounded in the often very messy and difficult to access multiple realities of people's remembered and lived experiences, rather than be filtered through a research approach concerned with only admitting data that is regarded as objective, measurable and triangulated. The need to have a critical friend/s and a supervisor will be stressed as mandatory to help with the process of keeping a "critical distance" while dealing with the data. I will also share how my resulting six concepts arising out of my study can be considered by academic peers as theoretical frames for working transculturally with issues of cultural trauma in the black (and similar racial minority) context.

Summary

The research findings confirmed my assumptions about the phenomenon as one which did not have a one-dimensional face, but a picture that presented as multi-faceted with an interactional make-up, involving both the notable impact of subtle racism and influences of black and minority individuals' own cultural narcissistic wounding. This wounding as previously described, presented as an unrecognised self-hate which is *acted in* and projected out. This was the product of internalised racial oppression emerging from a historical context and the re-wounding from present-day racism.

There were a few surprises in the findings. The most significant was the explanation for the phenomenon, which highlighted the particular impact of workplace oppression on black workers. Although relatively simple and straightforward, it was most profound. Granted the reality of "workplace oppression" was destructive, the particular injurious impact on individuals sense of self appeared heavily influenced by the individual himself or herself. This explanation, albeit contentious, strongly suggests that the real battleground in the fight against racism is the personal – not the political. It is on this battleground the role of the internal oppressor will be critical. The study has revealed how this major component is significant in undermining

mental health and that in order to deal with its negative influences, the move towards developing a cultural reflexive identity is key. Such an identity can allow individuals to deal not only with negative external impingements on the self, but also fight a good battle with the internal advisory - the internal oppressor. Again, George Bach (1998) reminds us that the inner enemy is as much a formidable foe as the most manipulative [or oppressive] of associates.

Chapter 7: Conclusions

7.1 Personal Healing and Transformation

As I commence the concluding section of this document, I am conscious of the journey I have undertaken in the course of this research. I arrive wearily at this juncture, not to end the work of this challenging enterprise, but to close this chapter of the research process.

In writing the document, I was particularly interested in my own internal conditions of voice, personal growth and development as a researcher. I reflected by way of quiet contemplation on my learning and my vulnerability as I negotiated the research journey. I looked inwards to what internal shifts have been made, where questions are still unanswered and where conundrums remain unsolved. Reflection is made also on how I maintained engagement with the continuous process of searching for knowledge and deeper understanding of the more subtle and hidden aspects of cross-cultural human interaction. In so doing, I feel I have increased my learning, deepened my own healing process and strengthened my abilities (therapeutic and personal) to assist others in gaining power over adversity and to transform their lives.

In the journey of researching a lived phenomenon, I was challenged to reflect on the relationship between my research and how my personal, emotional, spiritual and professional growth have all been affected; in particular, on how my psychotherapy practice has been changed by the research itself.

I have come to a clearer realisation that the work of change for us as black people is fundamentally about identifying our participation in the perpetuation of oppression and discovering that the 'enemy' that is felt to be only on the outside, is also inside of us. I have arrived at an improved understanding of the fact that our store of experience of dominance can provide useful opportunities for us to learn about the processes by which power – intentional or intentional - over others are constructed. I

have come to realise that true liberation is quintessentially about having a sense of internal freedom. That does not ignore external social and other political realities. The task therefore is as minority individuals in a minority racial collective, to develop in ways that shift the locus of control back unto our own laps. This reclaiming process is about taking personal responsibility towards deepening our own humanity and moving from mere surviving to thriving.

In the course of this learning, I feel I have utilised my deepened knowledge to help clients and supervisees work more creatively, appraise their own validity and generate alternative ways of construing the world around them. This has been challenging work and for those individuals with whom I have journeyed, who most regularly experience oppression in many areas of their lives, it was excruciatingly painful and often frustrating to deal with the denial of [our] participation and entanglement with issues of abuse of power and oppression within our own selves. Yet, it was from these negotiations and these journeys, that I feel I have begun to master the skills of working deeply with issues of oppression. Such skills include:

- spotting the unseen burdens that we carry;
- dealing with defensive and protective postures/ positions that hold us back;
- unveiling silent anger and grudges that deny the experiencing of a state of grace;
- enabling healing from the invisible injuries suffered in the above process

In this culturally-sensitive work, I feel I have also become more effective in bracketing off my material, whilst remaining closely empathic with the challenge of helping others to explore their experiences.

I found the immersion in the script and writing up of this document more demanding and exhausting that being in the field. However, I was aware of an opening of my life to a shift of form throughout the research journey. In this opening process, I was highly attuned to previously unnoticed characterological features that we as black people carry. These are manifest in myriad ways, such as the:

- 'hard' expressions worn that serve as protection against attacks on the cultural skin;
- the ease with which anger is accessed and expressed, which often overshadows true feelings of upset, hurt and vulnerability;
- excess body weight many black women unconsciously carry to buffer the pain and burdens they shoulder;
- defensive stances adopted in preparedness for fight and flight;
- rebellion against orthodoxy, authority and the 'western Order' as a defiant show of personal autonomy and independence.

I reflect on all of the above and the entries in my personal journal and find it helpful to return to these recordings for evidence of inner shifts within myself, changes in my thinking process and movement towards further individuation.

In the course of this research that has allowed a more comprehensive awareness of the issues addressed, I start to look at myself more closely. I have begun to focus on specific areas such as my health and my weight, both of which were severely compromised during this research journey. I have become more disciplined with food and exercise, losing two and a half stones in the process journeying this research road and befriended the process of Pilates, which brought about a welcomed calm and better understanding of my relationship with stress and the body. I have become more aware of what I have always admired and have accepted from white British culture without the anxiety and lurking fear of losing my own blackness and centeredness. I have become more conscious of my Self as a black educated, professional woman in a mixed relationship with a white Cambridge academic, and a number of subtle areas in intercultural interactions, which I (we) had not previously discussed and acknowledged. This was an important and positive learning curve for me (and for us both) particularly in areas where I was unconsciously engaging in disavowal of my own worth.

Through the process of addressing thorny issues of race in my own roles as a black woman, a psychotherapist, clinical supervisor, trainer and consultant, writer, I have

been affirmed in my approach that the stance of adopting a purposeful, quiet, no-blame approach in teaching/facilitating others is by far, the most effective way to create engagement with such challenges. I have always tried to put myself in the shoes of others, including those of the oppressor to help me understand as much of the whole picture as I can. This stance has proved most facilitative in handling emotive and sensitive issues such as race, class, sexuality, and religion. I have also gained a wider appreciation of the challenge of tackling 'modern racism (Batts, 1998), which is explained as a holistic task that should include, **the personal, interpersonal, institutional, and cultural.** The research has confirmed that in addressing issues of race conflict and interpersonal difficulties, closer attention to cultural baggage and its effects is decidedly a necessary premise from which fundamental personal work can begin. Without this foundation, all other levels of exploration seem baseless.

Bolstered by this affirmation, I feel less threatened to engage in intercultural challenges where a level of surrendering and making concessions for others lack, might be necessary to achieve a helpful outcome. I am aware however, that such interactions are to be negotiated with a critical consciousness and awareness of one's own integrity.

As I look across the expansive information evolving from all the stages of the research, and review my own personal healing process, along with the deep sense of having given back 'gifts' (opportunities for deepening knowledge and insight) to the co-researchers, I feel I have been immersed in a genuine transformation process. The benefits of this personal and professional journey have not only helped me as a black person, but they have enhanced my personal relationships, brought a certain wisdom to my professional practice, and created important pathways for a deeper sense of freedom and achievement to be felt and enjoyed.

7.2 Other Explanations and Future Work

The limitations of this study need to be acknowledged. Added to the point underlined throughout this document that the study is an insider's research focussing on a particular group in a particular context, there are other factors to note:

- the study sample was small
- there were small numbers of men and Indian/Asian respondents
- it was not a comparative study, contrasting white workers' experience of workplace stress
- the age of the majority of respondents (late 30s to early 40s) excluded other age groups
- it didn't explore differences between black British people and black immigrants from the Caribbean and Africa
- it did not explore specific issues for black people who were from mixed parentage backgrounds, or those who identified as gay or lesbian and issues of being black and disabled

Despite these limitations, the study clearly suggests that black people's experiences lead them to feel marginalized and treated differently in relation to their white counterparts. The consequence is that black workers end up feeling their voices were unheard in workplaces where subtleties of race dynamics constantly operate. It is important that these voices are listened to. The task of making them heard will be the key to making black workers' rights a reality. In addition to legislation that helps create an atmosphere of equality and fairness at work, culturally competent counsellors and psychotherapists can play an important role in the challenge for change.

A central theme in therapy is dealing with issues of identity, part of which should be our history and collective development across generations. This means that questions such as Who am I? Where do I come from? What influences have marked me? What

have I developed for myself that is independent of the collective? are all necessary and important enquiries to be made when confronting the internal oppressor.

I conclude this section on 'other explanations' with a psycho/social/historical viewpoint that offers what I think is a further key explanation for the presence of what Akbar (1979) describes as, 'a persistent post-traumatic syndrome' present in the characterology of black people. I offer this perspective at this juncture, as I think it is relevant to the area of 'other explanations'. This highly polemic viewpoint, which I hold with a level of passion, is grounded in the belief that trauma unresolved, is carried into one's present functioning at both the collective and individual levels.

Black people and their historical past, do not have the same level of comfort as Jews for example and their experience of the holocaust in knowing that the rest of the world feel 'with them' in acknowledging this historical tragedy. The holocaust is not a buried, silent issue. It is not forgotten in the non-Jewish world. The very word – holocaust – is almost synonymous with evil itself for millions of non-Jewish people. And in Germany itself the memory is strongest. Germans did not bury their history. They have not just averted their eyes from the horrible things done in Europe by other Germans such a short time ago. If there is any comfort to be had, Jews must feel they are offered it, for what it's worth, by this world-wide recognition, this collective unreadiness to forget.

The great crime committed against Africa has been forgotten in my opinion. It has been buried, has been driven to the margins of people's memories and records (until recently with the discussion on world debts). Everyone knows about 'colonialism' or 'imperialism', but Africans were not just colonised, as were the majority of the world's people in some shape or form. They were not just treated to ordinary imperialistic domination. African people were enslaved, and it happened not very long ago. The rest of the world appears to be not 'with them'. The world is guilty of forgetting the dreadful fate that befell the people of Africa, East and West. Slavery is not in everyone's minds. It is not part of everyone's culture. It is not one of the great

leading images which people everywhere have in their minds – as the holocaust is. We are allowed to forget it – or to be interested or not interested as we may choose. I suggest that it is this forgetting, this silence, which must be an additional pain to black people anywhere today. In turn, the carrying of this the historical pain by black people in the form of 'a persistent post-traumatic syndrome', is perhaps the only way, in my analysis, of giving due recognition to an important aspect of all our history which defines everyone's humanity. Not only do I feel that black people carry the transgenerational and intergenerational pain of their collective, but also the burden of shame of those who have chosen to forget their part in this history.

I am mindful that the above viewpoint may run the risk of coming across as an angry, political manifesto, but I do believe the sentiments therein, if carefully analysed, do reveal a serious psychoanalytic dimension to be challenged in the unheeded, subtle, voiceless aspects of race relations.

Future work

The present study suggests a number of areas worthy of further and profitable research. While this study has deliberately focussed on the experiences of black workers in three institutional settings, a number of contrasting issues could be further addressed such as, examining workplace difficulties as experienced by other minority ethnic groups and making links with the black experience. Future work examining discrimination and health could focus on why there is a concentration of black and other minority ethnic groups in certain professions, e.g. in the mental health field and nursing. The possibility of being involved in aspects of such work is on its way, and presently scheduled to get off the ground in late 2005 *(See Appendix 9, page 207). The extent which other future research can cover is wide and can include work in uncharted areas of identity formation with people who were born here in the UK and naturalised British citizens from India, Africa and the Caribbean. The focus on such a theme would be to examine the impact of cultural, social and familial influences on the developing self. Other work exploring contrasting experiences of white and black

workers can add to the existing body of knowledge on race matters and the application of anti-discriminatory practices. Such work could employ a combination of qualitative and quantitative methods to widen its parameters.

Conclusion

The process of my personal and professional reflecting is ongoing and situates the completion of this study along a continuum of work in addressing intercultural issues in counselling and psychotherapy. The ending of this project is the beginning of future work to be done. Ongoing learning and self-development are *products* of my reflections throughout this journey. Coming to the project from the position of wounded-healer has strengthened a personal belief in my own leadership and the need to explore and facilitate in counselling and therapy the actual foundations of self-leadership through leading the wounded back to their own true story.

Chapter 8: Closing Thoughts

8.1 Closing the Project

As I close this document, I return to my reasons for doing this study and ask the question, what does this study tell us? In summation, the study tells us that, workplace oppression contributes to invisible injuries in black workers; black people's voices are unheard at work; the legacy of slavery and colonialism shapes black people's attachment patterns and relationships with white people; and the internal oppressor is clearly evident and active when external oppressive situations arise. I distinguish my findings from other research investigations in that it is a focuses on a specific ethnic group in a specific context and, in examining the impact of external stressors on the Self, I have scrutinised what the individual may also bring to the difficult situation that could influence its course and effect. My literature search has shown that a majority of similar studies have tended to focus mainly and predominantly on the external impact of racism, at the expense of addressing the personal and racial group enactment/re-enactment phenomenon. The evolving concepts are sound and can be applied and modified to meet all theoretical schools in order to help practitioners in their thinking, conceptualising and inter-cultural practice.

The results and 'products' of this enterprise, which I assess as being both reformative and transformative in nature, are geared towards heavily evaluating and redirecting policies with regard to anti-discriminatory practices in therapy and in the workplace. It is also hoped that the attention and scrutiny to subtleties in intercultural interaction will not only offer new insights and pathways to seeing what is familiar, but guide therapy practitioners in being more culturally competent when dealing specifically with race matters.

I arrive at the end of this enterprise with a great deal of thoughts about our experiences, struggles and achievements as black people. I feel affirmed in my

efforts to further the work in this area. I extend special thanks to my co-researchers and collaborators who have joined me in this journey and I remain conscious of the personal challenges and impact this whole enterprise has had on my life. I am appreciative of the help from my supervisors and advisors throughout this long and arduous journey and I am gratified to have had the opportunity to engage in a significant pursuit that has contributed to my personal development and professional learning and consequent transformation.

To recap, in this study I have explored the experiences of being black in the workplace and examined the impact of these experiences on the well-being of black workers. I have identified causes, both external and internal, that contribute to the specific nature of stress. I refer to this stress to as 'workplace oppression' leading to negative effects on the Self and possible cultural trauma. I am satisfied that I have been able to articulate a candid voice in communicating the unspoken, unspeakable and, unsayable. In doing so, I have been affirmed in my abilities to generate new knowledge and a shared language for widening the psychotherapeutic discourse in addressing black issues and particularly black identity wounding. I feel particularly affirmed in my abilities to support clients and supervisees more effectively and share this expert knowledge with others who are striving for cultural effectiveness and competence in their therapeutic practice.

In closing, I return to reflect on the theme of racism – a theme that has emerged as the central premise and backdrop to this study. I end with a favourite poem that sums up the absurdity and irrationality of this form of bigotry. I hold it as one which is both serious and bringing humour to a contentious and thought-provoking area.

The poem:-

FAIR DINKUM

Dear white fella,

couple tings you should know –

when I born, I black

when I grow up, I black

when I go in sun, I black

when I scared, I black

and when I die – I still black

You white fella,

when you born, you pink

when you grow up, you white

when you go in sun, you red

when you cold, you blue

when you sick, you green

And when you die, you grey.

And you have the cheek to call me coloured?

anonymous

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"A psychotherapeutic Understanding of Black Identity in Workplace Contexts"

Aileen Alleyne

Appendix 1

- **Examples of Significant Life Scripts Shaping Cultural Beliers and value Systems**

Examples of significant life scripts shaping cultural beliefs and value systems

Cultural 'scripts' - entitlement or impediment?

Verbatim responses extracted from respondents' stories

Scripts that identify collective responses to black archetypal experiences

1. "People will always see your colour first and personality second"
2. "We have to work twice as hard to be noticed"
3. "No matter how much we succeed, people will always try to beat you down"
4. "Black people can't be racist - we haven't got the power"
5. "We can't afford to wash our dirty linen in public – that's like giving white people ammunition - we must stick together"
6. "As black people, we don't seem to come together and sustain anything that's good for any length of time"

Scripts that indicate a defensive (*protective*) mindset and value system

7. "I am not interested in theory – I go by my instincts"
8. "What's the point in trying – you'll only get no for an answer"
9. "I am not interested in promotion – it forces you to conform to the system - I don't want to loose who I am as a black person"
10. "I don't do deference where white people are concerned"
11. "I can never trust white people - I have a healthy disrespect where they are concerned"
12. "You can't afford to show vulnerability - people will walk all over you"
13. "When things get too much, I just walk away"
14. "You take me as you see me - what you see is what you get – like it or lump it"
15. "This is who I am – I say what's on my mind - ain't changing for no one"
16. "I am not putting myself out for no one"
17. "I always leave things to the last minute"
18. "I take everyday as it comes – I'm not into planning"
19. "I never blow my own trumpet"
20. "I don't trust anyone but myself"

"A psychotherapeutic Understanding of Black Identity in Workplace Contexts"

Aileen Alleyne

Appendix 2

- **Interview questions**
- **Life line**
- **Interview Consent Form**
- **Research Request Invitation**

Interview Questions - Doctoral Research Project

Introduction &: Work History

1. Can you tell me briefly about your work and how you have got to where you are?

2. How would you describe your relationship with:-

   (d) peers?
   (e) Management?
   (f) users/clients/patients/students?

3. How do you think you are seen in terms of your work responsibilities and as a colleague?

Employment Experience:

4. Can you describe your employment experience and key factors influencing this experience?

Institution and Self:

5. In terms of your employment experience, can you describe its effect on you:-

   (a) physically
   (b) emotionally
   (c) psychologically
   (d) spiritually
   (e) economically
   (f) socially

6. In order for me to get to know the person behind the profession, can you recall any key incidents, situations, experiences from childhood that played a part in shaping who you are today.

7. In which ways have your work experiences affected your life outside, and vice versa?

8. How have others at work and outside responded to your work difficulties?

9. How important is your work and what would be the ideal for you in the workplace?

Conclusion:

10. Can you summarise what you have learnt from both your negative and positive work experiences?

Informed Consent

Name.....

Organisation.....

Job Status.....

Age.....

Ethnicity.....*Country of Origin*.....

This research is being undertaken by Aileen Alleyne, a Doctoral student whose investigations are concerned with wounding to identity in workplace contexts. Her particular interest is in black and Asian people's experience of workplace stress/oppression and its effects on their health and sense of self.

Thank you for agreeing to take part in this research. Please read the information below and sign the consent form below and retain a copy for yourself.

Confidentiality

I understand that the researcher can use experiences, materials and verbal expressions from our interaction, but that my real name and identity will be protected at all times. It will be my own decision should I wish to identify myself. I also understand that the researcher and research supervisor/s will have access to interview material and that this material will be stored using codes for anonymity. The researcher will ensure that all interview information will be destroyed after submission of the research. I recognise that I am encouraged to question concerns about confidentiality, or any other issues arising from the research process, its outcomes and subsequent use at any stage in its duration.

Emotional/psychological impact of this interview

I acknowledge that during the interview, I might experience difficult or even distressing feelings as I recall experiences of workplace oppression. I understand that I am fully responsible for securing my own support if this is needed after the interview. I also understand that I can withdraw from the process at any time and that my interview and consent form will be destroyed.

***** I have read the above ethical principles to which the researcher agrees to adhere and consent to taking part in this research *****

Signed.....

Date.....

Work History Line

1st work exp	2nd work exp	3rd work exp	4th work exp	5th work exp	6th work exp

1 = optimum work experience

2 = very good " "

3 = good " "

Average " "

-1 = unsatisfactory work experience

-2 = negative " "

-3 = damaging " "

Life Line

1. Pre-adolescent
2. Adolescent
3. Teens/early adulthood
4. Adult years

Positive life experience

Average " "

Negative life experience

Aileen Alleyne ~ UKCP Reg. Psychotherapist, Clinical Supervisor, Org. Consultant

Tel: 020 8693 4159 ***Fax:*** 020 8693 1545 ***e-mail:*** aileen@kisskadee.com

... March 2003

Dear .....

Re: Research Request

Following my initial contact with your Head of Service, ..., I write to introduce myself and briefly outline the purpose of my independent request. This is to seek your permission to conduct one-off semi-structured interviews with black and Asian staff at all levels and grades within the Service.

To introduce, myself, I am a UKCP Registered psychotherapist and clinical supervisor in private practice and I also consult in the workplace on issues of working with difference and diversity. I am currently engaged in a Doctoral programme in Psychotherapy, run jointly by Middlesex University and Metanoia Institute. My research is primarily concerned with black and Asian people's experiences in the workplace and its effects on their health and sense of self.

I am concerned with building a map of these personal experiences in the workplace and scrutinising them in a rigorous and humane way. The research will be conducted in three institutions, namely, State Education, the NHS and Social Services. I hope to make the findings, i.e. the recurring themes and learning points available to the public, and also create ways to make this information of practical use in the current work with diversity and difference in institutions. I can stress that all personal details will be handled in the strictest of confidence and all names and personal details will be withheld to preserve interviewee's identities.

If you can make a contribution to this research aims, I hope you can grant me the permission to meet with you. I will need about 1½ hours (maximum) of your time, which we can discuss to arrange time and venue. I can of course assure you once again, that all professional codes of ethical research practice will be adhered to. To participate, please contact me via e-mail or telephone as soon as you receive this circular.

I look forward to hearing from you.

Yours sincerely

Aileen Alleyne

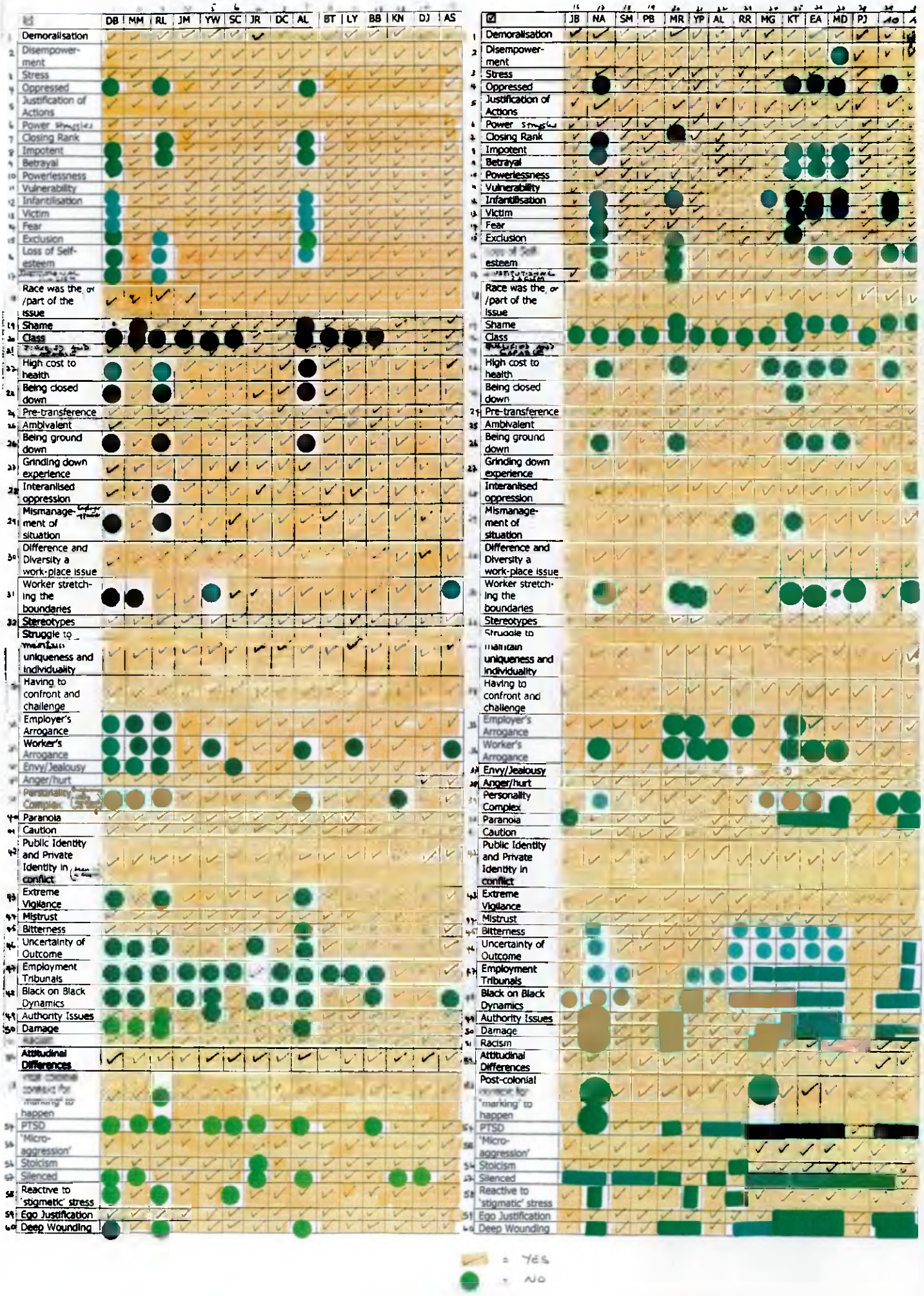
"A psychotherapeutic Understanding of Black Identity in Workplace Contexts"

Aileen Alleyne

Appendix 3

- **Grid Highlighting Themes from Research**

GRID HIGHLIGHTING THEMES EMERGING FROM DATA



"A psychotherapeutic Understanding of Black Identity in Workplace Contexts"

Aileen Alleyne

Appendix 4

- **Published Papers**

Papers by Dr. Aileen Alleyne

- **Black identity and workplace oppression**

Counselling and Psychotherapy Research, July 2004, Vol. 4, No 1: 4-8

This paper is primarily aimed at counselling and psychotherapy practitioners whose clients experience workplace conflict and its resulting stress and trauma. The paper reports findings from the author's doctoral research, studying black workers in three work contexts.

- **Race-specific workplace stress**

Counselling and Psychotherapy Journal, October 2004, Vol. 15, No 8: 30-33

This paper examines common experiences of work-related stress affecting black people in predominantly white institutions. The paper addresses less visible kinds of discrimination ('modern racism') and other dynamics of positional power within these settings.

- **The internal oppressor and black identity wounding**

Counselling and Psychotherapy Journal, December 2004, Vol. 15, No 10: 48-50

In this paper, the author puts forward the concept of 'the internal oppressor'. This is a deep-seated, long-established aspect of black identity which operates alongside current experiences of racial oppression. It is to be distinguished from internalised oppression and can be viewed as the enemy within or internal adversary.

- **The internal oppressor - the veiled companion of external racial oppression**

UKCP The Psychotherapist, Issue 26, Spring 2005

This paper reworks the theme of the internal oppressor and workplace oppression.

- **Invisible injuries and silent witnesses: The shadow of racial oppression in workplace contexts**

Psychodynamic Practice - Individuals, groups and organisations. August 2005, Vol. 11, No. 3: 283-299

In this paper, the author suggests that internalized oppression is the primary means by which all of us hold unto and re-enact our unresolved difficulties. She examines this concept with specific regard to black people's experience of racial oppression in workplace contexts and their capcity for resilience in these difficult and often traumatic circumstances.

- **Working with clients who are experiencing harassment in the workplace**

BACP Information Sheet (G10), July 2006

An information sheet written for the British Association for Counselling and Psychotherapy (BACP) and specifically devised for practitioners who are working with clients who are suffering harassment in the workplace. The paper offers a theoretical understanding of the nature of harassment and gives guidance on working with the effects of this particular kind of trauma.

Black identity and workplace oppression

Aileen Alleyne

This paper is primarily aimed at counselling and psychotherapy practitioners who meet issues of workplace conflict in their practice and the resulting stress and trauma faced by their clients. I define workplace conflict as complex and enduring situations arising from diverse forms of harassment. These include bullying, scapegoating and other discriminatory and oppressive practices that affect health, esteem and work performance. This paper reports the findings from my doctoral research project which investigated and sought to understand the specific experience and nature of workplace conflict for black workers in three institutional settings: the National Health Service (NHS), education and social services. The inspiration for this research came from psychotherapy practice, where it was repeatedly observed that black workers appeared to be suffering significantly more negative and damaging effects of workplace stress and trauma than white workers. I describe these experiences as workplace oppression and differentiate them from other workplace conflicts.

Key words: black workers, workplace oppression, stress, trauma, internal oppressor, black identity

The participants in this study are 30 black workers. Black is used here to describe people with known African heritage and others who experience discrimination because of the colour of their skin or culture. These workers were drawn from the NHS, education and social services. The research process was undertaken by conducting semi-structured interviews with those who responded to my formal invitation to share their experiences in the workplace. The invitations were first discussed and approved by the organisations before they were circulated to the black staff population. My formal requests to interview within the NHS were not favourably met and so I used a more informal, word of mouth approach. Education and social services were largely (though cautiously) welcoming and interested in the study. Five men and 25 women came forward, their ages ranging from 28 to 59 with the majority in their late 30s to early 40s. Of the 30 respondents, 15 were managers and 15 were in non-managerial positions. Eighteen worked in educational services (psychology departments and college or university settings); six were from social services (children and families, mental health and training departments), and the remaining six were from the NHS (nurses, midwives, health visitors). About half the respondents working in education and social services settings had previously held jobs in the NHS as students and qualified nursing staff. The overwhelming majority of participants were black Caribbean, black African and black British born (in this order), three of whom were from mixed parentage backgrounds. There was also one Chinese man and two Asian women.

The interview questions were devised with the help of 10 colleagues who are counsellors and psychotherapists. As a group they were invited to discuss the research project and contribute to the process of creating a questionnaire with the minimum of bias, to help respondents tell their work stories. The interviews took place over six months. Each lasted an hour and was taped and transcribed to capture the respondents' own words. The responses were carefully scrutinised for emerging themes. As my theoretical perspectives are rooted in a psychodynamic tradition with an intercultural perspective, I was interested in the workings of black/white relations along with the dynamics operating in the workplace and within the individuals themselves.

I chose a qualitative research approach, using

What does this study explore?

- The experience of being black in the workplace
- The impact of this experience on the wellbeing of the worker

phenomenology, hermeneutics and heuristic principles. This combined approach mirrored the process of counselling and psychotherapy as the therapist embarks on an unknown journey with their client. Phenomenology boundaried me and reminded me to suspend my own assumptions about the enquiry and build up a comprehensive description of the 'thing itself' as it evolved (Hurssel, 1960). The hermeneutics paradigm provided a way of exploring *meaning* behind the description of the respondents' stories in order to gain deeper understanding of the emerging phenomenon (Gadamer, 1975). This understanding was always taking place in time, history and culture. As researcher/practitioner in this project, the heuristics element required that I be reflexive in using my own experiences of workplace oppression and yet be patient and objective while waiting for the 'thing', that is, the phenomenon, to unfold (Moustakas, 1990).

I found this an extremely difficult task with a subject so close to my own experiences and it aroused many feelings. The challenge was to immerse myself in the detailed stories told while suspending my own beliefs and opinions, so that new meanings were free to surface.

The findings reveal two main themes suggesting interplay between external and internal factors. External factors were represented by the white (usually male) management structures, and attitudes and actions of white peers. Internal factors related to the feelings, reactions and stances adopted by black workers. The relationship between external and internal factors and how these were handled seemed to influence and shape the worker's experience of stress and trauma in the workplace. Although this study is based on a relatively small sample and the results cannot be generalised, repeated themes in respondents' stories have suggested common areas in black people's experiences of difficulties in the workplace.

Table 1 shows the internal and external cycle of events in which black workers feel ground down and trapped.

The initial focus of the research was to examine black workers' experience of workplace conflict. The scope of the study broadened to consider what these workers might bring to the situation that could influence the work conflict dynamics and the nature of their particular experience.

Initial findings – nature of workplace oppression

The general findings indicate that although workplace oppression for black people was not overtly about race and cultural differences, conflict was frequently initiated by subtle comments and behaviour that targeted aspects of the individual's race or cultural identity. Respondents' examples included:

- failure to notice their presence
- meeting silence when a supportive response would normally be expected
- white colleagues refusing to make proper eye contact when it mattered
- repeated instances of exclusion
- the absence of pleasantries normally accorded to white colleagues
- over-use of adjectives such as aggressive, scary, angry, frightening, threatening, problem, difficult, when referring to black people.

'Workplace oppression was frequently initiated by subtle comments and behaviour that targeted the individual's race and cultural identity'

Respondents also reported cultural jokes and remarks that they found offensive. For example, a black female psychologist described her experience of being referred to as 'uncivilised' because she chose not to socialise and share pub lunches with her white colleagues. She found the remark offensive and hurtful. The findings show that over time this treatment contributes to longer periods of hurt, shame and demoralisation, often leaving workers traumatised. The unrelenting nature of these conflicts and the workers' resulting protective and defensive postures, eventually wore them down, leading to erratic or lengthy sickness absence.

Respondents' stories pointed to collusive management structures when dealing with workplace oppression, where both management and workers became stuck in their respective positions. My data highlights examples where these conflicts had turned into long and bitter battles with poor outcomes.

In some cases it also appeared that black workers experienced more severe disciplinary action than their white counterparts. Several respondents described receiving formal notices of disciplinary action to be taken against them unusually soon after a complaint was made about them. These workers were upset by the fact that little or no management effort was deemed necessary to investigate these complaints before instituting formal action.

A large percentage of respondents had suffered

Table 1: External and internal cycle of events

External factors	Internal factors
Micro and macro aggression*	Stigmatic Stress * (SS) and anticipation/ re-experiencing of shame and hurt
Persistence of the above	Protective postures adopted. Development of defensive stances and attitudes
Culture of SS becomes more established	Wounding to sense of self. Experience of possible trauma. Work beings to be negatively affected (slip-ups, mistakes)
Management reacts to worker's slips-ups	Experience of unfairness, harassment and victimisation
Formal warning from management	Ego justification as a defence to being devalued
Disciplinary procedures introduced	Preoccupation with the white Other and fear of emotional collapse
Entrenched punitive attitudes from management	Fight/flight into illness (usually manifested by erratic to long periods of sickness off work)
Impasse	Post-traumatic stress and possible depression
Defensive posturing against possible charges of racism. Chronic crisis	Choices made (1) employment tribunal (2) resignation to the status quo (3) move jobs

**Microaggression* – term coined by Russel (1998) to describe racial assaults by white people that are subtle, stunning, often automatic, non-verbal exchanges that are offensive to black people. The result is shame and hurt. *Macroaggressions* are similar to microaggressions but are directed at black people in general as well as the individual.

**Stigmatic stress* – this arises from being 'marked' (singled out for unfavourable and discriminatory treatment). The 'marked' person is pushed into a state of hyper-vigilance and over-sensitivity.

considerable negative effects to their emotional wellbeing and physical health as a result of this ongoing work situation. As well as obvious stress symptoms in the 30 interviewees – increased irritability, insomnia, poor concentration, fluctuations in weight, tearfulness, aches and pains – there were occurrences of late onset diabetes, hypertension, chronic fatigue syndrome and clinical depression.

Further analysis of the data revealed common factors within the three organisational cultures. These contributed to a 'grinding down process', a term frequently used by respondents. This experience also produced high levels of discontent and cynicism among black workers who were all professionally qualified and felt capable of performing their work effectively.

'Respondents' stories indicate that workplace oppression may lead them to question aspects of their identity'

Respondent 4, a black qualified youth worker in a college setting, had a complaint issued against him followed by formal disciplinary proceedings. He said: 'I can't believe management is not interested in hearing the whole story... it just doesn't feel fair... the whole thing has left a really bad taste... I will always carry a healthy disrespect for white people because I can never trust them'.

These examples are a small indication of the pervasive experience for black workers. Respondents' stories indicate that workplace oppression may lead them to question aspects of their identity.

Respondent 25, a senior psychologist, summed it up when she said: 'Illusion plays a very important part in creating identity. It can be

someone's truth... my truth. When that goes, one is left shattered, even depersonalised... this is how I have been left feeling as a result of what I have been through at work over the past five years'. This statement suggests that attacking a person's identity can destabilise their ontology (nature of their being).

Social services appeared to have marginally better procedures for dealing with work disputes and a more enlightened approach to diversity management. Those in the NHS seemed to suffer the most out of the three groups.

Subsequent findings – issues specific to black workers

In relationships people bring issues of their own to the dynamics of interpersonal engagement. The worker-management relationship is no exception. It is my belief that black people's issues could be the psychological wounds of black history carried within, which can be reopened by racial bullying, harassment, scapegoating or other oppression.

A large number of respondents seemed to manage their work difficulties in similar ways. They tended to wait to be given opportunities and openings and they wanted permission to be 'actional'. The recurrence of this theme in respondents' stories highlights real difficulties with issues relating to personal rights, entitlement and self actualisation.

Akbar (1996) comments:

'Our [black people's] progress is still impeded by many of the slave-based characteristics... The objective of the discussion is not to cry "victim" and seek to excuse those self-destructive characteristics created by slavery. In fact the objective is to identify the magnitude of the slavery trauma and to suggest the persistence of a post-slavery traumatic stress syndrome, which still affects the [black person's] personality. It is not a call to vindicate the cause of the condition, but to challenge Black people to recognise the symptoms of the condition and master it as we have mastered the original trauma.'

A post-slavery, post-colonial context whose baggage is passed from generation shapes black people's attachment patterns and relationships with the white Other.

Further findings from the interview data suggest the presence of the *internal oppressor*. A majority of respondents tended to view their negative and traumatic work experiences in terms of contemporary versions of an enslaved and colonial past.

In 18 of the 30 respondents there seemed to be a collective familiarity with constructs used to describe their pain and their lot:

- *I don't do deference where white people are concerned*
- *you can never trust the white man's intentions*
- *white people will never get accustomed to nor comfortable with a black person in a position of power*
- *people will always see your colour first and personality second*
- *no matter how hard you try to succeed, people will always want to beat you down*
- *we always have to work twice – even three times – as hard to get to where we want or be on par with the white man*
- *we don't seem able to come together and sustain anything good as black people.*

These examples (and many others), presented as life scripts and absolutes, seemed to determine respondents' personal drives, values, sense of relatedness, views of the world and relations with the white Other.

Many respondents referred to slavery and colonialism when describing their work difficulties:

- *this is modern day slavery*
- *white management still want to keep black workers in chains.*

'Many respondents referred to slavery and colonialism when describing their work difficulties'

The internal oppressor

Much has been written about black internalised oppression (Akbar, 1996; Freire, 1970; hooks, 1995; Lipsky, 1987; Lorde, 1984). It is defined as the process of absorbing the values and beliefs of the oppressor and coming to believe all or some of the stereotypes and misinformation. This process can lead to low self-esteem, self-hate, the disowning of one's group, and other complex defensive interpersonal behaviours that influence and affect quality of life.

Few writers (except Lorde, 1984) have dealt specifically with the concept of the oppressor within ourselves, the internal oppressor.

The internal oppressor (a noun), as distinct from internalised oppression (a process), is an aspect of the Self that carries historical and transgenerational baggage. It seems to have the power to influence black people's relationship and attachment dynamics with the white Other. In an external oppressive situation, real or perceived, the internal oppressor opens up old wounds.

'The internal oppressor is an aspect of the Self that carries historical and transgenerational baggage'

An awareness of this aspect of the self, how it functions and how one relates to it when it is aroused, could be a key factor in a black individual's ontological security (transcending immediate situations in order to maintain

What does this study tell us?

- Workplace oppression contributes to invisible injuries in black workers
- Black people's voices are unheard at work
- The legacy of slavery and colonialism shapes black people's attachment patterns and relationships with white people
- The internal oppressor is evident when external oppressive situations arise

centeredness) and assist in maintaining good psychological health.

Conclusion

The limitations of this study need to be acknowledged:

- the study sample was small
- there were small numbers of men and Asian respondents
- it was not a comparative study, contrasting white workers' experience of workplace stress
- the age of the majority of respondents (late 30s to early 40s) excludes other age groups.

Despite these limitations, this study suggests that black people's experiences lead them to feel that they are treated differently in relation to their white colleagues. The consequence is that black workers end up feeling their voices are unheard in workplaces where subtleties of race dynamics constantly operate. It is important that these voices are listened to. The task of making them heard will be the key to making black workers' rights a reality. In addition to legislation that helps create an atmosphere of equality and fairness at work, culturally competent counsellors and psychotherapists can play an important role.

A central theme in therapy is dealing with issues of identity, part of which should be our history and collective development across generations. This means that questions such as Who am I? Where do I come from? What influences have marked me? What have I developed for myself that is independent of the collective? are necessary and important when confronting the internal oppressor.

Therapeutic management of workplace oppression requires a deep understanding of trauma as experienced by black people and other minority groups. Practitioners need to acknowledge the impact of these invisible injuries on the black self. Such therapeutic support may be time-limited or long-term. It requires practitioners to work through various phases of the trauma with the aim of assisting clients to restore a sense of self and consider ways of responding effectively to internal and external oppressions. The work is about healing, restoring and reframing the worker's relationship with their past in order to enable a more free and open life experience.

Practitioners will not only be challenged to work with the manifest nature of workplace oppression, they will also be confronted with the traumatic imprints of black people's political, historical and psychological experiences. The therapeutic task is to help black workers towards a goal of critical consciousness; that is, to help them discover ways of separating themselves from traumatic historical memories that may perpetuate tyranny in their daily lives. ■

Aileen Alleyne is a psychotherapist and clinical supervisor in private practice. She is also a trainer and facilitator of cultural and racial diversity issues in organisations and educational group settings.
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Race-specific workplace stress

When people work in groups, businesses or institutions, sustaining cohesion can be fraught with difficulties – there are fractions, splits, diverse interests and differing priorities that can be creative as well as destructive. This highlights the challenge of being both an individual and part of the group, of having both similarities with others as well as differences. Experiences of positional power in organisations can mirror our experiences of the power adults had over us as children and the power we experienced from social, cultural and political establishments.

Whilst recognising this is common for all of us, Aileen Alleyne has also observed from her personal and professional experience that there seems to be specific patterns in work-related stress when examining the experience of black workers. Her observations led her to explore this further and she is now coming to the end of a doctoral study. Her research indicates some pervasive experiences that are of a powerful, insidious and yet subtle nature.

I CAME to this country in 1975 with the traditional and colonial values of my upbringing in Guyana, one of which was an unquestioning respect for white people. I was very naive. I came to train in nursing and was a general and psychiatric nurse for 11 years in the NHS. Subsequent trainings and positions held in student counselling, alcohol and drug addictions, HIV/Aids counselling, teaching in the NHS, have all exposed me directly and indirectly to overt and covert racial prejudice and discrimination. These were all tough experiences – yet not as tough as my training as a counsellor and psychotherapist. Especially difficult was my analytic group experience where, as the only black member of the group, I felt subjected to subtle and repetitive assaults that left me feeling completely traumatised and unsupported by the analyst. He seemed unable to deal with what was happening. As a consequence, the painful experiences of being 'marked' and targeted for the group's negative and unwanted feelings slowly induced a crippling emotional effect. It was as if I understood the word 'trauma', especially in the collective sense, in relation to my race, my black identity, for the first time.

I still think about how a fuller understanding and ability to handle the virulent nature of race dynamics by the analyst would have helped me and the group to name, explore, understand and work through these difficulties. My (white) clinical supervisor who was supportive throughout this experience, kept asking me why I was staying – and I did stay, for three painful years. My justification was that I needed to be sure I was not running away from an important life-enhancing challenge – and I sincerely hoped things would change. Towards the end, I sat simply staring at the floor. I became mute.

Over the years, the cumulative experiences of this unheeded form of oppression have resulted in a strong desire to be liberated from its chokehold and participate in the liberation of others on both sides of the black and white divide. Past memories (feelings of being ground down and infantilised) have left its mark and I have noticed in my work as a psychotherapist that my black clients have also had similar traumatic encounters. This has led me to ask a number of questions. In particular: do black people hurt differently? If they do, how is that hurt manifested and why is it different?

As I explored these questions further, I started to see a spiral of events that seemed to lead to a miserable entrapment. These take place in a number of different settings. However, in this article I focus on my findings from my research – on experiences black workers have in the workplace. The following case study offers a bird's eye view of spiralling events typical of the experiences of the people in the research study.

Case study

Mavis is a 37-year-old black woman, who was born in Jamaica and came to this country as a child. She works as ward sister on a unit for the elderly. She manages a predominantly white female staff group and one black nursing assistant. Mavis has cherished a previous reputation for being professionally capable, a hard worker, conscientious and well respected. She is known for speaking her mind and is sometimes seen as difficult for this reason. Mavis noticed that her management strategies were

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constantly questioned and debated, instructions to staff were deliberately disregarded and she frequently faced subtle challenges by some of them who appeared to support white patients' complaints about not wanting to be bathed or touched by Mavis or the black nursing assistant.

On one occasion Mavis reported overhearing one of the white nurses saying that she (Mavis) was too qualified for her own good and that if she wanted to boss people around she should go back to where she came from. This upset her terribly and when she challenged her team, she was met with a collective silence. Such situations continued and the lack of intervention from management began to eat away at Mavis. A once confident and competent manager, she started to make mistakes at work, take time off regularly for emotional stress and depression and felt less generous in her duty to care. Over the next eight months, relationships on the ward broke down further and management stepped in and took action against Mavis's ability to manage. During the next year, she remained on long-term sick leave whilst being embroiled in a bitter battle to fight her case. Mavis eventually retired on medical grounds at aged 40. She was diagnosed as clinically depressed and suffering from severe stress. Since then she has developed late onset diabetes and has been in therapy for four years.

Many readers might identify with some of these experiences. However, although stressful for anybody, what is particularly significant is the extent and impact on Mavis's physical and mental health. My research indicates this is not uncommon. Like tinnitus (constant ringing in the ear), the experiences are distressing for the sufferer, but silent to those around. These quiet acts of oppression remain an unheeded dimension of race relations. My observation is that although subtle and seemingly insignificant, especially at first, their effects are insidiously powerful and damaging. In some cases the acts increase in intensity to become blatant racial assaults – for example, at least one respondent reported that a picture of a gorilla had been placed on her coffee mug.

The degree of similarity of experiences has been so pervasive that it has been possible for me to identify and map a series of events, rather like stages. I have come to think of this as a spiral of events that starts with a seemingly minor incident and then escalates to enormous proportions.

1. Micro and macro-aggression

At first, there seems to be a minor difficulty or exclusion. For example, a black individual may be publicly corrected, or notice that a white person never makes proper eye contact when speaking to them, feels deliberately ignored or excluded from normal pleasantries. These are all acts of microaggression (Russell, 1998)[1], and although they are seemingly minor events, the impact on the individual over time is considerable. As former President Bill Clinton publicly acknowledged in his 29 March 1997 weekly radio address – Federal News Service – and quoted in Russell, 1998:

'...racism...is not confined to acts of physical violence... Everyday [black people] and other minorities are forced to endure quiet acts of racism – bigoted remarks...job discrimination... These may not harm the body, but...it does violence to their souls. We must stand against such quiet hatred just as surely as we condemn acts of physical violence.'

Violence to the soul causes deep wounding, shame and feelings of infantilisation. Within the workplace, the recipient registers the difficulties from here on with their white colleague or manager. The potential cohesion that may have been present in this relationship feels threatened. The

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black person becomes cautious, vigilant and hyper-sensitive to future possible wounding or hurt. And, such examples of micro-aggression continue.

There may also be examples of macroaggression (Russell, 1998)[1] that occur alongside. This refers to seemingly minor attacks on the person's group or culture. Such examples can be the over-usage of adjectives such as, aggressive, frightening, threatening, and difficult, when referring to or describing black people or, viewing black men as a case in point, only in terms of the physical and dangerous. Such words and narrow perceptions of race can eventually 'mark' the individual and become words/labels that wound. When these situations occur, they are experienced as a collective assault, as well as an assault on the individual that highlights their difference in a negative and reductionist fashion.

2. The worker responds

Examples of micro and macroaggression continue and eventually the worker responds. Reactions might be overt or a complete withdrawal from the situation. When it is the former, the most common response is: 'You are being too sensitive/you have a chip on your shoulder/you are being difficult'. The worker's hurt is not recognised with such dismissals and on some level, the individual then turns their pain inwards. Over time, the worker becomes more pre-occupied with their external situation. Internally, they may experience impotence and a feeling that no one believes them. This adds a secondary trauma to the original hurt.

3. Mistakes/slip-ups

As the worker becomes more pre-occupied with their situation, they may start to make mistakes at work. These slip-ups get noticed and their manager highlights them in an exposing manner. As this situation continues, the worker may feel a deep sense of unfairness, harassment and even victimisation. The worker may become engaged in much ego-justification which is usually a defence against being devalued and a reaction to feeling powerless.

> "I still think about how a fuller understanding and ability to handle the virulent nature of race dynamics by the analyst would have helped me and the group to work through these difficulties"

4. Management's response

Respondents' experiences suggest that management may either adopt a complicit role in these difficulties, thereby leaving the worker unsupported and undervalued, or they may over-react, showing a lack of skills in managing these situations in a fair and competent manner. Some workers have reported receiving 'penalties', e.g. increased work load and being transferred to another department, for challenging the status quo. Others have described 'conspiratorial' managerial efforts that sought to set them up to fail. Very few respondents reported receiving fair and just treatment in a consistent manner.

5. Crisis

At this stage events have spiralled to a crisis. The individual is extremely distressed and unhappy and both sides may become entrenched in individual positions. The manager may issue a formal warning and instigate unusually quick actions for disciplining the individual. The worker by this time may respond in one of three ways:

1. Feel completely powerless and become completely withdrawn
2. Become indifferent (for example, working to the minimum standards and withdrawing all generosity)
3. Fight back – over-react, possibly shouting 'racism!'

In the latter case, even though discrimination may have been a critical part of events, it is not the whole story - but the black worker may blanket their problem with the accusation of racism and this

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creates more entrenchment. By this stage, attendance at work is erratic with more and more time taken off for sickness. Usually the worker has seen their GP and often they will have been prescribed sleeping tablets and/or anti-depressants. In the study, there has been a pervasive similarity in other medical conditions. These include:

- Chronic Fatigue Syndrome, very similar to ME
- Late onset of diabetes amongst men and women
- Hypertension
- Mood swings and personality changes

The problem with all of this is that events have spiralled to such an extent that the individual falls prey to ill health and it seems there is no alternative but to:

- retire from work on medical grounds,
- be dismissed from work and/or
- fight the battle in a law court.

Yet, with proper understanding and handling of these situations, all of this could have been resolved much earlier. So, as therapists, we need to be mindful of these dynamics when working with individuals who find themselves caught up at any stage in such a spiral.

Working with invisible injuries and race-related stress

In the earlier stages, clients may report incidents of micro or macroaggression. It may be that if this has just started, they are unaware of the full impact these incidents have – or might have. However, if they are in therapy at this point, they already have a place where these incidents can be named and processed and options for responding can be explored.

Those who come into therapy at a later stage, and possibly as a result of the stress they are now conscious of, may well have already presented to their GP and be experiencing a number of medical and psychological symptoms. In addition to those already cited, we can be alert to experiences reported by respondents and clients of:

- Having dreams or nightmares about going to work
- Feeling ground down
- Feeling oppressed
- Feeling as if work had taken over, had hijacked their internal sense of self, had become a source of emotional terrorisation

Clients may present with post-traumatic symptoms, such as re-playing painful and difficult work events over and over. They may have low level or clinical depression, headaches, sleeplessness, tearfulness. They may also present with psychosomatic symptoms such as vague and recurring pains in the stomach, head or body generally. One respondent from the study was convinced that she had terrible bad breath because as she put it – 'every time I opened my mouth, I was shut down'. There is also likely to be a loss of libido and considerable irritability.

Above all, when clients are caught up in this spiral, they need to talk, be heard and be believed. Many people may choose to stay in their situation because they are worried about getting another job and keeping up financial commitments. It is important they receive support for their experience, their sense of self, and to develop a critical awareness to feel empowered.

Conclusion

I believe a central theme in counselling and psychotherapy is about dealing with issues of identity. I believe that this includes looking at our history and the collective development that extends across generations. Questions I consider to be at the heart of this work are: Who am I? Where do I come from? What experiences have marked me? What is my relationship with my history? What have I developed for myself that is independent of the collective? How are events in the objective world involved with my subjectivity? How might I examine and review such matters?

So, I see the role of the therapist as providing a healing space where the client can restore a sense of self and review their internal and external responses for more effective outcomes.

We should not fall into the trap of reducing such a complex subject to a simple case of white managers and white peers being bad or that all black people are helpless victims of racial oppression. There is a real need to recognise that there are well-established traditions and complex systems of (white) power which shape the way in which social relations and practices are actually experienced by black people, both within the workplace and in society at large.

Structures are still not in place to deal with these phenomena effectively. Through my work, I am coming to realise that there are urgent challenges for us as practitioners to be more conversant and culturally competent in working with the more silent and subtle aspects, as well as the visible aspects, of racial oppression in our clients' external realities and their effects on emotional and psychological health. Race-specific workplace stress or oppression is one such challenge which also requires organisational management and Human Resources personnel to re-evaluate their existing workplace policies and practices.

The term 'black' is used to indicate people with African heritage. The great majority of the respondents interviewed were black British, African Caribbeans and African nationals. ■

Interview by Karen Minikin.
See also July CPR *for Ailern Alleyne's full research paper.*

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The internal oppressor and black identity wounding

Aileen Alleyne identifies an internal dynamic that affects black* attachment patterns to the white Other.

'The inner enemy is as much a formidable foe as the most manipulative associate' (George Bach)

'I don't do deference where white people are concerned'; 'you can never trust the white man's intentions'; 'white people will never get accustomed to, nor comfortable with black people in positions of power'; 'people will always see your colour first and personality second'; 'no matter how hard you try to succeed, people will always want to beat you down'; 'we always have to work twice – even three times – as hard to get to where we want to be on par with the white man'; 'we don't seem able to come together and sustain anything good as black people'.

The above examples might seem to come from a past era, a time when things used to be more overtly and permissibly divisive in black/white relations. Yet these opinions were all expressed quite recently – in the last year during my research study on race-specific workplace stress. So what has changed and what still remains? These examples (and many more) drawn from black workers' stories, were typically referred to and readily interwoven into the narratives bearing their experiences of workplace difficulty. These I will refer to as workplace oppression. Workplace oppression is my specific choice of term because it addresses directly issues of power and powerlessness and of the dominant and dominated. Central to this topic are quiet forms – silent acts – of subtle racism and racial prejudice that have a negative and detrimental impact on black and other minority ethnic groups.

This article is written to support both white and black practitioners who might meet these unconscious dynamics in their work with black clients. Such experiences can be painful for both therapist and client, particularly as there are many cases where black clients in beginning to feel stronger from their therapy, also start to feel angry. This might have a sperial intensity if the therapist is white.

What has struck me about the opening remarks quoted, is the way these statements are internalised to create life scripts for a large number of respondents. These scripts had the tendency to determine such things as personal drives, values, worldviews and the individual's relatedness to the white Other. For example, many respondents referred back to slavery and colonialism when describing their work difficulties, and significantly used such language connected to the past as: 'this is modern-day slavery' and 'white management still want to keep black people in chains'.

This evidence suggests that although we, as black people, are nearly two centuries removed from our historical past, we still carry the intergenerational scars in both our mental and social lives. The ever-present past, with its conscious and unconscious effects on black people's here-and-now experiences, suggests to me that relations between workers and management, and clients and therapists, will inevitably bear aspects of these historical interactions.

In my last article[1], my description of the 'spiral of events' highlighted how certain workplace events occur and escalate to critical proportions with negative and traumatic effects on black workers. The depiction of these events brought to light some complex intercultural dynamics similar to those of the more classic three-stage process of scapegoating namely, *identification* (being singled out), *transference of blame* (projection), and *banishment* (isolation and attack). Furthermore, I would argue that compounding the experiences of workplace oppression, is the issue of what black people bring of their own (both personal and historical) to these difficult situations. This piece focuses on the presence and function of the internal oppressor, which arises from black people's history and which has the tendency to conflate with present, here-and-now experiences of identity-wounding, stress and trauma.

It would be quite tempting in our modern times to dismiss this unheeded dimension of black people's historical past, or of any other oppressed racial or cultural group's past, as a factor determining identity. But the work of Karpf[2], Lifton[3] and Schaverien[4] show that this would be short sighted. Schaverien in particular deals powerfully with the unconscious, showing how collective memory with its painful imprints, can

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continue to transmit trauma and grief through the generations of an oppressed group or race of people.

The internal oppressor

Much has been written – Akbar[1], Freire[2], hooks[3], Lipsky[4], Lorde[5] – about black internalised oppression, which is the process of absorbing consciously or unconsciously the values and beliefs of the oppressor and subscribing to the stereotypes and misinformation about one's group, at least in part. Such a process leads to low self-esteem, self-hate, the disowning of one's own group, and other complex defensive interpersonal behaviours that influence and impair quality of life. Although this concept has been fully explored by the writers mentioned above, only a few (for example Lorde[5]) have dealt specifically with the concept of the oppressor within ourselves – the 'internal oppressor'. I maintain that the internal oppressor – an aspect of the self that becomes the inner tyrant – is distinct from internalised oppression. The latter is the way in which we allow external beliefs and value systems to invalidate our authenticity and inhibit our personal agency.

The internal oppressor is in my view an aspect of the self that appears to carry difficult historical and intergenerational baggage across the generations. In terms of black/white relations, the internal oppressor seems to create a post-slavery/post-colonial mindset that colours our (black people's) dealings with the white Other. It influences our inter-relational dynamics and attachment with this Other and may even collude unconsciously with the prevailing external difficulties. The internal oppressor seems to be ever present, but lies dormant for the most part. It is only when it is in contact with an external oppressive situation – real, perceived, or a mixture of both – that the historical memories are re-awakened, opening up old wounds that can lead to silent, invisible re-wounding of the self and identity. Prejudices, projections, intergenerational wounds and the vicissitudes of our historical past are all aspects of this inner tyrant – the internal oppressor. They are kept alive within the transgenerational transmission of trauma, and this suggests a degree of a persistent post-traumatic syndrome in black people's existence. Alongside these historical aspects of the internal oppressor, are other factors such as, our narcissistic injuries, personal unresolved difficulties where power and control predominate, and painful unresolved family dynamics.

> **'The task is to enable the process of unravelling, owning and dealing with what belongs to us as black people'**

The nature of the internal oppressor appears to be the sum of these characteristics, which rest in the shadow of the self. The legacy of (our) black people's historical past, along with the burden of our internalised oppression, both seem to play a crucial part in shaping our pre-transference relationship and attachment patterns to the white Other. The picture being created here is one of the past and present, as well as internal and external factors being inextricably linked and fused. How black people manage this aspect of the self is a key factor in our ontological and mental health security.

Cultural enmeshment and ontological health

What are the consequences of this conscious and or unconscious holding on to the past? Fusion of the historic past and present, as well as the internal and external, begins to look and feel very much like states of co-dependence and, more specifically, enmeshment (Minuchin[10]). Black people's historical past and its effects on the present seem largely to determine their ontology (rooted sense of being in the world) in any given situation with the white Other. Enmeshment as a psychoanalytic concept begins to help us understand why this is so. Enmeshment is unavoidably linked to the concept of Self. For example, mother and young child are likely to be functionally enmeshed temporarily at the 'expense' of father – but later the situation will reverse to leave mother less proximal and father more engaged. This is a normal state of affairs in most family systems and allows the child to experience both parents and negotiate the process of autonomy in a healthy fashion. Dysfunctional enmeshment according to Minuchin[10], is seen as a disorder producing developmental arrest that leads to difficulty in disengaging from internal objects, e.g. one's mother, father or (as in the case of black/white relations) the coloniser – the oppressor.

Enmeshment of this kind becomes inflexible and prevents or hampers change, growth and achieving one's fullest potential. It breeds dependency and anger (not always recognised) over the reliance on the Other. Specific to black/white relations, this enmeshed state has, in my view, undoubtedly created patterns of parent/child and symbiotic attachments, where both sides perpetuate and continually seek mutual advantage from each other. Sampson[11] illuminates this point in his analysis of the context of power in black/white relations. He suggests that 'dominant groups and individuals create serviceable others whose creation gives both the self and the Other the very qualities that define

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their human nature'. He continues: 'the [black] Other is a figure constructed to be serviceable to the historically white dominant male group. In order to provide this service, the Other cannot be permitted to have a voice, a position, a being of its own, but must remain mute or speak only in ways permitted by the dominant discourse'. He adds the point that 'the other is an essential presence without whom the dominant protagonist could not be who they claim to be'.

Dependency issues between majority and minority groups can clearly be identified in the above viewpoints.

A key finding from my research has indicated that amongst the respondent group, a majority seemed to share a common mindset. They were more predisposed to waiting to be given opportunities, openings and permission to be 'actional' (exercising personal agency) as opposed to actively taking opportunity, initiating, leading, creating openings and being more self-governing. The recurrence of this theme in respondents' stories has highlighted real difficulties with issues of entitlement, personal rights and self-actualisation (seeking one's full potential).

Co-dependence and enmeshment would suggest then that there is a propensity for us as black people to seek self-definition through the white Other, whilst also being extremely critical of this other. This tricky ambivalent situation can lead ultimately to difficulties in experiencing oneself as separate in one's own identity. Dependence on the white Other in either conscious or unconscious ways, whilst carrying around historical baggage and angst, can create a focus where the white Other is forever present – a function of the superego. This preoccupation can lead to strong connections (cultural and spiritual) with the individual self becoming more elusive. Enmeshment and co-dependence in this context become a disease of lost selfhood. To utilise one's personal energies in continually tracking the carer (the white Other) – as witnessed in some of the research interviews – may also contribute to biased or negative pre-transference dynamics. Such dynamics can lead to a hypersensitivity and anticipation of racial and cultural conflict in any given situation.

So how do black people go about healing from the effects of this historical enmeshment? And how can black workers interrupt the 'spiral of events' discussed previously when faced with the challenge of dealing with workplace oppression?

Separation and healing

The way out of most enmeshed states is to separate, achieve autonomy, and self-sufficiency. However, separation in relation to black/white dynamics, is not to be misconstrued as separatism, isolation or alienation.

The necessary task in my view is to understand the bigger picture – which in turn enables the process of unravelling, owning and dealing with what belongs to us as black people. Ongoing work is also needed in separating out what belongs to the white Other, which may include such dynamics as irrational fear, guilt, projections, displacement of negative feelings, and over-compensatory defences. If we are unable to 'own' what is ours, then we cannot engage in the process of examining, evaluating, regulating or influencing its impact.

Both black and white practitioners who are themselves aware and conscious of the need for such personal work can play an important role in facilitating and affirming this task in therapy for both black and white clients. This will involve helping the client to see what is in the frame, naming it, understanding and dealing with its presence and exercising agency in regulating it. When there is wounding to black identity, the tendency to link the historical past to present circumstances is quite common. The job of distinguishing internal and external realities, personal and historical factors, and the past and present, are all necessary and important tasks in achieving personal (and spiritual) freedom. Most writers – (sic) hooks[7], Akbar[5], Lorde[9], Cobbs and Grier[12] – who have addressed this issue, emphasise the need for black people to educate themselves for 'critical consciousness'. By this, they mean the ability to show independence of mind by reasoning for oneself and having the emotional literacy and cultural competence to do things differently. In hooks' *'killing rage, ending racism'*, she reminds us not to see blackness solely as a matter of powerlessness and victimisation. Rather, there is a need to have deeper understanding of institutional racial oppression in all its facets and of the ways it over-determines patterns of black/white social and work relations. ■

**The term black is used in this context to indicate people with African heritage.*

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Invisible injuries and silent witnesses: The shadow of racial oppression in workplace contexts

AILEEN ALLEYNE

Abstract
Internalized oppression is the primary means by which all of us hold on to, 'agree' and re-enact our unresolved and repressed difficulties. This paper will examine this particular phenomenon with specific regard to black and white relations in workplace contexts. The reality of prevailing external and internal issues will be fully discussed to highlight factors relating to racial oppression, capacity for resilience and their deleterious effects on black identity development.

Keywords: *Black identity wounding, workplace oppression, 'the internal oppressor', enmeshment, trauma, healing*

The inner enemy is as much a formidable foe as the most manipulative [or oppressive] associate (Bach, 1985). This statement aptly supports some key findings from a recent study I have been involved in on the subject of oppression and black identity wounding in the workplace. While this quote may indeed have relevance to all of us, my research suggests that this factor is an often forgotten unguarded area within the discourse and challenge on race issues. In this paper, I will be scrutinizing this key finding and share my analysis of the workings of this unheeded dimension of black/white relations and its complex dynamics.

To date, much written material on race and specifically on black/white issues have tended to address external factors such as cultural imperialism, social and political inequalities, racism, crime, mental health and education. In counselling and psychotherapy, where it is expected for such discourses to be more focused on the *internal*, material is very limited. This is surprisingly the case despite the subject's very complex, wide, and ever-changing parameters. Existing literature has given some attention to familiar themes through repetitive debates and counter-debates to the point

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where we can now expect any current literature to include themes along well-worn lines of the following.

(1) Racism as splitting, projection and projective-identification (Dollard, 1937, 1938; Money-Kyrle, 1960; Hinshelwood, 1989; Rustin, 1991; Young, 1992; Timimi, 1996; Ward, 1997; Gordon, 2004). These texts represent arguments and counter-arguments for these concepts.
(2) Understanding the roots of racism through dynamics of the Oedipus Complex (Chasseguel-Smirgel, 1990). Nazi genocide is referred to here as a clear example.
(3) Racism as an irrational process and therefore a form of neurosis if held onto (Rustin, 1991).
(4) Racism as sibling rivalry (Sterba, 1947) and a way of understanding how and why black people are made to represent sibling rivals and be placed in situations to be infantilized.
(5) Racism as a manifestation of sexual jealousy and associated with objectification of black people as primitive, the physical, shit and evil (Berkeley-Hill, 1924; Fanon, 1968; Vannoy Adams, 1996).
(6) Racism as a response to modernity (Frosh, 1989; Sarup, 1996); racism as a matter of cultural imperialism and exploitation and therefore highlighting issues of power and powerless and the dominant and dominated.
(7) Understanding racism from the perspective of boundaries and boundary drawing – a way to fix the other, to assert and maintain sense of absolute difference between self and other (Gordon, 2004). As an exception, this perspective provides a refreshing addition to the body of available text.

Included in this list are other psychoanalytic thinkers who compare historical black/white relations to such situations as child labour, which was ubiquitous in the past, and the sexual abuse of children, as well as contrasting it with the oppressive conditions and the exploitation of the working classes under early capitalism.

To date, attention to the *inner* dynamics of race and racism, its effects specifically on those who live with the stigma of historical oppression and those who have to survive its perpetual stigmatization on a daily basis, have been particularly scarce.

In spite of the paucity of material, black[1] people do – and have quietly (and defensively) – acknowledged the fact that 'we have stuff to deal with in our own backyard'. This statement clearly points to inner unresolved issues within ourselves and is widely recognized as part of 'our' [black people's] ongoing agenda. Yet, despite this collective recognition, like the silence of psychoanalysis with regard to race, the statement seems to be just an echo and is relegated to a mere wish fulfilment for a lot of us [black people].

The intention to actualize its goals and aims seems plagued by widespread psychic inaction and malaise. In my view, this situation has contributed to certain prevailing beliefs and stances that prove limiting and restricting to our [black people's] general growth and development. What this preamble is leading up to, as will be explicated more fully in this paper, is the suggestion that there is an internal adversary that is in constant flux with our [black people's] external environment. Its presence, though not always felt, may be powerful enough to influence our interactions and responses in our world. The study I have recently conducted reveals the workings of this phenomenon.

The research

The impetus for my research project was first generated by repeated observations made within a private mixed counselling and psychotherapy practice. As I look back on my work, I cannot recall a single case amongst my black clientele where unprompted references to actual or perceived difficulties in black/white relations at work (and in general) were not alluded to or fully discussed in therapy. Even when such work problems involved black-on black dynamics, the black person in position of power was often seen as identifying with the 'aggressor', that is, with white people and the system, or 'selling out'.

I regularly witnessed black clients presenting with ill-health arising from prolonged and sustained workplace difficulties. These concerns were of a particular nature and frequently affected such things as physical health, self-esteem and opportunities for professional advancement. Such situations occurred mainly within predominantly white-managed structures and highlighted problematic relations within these setups. Workplace stress was not only manifested through raised anxiety, irritability, tearfulness, loss of concentration, demoralization, etc., but there also emerged a worrying picture depicting a high incidence of chronic fatigue syndrome (ME), late onset diabetes, clinical diagnoses of hypertension, depression and mental health difficulties. Although it cannot be concluded that the latter effects are a direct result of these workplace difficulties, it could be argued that their presence in a large percentage of the study's sample group is of particular significance and concern. It was this concern in the second instance that fired my interest and decision to investigate this phenomenon.

The research was conducted using a semi-structured approach to interviewing workers who volunteered to talk about their work experiences. The interview covered areas such as their work history, exploration of work experiences, cultural identity and social adjustment in this society, racism, family and personal history, future hopes and expectations. Thirty workers were drawn from the National Health Service (NHS), Education and Social Services; three establishments historically known for attracting black people

and, mainly, black women. Such attraction, it should be mentioned, was also fostered by British policies directly set up to fill personnel shortages in these areas.

As a qualitative study using a mixed research paradigm (phenomenology, (Husserl, 1960), hermeneutic (Gadamer, 1975) and heuristic (Moustakas, 1990)), the sample size was intentionally boundaried to allow in-depth scrutiny of unconscious dynamic processes. Five men and 25 women were interviewed, their ages ranging from 28 to 59 years. The majority were in their late 30s to early 40s. Of the 30 respondents, 15 were managers, the remaining 15 were in non-managerial positions. Eighteen worked in educational services (psychology departments, colleges and university settings); six were from social services (children and families, mental health and training departments), and the remaining six were from the NHS (nurses, midwives, health visitors). The overwhelming majority of participants were black Caribbean, black Africans, black British born (in this order), three of whom were from mixed parentage backgrounds. One Chinese man and two Asian women also took part in this study.

As my theoretical perspectives are rooted in the psychodynamic tradition and particularly in understanding unconscious elements of intercultural phenomena, I was keen to investigate complex and subtle dynamics operating in the workplace with regard to black and white relations, and essentially those within the individuals themselves. Having recently published aspects of this work in the *British Journal for Counselling and Psychotherapy* (Alleyne 2004a,b,c) and noting feedback along the way, I am mindful of those who suggest that adding a white control group could have made a stronger case for my arguments. However, the boundaries and personal pursuits of the doctoral research dictated a focus, which in turn clarified the scope of the investigations at the time. I was clear I wanted the primacy of this study to be a particular scrutiny of the 'thing' itself, that is, the years of observing a phenomena in private practice and society at large, and one which includes my own personal experiences from which I can claim membership and be an 'insider'. Therefore the pursuit to decode, describe, and illuminate this 'thing' predominated.

On reflection and during the research process, I would have welcomed a more diverse response. None were forthcoming from other 'black' groups, European economic migrant groups, or other members of the 'hidden white minority groups', e.g. Gypsies, and refugees, who are all known to face particular difficulties of oppression because of their racial and cultural status in this society.

Emerging from the interviewees' stories was a clear pattern, which when analysed highlighted a silent form of discrimination, i.e. a subtle form of racism. This phenomenon, although not new to its recipients, seems largely unacknowledged in this society. In the USA, former President Bill Clinton went some way to addressing it by publicly acknowledging its presence and

harm. In his 29 March 1997 weekly radio address, quoted in Russell (1998, p 139) he remarked:

> ... racism ... is not confined to acts of physical violence ... Everyday [black people] and other minorities are forced to endure quiet acts of racism – bigoted remarks ... job discrimination ... These may not harm the body, but ... it does violence to their souls. We must stand against such quiet hatred just as surely as we condemn acts of physical violence.

From my long-standing observations, now confirmed by the findings within the study, I have concluded that the particular experience endured by black workers in the workplace is *workplace oppression*. I use the term in a deliberate sense to address complex organizational dynamics and silent forces that give rise to difficulties involving issues of power and powerlessness and of the dominant and dominated. To see these experiences of black workers as simply stress, scapegoating, bullying, harassment, or personality difficulties is to do a huge disservice to an unexamined phenomenon and all its complex tenets.

Within organizations, which represent a microcosm of society at large, it is a well-known fact that black and other minority ethnic groups easily become containers for projected, unwanted and negative feelings from the other (Obholzer and Roberts, 2000; Shur, 1994). My argument is that within this process of projective-identification (Klein, 1946), aspects of the individual's internal trauma may 'hook' onto external elements of oppression, thus providing fertile ground for the re-enactment of oppression in the workplace. These primitive repressions can be enacted by both sides (black and white), and the study has shown that in the context of the workplace, such dynamics can persist over long periods, leading to harmful experiences of depersonalization and powerlessness particularly in black individuals.

General findings

In brief, the study highlighted the following.

(1) Definite external oppressive factors that contributed to a grinding-down intrapsychic process with consequent invisible wounding to workers. I term this phenomenon *workplace oppression*.
(2) The presence of an *internal oppressor* which, when stimulated, tended to conflate with external oppressive situations.
(3) Evidence of cultural enmeshment that led to black ontological insecurity.

These areas are discussed with the aim of promoting further conceptual understanding of, and a more inclusive dialoguing with, inner and outer

aspects of oppression – in this instance, with specific regard to trauma and black identity wounding.

Workplace oppression and invisible wounding

A general finding in this study has indicated that although workplace oppression for black workers was not overtly about race and cultural differences, interpersonal conflict in black/white relations were frequently set off by subtle, silent and 'not so easy to pin down' incidents. Such incidents targeted a racial or cultural signifier of the black person's identity. These incidents ranged from those that were usually no more than minor annoyances, some unintentional and intentional, to more major incidents of racial assaults that were deeply painful and harmful.

The unrelenting nature of these silent conflicts and the subsequent protective stances adopted by black workers to defend against further hurt, eventually wore them down. This particular observation was so common amongst the sample group I interviewed that it not only became clear that external oppressive forces were at work, but that there were other factors involved in this complex picture.

Respondents' stories pointed to workplace cultures that covertly fostered collusive management structures when dealing with difficulties involving black workers. Respondent No. 16 described her sense of 'management closing ranks' when she challenged the status quo. The data also highlighted examples where conflicts had turned into unusually long and bitter battles with poor and unsatisfactory outcomes. In some instances, it also appeared that black workers experienced more severe disciplinary action than their white counterparts. Several respondents described having strong feelings of organisational conspiratorial tactics aimed at putting them under undue pressure; the intent being to set them up to fail. The '*setting up to fail syndrome*' was articulated by Respondent No. 7, who expressed: 'they know they just can't get rid of you ... the law wouldn't allow it these days ... so they put pressure on you to make damn sure you don't cope'. This worker described receiving a formal notice of disciplinary action instituted unusually soon after a complaint was made against him. He was upset that little or no management effort was deemed necessary to investigate the complaints in full.

Further analysis of the data showed that there were different dynamics operating within the three organizational cultures. For example, Social Services and Education seemed more open to and active in embracing complex issues of working with difference and diversity. In contrast, the National Health Service appeared to be slower and less forthcoming in meeting these challenges head on.

The analysis of these benign and virulent projections of workplace oppression was so clear that it was easy to identify a pattern as depicted in Figure 1.

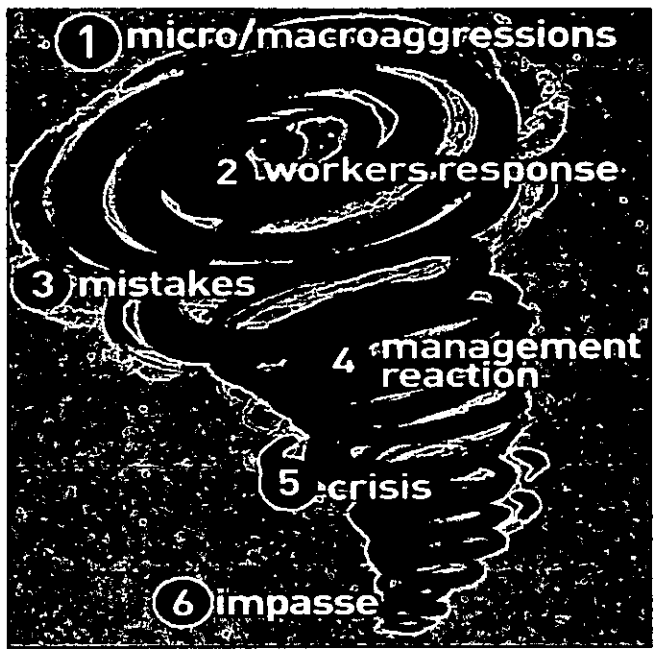

Figure 1. 'Spiral of events'. *Microaggression* – the term coined by Russell (1998) to describe racial assaults that are subtle, stunning, often automatic, non-verbal exchanges by whites who are down-putting of blacks. The resulting effect is shame and hurt. *Macroaggressions* are similar to microaggressions in many respects but differ in that they are directed at black people as well as the individual

The following case example is a reflection of common, everyday experiences black workers have, and still endure, in the workplace. Although individual situations vary, the familiar pattern of events is typical of the unseen and the unacknowledged drama of which many are a part.

The client, whom I shall call Velma, is a black Caribbean woman in her mid-40s, and is attending therapy for stress while negotiating an employment tribunal case involving her employers. She is a senior health care practitioner with 12 years' service with the same employer. The charges she brings against them are for racial discrimination and unfair treatment over a sustained period.

Velma is married with four children and supported by a very loving husband. She has a good network of close friends and family members, and she has turned to this support system during her present difficulties. Like many Caribbean children, Velma was left in the Caribbean at an early age. Her parents emigrated to England with her three older brothers when she was 4 years old. She and another brother were left behind and she expected to join her parents when they had 'paved the way' for the family to be

reunited. As the youngest, Velma was her father's favourite. She also held a special place in the eyes of her uncle, grandfather and brothers. There was definitely a special love showered on her, the only girl, by the males in her family. Consequently, men were idealized and females were given a much lower profile in Velma's eyes. These early identifications seemed to positively influence Velma's attachments to men, the male order and all its representations, e.g. authority, power, forthrightness. It would be true to say she developed a positive transference in these attachments. However, being left behind was to become a very traumatizing experience that would deeply wound her and shatter her idealizations of men.

Throughout her therapy, it was clear that the early disappointments by a much loved father and brothers were re-awakened during the protracted and difficult experiences in the rejecting and oppressive atmosphere of her workplace. This environment, which was dominated by white males in positions of power who were also part of the patriarchal managerial structure, had also failed her. She felt excluded and her situation was compounded by her distance from her female peers. Her earlier experience had led her to view men as duplicitous creatures and women 'grey' and of no consequence. These early split gender internalizations were manifest in her interactions at work. On the one hand, she gave more credence to her (stereotypical) male side, i.e. openly challenging the status quo, speaking her mind and going where others feared to tread. On the other hand, she played down the (stereotypical) female side, which, if permitted, would have allowed her to show her warmth and vulnerabilities. She never cried in therapy.

In one of her earlier sessions, Velma said that she had never wanted to seek promotion during the 12 years she had been with her employers.

> I was quite happy being a main grade and . . . for me, if I became anything else but a main grade, I thought I would lose a lot . . . I would lose a lot to the system . . . I would be constrained . . . and I would have to give up . . . I wouldn't be able to be myself.

I wondered (with her) whether this was her way of limiting her prospects and whether this was an unacknowledged aspect of internalized oppression which perhaps suggested that she shouldn't go above 'her' station. As a fellow black person, 'insider' and psychotherapist in this dyad, I felt I had a certain privilege and tacit permission to challenge this statement. Anticipating the need for delicacy with my intended challenge, I felt it would help to use what was intimate between us – our authentic Caribbean dialect, to make my point. My intervention was:

> You know Velma, back home we would always hear our parents and grandparents say certain phrases when they were scolding us . . . yu

> getting too big for yu shoes! ... yu must know yu place! ... you remember those sayings? (pause) ... Sometimes these very sayings go deep ... deep enough for us not to realise ... even within our sophisticated selves ... that they can make their mark. I am wondering whether we can explore this in the light of what you are saying about your potential and your own creativity?

This intervention was well-received and opened up many sessions of progressive work, where Velma was able to explore her own internalised opression and its subtle impact.

Velma appeared to have a good relationship with her clients, both black and white, but she felt her colleagues were always 'wary' of her. She remembered overhearing one of them say, 'The trouble with her is that she can't be influenced'. Velma (rightly or wrongly) felt her race – her kind – was being judged, rather than the content of her character and abilities. She prided herself on being self-sufficient, not needing 'them' and just getting on with the work. Velma took extra pains to get things right at work and played every procedure by the book. As a black person, she felt this to be a necessary precaution, because to be black is to be vulnerable. In this instance, we can identify a hypersensitivity, alertness and preparedness for criticism and attack. She also constantly defended against this potential attack on her racial identity by letting everyone know that she was happy to be a black person and was comfortable in her skin. This is a stance that can be seen as a reaction to 'stigmatic stress' (the act of being 'marked' and singled out for unfavourable and discriminatory treatment and consequently pushed into a state of hyper-vigilance and over-sensitivity), and a type of enactment that unwittingly drew unnecessary attention to her race. In the process of therapy, I was able to witness the dynamics of this enactment as they operated in constant flux with her outside difficulties.

Her white colleagues also played out the reciprocal dynamics. For instance, she reported one of them saying that she was 'uncivilised' because she chose not to socialize and have pub lunches with them. Velma was very insulted and hurt by this comment. There were other examples that included a white female teacher, who, on being very apprehensive at their first meeting, said to her colleague after she had acquainted herself with Velma, 'This lady is no fool'. Velma described having a strange reaction to this comment, because although she heard it as being a supportive remark, it also had a definite uncomfortable edge. She felt it was a grudging, backhanded compliment. Alongside these happenings were other seemingly minor incidents, of colleagues not offering her any eye-contact, not reciprocating her daily greetings, ignoring her presence and isolating her from discussions. Velma was beginning to feel like a non-person.

Obvious signs of stress were notable at this stage and were manifest by her irritability, poor concentration, forgetfulness, poor sleep, ruminating,

and holding herself together for attack. In therapy, it was clear that the *invincible* Velma was still able to cope despite carrying high levels of stress. I concluded that it was the energy from her anger, passion, personal convictions and independence (both negative and positive aspects) that was maintaining her ontological security. This situation, although admirable, raised serious concerns for her and other black people being able to endure such high levels of humiliation and shame. This flip side of cultural resilience is a very much unexplored area in psychoanalysis.

Things started to go distinctly wrong for Velma when complaints were made about her work. Colleagues found her 'too thorough' and therefore slow, as well as 'too challenging'. Her boss described her as 'difficult' and many expressed indirectly that she seemed to be 'too comfortable' in her efficiency. Others were not happy with her questioning of racial and cultural issues in the work with black children and their carers, and there were criticisms about the way she handled clients, namely allegedly giving too much attention to black children. She was seen as 'too independent and not a team player'. Over a considerable period, these 'minor' complaints persisted and slowly became more intrusive and significant in nature. The unrelenting process and grinding down nature of these unchecked situations, inevitably led to deteriorating relationships, more scrutiny of her work and monitoring of her every move. Velma started to become very ill and needed to take more and more time off work for stress.

Velma felt that she finally had to confront her white male manager about her treatment which had rolled on for 18 months. She was unprepared for his unguarded response, and reported as him saying 'What is it about your people that makes it so difficult for you to accept authority?'. For Velma, this was the last straw. Subsequent head-to-head confrontations with this manager resulted in her employers swiftly handling a subsequent allegation of serious unprofessional conduct with an immediate suspension from duties. Velma vehemently denied this allegation and treated it as the 'ultimate set-up' to 'dispose' of her.

Gradually over the next year with intermittent attempts to resume work, Velma visibly sank into further ill-health and depression. Her condition affected home life and she became concerned about her relationships with her children and husband. Guilt of damaging her family compounded her stress and she plummeted into the vortex (as depicted in Figure 1) of fear and depression. She worried that she would never be able to practice again, and started to feel extreme vulnerability. She acknowledged with great difficulty a deep sense of losing her sanity. In one session, she remarked that, 'it is very seductive at bath times to sink slowly under the water and go to sleep forever'. Such comments clearly indicated her worsening depressive state and hovering suicidal ideation. I became quite concerned for her psychiatric health at this point.

Velma later developed hypertension, late-onset diabetes and was officially diagnosed as clinically depressed. She summed up her situation thus: 'Illusion plays a very important part in creating identity. It can be someone's truth ... my truth. When that goes, you are left shattered, even depersonalised ... this is how I have been left feeling'. This statement not only expresses her deep loss; but it also suggests that attacks on a person's (racial) identity can destabilize their ontology security. Further damage would occur as a result of regular attendance in court during her Employment Tribunal case. Velma suffered severe panic attacks and a subsequent mild heart attack. She was officially put on long-term sick leave on full pay. From beginning to end, this particular set of workplace dynamics was drawn out for a total of 4 years and 10 months; a notably long period but not unusual for many cases of workplace oppression involving race. In therapy, Velma struggled with issues of closure, as it seemed she was neurotically driven to 'publicly shame them into the realisation that they can no longer keep black people in chains'.

The law concluded that race *did* matter in her case and that there was abundant evidence of injuries to feelings. Velma's employers were found guilty of numerous charges of racial discrimination and unfair treatment over a sustained period. She in turn felt fully vindicated in her efforts to achieve 'justice'. The losses and harm however for Velma were many and in some instances, irretrievable and long-term. The work of therapy at the latter stages was geared toward her healing and reclaiming her own state of grace.

'The internal oppressor'

From this very typical clinical case offered above, it can be seen that workplace oppression is about problematic work dynamics that are both external and interpersonal in nature. However, my research revealed that this is only two sides of the picture. Close observations of familiar recurring phrases, themes, identifications, preoccupations, metaphors in workers' stories and other symbolic language present in their narratives, left little doubt that there was a hidden dimension to this workplace phenomenon. Deep scrutiny and analysis of my findings, coupled with observable evidence from private practice, suggested there was an influential internal force that co-existed alongside external and interpersonal experiences of oppression. I see this significant outcome as having particular relevance to black people as a whole and for all therapists who work with black identity wounding and other issues of cultural trauma.

The study although limited, indicates that negative experiences of black people's historical past are still bound up with those of their present. This is not entirely new thinking and by no means a new concept. We have only to look to such writers as Lifton (1969), who examines the impact and effects

of Hiroshima on its peoples, and Dale (1988), Karpf (1996) and Schaverien (1998) whose works deal powerfully with the effects of the holocaust and aspects of Jewish identity. These writers show in their different ways how collective memory with its painful imprints can continue to transmit trauma and grief through generations of an oppressed group or race of people. Schaverien's work in particular provides us with a searing analytic account of the legacy of the holocaust and Jewish identity. However, although each of these human tragedies are uniquely different, there are areas of commonality that can help us to deal more effectively with collective trauma when it has specific regard to identity, understanding of the self and the process of healing.

What I am highlighting here is the strong possibility that powerful memory imprints from a legacy of a painful historical past might heighten oppressive workplace experiences for black people. This inescapable past, although a distant 400 years ago, seems still to be present enough to be creating a persistent post-traumatic syndrome. Therefore, the work of throwing off the shackles of the past and emerging from the entanglement of historical briars is still an important modern day (therapeutic) task for members of the black diaspora (and other oppressed groups). It would be true to say that a reflexive identity will only begin at the point where unconscious identification and fixation with aspects of one's history cease.

Akbar (1996) confirms these views thus:

> our [black people's] progress is still impeded by many of the slave-based characteristics ... The objective of the discussion is not to cry 'victim' and seek to excuse those self-destructive characteristics created by slavery. In fact, the objective is to identify the magnitude of the slavery trauma and to suggest the persistence of a post-slavery traumatic stress syndrome, which still affects the [black person's] personality. It is not a call to vindicate the cause of the condition, but to challenge Black people to recognize the symptoms of the condition and master it as we have mastered the original trauma (p.25).

Attached to this central theme is another forgotten point – one that adds, in my view, an additional pain to black people anywhere today. The burden of continuing to carry the historical pain of our past in the form of a persistent post-traumatic syndrome is perhaps the peculiar result of a loud silence that denies and delays the necessary process of giving due recognition to an important aspect of humanity's history. Not only do I feel that black people continue to carry the transgenerational and intergenerational pain of their collective past, but also the burden of the other's hidden shame and their own silent witnessing.

The '*internal oppressor*' (a noun), as distinct from internalized oppression (a process), is an aspect of the Self which appears to carry around and

through the generations this historical and intergenerational baggage. Much has been written about internalized oppression (Freire, 1970; Lorde, 1984; Lipsky, 1987; hooks, 1996), which is the process of absorbing the values and beliefs of the oppressor and coming to believe that the stereotypes and misinformation about one's group is true (or partly true). Such a process can lead to low self-esteem, self-hate, the disowning of one's group, and other complex defensive behaviours in relation to one's group. Although this concept has been fully explicated in the works of the aforementioned writers, only a few, Lorde (1984) and Alleyne (2004), for example, have dealt specifically with the concept of the oppressor within ourselves – the internal oppressor and black identity.

Prejudices, projections, inter-generational wounds and the vicissitudes from our historical past are all aspects of this inner tyrant – the *internal oppressor*. They are kept alive through the transgenerational transmission of trauma. As the case of Velma clearly indicates, alongside these aspects of the internal oppressor are other factors such as our narcissistic injuries, our personal unresolved difficulties where power and domination feature as themes, and those difficult and painful experiences unresolved within our family dynamics. The nature of the internal oppressor appears to be the sum total of these characteristics, which rest in the shadow of the self. The overarching backdrop of a post-slavery/post-colonial context and the baggage of black people's internalized oppression stemming from these historical experiences all seem to play a crucial part in shaping our pre-transference relationship and attachment patterns to the white other. The clear picture being created here is one of the past and present, as well as internal and external factors, being inextricably linked and fused. This fusion raises a further key theme.

Cultural enmeshment and black ontological security

Following on from my analysis of the internal oppressor, fusion of the historical past and black people's present functioning begin to look and feel very much like states of co-dependence and more specifically, *enmeshment* (Minuchin, 1974). The historical past and its effects on the present will have the tendency to determine ontology (rooted sense in the world) in any given situation. Enmeshment as a psychoanalytic concept can help us to understand why this is so. Enmeshment is unavoidably linked to the concept of Self. For example, mother and young child are likely to be functionally enmeshed temporarily at the 'expense' of father, but later the situation will reverse to leave the mother less proximal and the father more engaged. This is a normal state of affairs in most family systems, and it allows the child to experience both parents and negotiate the process of individuation in a healthy fashion. Dysfunctional enmeshment according to Minuchin is a disorder producing developmental arrest that leads to

difficulties in disengaging from internal objects, for example, one's mother or father. With regard to black/white relations, I am suggesting the object is the coloniser. Enmeshment of this kind prevents or hampers change, growth and individuation. In the case of Velma, we see these effects in her unconscious denial of the wish for promotion after 12 years of service. Enmeshed states undoubtedly create patterns of parent/child and symbiotic attachments where both sides continually seek mutual advantage through each other. For the parent, it may be the need to continue exercising power to keep the child in an infantilized position. For the child, there might still be ambivalent needs to be looked after, be independent, and, at the same time, have someone to fight against. Inherent in these inter-dependent relationships is the dynamic of projective-identification previously addressed in Velma's case.

The vicissitudes of the colonial era have clearly left both parties dependent on each other, creating forms of co-dependency and identifications through the 'other'. It is my view that this state of affairs may have left black people with more struggles to negotiate in the very important process of differentiation and subsequent ownership of a state of grace. The stronghold and effects of colonialism have much to answer for in this tragedy. For the black 'other' who has been kept in the child position, being separate and autonomous might be underpinned by catastrophic fantasies of the consequences of emerging and being oneself. Tendencies therefore would be to settle for what is safe and comfortable – a state of dependence and waiting to be given opportunity – while feeling dissatisfied, frustrated and even enraged with one's situation. From a cultural object-relations perspective, this point can be understood by a powerful comment made by interviewee No. 30, who felt that black people seemed unable to initiate and be self-governing unless validated and monitored (kept in check) by the white man. Enmeshment breeds dependency and immaturity due to the developmental deficits arising from this unhealthy union. The way out of the enmeshed state is to separate out, seek autonomy and self-sufficiency. Separation in the black/white context, however, is not to be confused with or interpreted as separatism, isolation or alienation from the white other.

Co-dependence and enmeshment would clearly suggest then that there is a propensity for us as black people to seek self-definition through the white other, while also being extremely critical of this other. This tricky ambivalent situation can lead ultimately to difficulties in experiencing oneself as separate in one's own identity. Dependence on the white other whilst carrying around historical baggage and angst, can create a focus and preoccupation with this 'other' that can lead to connections (both cultural and spiritual) with the individual self becoming more elusive. Enmeshment and co-dependence in this context can become a disease of lost self-hood. To utilize one's personal energies in continually tracking the parent (the white other in this instance) can create a dynamic that heavily influences

the 'pre-transference' (feelings built up about the other that prejudices the potential for a real relationship) in any given situation. It can also lead to an over-sensitivity and anticipation of racial and cultural conflict as brought out in some instances in Velma's case.

Conclusions

Although this paper primarily focuses on the experiences of a specific racial group, i.e. black people, the findings of the study may also be of value to other minority ethic groups whose experience of societal prejudice and discrimination is similar or problematic.

The therapeutic challenge emerging from the study is the task of knowing how to embrace the importance of one's history while cultivating the need to be reflexive. The challenge of reflexivity in the context discussed is about being self-aware of one's history, which is in continual collective development, and thus contributes to the enrichment of a new self-assurance that leads to a degree of liberation. Such challenge inevitably opens up new areas for the re-working of concepts as resilience, identity trauma and 'cultural healing' (my term). This challenge, however, is not specific to black or oppressed groups, but to all racial groups regardless of their status and position in society. However, for those groups who have historically experienced wide-scale oppression and the invisible effects of the silent legacy of the transgenerational transmission of trauma, the need for reflexivity is even greater.

The striving for cultural competence as practitioners in counselling and psychotherapy must raise the central theme of working with identity, part of which should be our history and collective development that extends across generations. Questions such as, Who am I? Where do I come from? What influences have marked me? What have I developed for myself that is independent of the collective?, all seem quite necessary and important when confronting the inner tyrant, *the internal oppressor*. In the context of invisible injuries and black identity wounding, psychodynamic and analytic approaches may provide the space for clients and patients to elucidate and make more sense of the obscure aspects of their histories in the present. Essentially, practitioners will not only be challenged to work with the post-traumatic manifestation of this past, but also with their own thinking and approaches to cultural trauma.

My intention in this paper has been to alert practitioners to the subtle and pervasive influences of race and workplace oppression and furthermore, lend a public voice to a silent tyranny that takes many black casualties in its wake. In my experience, the significance of these issues are either missed, undermined, colluded with or reacted to with indifference in the world of psychotherapy. The potential import of such material is not then given its rightful place in these contexts. However, it is important at

the same time not to overvalue such material nor assume that all black people are traumatized or blighted by racism or by internalized racial oppression. The task of the therapist is to be able to distinguish between the different issues raised by the client/patient and facilitate the work where this material might apply in the bigger picture of their personal journeying.

Note

1 Throughout this paper the use of the term black will refer to people with known African heritage.

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...putting the pieces together

On their return however most of the men had discussed what had happened in the group with a friend or colleague. Having experienced such a degree of sameness in their thinking, it now seemed possible for the group members to explore who they felt they really were, without the fear of being attacked by this mythical black man. Robert emerged as a caring and supportive father figure in the group, Tony was openly able to explore his fear of never finding tenderness with a black partner and Chester better able to engage with his girlfriend and talk with her about their life and their future. He seemed to have changed his approach in his relationship with his partner, finding that they did after all have a lot to talk about and to plan for their lives. He did not feel as pushed around by her as he had done before and considered whether or not he would have gone into therapy had she not suggested it.. Patrick explored his early childhood relationships with his father who had left them and his mother's inability to manage her three children alone. He felt that he would never leave his own children if he were to have any. He said that it hurt not having contact with his parents and very little with his sister and brother and he thought that they too could do with therapy.

Eden completed his course and at the end of the group was planning to return to Ghana. He felt that he was always under pressure from his family to do well and now wanted to go back to his civil service job in Accra and have an easier life. Ainsley became less of a recluse and was supported by Robert to volunteer in a youth-club.

Discussion

The six people in the group were able to get a clearer picture of themselves as black men from the experience of working in a black men's group. The hidden stereotype held about black men could only have been reflected back to them from the mirrored experience of working with other black men who harboured that image of themselves, but projected onto others. They were finally able to say I AM...having discarded that spoiled social identity as bad and useless black men. From the group experience of refuting this identity, I feel sure that such a discourse could only take place in a black men's group.

Since this event I have became more and more interested in how young black men manage to construct a positive self identity. Images of black tough street cred not only conflate a whole range of identities for young black men, but also hide the tender, loving and hard-won identities that all men are capable of having. It is only when we can dare to be our true selves that we can be of use to our black sons, nephews and grandsons. Perhaps we can explain to them about the dangers of life's hard obstacle race without needing to act it out as a way of helping them to survive it.

Women of African descent in Britain and the USA have played an important part in the civil rights movement and have developed black women's groups to help them discover who they are. Men, black and white, are slow in this quest for self discovery and self development. Many fear losing power and revealing themselves as vulnerable, without the trappings of the social structure which they have appropriated as their own. In the case of African descended men in the Diaspora, they do not own the social structures, so one wonders why a coming together of this sort for exploration has been slow to happen. Perhaps since 'The Million Man March' we as African descended men can begin to consider who we really are.

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The internal oppressor - the veiled companion of external racial oppression

In this paper, I will briefly present a theory of intercultural psychotherapy that has evolved from a recent study enquiring specifically into black workers experiences in the workplace. The theory is also offered as a useful perspective that could have wider application to areas such as psychic wounding and developmental arrest. The quote: The inner enemy is as much a formidable foe as the most manipulative {or oppressive} associate. (George Bach, 998), aptly supports this key finding, and with specific reference to black/white relations, the internal enemy is of utmost importance as it rests on the very real external experiences/history/fears of oppression.

A qualitative research approach was used for the study, involving a random sample of thirty people between 30-45 from predominantly African-Caribbean, black British and African backgrounds. All held posts (managerial and non-managerial) in three well-known institutions - the NHS, Social Services and Education. From their rich and varied stories, the following key themes emerged:

a) the presence of a virulent form of racism, i.e. subtle racism (resembling the covert racism described in the MacPherson Report, 1999 and Kovel 1970).

b) a pattern to an unnamed phenomenon in these settings which I term "workplace oppression".

c) resulting harmful effects manifesting as black identity wounding and trauma.

d) the presence of an internal enemy which I term "the internal oppressor" which is distinct from the process of internalised oppression.

e) evidence of "cultural enmeshment" in black/white relations.

Here I will present and discuss two of these key findings, (a) the phenomena of workplace oppression, and (b) the workings of the internal oppressor. Further details of the study are listed in the references.

The personal accounts gathered have clearly and consistently highlighted ongoing difficulties in black/white relations at work that prove harmful and impeding to black workers. There was evidence that although these difficulties were not always overtly about race, they nevertheless targeted racial aspects of the individual's identity and occurred with such regularity that it was easy for the 'sufferer' to detect their distinct nature. Analysing the material, I identified a specific pattern and recognisable flow to these developing events. The picture presented below highlights the cycle of events:

CYCLE OF EVENTS (Alleyne 2004)

Microagression* - term coined by Russell (1998) to describe racial assaults that are subtle, stunning, often automatic, non-verbal exchanges by Whites that are down-putting of Blacks. The resulting effect is shame and hurt. Macroaggressions* are similar to microaggressions in many respects but differ in that they are directed at black people as well as the individual.

WORKPLACE OPPRESSON

I use the term workplace oppression in a very deliberate sense to address complex organisational dynamics and silent forces involving issues of power and powerlessness and of the dominant and dominated. The research showed webs of entanglements and dramas played out in the workplace, suggesting certain power dynamics were at play and were enacted and re-enacted in the everyday cultures of work settings. For black workers these enactments ranged from minor annoyances and everyday cultural frustrations, e.g. referring to black men as boys, jokes, name-calling, "feeling you have to blend in", "playing down your own needs and identity", being ignored, etc., to more major incidents of racial "assaults" and discrimination. Overall the effects for the black worker were hurtful and deeply painful. All the interviewees complained of the effects of "stigmatic stress" endured over a long period. This strain arises from being 'marked' and singled out for unfavourable and discriminatory treatment; the 'marked' person is pushed into a state of hyper-vigilance and therefore highly sensitised to their surroundings. Prolonged experiences of this kind soon resulted in raised anxiety, irritability, ruminating over events, demoralisation and paranoia. Alarmingly, interviewees revealed a high incidence of chronic fatigue syndrome (ME), late-onset diabetes, and clinical diagnoses of hypertension, depression and mental health difficulties. Interviewees described these insidious and relenting workplace experiences as a kind of "grinding down process" which threatened their capacity to remain resilient and positive.

These occurrences were so stunning and debilitating in nature that to simplify them as just stress, scapegoating, bullying, harassment, personality difficulties or mere projective-identification, is to do a huge disservice to an unexamined phenomenon and all its complexities.

"The conclusion was that race does matter in the workplace"

Initial findings clearly confirmed a long-recognised problem of institutionalised racism; racism that can be unwitting and pernicious. This is also the form of racism that thrives in traditional work cultures, bolstered by majority values which support "the way we do things round here". Such cultures shape interpersonal relations, routine practices and procedures in ways where black and minority ethnic individuals feel marginalized and excluded. The conclusion was that race does matter in the workplace. However, in spite of its wide-scale difficulties, subtle racism in particular seems unrecognised as a real problem in Britain. The situation is different in the US, where this pernicious process was given public credibility in 1997 by President Bill Clinton's acknowledgement of its presence and harm:

"...racism...is not confined to acts of physical violence... Every day (black people) and other minorities are forced to endure quiet acts of racism - bigoted remarks ...job discrimination... These may not harm the body, but...it does violence to their souls. We must stand against such quiet hatred just as surely as we condemn acts of physical violence." (Russell, 1998)

Within organisations that represent a microcosm of our society, it is known that black and other minority ethnic groups easily become containers for projected, unwanted and negative feelings from the other (Obholzer and Roberts, 1999; Shur, 1994). The three institutions highlighted in this study are workplaces where staff are expected to continually hold anxieties and impulses evoked by people who are needy and vulnerable. Within such milieus, the projection, re-introjection and splitting of primitive internalised object-relations can easily predominate and be evacuated into and displaced unto perceived lesser others and also sustained by the process of attributing 'lesser' values to others. Black and other minority ethnic workers are convenient vessels in this sense, and the perceived 'lesser' others. Those taking part in the study voiced repeatedly that they seldom felt held and supported in their organisations and by management. With specific regard to race matters lack of holding can be seen as institutional structures consciously and unconsciously colluding, legitimising and disguising enactments of dehumanisation, splitting and omnipotence.

In the circumstances described, it is clear that the resulting psychic pain from this unheeded dimension of black/white relations cannot simply be endlessly absorbed without deep damage to the individual's positive feelings and hopefulness about themselves.

A subsequent key finding from the study suggests that within these processes of projective-identification (Klein, 1964), aspects of black people's internal trauma may "hook" onto and into elements of external racial oppression, thus setting a complex scene for the re-enactment of oppression in the workplace. The erosion of physical and internal well-being undermines black workers to the extent that they enact the injustice they experience. This can be seen as (and I think often is) attempts to 'get fair treatment', or move from the position of 'object' i.e. the container for negative projections, to proper 'subjects'. However, as these behaviours tend to bring a negative attention, such re-enactments unwittingly feed into a confirmation of racist assumptions and notions of black people being difficult, aggressive, angry, threatening, and having difficulties with authority.

THE INTERNAL OPPRESSOR

The external and interpersonal dynamics discussed so far portray only two dimensions of the triangulated phenomenon of workplace oppression. The third and most disregarded area raises important issues for what the "sufferer" might also bring to the situation. This was a secondary finding from the study, principally borne out by the language of the interviewees. continued over...

Particularly striking was the way in which interviewees described their experiences; my attention was drawn to a set of familiar, recurring phrases, themes, identifications, pre-occupations, metaphors and other symbolic language, venting anger, frustration and recounting feelings of abject despair and depression. Examples of such language are as follows:

1. "people will always see your colour first and personality second"
2. "no matter how hard you try to succeed, people will always want to beat you down"
3. "white people will never get accustomed to nor comfortable with a black person in a position of power"
4. "we always have to work twice - even three times - as hard to get to where we want or be on par with the white man"
5. "we don't seem able to come together and sustain anything good as black people"

Examples of comments that linked the past to the present were:

1. "this is modern day slavery"
2. "white management still want to keep black workers in chains"

Scrutiny and analysis of this language pattern suggested that powerful memory imprints from the legacy of a painful historical past were marked, and re-opened with the occurrence of oppressive workplace practices. It seemed that the inescapable past, although perhaps chronologically distant, was still present enough to be creating a persistent post-traumatic syndrome. Segregation and apartheid are current memories of lived experiences for many people, the presence of more oppressive memories is not distant. The influence of this third element suggested the presence of the internal oppressor.

The 'internal oppressor' (a noun), as distinct from internalised oppression (a process), is an aspect of the Self carried through the generations, historical and intergenerational "baggage". I use the term baggage in this context to describe that which we as black people carry unwillingly and not a chosen possession. Much has been written about internalised oppression, Lipsky (1987), Lorde (1984), hooks (1995), Freire (1970), which is the process of absorbing the values and beliefs of the oppressor and coming to believe that the stereotypes and misinformation about one's group is true (or partly true). Such a process can lead to low self-esteem, self-hate, the disowning of one's group, and other complex defensive behaviours in relation to one's group. Only a few, (Alleyne, 2004; Lorde, 1984) however, have dealt specifically with the concept of the oppressor within ourselves - the internal oppressor and black identity development.

Prejudices, projections, inter-generational wounds and the vicissitudes from our historical past are all aspects of this inner tyrant - the internal oppressor. They are kept alive through the transgenerational transmission of trauma. Alongside these aspects of the internal oppressor are other factors such as our narcissistic injuries, our personal unresolved difficulties featuring power and domination, and those difficult and painful experiences unresolved within our family dynamics. The nature of the internal oppressor appears to be the sum total of these characteristics which rests in the shadow of the self. The overarching backdrop of a post-slavery/post-colonial context and the "baggage" of black people's internalised oppression from these historical experiences seem to play a crucial part in shaping our pre-transference relationship and attachment to the white other. The clear picture being created is one combined of the past and present, as well as internal and external factors being inextricably linked and fused. Fusion of the historical past with one's present functioning can lead to forms of co-dependence which I refer to as cultural enmeshment. In brief, the concept of enmeshment with particular reference to black/white relations, is a key theory to understanding complex issues relating to black identity development, trauma and resilience and the work of repairing and healing.

IMPLICATIONS FOR PRACTICE

A central theme in psychotherapy is dealing with issues of identity, part of which should be our history and collective development which extends across generations. Questions such as, Who am I? Where do I come from? What influences have marked me? What have I developed for myself that is independent of the collective? Would all seem necessary and important when confronting the inner tyrant - the internal oppressor?

Psychotherapeutic management of emotional and psychological issues connected with workplace oppression will require a deep understanding of cultural identity trauma and the human condition in all its complexities. Central is the need to acknowledge the effects of silent, subtle dynamics of racism and its potential to hurt, harm and even damage profoundly. Awareness of the vestiges of a historical colonial past and the likelihood of such a history being carried around as cultural 'baggage' with a recurring post-traumatic effect is key, and a conceptual understanding of the potential for such 'baggage' to be enacted and re-enacted in group situations such as "caring organisations" is crucial .

The therapist working towards being more culturally competent will also need a clear understanding of vital issues pertaining to power and powerlessness and the complex ways these factors are heightened in traditional hierarchical systems. Attention to the areas presented in this paper could enable practitioners to respond more effectively to problems of trauma and black identity wounding. An inclusive approach which holds together the external, interpersonal and internal dimensions of this problem, could prove effective in helping clients/patients to tune out latent rage and castrate the internal oppressor. Such work could also help clients/patients reframe (not forget) their relationship with their past, which is a necessary ontological task to fully heal, and restore a state of grace (fulfilment, unimpededness and elevation). It would be true to say that a reflexive identity will only begin at the point where unconsciousness identifications and fixation with aspects of one's history cease. This statement is pertinent to both sides of the black/white divide. However, as my research clearly confirms the prevalence of subtle racism and its harmful effects to many. I will turn to Paolo Freire (1970) to reiterate why this important topic is a matter for all disciplines (including psychotherapy) that deal with concerns of the human condition. In discussing change in the oppressed and oppressor, Freire names three key points; (a) oppression dehumanises both parties; (b) the oppressor, who is himself dehumanised because he dehumanises others, will try to hang onto his power and dehumanising practices; (c) as a consequence, the oppressed has to lead the struggle for a fuller humanity for both. The latter is an important goal much impeded by the function of the internal oppressor.

In my experience, the significance of the issues raised in this paper is either missed, undermined, colluded with or reacted to with indifference in the psychotherapy world. The potential import of such material is not then given its rightful place in this milieu. However, it is important at the same time not to overvalue such material nor assume that all black people are damaged by the inescapable fact of living with racism in their midst. The task of the therapist is to be able to distinguish between the different issues raised by the client/patient and facilitate the work of separation and healing where this material might apply in the bigger picture of their difficulties. Although this paper has focussed primarily on a

study of the experiences of a specific racial group , i.e. black people, its findings may also apply and be of value to other minority ethic groups whose experience of societal prejudice and discrimination are similar or problematic.

• The term black is used throughout this paper to represent all peoples with known African heritage.

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Biographical details

Aileen is a psychotherapist and clinical supervisor in private practice. She is also a trainer and facilitator of cultural and racial diversity issues in organisations and educational settings. She also has a background in mental health.

Report from the Registration Board

On-Line Register

I am delighted to inform you that the long-awaited on-line register and 'Find-a-Therapist' part of the UKCP website is now up and running: find it at www.psychotherapy.org.uk. Click on 'Services'; then on 'Find a Therapist'. Please let us know what you think: email lisa.donohue@psychotherapy.org.uk for comments about the general style and appearance. If your own register entry is incorrect, then email valerie.honore@psychotherapy.org.uk.

In terms of organisational reform, the work that we have done on individual registration, on re-accreditation, on the simplification of titles, has all had an airing - but none of it has made its way yet into UKCP statutes. We await (and participate in) developments in the debate around Member Institutions, which was taken a step further at the AGM. It seems that these will involve a considerable amount of reorganisation of accrediting functions, and the RB's role will change - becoming the regulator of the accreditation standards for individuals, alongside the new Standards Board, which will develop those standards.

This coming year will, I think, be a year when some of the RB's work really begins to bear fruit: I think it is highly likely that, by the AGM of 2006, we will finally be placing major constitutional reforms before the UKCP.

Thanks to the Staff

It has not been an easy year for the staff. We have two members of staff, Mike Bowen and Valerie Honore specifically allocated to the regulatory aspects of the UKCP. They have been servicing an increasing volume of work not only from the RB, but from the Training Standards Committee, the Ethics Committee and the Equal Opportunities Committee.

We understand that a long-overdue new staff member will be appointed shortly.

Meanwhile, the Board would like to take this opportunity to thank the staff concerned for absorbing this pressure, and to Valerie Tufnell, Chief Executive, for overseeing the work.

The New Registrations Process

For the staff, this has been the major preoccupation this year. The move to a new database, and the production of new forms to ensure that registrants' data was all up-to-date was a huge exercise for the staff - and for some of the Member Organisations too.

Later this year, we will be piloting direct access to the database for some Member Organisations that wish to avail themselves of the service.

We have a revised timetable for this year, and we believe that the procedure will be a little smoother.

The Simplification of Titles

In its attempts to draw matters over labels to some kind of consistent conclusion, the RB has now had two debates, and presented papers to both the Governing Board and the AGM.

continued over..

Working with clients who are experiencing harassment in the workplace

by Dr Aileen Alleyne

G10

Information Sheet

Introduction

This information sheet deals with the topic of workplace harassment, its visible and invisible effects on individuals, and ways for practitioners to work with these difficulties. It considers complex group and workplace dynamics, and skills to address problems caused by harassment. It is important to bear in mind that bullying and harassment can occur at all levels in the workplace from subordinates to peers and management. They are not restricted to managers and management presenting as the problem or to men as the sole perpetrators. Workplace harassment can occur from all directions of the workforce.

Objectives

The practitioner shall:

- have a fuller understanding of organisational dynamics that contribute to harassment
- be able to distinguish between various forms of harassment
- be more knowledgeable about issues involved
- be more informed and guided in this aspect of trauma work

Essential areas for therapists to address:

- working with psychological trauma and issues of loss
- working with identity wounding and self-esteem issoes. (Identity wounding describes the hurt and offence caused by being singled out for negative or unfavourable treatment.)
- working with 'the internal oppressor' (Alleyne A, 2004)[1] in black/white contexts. This may also include other contexts, for example age, gender, sexuality.

Introduction to organisational dynamics

When people work in groups, tensions exist that can be creative as well as destructive. Positional power in organisations can mirror our experiences of the power that adults had over us as children, and the power we experience socially, culturally and politically. Abuse of power can also stem from situations where personal inadequacies and anxieties are acted out in relationships with others. Such acting out can be understood as manifestations of false power and a desperate, even perverse wish to be recognised. In such circumstances, the bully or harasser is often compensating unconsciously for unacknowledged personal shortcomings and weaknesses in themselves.

Workplace harassment may arise from these powerful sources. Therapists working with clients who experience harassment need an awareness of unconscious processes such as projection, projective-identification, unhealthy competition and acting-out. Awareness of these processes can deepen the

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practitioner's understanding and facilitation of this work. Examples of these dynamics are as follows.

Projection

Colloquially known as 'dumping', this is a defence mechanism whereby individuals attribute their own feelings to someone else.

An example would be where a colleague or group denies certain feelings and wishes but asserts that another person or group has them: 'I/we are not prejudiced, but X/ that group has a chip on their shoulder.'

Projective identification

This is an unconscious process by which we project a hidden aspect of the self on to an outside agency and then fuse with that agency. The recipient of the projection is then seen to carry the critical unresolved aspect of the self which cannot be directly owned or dealt with. An example might be a burnt-out worker who puts their apathetic feelings onto their client and then blames the client for not moving on or making progress.

Unhealthy Competition

Competition between colleagues can sometimes create an unhealthy working environment and a difficult atmosphere, e.g. envy, jealousy, rivalry and competition may arise among group members. This may mirror feelings similar to those experienced in relation to a brother or sister.

Acting out

This occurs when people use passive or active aggression to deal with conflict. The absence of appropriate communication can both cause and exacerbate this behaviour. The worker for example, who is repeatedly late for work, meetings and other appointments might be communicating their unhappiness at work or expressing some other dissatisfaction in their life.

Practitioners can help clients understand the realities of harassment by helping them see how they contribute to these situations. Therapists may use the following questions in their work

- Is there something else here that is being missed?
- Is there another way to look at this?
- Does this situation remind you of any previous experience?
- Is there any similarity between what is going on now and any previous work experiences?
- What might you be bringing to this problem?
- When your colleague does X, what do you think the intended aim is?
- What are your choices, entitlements and rights in this situation?

It has to be acknowledged that there is a grain of truth in most projections, that is to say, there often is something 'wrong' in the other's behaviour. However, distortions and exaggerations may overshadow the degree of blame and undeserved 'wrongs' may be added to the assessment of the other's behaviour. Therapists should consider that what may be deemed as harassment or bullying by the client might, in certain circumstances, actually be acceptable management behaviour in that management is the delegation of tasks, responsibilities and specific goals designed to achieve organisational objectives. Therefore it is not unreasonable that the monitoring of progress towards the fulfilment of these should take place, nor is the application of reasonable corrective or remedial measures when individual performance falls short necessarily to be construed as harassment or bullying.

What is harassment?

Harassment is unwanted conduct affecting the dignity of men and women in the workplace. It may be related to age, sex, race, disability, religion, nationality, or any personal characteristic of the individualand, as previously stated, can occur across all levels of the workforce. The key is that the actions or comments are viewed as demeaning and unacceptable to the recipient.

Harassment is legally prohibited on many specified grounds, including race, sex and disability. A list of relevant statues is included in the Further Reading list at the end of this Information Sheet.

Bullying

Bullying is offensive, intimidating, malicious or insulting behaviour, an abuse or misuse of power through means intended to undermine, humiliate, denigrate or injure the recipient (ACAS, 2003).[2]

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Bullying may be a one-off incident or part of a persistent pattern. It may include verbal abuse, physical assault, unjustified criticism, sarcasm, insults, twisting things said or done, spreading false or malicious rumours about someone and isolating or ignoring a person. It may also include putting people under unnecessary pressure with excessive work, impossible deadlines and sabotaging their work or ability to do their job by not providing them with vital information and resources.

There is a wealth of legislation to provide equality of opportunity and protection from unlawful discrimination (treating someone unfairly or unequally simply because they belong to a certain group), harassment and bullying. The key Acts and Regulations are set out in the Further Reading list but this is not to be taken as an exhaustive list.

Racial harassment occurs when a person is threatened, abused, insulted or taunted in relation to their race, or nationality, colour, language or ethnic origin, or racial characteristic. It may include derogatory remarks, innuendo and slur, intolerance, mimicry or mockery; displays of material offensive to a particular race, racial jokes, allocating least favourable jobs or singling out for unfair treatment (see Race Relations Amendment Act 2000).

Sexual harassment is any verbal or physical sexual conduct that is unwelcome and uninvited. It may include kissing, embracing, patting, pinching, touching, exposure, leering or gestures, questions about a person's private or sexual life, requests for sexual favours, smutty jokes, phone calls, emails, facsimiles or messages, offensive noises or displays of sexually graphic or suggestive material (see Sex Discrimination Acts 1975 and 1976).

Discrimination is treating someone unfairly or unequally. This may occur on the grounds of sex, marital status, pregnancy, family responsibility, family status, race, religious beliefs, political conviction, gender history, impairment and disability, class, age or sexual orientation.

Victimisation is the intentionally or knowingly unfavourable treatment of a person. This could include adverse changes to their work environment, denial of access to resources, information or work, unrealistic goals and deadlines, allocation to unpopular jobs/shifts, having work and credit denied.

Scapegoating in the context of the workplace involves an individual or group made to bear the blame for others.

Workplace oppression (Alleyne A, 2004)[3] is a specific intercultural term used to describe and include silent and subtle forms of racial discrimination experienced by black and other minority ethnic people in the workplace. The term highlights the hidden aspects of workplace difficulties, which have the potential to cause deep distress and ultimate damage to individual's identity and self-esteem. Some key elements of workplace oppression may also apply to other minority groups such as gay and lesbian people, those with hidden or visible disabilities, and people embracing a religion. An example may be where a deeply religious person or minority seeks to assert their beliefs on others.

Dynamics of harassing behaviour

Harassing behaviour tends to follow a basic three-stage process: **identification** (being singled out), **transference of blame** (projection), and **banishment** (isolation and attack) (Dyckman J, Cutler J, 2003)[4] Understanding this process is important in order to help break the cycle.

Without full knowledge or insight into what is happening, 'victims' might be puzzled or confused, think something is wrong with them, feel trapped or tempted to retaliate. Whichever the response, the continuous feeling of being under attack can chip away at self-esteem and confidence. The greater the insecurity of the individual, the worse the perpetrator's behaviour can become. Where the perpetrator is in a position of power, or has access to power, and is supported by institutionalised management culture, the 'victim' inevitably comes off worst. Organisations should now have some form of Harassment, Bullying and Unlawful Discrimination Policy & Procedure (for example that of BACP which sets out an organisation's stance and the route available to employees who have suffered, or are suffering from harassment, bullying or unlawful discrimination at work from another employee, group of employees or third party. Organisations should regard acts of harassment, bullying or unlawful discrimination as a disciplinary offence.

Effects of harassment

While victims of harassing behaviour may maintain a false air of normality, to the alert observer, certain clues

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may arouse concern and over time become increasingly obvious. Initially there might be:

- preoccupation with problematic work events
- irritability and poor concentration
- increasing sense of isolation
- withdrawal from group activities and normal everyday interactions with others
- weakened interpersonal skills
- frequent minor illnesses and sick leave
- a growing sense of anger.

Continued harassment can lead to increased confusion, resentment and fear. Emotional pressure can build up inside the person to the extent that they feel threatened and might explode or implode. The perpetrator's behaviour can make the sufferer feel trapped in a job that they would otherwise enjoy. Mistakes in the individual's performance may become more apparent. Worries about losing their job, financial dependence on it and loyalty to clients and other colleagues may all add to the growing stress.

Stress from workplace harassment can develop into post-traumatic stress. In situations involving prolonged institutional and individual experiences of racism, the long-term effects can sometimes resemble 'complex post-traumatic stress' (Alleyne A, 2004),[5] a term used to describe a specific syndrome over and above post-traumatic stress and related to repeated psychological traumas such as child abuse or captivity. Research (Alleyne A, 2004)[5] on black workers' experiences of harassment in the workplace suggests that the more subtle and virulent forms of modern day racism can also contribute to such complex effects (Hermon J L, 1992).[6]

Those experiencing harassment may respond by:

- ignoring the symptoms
- rationalising and making excuses
- acknowledging that personal control has given way to physical illnesses and mental distress.

Clinical symptoms of traumatic work stress

Physiological symptoms

- headaches, migraine, altered blood pressure, back pain, irritable bowel syndrome, increased susceptibility to infections

Psychological, emotional and behavioural symptoms

- anxiety, hypervigilance, irritability, panic attacks (eg experiencing palpitations just thinking about work), having a constant feeling of dread, being tearful
- depression, avoidance of reminders of the stressful events, social avoidance and withdrawal, emotional numbing
- delusions, personality changes, fluctuations in emotions, paranoia,
- comfort eating, excessive drinking and smoking
- post-traumatic stress

This list of symptoms is not exhaustive. The symptoms vary with individuals, and may be sporadic at first, or become more persistent.

Working therapeutically with those experiencing harassment in the workplace

Essential skills

- Challenge your personal beliefs about harassment by questioning whether:
  - these situations exist only in people's imaginations
  - harassment only happens to weak, unassertive people and those who ask for it
  - only managers harass
  - only men harass
  - it happens to politically correct people who can't take a joke
  - it's fashionable to cry racism and then seek compensation through an employment tribunal.
- **Validate clients' experiences**; enable clients to tell their stories by being an effective facilitator and non-judgmental witness
- **Provide containment**; by helping clients deal with overwhelming and intolerable feelings.
- **Strengthen clients' capacity for resilience**; by helping clients to come through challenges of adversity and maintaining emotional balance and psychic equilibrium.
- **Facilitate closure, healing and restoration**; by helping clients to let go in order to begin the process of repairing distorted perceptions of self and to reclaim their self worth.
- **Maintain your own capacity to think**; by receiving and holding clients' distress without

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absorbing it or acting out. Supervision is essential for maintaining the professional distance needed in this work.

- Provide information about supportive resources; by being aware of trade unions such as ACAS (Advisory, Conciliation and Arbitration Service) or other resources such as the CRE (Commission for Racial Equality), the EOC (Equal Opportunities Commission), and HSE (Health and Safety Executive). Both the CRE and EOC have issued Codes of Practice for the purpose of eliminating discrimination in employment.

Essential themes

Working with invisible injuries of workplace harassment

Human beings achieve good mental health by having a strong sense of cohesion and continuity in their lives. Such feelings enable us to feel properly grounded and connected to others and ourselves. Having a sense of self-worth validated by others is a key factor to maintaining this psychological equilibrium.

Many writers, (Herman J L, 1992),[6,7] (Garland C, 1999),[8] (Starker, Watson, Robinson, 2003)[9] agree that psychological reactions to traumatic events cause interruptions to positive feeling states and upset our internal balance. When such conditions persist and become severe, they can disrupt effective functioning. A diagnosis of PTSD (post-traumatic stress disorder) can be distinguished from generalised post-traumatic stress when there is a history of exposure to a traumatic event and in addition, over a specified period of time, the presence of some or all of three main groups of symptoms. These are:

- recurrent and intrusive recollections, or re-experiencing, of traumatic events that distress the person
- avoidance of stimuli associated with the traumatic events, emotional numbing, and withdrawal and detachment from others
- hyper-vigilance and hyper-arousal.

If the symptoms continue for a minimum of one month, PTSD may be present. If symptoms persist for up to three months, the diagnosis may be acute PTSD. PTSD becomes chronic when symptoms persist for more than three months.

Workplace harassment may cause PTSD. Over time, this invariably leads to invisible, but nevertheless real, psychological pain. Chronic psychological pain can lead to 'radical disconnection'(Starker, Watson, Robinson, 2003)[9] a form of emotional *disturbance* that threatens the individual's capacity to have a sound mind. Therapists can identify such emotional distress when clients talk about experiencing deep shame from ongoing humiliation, embarrassment, guilt, fear, loss of power and loss of dignity. Further signs of such distress are in client's constant questioning of their self- worth and their relating in an anxious state of hyper-vigilance. Such negative experiences may lead to deep and debilitating stress and distorted self perceptions. It is not uncommon for individuals to say they are 'being taken over by events' or 'not thinking straight'; or for them to say they 'don't know what to think or believe anymore'; or for them to ask 'am I going mad?' Therapists can help clients who suffer these experiences not to sink into a spiral of despair and depression.

Practical therapeutic steps for working with invisible injuries

- help clients to tell their stories as a way of desensitising from the traumatic event and to begin to reframe their experiences
- assist in both a literal and symbolic return to a safe place
- help clients to name their experiences and offering support in the promotion of connections necessary to deal with psychic disconnections caused by workplace trauma
- promote connections at various levels of information processing:
  1. Facilitate the pre-narrative, ie encourage clients to share factual accounts of their experiences, what they are conscious of and can readily access from their memory. Factual accounting, which is not infused with effect, is important in helping the client to order their thinking about events and feel they are being heard.
  2. Facilitate the subsequent retelling of these stories by encouraging clients to express their feelings and interpretations of their experiences. Connecting feelings and interpretations to events may lead to the narrative becoming a more integrated story, which is important for clients who might be emotionally disorientated by their experiences.
  3. Help clients to put things in context. This

may include assisting individuals to see what belongs to them and what belongs to the perpetrator. The object is to help inhibit the consolidatinn of cognitive distortions relating to the event.

Working with the physical effects of trauma

Therapists should pay equivalent attention to the physical effects of workplace stress. Ill health can present an added worry to ongoing experiences of harassment and soon become debilitating for sufferers. Research (Bloik, 2002)[10] (McKenzie K,2002)[11] indicates that the effects of hormones released in prolonged or severe psychological trauma, impact on the immune system and may render the person more liable to immune-related illness such as chronic fatigue syndrome. The cardiovascular system may also be affected, causing high blood pressure and diabetes.

Working with wounded identity and self-esteem issues

Restoring self-structure should be the key aim of any therapeutic work in this area, as workplace harassment damages self-esteem and can lead to deep identity wounding. Therapeutic skills necessary to achieve this aim include:

- enabling clients to experience feelings and mourn any losses
- supporting clients to keep sight of and hold onto a sense of who they were before the difficulties started
- facilitating the work of reclaiming sense of self and wholeness
- helping clients to strengthen their capacity for resilience and coping
- helping clients to let go of the past and rebuild from the point of rupture and damage.

Working with the internal oppressor

Enabling clients to see what they themselves might bring to difficult work situations is also a key part of the helping process. Care should be taken in the timing and nature of this area of challenging work.

The internal oppressor can sometimes be a more formidable foe than the most oppressive of external situations. Therapists need to be aware that clients' unresolved issues of, for example, being bullied as a child or having problems with authority figures, can cloud present realities at work. The work in this area, therefore, is to help clients see what is theirs, what belongs to the perpetrator and what is chronic within the actual culture of the workplace.

Workplaces are hotbeds for projective identification. Individuals may act out and project negative unwanted feelings on others. Recipients of such experiences are usually perceived by others as 'less than' other people or seen in unfavourable and negative ways. 'Difference', in this context, is often viewed as a problem. Those who become easy recipients of negative projections include black and other minority ethnic people, gay men and lesbians, people with disabilities, those who challenge the status quo and others who are perceived as threats. Individuals may react by 'hooking' onto external elements of the present difficulties, thus creating a complex scene where workplace dramas are played out. The perpetrator and 'victim' may re-enact these situations periodically or continuously.

Helping clients to maintain personal power is essential to the work of avoiding the victim trap. Therapists should be mindful however of the need for well-timed and sensitive personal challenges in this work so as to avoid risks of re-traumatising clients.

Clients may find it helpful to explore in therapy the possible range of appropriate sources of referral, e.g. dispute resolution or mediatinn services for employer and employee or cultural experts who may bring their particular expertise to the procedures, but for ethical reasons therapists should be careful of making specific recommendations.

Ethical dilemmas may arise with clients who are experiencing harassment in the workplace. For example, a therapist who becomes aware of a bully in the workplace may consider that the bully needs help in order to protect other employees. The therapist may need to decide whether or not to intervene. Each situation should be thoroughly assessed with help and guidance from their supervisor.

Therapists should note that work conflicts involving institutional racism, individual racial prejudice and workplace oppression often present in subtle and problematic ways. What both black and white workers may hold and carry historically can compound

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difficulties. Feelings of superiority and inferiority and other past-unresolved issues of race can be played out insidiously in a context in which caution still inhibits the articulation of racial prejudice in work contexts.

Therapists need to challenge their own views on race and racism before achieving a level of cross-cultural competence that can empower the client to make effective interventions.

Summary

Harassment affects individual potential, effective work relationships and productivity, in ways that are damaging to individuals and employers. Only by working together at every level of human relations can the problem be recognised, tackled and overcome.

Workplace harassment presents practitioners with a real therapeutic challenge. Therapists should expect to validate clients' experiences, provide containment, facilitate closure and healing, and strengthen clients' resilience and coping strategies as well as maintain their own capacity to think systemically about group relationships and workplace dynamics. Practitioners need to be alert to effects of obvious and overt harassment, as well as complex mental health presentations from silent and subtle forms of racial prejudice. They should also be attentive to their own supervision needs, amongst which should be an awareness of possible vicarious traumatisation which can occur through sympathetic participation in the client's experiences. Additionally, in cases where clients may decide to initiatecomplaints procedures or take legal action against their perpetrator, conscientious and accurate note taking and record keeping will prove invaluable. Therapists should refer to the BACP Ethical Framework, BACP Information Sheets G1 Access to records of Counselling and Psychotherapy Sessions and the reference book *Therapist in Court* (Bond and Sandhu, 2005).

In trauma work of the kind addressed in this Information Sheet, it should be noted that some individuals might recover with little help or with timely short-term interventions. For others, where damage has been entrenched, longer-term support may be necessary, or referral to other areas of specialised support and treatment.

Dr Aileen Alleyne is a UKCP registered psychotherapist and clinical supervisor in private practice in South London. She does research and training in cultural and diversity issues in organisations and educational group settings. She has also written and published papers on these and related topics. Email: aileen@kisskadee.com Website: www.aileenalleyne.com

References

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Further reading

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BACP Information Sheet on Access to Records (currently being updated)

BACP Information Sheet on Counselling with Children and Young People

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Law

Age Regulations – expected October 2006

Equal Treatment Directive

Disability Discrimination Act 1995

Equal Pay Act 1970

Harassment Act 1997

Part Time Workers (Prevention of Less Favourable Treatment) Regulations 2000

Public Interest Disclosure Act 1998

Race Relations Act 1976

Race Relations Amendment Act 2000

Sex Discrimination Act 1975

Sex Discrimination (Gender Reassignment) Regulations 1999

Sexual Orientation Regulations 2003

July 2006

BACP is aware that law and practice are always in a process of development and change. If you have evidence that this Information Sheet is now inaccurate or out of date feel free to contact us. If you know of any impending changes that affect its content we would also be pleased to hear from you.

It should be noted that this Information Sheet offers broad guidance, which sets out industrial good practice, but it should not be substituted for legal and for other professional advice applicable to your particular circumstances.

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"A psychotherapeutic Understanding of Black Identity in Workplace Contexts"

Aileen Alleyne

Appendix 5

- **Training Video Contract**

Aileen Alleyne

From: "Wheeler, Professor S." <sw103@leicester.ac.uk>
To: "Aileen Alleyne" <aileen@kisskadee.com>; "Gill Tuckwell (E-mail)" <Gilltuckwell@aol.com>
Cc: "Sheers, J.E.M." <jems1@leicester.ac.uk>
Sent: 22 September 2004 09:32
Attach: Aleyne and Gill.doc
Subject: Cross Cultural video project

21st September 2004

Dear Aleyne and Gill

Many thanks for your training video proposal that seems well thought through and highly appropriate. I should be delighted to work with you on producing this video.

I am passing the plan over to John Shears, the video production manager, and will set up a meeting as soon as possible.

We will offer you a formal contract, the details of which need to be discussed and negotiated. Meanwhile many thanks for all your efforts to date and I look forward to taking it further.

Best wishes Sue

Professor Sue Wheeler
Director of Counselling and Psychotherapy Programme,
University of Leicester
128 Regent Road
LE1 7PA

Proposal for training video for working with diversity and racial difference in counselling

Aim

To provide audio-visual material of counselling interactions and an accompanying manual to stimulate thinking and discussion about issues of diversity and racial difference.

Objectives

i) to enable discussion about issues presented in the counselling vignettes;
ii) to extend knowledge and awareness of underlying issues;
iii) to provide a forum for exploring one's own emotional responses to the vignettes;
iv) to promote competence in working with issues of diversity and racial difference.

Format

The video will consist of four vignettes of counselling interactions and an accompanying manual for facilitators. Each vignette will last for approximately ten minutes and will present a specific theme pertinent to diversity or racial difference. The manual will draw attention to relevant underlying issues and will suggest possible uses of the video. The thematic headings and underlying issues are outlined below:

Vignette 1 – Identity issues

- sense of self
- cultural issues relating to self esteem
- self and other
- the threat of difference

Vignette 2 – Discrimination at work

- issues of power
- inclusion and exclusion
- scapegoating and targeting
- organisational issues

Vignette 3 – Issues in a mixed race couple relationship

- cultural expectations of intimacy and sexuality
- values and beliefs
- gender roles
- extended/nuclear families

"A psychotherapeutic Understanding of Black Identity in Workplace Contexts"

Aileen Alleyne

Appendix 6

- **BACP Contract**

British Association for Counselling and Psychotherapy

BACP House, 35-37 Albert Street, Rugby, CV21 2SG
Telephone 0870 443 5252 Fax 0870 443 5161
Minicom 0870 443 5162 E-mail bacp@bacp.co.uk
www.bacp.co.uk
All calls charged at BT National Rate

This document formulates the commissioning contract for BACP Information Sheets.

THIS AGREEMENT is effective from the 21 June 2005.

BETWEEN

British Association for Counselling and Psychotherapy (BACP)

and

Aileen Alleyne, 35 Pellatt Road, LONDON SE22 9JA (the 'author')

For the production of an Information Sheet entitled "Harassment in the Workplace" (working title) being approximately 3000 words to be produced for editing by 1 September 2005.

1. Copyright shall be held by BACP.
2. The document shall be subject to scrutiny and editing by the Information Services Editorial Board.
3. There shall be a minimum of two drafts produced.
4. The author will receive final edited copy for comment before publication.
5. The information sheet will include a disclaimer stating that it is for information only and should not be substituted for professional advice.
6. Payment will be made only on satisfactory completion by the agreed deadlines of the commissioned work.
7. On satisfactory completion, as agreed by the Information Services Editorial Board and Information Services Department Manager, BACP will pay the author, on receipt of an invoice OR completion of an expenses form, a one off payment of £200.00 (two hundred pounds) inclusive of VAT.

Signed

E M O'Farrell
Head of Human Resources

Signed

Aileen Alleyne

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"A psychotherapeutic Understanding of Black Identity in Workplace Contexts"

Aileen Alleyne

Appendix 7

- **Contributions to Educational Data Bases**

Aileen Alleyne

From: "Eugene Ellis" <eeabeate@ntlworld.com>
To: "Aileen Alleyne" <aileen@kisskadee.com>
Sent: 23 October 2004 05:02
Subject: Fw: Black and Asian therapists On-line

Black and Asian therapists on-line

Dear Aileen

I am writing to ask you to contribute to the UK's first online directory of Black and Asian counsellors and therapists.

There is a place on the site for articles of interest. I would like to include your article entitled "Black identity and workplace oppression" CPR July 2004 Vol 4 No 1.

The aim of the directory is to facilitate Black and Asian clients in finding emotional and psychological support from therapists of African and Asian heritage who are qualified and experienced. The directory will also be of use for therapists wanting to network with other colleagues for their own professional development and supervisory purposes.

The directory is hosted on the website:
www.blackandasiantherpaists.co.uk

Entry to the directory is open to qualified counsellors, psychotherapists, clinical or counselling psychologists and psychiatrists who are working in private practice.

I hope you can contribute. If you can I will need an electronic copy of the article.

Eugene Ellis

Aileen Alleyne

From: "jane.ryan" <jane.ryan@allaboutpsychotherapy.com>
To: "Aileen Alleyne" <aileen@kisskadee.com>
Sent: 13 September 2004 14:12
Subject: call for papers and reviews

ALL ABOUT PSYCHOTHERAPY
THE ONLINE RESOURCE FOR PSYCHOTHERAPY

www.allaboutpsychotherapy.com

Dear Aileen,

Pre-launch Bulletin: Invitation to contribute articles and reviews

You may already be aware of this extensive website on psychotherapy, psychology, counselling and psychiatry (**www.allaboutpsychotherapy.com**), which will be launched during the next month.

We want to create a free flowing exchange of information on issues of theory and therapy. Several of our sections facilitate interaction, including *Media Watch*, *Journal Watch* and *Features*. Here people can share information and ideas on psychotherapy and other mental-health themes. This can advance research, theory and practice, as well as help with networking and personal-professional development.

I am writing to ask if you would like to contribute an item to the site, especially for its launch. In the case of a *Feature*, it could be an article that you have already written, whether previously published or not. Please note that your name will accompany any item you contribute. If you join our directories, your contribution can be hyperlinked to your directory entry, should you wish, so anyone reading your contribution will be able to contact you.

You can contribute to any of these three sections, as follows:-

Journal Watch
This is an opportunity to review or to refer others to academic that you think are important. To send us your review, please submit:

- Your name, profession and country
- The title and author of the journal article
- The name of the journal, volume and number, ISSN
- An email link to the journal publisher, if possible.
- Your email address if you wish to enter correspondence with others on the site.
- Your review (500-1000 words)

Media Watch
If you have noticed any interesting item in the media on psychotherapy or mental health in general, please let us know. It may be useful for someone's research, or may indicate the media's approach to a certain issue. It might be an obituary, book review or news item that caught your eye because it revealed something interesting about human nature, mental distress, or psychotherapy. We would like you to add your own comments to the piece, letting us know why you found it interesting or important (50-500 words). Others can

then refer to the item and comment.
To send us your review, please submit:

- Your name, profession and country
- The title and author of the original item
- The name of the newspaper, magazine, website or broadcaster
- An email link to that publisher.
- Your email address if you wish to enter correspondence with others on the site.
- Your review (500-1000 words)

Features
This is an opportunity to express your own clinical and theoretical interests. We would like to receive articles on issues relevant to psychotherapy, counselling, psychiatry, and psychology. To send us your feature, please submit:

- Your name, profession and country
- Your email address if you wish to enter correspondence with others on the site.
- Your article or paper (1500-2000 words)

In each case please return your piece to submissions@allaboutpsychotherapy.com

Editorial Policy
Allaboutpsychotherapy.com is an international forum with a focus on mental health, psychological problems and psychotherapy. It encompasses the disciplines of psychotherapy, psychiatry, counselling and psychology. We welcome submissions from professionals and researchers from relevant professional backgrounds, provided they have a bearing upon emotional problems or psychological disorders, or upon treatment of these. Research reports are welcomed. Case studies will be considered only if the author is able to confirm that the personal, biographical material relating to any client or patient is sufficiently disguised so that it cannot be recognised by others. Please note that contributors to certain sections of this website (such as *Media Watch*, *Journal Watch* and *Features*) must be registered psychotherapists, psychologists, counsellors, or psychiatrists.

Thank you very much in advance for any contribution you can make to the advance of psychotherapy through this site. We hope you will consider becoming a subscriber and joining our on-line community.

Best wishes

Jane Ryan
Creative and Marketing Director
jane.ryan@allaboutpsychotherapy.com

Project Manager: Ana Pires, 35 Croftdown Road, London NW5 1EL
Tel: 0207 428 0616 ana.pires@allaboutpsychotherapy.com

Creative and Marketing Director: Jane Ryan, 4 Snape Road, Tunstall, Suffolk, IP12 2JL
Tel: 01728 689090 jane.ryan@allaboutpsychotherapy.com

Board of Directors: Einar Jenssen, Sue Cowan Jenssen, Dr Bron Lipkin, Jane Ryan, Dr Morton Schatzman

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Electronic Library for Social Care (eLSC) – www.elsc.org.uk

- New to CaraData under 'counselling' include – ***Four articles from CPJ Dec04***: The internal oppressor and black identity wounding by Aileen Alleyne; Why bother about the Human Rights Act? by Ruth Costigan; Reflecting on supervision training courses: the heart of the matter by Caro Bailey; Being with the burned by Kathryn Burton and Anne Beaumont.

"A psychotherapeutic Understanding of Black Identity in Workplace Contexts"

Aileen Alleyne

Appendix 8

• Talks at Conferences

- Contributor to the sixth annual conference – 'Separation and Reunion forum
- Contributor to the Maya Centre lectures in Resilience (psychoanalytic perspectives)
- Guest speaker at the Guild of Psychotherapy Winter Conference 2003. Theme addressing race issues in psychotherapy training

SEPARATION AND REUNION FORUM (SRF)
SIXTH ANNUAL CONFERENCE

FRIDAY 25TH NOVEMBER 2005
9.00- 5.00 PM
LONDON METROPOLITAN UNIVERSITY,
STAPLETON HOUSE, HOLLOWAY ROAD, LONDON N7

'INTERNALISING THE HISTORICAL PAST: ISSUES FOR SEPARATION AND MOVING ON'

The historical past of enforced separation from families and homelands, although a distant four hundred years ago, seems still present enough to be creating difficulties for us as black people from the Caribbean. In what appears to be a persistent post-traumatic condition of this past, we continue to struggle to achieve collective autonomy and growth. Our progress is impeded in countless visible and invisible ways—in our relationship with ourselves, with each other, with our families and with our communities.
This Conference gives voice to these concerns by focusing chiefly on internal matters that contribute to such difficulties in the lives of some individuals and families.

Keynote Speakers: Professor Hilary McD. Beckles
Barbara Fletchman-Smith

A.M. Professor Beckles is Personal Chair, Professor of Economic and Social History, Principal, and Pro-Vice-Chancellor, Cave Hill Campus University of the West Indies, Barbados, West Indies. He is an internationally reputed Historian and well known author. He serves on Editorial Boards of several academic journals, including the Journal of Caribbean History. He is also a keen cricketer and researcher of cricket history and culture.

P.M. Mrs. Barbara Fletchman-Smith, M.A. (Psychoanalysis) is a Psychoanalyst, registered with the British Psychoanalytic Council. She practices privately and also works for the N.H.S. and the Inter-City Centre for Psychotherapy & Counselling. She is the author of 'Mental Slavery, Psychoanalytic Studies of Caribbean People'.

An Interdisciplinary Team of Facilitators will lead Discussion Groups.
Fee: £60.00 - Students £35.00 (copy of student card, please)
Refreshments & lunch provided *(please state if vegetarian/vegan)*
The Conference is organised in collaboration with: The London Metropolitan University and Training Link.

PLEASE COMPLETE APPLICATION FORM IN BLOCK LETTERS

Re: SIXTH ANNUAL CONFERENCE: 25TH NOVEMBER 2005

Name:

Address:

Tel. No: ..... **E-mail:** ..... **Occupation:** .....

Please send cheques payable to S.R.F. 54-56 Phoenix Road, London NW1 1ES

For further information Tel: 0207 383 5405
E-mail: admin@serefo.org.uk

To: Elaine Arnold

From: Aileen Alleyne

6th September 2005

Workshop title - The internal oppressor: still parked in your backyard!

This workshop will introduce you to two key concepts in relation to the conference topic. They are *the internal oppressor* (which is distinct from internalised oppression) and *cultural enmeshment*. You will have the opportunity to explore these concepts in relation to yourself and discuss constructive ways to deal with these impediments to personal and collective progress.

"Who would have thought my shrivel'd heart
Could have recover'd greenness?" George Herbert

11 February 2006 second lecture / **Aileen Alleyne**

The internal oppressor: the veiled companion of racial oppression

An all-too-often guarded area within the discourse on race is the internal oppressor. What part does it play in influencing the impact of racial oppression? What is the difference between internalised oppression in which an individual takes in the values and beliefs of the external oppressor, and the internal oppressor: an aspect of the self that carries vulnerabilities from the person's own early life, and historical baggage from previous generations? In order to understand resilience or vulnerability in the face of racism this internal component must be addressed by both patient and therapist.

Aileen Alleyne is a psychotherapist and a trainer in cultural and racial diversity in working and educational settings.

11 March 2006 / **Brian Martindale**

Resilience and vulnerability in later life

Some people cope so well with the ravages that may accompany ageing. Others collapse, seemingly for the first time, without much external provocation. What can psychoanalysis contribute to our understanding of these great variables? Brian Martindale will demonstrate how unconscious dependency issues from early life can determine resilience or vulnerability in late life. He will also show how identification with the late-life experiences of key persons in our lives can make a vital contribution to our ability to face the guillotine of finite time.

Dr Brian Martindale, psychoanalyst, worked for sixteen years in the Psychiatry of Old Age Department at St Charles Hospital, West London. He is currently Consultant Psychiatrist to the Early Intervention in Psychosis Service, South Tyne and Wearside NHS Trust.

"Three highballs and I think I'm St Francis of Assisi"
Dorothy Parker

Venue

These lectures will be held at
The Interchange Studios, Hampstead Town Hall Centre,
213 Haverstock Hill, London NW3 4QP
Belsize Park ≈ Hampstead Heath

Lecture timetable

Registration and coffee 10 – 10.30 am
Speaker/s and discussion 10.30 – 12 pm
Coffee 12 – 12.45 pm

Cost

£25 per lecture. £130 for the full series.
Please complete and send in the enclosed booking form.

Further information

The Maya Centre, Eastgate Building,
131B St John's Way, London N19 3RQ
tel 020 7281 2673 Email: info@mayacentre.org.uk

The Maya Centre

The Maya Centre, now 21 years old, is a charitable organisation providing free psychodynamic counselling for women in situations of particular difficulty.

Its work focuses on the mothers of young children and teenagers, older women, women in situations of violence, Black women, Irish, Turkish and Somali women for whom counselling is given in their mother tongue. This series has arisen out of the work of the Maya Centre.

"You may write me down in history / With your bitter twisted lies,
You may trod me in the very dirt / But still, like dust, I'll rise."
Maya Angelou

Cover image: Shibata Zeshin / Bridgeman Art Library

The Maya Centre

Resilience

A psychoanalytic exploration

Saturday mornings, October 2005 to March 2006

Aida Alayarian, Aileen Alleyne, Elaine Arnold,
Lisa Baraitser, Mia Beaumont, Sue Gerhardt,
Brian Martindale, Amélie Noack, Margot Waddell

"Much safer stands the bowing reede
than doth the stubborn oke" Anon

8 October 2005 / Sue Gerhardt

Is there such a thing as a resilient baby?

Sue Gerhardt will describe how love and affection, or the lack of them, shape the brain in very early life. She will think about the meaning of resilience in the context of early relationships, and will explore links between the emotional climate of early experience and later outcomes – whether emotional wellbeing or psychological difficulty. The implications of her approach are profound and inspiring.

Sue Gerhardt is a psychoanalytic psychotherapist working in private practice with adults. She also works for the Oxford Parent Infant Project, a charity offering counselling to parents and babies. She is the author of the acclaimed book *Why Love Matters* (2004).

10/12

~~12 November~~ **2005** / Margot Waddell

Grouping or ganging: the psychodynamics of bullying

What is the meaning of resilience in childhood?
This paper looks at the complex interaction between external circumstances and internal disposition, and asks why one child becomes a bully and another a victim. It draws on examples from early infant/mother relationships and from the different settings in which bullying is often found, particularly schools, examining these in the light of developmental psychology and in particular psychodynamic theory. It does not seek to offer solutions or find causal explanations, but to address descriptively the deep-rooted sources of bullying and the ways in which these attack strength and resilience in childhood.

Margot Waddell is a psychoanalyst and Consultant Child and Adolescent Psychotherapist at the Tavistock Clinic.

"He saw the cities of many people and learnt their ways.
He suffered many hardships on the high seas in his struggles to preserve his life and bring his comrades home" Homer

12/11

~~10 December~~ **2005** / Lisa Baraitser and Amélie Noack

Mother Courage: reflections on maternal resilience

Why is it that some women who have experienced devastating early child experiences go on to mother effectively, whilst others struggle? This paper explores the way in which mothers face the challenges of parenting, drawing on both internal and external resources in their response to their children. Maternal resilience is seen not just as a matter of survival or courage, but as an ability to bear and integrate maternal aggression, hate and failure. When these feelings can be acknowledged and understood, maternal resilience can provide a model with which to think about the protective function of therapeutic intervention for mothers and their children.

Lisa Baraitser is writing her doctoral thesis on maternal subjectivity. Amélie Noack is a Jungian analyst, group analyst, and convenor of the London Qualifying Course at the Institute of Group Analysis. Both have worked extensively with mothers in a range of therapeutic settings, including the Maya Centre.

14 January 2006 first lecture / Mia Beaumont

Working with an asylum seeker: some aspects of vulnerability and resilience

Mia Beaumont will speak about her work with an asylum seeker who was also a victim of torture. Because of experiences in both adult life and her own infancy, this patient was not able to find resilience in the face of catastrophe. The lecture will show how trauma and inner vulnerabilities from the past can combine and interact to undermine strength.

Mia Beaumont is a psychoanalytic psychotherapist and an educational psychotherapist. She works in private practice, is Chair of the Caspari Foundation for Educational Therapy, and a therapist at the Medical Foundation for Victims of Torture.

"Some shape of beauty moves away the pall
From our dark spirits" Keats

14 January 2006 second lecture / Aida Alayarian

Working at the Refugee Therapy Centre

Work with refugees who have experienced trauma and adversity inevitably raises issues of resilience. How can psychoanalytic clinicians best work with these issues? Resilience can be seen as an outcome, a protective factor, an individual characteristic, a process. The aim of this paper is to extract characteristics commonly associated with resilience and to explore the dynamics of creating a secure inner state when the external world is profoundly unpredictable and even life-threatening. Aida will talk about her own experience and that of some of the refugees she has worked with.

Aida Alayarian is a chartered psychologist and a child and adult psychotherapist. She is a co-founder and Clinical Director of the Refugee Therapy Centre in North London.

11 February 2006 first lecture / Elaine Arnold

Families split between the UK and the Caribbean

When families migrated from the Caribbean to the UK most envisaged their stay as temporary. Few were prepared for the social and economic difficulties they encountered. Many had left their children with their extended family, and were only reunited many years later. Researching the reunions of women who were left behind as children, Elaine Arnold has found that some of them were able to transcend the traumatic reunion with parents. Many attributed their survival to their ability to recall and reflect upon memories of the care they received in their early years.

Elaine Arnold is a retired Lecturer in Social Work at Sussex University. She was for several years Coordinator of Training at Nafsiyat, Intercultural Therapy Centre. She is currently Director of the Separation Reunion Forum.

LISTENING IN COLOUR (synopsis)

Aileen Alleyne – Guild Winter Conference – 18th January 2003

The main presentation at the Winter Conference was given by Aileen Alleyne whose paper focussed on the key issue and process of *de-centering* in psychotherapy training. This concept called into question a single centered idea of teaching which can apply to all issues of difference and diversity. The presenter noted that her presentation title, Listening in Colour, spoke very clearly to this process; one of recognising, understanding and appreciating difference. The title also stressed the key issue of learning that appreciated the impact of differences in social location, based on the whole ensemble of race, gender, class, sexual orientation, religion, physical ability, and language. Her emphasis on black students in psychotherapy training raised several issues for discussion. The presenter put forward a number of themes which were common for black students in training. These were, (a) black students always finding themselves in a minority of 1 or 2 trainees on psychotherapy training courses (b) only having sketchy inclusions of race and cultural issues in the training programme (c) black students being made to feel they had to raise and carry issues of race and cultural diversity in the programme (d) black students being often left feeling burdened with responsibilities to teach their peers and tutors about issues of race and cultural diversity or be spokesperson for their cultural group (e) in many instances, race regularly being handled in a patronising or stereotypical way (f) as a consequence black students were constantly being left in conflict as to how to present their concerns which were often misinterpreted as lack of assimilation, or their problem.

The presenter pointed out that these common concerns for black students clearly highlighted a lack in embracing issues of diversity, and the true character of inequality which is grounded in differential needs. The presenter felt there was a need to critique more widely Eurocentric theories and concepts which are still held firmly within psychotherapy trainings. She pointed out that the dissatisfaction expressed within the aforementioned points left black students feeling excluded and not mirrored in their cultural and racial experiences. The effects on the black student were described in terms of them having to endure long periods of isolation, alienation and even low level depression. In some instances, this experience would last throughout the student's training. Some black males described their experience of training as psychological emasculation, whilst women concentrated on feelings of, shutting down, becoming suspicious and paranoid. The enduring process of trying to cope in training had in some instances lead to feelings of dissociation which seemed to stem from a real fear of loosing a core and sense of one's true self.

The presenter made use of the theoretical point of Winnicott's precursor of the mirror, i.e. the mother's face with its facilitating expressions as the key for healthy emotional development. She linked this concept to environment of psychotherapy training which in similar ways, needed to provide a welcoming face and place where all its students can be reflected equally and fully within the process of their continuing personal and professional development.

In terms of solutions, factors contributing to a facilitative learning environment were offered in terms of (a) caution to tutors when applying for example, aspects of Object Relations Theory or other theories that unwittingly pathologised and patronised racial

groups (b) tutors being mindful of possible destructive dynamics that can exist where there are two lone black students in a predominantly white training group (c) tutors being competent in handling situations where the tendency of some black people is to promote the reductionist approach where all difficulties are reduced to problems of race and racism (d) tutors being competent in handling dynamics of denial and avoidance stemming from a 'colour-blind' approach (e) the training ethos moving from an essentialist or individual view of human beings to a relational one (f) training management adopting the American multicultural training model which is a philosophy that promotes the acknowledgement, appreciation and usage of cultural differences (and similarities) as a critical factor in the development and implementation of any system, institution, programme or curriculum (g) training and management personnel dealing with fears of *de-centering* their tried and tested orthodoxies at four distinct levels, that is, the personal, interpersonal, institutional and cultural (h) tutors making the classroom a democratic setting where everyone feels a responsibility to contribute towards the central goal of transformative pedagogy (i) all educators remembering that a democratic training environment will work from the premise of 'Listening in Colour': **Who speaks? Who listens? How and why?**

The presenter drew on the works of predominantly American educators, Dr Valerie Batts, bel hooks, Peter McLaren, Freire, Paulo, and Winnicott to illustrate her points. She offered further challenges to the directors of training institutions by suggesting that they remove any lip-service references to intercultural ambitions and demonstrate realistic forms of positive discrimination to improve the vast imbalance. She suggested that high training fees, for example, which exclude some people, could be lowered to allow low income earners to gain access to training. Additionally, a

potential clientele that would not otherwise have access to psychotherapy training, could experience equal opportunity by making payment more accessible through instalment arrangements. Changes in recruitment which included teaching staff from diverse racial and cultural groups, needed to be extended to current traditional customary practices that still upheld trends in holding on to the familiar and like-minded set. Change at the very top was also necessary. Training committees which have never had a black or Asian member in its midst will have to be challenged in shifting out of their comfort zones by reviewing their practices of recruitment. The presenter ended by acknowledging the fact that the problem of the lack of diversity in psychotherapy training cultures was no easy task to solve, however, it was no reason to give up on it either. She emphasised the point that whilst a weighted white membership is allowed to direct the operations in psychotherapy training management, the opportunity to fully discuss multiculturalism will continually be forfeited and discourse will always be fundamentally flawed.

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"A psychotherapeutic Understanding of Black Identity in Workplace Contexts"

Aileen Alleyne

Appendix 9

- **Participation in External Research Projects**

Aileen Alleyne

From: <kamaldeep.dhillon@scmh.org.uk>
To: "Aileen Alleyne" <aileen@kisskadee.com>
Sent: 09 February 2005 13:36
Attach: CPJ.1004.30_33.pdf; CPJ.1204.48_50.pdf; CPR - Alleyne - Research Doc..pdf
Subject: Re: delight

Thank you heaps for your electronic copies - I had seen the others too. Very appreciated and now more easier to share with fellow colleagues. I am excited to have met you this week and feel that there will be lots to explore and collaborate on.

I met my SCMH colleagues today for brain-storming and consulting on a project on discrimination in the mental health workforce. The interest is there and in many of its manifestations (race/culture/ethnicity/gender/sexuality/disability). We are keen to shape a project using a case-study and focus group narrative based qualitative methodology, with the aim of trying to understand 'what discrimination actually means' (given the complexity of the construct to help understand its nature and mechanisms) and 'how we respond to it (effect/affect/coping/) and some other areas. The aims are fairly open given the little work done in the mental health workforce.

I am wondering how you might wish to be involved (am open to suggestions) and on what sort of basis (the project has not yet been budgeted and likely to be confirmed by August or thereabouts)? I will think some more on this and would value knowing of your expectations from me/SCMH?

I am aiming to write up this research proposal by the end of this month and am keen to have your views.

Dhillon is quite a common surname. lol. Not related to Harinder, though I do hear her name around. The conference sounds interesting and I'd value some more details, webbased or otherwise. Do feel free to give my name.

Many thats Aileen,

Kam.

"Aileen Alleyne" <aileen@kisskadee.com> 07/02/2005 21:18
To: <kamaldeep.dhillon@scmh.org.uk>
cc:
Subject: Re: delight

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(See attached file: CPJ.1004.30_33.pdf)(See attached file:

"A psychotherapeutic Understanding of Black Identity in Workplace Contexts"

Aileen Alleyne

Appendix 10

- **Specialist Seminars Document**

Professional Knowledge Paper

from

Specialist Seminars

DPS 5071

~Aileen Alleyne – 2002 to 2005~

Seminar 1

Embracing Effective Multicultural Systems – Dr Valarie Batts
– *12th July 2002*

Seminar 2

Poetic Writing as Search and Research – Miller Mair & David Hart
– *25th October 2002*

Seminar 3

From Transmissional to Transformational Learning: Individual and Organisational Perspectives – Dr Michael Carroll
– *31 January 2003*

Seminar 4

Building a better bridge between research and practice – Marvin Goldfried
– *23rd October 2003*

Seminar 5

Illusion and Disillusion in Writing – Michael Jacobs
– *1st May 2003*

Seminar 6

Life after the Doctorate...continuing to be a researcher – Dr Nigel Copsey
– *23rd January 2004*

Seminar 7

Being in two minds: Trauma and Attachment – Professor Jill Straker
– *15th March 2004*

Seminar 8

Turning the obvious into the problematic: the challenge of phenomenological research - Professor Ernesto Spinelli
– *5th May 2004*

"MY SPECIALIST SEMINARS MAP"

Specialist Knowledge Paper

I present my Specialist Seminars map and accompanying review to show how these sessions have contributed to the development of my thinking and enhancement of my journey throughout the doctoral project.

I attended eight Seminars between the period of July 2002 and May 2004. These sessions either related directly to my project, e.g. seminars 1, 5, 7, 8, or otherwise offered particular knowledge towards my professional development, e.g. seminars 2, 3, 4, and 6. All sessions were largely informative and provided a focus for both the process of continued learning and a welcomed opportunity to maintain contact with other doctoral colleagues. The chosen eight sessions were helpful overall in making my research project personal, reflexive and meaningful.

I will elaborate on each of the mandated six that I found most beneficial and demonstrate as required, my (a) preparation for attendance, (b) participation during the seminars, (c) reflection upon learning experience, (d) an ability to critique and (e) relevance to final project and practice. The remaining two seminars will be included with a brief summary of their content.

SEMINAR 1

EMBRACING EFFECTIVE MULTICULTURAL SYSTEMS - Dr Valarie Batts – 12th July 2002 – *This seminar offered the VISIONS model - a four level approach (personal, interpersonal, institutional, cultural) to understanding and challenging oppression. Implications for academic research was also discussed on the day.*

I valued this session for many reasons. It addressed a subject of particular personal interest and my appetite was wetted by the preparatory text. From the presenter, I observed and gained skills for cogently addressing the thorny subject of oppression and racism in a manner that included and respected the diverse make-up of groups. I

benefited from having a balanced level of tutorial and experiential input that allowed for maximum participation and reflection. My own knowledge and awareness of the topic were increased and deepened. I found it particularly refreshing and helpful that the day was about subtle or "modern" racism, as oppose to its obvious counterpart, overt racism. The complexities of this theme were pertinent to my research topic and I had much to enquire about and offer on the day.

Dr Batts provided a workable model (*VISIONS*) for addressing issues of race and cultural inequality in organisations. It was significantly useful and I have since applied an adapted version of its four-stage approach in my organisational consultancy work. I have also customised some of the session's experiential group exercises, all with due acknowledgement to the source. I was particularly interested to learn that Dr Batts's model had evolved from a consultative process and saw this as an exemplar of collaborative work. This helpful illustration served as a mirror to my own collaborative research work and affirmed my chosen approach to addressing race and diversity issues for this enterprise.

I found less beneficial the weighty handout on Proctor and Gamble's Diversity Facts, Figures and Financial Performance. In my view, this "dry" information (61 xeroxed double-sided pages for each of the 12 attendees) was unnecessary and a vast waste of stationery. A reference would have easily sufficed.

As a black woman presented this seminar, I found the experience welcoming, affirming and reflective of my presence. Although a liberated woman, it continues to be important to me to have such representation in settings of educational influence. I learnt from the presenter's manner and delivery that the topic of diversity and oppression, which so easily generates strong feelings, is best handled by negotiating clear and meaningful guidelines at the start. Prior to this seminar, my treatment of ground rules was somewhat perfunctory. Dr Batts's session changed that. I choose to highlight this particular aspect of the day, as I now agree that meaningful guidelines and ground rules are pivotal to the shape and outcome of any groups' learning. Particularly useful from her list were:-

a) the "try on" approach which facilitates self-focus and empathy. This approach encourages opening up and letting in of the unknown and unfamiliar, whilst noting their impact, and one's reactions to their felt presence.

b) it's OK to disagree but it is also important to be able to **listen long enough to hear the Other**

c) it's not OK to blame, shame, attack self and others

d) practice multiple thinking (this is about engaging in the process not formulating prescriptives)

I found these distinctive ground rules invaluable to diversity group work, an area that continues to be a large part of my professional work.

Ground rules and guidelines for effective dialoguing stirred up much thought about their relevance to such situations as the setting for final doctoral presentations. Granted this forum is not about teaching others, I am nevertheless mindful that it is a place to validate the process, rigour and conduct of my research work. And considering my work is about race dynamics and black/white relations, I believe Dr Batts's helpful input raises considerations for the application of such guidelines in such a setting. This query presents a curious conundrum in my view and one which is yet to be discussed. The challenges I will therefore meet are many. In presenting, I need to be clear but not dogmatic, flexible but not deviate from my particular focus, authoritative but not overassertive or overbearing, open but not leave myself too vulnerable. This difficult position of holding tension and maintaining balance, although familiar, is one that I will have to hold in going public with my work.

Hugely comforting was Dr Batts's generous (off the record) self-disclosure about difficulties and challenges she encountered during her PhD journey researching race issues in the US. Her experiences both affirmed my concerns in airing minority issues and gave acknowledgment to the real difficulties and 'givens' within society. From this seminar, I gained a special knowledge that could only have been acquired

from such 'intimate' exchange. I was encouraged in my learning from someone whom I felt was an "insider" to some specific difficulties I needed to be heard and addressed.

SEMINAR 2

BUILDING A BETTER BRIDGE BETWEEN RESEARCH AND PRACTICE – Marvin Goldfried – 23rd October 2003 – *This session presented an overview of the long-standing gap between practice and research. It examined how research can provide conceptual and pragmatic ways for creating a bridge between the two disciplines.*

This seminar spoke directly to its title and was memorable for several reasons. The presenter's dynamic style was persuasive in addressing the strained alliance between psychotherapy and research and the role practitioners need to play in redressing this situation. The thrust of the session reaffirmed my choice in pursuing a research doctorate by professional studies as oppose to a traditional PhD.

Dr Goldfried's insights into how ideas are changed were particularly relevant and transferable to my research. His assertion that most research starts with a tacit knowledge, i.e. knowing something in your bones, but also being able to make it palatable in the research presentation, rang a familiar note. It impassioned the genesis of my own work and also reminded me of Dr Batts's views that we must engage others in the process (not subjectivity) of our work.

Of particular help were the clear suggestions on how to package research presentations. Using the language of the consumer and finding a common humane theme that all people can relate to, was particularly helpful. An overview of the philosophy of understanding with clear descriptors for the Verstehen and Behavioural positions, were informative. Some aspects of this theme echoed Dr Batts's "try on" and no blame approach to facilitating dialogue with disputatious topics.

A summary of the many ways research can inform psychotherapy practice was enabling in further evaluating the nature and intentions of my own research project. I was able to identify more clearly my approach to my enterprise which I saw as straddling the positions of, (a) scrutinising the phenomenon (***basic research***) and (b) asking the question of "how" does change occur (***process research***). This clarification validated my previous shaky views following Professor Portwood's much earlier input on "The professional demands of Doctoral Projects". In this seminar, he delineated three key intentions of projects, - informative, reformative, transformative. I tentatively assessed then, that my project was hovering in its intentions somewhere between a ***reformative*** and ***transformative*** enterprise. Reformative, because it is redirecting thinking and changing emphasis on looking at a particular happening in black/white interpersonal dynamics, and transformative, because the phenomenological enquiry has revealed a much fuller understanding of trauma in this context. The clarification from Dr Goldfried's seminar (which correlated with learning from Dr Portwood's session) was pivotal and contributed to a transparency and clarity in the project's intentions.

Particularly unforgettable was Dr Goldfried's near master class demonstration of the ability to hover long enough on a thorny, in this instance, "intercultural" issue, before offering his subjective input. The immediacy and skilfulness of this particular exchange with a black participant offered both hope and a belief that robust and healthy discourses on race issues were indeed possible in education.

With regard to personal preparations for this seminar, time constraints had interfered with a full engagement with the pre-reading text. However, I recorded copious notes during this seminar and have reflected on them, both for the writing up of this paper and for wider purposes of completing my final document. I have also followed up Dr Goldfried's recommended website references on the new concept of "minority stress" which has been invaluable to my work.

SEMINAR 3

FROM TRANSMISSIONAL TO TRANSFORMATIONAL LEARNING: INDIVIDUAL AND ORGANISATIONAL PERSPECTIVES – Michael Carroll – 31 January 2003 – *This seminar focused on factors that block and facilitate individual and organisational learning. Two key concepts – transmissional and transformational learning were fully explicated for the purposes of thinking through broader themes of evaluating learning and its impact on self and others.*

It was particularly pleasing to be taught by Dr Carroll again, as I had been his student on a previous training. I welcomed once more his inimitable style of facilitating learning through a combination of wit, wisdom and transparency. I experienced the well-structured day as balancing both the right amount of tutorial input, experiential work and space to share in the group.

This seminar focused on factors that block and facilitate individual and organisational learning. Two key concepts – transmissional and transformational learning, were of particular interest and were fully explicated for the purposes of thinking through broader themes of evaluation, and impact on self and others. The day's theme held chief relevance to both my doctoral project and general professional work, and I have continued to reflect on many key themes from the session specifically in my psychotherapy practice.

I took away an enormous amount from the day and would find it difficult to acknowledge for this paper all areas of learning. However, of critical importance was my reflection on the differences between transmissional and transformational learning. I was welcomed the opportunity to engage in purposeful reflections on how past, parental and societal influences have shaped and continue to play a part in my approach to learning. I understood transmissional learning as being the desired product of learning that makes it "destinational" in its approach. It facilitates where you want and need to get to; it allows entry into formal places, offers rewards with credentials and provides routines, all sometimes with possible costs to such aspects as gaining mindfulness, open-mindedness, surprises, and the art of learning to live with the delicate tension of not having absolutes. My upbringing and culture subscribed to

transmissional learning for these sought after outcomes. And furthermore, being black emphasised this goal. As a child my parents underlined the fact that knowledge was power and education was the route to freedom (both personal and racial). This was a powerful indoctrination. Pursuit for these goals did not leave much room for the 'luxuries' of transformational learning, which I understood as that which is gained through engaging in a more developmental process. Such learning creates challenges for the following: (a) inquiring into and responding openly to other's ideas; (b) questioning assumptions underlying beliefs, ideas, actions and positions; (c) reframing ideas of values that seem contradictory; (d) addressing fears of losing what is familiar and safe; (e) challenging oneself to learn in new realms; (f) taking risks, and moving between separate and connected, independent and interdependent; (g) tapping into and drawing on tacit knowledge. This list is endless.

I feel I have only just begun to be fully conscious of my fight against such family doctrines and the career choices I have made. From the seminar, I gained a better sense of my learning that has always been that of perceiving and constructing my reality through observing and participating. For these reasons, I feel it is no accident I have opted for psychotherapy as a profession, and chosen to conduct an enquiry into black identity wounding, an experience perhaps I unwittingly have suffered through family pressures and dictates.

Dr Carroll's seminar has stimulated deep reflection on unheeded dimensions of learning, and I feel my abilities for creating meaning and conceptualisations have sharpened from this experience.

Of particular note were the handouts from this seminar, which I have since referred to in many aspects of my written work. I have also shared the seminar handout on mentoring to three groups of mentors who I currently supervise in three London schools.

SEMINAR 4

BEING IN TWO MINDS: TRAUMA DNN ATACHMENT – Jill Straker – March 2004 – **A** *substantial input on diverse theories addressing concepts of trauma and attachment was presented in this seminar. The session also encouraged participants to draw heavily on their own experiences and work projects.*

For me, this seminar was by far the most theoretically rigorous and experientially helpful. It covered two key concepts relating to my project with a delicate and even balance. I enjoyed the new material gained from this session and found memorable the particular words, phrases, quotes and sayings poignant to the theme of trauma. Prof. Straker offered a substantial amount of theory whilst encouraging participants to draw on their experiences and work projects. Particularly useful was her engagement with classic psychoanalytical concepts, a long awaited input on the doctoral programme that was crucial to those of us dealing with unconscious processes both in our practices and research studies. I also learnt from the presenter's mindfulness to include and respect the positions of non-analytically minded participants.

The topic of trauma and attachment was fully explicated from a reflexive and conceptual angle. Of particular importance was the openness of Prof. Starker who rose to being challenged directly by two black members (me included) on inclusion of significant racial faux pas. I valued her stance to acknowledge its importance and effect on to us, and her allowing (in my view), the right amount of discussion on the matter. This was an important example that showed a readiness to engage fully and meaningfully in those areas where we unwittingly *put our foot in it.* The handling of this incident by all concerned gave permission and encouragement for risks to be taken without fear of negative repercussions.

Particularly helpful to my practice was the recognition of re-traumatisation and the suggestion that therapy work geared to facilitating clients to separate out what is real and/or perceived can, in itself, be a traumatising process. Others "nuggets" with regard to understanding trauma were concerned with the view that "when words fail, metaphors may help". This notion alerted me to my respondents' language which

included strong images and phrases such as, chains, being ground down, excluded, passed over, and white people (used as a negative). My conceptualisations were further refined when such language and metaphors were more carefully scrutinised to confirm a theory suggesting a dialectic between black historical attachment and present day re-traumatisation.

Trauma as having the effect of interrupting "coherency" and "continuity" were further useful conceptualisations. This concept has assisted my explanations of the presence and function of "the internal oppressor", and has become the knob of my hypothesis.

Theoretically, this seminar was crucial in supporting my hunches and previously held shaky analysis. I was able to see more clearly the emerging theory, which suggested that in order to have a sense of who we are, we needed to have positive connectedness and reciprocal feedback from the outside world. I was aware that this significant hypothesis had already been validated in the works of Bowlby (1969, 1988); Guntrip (1971); Kohut (1997); and Winnicott (1960) with specific regard to psychological development. I concluded that my work was adding an intercultural element, i.e., the unheeded dimension race, to existing views on identity development.

I have quoted Prof. Starker in my published doctoral papers and have since referred to her work in supervision with my own supervisees. Her input on (a) the effects of memory due to trauma, (b) issues relating to post-traumatic stress, (c) re-traumatising the client by over-zealousness of the therapist's, have all helped with a particular mindfulness in my work with trauma. This intellectually stimulating seminar has also validated my psychological stance in thinking about the human condition, in that I am more aware of my reasons for straddling both the conceptual theorist and conceptual humanist positions.

SEMINAR 5

LIFE AFTER THE DOCTORATE...CONTINUING TO BE A RESEARCHER

– Dr Nigel Copsey – 23rd January 2004 – *This session offered a glimpse into how the doctorate can both support radical change in both the fields of counselling and psychotherapy and in the real world. Dr Copsey presented an account of his own doctoral project and current post-doctoral work.*

I chose this seminar at a time when I was beginning to think more deeply about my doctoral "products". Preparational work was done alongside the task of reading Dr Copsey's unpublished book chapter entitled, "Finding a Voice". Prior to this seminar, I had arranged to see his work and discuss ideas for my own research project.

The seminar offered a clear and effective illustration of what the unique doctoral programme can achieve. I related quite closely to the distinctiveness of this project because it spoke to and addressed important challenges within marginalized areas such as mental health, working with issues of difference and diversity, and intercultural counselling/psychotherapy training. I related to these elements and viewed them as important areas with varied possibilities contained in my own work.

I gained learning in several ways e.g. through such perspectives as being touched by the presenter's passion and congruence, being invited to share in his achievements, and his daring to tread where many have only made pledges. His was a real example of how the doctorate can both support radical change in counselling and psychotherapy and in the real world. Dr Copsey modelled how to be transparent and open in presenting the realities of the doctoral project. His enterprise was an exercise in doing something different at a structural level through the simple yet difficult task of changing the way people made contact with each other. I had a quiet admiration for his achievements and was encouraged to strive for a similar impact and effectiveness in my own work.

This seminar reminded me of the power and importance of collaborative work as demonstrated in the presenter's own process, and the linking of previous professional

experiences and achievements that contributed to the quality of his enterprise. The latter is an area of the doctorate which I have tended to neglect and which was brought into the foreground by this seminar's input. The session was also important for reasons that it created a space to discuss the topic of spirituality. I found this particularly useful, as it not only addressed another area of diversity I value, but also offered some helpful insights into my own project on black identity wounding and healing.

SEMINAR 6

TURNING THE OBVIOUS INTO THE PROBLEMATIC: THE CHALLENGE OF PHENOMENOLGICAL RESEARCH – Professor Ernesto Spinelli - 5th May 2004 – *This seminar offered clear guidelines for exploring and discerning meaning structures that both contain and identify distinct, experience-derived humanly-lived experiences. Central principles necessary for shaping phenomenological research at doctoral level were fully explored and discussed.*

This seminar was scheduled too late in my opinion, for candidates of cohort 4. It was nevertheless highly informative and offered from a retrospective position, much of what I needed know for my phenomenological research activities. Prof. Spinelli gave clear guidelines for exploring and discerning meaning structures that both contain and identify distinct, experience-derived humanly-lived experiences. This methodology had direct relevance to my project and I gained immensely from this session, albeit in hindsight.

I made the most of this seminar by engaging in review and evaluation of my project. I found it helpful to retrace all the necessary intricacies needed for a structured focussed investigation. I was quietly reassured that I was on the right track thus far, but was very mindful of some uncomfortable gaps. Although these issues did not

invalidate my work in any way, I have acknowledged their presence and discussed the issues with my supervisor.

There was regret in having chosen a large sample consisting of 30 respondents and engaging in bulk interviewing for the purposes of collecting and analysing data. On reflection, I would preferred to have worked either with a smaller sample of say, 10 to 12 interviewees that could have allowed for deeper scrutiny of the data, or settled for the same sample (30) with a more truncated and staged approach to the interviewing process. I reflected that the process of immersing myself in 30 taped interviews, whilst struggling to maintain distance from my own agenda, biases and views, was indeed an unnecessary and gruelling approach to the enterprise. This "flooding" effect coupled with the effects of addressing 'live' issues of trauma, proved costly in my view, and I still reflect on whether my severe back pain, three mysteriously slipped discs, and clinically diagnosed hypertension, could have been prevented. Also difficult was maintaining the task of achieving objectivity in the face of the phenomenological pursuit. My strong wish for integrity and validity dictated that I did not seek such an impossibility, but rather remained mindful of honouring an ethical stance that was constantly moving towards such a position.

I took away the profound message that questions for phenomenological research should be structured to assess meaning rather than give information. I was reminded of my tendencies to give information - almost an attempt to teach – when presenting my work, and the fact that I should guard against this inclination.

A sticking point from this seminar was, and still is concerned with the view that what is agreed in research findings should be tested out with a wider and separate group. I have struggled with this idea as being a necessary criterion for validation of research projects. I have sought much guidance and advice on this matter from my supervisor and critical friends. My supervisor's response was helpful in suggesting that I should wait and see what emerged from the data before deciding. Feedback from critical friends exposed a marked and worrying split along racial lines. Notably, views expressed mainly by white critical friends indicated concerns about a "lack of a control group....", and suggestion that, "a comparative study with a white group would give more empirical weight to the study". Conversely and without exception,

feedback from black critical friends (many of whom are researchers and academics) has affirmed a methodology that has focussed on investigating a critical and overlooked phenomenon within a specific racial group. Some raised the point that a control group should not be necessary in 'legitimising a black view and a black experience'. A few however would have preferred a bigger presence of other minority respondents. I have reflected fully on this suggestion. The low numbers who volunteered have raised a number of evaluative questions such as (a) did the invitation to interview "black and Asian staff" exclude other minorities? (b) was the selection process biased towards other minorities in any way? (c) did the majority black people who volunteered had more to say about grievances? (d) did I pre-empt the selection process for these reasons. These questions have been fully addressed and I conclude that I have honoured the focus of the study and maintained ethical mindedness throughout. Also helpful was the inclusion of an initial collaborative process with psychotherapy colleagues to discuss and design the interviewing process. I feel this has helped to guard against any personal agendas and any other possible biases that may have influenced the process.

Reflexive thinking about a comparative study has allowed me to accept the use of control groups as a means of testing validity in research. It has also helped in clearly identifying where there might be exceptions. I believe that in my case where the phenomenon has become the very *thing* that is to be studied within a *specific* racial group, such a requirement is unnecessary. Additionally, the scope of the project (120 credits) which takes into consideration all past work in this area clearly creates limitations. I foresee future comparative investigative studies as important post-doctoral work and I embrace this as necessary ongoing work of this study.

Having engaged ethically in collaborative fieldwork work, poured over my data, tested out the emerging themes and analysis with a section of the respondent group, and discussed my concerns with my supervisor, I feel I have met the required rigour of a phenomenological study with a combined intent to observe and process the implications for a particular phenomenon. However, for future research work, I will be mindful of the gaps previously indicated and review the methodological approach.

A substantial handout from this seminar was useful and I have since referred to its contents as a checklist and for review purposes.

Seminar 7

POETIC WRITING AS SEARCH AND RESEARCH – Miller Mair & David Hart – 25th October'02 – *This seminar explored non-formal modes of writing that enabled psychological discovery and recovery. The day engaged participants in exercises that encouraged experimentation with these forms of expressions.*

Seminar 8

ILLUSION AND DISILLUSION IN WRITING – Michael Jacobs – May 2003 – *This seminar was concerned with exploring ways of constructing experience through forms of knowledge, thinking and believing.*

I have enjoyed the learning gained from the seminars and the process of reflecting on this part of the doctoral programme. My intention is to continue my personal and professional development through attending future relevant seminars offered both on the programme and outside in the wider psychotherapy community.

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"A psychotherapeutic Understanding of Black Identity in Workplace Contexts"

Aileen Alleyne

Appendix 11

- **Feedback Supporting Validation, Reliability and Representation of the Work**

Appendix 11

FEEDBACK SUPPORTING VALIDATION, RELIABILITY AND REPRESENTATION OF THE WORK

I present a sample of the feedback in response to 5 published papers relating the research findings*(See Appendix 5, page 203 for papers). The feedback is seen as verification of my approach in representing and validating interviewees' experiences. As an example to highlight varying responses, I choose two contrasting feedback responses, one in which a black participant relays the benefits of the research to her personally and her professional team. The other received by a white female colleague and critical friend who offer both validation and critique. However, the white colleague's insistence on the consideration for a white control group is a point met several times in the *white* response to my work. I have responded in defence to my choice of methodology in Chapters 1, 2 and 3.

Feedback

1

Thanks for the paper. It is excellent. You have enabled me to name my experience and helped me see why I became so stuck. A lot more black people need to read about this. We will be using the paper at our peer supervision group (Croydon Social services) for discussion and see how we can implement some changes for the counselling and mediation service in Croydon. In Croydon, often we have to deal with the end destruction. [FROM BLACK FEMALE CO-RESEARCHER]

2

Thank you for publishing this paper. I read it with interest and do have a few comments to make. I will just tell you what struck me. First of all I think it is a very significant research to be engaged in. Although it is a small group it is not an insignificant number of people to base your research on. The main weakness as I

see it is in the lack of a control group. If you want to be take this beyond observing the phenomenon then you need to show how such situations are different for black from white employees. [You do point this out as a weakness at the end of your study but it needs to be addressed.] Everyone in the work place these days is highly stressed and although I do not doubt your observations of racism you need to show through your questions that it is racist oppression and not merely workplace oppression or bullying. Also it would be helpful to make more use of the internal oppression - ie that which is anticipated and the outer world reality and of course that is the problem - how to measure such a thing. [FROM A WHITE FEMALE COLLEAGUE and CRITICAL FRIEND]

3

Thank you so much for your 'paper', I read with great interest and it made me think and I made a lot of notes in the process. I knew it would be a significant and thought provoking topic when I agreed to be interviewed. It affirmed my reasons for deciding to leave the NHS.

I believe that at an unconscious level we are 'locked' into the historical slave /colonial response as described in your paper. Will you be using this as a teaching tool in the arena you did your research i.e. nursing. It would be a mammoth task, this piece of work has the ability to start a dialogue amongst accepting groups who have the responsibility for the wellbeing of others; other therapists as an example.

This would make each individual think about why they are prepared to subject themselves to such toxic/destructive dynamics: apart from the most obvious i.e. to pay the bills.

Change starts from a positive outlook and begins with the individual this paper is a good beginning. [FROM BLACK FEMALE CO-RESEARCHER]

4

Congratulations on finally getting the paper into print and in circulation! I've both read it and shared it with friends and family. Some spontaneous thoughts:

Small sample or no, you seem to have touched on one of the raw wounds of multicultural experience in the New World. This is perhaps exacerbated in the UK by the lip service paid to equality, cultural diversity and racial tolerance. First impressions from colleagues and family here is that in the US many believe there is no such presumption about equality, diversity or tolerance. Sadly, one expects to be discriminated against and is always on the look out for incidents to confirm expectations. Symptomatic of centuries of trauma and mistreatment and more recent evidence of chronic anxiety, we remain on guard and tense. For many in mixed company, this makes for problems in the workplace. However, my 26 yr. old UK educated son who works in advertising in Manhattan does not seem to have these kinds of problems. Well-educated, travelled, cultured British outlook, African/American background and secure in his trade, he tells me detractors have a hard time finding ways in which to undermine him and he's learned how to counter those who do. He says his generation may be different. In short, while we continue to research, acknowledge and honor our history can we also allow ourselves to grow in this environment - including growing a skin thick enough to facilitate our stay here, now? [FROM BLACK FEMALE CRITICAL FRIEND]

5

I have just finished reading your article in the CPR and wanted to say how much I valued it. I am in the process of completing my research which explores the training experiences of Black counsellors, using a fairly small sample. The findings of your research though about a different experience is very similar to the findings I have. [FROM WHITE FEMALE READER]

Thanks for publishing your paper on 'The internal oppressor and black identity wounding' which I found very interesting. I'm intrigued how some of your points would be interpreted by locals from other socio-cultural settings.

For example:

1. Indonesians recognise in somewhat different terms the 'internal oppressor'; they stress that negative and positive forces or energies are intrinsic to the individual and the world. It is important that they are kept 'in balance', and as the cosmos in continual flux this is a constant process. Essentially the dualities are

seen as complementary dualities, which have to co-exist in harmony. Rituals are crucial in recentring and rebalancing humans with one-another.

2. 'Enmeshed' is viewed in the paper as inflexible and hampering of development. Our society of course tends to stress the autonomy of the self. Indonesians, Balinese in particular, point out that humans are interlinked with others, also the spirits of the environment. If not appeased and propitiated, they can detrimentally affect consciousness (see the Tsunami disaster). As locals say "the gods would laugh if humans became too independent." A picture of mutual dependency emerges. it has some proximity to an avant-garde ecological position.

4. Internal and external are part of our western psychodynamic perspective. It lacks the sense of communal space and time. Suffering in Asian communities is often located outside the circle which they all share.

Anyway, these are just musings. I found the paper nuanced and interesting to read, especially as it is bringing up new ideas. [FROM WHITE FEMALE COLLEAGUE]

#6

I was interested to read your article entitled Black Identity and Workplace Oppression in CPR (July 2004), insomuch, that I have come to the conclusion that the external experience of external oppression would not have its effect without those experiencing it believing it to be to be true. The apparent shared or collective experience continues to impeded personal and professional development within people of colour, and yet I am unclear as to what we can do to redress this imbalance. I have worked extensively with people of colour of varying ages, and have come to the conclusion that those who seem less emotionally distressed are those who are older. They appear to be more accepting of the physical world, the social environment, and their position of it; rather than feeling that the physical and social world shouldn't be the way they are. They feel that much can be done to enforce the view that there shouldn't be external oppression, however, they are much more likely to emphasise individual development to deal more constructively with that oppression. We as a people need to become better able to cope with external oppression. Out interpretation of the world is this

way is real, but ways of dealing with are not very good. Do you have ideas about how we may address this issue, (i.e. dealing with the internalised oppression, psychologically? [FROM WHITE MALE READER]

 # 7

I know it has taken me some time, but I have finally had a chance to read your article. I found it very clear to read and so important to publish more of this material. It was rather painful to read many aspects and I was thinking that for some people reading it they may identify racism for the first time going through your list. You could in fact think about this? Or perhaps you have done so already in your PhD. Almost like your list, but more elaborate on diagnosing institutional racism (trauma and racism relationship and impact on the psyche when it is repeated).

I especially find the qualitative research useful as it is all about meaning, rather than interpreting too much which has the danger of attaching our own meanings on the other's experience. This was my early theoretical influences at Regent's College and I thought it was really useful that you framed it in this philosophical/qualitative lens.

Well done and congratulations [FROM GREEK FEMALE COLLEAGUE AND CRITICAL FRIEND]