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The Illusion of Progress: An Ethnographic Exploration of Racism, Trauma and the Academy.

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Abstract
This ethnographic inquiry draws upon empirical work to explore the experience of trauma among the "black" British African and Caribbean diaspora. Using a combination of Critical Race Theory and psychoanalytical concepts of transgenerational trauma, this study examines the role of British institutions of higher education in perpetuating racial trauma by virtue of "white" supremacy and privilege, hindering the academic and emotional growth of "black" students within its walls.

Keywords
Trauma; diaspora; critical race theory; psychoanalysis; white supremacy; academic and emotional growth

Introduction

> 'We are told there is no racism, we are told that everything is equal, we are told that it is just our fault and we've got a chip on our shoulders, yet our experience tells us something completely different.'
> (Joyce, Clinical Director of the Sankofa Institute of "Black" Psychology)

According to Freire (1972), education has been universally appreciated to be a social good necessary for the practice of liberation, and growth (Freire, 1972). Yet, the construct of education and the systems within which it operates are all too often involved in the legitimation, defence, and enactment of "white" supremacy when practiced within institutions founded upon oppressive power structures (Gillborn, 1990; 1995; 2004; 2005; Andrews, 2015; Baez, 2000). In the British context, the sustained myth of a post racial, multicultural society has often rendered academic discussions around racial inequity within

education to be irrelevant (Bhopal, 2018; Andrews, 2015). However, as discussed by Gillborn (2005) and Andrews (2015), institutions of British higher education harbour an inherent bias in the structure of the academic institution through which the privileging of "white" interests serves to undermine "black" students' claim to space, and sense of belonging (Gillborn, 2005; Andrews, 2015). 'Black' students who find themselves to be operating within the overwhelmingly "white" physical and theoretical space that is British higher education experience unique psychological challenges (Andrews, 2015; Shahid, Nelson and Cardemil, 2018). Such challenges transcend the general sources of stress that characterise the experience of higher education and are instead grounded on the encounter with institutional racism (Shahid, Nelson and Cardemil, 2018; Gillborn, 1990; 2005). The institutional failure to meet the cultural and psychological needs of "black" students in affirming their claim to space and sense of belonging facilitates the continuity of racial trauma among "black" British African and Caribbean students, which can have academic consequences (Gillborn, 2005; Coleman, 2016; Andrews, 2015). According to statistics documented by the University of East Anglia between the years of 2011-2012, 78.7% of "white" students achieved a 2:1 or above, while only 56.3% of "black" African students and 60% of "black" Caribbean students achieved a 2:1 or above 1, with a similar trend reflected in the following years. The "Black" attainment gap is not exclusive to the University of East Anglia but is an interdisciplinary phenomenon which across predominantly "white" institutions of high education across the British context (NUS, 2010). In analysing the "black" attainment gap, while there are several variables which can contribute to academic attainment, the differential levels of attainment between "black" students and their "white" counterparts is somewhat informed by an experience of British higher education specific to students racialised as "black". In my exploration of the "black" British African and Caribbean experience of racial trauma, I came to realise that the most pervasive form of racism lay in the taken for granted practices within the university context that conform to a logic of "white" supremacy, perpetuated through cultures, habits, beliefs, or symbols embedded within institutional arrangements and practices that academically disadvantage "black" students, and impact upon their self -esteem. While I cannot make a conclusive assumption on the causal relationship between such practices and the "black" attainment gap, I hope to

[1] Percentage of Good Honours for BME and 'White' students over time at UEA. See Appendix A.

reflect those experiences of racial trauma shared with me by my participants, which in themselves implicate the organisational structures of the university establishment.

Methodology

The empirical work presented in this study draws upon ethnographic research that I conducted in London, Norwich and Birmingham between October 2017 and January 2018, employing the anthropological research paradigms of semi structured and open- ended interviews, as well as participant observation. With regard to participant involvement, I selected approximately thirteen participants belonging to the "black" African and Caribbean British diaspora through purposive sampling. I conducted semi structured and open-ended interviews with practicing clinical psychologists at the Sankofa Institute of "Black" Psychology, as well as with undergraduate and post graduate students of British universities, professors who have published work in field of study, and members of my family. The use of semi -structured and open- ended interviews allowed me to inquire into the research participants' body of values by which they have come to perceive themselves and their position in the world, specific to the African and Caribbean British diaspora. Situated among several phenomena that cannot and have not been easily measured included in the study, I was able to locate sense of self within the complex racialised system embodied and enacted in day to day life. To facilitate analysis, each individual interview was recorded, transcribed verbatim and coded systematically. While this study is ethnographic in style, academic engagement with theory is drawn on throughout the analysis of data, with details of the interviews discussed throughout the study. It must be highlighted that the research has been designed to avoid focus on a specific disciplinary department within British Institutions of higher education, reflected in the interviews encompassing a range of academic disciplines. My decision to pursue a methodology on this basis was grounded by the observation that the narrative of Western imperialism is nationally perpetuated across several disciplinary departments in British institutions of higher education, as opposed to existing as a product of a certain disciplinary discourse.

Positionality, Engagement and Participation

My interest in ethnography is grounded in the articulation and excavation of familiar racial and cultural discourse. As a second -generation student of mixed African Caribbean heritage

and a direct descendent of first generation "black" Caribbean diaspora, the dynamic of a dual membership to both the cultural community I was researching and to the academic body to which I will report characterised my experience as an 'indigenous ethnographer' in the field (Hooks, 1994:126). Having premised the inquiry on the exploration of the "black" British African and Caribbean visceral experience of trauma particularly within higher education, I was entering the field with an embodied cultural knowledge informed by my own lived experience of race, and the observation of experience (Holloway and Jefferson, 2000). My understanding of the "black" African and Caribbean experience of race as embedded within a racialised system of colonial and post- colonial construct was informed by both an academic lens, as well as within my own ontology. My experience as an undergraduate student of colour attending a predominantly "white" British university significantly informed my understanding of the processes that are influential to "black" perspectives and experiences in academia. In particular, my academic status as a student studying for a degree in International Development has allowed me to observe the operation of race within the curriculum, and the inherent centrality of neo colonialism to certain discourses of knowledge. Not only was I able to observe the ways in which race was narrativized in my particular disciplinary department, but I was also provided with the opportunity to actively engage with "black" students across the university context in order to appreciate the experience of race in various forms.

During the process of the research, I came to realise that my position an indigenous ethnographer offered significant opportunities of a transference and translation of knowledges and allowed me access to a particular reception that I perhaps would not have had if this embodied understanding was absent. The relationships built, and the spaces that I occupied, were fundamentally grounded upon my membership to my cultural community, as well as to the academic body that I was situated within. This was particularly demonstrated by my involvement in participant observation, which had become critical to the development of the research process. An example of which was my inclusion in the "Brown Bag" weekly practice of communal meal at the Sankofa Institute of "Black" Psychology. Hosted on a Wednesday lunch time, the communal sharing of home cooked vegan food traditional to West Africa and the Caribbean is contributed by each member of staff. The occasion is defined by cultural performance through particular ritualised acts which organise

and maintain social bonds (Certeau, 1984). My inclusion in this culturally performative activity was most significant, as it served as an invitation to collectively celebrate and preserve a shared cultural heritage that was diminished and obscured under European colonial rule. While it must be acknowledged that my representational positionality as an indigenous ethnographer possessing membership to the communities that I have explored may compromise an informed objectivity, my position throughout the research process was distanced by the academic impasse of documenting experience.

Considerations

In examining "black" experiences of trauma, it is integral to acknowledge the inevitable limitations that accompany the research (Rampersad, 2015). There are significant differences in the African and Caribbean experience of race in Britain, particularly with regard to the adoption of a post racial British identity which can complicate the analysis of a contemporary collective experience. Fundamentally, it is critical that the experiences of "black" students are seen as reflective of different socio historic trajectories, so as to avoid the risk of homogenising the "black" students as a monolith by virtue of certain cultural forms (Rampersad, 2015). While the ethnography is focused on racialised experiences, the intersections of ethnicity, gender, sexual identity, and ability must be highlighted as critical components of intersectional analysis of race in higher education. "Black" students can balance several identities alongside their race which are likely to influence their experience in British high education. In addition, I have made the conscious decision not to differentiate the experience of research participants based on the intersection of class. While class must be appreciated to be a significant component of intersectional analysis, in the context of British high education I found it inappropriate to amplify the experiences of a particular socio -economic strata, for this study is premised on the assertion that "black" students continue to suffer an educational disadvantage within the British system regardless of socioeconomic background (Andrews, 2015). While certain intersections are absent from the analysis and may limit my understanding of the field, the centrality of race in the inquiry should not be occluded. The primacy of race in this ethnographic inquiry is grounded on the understanding of race as a categorical concept which has and continues to represent the dividing line between those bodies valued as autonomous beings, and those not worthy of agency (Bhopal and Preston, 2012).

Defining Trauma

The discussion into definitions of trauma and their application remains controversial across academic thought (Degruy, 2005). The image and untranslatability of trauma is complicated further when positioned in the context of racial oppression, and the subsequent responses to this trauma articulated through constructions of selfhood and identity. While trauma can be universally experienced, the specificity of racial oppression to the "black" African and Caribbean global diaspora has seldom been appreciated by definitions of trauma offered by Western schools of psychology. In order to conceptualise the visceral embodied experience of trauma specific to members of the "black" diaspora, I have chosen to place emphasis on definitions of trauma offered by my research participants.

Neo Colonial Curriculum

> 'It's very clear that when you go to university, that you are entering a very Eurocentric environment where everything is geared around the glory of Britain, empire and European learning. Where does a "black" person fit in there? You are in this cathedral of learning, to learn how to better glorify Britain and its intellectual prowess.'
> (David, Managing Director of the Sankofa Institute of "Black" Psychology)

During the course of my research, I had come to observe that British institutions of higher education were reconciled with a continuum of racial trauma by virtue of certain policies and practices that seek to maintain a logic of "white" supremacy (Andrews, 2017; Gillborn, 2005; Bhopal and Preston, 2012). As defined by (Ansley, 1997:592):

> "white" supremacy does not 'allude only to the self -conscious racism of "white" supremacist hate groups', but to 'a political, economic and cultural system in which "whites" overwhelmingly control power and material resources, conscious and unconscious ideas of "white" superiority and entitlement are widespread, and relations of "white" dominance and non-"white" subordination are daily re-enacted across a broad array of institutions and social settings'.

When applying analytic attention to the perpetuation of racial trauma, I found it integral to identify the practices and discourse adopted British higher education as part of the long established cultural and historical systems of racial domination (Gillborn, 2005). My realisation that these structures, and not trauma, were in themselves transgenerational is

highlighted further by Butler (1997) in her observation that social structures possess a temporal life and therefore they must be repeated by individuals in order to reconsolidate their power and efficacy (Butler, 1997). In particular, the inherently intergenerational reproduction of social and cultural capital is complicit in the alienation and oppression of "black" British African and Caribbean students (Collins, 2009). European colonial rule may have disappeared but colonialism, in its many disguises as cultural and knowledge-based oppression, lives on. As discussed by Jonathan in our interview:

> '… if we are not saying that "black" people are inherently less intelligent than their "white" counterparts particularly when it comes to grades lower than their white counterparts then it is definitely something to do with the institution. If we are saying that everyone gets the same measures and the same access to resources, then there must be something else which means that "black" people are experiencing university differently.'

Jonathan made sure to emphasise that the continuity of racial trauma was ensured through 'a racist academia.' As discussed by Eccles and Roeser (2011), one of the most significant facets of higher education is the content of the undergraduate and postgraduate curricula in terms of its intellectual substance and its consideration of certain historical realities (Eccles and Roeser, 2011). The colonial baggage that several academic disciplines carry is a reality which has fundamental implications in the ways that knowledge is not only constructed and reproduced within academia, but also by the way in which it is psychologically received by "black" students. Informed not only by my interviews with "black" students but also by my participant observation with the university context, when faced with a curriculum working to condition "black" students into Eurocentric understandings of the world, the cognitive and emotional engagement with the material is jeopardised and can contribute towards a vacant self -esteem and a lack of self-worth (Eccles and Roeser 2011). Through my ethnographic research, I sought to provide a platform for current and former "black" students to explore and challenge the curriculum that has come to define their academic experience, offering a visibility and an ownership of experience that I came to realise was fundamentally lacking in academic discussions on race.

Discourse

According to Fanon (1952), 'there are a series of propositions that slowly and subtly – with the help of books… schools, and their texts – work their way into one's mind and shape one's view of the world of the group to which one belongs' (Fanon, 1952). In the context of the academic curriculum, I observed that the naturalisation of racism through the perpetuation of "whiteness" had become doxic and is reinforced by neo colonial discourse of Western superiority (Hall, 1992). This was highlighted to me by Ibi, a postgraduate student, as she recalled the way in which the cultural reality of Africa was constructed through discourse within her academic curriculum:

> 'I was being shown images and narratives of a destitute continent that is Africa, which was so behind and couldn't seem to get itself together. I always had this idea in the back of my mind, not that I was consciously thinking it, but there was the assumption that Africa is poor; that was Africa's identity as a poor continent.'

A neo colonial discourse carries with is the significant power to construct and reproduce "facts" on certain historical and cultural realities, which can manifest in the subconscious of oneself (Hall, 1992; Foucault, 1980). The articulation of "black" African and Caribbean ontologies as the distant other to the "white" West can be best understood through the lens of Orientalism, developed by Said (1978). The concept of Orientalism is defined by Said (1978) as 'the corporate institution for dealing with the Orient – dealing with it by making statements about it, authorizing views of it, describing it, by teaching it, settling it, ruling over it: in short, Orientalism [is] a Western style for dominating, restructuring, and having authority over the Orient'(Said, 1978:3). Said (1978) discusses the way in which a cultural reality was constructed of the Orient, in order to establish 'the ineradicable distinction between Western superiority and Oriental inferiority' (Said, 1985: 42).

In application to the "black" African and Caribbean context, the complicity of Western scholarship with the academic curriculum is revealed in the representation of Africa and the Caribbean as the degenerate, exotic other (Said, 1978;1985; Hall, 1992). While in conversation with Kai, a cognitive behavioural therapist training at the Sankofa Institute, he expressed a frustration with the dominance of "white" European scholars of Africanist literature speaking on African discourse:

> 'I remember one of the questions I asked, was when are we going to look at non- European perspectives in terms of narratives and things like that. One of my tutors brought down a selection of books about non- European perspective, yet they were written by European writers. Not one single "black" author. I remember saying this is not what I asked for, I asked for our perspective – not your second- hand perspective.'

With much of the literature emanating from the West, I couldn't help but to observe that a predominantly "white" academic curriculum ensures that the examination of Africa and the Caribbean 'is by and for the "white" man', establishing a structural and cultural dominance over the distant and silenced other (Fanon, 1952). As discussed further by Bhabha (1994), history is happening 'within the pages of theory, within the systems and structures we construct to figure the passage of the historical' (Bhabha, 1994: 37). In this way, the distortion and indeed the omission of African and Caribbean historical narratives functions to rewrite history to maintain a European cultural dominance over former colonised communities. In conversation with Ayesha, an undergraduate student of English literature and history, she relayed to me, '… institutions operate on the basis of an ideological driving force; education is no different. It is not a coincidence that the histories we are being taught position Britain as the victor and the saviour.' It was in these moments that I questioned the tacit intentionality of discourse, and to what extent the curriculum was designed to accommodate the superiority of Empire accompanied by the denigration of its former colonies. While such questions will remain answered, the messages being relayed to "black" students by the academy was very clear, as David pointed out to me, 'your only value is how much you accept the British view of the world.'

Cultural Capital

In my examination of knowledge- based oppression with British institutions of education, I have come to conceptualise the Eurocentric curriculum through a Bourdeiuian lens, with a focus on cultural capital as pivotal to the subordination and domination of "black" students. Cultural capital, defined as the consumption of cultural knowledge, abilities, and skills reflective of the privileged societal groups, inherently illegitimates and invalidates certain cultural products as opposed to others (Yosso, 2006; Bourdieu, 1986). With regard to the academic curriculum and accompanying pedagogies, access to cultural capital deemed

valuable is a socially facilitative vehicle restricted to dominant "white" perspectives, which contributes to both the reproduction of racial trauma and its legitimation through the misrecognition of social and cultural experiences as individual capacities (Rampersad, 2015). Inquiring into the enactment of illegitimating "black" discourses of knowledge, Jonathan offered me his own experience as a postgraduate student of a predominantly "white" institution, 'some of the ways in which these microaggressions manifest is in the unconscious dismissal of ideas, and an inability to support in research objects… This is perhaps not a microaggression on an individual basis, but certainly is a microaggression from the institution itself.' The unconscious dismissal of ideas offered by "black" students was similarly reflected to me in a poignant discussion with Imani at the Sankofa Institute:

> 'as soon as we get given a module and we want to "blackenize" this, you want to put a bit of black experience in it – most of the time you'll get marked down. I remember I got quite high grades in my drama therapy, and then I decided to do a double module on images, and I did it all on black images; the Gollywog everything. I got a D-, and I knew but I said I was going to take the risk, because I wanted to do it for myself.'

According to Yosso (2006), the "black" attainment gap has more often than not been theorised in congruence with deprivation models claiming a lack of normative capital, which establishes blame for the academic position of "black" students by virtue of their cultural forms (Yosso, 2006). However, for this association to be accurate, cultural capital would have to be structured as a product intrinsically democratic, appreciating the relative worth of the culture and the ways it has come to be devalued. Unaltered, this association also implies pathology at the core of why "black" students perform differently in academic settings, namely, because they lack the requisite cultural capital (Yosso, 2006). Rather, I had come to observe the exclusion of certain cultural and historical perspectives from the academic curriculum, and the process through which dominant "white" narratives are imbued with normativity.

A predominantly "white" curriculum not only produces knowledge that is fundamentally hostile to "black" African and Caribbean experiences and perspectives but can also invalidate the efforts of "black" students to introduce discourses of knowledge that are historically, socially, and culturally relevant to their academic experience into the curriculum (Andrews,

2015). During his interview, Jonathan began to discuss his personal experience with his academic writing, and the resistance he faced in his attempts to offer "black" perspectives as opposed to conforming to a "white" curricula:

> 'during the course of my dissertation, there was a severe frustration with the types of authors I was looking at. I got to the point where I was like forget this, it's all "black" academics from now on. And it was a struggle, and the university were not supportive about my decision to do that… any "black" student who has ever wanted to write stuff about "black" people, to show black people in a positive light very rarely is successful…these institutions do not give the kind of freedom of expression that it advertises, especially UK institutions.'

"Black" students who find themselves operating outside of the dominant academic narratives by practicing forms of decoloniality often experience significant resistance from the academic body, the majority of which is "white". While racism enacted within the institution may not be deliberate, tacit intentionality can be observed through the patterning of "white" privileging and racial inequity perpetuated by "white" powerholders within the institution (Gillborn, 2005). I came to identify the sustained and unequivocal validation of "white" perspectives and narratives within the academic curriculum to the exclusion of capital offered by "black" African and Caribbean discourses of knowledge understood as an act of "white" supremacy.

Vacant Esteem and Visibility

In my experience as an undergraduate student of colour, I learnt very quickly that I had to make a conscious effort to surround myself with scholars who shared my lived experience as a member of the "black" African and Caribbean community. Yet, this effort would not compensate for the lack of visibility that I, and so many of my "black" peers had come to experience within the confines of the lecture theatre, in which I largely felt alienated from the material in discussion. This sentiment was shared by Ibi in her expression that:

> 'I've never had that feeling at all once when I studied development, not once was I able as a woman, as a "black" woman or as a "Black" British woman, as an African woman, as a Nigerian woman, there was not once where any parts or aspects of my identity were able to connect with what I was being taught or shown about Africa.'

Across educationalist scholarship, it is appreciated that an academic curriculum perceived by students to be meaningful is integral to establishing an educational practice that can promote engagement and motivation (Ladson -Billings, 1995; Roeser, Eccles and Sameroff, 2000; Eccles and Roeser, 2011). A perceived curriculum meaningfulness is constructed through the academic appeal of the discipline to the cultural reality of the student, helping to bond them to the institution within which they operate (Roeser, Eccles, and Sameroff, 2000) An un diverse academic curriculum has the potential to severe the emotional and academic engagement among "black" African and Caribbean students to a particular discipline, relaying the message that their perspectives and experiences are not valuable enough to be democratically integrated into mainstream discourse. As discussed by Butler-Barnes *et al.* (2017), "black" students come to feel as though 'like they're not seen, not understood, or invested in', with little being done to combat the prevalence of negative stereotyping that is being reinforced by "white" hegemonic Western discourse of knowledge (Butler-Barnes *et al*., 2017).

Throughout the course of my research, I came to observe the psychological consequence of a "white-washed" curriculum on the visibility of the "black" African and Caribbean students with whom I interviewed. Transcending the issue of academic attainment and achievement processes, is the impact that a fundamental lack of visibility has on self-esteem – acknowledged as a product of racial trauma. Self- esteem refers to one's beliefs about the value that one produces to the wider world, which is necessarily affirmed by the recognition of material and intellectual contributions (Degruy, 2005). Accordingly, Imani expressed to me that '…everybody else has their history, when you really think about it we are one of the main ones that almost walk around lost… – it's that sense of belonging. If you think you've got nothing, you think you're worth nothing.' The sustained omission of "black" scholarship from the academic curriculum demonstrates a failure to recognise the value that "black" intellect has to offer, and thus reflects a pronouncement of inferiority that is subject to internalisation. As discussed by Ibi, 'what that does in terms of the material we were being taught from a "white" Western perspective perpetuates that idea that "white" people are the most intelligent and are the only ones that have something valuable to offer and contribute to society.' Decolonising the academic curriculum has a function greater than switching up the books, it reflects the process of reclaiming agency within a context of

structural racism. In an interview with Dr Gus John, this was expressed as an 'antidote to trauma', and a 'form of self- repair.' He went on to stress that without this process, "black" students continue to endure oppressive systems of higher education that upholds racism and "white" dominance.

Protective Identities

> 'You need a certain stomach to survive in higher education. Another traumatising aspect that not many people will admit to, is you almost have to create another persona survive.'
> (Caroline, post graduate student of high intensity cognitive behavioural therapy)

In the context of the British university, I began to observe the effect of non- affirming academic environments on the identities of students racialised as "black". "Black" experiences within predominantly "white" institutions of education were not only coloured by the presence of negative stereotyping of "blackness", but also by the negotiation of a dominant "white" habitus which is irreflective of "black" African and Caribbean ontologies (Andrews, 2017).

In conversation with David on his past experience within a predominantly "white" British university, he explained that '... in embracing that education system that doesn't reflect you, that doesn't consider you, you have to give up who and what you are to become this – whatever this is.' I observed a distinct twoness reminiscent of a Duboisian (1903) double consciousness, whereby the "black" student is being pulled in competing directions by virtue of their "blackness" (Du Bois, 1903). I began to conceptualise the British university as a space governed by particular ways of being, of dressing, behaving, and speaking that embodies the dominant cultural sphere, which fundamentally isolates "black" bodies and ontologies. David's allusion to the adoption of an adaptive identity as an alternative to "blackness" was also suggested by Joyce, whereby:

> 'if ("black" students) want to get through the system, they have to put their "blackness" and their needs for their "blackness" on hold… surviving in there means that you have to give up on yourself and leave yourself outside... If they want to get through the easiest, they will… assimilate to survive.'

Joyce's detail of the contextual demand placed on "black" identities by predominantly "white" institutions of educations lead me to explore the adoption of certain protective

identities by "black" students in order to assimilate – an act which I came to appreciate as a product of significant racial trauma.

Assimilationist Ideology

The academic domain is one in which race is often salient for many "black" African and Caribbean students, whereby 'if you are black, you are seldom allowed to be an ordinary, regular human being. Instead, at every turn you are confronted by hidden stereotypes that can spring to life and destabilise' (Davids, 2011). Through the lens of the European colonial legacy, race has been made the criterion by which "black" bodies are judged, irrespective of their social or educational attainments (Fanon, 1952). Across the academic field, psychological responses to a hostile racial climate have been understood to manifest in the internalisation of prejudice, consequently holding negative attitudes toward self and making subliminal efforts to proximate "whiteness" - the possessor of all knowledge (Fanon, 1952). According to Fanon (1952), the identification with "whiteness" at the expense of "blackness" is a manifestation of a deeper unconscious to be "white", a legacy left in the black person by the colonial situation devaluing "black" African and Caribbean discourses of knowledges (Fanon, 1952). Alternatively, Fordham and Ogbu (1986) observe that in the American context, African American students fear the accusation of 'acting white', and thus choose to disengage from the academic process in a conscious effort to maintain authenticity as a member of their racial group (Fordham and Ogbu, 1986). In both instances, Fanon (1952) and Fordham and Ogbu (1986) implicate the adoption or dilution of a racial identity in order to survive in a context of binaural prescriptions of "whiteness" and "blackness" – an observation which was in turn made by those whom I interviewed, yet the rationale of which challenged these theorisations (Fanon, 1952; Fordham and Ogbu, 1986).

In conversation with Ayesha, I was keen to explore her personal experience within the confines of a predominantly "white" lecture theatre. With regard to the expression of her racial identity, she expressed that 'you don't want to be over emotional, you don't' want to be too loud, too critical – you want to be just enough.' During the process of my research, I came to forge an understanding of the adoption of an assimilationist ideology through which protective identities were formed as a response to a racially hostile academic climate. In this way, the de-emphasis of one's claim to "blackness" in favour of a raceless disposition minimised connectedness to a "black" racial identity in exchange for mainstream attitudes

and values appeared to be a result of a combined perpetuation of superior "whiteness" alongside the devaluation of "black" identities. For as Ayesha went on to elaborate:

> '… wanting to assimilate to the point where you are ashamed of where you come from, as if where you come from is somehow inferior because of the messages that are being communicated to you, the way that you are being made to feel – to me this is trauma.'

Protection as Performativity

The enactment and embodiment of this disposition was discussed by Ayesha during our interview, that 'you want to be so good that "white" people will applaud you for it. You want to walk the walk, talk the talk, so that you will be accepted.' This was further reflected to me in conversation with Imani at the Sankofa Institute, where she recounted to me the process through which "black" students negotiate their bodily expressions in order to assimilate into a predominantly "white" institution of higher education, 'Do I be true to myself? how should I be…how should I behave…how should I dress and the quieter I am sometimes, the less likely I'm gonna get asked questions.' I realised that this protective identity was a form of protection against the ridicule of being different or a way of avoiding the need to explain, deflecting attention from oneself, and narrowing the gap between "white" and "black" identities. During this interview, the particular mention of the practice of assimilation through expressions of the body indicated that the protective identity took the form of a performance. As discussed by Goffman (1956), an individual on a given occasion presents as an actor on a social stage, through which modes of self -expression serve to actively create a desired impression before an audience, themselves included (Goffman, 1956). In situating Goffman's theoretical framework within the context of the British university, I observed that the projection of a certain image of oneself was being called upon in an act of performativity to effectively assimilate into the institution, in which the identities produced in response the perpetuation of trauma were enacted. Yet, as also identified by Goffman (1956), the performer may become consumed by his own act, convinced by their impression of reality (Goffman, 1956). Interestingly, this came to light in discussion with Joyce, through which she explained that in the context of the endorsement of an assimilation ideology, 'if you do it too efficiently and too effectively, you don't realise that's what you've done and then you go out thinking you've got something, and this is the only way to be.' It was in this sense that I

came to understand the great complexity in navigating a "black" identity through a predominantly "white" space of the British university, and the price that can accompany the quest for acceptance, and survival.

Conclusion

> 'We are not in battle with them, we are not trying to be better than, we are simply trying to be'.
> (Joyce, Clinical Director of the Sankofa Institute of "Black" Psychology)

My immersion into the reality of racial trauma highlighted the continuity of visceral trauma inflicted during colonisation into the contemporary lived experience of the "black" diaspora. The values through which the "black" community, myself included, come to perceive themselves and their place in the world has been and continue to be challenged by social structures grounded in racist discourse which threatens the ontology of "black" bodies. Yet, academic attempts to narrate monolithic and homogenous responses to this trauma often overlook the complexity, fluidity and diversity that informs experiences of racism. As discussed by Mount (2016), the "black" community cannot be manufactured into bodies of resistance to fight against "white" supremacy nor as passive victims, but rather that the binaries of accommodation and human agency must be dissolved in order to understand trauma as messy and unpredictable (Mount, 2016). In discussions with former and current "black" students of British universities, I came to understand the significance of education in the potential to transform the conditions of racial trauma facing the "black" community, holding the potential to define the narrative of "black" disempowerment. This is a critical research area which is in need of further anthropological attention in order to effectively identify, deconstruct, and challenge the policies and practices of British higher education, that traumatise "black" students.

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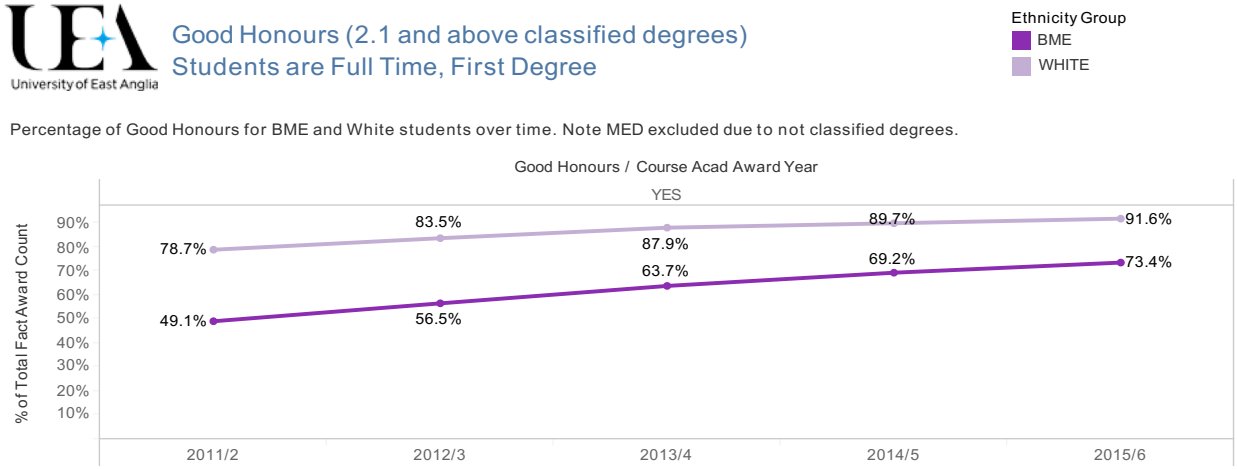
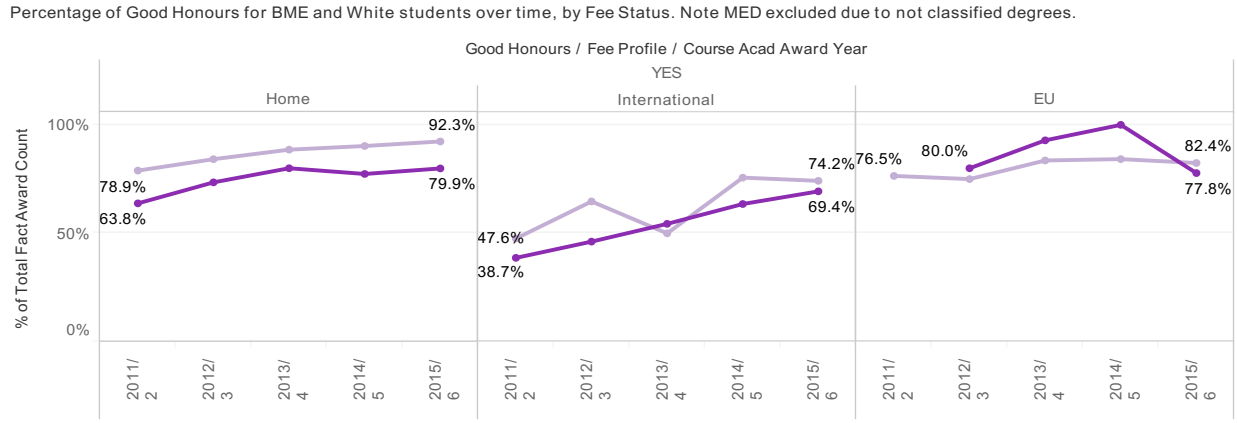
Appendix A

Percentage of Good Honours for BME and White Students over time





Data for BME and White students over time, by Fee Status. Figures show percentage of Good Honours and student counts. Counts below 5 are shown as *. Note MED excluded due to not classified degrees.

Fee Profile / Course Acad Award Year

Good Honours	Ethnici..	Home 2011/2	Home 2012/3	Home 2013/4	Home 2014/5	Home 2015/6	International 2011/2	International 2012/3	International 2013/4	International 2014/5	International 2015/6	EU 2011/2	EU 2012/3	EU 2013/4	EU 2014/5	EU 2015/6
YES	BME	63.8% 97	73.5% 147	80.0% 184	77.4% 188	79.9% 187	38.7% 84	46.2% 158	54.4% 242	63.5% 249	69.4% 267		80.0% *	92.9% 13	100.0% 8	77.8% 7
	WHITE	78.9% 1479	84.2% 1479	88.6% 1696	90.3% 1621	92.3% 1640	47.6% 10	64.7% 22	50.0% 14	75.7% 28	74.2% 23	76.5% 13	75.0% 48	83.6% 56	84.2% 64	82.4% 75
NO	BME	36.2% 55	26.5% 53	20.0% 46	22.6% 55	20.1% 47	61.3% 133	53.8% 184	45.6% 203	36.5% 143	30.6% 118		20.0% *	7.1% *		22.2% *
	WHITE	21.1% 395	15.8% 278	11.4% 219	9.7% 175	7.7% 136	52.4% 11	35.3% 12	50.0% 14	24.3% 9	25.8% 8	23.5% *	25.0% 16	16.4% 11	15.8% 12	17.6% 16

Note: 'YES' shows figures for Good Honours, 'NO' shows figures for not Good Honours

Data by Ethnic Group and Fee Status. Figures show percentage of Good Honours and student counts. Counts below 5 are shown as *. Data for EU students is not shown due to very small base sizes. Note MED excluded due to not classified degrees.

Fee Profile / Course Acad Award Year

Good Honours / Ethnicity Group		Ethnicity	Home 2011/2	Home 2012/3	Home 2013/4	Home 2014/5	Home 2015/6	International 2011/2	International 2012/3	International 2013/4	International 2014/5	International 2015/6
YES	BM	Arab				100.0% *	100.0% *		66.7% *	50.0% *	33.3% *	63.6% 7
		Asian -Bangladeshi	33.3% *	80.0% *	90.0% 9	75.0% 6	87.5% 7		50.0% *	50.0% *	50.0% *	
		Asian - Chinese	61.9% 13	78.6% 11	83.3% 15	56.5% 13	83.3% 10	35.4% 58	42.1% 104	50.5% 161	60.5% 188	66.7% 180
		Asian -Indian	64.0% 16	72.4% 21	77.4% 24	88.9% 40	78.9% 30	100.0% *	42.9% *	81.8% 9	100.0% *	71.4% 5
		Asian - Other	50.0% *	57.9% 11	42.9% 6	80.0% 12	85.7% 24	43.8% 14	57.1% 32	59.4% 41	77.4% 41	76.3% 45
		Asian - Pakistani	85.7% 6	72.7% 8	100.0% 10	80.0% 8	76.9% 10		71.4% 5	40.0% *	66.7% *	50.0% *
		Black - African	56.3% 18	68.2% 30	75.0% 42	76.5% 39	63.5% 33	70.0% 7	57.1% *	77.8% 14	92.3% 12	71.4% 10
		Black -Caribbean	60.0% *	50.0% *	84.6% 11	58.3% 7	90.9% 10					
		Black - Other	100.0% *	100.0% *		100.0% *	100.0% *			50.0% *		83.3% 5
		Gypsy, Traveller (excluding Irish Travel..	100.0% *									
		Other Mixed	66.7% 10	82.6% 19	86.4% 19	82.6% 19	91.7% 22	50.0% *	50.0% *	100.0% 5		100.0% 8
		White and Asian	57.1% 12	83.3% 20	84.4% 27	78.8% 26	84.6% 22	100.0% *	50.0% *	50.0% *		100.0% *
		White/Black African	100.0% *	85.7% 6	88.9% 8	80.0% *	80.0% *		100.0% *	100.0% *		50.0% *
		White/Black Caribbean	77.8% 7	73.3% 11	92.9% 13	69.2% 9	84.6% 11					
	WHI.	White	78.9% 1479	84.2% 1479	88.6% 1696	90.3% 1621	92.3% 1640	47.6% 10	64.7% 22	50.0% 14	75.7% 28	74.2% 23
NO	BM	Arab			100.0% *			100.0% *	33.3% *	50.0% *	66.7% *	36.4% *
		Asian -Bangladeshi	66.7% *	20.0% *	10.0% *	25.0% *	12.5% *		50.0% *	50.0% *	50.0% *	
		Asian - Chinese	38.1% 8	21.4% *	16.7% *	43.5% 10	16.7% *	64.6% 106	57.9% 143	49.5% 158	39.5% 123	33.3% 90
		Asian -Indian	36.0% 9	27.6% 8	22.6% 7	11.1% 5	21.1% 8		57.1% *	18.2% *		28.6% *
		Asian - Other	50.0% *	42.1% 8	57.1% 8	20.0% *	14.3% *	56.3% 18	42.9% 24	40.6% 28	22.6% 12	23.7% 14
		Asian - Pakistani	14.3% *	27.3% *		20.0% *	23.1% *	100.0% *	28.6% *	60.0% *	33.3% *	50.0% *
		Black - African	43.8% 14	31.8% 14	25.0% 14	23.5% 12	36.5% 19	30.0% *	42.9% *	22.2% *	7.7% *	28.6% *
		Black -Caribbean	40.0% *	50.0% *	15.4% *	41.7% 5	9.1% *					
		Black - Other						100.0% *	100.0% *	50.0% *		16.7% *
		Other Mixed	33.3% 5	17.4% *	13.6% *	17.4% *	8.3% *	50.0% *	50.0% *		100.0% *	
		White and Asian	42.9% 9	16.7% *	15.6% 5	21.2% 7	15.4% *		50.0% *	50.0% *	100.0% *	
		White/Black African		14.3% *	11.1% *	20.0% *	20.0% *					50.0% *
		White/Black Caribbean	22.2% *	26.7% *	7.1% *	30.8% *	15.4% *					
	WHI.	White	21.1% 395	15.8% 278	11.4% 219	9.7% 175	7.7% 136	52.4% 11	35.3% 12	50.0% 14	24.3% 9	25.8% 8

Note: 'YES' shows figures for Good Honours, 'NO' shows figures for not Good Honours