

**Understanding the lived experiences of Black
African International Students in England using
the lenses of Bourdieu and Critical Race Theory**

SOLOMON AMARE ZEWOOLDE

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**University College London, Institute of
Education**

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Declaration

I, Solomon Amare Zewolde, confirm that the work presented in this thesis is my own. Where information has been derived from other sources, I confirm that this has been indicated in the thesis.

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SOLOMON ZEWOLDE

Abstract

This thesis is concerned with issues of how 'race', ethnicity and prior education interact with the lived experiences of Black African International students (BAIS) as they live and study in the UK. It explores how their blackness and Africanness as embodied through their skin colour and accent, and the stereotypes about their place of origin, shape their social realities, both in and outside their universities.

Using theoretical tools from Bourdieu and Critical Race Theory (CRT), this thesis explores how previous education, along with stereotypical perceptions on the part of peers, institutions, and wider society, position BAIS as racialized Others and shape their lived experiences. A qualitative research methodology in conjunction with a CRT framework is used to explore the stories of 21 BAIS studying in ten universities located in eight English cities. A Bourdieusian and CRT analysis shows that BAIS's lived experience is a function of the possession of capitals demanded by UK higher education, lower expectations and multiple racialized dominations and exclusions. Being foreign and/or being international mediate access to, and quality of, educational experience in the UK. BAIS face extra adjustment challenges due to infelicitous encounters with the UK field of higher education, which devalues their cultural capital and demands that they possess the capital that it does value. Being black African with prior education in their home countries positions them as lacking outsiders who are admitted to the institutions but not truly included. I found BAIS experience both overt and covert forms of racism and Othering that pervade all aspects of their lived experiences, both inside and outside the university.

I conclude that the lived experiences of BAIS in the UK cannot just be explained by possession of, or lack of, the cultural capital demanded by the higher education field, and research and scholarship dealing with BAIS living and studying in the West must of necessity use analytical lenses that foreground race and racism for a just and complete analysis.

Impact Statement

There is a lot more to a good party than just sending out the invitations!

International students form a significant part of the student population in UK higher education and are a major source of revenue. However, the number of international students in the UK has decreased from 488,000 in 2011/12 to 458,520 in 2017/18 and in just three years between 2014/15 and 2017/18, the number of BAIS decreased from 35,070 to 27,815. And BAIS from Nigeria, the highest sending African country, showed a steep decline, from 17,920 students in the 2014/15 academic year to 10,540 in 2017/18 – a reduction of 41.2% in just five years.

The UK government launched a new and ambitious International Education Strategy in March 2019, which aims to increase the value of education exports to £35 billion per year and the total number of international students to 600,000 by 2030. One of their five crosscutting strategic actions reads, 'Continue to provide a welcoming environment for international students and develop an increasingly competitive offer.' However, in October 2019 The Equality and Human Rights Commission found that 'there was a strong theme of feeling unwelcome, isolated and vulnerable' among international students.

The findings from this study provide important insights into how such a welcoming environment can be provided. In particular, Chapters 7 and 8 document BAIS's racialized discriminatory and exclusionary lived experiences, which demonstrate the inadequacies on the part of the host institutions and the community in general. Together, these findings could inform the development of policies or measures that could be put in place to tackle the issues of racism and Othering that international students such as BAIS experience while studying and living in the UK. The findings also underscore the need to further and continuously explore and understand the experiences of BAIS in UK HE, to improve their experiences and ensure that the UK remains a popular destination.

The thesis also has benefits inside academia. In particular, the analysis carried out will benefit research and scholarship on the experiences of black students by highlighting the value of employing the combined lenses of Bourdieu and CRT for a just and complete understanding. This will be achieved through disseminating the outputs in scholarly journals and through the publication of the thesis in book form.

However, the most important benefit of this thesis is aiding universities and lecturers to understand that not all their students experience their curriculum, teaching, learning and assessment in the same way. A field that promotes independence and negates communal dispositions alienates BAIS. The findings in Chapters 5 and 6 specifically show the need for more effort to make the curriculum, teaching and assessment practices more inclusive. For example, the findings show that BAIS feel that 'they do not belong' due to the complete absence of black teachers and/or a curriculum that is very Eurocentric, which contributes to framing BAIS as the Other. The findings also show that universities should do a lot more to realize the promise of internationalization as a driver of the development of intercultural competence through the interaction of diverse groups of students engaging in an academic task and/or social activity. These findings could aid in the development of programmes that target such changes.

Acknowledgement

My PhD project has been a truly rewarding experience and there are many who supported me in this long and bumpy journey. First, I would like to thank all the research participants who openly welcomed me to their respective university campuses and shared with me their personal stories- sometimes on issues they have never talked about before. This thesis would not have been possible without you and I can never thank you enough! Although you remain anonymous, I hope I have done justice to your experiences so that your voices will be heard.

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Dedication

In loving memory of my father Amare Zewolde whose extraordinary belief in knowledge and education, and also his defiance continues to inspire me.

And

My mother Tsigie Leta whose self-less love always reminds me of the power and the importance of feeling-loved

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Chapter 1: Introduction

This thesis is concerned with issues of how 'race', ethnicity, and previous education interact with the lived experience of students in undergraduate higher education. More specifically, it is a story of how students' skin colour and accent, and stereotypes about their place of origin, as well as other coded ways of talking about 'race', position them as racialized Others and shape how they are perceived, assessed and talked about. It tells a story of students who are new to the host country and its education system and culture, and who face extra adjustment challenges due to infelicitous encounters with the UK field of higher education, which devalues their cultural capital and demands that they possess the capital that it does value. It is also a story of how experiences of overt and covert racism and Othering pervade almost all aspects of their lived experience, and complicate the terrain of the educational landscape that they need to navigate on an unlevel playing field that is disguised as meritocratic.

Although I have always been interested in issues of how student diversity interacts with educational experience in higher education, two personal experiences in educational spaces following my relocation to the UK as a refugee in 2011 triggered my PhD journey. My first experience was at a London college where I enrolled to do a teacher training course known as CELTA (Certificate in English Language Teaching to Adults). During my four-month stay in the college, everything seemed a bit strange to me. From the gate to the classroom, and everywhere else in the college, I felt out of place. I felt that I was seen as a guest, not as a 'normal' student. Most people talked to me politely but differently – with care, suspicion, or even with sympathy, although they knew of no misfortune that had happened to me. I was confused, and could not understand or explain what was going on. The classroom was no different. The course was designed as three day a week sessions (including input on Saturdays, 9.30 a.m. to 4.30 p.m.), with two evenings of teaching practice per week (6.00 to 9.00 p.m.), where trainees start teaching from the very first week. Despite having been in the classroom

for nearly 14 years, and having been evaluated as a good teacher on several occasions in my past teaching experience, I found my experiences in the CELTA training very distressing. For the first time in my life, I felt quite nervous even to stand in front of a class. This was a direct result of the way in which I was assessed, the kind of feedback I received, and the way in which I reacted to the feedback.

The evaluative comments from the lecturers were confusing, or rather discombobulating, overwhelming, and at times unrealistic. In my feedback, there was constant and categorical reference to problems that 'non-native' trainees have, which implied to me that there was something essentially problematic with me as a trainee. All the teachers acknowledged my dedication and achievement, as I scored the highest mark in all written submissions. However, my final grade was just a pass (the least of the three classes of grades that can be awarded). I was hurt that my efforts and knowledge as demonstrated in my writing assignments and practice teaching sessions were not reflected in my final grade. Although I have no conclusive evidence to suggest that the lecturers were discriminatory, I left the course feeling that I was treated differently. I was the only black African on the course, and I felt that I was learning by swimming against the current, despite being the only student with a prior degree-level qualification in teaching.

My second experience was when I worked as student support worker and a study skills tutor in various London universities. The job involved going to lecture halls and seminar classes, which gave me the opportunity to observe interactions in the classroom. In the university classrooms I have been to, it was often the case that students were de facto divided by 'race'/ethnicity in the way in which they sat and interacted. These are overwhelmingly UK home students. I have never seen anything like that before in my educational experience, and I was very puzzled. It was against my expectations of what student life would be like in a highly cosmopolitan diverse London. During discussions in seminar classes, side talks, formal group work assignments, groupings and socialization over tea breaks, the large majority of the students engaged and interacted with students who were like them in skin colour.

These two personal experiences inspired and enthused me to look at minority students' experiences of higher education in the UK. An exploratory look at the research literature revealed to me that despite increases in access, ethnic minorities in general have a different higher education experience and attain less than white students, even after controlling for difference in socio-economic background and entry qualifications (Connor et al., 2004; Broecke & Nicholls, 2006; Richardson, 2015; Leslie, 2005; Singh, 2009). The literature has, however, established that there is limited research on the experiences of some minority ethnic groups, such as international students in general (Morrison et al., 2005), and a dearth of research about black African international students (BAIS) from Sub-Saharan African (SSA) countries in particular (Leonard et al., 2003). A recent study (Crozier et al., 2016) found that the UK higher education landscape is raced, classed and gendered, and observed that a white middle-class culture disguised as a 'neutral' and 'objective' academic culture is alienating to home BME students, let alone to international students. Thus, I decided that it would then be fascinating to explore the lived experiences of BAIS, who are quite distant from the dominant 'white middle class' UK higher education academic culture.

Internationalization and International students

The concept of internationalization provides the contextual background to the phenomenon of students crossing borders in search of international education (Altbach & Knight, 2007). The narrow definition of internationalization evolved through time, and the concept now goes beyond the phenomenon of the movement of students across national borders: it is conceptualized as a broader strategy involving all functions and structures of a higher education system and/or institution (De Wit, 1999). Internationalization now includes such specific activities as research cooperation, student/staff exchange, off-shore campuses and efforts to internationalize curricula. Knight's (2004:11) conceptualization of internationalization in higher education as 'the process of integrating an international, intercultural or global dimension into the purpose, functions or delivery of post-secondary education' will be relevant in this study

for looking at how these ideals are reflected in BAIS's lived experiences. However, before looking at some documented aspects of the experiences of international students, it will be helpful to look at who they are and how they are defined.

Who are international students?

Although there is general agreement that international students are those who move from one national setting to the other for the purpose of seeking higher education, there are variations in the way the term 'international student' is defined depending on context and geographic regions (Verbik & Lasanowski, 2007). For example, although they cross borders, students from New Zealand studying in Australia, and students from the European Union studying in the UK (until Britain leaves the EU) are considered home students, not international students.

The manual developed by UNESCO/OECD/EUROSTAT (UOE), which monitors the movement of students across national borders, provides the framework that enables categorization of students as foreign and international students. UOE (2018) explains that while foreign students are defined by citizenship, international students are defined by permanent place of residence and by the place where they obtained their upper secondary qualification before enrolling in a higher education institution in the host country. Thus, students are foreign if they do not have citizenship of the country in which they study but are permanent residents. On the other hand, students who cross international borders for the purpose of enrolling in tertiary education programmes in another country with a prior entry qualification obtained from their country of origin are referred to as international students.

Similarly, the Higher Education Statistics Authority (HESA), which is responsible for collecting such data in the UK, operationalizes international students using domicile, immigration status and prior qualification. Although HESA does not explicitly define international and foreign students, the data it gathers on domicile, nationality and visa requirements are used to classify students as home and international students – HESA uses the terms 'UK domiciled' and 'non-UK domiciled'. Using HESA's framework, I define an

international student in the context of UK higher education as a non-UK domiciled student with a secondary school qualification from their country of origin, on a Tier 4 visa, who has come to the UK with the sole purpose of joining a UK higher education institution.

International students in UK higher education

At present, the UK is the second most popular destination for international students after the United States. International students make up 19.6% of the whole student population, 14% of all undergraduates and 35.8% of all postgraduates (Universities UK, 2019). The phenomenal expansion of international education in the UK was driven partly by government intervention – the Prime Minister's Initiative (PMI, 1999; PMI 2, 2006) (Trahar, 2007). According to UKCISA (2019), there were 458,490 international students (non-UK domiciled) studying at UK higher education institutions in the 2017/18 academic year. By country, the highest number of students come from China (106,530). Students from Africa in general account for 6.1% (27,815) of international students in the UK, with Nigeria being the sixth most sending country, with 10,540 students. By subject area, 27.7% of international students are enrolled in business and administrative studies, 11.5% in engineering and technology courses, and 5.1% in law.

Data from the Department of Business, Innovation and Skills (BIS) indicate that international students are a major source of income (BIS, 2013), accounting for a third of the overall income from higher education in the UK. Universities UK (2019: 9) reported, 'The net economic impact of the 2015–16 cohort of international students over the course of their studies is expected to be around £20.3bn.' In addition to income generation, international students also bring diversity of perspectives to academic work (Charles-Toussaint & Crowson, 2010), acquaint home students with challenges and opportunities of diversity (Andrade, 2006), and can help educators recognize the influences of their own and home students' culture on their values (Wang, 2012). BIS (2013) reports that international students enhance the brand of the UK's higher education globally. Notwithstanding the fact that the category

'international students' tends to homogenize experience, Universities UK (2017) reports that the UK is the most recommended destination by international students, and UK graduates have the lowest unemployment rate of all major OECD providers.

However, as I will discuss in the next chapter, studies on the experiences of specific groups of international students in the UK show that there are some serious challenges. For example, evidence of the benefits of international students' presence in university classrooms for enriching perspectives in academic discussion is hard to come by. Anderson et al. (2008: 28), looking at staff and home students' experiences of internationalization in the UK, report that 'One of the most striking findings of this project, was the lack of engagement of home students with internationalisation either personally or pedagogically'. This lack of engagement would threaten one of the claimed benefits of internationalization, enhancing intercultural competence.

International students leave their country of origin to pursue international education for various reasons. These include securing a prestigious and internationally recognized qualification (Maringe & Carter, 2007), seeking opportunities to learn a new culture and language (Montgomery, 2008), looking for high-quality educational experience (McClure, 2007), improving their labour market prospects (Chirkov et al., 2007) and looking for specialist institutions offering courses unavailable at home (Altbach, 2004). Studies have also documented that international students benefit from transformative learning experiences, and that some take up leadership positions upon their return to their countries of origin (Maringe & Carter, 2007; Intolubbe-Chmil et al., 2012). This phenomenon usually prompts international students to have very high expectations of their educational experience in host institutions, including a higher expectation of individual academic support. There is some evidence that these high expectations are not always fulfilled by host institutions, and that international students are seen by academic staff as being unrealistic in their expectations and burdensome (Maringe & Carter, 2007).

This discourse of international students as being challenges and burdens has historically essentialized and homogenized this diverse group of students (Elsey & Kinnell, 1990). In some cases, this has led to the construction and imposition of stereotypical discursive identities of international students as less affluent, which in turn has led to lower institutional expectations, with far-reaching ramifications for students. For example, Devos (2003: 164) explored how debate over academic standards in Australian higher education led to a discursive construction of an international student identity which identified them 'as the boggy, or problem, for Australian higher education rather than, for example, the decline in public funding.'

Researching the international student experience

There appears to be relatively little research on the experiences of international students in the UK, compared to research on the topic in other parts of the Western world, such as the US and Australia (Lillyman & Bennett, 2014). The available research literature on international students reveals two main areas of research focus: attainment and experiences.

The limited research on attainment compared the performance of international and home students, and reported a mixed picture. In earlier studies, some found no significant difference (Marshall & Chilton, 1995; Ackers, 2002), some reported that international students performed better (Pauley, 1988) and others discovered that UK home students performed better, measured by degree class awarded (Makepeace & Baxter, 1990). More recently, Morrison et al. (2005), Iannelli and Huang (2014) and LSEU (2017) have all reported that international students were consistently awarded fewer 'good' (2:1 and first class) degrees. Most of these studies focused on a limited number of universities and specific courses, and quantitatively analysed differences of pre-entry attributes such as age, sex, mode of study, discipline of study and the highest qualification on entry; they did not look at what happens once students are in their universities. However, as Astin (1993) has established, the quality of student experience could have a much greater explanatory power about variations in attainment than pre-entry attributes. My study

explores how the lived experiences of BAIS affected their academic performance and/or attainment.

Research on the holistic experiences of international students identifies problems related to academic and social adjustment (Andrade, 2006), social isolation (Sawir et al., 2008) financial difficulties (Blake, 2006), and racism and discrimination (Lee & Rice, 2007). Social adjustment problems identified in the context of UK higher education include difficulty making friends from the host nation (Pritchard & Skinner, 2002; Brown, 2009), loneliness and homesickness (Rajapaksa & Dundes, 2002), financial problems and accommodation (Li & Kaye, 1998), culture shock and racial discrimination (Furnham, 2004). As highlighted above, these phenomena isolate students, and tend to negate the much-espoused goal of internationalization – developing intercultural competence and bringing international perspectives to academic work and life in host institutions (John, 2014).

Research on the academic adjustment of international students identified such issues as problems with English-language proficiency, lack of academic writing skills and critical thinking skills (Lea & Street, 1998), influence of prior academic culture (Nayak & Venkatraman, 2010), and adapting to new assessment and feedback practices (Carroll & Ryan, 2007). Recent studies on these issues (Brown & Holloway, 2008; Signorini et al., 2009; Huang, 2012; Swami, 2009) focus on envisaged 'cultural differences' in terms of teacher–student relationships and previous educational experiences. Evans and Stevenson (2011) found that a hierarchical and asymmetrical teacher–student relationship in past educational experiences of international nursing students impacted their student–supervisor relationships in UK universities. Huang (2012) draws on the work of Hofstede (1994), which suggests strong association between one's behaviour and nationality, and argues that Chinese collective culture and Western individual culture present a particular challenge in the context of international education. However, such crude assumptions, which tend to equate behaviour, culture and nationality, and assume that people of a certain nationality are expected to behave in a uniform way have

been seriously challenged by many scholars (Baumann, 1996; Signorini et al., 2009; Tran, 2011).

A significant implicit stance in much of this research is the tendency to put much of the responsibility for adapting both socially and academically on international students, with the assumption that there is little or nothing that host institutions can do about it (Lee, 2015). However, there has recently been a shift from the discourse of 'deficit' to a discourse of 'difference' in researching the experiences of international students (Carroll, 2014). The focus on 'difference' usually uses cultural differences between international students and their institutions to explain or understand their experiences in host institutions. This could be quite misleading and unjust. This is because, although there are experiences that can be attributed to differences in educational culture, this runs the risk of imposing homogeneity on what is in fact a very heterogeneous group. Gillborn (2008; 2010) explained the way in which 'culture' is used to essentialize ethnic minorities in racialized ways and reify differences in educational outcomes as natural. In the context of this study, this could lead to the assumption that international students' poor experience and low attainment is due to their culture, taking responsibility away from the system. However, such an assumption is not borne out by the evidence from the literature. In a systematic review of the research literature on international students in the UK, Lillyman & Bennett (2014) confirm that international students continue to be homogenized despite the fact that they come from all over the world and have various educational backgrounds and experiences, and differing levels of academic abilities and preparedness.

In this study, I explore how students' previous educational experiences (what Bourdieu terms 'capital') (Bourdieu, 2011), along with 'race'/ethnicity, shape their lived experiences. I explore how their previous education and sociocultural background interact with academic and social experiences while they live and study in the UK. In particular, I consider how their 'race'/ethnicity pervade all aspects of their lives in various social settings, both inside and outside the university, and how the extra pressure this brings is not necessarily experienced by white and/or home students. I hope that my thesis

contributes to a debate that focuses on the inadequacies of host institutions and society to understand the quality of experience and educational outcome for BAIS.

Research Aims and Questions

As I have highlighted above, the extant research literature indicates that international students' experience of higher education is different from that of home students. However, I contend that there is a dearth of research literature on specific groups of international students, particularly undergraduate BAIS studying in UK universities. By exploring the lived experiences of BAIS, this study aims to contribute to a more comprehensive narrative of international student experience that includes the stories of BAIS, whose voices are normally silent and need to be acknowledged and lifted. The empirical findings would deepen institutions' and teachers' knowledge and understanding of BAIS's lived experiences, and help them to reflect on their policies and practices. I hope that this will allow progressive members of the academic community to examine their practice more closely and better understand the students that they teach. The findings would also help universities to acknowledge and reflect on the culturally constructed nature of their institutions, and to work to create a more inclusive institution through participation and representation.

The findings could also serve as one monitoring mechanism of policies and procedures put in place to support international students, as BAIS's stories challenge and counter dominant discourses of higher education as a colour-blind, meritocratic and race-neutral practice (Solorzano & Yosso, 2001) .

To achieve its aims, this study is underpinned by the following research questions:

- What are the lived experiences of BAIS while studying and living in the UK?
- In what ways do 'race' and ethnicity shape their lived experiences while studying at a UK university?
- To what extent, if any, have 'race' and racism played a role in the lived academic experiences of BAIS, in particular their academic performance and achievement?

Organization of the thesis

This thesis presents analysis of BAIS's stories and accounts of various aspects of their lived experiences. I will first explain how the thesis is organized and structured.

In Chapter 2, I present a review of relevant and related literature that provides context for the present study and identifies gaps in knowledge. I consider previous research under three main topics: sociocultural experiences, academic experiences, and experiences of racism and discrimination. I then summarize what is known and discuss how this relates to the present study.

In Chapter 3, I present the theoretical tools that I use to explore the issues that shape the lived experiences of black African international students in this study. I discuss how these tools are important for exploring and understanding issues of 'race', ethnicity, racism, culture, acceptance, capitals and attainment – the issues that shape the overall lived experiences of BAIS. I make the argument that the theoretical tools, used together, are key to fully exploring and illuminating the findings of the study.

In Chapter 4, I present and explain the overall methodology and the specific methods used to carry out this study. I also discuss the research design and the fieldwork process, and how that led to the broadening of my research focus. I discuss how the research participants were recruited, and provide some information about them using pseudonyms. I explain the data collection tools used and the ethical considerations that informed the process. The last section of the chapter presents a reflection on the research where I examine my insider/outsider status and how this influenced the whole research endeavour.

The four analysis chapters (5-8) support my thesis statement. My thesis argues that the lived experiences of BAIS in UK universities, and their lives beyond, cannot just be explained by possession of, or lack of, the cultural capital demanded by the UK higher education field. Their overall experiences are heavily shaped by experiences of racism, and by how they are positioned

and constructed as visible 'Others' based on coded expressions of 'race', such as accent, immigration status and images of their place of origin, Africa. I present four arguments in support of my thesis, supported by evidence from the empirical data.

The central argument in Chapter 5 is that BAIS face extra adjustment challenges due to an infelicitous/inequitable and unjust encounter with the UK higher education field, the need to adapt to a new societal culture, and the loss of their social capital, which is at times exacerbated by poor institutional support. Consequently, they may be overwhelmed, and experience greater levels of stress and difficulties in their transition to higher education than home students experience. In addition, the substantial fees that they and/or their families pay lead to an expectation and pressure to succeed in a new field of higher education that does not value their capitals, and at the same time demands that they possess the capital and habitus that it does value.

In Chapter 6, I explore the factors that BAIS say have affected their academic performance and achievement, and extend the argument made in the previous chapter about BAIS's overall disadvantage in comparison with home/white students. In particular, I explore how BAIS are challenged by newer forms of assessment in the new field, as their cultural capital of exam performance-oriented skills from previous education is rendered less valuable. Capital is valued differently in different fields (Bourdieu, 2011). Perceived lack of the capital that is demanded by the new field, coupled with perceived racism, and discrimination in marking, grading and overall judgement of their academic work mediates their academic performance. The central argument of this chapter is that in view of the disadvantages that BAIS face, it is a Sisyphean climb to compete with home/white students to attain high, especially first class, degrees.

Chapter 7 extends the discussion of experiences of discrimination and racism addressed in the previous chapter beyond academic experiences. The central argument in this chapter is that both overt and covert forms of racism pervade all aspects of BAIS's lived experiences in various social and physical spaces,

both inside and outside the university. Although they use various coping strategies to alleviate its impact, this phenomenon exacerbates their disadvantage to achieve educational success and cannot be explained by Bourdieu's cultural capital theory.

Chapter 8 builds on the discussion of BAIS's experiences of racism presented in the previous chapter, and shows the depth and layers of domination and subordination that they experience. The central argument of this chapter is that being Othered demonstrates not only the disadvantage experienced by BAIS, but also the privileges of being a white and/or home student. BAIS are positioned and constructed as 'Others' through processes of Othering mainly, but not exclusively, linked with their place of origin, Africa, and the stereotypes associated with it. I argue that this situation further complicates the terrain of the educational landscape that BAIS need to navigate on an unlevel playing field.

In Chapter 9, I conclude by summarizing my findings and arguments in relation to the current literature. I argue that BAIS's lived experience is a function of the possession of capitals demanded by UK higher education, lower expectations and multiple racialized domination. Their experience is fraught with lack of acceptance, and BAIS are positioned as 'lacking' outsiders, who are admitted to institutions but are not truly included. They experience racism and/or Othering from home white (and also black), other non-white international students, and members of the community in various social settings both inside and outside the university. Within their universities, institutional structures and practices, such as online submission, seminar groups, predominantly white teachers, the Eurocentric curriculum and newer assessment methods, are unfortunately found to be sites of further disadvantages or racialized discriminatory treatment when BAIS did not readily fit into these practices and/or were perceived as deficient learners. I then consider the theoretical and empirical contributions of my thesis, followed by its limitations and implications.

Chapter 2: Review of literature

Introduction

This chapter presents a review of the scholarly and research literature with a view to providing context for the study and to situate the study in relation to the relevant literature. It also aims to review what is so far known about BAIS's experiences, and to identify the lacuna to be filled or the knowledge to be extended. This review of the research literature on BAIS's experiences is processual, commencing with the study and continuing throughout the analysis, guided/driven by new themes emerging as the data are interrogated iteratively.

I begin with a brief discussion of BAIS in UK higher education, their proportion, motivation, and where and what they study most. I then discuss research literature on the experiences of BAIS under three major topics: sociocultural experiences, academic experiences, and experiences of racism and discrimination.

BAIS in UK higher education

Education has historically been one of the main drivers of Africans' migration to the UK, and African students have been in British education since the 18th century (Daley, 1998). However, the movement of students as we know it today perhaps started in the 1940s. Keith (1946: 65) documented the growing numbers of African students in British universities and had the following to say in 1946:

To-day [sic], the scholarship students alone number over 600, about 200 of whom are Africans; 80 from Nigeria, 65 from Gold Coast, 25 from Sierra Leone, and the remainder from the Gambia, East Africa and Northern Rhodesia. Private African students probably number from three to four hundred.

At present, 1 in 16 international students in the UK comes from Africa. As mentioned earlier, according to HESA (2019) , there were 27,815 African international students (49.9% postgraduate (13,870) and 50.1%

undergraduate (13,945) studying in UK universities in the 2017/18 academic year. This is 6.1% of the total (458,490) non-UK domiciled students and 8.5% all non-EU domiciled students (325,665). The 13,945 undergraduate African international students represented 5.5% of the total (255,705) non-UK domiciled undergraduate students, a 1% reduction from the figure five years earlier.

Table 1: The proportion of undergraduate African international students in the UK 2014/15 and 2017/18

Year	UK total	Africa total	Percentage of UK total
2014/15	232,105	14,790	6.4%
2017/18	255,705	13,945	5.4%

Source: HESA Student Statistics (2019)

Despite the reduction in the overall numbers of the undergraduate students from Africa, Nigeria remains in the top ten non-EU sending countries. However, there is a steep decline in the number of BAIS from Nigeria, from 17,920 in 2014/15 to 10,540 students in the 2017/18 academic year – a reduction of 41.2% in just five years. The evidence from this study suggests that the quality of the student experience could be one main factor for the reduction. In fact, in a 14:46-minute YouTube video entitled ‘Stop Applying to UK Universities! (Nigerians)’ (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Z0VnWYWiiNQ>) published on 10 April 2019 and accessed on 23 August 2019, female Nigerian biomedical student Dyna Ekwueme, who graduated with a degree from the University of Brighton in 2017, speaks of how Nigerians especially are unfairly treated in the labour market, even with a first-class degree. As of 23 August 2019, her video had 178,798 views, 2,211 comments (the overwhelming majority in her support), and 3.4 thousand ‘likes’. She explained that home students or Europeans with a 2:2 or even a third-class degree are preferred, and she strongly criticizes the system as unfair. She calls on fellow aspiring Nigerians to stop applying to UK universities. This is consistent with the labour-market experiences of BAIS in this study.

Why do BAIS come to the UK?

There is limited literature on the motives of African international students to come and study in the UK. The available literature indicates that their choice of the UK may be influenced by the colonial and post-colonial links of their countries (Goldbart et al., 2005), the reputation of UK universities (Maringe & Carter, 2007) and the influence of recruitment agents working/having ties with their countries (Hulme et al., 2014). In a rare study, Maringe & Carter (2007) investigated the reasons why BAIS come to the UK to study. They conducted focus group discussions (FGDs) with 28 African students studying in two universities in Southern England. Their sample included students mainly from Southern Africa, and some from North and West Africa. They did not differentiate the students by 'race'/ethnicity and we do not know how many were black Africans and how many Asian and/or white Africans. This is significant because white and Asian Africans have a different experience from black Africans while studying in the West (Lee & Opio, 2011).

Although they confirmed that many of the reasons that other international students come to the UK also apply to BAIS, they also identified some reasons that may be more specific to African students. These include a greater expectation that UK higher education would prepare them for the leadership positions they aspire to assume when they return home, lack of capacity in their countries to train them at certain levels, and economic and political instabilities in their countries. They also reported that 100% of their sample said they were attracted by 'international recognition of British qualifications' and 65% said they were attracted by the 'excellent teaching and learning environments' based on the information they had from other people from their country who studied at British universities. Maringe & Carter (2007: 459) conclude, 'The data suggest that African students come to study in England on the promise of getting a truly international HE experience. Questions are however raised about whether this promise is delivered in full.' [Brown & Holloway \(2008\)](#) also reported that students' very high expectations, when not met, may turn into stressors blighting their experiences. In fact, Hyams-Ssekasi et al. (2014: 1) reported that black African postgraduates

faced 'significant financial pressures and difficulties in understanding and integrating into the culture of UK universities. In some cases, these challenges left the students feeling disillusioned and cynical about the value of an international education.'

Research on the experiences of BAIS

While there is a relatively significant amount of research on Asian international students such as Chinese students, by comparison there is very little research literature on the experiences of BAIS. Researchers (Beoku-Betts, 2004 ; Lee & Rice, 2007; Pruitt, 1978; Constantine et al., 2005; Lee & Opio, 2011) report that black students face quite a serious problem of racism and discrimination in addition to the problems of isolation, financial difficulties, and separation from family and friends, which are faced by all international students. These studies are from the US, and there is a paucity of such research in the UK context. Hyams-Ssekasi et al. (2014) reiterate that despite quite a significant amount of research on the experiences of international students in UK universities, very few of these studies looked at the educational experiences of BAIS. This is interesting in view of the evidence of a long history of BAIS presence in UK higher education spanning nearly 300 years (Daley, 1998). There are even fewer studies exclusively on the experiences of BAIS from English-speaking Sub-Saharan African (SSA) countries. The limited research on the experiences of this group of students reported that they are motivated by a higher quality of education and the chance of securing an internationally recognized degree (Maringe & Carter, 2007). They also face financial difficulty and challenges integrating into UK culture and the educational system (Hyams-Ssekasi et al., 2014), and face challenges adapting to alternative modes of assessment, typically preferring traditional forms of assessment (Bartoli, 2011).

Since the research literature that specifically focuses on BAIS's experiences in the UK is quite scarce, I have also reviewed studies from other Western

destinations for BAIS, mainly the US, where there is a relatively significant amount of research.

The review of research literature is categorized into three sections: sociocultural experiences, academic experiences and experiences of racism and discrimination.

Sociocultural experiences

BAIS in the UK have been reported to experience greater challenges to adapt to their new social and academic environment. This includes feelings of isolation and alienation in various social settings in the host society. Keith (1946) is one of the earliest papers in the literature to document the lived experiences of African international students (then called overseas and/or colonial students) in UK higher education. While discussing the serious lack of accommodation for overseas students, especially in London, Keith (1946:69) highlights that African students suffer more from accommodation problems than other overseas students do:

Owing to colour prejudice, the African student has been, and still is being, denied free access to lodgings which may be available to other classes of students, and attempts to draw up satisfactory lists of lodgings which take non-European students have not been very successful.

Keith also mentions that African students face serious challenges making friends with home students, and depend on churches and charities for socialization. It is interesting to note that Keith (1946) never mentions racism as a possible cause, even in 1940s England where society was openly hostile and racist to black people (Small & Solomos, 2006). This tradition of being oblivious to racism is reflected in much of the educational research literature in the UK.

Maundeni (2001) looked at the role of social networks in the adjustment of African students in a Scottish university, using semi-structured interviews with 29 African students from seven African countries. Maundeni reported that African students heavily relied on their own fellow country nationals for

friendship and support. The African students in Maundeni's (2001: 253) study secured some crucial 'emotional, informational, spiritual and financial support, advice and social companionship' from fellow Africans, but despite overall good experience with lecturers, they also reported some discriminatory treatment, which was a source of stress. In particular, Maundeni (2001) , found that lecturers' rejection of the prior knowledge and experience that the African students bring to the classroom was the source of stress. Maundeni (2001:270) reported a student saying, 'what frustrates me more is that sometimes when I try to share with the class my experiences, the lecturer does not show interest. (Eddy, aged 32).' Maundeni (2001) also reported that African students had little or no contact with both home students and also their neighbours in the community, which jeopardized their adjustment. This shows that not much progress seems to have been made in the six decades since Keith's (1946) research, in terms of making friends for Africans who come to study in the UK. Indeed, inadequacies on the part of institutions in dealing with the adjustment challenges that BAIS faced led to health problems. Maundeni (2001: 271) reports, 'This study found that a majority of students used medical services, sometimes to address psychological problems.' Maundeni argues that BAIS in the study somatized their psychological stress as physical symptoms, and sought medical help instead of psychiatric help. Bradley (2000: 417), in a study of institutional response to the health needs of international students, also reports that the economic, social and academic problems that international students face 'in extreme cases may trigger and/or exacerbate mental health problems'.

Despite several instances of social isolation and alienation, being positioned as less important and experiencing the rejection of their previous educational experiences, Maundeni (2001) frames the adjustment challenges of the African students included in the study only as 'problems of social network', not as structural disadvantages such as racism. This tendency is also reflected in US studies. In one of the earliest studies Pruitt (1978) who investigated the adaptation of Sub Saharan African international students in the US reported that Sub Saharan African students faced greater adjustment challenges

because they purposely chose to isolate themselves from their American peers but not the other way round.

This framing of BAIS's experiences as anything but racism (Harper, 2012) is also reflected in Hyams-Ssekasi et al. (2014), who explore the challenges that postgraduate BAIS face in adjusting to UK culture and educational systems. They find that African students, among other things, experience being stereotyped, and have difficulty making white friends in particular. Two quotations from Hyams-Ssekasi et al. (2014:8) are revealing:

The values we have in Africa are looked down on. Talk about our traditions, they are still considered backwards only good enough for research. [She laughs loudly] I don't want to say so much about this because it makes me angry. (Ade, Uni. 2)

I try to socialize and have tried to befriend a number of White people but there is a limit. I know it and I feel it. I have been left alone in a pub by my so-called friends. (Tobi, Uni. 3)

However, despite this, Hyams-Ssekasi et al. (2014:10) report, 'The students in this study did not report overt racial harassment, but did feel socially excluded and unwanted by the local student population.' Feelings of isolation and being unwanted could be a direct result of racism, but the authors' narrower conceptualization of 'racism' as only 'overt harassment' seems to have prevented them from considering racism and led them to frame the students' experiences as being just the result of difficulty 'integrating into the UK system'.

In a similar study, two of the same authors, Caldwell & Hyams-Ssekasi (2016), explored the challenges that African international students experience as they leave their homes to come to the UK. They interviewed 50 mature (non-traditional age) African students (46 undergraduates and 4 postgraduates) from one UK university, and report such challenges as separating from their communities, practical challenges in completing the application process, delays and problems in securing visas, and financial problems. They argued that these affected their transition and adjustment in the UK. Although focusing on students' background characteristics could have its own merits,

there is a very high risk of reifying the deficit view that students are to blame for failing to adapt, masking the serious and pervasive structural and social barriers on the part of the universities, society and government of the host nation.

Research on the experiences of international students more often than not includes either very few Africans or no Africans at all, and continues to ignore the role of 'race' and racism in their lived experiences. Brown and Holloway's (2008) ethnographic study explored the adjustment journey/process of postgraduate international students on a one-year course at a university in the south of England. They observed the whole cohort of 150 postgraduate students at the university but interviewed only 13. There is only one South African student interviewee quoted in their report. They found loneliness and anxiety caused by the need to adjust to a new academic and sociocultural environment to be main adjustment issues for most participants. In fact, they say that two students left because they felt too stressed and homesick. They also report that adjustment is not a linear and generalizable process, as it works 'by cultural distance, language problems, academic demands, loneliness and homesickness' (Brown and Holloway, 2008:244), but ignored the possible role of discrimination and racism. This is regrettable because of their finding their participants' words about their struggle to make friends, and the resulting isolation and loneliness that they experience, clearly indicates their position of domination and subordination.

Pritchard and Skinner (2002) explore the adjustment experiences of international students in the UK (Northern Ireland) and found that they do not adjust properly and thus suffer isolation. Their participants were from the EU, the Asian continent and Americans, and included no Africans at all. They approach their research with a highly deficit-view, and assert that international students stick to people from their own countries and 'fail to make contact with home students and local people' (Pritchard and Skinner, 2002:323). They place the failure to adjust squarely on the international students and fail to consider a host of factors on the part of UK society that makes adjustment an upheaval. This overall tendency to shun the role of 'race' and racism has been

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observed by Sriprakash et al., (2019) who wrote, 'Considerations of racism remain silent, or indeed, are erased, within teaching and research, often in favour of colour-blind and technocratic approaches [...]'. This tendency to frame the experiences of international students as adjustment challenges appears to be universal. For example, Tauriac & Liem (2012), in their investigation of academic outcomes for black Americans and immigrant-origin Americans (which includes BAIS), found that institutional support that facilitates the integration of BAIS into the university community helps them to adjust to the academic demands of their new educational setting. In a systematic review of research literature on the international student experience across the Western world, Andrade (2006) also found that much of the research framed issues of language proficiency, study habits, academic achievement, educational background, lack of support services and/or even discrimination only as adjustment challenges.

Academic experiences

Researchers have documented some issues related to the academic adjustment challenges of international students, including problems of English-language proficiency, teacher–student relationship, biased curricula and assessment-related challenges (Andrade, 2006). In a meta-synthesis of the research literature on the experiences of international students in English-speaking Western countries, Andrade (2006) found that overall, the research evidence suggests that they are happy with their academic experience, in particular with teaching and teachers, but are less satisfied with their social integration/adjustment experiences. However, Andrade (2006) also reports that country of origin plays a role, and that Western Europeans adjusted more easily than other internationals. Andrade (2006) reports that issues of English-language proficiency are the main factors affecting the overall academic adjustment and achievement of international students. In the UK, research on international students identified similar academic adjustment problems, albeit the focus has been overwhelmingly on Asian international students (Jin & Cortazzi, 1996; Qing & Schweisfurth, 2006; Gu et al., 2010).

Bailey (2006) surveyed 159 Chinese and West African international students at the University of Wolverhampton, and also interviewed some students, staff from the university's service departments, and looked at data on performance. Bailey (2006) reports language problems and the weather as being the most serious difficulty the students faced while studying in Britain. The students also report high satisfaction with teaching, but the curriculum was seen as highly Eurocentric and alienating to them. They also attained less than UK students, and were involved in more cases of academic misconduct such as plagiarism than UK students.

Some studies look at challenges emanating from academic cultural differences. In a qualitative study of the experiences of postgraduate international students (including BAIS) in the UK, Brown (2008) finds academic cultural differences in the areas of computer use, essay writing and referencing, critical thinking, participation in discussion, and language ability as major challenges that the students faced. This situation caused a great deal of stress, as the students were not prepared for the academic demands of their new educational setting. The most serious challenge reported by the African students in Brown's study was the demand to use computers for academic work. Brown (2008:12) reports, 'None of these students expected the prevalence of word processing and Internet use, and when asked, all said they had not received pre-arrival information on the topic, reflecting a selectivity in the information forwarded to students.'

Some other studies look at classroom experiences of international students. Osmond and Roed (2009) explored international and home students' view of group work using 25 qualitative interviews at Coventry University. Their international student sample includes a student from Nigeria, but they did not specifically quote any statement from them. They report that international students wanted to work with students from similar ethnic backgrounds, but home students said they preferred mixed cultural groupings, although they sometimes exclude international students because they do not know 'how to talk to them' (Osmond and Roed, 2009:118). Like many of the UK studies on the international student experience, the authors frame this just as language

barrier preventing international students from mingling with home students, and never a case of exclusion of the Other. In fact, home students' avoidance of interaction with international students was explained as being caused by their 'fear of causing offence' (Osmond and Roed, 2009:122) and corroborates their findings with an earlier UK study at the University of Leeds (Allen et al.,1994), which similarly squarely puts the blame on international students. The study also finds that while international students perceived that group work offers them the opportunity to make friends from diverse groups, home students said that they do not need to make new friendships as their established circles are still around. Despite this, however, international students are blamed for staying in conational friendship circles.

In a similar but more critical and insightful study, Harrison and Peacock (2009c) explore home undergraduate students' experiences and perceptions of international students in classroom interactions using focus groups and semi-structured interviews in two universities in South-West England. They report that home students were mindful during cross-cultural encounters and experienced anxiety. This seems to be heightened when it involves a BAIS. Harrison and Peacock (2009a:135) quote a home student who said:

you have to watch what you say ... There's this Nigerian boy and [my friend] is scared 'cos she's worried she's going to say the wrong thing. She is not racist, but she's worried she's gonna say something and that worry has stopped her from talking to him.

The authors do not provide any context, and it is not clear why the Nigerian student is a particular worry and a source of anxiety. Given what we know, skin colour visibility might have singled him out – as Madrid (1988: 56) articulates '*The other* frightens, scares.' Interestingly, Harrison and Peacock (2009a:136) report that although home students try very hard to avoid using stereotypes, and make extra efforts through 'response amplification' (Stephan and Stephan, 1996)' to be seen to be doing this, they manifest 'subconscious stereotypes' by referring to all students from the Asian sub-continent as 'these Chinese' students. Despite its powerful insight, however, the paper concludes that home students' lack of engagement is a risk aversion strategy to avoid

'causing offence ... by making a cultural faux pas' (Harrison and Peacock, 2009a:136) during interaction with an international student or avoiding the risk of getting lower grades by working with them. In the process, as Sriprakash et al., (2019) argue, consideration of 'race' and racism is totally erased.

Leask (2009), in an exploration of international students' perspectives on their lived experience in the Australian context, find that some international students experience alienation from home students. An international student said, '... beside me is an empty chair, but this girl ... I was like smiled at her, then she sit at the back at the end of the class ... (Mei-Li, IS).' The author concludes, 'It is the extent and depth of the level of engagement with other cultural perspectives as a normal part of life at university which defines the student experience of internationalisation' Leask (2009:14)– something that is currently lacking in university campuses.

Assessment experience

There is a paucity of research literature specifically on the assessment and feedback experiences of international students (Carroll, 2014). This is surprising in view of the potential that research on international students' lived experiences of assessment could produce the evidence to guide the development of an inclusive curriculum and assessment practices. The limited research in the area mainly looks at students' preferences about different assessment methods and/or the fairness and validity of assessment methods in measuring academic ability across cultures (De Vita, 2002; Kingston & Forland, 2008; Bartoli, 2011).

Studies on preferences about assessment methods show contrasting results. While Kingston and Forland (2008) report that international students prefer what are collectively termed as alternative forms of assessment (such as project work, coursework, presentations), Bartoli (2011) reports preference for traditional forms of assessment such as end-of-term written examinations. Kingston & Forland (2008), in a study of 'gaps in expectation between teachers and East Asian international students', noted that the large majority of these students preferred alternative forms of assessment to traditional

examinations. The students argued that due to deficiencies in English language, they preferred assessment methods that would not put them on the spot and give them the opportunity for detailed written feedback from tutors rather than just verbal feedback.

Bartoli (2011) investigated the assessment experiences of black Africans on a social work degree programme at a university in the East Midlands, England by analysing their grades in different assessment formats. In an FGD session, the students expressed their views that they find traditional exams more familiar, and they referred to other forms of assessment such as coursework assignment as the 'other world' (Bartoli, 2011:46). They also argued that they perform better in exams. The author particularly investigated the students' perception that they do better in exams compared to other forms of assessment on their course, such as portfolios, presentations, and coursework essay assignments. Bartoli (2011:55) reports, 'The findings of this study conclude that the perceptions of the Padare students [BAIS from Zimbabwe] are borne out and validated by the data – they fare better in the examination compared to other assessment tools.' Given the fact that assessor subjectivity could be much more pronounced in marking coursework submissions than exams (Brown & Knight, 2012), bias could be one factor for the variations in their grades.

In a comparative study of UK home and international students' preferences about assessment methods, Bartram and Bailey (2010) report that both groups preferred to be assessed by coursework and that exams were their least preferred method. However, the result also shows that a higher percentage of UK students chose coursework and that none of them chose exams as a preferred method of assessment. By contrast, not only did a smaller percentage of international students chose assessment by coursework, but about a tenth of them preferred exams and a fifth of them preferred assessment by a combination of coursework and exams. The authors also report that while many UK students preferred coursework assessment to avoid the stress of exams, many international students said coursework gives them the time to learn and improve their language skills. It is

also interesting to note that the Nigerian student in their study said, 'Exams really assess the ability of the student' (Bartram and Bailey, 2010:183). As all assessments (at least summative ones) seem to aim to measure 'the ability of the student', this student's statement may be interpreted as a preference for what he/she believes is a fairer method rather than only the choice of exam as an assessment method.

In a similar vein, De Vita (2002) investigates the extent to which assessment methods in current use in the context of business studies at an English university can fairly be used to measure the ability of home and international students. The investigation specifically aims to establish if three methods of assessment (multiple choice, coursework and end-of-course examination) are culturally fair indicators of 'ability' as measured by marks awarded to home and international students. De Vita finds that home students received higher marks than international students on all three methods of assessment. Although all three assessment methods appeared to advantage home students, statistical tests revealed assessment by examination in particular disadvantages international students. De Vita (2002: 1) reports, 'The main finding indicates that assessment by examination penalizes international students beyond differences in ability levels, as measured by multiple-choice test and coursework assignment scores.' While this finding is consistent with Van Dyke (1998), who finds that African students on business studies degree courses achieved lower marks on units assessed by examinations, it contradicts Bartoli (2011), who finds that African students on a social work degree course achieved much better when assessed by examination than by coursework. These contrasting findings suggest that the cultural bias that may be inherent in assessment methods differentially affects students from various ethnic/cultural backgrounds. International students in De vita's study come from 24 unspecified nationalities so we do not know if BAIS were involved. Thus, we need research that takes into account more specific ethnic or racial differences in the student profile.

Van Dyke (1998) looks at the progress and achievement of ethnic minority and white students in two London-based universities, finding considerable ethnic

differences in both retention and graduation rates across the four courses investigated, with Asians mostly at the top and Africans and Caribbean at the bottom. The paper attributes this ethnic difference in achievement to the format of assessment used, English-language proficiency, curriculum, and staff–student relationship. It reports that assessment by examination disadvantages ethnic minorities (a finding repeated by De Vita, 2002) and that English-language proficiency influences (perhaps unduly) teachers' marking of students' work. Ethnic minorities also felt that the style of their written English is a source of disadvantage. Evidence from institutional assessment standards and regulations show that 'English language proficiency is given some weight in marking students work'. Van Dyke (1998) argues the need for making the linguistic requirements of units/modules explicit. However, evidence from research on assessment in higher education (Bloxxham et al., 2011 ; Price et al., 2011) shows that some aspects of the written English standards/requirements are simply tacit and cannot fully be made explicit. Bourdieu and de Saint Martin (1974) also argue that university examinations standards reflect the values of the dominant cultural group, and requirements of the 'fuzzy' academic standards (Sadler, 1987) may not be equally clear to all groups of students. The students' narratives of their experiences resonate with the evidence in the literature.

Van Dyke (1998) also found that Eurocentric curricular content, particularly in social sciences and humanities, has an important effect on the success of ethnic minority students. In addition, low expectations due to teachers' stereotypical view of minorities and limited contact with teachers outside of class also affected the academic achievement of ethnic minority students. They argue that contact outside of class could give opportunities to learn a bit more about the tacit rules of the assessment game. Van Dyke (1998: 132) reports that 'The evidence that emerged from this project indicates that individual merit may not be the only defining variable that influences student progress and performance.'

Van Dyke (1998) also unearths some very remarkable findings in that they make direct reference to racialized discrimination on the assessment and

feedback experiences of African students. The following quotations from Van Dyke (1998) represent African students' voices on marking, stereotypical views by staff of African students, inequitable staff–student relationship, and racism.

On this particular course they have already chosen who will get the first class degree and it's a white person that I know ... and the others will probably get 2.1s and the majority of black people, I feel, will get specially those who come from African continent, 2.2s or thirds and it seems like that [outcome] will be determined from the time you start your second year ... And that's what I am finding with this particular college ... But I do have a friend at another university that is experiencing a similar situation to this ... And you know, there doesn't seem to be anything that you can do about it and you sort of go home in tears.

(Van Dyke, 1998:130)

So and so never gives black students above 55. I helped a white student with an assignment and when he got them back he asked me what I got. He got an A and I got a C. He couldn't believe it.

(Van Dyke, 1998:121)

On white students benefiting from securing a lot more feedback on coursework due to a higher level of interaction with staff, a student was quoted as saying:

But then you know, you do have certain people who understand what I can only call 'the rules of the game'. That they should take everything not just to one lecturer but to two, three or four lecturers. And you know, if they can get a couple of home numbers, they're really in there.

(Van Dyke, 1998:131)

In what may be described as an unusual incident, a student also reported an explicit racist remark about African students. **Van Dyke (1998: 131)** reports, 'One day I actually overheard X make racist comments about us to another lecturer. X said there were too many Africans in [the university] and that we were all dumb fools'.

While the quotations above may be contested as allegations, subjective impressions and difficult to prove, they provide evidence of low trust and poor relations between African students and staff, which is unhelpful, with deleterious effect on students' learning and achievement. The students feel

Othered and discriminated against. Staff bias and equating BME students with a lower grade, as claimed by the student above, has also been mentioned by Cousin (2016) (cited in Steventon et al., 2016:206), who wrote, 'When teachers behold BME, do they behold 2:2 students?'

Very low expectations of especially black students in UK higher education have also been reported by a National Union of Students study (NUS, 2011). This is a comprehensive UK-wide survey of 938 students, with some focus groups on the experiences of black students (home and international) in UK higher and further education, with the majority (72%) in higher education. Although the term 'black' in the study was used as a political term to include students from African, Caribbean, Arab and Asian ethnic backgrounds, 71% (669) identified themselves as 'black' and 28% of these (264) self-identified as 'black African'. The study found similarities, as well as some differences, between the experiences of home and international black students. The specific difficulties faced by BAIS include biased marking, experiences of racism in the academic environment (reported by 9% of the students), difficulties adapting to unfamiliar teaching and learning styles, feelings of isolation and alienation with a direct bearing on their motivation and desire to stay on their courses, and low expectations both from teachers and their peers- which left them feeling that they are destined to fail or underachieve (NUS, 2011:5-6). Some African international students perceived their educational environment as exclusionary and discriminatory. NUS (2011: 48) reports these statements from black African international students:

[International] students (especially those of colour) often feel like outsiders and are probably not paid as much attention to than other students [sic]. There is often the perception that they are going to fail at whatever they try and therefore they aren't encouraged. **Black African international student, HE**

I think treatment in class is often prejudiced and references to Africa by some of the teaching staff tend to be dismissive and, in some cases, ignorant –because they are experts of a place where they have never been. It is offensive to have your birthright dismissed just like that in ways that are often stereotypical and untrue. The whole experience puts you off. **Black African international student, HE**

(NUS 2011: 48)

NUS (2011: 49) also reports that BAIS believed that assessment practices in their universities did not consider cultural differences:

The treatment and opportunities provided are mainly aimed at home students at large and there's not a lot done for the international students. For example, I am from Nigeria and we tend to adopt the American writing skill ... these are mistakes students make which is not necessarily their fault as they do not realise the difference and are losing marks for it [in] assessment. **Black African international student, HE**

(NUS 2011: 49)

The studies by Van Dyke (1998) and NUS (2011) of black students' assessment experiences in UK higher education suggest that not much has changed in any major way in the 13-year period between them. My doctoral study also explores the factors that BAIS believe affect their academic performance and achievement, and has produced evidence that is consistent with, but also in some ways extends, the literature.

To summarize, this review of the literature shows that research has established that international and home students' academic experience is different. International students are challenged by, inter alia, differences in educational culture and problems of English-language proficiency. Most research also reports that there is much less interaction between home and international students than is desired, and much of the research uncritically puts the blame for poor interaction both inside and outside the classroom on international students. The review also establishes that there are ethnic differences in assessment experience and academic achievement. Many of the studies also homogenize international students as one group, and very few include BAIS in their sample – evidence that they continue to be overlooked.

Although my study follows the tradition of research work that explores the experiences of international students, more relevant for my study is the research literature that focuses on discrimination and racism experienced by international students in general, and BAIS in particular. In the next section, I

review studies that particularly focus on black international students experiences of racism and discrimination.

Experiences of racism and discrimination

The research literature has established that international students in general experience feelings of isolation and loneliness when they live and study outside their countries (Andrade, 2006). This is heightened by the loss of their friends and family as they cannot rely on their support during difficult times. It is also exacerbated by the alienation and exclusion they suffer from the host society, both inside and outside their university. Research (Lee & Opio, 2011; Boafo-Arthur, 2014a; Lee & Rice, 2007 ; Irungu, 2013; Brown & Jones, 2013) has documented that black African international students especially suffer exclusions as a result of the racism and discrimination they experience because of their skin colour, ethnicity/culture and accent, and also due to negative stereotypes of their continent, Africa. For example, Hanassab (2006), in an investigation of racial discrimination experienced by international students, found variations by the geographic regions from which the students originate: international students from Africa and the Middle East experience more racial discrimination, and they experience it more off campus than on campus. African students report the highest incidences of discrimination in three of the four areas of discrimination investigated. The African students reported an equal 17% of experiences of racial discrimination during interaction with professors, other university staff, and during the process of application for campus jobs; 33% also reported racial bias from the general population in Los Angeles.

In general, there appear to be few studies looking at how 'race' and racism shape the lived experiences of international students globally (Fries-Britt et al., 2014; Brown and Jones, 2013) and a dearth of it in the UK, particularly concerning undergraduate BAIS. I could not find any study that exclusively focuses on undergraduate black African international students experiences of racism in the UK.

One of the few studies in the UK (Brown & Jones, 2013) explores experiences of racism of postgraduate students studying at a university in the south of

England. This is a significant and welcome development for one of the authors, who previously framed issues of isolation and discrimination in international students' experiences in the UK as being caused by 'cultural differences' and ignored considerations of racism (Brown, 2008; Brown & Holloway, 2008). In this latest study, Brown and Jones (2013) investigate racist incidences among 149 postgraduate students and the impact on the international student experience using a mixed method study. Of the 149 students surveyed, 49 said that they have experienced racism – only two were BAIS. Of these 49, 33 students consented to be interviewed, but 15 students declined, saying that they did not want to relive their experiences of racism. Only one of the BAIS volunteered to take part in a personal interview. The mainly Asian postgraduate interviewees reported various encounters with racism, ranging from physical assault to swearing and aggressive laughing. They concluded that experiences of racism had a strong emotional impact, leading to such behaviour change as staying at home, being fearful, and even changing or denying identity. This led some participants to develop negative attitudes towards the host community and a reluctance to recommend their current university to fellow nationals, and some also vowed not to visit the country again themselves.

One BAIS (a Ghanaian student) reported his personal experience of racism, and the experience of a fellow BAIS who was unable to deal with the racism and had to leave the UK:

There was this aged man, I think he was drunk. He saw me in the bus and he said 'hey you Nigger, you black man. Do you have some weed on you?' I just looked away and everyone had their eye on me. He kept on asking and shouting on me. (Ghanaian student)

(Brown & Jones, 2013: 1011)

I have a friend who was abused. He went back home. I think most of them when they have this issue they can't stand it. (Ghanaian student)

(Brown & Jones, 2013: 1012)

The Ghanaian student also explained that these experiences of racism had a profound emotional impact on them, as they induced a feeling of being unwanted:

For two days I was crying in my room. I felt like just running back to Ghana. What I realise is that they saw me not to be part of them. I don't belong with them. They didn't want to see me. They don't like my presence. (Ghanaian student)

(Brown & Jones, 2013: 1013)

The Ghanaian student also said that they will not recommend that fellow Africans study in the South of England, believing that London, the Midlands or the North are better regions in which to study. Although all the international students, including white Europeans, suffered some form of racism in their study, the black Africans seems to have been affected most, as one went back home and the other refused to take part in the interview (along with others, of course) because they found it painful to talk about their experiences of racism. Brown and Jones (2013:1010) write, 'This study therefore confirms that physical distinctiveness from the host community increases a sojourner's vulnerability to abuse.'

Some studies, especially from the US (Constantine et al., 2005; Bofo-Arthur, 2014a; Lee & Opio, 2011), report the feelings of exclusion and depression BAIS suffered as a result of the racial prejudice and discrimination they experienced. For example, **Bofo-Arthur (2014a)**, in a review of the research literature on the experiences of BAIS in US higher education, identifies racial prejudice and discrimination is the most serious issue affecting their adjustment, causing them a great deal of stress. The review shows that BAIS suffered prejudice and discrimination based on their black skin colour, culture and accent, and stereotypes about their countries of origin and their way of life, both from home students and other international students (including black home students).

In an empirical investigation, **Constantine et al. (2005)** used semi-structured interviews to examine the cultural adjustment problems of 12 African students from Kenya, Ghana and Nigeria studying in the US. The students experienced

racism, including direct racial attack from teaching staff and, more interestingly, from other international students. Among other things, they found 'prejudicial or discriminatory treatment' by Americans based on 'race', both inside and outside the university, to be a serious problem for black African international students. For example, while a Kenyan student said, 'It's frustrating to know that people think less of you because of the color of your skin' (Constantine et al., 2005:62), a female Nigerian interviewee said that a white teaching assistant called her a 'stupid nigger' (Constantine et al. (2005:61) in a seminar class. She left the session immediately and also dropped out from the module altogether.

The researchers also report that the African students experienced discriminatory treatment from other non-white international students. A female Nigerian student said:

When I first moved into my dorm, I had roommates from Taiwan and Japan who both asked to be moved to another room because they didn't want to room with an African. I also heard some Asian and [European international] students talk about being afraid of Africans, like we're going to hurt them. They have some strong stereotypes about us.

(Constantine et al., 2005:62)

BAIS also experience racial discrimination and stereotyping by other black students. In a study of the experiences and adjustment problems of African international students, Blake (2006) finds that even in a historically black institute such as Delaware State University, black Africans experience racial discrimination from black American peers and their lecturers alike. Constantine et al. (2005) in particular note that experiences of racial prejudice, including overt racial attacks, were relatively new to many of the BAIS in their studies, and they warn that this 'may increase these students' risk for developing or exacerbating mental health problems' (Constantine et al., 2005:63).

Some studies are very critical of framing international students' experiences as 'adjustment challenges', since they believe that removes responsibility from

the institutions and the host society. For example, Lee and Rice (2007) explore the experiences of both undergraduate and postgraduate international students at a research university in the South-West of the US using 24 qualitative interviews. However, only one interviewee was an African international student. They use neo-racism (new racism, which they define as 'discrimination based on culture and national order' (Lee and Rice, 2007:389) as their theoretical framework to analyse and situate the experiences of the international students. They find that the international students experienced discriminatory treatment from teachers, peers and members of the host community, ranging from being ignored to being insulted and a threat of physical attack. However, it is only the non-white international students that experienced discrimination based on their 'race' and their foreign status. The white Europeans and Canadian international students in the study all said that they did not experience any discrimination whatsoever. The African student in this study reported one of the most overt instances of discriminatory treatment. He related, "Off campus, [I] was confronted for driving in a neighbourhood, giving a friend driving lessons. I didn't complain. I didn't want to push [the] issue" (Lee and Rice, 2007:403). Lee and Rice (2007) conclude that not all the issues the students faced should be framed as adjustment challenges, as many of the difficulties they experienced in their studies were due to inadequacies within the host community.

In a similar vein, **Lee and Opio (2011)**, using neo-racism as a theoretical framework, explored the lived experiences of 16 African student athletes from seven different African countries studying in US universities. Their sample contained 12 black Africans, one Arab African and three white South Africans. They found that the students faced discrimination based on their 'race' and negative stereotypes about Africa from teachers, students, and administrators, their sport teammates, and members of the local community. They reported that African athlete international students on scholarships experienced insults, being excluded from classroom discussions, and being marked down in assessment. Some black Africans believed that they experienced

discrimination due to negative perceptions of Africa in addition to their 'race'. A female Nigerian student lamented:

[The advisors] think people from Africa are dumb, or are not supposed to be smart. I remember after my sophomore year I went to my athletic advisor ... and she was like, "No, you can't be taking this chemistry [class] and you want to travel. It's going to be bad, so I don't worry about it. ... No, it's going to be too hard to pass." I was taking four science classes and after I made good grades she was like, "Oh my God! I didn't know you can ..." You know how people can really generalise that you [are] supposed to be dumb and they find out you not as dumb as they thought.

(Lee & Opio, 2011: 638)

However, the white South Africans in the study did not report experiencing any racism and discrimination. In fact, a white South African swimmer said that they 'blend in pretty well here' (Lee and Opio, 2011:640). Even Americans' identification of their foreign accent did not entail discrimination as it normally does for black Africans. The authors reflect that this finding may challenge their use of neo-racism as a theoretical lens. The negative stereotype about the continent of Africa affected only the black and the Arab Africans and not the white Africans. They write, 'discrimination based on race may supersede discrimination based on national order when it comes to neo-racism ...[and] neo-racism may not apply to migrants who are of the majority race' (Lee and Opio, 2011:641). I believe that what the authors found is racism, and there seems to be nothing new about it! I argue that critical race theory (CRT) is a much more robust and comprehensive framework.

Other studies explore the intersection of race and other axes of differences, such as gender. For instance, Beoku-Betts (2004) examines how racism, gender bias and Third World location affected the graduate education experiences of 15 African women in science courses in Europe and the US. All of the participants said that racism affected their graduate school experiences, as manifested through such processes as 'lack of good mentoring', 'perceptions of their inability to do the work', and 'the social isolation they experienced in their interaction or lack thereof with White counterparts in their

host institution' (Beoku-Betts, 2004:131). The author also identifies that 'third world marginality is a distinctive factor differentiating the experiences of African women graduate students in science' (Beoku-Betts, 2004:123), in addition to the racial and gender bias they experienced. Professors often communicated low expectation by referring to the students' Third World origins in their feedback on grades.

Very few studies focus on how black students develop racial awareness once they arrive at the host country for international education. As highlighted above (Constantine et al., 2005), experiences of racism based on skin colour is a new phenomenon for many BAIS. The literature usually makes illusory assumptions and homogenizes home black and foreign black students, and 'race' more often than not subsumes differences in ethnicity and nationality, masking a key difference in how the two groups develop racial awareness. For example, in the UK, home black students experience racism through school ability-setting, disproportionate exclusions, low expectations and negative stereotypes (Gillborn, 2008). BAIS are very unlikely to have such experiences, and come with their own country-specific understanding of racial differences that are normally based on ethno-linguistic differences rather than skin colour. In a rare study on this issue, Fries-Britt et al. (2014) explore how foreign-born students of colour perceive and respond to racialized experiences and their racial minority status in the context of higher education. They explain that the term 'foreign-born' helped them to capture all those born and raised outside of the US, but who have different citizenship statuses. Their sample of 15 undergraduate and postgraduate physics students mainly consisted of black students from such African and Caribbean countries as Nigeria, Trinidad, Tobago, Senegal and Haiti. They find that many of their participants did not understand the salience of race and racial identity in the US until they arrived, and that they felt 'disconnected to the U.S. context of racial issues' (Fries-Britt et al. (2014:4). They also report that traditional theories/models of racial identity development do not fully capture the experiences of the black students in their study.

Some studies document the covert experiences of racism and discrimination of black students that are not usually easily identifiable and that evade the label of racism. Following Professor Chester Pierce's introduction of the term, 'racial microaggression' is used to refer to subtle but insidious experiences of racism and discrimination (Pierce, 1970, cited in Solorzano, 1998). The overwhelming majority of research on racial microaggression looks at the experiences of African Americans in US higher education (Solorzano et al., 2000; Harper et al., 2011; Sue et al., 2007; Lewis et al., 2013; Nadal et al., 2014). In the UK, studies by Doherty (2019) and Rollock (2012) explore racial microaggression experiences in a secondary school and a higher education context respectively. I could not find any study on the racial microaggression experiences of BAIS either in the UK or the US. I have reviewed a few studies that explore the issue in the context of African American and Asian international students.

In one of the earliest studies, Solorzano et al. (2000) explore types of racial microaggression experienced by African American students using focus group discussions. They wanted to know how experiences of racial microaggression affected the racial climate of the campus and the students' academic performance. Thirty-four students from three elite, predominantly white, universities participated in ten focus group discussions. They find that African American students experience a 'very tense racial climate both inside and outside their classrooms' (Solorzano et al., 2000:65). The students report that they were made to feel invisible during classroom discussions and that the curriculum 'omitted, distorted, and stereotyped' (Solorzano et al., 2000:65) their experiences as African Americans. They also said that professors doubted their ability and questioned their high scores on tests, as they had low expectations of them. Also, their peers did not want to work with them, and excluded them from group work. The students also experienced racial microaggressions outside classrooms, where they were over-policed and put under surveillance during black student events or playing a game on the campus. A female student reiterated, 'It's so annoying that everywhere we go, we've got to [be] watched' (Solorzano et al., 2000:68). These experiences of

racial microaggression affected the students' emotional well-being, as they felt discouraged and frustrated, and struggled to perform and achieve well academically. The African American students attempted to fight back against the racial microaggressions and their insidious effects by forming such counter spaces as black fraternities or black sororities, to provide support and show solidarity with each other.

In a more recent and also more related study, Houshmand et al. (2014) explored the experiences of racial microaggression of East and South Asian international students studying at a Canadian university. They interviewed 12 first-year undergraduate students sampled from an earlier large-scale longitudinal interview study of the adjustment of international students. They reported that the students experienced racial microaggressions in four ways: 'excluded and avoided, rendered invisible, disregarded international values and needs, and environmental microaggressions' (Houshmand et al., 2014:381). The students reported such experiences as being told to go back home and being avoided or ridiculed for their accent in classroom work. White students and professors were also insensitive to the Asian students' international perspectives and invalidated their views. They also explained that their ability was judged based on stereotypes about Asia, which brought unrealistic expectations of what course they should be on, how they should perform and how they should behave, disregarding their individuality. They also experienced specific difficulties with securing funding, as they were perceived as rich international students. Securing visas and employment on campus were also other structural barriers that they experienced.

Summary and addressing the gap in the literature

This review of the relevant literature shows that there is relatively limited research on the experiences of international students in general, and that most studies focus on the academic challenges that students face. Much UK research on the academic experiences of international students focuses on problems of language proficiency, academic literacy and, to some extent, on critical thinking skills. The literature in this regard has also identified that there is a gap in attainment- as measured by differences in degree class awarded. It

is worth mentioning here that (Ladson-Billings, 2006) critiques the concept of attainment gap as deficit-laden, focusing on short term fix for what is really a complex problem rooted in historic, economic and socio-political disadvantages and reframed it as an 'education debt'. She explains that the achievement gap is compounded of various gaps (resource gap, teacher gap, expectation gap, opportunity gap) which have been historically constructed and/or compiled and should be seen as an 'education debt' that the nation owes black and other minoritised students. Indeed, in this study too BAIS specifically mentioned the lack of black teachers (teacher gap), and their previous education in an under-resourced environment (resource-gap) as factors affecting their academic performance. However, notwithstanding Ladson-Billings powerful theorization, and with full recognition that the notion of 'education-debt' perhaps equally applies to Africa due to colonialism's destruction of indigenous African education systems (Nwanosike & Onyije, 2011), I will use the term attainment gap for ease of reference to variations in academic achievement and/or performance, the issue that my study directly explored.

The literature review above also shows despite the fact that learning through assessment and feedback is the common practice in UK higher education (QAA, 2013), research on the assessment experiences of international students, especially on undergraduate BAIS is very rare. There is a clear gap in the literature about the attainment experiences of students who have had their secondary education in their home countries and for whom English is a second language (Richardson, 2015). Research on home white and BME students' attainment gap (Broecke & Nicholls, 2006) has established that there are ethnic differences in attainment that remain unexplained by differences in entry qualification and socio-economic status, suggesting the need for research attention on discriminatory and/or racist assessment and feedback practices. The review also reveals that much of the research is informed by a deficit-view and tends to place the responsibility for change or adaptation on the students. More often than not, the literature does not critically look at the

societal and educational conditions under which international students are placed upon arrival in a foreign country. Many of the studies, particularly in the UK, rarely consider the role of 'race' and ethnicity in shaping international students' lived experiences, and international students are often considered as one group, imposing homogeneity on what is actually a heterogeneous group. As a result, as I have shown in my review, issues of racial discrimination do not usually come up in UK research on international students' experiences. This is very surprising in view of the significant evidence of racial discrimination both in society and in education in the UK (Modood & Acland, 1998; Law et al., 2004 ; Gillborn, 2008; Gillborn, 2014; NUS, 2011; ECU, 2013; Elevation Network, 2012; BBC, 2010). Indeed, even a cursory glance at the extant literature on race and higher education in the UK reveals the racialized nature of the sector. For example, top university administrative positions, especially chancellor and vice chancellor, 'remain a white enclave' (Gulam, 2004) , and only 15 black academics are in senior management roles (Alexander & Arday, 2015). Only 85 of the UK's 18,500 professors are black, and only 17 of them are women (Black, 2014). Black women and men achieve the lowest percentage of first-class degrees (5.7% and 6.9% respectively, compared to 18.3% of white women and 19.4% of white men), and both black groups are over-represented in lower class degree categories (Shilliam, 2014). However, higher education institutions ignore the racialized nature of the sector. As Pilkington (2014: 207) rightly puts it:

And, yet, universities are extraordinarily complacent. They see themselves as liberal and believe existing policies ensure fairness; in the process, they ignore adverse outcomes and do not see combating racial/ethnic inequalities as a priority. This points, in my view, to the sheer weight of Whiteness (if not institutional racism).

(Pilkington, 2014: 207)

Traditionally, UK education literature usually attributes inequities and/or inequalities and discriminatory practices in education to differences in social class, rather than to 'race' or ethnicity (Bird, 1996 cited in (Reay et al., 2001). Thus, racial discrimination is usually compounded with class-based discrimination in research and other scholarly work. In addition, as Gillborn

(2019) and Sriprakash et al. (2019) have powerfully argued, there is a tendency to use colour-blind ideology to evade and deny the role of racism in the educational experiences of minorities (especially of black students). Harper (2012) also illustrates how researchers minimize racism in reporting their research findings, using 'assorted explanations' that argue 'anything but racism' (Harper, 2012:16). Harper writes:

Instead of calling them racist, researchers commonly used the following semantic substitutes to describe campus environments that minoritized students, faculty, and administrators often encountered: "alienating," "hostile," "marginalizing," "chilly," "harmful," "isolating," "unfriendly," "negative," "antagonistic," "unwelcoming," "prejudicial," "discriminatory," "exclusionary," and "unsupportive."

(Harper, 2012: 20)

Abdullah et al. (2014), in their review of 497 journal articles on the experiences of international students published between 1980 and 2013, found that none of them used theories of 'race'/ethnicity as theoretical or analytical lenses, which might have helped to unearth issues of discrimination based on 'race'/ethnicity or culture. Thus, there is a clear gap in the use of 'race' and ethnicity as analytical lenses to research the lived experiences of black African international students, particularly in the UK. My doctoral study, among other things, contributes to filling this gap by exploring the lived experiences of a specific group of ethnic black African international students from English-speaking Sub-Saharan African countries, using critical race theory and Bourdieu.

In the next chapter, I present and discuss the theoretical framework that I employ to explore and understand how BAIS's 'race'/ethnicity and previous education shape their lived experiences while they live and study in the UK.

Chapter 3: Theoretical Framework

Introduction

This chapter presents the theoretical tools that I use to explore the various issues that shape the lived experiences of black African international students (BAIS) in this study. These tools are used both as thinking and analytic tools, and are very important to explore and understand issues of 'race', ethnicity, racism, culture, acceptance, capitals and attainment – the issues that shape the overall lived experiences of BAIS. I begin by setting out Bourdieu's theoretical tools, which provide the space to explore how structure shapes BAIS's academic and social adaptation. In particular, Bourdieu offers the tools to engage with and interpret BAIS's accounts of how their prior knowledge and skills fares, what is valued and devalued in the new field. For example, I use his concept of cultural capital to explore what types of cultural capital BAIS come with, what capital is valued in UK higher education, and how this shapes their experiences. I also use the concept of habitus and field to explore how their adaptation is challenged by a narrowly culturally constructed field that continues to fail to adapt to a more inclusive environment. I will also discuss the critique of the traditional interpretation of Bourdieu's framework, which implies that only some students have cultural capital and that others do not have it. Yosso (2005) argued that although all students bring with them their own cultural capitals, educational systems value some forms of cultural capital highly and undervalue other forms. This is racialized in nature more often than not, and the use of Bourdieu's model alone is inadequate to fully explore and understand the lived experiences of BAIS.

I then discuss the concepts of 'race' and ethnicity, and the ways in which they are conceptualized in the context of education. This is helpful in examining how, and in what ways, 'race' and ethnicity can shape the lived experiences of BAIS. I also discuss the related concept of racism and its various forms, and how it can be used to consider and explore how 'race' is lived and experienced by BAIS in my study. I will also engage with the use of the term 'black', and explain how and why it is used in my study to refer to my research

participants. I then set out how the basic tenets of Critical Race Theory (CRT) can be applied to issues of 'race' and racism involved in this study. CRT tools expose oppressive and dominant discourses in the lived experiences of BAIS that would otherwise have been explained away as resulting simply from the lack of the requisite cultural capital. Through its recognition of the experiential knowledge of marginalized students, CRT gives BAIS a strong agentic-self. Finally, I also draw on the post-colonial notion of 'Othering', which can be helpful to explore the more subtle and nuanced ways in which BAIS have been othered and/or excluded from social and educational lives in different social spaces by people from different cultural backgrounds or having sundry roles in their educational lives.

Bourdieu's theory

Bourdieu (1977) argued that educational systems assume the possession of the cultural capital (e.g. knowledge/skills) and habitus (e.g. dispositions and embodied ways of standing, sitting, moving and acting) of the dominant culture for students to be successful in their education. Bourdieu (1977) explains that cultural capital exists in three forms: as objectified cultural capital (e.g. the possession of cultural goods and artefacts such as books and works of art) that helps a person to develop the propensity to seek information and knowledge; as embodied cultural capital (e.g. the possession and embodiment of valued knowledge, skills and dispositions) needed for success in education; and as institutionalized cultural capital (e.g. the possession of educational credentials). Bourdieu argued that cultural capital is accrued right from childhood from the family and its social networks. Thus, the educational success of students is affected by the possession of cultural capital. Bourdieu (1977) articulated:

By doing away with giving explicitly to everyone what it implicitly demands of everyone, the educational system demands of everyone alike that they have what it does not give. This consists mainly of linguistic and cultural competence and that relationship of familiarity with culture which can only be produced by family upbringing when it transmits the dominant culture.

(Bourdieu, 1977:494)

Thus, cultural capital is regarded as a highly valuable resource that one can deploy in one's educational endeavour. However, Bourdieu & Passeron (1990) explain that this deployment of cultural capital is mediated by one's disposition towards using that resource – they call this 'habitus'. Robbins (1993:159) describes habitus as 'the disposition to act which individuals acquire in the earliest stages of socialization and which they consolidate by their subsequent choices in life'. Habitus subconsciously influences how one perceives and understands a new environment (Bourdieu's 'field'), and will influence the decisions and choices one makes at different times in one's life. 'Field' may refer to a social setting where different cultural practices such as education take place. Thus, the field could be the classroom, the university, or the broader field of higher education, which constitute 'a network, or a configuration, of objective relations between positions' (Bourdieu & Wacquant, 1992:97) . They also underscore that cultural capital and habitus are functional and meaningful only in relation to a field. In the context of my study, this conceptualization is particularly important to understand how the change from an 'African education field' to the UK higher education field affects the value given to the cultural capital of BAIS.

Thus, BAIS who come to study in the higher education field in the UK may encounter a higher education system that does not value their cultural capital. Yet, it appears to be taken for granted that the new educational environment is a level playing field for all students to compete, as they share similar institutional resources such as teachers, libraries and other support services. Any disparity in attainment and lived experience may be explained as differences in individual ability/capacity. However, in an educational setting that reflects and values the cultural capital and habitus of one group of students over the other, BAIS could arguably occupy a marginalized position in the UK higher education field. In fact, Bourdieu (2010: 37) conceptualizes field as a site of struggle among different groups and articulated, 'A field is a structured social space, a field of forces, a force field. It contains people who dominate and others who are dominated.' Given this conceptualization of field, it is puzzling that Bourdieu did not clearly articulate how racialized this

domination could be in Western higher education fields where the norms and rules governing practice are overwhelmingly set by middle class-white policy makers, academics and staff. For example, I have highlighted in the literature review above how senior positions in UK higher education such as chancellor/vice chancellor 'remain a white enclave' (Gulam, 2004) and the teaching staff even at UCL where 45% of its students are international (the most in the UK) 72.3% of its academic staff are white (HESA, 2017/18). This representation in the field matters since as (Thomson, 2008:67) underscored, 'At stake in the field is the accumulation of *capitals*: they are both the process within, and product, of a field.'

As indicated earlier, (Bourdieu, 1977) contends that the amount of cultural capital (knowledge and skills) accrued by a person from previous educational experience affects his/her chances of educational success. BAIS possess a different form of cultural capital and habitus, and the match or mismatch of their dispositions and previous educational experiences with the new educational culture and system might play a significant role in their educational success and quality of overall lived experiences. The empirical evidence (DiMaggio & Mohr, 1985; Ganzeboom, 1982; Aschaffenburg & Maas, 1997; Katsillis & Robinson, 1990; Tzanakis, 2011) on the link between cultural capital and educational success, although inconclusive (Dumais, 2002), predominantly shows that higher educational attainment correlates with possession of middle-class cultural capital.

Habitus, hysteresis: Fish out of the water

Habitus is a concept that can be used to understand student adaptation in higher education, since it allows us to think about who enjoys a congruous encounter and who feels estranged as they join the world of higher education. Bourdieu (1990a) talks of 'ontological complicity', describing the fit between an individual's habitus and a particular social space (Bourdieu's 'field'). Bourdieu & Wacquant (1992:127) explained that 'when habitus encounters a social world of which it is the product, it is like a "fish in water": it does not feel the weight of the water, and it takes the world about itself for granted.'

Notwithstanding class differences, this factor works more favourably for UK home students, who are born, bred and educated in the UK, in comparison with BAIS, who were born, bred and educated in Africa and have come to the UK for higher education. However, it is worth pointing out that the research literature has documented ethnic differences in higher education experience and attainment, with white UK students overall reporting a more positive experience and attaining higher than non-white UK students in general (Broecke & Nicholls, 2006). However, in comparison with BAIS, who are new not just to the education system but also to the host culture, all UK home students enjoy a much greater advantage in terms of being native speakers and having knowledge of the societal culture of which they are the product. They may all be considered as 'fish in water'.

While compatibility between students' habitus and that of the institution increases adaptation, disjunction between the two slows it down. So, when BAIS join a UK higher education institution that reflects in its operations, curriculum and pedagogy the habitus of the dominant social and cultural group, they might be at a disadvantage, which may have serious consequences for their educational experiences and success. Relocation to the UK for higher education puts BAIS in a new socio-cultural setting and field of education that does not fit with their habitus. Although habitus is conceived by Bourdieu (1977) as 'transposable', suggesting that it is capable of transforming itself, this is not an automatic process. When habitus encounters a new world that is alien to its previous world and socializations, one might experience a shock for the habitus. For BAIS, this could mean being at a loss and feeling out of place, and therefore like 'fish out of water', in the highly competitive world of the UK higher education field. Bourdieu's (1977b) concept of 'hysteresis' is an important theoretical tool that can be used to consider how this sudden disruption of habitus and field affects the adaptation, experience and attainment of BAIS.

Thus, the habitus of BAIS encounters the new UK culture that is different from the previous environment and social conditions that formed that habitus. Bourdieu argues that this results in a hysteresis effect caused by a lag

between the habitus formed by previous education experience and the one that their UK field of education demands. In *The Logic of Practice*, Bourdieu (1990b:62) explains that the hysteresis effect refers to when habitus encounters ‘... an environment [that is] too different from the one to which they are objectively adjusted.’

However, CRT scholars challenge Bourdieusian analysis of black and minority students’ experiences in higher education for being an interpretation informed by a deficit model, since students are made responsible for their poor experience and low attainment despite serious and obvious inadequacies and inherent inequities in the educational system. In her seminal work ‘Whose culture has capital?’, Yosso (2005) argued that researchers need to move away from this deficit-laden view that black and minority students lack the cultural capital needed for educational success to a recognition of the different but valuable cultural capital that they bring to the educational environment. It is not that they lack cultural capital, but that their cultural capital is either undervalued or ignored.

Besides, only using disjuncture in habitus or the hysteresis of habitus to explain ethnic differences in attainment and experience is also problematic, since Bourdieu mainly attributes differences in habitus to class differences and not to ‘race’. However, we know that habitus is defined as ‘systems of dispositions’ learned unconsciously through early socialization and it orients actions, choices, and behavior. These include the disposition to stand, to sit, to move and to think, and to behave in a certain way during social interactions. Thus, it could be argued that people might learn to act and behave in a racist way because of their habitus. Indeed, Bonilla-Silva (2017:121) speaks of ‘white habitus’ which he defines as ‘a racialized, uninterrupted, socialization process that *conditions* and *creates* whites’ racial taste, perceptions, feelings,, and emotions and their views on racial matters.’ However, Bourdieu himself does not seem to pay sufficient attention to the examination of how habitus might be linked to ‘race’ and racism.

The stories of BAIS show that their capitals have been undervalued in the UK higher education field, the curriculum negates their experiences, and they have been racialized and Othered as less capable students because of their place of origin and previous education experiences. This blurs the line between what Bourdieu suggests is a class-based domination and what might actually be a racial domination. I therefore argue that Bourdieu's theoretical framework is insufficient to fully explore and understand the lived experiences of BAIS in UK higher education. We need a framework that enables us to explore the social realities of racialized groups such as BAIS by allowing the investigation of the intersections of 'race'/ethnicity and racism with Bourdieu's cultural capital theory. I argue CRT with its focus on the voices of oppressed groups and its full recognition of the permanence of racism in society extends Bourdieusian analysis and offers a comprehensive and sound understanding of BAIS's lived experiences. In a recent article that attempted to explicate theoretical discourse between Bourdieu and CRT, Tichavakunda (2019) argues that Bourdieu's concept of field would allow how black students' agency play out in a relational context as they interact with other agents in their university and the host society. Tichavakunda (2019) also argued that the concept of habitus could be deployed to explain variations in lived experiences among black students, an area where CRT seems to struggle to fully accommodate. In this study, for example, BAIS expressed some distinct experiences of racism and also coping strategies that is not necessarily shared by British black students. Tichavakunda, (2019) argues habitus with its focus on experiences and/or history could be used to explain such differences. CRT also complements Bourdieu's exclusive focus on dispositions by highlighting the salience of 'race' in the lived experiences of BAIS- that 'race' is central not marginal in their lives. In this way, Bourdieu and CRT complement each other and provide a more comprehensive theoretical framework to explore BAIS lived experiences.

Studies that used the two frameworks together to explore black people's experiences are extremely rare, especially in the UK. Vincent et al. (2012) in their study of the educational strategies of middle-class British Black

Caribbean heritage parents used Bourdieu and CRT to explore and understand within group variations. In particular, they explicated that a combination of the concepts of whiteness and the habitus of the middleclass Black Caribbean parents helped them to investigate differences in strategies adopted by the parents in their interactions with schools and in some cases the schools devaluing and rejection of the parents' middle class capital and habitus resources.

In the following section, I will discuss the concepts of 'race', ethnicity, racism and blackness, followed by a discussion of CRT and its basic tenets, including how it informs this study.

'Race', ethnicity and the term 'black'

Folk concepts of 'race'

As an ordinary folk concept, 'race' is seen as a social category used to classify people, usually based on physical characteristics such as skin colour. This folk concept also assumes that 'race' is natural and a given, when, in reality, 'race' is a dynamic concept that is constantly redefined and also contested. Fredrickson (2002) explains that the word 'race' was probably first used as a marker of social difference when the Spanish Catholics defeated the Muslim rulers of the Iberian peninsula in 1492 (Reconquista of Spain) and marginalized the remaining Muslim and Jewish converts from political power on the grounds of not having 'pure blood' to rule. But the word 'race' as a biological construct, and its use to classify human beings in a hierarchy with the white 'race' being at the top, is a nineteenth-century phenomenon (Banton, 2014). To justify oppressive systems and practices such as colonialism, the slave trade and eugenics, European scientists developed 'race science', which posits that non-European 'races' are culturally, morally and intellectually inferior and that it is right to subjugate, and at times even to exterminate them (Omi & Winant, 2014) ;(Fenton, 2003). The concept of 'race' as a fixed and unchangeable biological trait was created to serve the interests of dominant social and cultural groups and their claims to greater power and resources. Since then, 'race' has been linked to inequalities in power relationships and

the creation of hierarchy in society that advantages some and disadvantages others in all walks of life, including education.

Critique of the folk concept of 'race'

Keita et al. (2004) explain that developments in biological sciences beginning in the first half of the twentieth century, and later developments in genetics, discredited 'race' and 'race science' as they proved that there was little or no evidence that there are biological 'races'. Jones (1996), cited in Pilkington (2003: 14), writes, 'the visible differences between people are biologically trivial ... there are far greater genetic variations within than between groups previously defined as races.' However, despite this rejection of 'race' as a scientific concept, it is a term that is widely used in everyday life. People are seen, or see themselves, as belonging to a certain 'race' such as 'black' or 'white', usually based on phenotypic characteristics such as skin colour and facial features. This categorization of people based on phenotype varies depending on place, time and social setting. A person with a black skin may be referred to as 'black' in one social and cultural setting and 'brown' in another. This shows that 'race' is a social construct usually defined by dominant cultural groups (Frankenburg, 1993).

The social construction of 'race'

Omi & Winant (2014) explain,

Race is indeed a pre-eminently *socio-historical* concept. Racial categories and the meaning of race are given concrete expression by the specific social relations and historical context in which they are embedded. Racial meanings have varied tremendously over time and between different societies.

Omi & Winant (2014:11)

The social construction of 'race' can be exemplified by how the same person (biologically speaking) may assume a different 'race' when moving from one country to another. For example, a colleague from a Latin American country who I thought of as 'white' recently told me that he is identified as 'black' in his country, while his partner with more or less the same skin colour said she is identified as 'white' in that same country but not here in the UK. People of the

same skin colour can also be assigned to different 'races', as racial systems evolve over time. For example, Irish people were not recognized as belonging to the white 'race' in the US about 100 years ago (Ignatiev, 2012). The significance of this is that the categorization of groups into different 'races' in different socio-political contexts is a categorization of power that affects the life chances and opportunities available to the different groups. Categorization into 'races' entails different social expectations and differences in social status.

This categorization is done through a social process called racialization, which (Miles, 1982:157) defines as 'a process of delineation of group boundaries and of allocation of persons within those boundaries by primary reference to (supposedly) inherent and/or biological (usually phenotypical) characteristics.' When a person is categorized and identified as belonging to a certain 'race' (usually by the dominant cultural group), this locates the person in a particular position in a racial system that advantages or disadvantages him/her. Miles (1982, 1986) strongly contends that this process of racialization is an evolving and dynamic social process that interacts with other categories of social identity such as social class, gender and culture. So the process of racialization, in addition to biological 'race', can be based on some personal traits such as accent, dress, diet, clothing, beliefs and deportment. This can be very important in understanding the lived experiences of BAIS in this study, and their views of themselves as racialized Others. Besides, there is a widespread public perception of 'race' as a biological rather than a social construct. Morning (2011:4) found that '... biological interpretations of race remain powerful in scientific thinking and communications to the public, and in contrast, the idea that 'race' is a social construction is not conveyed widely'. As the Thomas Theorem asserts, 'If people define a situation as real, it's real in its consequences' (Thomas & Thomas, 1928).

However, despite this, critics of the concept of 'race' as an explanatory and analytic tool in research (Banton, 1977; Fenton, 2003) argue that 'race' does not have a theoretical value as it could be very deterministic because of its fixation on biological traits. They argue that 'race' may not allow an in-depth

and subtle analysis of social life or practice, where learned cultures (referred to as ethnicity) may play a more important role than phenotype. As a result, beginning in the 1960s, there has been a move away from looking at 'race' to look at people's culture, tradition and ancestry, giving rise to terms such as 'ethnic groups' and 'ethnicity', which are seen as more analytical and less emotive and political than 'race' (Pilkington, 2003). However, as discussed in later chapters, this study shows that 'race' remains a central part of the lived experiences of people of colour such as BAIS. As Barot & Bird (2001: 601) ask, 'why does corporeality still play a central part of peoples' experiences of 'race'?', if phenotype is so outdated and irrelevant.

Ethnicity as a reconceptualization of 'race'

Hutchinson & Smith (1996) explain that ethnicity is a concept mainly anchored on cultural traits such as a sense of belonging to a group based on shared or imagined history, language, culture, or ancestry. Eriksen (2002) indicates that ethnic groups could be formed based on people's belief in shared strong emotional attachment to history and territory (primordial approaches), or based on a shared interest in access to political, economic and material resources (mobilizationist approaches). While people who share similar cultural and linguistic backgrounds could fall under the primordial approaches, groups living in diaspora who form a social identity based on a shared history of oppression could be very good examples of the mobilizationist approach. Ethnicity comes to light in the context of social interaction when minority ethnic groups interact with the dominant ethnic group in a socio-cultural setting and negotiate representation in social, economic and political life. Giddens et al., (1991) explain that the term 'ethnicity' denotes a sense of difference that a group of people who believe they form an ethnic group feel and show during their interaction with another ethnic group distinctly different from them. This difference is mostly based on culture, language, customs, dress and disposition/ways of thinking, and people tend to find this less derogatory than the term 'race'.

Critique of ethnicity

Although the concept of 'ethnicity' could in some ways be less emotive and much more nuanced than the concept of 'race', Pilkington (2003) indicates that current use of the term 'ethnicity' in public policy and research shows that there seems to be reference to 'race' within what we call 'ethnicity'. One such instance is the use of the terms 'Black British' and 'Black African' in the UK household census. For example, the term 'black African' is used to denote a whole range of people from very different cultural and linguistic backgrounds who would not fall under one ethnicity unless we look at them as a 'race'. Some scholars such as (Back & Solomos, 2000) go further and argue that the focus on ethnicity as denoting culture could be a coded way of speaking about race. Back & Solomos (2000) write:

In the case of contemporary racist discourses, for example, race is often coded in terms of 'difference and culture'. However, the central feature of these processes is that the qualities of social groups are fixed, made natural, confined within a pseudo biologically defined culturalism.

(Back & Solomos, 2000:20-21)

Similarly, Hall (2000 cited in (Gunaratnam, 2003)) seriously challenged the soundness of the distinction made between 'race' as biology and 'ethnicity' as a marker of cultural difference, as there is an overlap between the meanings of the two concepts. Gunaratnam (2003:5) quotes Hall and writes, 'The important point that Hall makes is that the processes of biological and cultural differentiation through the categories of "race" and ethnicity are not two separate systems of meaning ("discourses"), but are "racisms two registers" (Hall, 2000: 223).' In line with Hall, I reject the attempt to make a sharp dividing line between the terms 'race' as related to biology and 'ethnicity' as related to culture. I use the term 'race' along with 'ethnicity' as I acknowledge the complexity surrounding the two terms. As I also use the contested term 'black African' throughout, I will briefly discuss it below.

Defining the terms 'black' and 'black African'

Daley (1998) observes that terms such as 'black' and 'black African' are socially constructed categories defined more by power and politics than by

nature or choice. Thus, their use to categorize people has always been questioned (Aspinall, 2011 ; Tsri, 2016) as the terms may not be a true reflection of how people from the continent of Africa describe themselves. There are two sides to the debate around the appropriateness and the usefulness of the term 'black African'. Some argue for maintaining the use of the term as a political tool of resistance (Carmichael and Hamilton, 1967 ; Biko, 1973 ; Fredrickson, 1996), while others challenge the use of the term 'black African', arguing that it essentializes and homogenizes people, reinforcing negative stereotypes and prejudices (Agyemang et al., 2005 ; Aspinall, 2011 ; Tsri, 2016). The debate on the use of the terms is very relevant in view of the fact that Africa is a continent of 56 countries with significant diversity in terms of 'race'/ethnicity, both among countries and within individual countries. Agyemang et al., (2005) and Aspinall, (2011) questioned the appropriateness of the term 'black African', since some nations from Sub-Saharan Africa, such as Somalis, self-identify their social identity with their nationality, rather than with the category of 'black African'. Both Agyemang et al., (2005) and (Aspinall, 2011) underscore the need to deconstruct the term 'black African' based on research that explores how 'black Africans describe themselves, and recommend the use of the generic term 'African' (Aspinall, 2011) and/or 'African origin' or 'African' plus an ethnic label such as 'African Kenyan' (Agyemang et al.,2005) . In a more recent study, (Tsri, 2016) puts forward a bold and compelling argument for the total abandonment of the categorical use of the term 'black' as he believes it is impossible to overcome the symbolic association of the term 'black' with bad things and images. He argues:

In sum, my argument is that so long as the symbolic use remains, the categorical use of black will be derogatory, that the categorical use of black is an imposition of a definition of a subordinate group by another dominant group and that the categorical use of 'black' and the associated black/white dichotomy supports a privileged self-understanding of the people who label themselves as white and in turn sustains privilege and oppression. To put it succinctly: Africans are not black.

(Tsri, 2016:158)

In my view, although Tsri's point that the symbolic use of the word 'black' does not and should not describe Africans is valid, I am still of the opinion that we can fight the negative symbolisms of the word 'black'. We also need to question whether such negative symbolisms of the word 'black' have changed over time. Also, is it realistic to abandon a label whenever it is symbolically associated with bad things? Do we, for example, abandon the use of the word 'socialist' because of its past association with dictators in East Europe and Africa? Is it not also possible to deconstruct socially constructed dichotomies such as 'black' and 'white'? Admittedly, it is difficult and complex, as the dichotomy invokes historical power relationships, but with time I believe it is possible to change it. Thus, I have chosen to continue to use the term Black within this study.

As a person originating from Sub-Saharan Africa, I understand the issues and concerns raised by those advocating the abandonment of the use of the term 'black African' as it could reify stereotypes and asymmetrical power relations. In the context of people living in diaspora, the key issue in my view is not just how we describe ourselves in official census and ethnic-monitoring forms, but also how the state and the dominant culture define and treat us in the domain of public life and social interactions. Despite having a black skin colour, I did not describe myself as 'black African' until I came to the UK. However, I have now come to learn from my lived experiences in the UK that my disadvantages, discriminations, and for that matter privileges, appear to be linked to me being identified as either a 'black' or 'black African' person by the dominant cultural group, despite how I describe my social identity. From this point of view, it appears that it does not matter how I describe myself; the most viable way for me to stand up to a racial disadvantage is may be to stick to my 'black African' identity. I also understand that 'race'/ethnicity more often than not intersect with class, gender, immigration and employment status, and differentially impact people's life chances, opportunities and experiences. However, I contend that it is one's 'blackness' that makes one part of a visible minority and triggers such discriminatory acts as disproportionate and unreasonable police 'stop and search', interrogation by immigration officers at

ports, and prejudicial treatments in other public-service sectors. The latest figures on 'stop and search' by Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary (released on 21/09/2016) says, 'Police stops of black people are still at an "eye-watering" level compared with white people ...' (www.theguardian.com/law/2016/sep/21/). If we abandon the categorical use of the term 'black African' as suggested by (Tsri, 2016), I find it difficult to see how claims of colour-line racism can be made. Besides, Bashi (1998) argued that 'racial categories matter because racial hierarchies matter'.

For now, I will maintain the use of 'black Africans' in my study to refer to my research participants' place of origin and because of my personal conviction that it is a pragmatic resistance tool against discrimination based on 'race'. Beoku-Betts (2006) reported that students from Africa normally refer to themselves as 'black Africans' while living and studying in the West, and share post-colonial legacies of being seen as poor or 'under-developed'. This is a key factor in BAIS's experiences, as I discuss further in the section on Othering below. Agyemang et al., (2005) evaluated the application/use of the term 'black African' as one that signifies sub-continental origin and that is used to refer to people who originated from Sub-Saharan Africa – the geographic region from where my research participants originate. In my study, the term 'black African' will be limited to this use, and my research participants will be given the opportunity to describe their ethnic identity, as the term 'black African' is 'unrelated to ethnicity' (Agyemang et al., 2005).

Racism

The research literature recognizes the conceptual quagmire surrounding the concept of 'racism', and acknowledge the difficulty of producing a clear and concise definition of the concept. However, Garner (2009) recognizes the complex layers of racism and the many ways in which it has manifested itself historically in different socio-cultural and political settings. Garner (2009) underscores that any definition of racism (or 'racisms', as he would like to call it) must include the following three points:

- **A historical power relationship** in which, over time, groups are racialized (that, is treated as if specific characteristics were natural and innate to each member of the group).
- **A set of ideas** (ideology) in which the human race is divisible into distinct 'races', each with specific natural characteristics.
- **Forms of discrimination** flowing from this (practices), ranging from denial of access to resources through to mass murder.

(Garner, 2009:11)

The core of these three elements is perhaps that racism is an ideology that includes beliefs and ideas, and also some actions and practices, of individuals, institutions or society that could lead to the discrimination and marginalization of categories of people. What may be called racism has also varied historically and continues to evolve. Essed (1991) provides a very useful summary of various kinds of racisms as reported by the experiences of the 55 black women she interviewed in the US and the Netherlands. These experiences of racism are categorized under 12 major topics, ranging from biological and cultural denigration to neglect/indifference about race relations, and from patronizing behaviour to physical violence. Although Essed's list is neither exhaustive nor representative of types of racisms, it shows the complexity involved in understanding racism and its inextricable link with other associated concepts, such as stereotyping, prejudice and discrimination.

While stereotyping refers to ascribing some specific behaviours and/or tendencies to an entire group because of their membership of a particular ethnicity/'race', prejudice is perhaps best conceptualized as forming a preconceived idea or judgement about people who are markedly different to us before having any first-hand experience of their individual abilities, capabilities and character (Giddens et al., 1991). In the context of race relations, although members of both the dominant and the minority cultural groups could have prejudiced attitudes and/or beliefs about each other, the power relationship defines the racism. Gillborn (1990:7) writes, '... racism combines individual and group *prejudice* with a structural position whereby the individual or group has the *power* to influence others' experiences and life-chances (cf. AMMA, 1987). **PREJUDICE+POWER=RACISM.**' Discrimination could therefore be understood as the result of prejudicial thinking and

stereotyping. Discriminatory practices range from skin colour racism, where people are treated differently just because of difference in skin colour and other physical features, to discrimination based on a host of cultural factors, including language and religion, or other visible markers of difference such as dress and customs (Essed, 1991).

The literature on racism (Law et al., 2004 ; Gillborn, 2008 ; Phillips, 2011) highlights that racism could be individual, structural/societal (based on class or gender, for example) or institutional (policies and practices of the education or health system). However, there has been a tendency to look at racism as the conscious and overt behaviour and/or acts of a few ignorant or bad-natured individuals and not that of institutions or wider society. Harper (2012) laments that there is a tendency to downplay the fact that racism is pervasive in mainstream white European and American societies. However, while racist beliefs can be overt, they can also be deep-seated and embedded in wider society and part of the 'normal', taken-for-granted practices of established institutions. Examples in education can be the use of curricula and books that disregard the contributions of minorities, under-representation or non-representation of minorities, and the persistent inequalities in attainment despite academic ability.

Although racism exists at the individual, institutional and societal levels, the shift to recognizing institutional racism has been very slow. The work of Carmichael and Hamilton (1967), which explored how US racism has its roots in white supremacist belief in the inferiority of blacks, is perhaps among the earliest to recognize that racism is systemic and operates through established institutions such as the legal and education systems. Carmichael and Hamilton (1967) coined the term 'institutional racism' to refer to racism arising from institutional practices and policies rather than just from individual prejudices and stereotyping. In the UK, this process of recognition of racism beyond an individual act perhaps began with the two major inquiries of Scarman, (1981), following the Brixton riot on 11 April 1981, and Macpherson (1999), into the death of black teenage boy Stephen Lawrence on 22 April 1993.

Scarman, (1981), while making a significant contribution in reporting its finding that racism could be the result of institutional actions, labelled these institutional actions 'unwitting' and rejected the existence of institutional racism in Britain. Scarman (1981) writes:

It was alleged to me by some of those who made representations to me that Britain is an institutionally racist society. If by that is meant that it is a society which knowingly, as a matter of policy, discriminates against black people, I reject the allegation. If, however, the suggestion being made is that practices may be adopted by public bodies as well as by private individuals which are unwittingly discriminatory against black people, then this is an allegation which deserves serious consideration, and, where proved, swift remedy.

(Scarman, 1981:11)

However there appears to be strong research evidence that challenges Scarman's (1981) assertion of 'unwitting' rather than intentional racism in Britain. For example, Grieve & French (2000) reported that black men in Britain are over-policed as perpetrators and under-policed as victims, as may be evidenced by the disproportionate numbers of 'stop and search' instances carried out by the police. Gillborn (2008) reported that institutions and teachers still continue to associate differences in 'race' with differences in ability and behaviour. Gillborn & Mirza (2000) reported UK school practices of classifying students into ability grouping and the General Certificate of Secondary Education (GCSE) tiering system to be highly racialized processes. They reported that black students in particular are disproportionately and consistently being put in lower ability sets even when demonstrating a higher achievement, and are also being entered for a lower tier GCSE exam where the highest grades are simply not available to achieve. Gillborn (2008) has also shown how assessment in schools has been used to maintain and reproduce existing inequalities in educational outcome.

The strongest form of official recognition of racism as a product of institutional practices and policies in the UK perhaps comes from Macpherson (1999), which defines institutional racism as:

The collective failure of an organisation to provide an appropriate and professional service to people because of their colour, culture, or ethnic

origin. It can be seen or detected in processes, attitudes and behaviour which amount to discrimination through unwitting prejudice, ignorance, thoughtlessness and racist stereotyping which disadvantage minority ethnic people.

(Macpherson, 1999: Section 6.34)

The Macpherson Report not only accepts the existence of institutional racism but also strongly asserts that racism can be anchored in institutional practices, procedures, policies and operations without individuals working in the organizations necessarily wittingly being racists. Although the Macpherson Report definition of institutional racism is in the context of the Metropolitan Police force, the concept of 'collective failure' to address discrimination on the basis of ethnicity or 'race' makes it very relevant to the education sector as well. Macpherson (1999: Para 6.54) lamented that 'Racism, institutional or otherwise, is not the prerogative of the Police service. It is clear that other agencies including for example those dealing with [...] education also suffer from the disease'. The apparent failure of the higher education system in the UK to deal with the pervasive and perennial inequalities in student attainment and/or BME staff recruitment/promotion and appointment to managerial positions is evident in the literature discussed in the chapter 2 above, (Gulam, 2004 ; Connor et al., 2004 ; CUCO, 1997b cited in, Bagilhole, 2000).

Covert Racism

In view of the fact that racism has undergone some transformation over the last few decades (Rattansi, 2007), the concept of 'new racism' (Barker, 1981) mainly anchored in culture and other differences rather just skin colour, is important to understand the relatively covert forms of racism and Othering that BAIS in my study experienced. In the context of my study, the 'new racism' (Rattansi, 2007 ; Barker, 1981) with its focus on such axes of social difference as culture and nationality, situates my research participants as a visible minority due to their accent, and their individual habitus (Bourdieu, 1990) , including deportment and conviviality, which makes them even more vulnerable to racism and discrimination.

This othering of BAIS could take place at different levels and through different processes. They may be identified and delineated as black Africans due to their 'race'/ethnicity, as international students through their visa status and place of domicile, and as nationals of a specific African country whose discursive negative identity impacts on them. Back and Solomos (2000) explained that BAIS could also suffer from the historical image of colonized people as 'primitive people'. They argue that 'being normal is colonized by the idea of being white,' and this might mean one would become even more vulnerable to an unequal treatment and racism the further their culture and their skin colour is from the norm – white.

There is empirical evidence that suggests increased vulnerability to racism based on skin colour across the world. In the US, Wyatt (1997) found that people with darker skin colours have a much higher chance of being discriminated against. Suarez-Balcazar et al., (2003) also wrote, 'African Americans reported the highest frequency of differential treatment, followed by Asians and Hispanics, (p, 440).' In the UK, while McDowell (2009) reported that non-white skin colour increases vulnerability to racism and discrimination, Brown (2009) found that skin colour similarity of white international students in an English university made them less vulnerable to racism to some extent, as their separateness wasn't reflected outwardly. Marginson et al., (2010) report similar findings in the Australian context. I now turn to the forms this racism can take.

Racial microaggressions

The African American Professor of psychiatry Chester Pierce coined the term racial microaggression in 1970 while he was researching and theorizing the racism that African Americans experience in their everyday lives. Over the last few decades, a number of scholars have used the concept to explore the daily racism experiences of people of colour in various contexts. Educational researchers (Harper et al., 2011; Nadal et al., 2014 ; Rollock, 2012; Solorzano et al., 2000; Sue et al., 2008; Harwood et al., 2012) have used the concept of racial microaggressions both as methodology and analytic lens to explore the everyday racism experiences of people of colour in both school

and higher education contexts. At present, the American scholar Gerald Wing Sue's work on microaggressions in general is widely used in research in education, and I will be drawing on his taxonomy of racial microaggressions (Sue, 2010) to explore the experiences of microaggressions of BAIS in my study.

Sue et al. (2007: 271) define racial microaggressions as '... brief and commonplace daily verbal, behavioural, or environmental indignities, whether intentional or unintentional, that communicate hostile, derogatory, or negative racial slights and insults toward people of colour.' Offenders, who are usually very decent and well-intentioned people, are more often than not unaware of the impact of their microaggressions. He explains that these verbal, behavioural and environmental indignities can be enacted in three forms: microassault, microinsult and microinvalidations. Microassaults are more explicit in nature and include the use of racial epithets along with discriminatory treatment of people of colour in public spaces. They are very close to old-fashioned overt forms of racism. Microinsults are insensitive remarks that send hostile or demeaning messages, often unconsciously, to people of colour. This includes remarks such as 'The most qualified person should get the job regardless of social background.' Microinvalidations 'are characterized by communications that exclude, negate, or nullify the psychological thoughts, feelings, or experiential reality of a person of colour' (Sue et al., 2007: 274). These are remarks that deny the existence of racism and hence claims of racism. An important example is 'I do not see colour', suggesting that one is unbiased and treats everybody equally. The problem with this is that one must have seen colour to be able to make such a claim of equal treatment of different 'colours'.

The concept of microaggression can be a useful conceptual tool to research and understand the daily racism experiences of BAIS in this study. It can help to identify how racism is enacted, the context, and its insidious effect on the victims. However, I am aware that foreign students such as BAIS may find it difficult to determine if microaggressions have occurred, and are often left wondering about what has happened. Sue (2010) have the following to say:

While international students are able to identify overt acts of prejudice, their internalised 'outsider' status in a host country may lead them to underrate the subtle slights and indignities that they experience from their American classmates, teachers, and the educational system as a whole.

(Sue, 2010:172)

Sue (2010) developed a taxonomy of microaggressions against international students based on a review of the available literature, and this is a useful reference in analysing the stories of BAIS in this study.

However, the centrality of 'race' and the range of racisms (including microaggressions) BAIS experienced in this study necessitates the use of comprehensive theoretical tools to do justice to the types of racism and Othering they experienced, and its ubiquity.

Critical Race Theory (CRT)

Bell (1988) explains that CRT was developed from the Critical Legal Studies (CLS) theory of race that aimed to expose how the concepts of 'race' and racism operate in society to exclude people of colour/(BME) in the US and in the UK. The developers of CLS argued that racism goes beyond individual racism and is systemic and structural (Crenshaw, 1990 ; Matsuda, 1987). CLS developed tools that can challenge the claim of a 'meritocratic' and 'colour-blind' legal system in the US, which in fact promoted hegemonic control by whites and/or Westerners.

CRT developed as an offshoot of CLS, focusing on the effects of 'race' and racism on the lived experiences of blacks and ethnic minorities. Although CRT has initially been used mainly in legal research, it has increasingly been applied to educational research (Parker & Lynn, 2002 ; Gillborn & Ladson-Billings, 2004 ; Dixon et al., 2006 ; Gillborn, 2006) since Ladson-Billings & Tate (1995) first introduced it to the world of education. Solórzano & Yosso (2002) outline five tenets of CRT as: (1) the intercentricity of race and racism; (2) the challenge to dominant ideology; (3) the commitment to social justice; (4) the centrality of experiential knowledge; and (5) the utilization of

interdisciplinary approaches. Below, I discuss the main tenets of CRT that are relevant to this study.

The main tenets of CRT

Solórzano & Yosso (2002) argue that the five tenets of CRT help us to foreground 'race' and racism in educational research with a view to fighting discriminatory practices based on 'race'. They explain that these tenets can be used to inform perspectives and gain insights into research on the educational experiences of blacks and ethnic minorities.

One of the tenets of CRT asserts the permanence of racism and acknowledges that 'race' and racism are central and permanent, and not aberrant, in society. CRT expounds that 'race' is a social construct and, as Carbado (2002:181) would argue, its meaning '...does not exist "out there," ontologically prior to its production and instantiation in discourses'. Racial meaning (i.e. what it means to belong to a certain 'race') is constituted in societal discourses that change over time and place. The idea of the existence of different 'races' within society is made, re-made, and perpetuated by these discourses that normalize racialized social hierarchy. The concept of 'race' is coded and recoded as a response to ever-changing social, political, and economic contexts of society, but the purpose remains the same – the creation and recreation of racialized social hierarchies. In this way, CRT argues that racism takes different forms and at the same time remains an embedded, fluid, and permanent feature of 'the usual way society does business' (Delgado & Stefancic, 2001:7). Thus, racism is embedded in daily interactions and institutional practices that are taken for granted and appear normal. CRT also recognizes the intersection of 'race' with other forms of social identities. Solórzano & Yosso (2002:25) explain, 'A critical race methodology in education also acknowledges the intercentricity of racialized oppression – the layers of subordination based on race, gender, class, immigration status, surname, phenotype, accent, and sexuality.' This recognition is particularly relevant for the study of the lived experiences of

BAIS, as they can be vulnerable to multiple levels of discrimination based on skin colour, nationality, immigration status, accent, and so on.

Another tenet of CRT is its challenge to dominant ideology; it challenges claims of 'objectivity', 'meritocracy', 'color blindness' and 'race neutrality' made by institutions and dominant research paradigms that silence and ignore the voices of blacks and ethnic minorities (DeCuir & Dixson, 2004). For example, colour blindness is a means of allowing white policymakers to downplay, or reject altogether, examination of their practices and policies that are responsible for racialized outcomes. For example, in a seminal work, Gillborn, (2008) demonstrates how educational assessment is used as a vehicle of domination and reproduction of middle-class white educational advantages. Gillborn (2008:91) argues 'that the "assessment game" is rigged to such an extent that if black children succeed as a group, despite the odds being stacked against them, it is likely that the rules will be changed to re-engineer failure'. This tenet is important in the context of my study to analyse stories of BAIS that challenge claims of 'post-racial' and meritocratic UK higher education.

A key tenet of CRT is its radical and unapologetic acknowledgement of the centrality of the experiential knowledge of people of colour as a legitimate and valid knowledge base. CRT explicitly acknowledges and draws on lived experiences of people of colour (Solorzano & Yosso, 2002). A number of scholars (Bell, 1992 ; Parker & Lynn, 2002 ; Ladson-Billings & Tate, 1995) have long recognized that experiential knowledge of marginalized people is legitimate and valid, and is key to analysing and understanding racial disadvantage. These scholars advocate the use of such methods as storytelling, biographies and narratives to capture the lived experiences of marginalized people and challenge dominant modes of inquiry that claim to be scientific and rigorous. Valencia & Solórzano (1997) and Yosso, (2005) in the US, and more recently Crozier et al. (2016) in the UK, critique deficit-informed research models and underline the key role of CRT in exposing the racialized, classed and gendered lived experiences of marginalized students.

This study of the lived experiences of BAIS entirely draws on the experiential knowledge of BAIS and lifts their silent voices in the scholarly literature.

Another tenet of CRT is its transdisciplinary perspective. CRT rejects ahistoricism and underscores the need to explore 'historic and contemporary constructions and manifestations of 'race' (Crenshaw, 1990 ; Lynn et al., 2002) in lived experiences using transdisciplinary perspective. To explore how 'race' and racism operates in education, CRT draws on many methods and analytic frameworks and transcends disciplinary boundaries. Solorzano & Yosso (2002) write:

Critical race methodology in education uses the transdisciplinary knowledge and methodological base of ethnic studies, women's studies, sociology, history, law, and other fields to guide research that better understands the effects of racism, sexism, and classism on people of colour.

(Solorzano & Yosso, 2002: 27)

This study also draws on theoretical tools from post-colonial studies, which together provide the methodological and analytical framework that is needed to properly understand the lived experiences of BAIS. As argued earlier, a single set of theoretical tools is not enough to fully capture and explore the complexity of lived experiences of BAIS. I have drawn on the post-colonial theoretical tool of Othering, which I will briefly discuss.

Othering

Othering is one of the three strands of major theoretical tools of post-colonial studies developed by Spivak (1985). Othering is concerned with the study of discourses that differentiate between dominant and marginalized groups in society. It is the process of marking the Other as deficient or less capable, and in some cases as sub-human. Similarly Fanon (1952) explored what it means to be a black man living in the West. In Chapter 5 of his book *Black Skin, White Masks*, entitled 'The Facts of Blackness', Fanon explored how lived experiences of black people show that there are powerful expectations, codes,

stereotypes and practices that reinforce the idea that black people are inferior to white people.

However, it is Spivak, (1985) and Said (1978) who developed the concept of 'Othering' as a conceptual tool to analyse the creation of a binary categorization of racialized superior and inferior beings. Othering is mainly concerned with how colonizers continued using or creating discourses to delineate the boundary between themselves and those they previously colonized. Rattansi (2007: 99) noted that 'race operates in a whole variety of guises and a myriad of taken for granted assumptions that have become embedded in public and private cultures'. Thus, this gave rise to newer ways of Othering other than just based on skin colour. Othering can be based on nationality, accent, language, religion, and gender, place of study, perceived ability and stereotypes about place of origin.

Powell & Menendian (2016) describe Othering as:

a term that not only encompasses the many expressions of prejudice on the basis of group identities, but ... it provides a clarifying frame that reveals a set of common processes and conditions that propagate group-based inequality and marginality ... Dimensions of othering include, but are not limited to, religion, sex, race, ethnicity, socioeconomic status (class), disability, sexual orientation, and skin tone.

(Powell & Menendian, 2016: 17)

A few studies have used the concept of Othering to explore the lived experiences of black African immigrants living in diaspora in the West. While Baak (2018) explored South Sudanese heritage students' experiences of exclusion in Australian schools, Uda (2018) explored black African immigrants' experiences of Othering in a similar context. Both studies targeted black African immigrants or those who have a black African heritage, and not black African international students – people who are temporary residents on conditioned visa status to study in a Western country. My study adds to the literature by deploying the theoretical tool of Othering in the study of international students' lived experiences. Thus, Othering and related tools from post-colonial literature are important for the full exploration and analysis

of the more subtle racism and discrimination that BAIS suffer based on stereotypes about the continent of Africa, their language proficiency and their perceived ability. Othering as a concept adds to the concepts from CRT in that it focuses specifically on the elements of discrimination, which arise in post-colonial context.

In summary, I would argue that the use of Bourdieu, the concepts of 'race'/ethnicity, CRT, and the postcolonial notion of Othering offer the opportunity to fully explore and understand the lived experiences of BAIS in UK higher education.

Chapter 4: Methodology

Methodology is thus the point at which method, theory and epistemology coalesce in an overt way in the process of directly investigating specific instances within the social world.

(Harvey, 1990: 1)

Introduction

In this chapter, I present and explain the overall methodology and the specific methods used to carry out this study. I also discuss the design of the research and the fieldwork process and how that led to the broadening of my research focus. I discuss how the research participants were recruited, and provide some information about them using pseudonyms. I then explain the data collection tools used and the ethical considerations that informed the process. The last section presents a reflection on the research where I examine my insider/outsider status and how this influenced the whole research endeavour.

The main purpose of this study is to explore the lived experiences of BAIS while they study and live in the UK, using the stories they tell to reveal their perspectives. To reiterate, the research questions are:

- What are the lived experiences of BAIS while studying and living in the UK?
- In what ways do 'race' and ethnicity shape their lived experiences while studying at a UK university?
- To what extent, if any, have 'race' and racism played a role in the lived academic experiences of BAIS, in particular their academic performance and achievement?

In Chapter three on the theoretical framework, I explained that this study is mainly framed and guided by theoretical tools from Bourdieu and CRT and the post-colonial notion of Othering. This allows lived experience to be understood as a historically and culturally situated phenomenon constructed socially at a specific place, in a specific context under specific conditions. I also argued that exploring the lived experiences and/or the social realities of BAIS while living and studying in the UK only through the lens of Bourdieu would be incomplete and may not do justice to the participants' voices and

experiences. It is also important to note that this study does not use a standard Bourdieusian methodology per se, which involves a complete analysis of a particular field and the disposition or habitus of those who occupy that field (Grenfell & Lebaron, 2014). It is rather a study that recognizes the usefulness of Bourdieu's thinking tools but also critiques them as providing an inadequate methodological and/or analytical framework to fully explore and understand the lived experiences of BAIS.

Despite this, Bourdieu has some key methodological implications for my study. Following Bourdieu's conceptualization of social space as field – '... a structured social space ... contains people who dominate and others who are dominated' (Bourdieu, 2010:37) – I conceptualized the UK higher education field as a potential site of racialized differences in lived experience and outcome for BAIS in my study. This partly informed the development of my main research tools – interviews and a contextual information sheet, which I discuss below. Bourdieu's thinking tools have also directly contributed to my understanding and interpretation of the accounts by BAIS of the interaction between their previous educational experiences in an 'African field' and their current experiences in a UK field, which demand the possession of different types of capitals and habitus than those that BAIS bring with them.

However, CRT makes the most significant methodological contributions to my study, mainly by offering 'space to conduct and present research grounded in the experiences and knowledge of people of colour' (Solorzano & Yosso, 2002:23). CRT unapologetically asserts the permanence of racism and legitimizes the experiential knowledge of marginalized people. The permanence of racism would mean racial discrimination and other related dominations/oppressions are embedded within the fabric of society and operate in taken for granted manners, including in universities – a microcosm of society. This means that I simply explore the ways these racialized oppressions and discriminations manifest themselves, shape lived experiences, and the overt and covert forms they take, rather than setting out to discover an objective racialized experience waiting to be found. CRT, *inter alia*, offers such tools as storytelling and counter-storytelling (Solorzano &

Yosso, 2002) that empower BAIS to tell their own stories that challenge claims of objectivity, meritocracy, colour-blindness and equal opportunity on the part of universities (Hirald, 2010).

In sum, the collective key methodological implication of the theoretical tools I employ in my study is the space that they offer for a move away from a normative and deficit-laden view that squarely puts the blame on minoritized groups of students such as BAIS for poor student experience and attainment, ignoring the role of structural inequalities. While Bourdieu shifts the focus from individual students per se to the detrimental effect of educational institutions' habitus and the capital that they value and demand, CRT rejects any claims of the aberrational nature of racism. Together, they enable critical inquiry to focus on institutional systems and practices and the wider society.

Rationale for qualitative research and CRT methodology

Following the challenge to the positivist tradition of representing the social world as an 'objective reality' that can be studied by 'neutral' researchers (Mitchell & Egudo, 2003), research methodologies that acknowledge the subjectivity of both the social world/reality to be researched and those who research it began to emerge. One of these methodological shifts is what (Goodson & Gill, 2011) have called 'the narrative turn', where researchers began looking for stories in researching the social world of people with a view to understanding their world within historical and sociocultural context. This 'narrative turn', among other things, is characterized by the turn from numbers to words (stories), and the turn from the general to the particular. While statistical observations of experience have their own value, such as in indicating trends or the numerical significance of an opinion, they tend to homogenize experience, making a deeper and nuanced understanding difficult. Surveys of students' experience target big numbers and try to come up with a grand narrative. In a recent authoritative article on the application of quantitative methods in CRT analysis (Gillborn et al., 2018:1988) warn that 'the centrality of racism as a complex and deeply rooted aspect of society [...] is not readily amenable to quantification' and that any critical analyses of

quantitative data must be complemented by the experiential voice of those who suffer racism and discrimination.

Qualitative methodology is well suited to studies concerned with understanding individuals' lived experiences, which more often than not involves exploring subtle and hidden nuances that are difficult to capture through quantitative methodologies (Ritchie et al., 2013). Besides, qualitative methodology allows studies to be conducted in a natural setting with a direct face-to-face interaction with the interviewees (Seidman, 2006). Despite this, however, traditional qualitative research in education has been criticized for 'epiphenomenizing or de-emphasizing race' (Parker & Lynn, 2002:13) and resorting to class-based or gender-based explanations for issues related to poor and/or negative lived experiences of blacks and minorities in education. As my study explores the lived experiences of BAIS in the UK, where the higher education field is culturally constructed (Crozier et al., 2016) and where they experience racialized encounters both inside and outside their universities, there is a potential for alienation and being Othered. Chavez & Guido-DiBrito, (1999) write:

Difficulties arise for many minority and international adult learners when they attempt to negotiate learning environments that have been constructed within an ethnic base of values, behaviours, beliefs, and ways of doing things that is different from their own.

(Chavez & Guido-DiBrito, 1999: 44)

Thus, to this effect I use qualitative research methodology in conjunction with the empowering CRT methodological framework to enable 'race'/ethnicity to be foregrounded. Two seminal articles (Parker & Lynn, 2002) and (Parker, 2019) demonstrate the contribution of CRT, and its connection with qualitative methods through counter-stories and storytelling methods, which enabled qualitative methods in educational research to centre race and racism and lift the voices of marginalized people whose lived experiences are marred by racism. In this study too, through an empowering one-on-one in-depth interviews, BAIS shared stories and counter stories about various aspects of their day to day lived experiences that gave them voice.

Research design

This study involved audio recording of in-depth interviews, and a self-completed 'contextual information sheet' to secure some demographic information about BAIS. This design allowed the exploration of the everyday lived realities of BAIS from their own perspectives in their own words, as well as the collection of some important demographic data. In-depth interviews provide researchers with the opportunity to listen to the interviewee for a longer period of time, and the chance to probe further and ask follow-up questions for clarification. Following Flick (2009: 21), who asserts that 'the qualitative research interview ... [is] a construction site of knowledge', I also acknowledge that my interviews explored participants' subjective perceptions, recollections and interpretations of their lived experiences, and the data produced is co-constructed with the interviewer (me) through our interaction. The use of qualitative interviews allowed the generation of stories that capture the complexities of the lived realities of BAIS and produced powerful data that provided valuable insights into how they understand and make sense of their everyday experiences while living and studying in the UK.

Fieldwork

Pilot interviews and widening the scope of the research questions

As I explained in the introduction, I began my study within the context of the pervasive attainment gap between white and minority students in the UK (Broecke & Nicholls, 2006), and initially focused on exploring the academic experiences of BAIS with particular reference to their experiences of assessment and feedback in their current universities. However, following some pilot work, I widened the scope of my research questions from just focusing on a specific aspect of academic experiences to looking at a much broader aspect of their lived experiences (both academic and social) and how they may be impacted by their 'race'/ethnicity.

My fieldwork commenced with an initial exploratory focus group discussion (FGD) with a group of seven students and two individual interviews. The

exploratory FGD was an opportunity for me to 'get to know' my research participants, most of whom are a lot younger than I am. I had particular concerns about possible differences in language use. This is particularly important since I employed a semi-structured interview with a narrative approach, which allows interviewees to have more control over structuring their responses and the opportunity to introduce topics that they feel are important for them. Polkinghorne (1995) emphasizes that language in narration goes beyond mere description and represents a world view that needs to be considered seriously. Hughes & DuMont (2002:258) argue that 'Focus groups provide researchers with direct access to the language and concepts participants use to structure their experiences and to think about a designated topic'. Hughes & DuMont (2002) underscore that this is particularly important when researchers deal with research participants from minority cultural groups.

Thus, I wanted to learn if there would be any serious differences between the language BAIS use to talk about their experiences and the language I use to frame my questions for them. To this end, I conducted an FGD with seven BAIS from a university in the North of England. They were recruited on the basis of availability and suitability, not representativeness (O'Brien, 1993), and as a result it was an all-male group with an average age of 30. This is consistent with the very limited literature (Hyams-Ssekasi et al., 2014) that identifies undergraduate BAIS as a mature student population composed of more males than females. However, it is worth pointing out that there were a few female BAIS who initially volunteered but did not eventually participate for reasons that included anxieties about being the 'only' female participant.

Lessons from the Focus Group Discussion

Although the FGD questions exclusively focused on exploring BAIS's experiences of assessment and feedback in their current universities, issues related to their identity either as Africans or black students pervaded all their responses. In particular, they believed they are unfairly judged in written assessments because of their African English, and Othered because of their

accent. I learnt the following specific lessons that informed the next stages of my study:

- The FGD gave the opportunity to have my first formal contact with a sample of my research participants and served as an icebreaker in terms of easing any anxiety I had, and I felt a lot more confident during the main interviews.
- The FGD provided me with direct access to the language they use, and I learnt that they understood almost all the wording of the questions in the FGD guide. I confirmed that most of my questions were written in a language they understood, and where they were not readily understood, it helped me to gauge the level and appropriateness of language to be used in the interview schedule. For example, I used the word 'identity', and many participants asked if I mean 'black', 'skin colour', 'white', 'ethnicity' or 'gender'. I learnt that 'identity' could be a confusing term, and I became more specific in my questions in the main interview about which aspect of their identity I meant.
- The FGD experience also reconfirmed to me that individual in-depth interviews were more suited to my study. First, I noticed that individuals cued each other both verbally and non-verbally while speaking in a group setting, and it was very difficult to treat what they said as independent and an accurate reflection of their experiences. This tended to unduly homogenize their experiences. Second, two FGD participants followed me at the end of the session and shared stories that contrasted with the positive views they had expressed in the FGD about their current academic experiences in their university. Thus, I was reassured that a more focused exploration in empowering one-to-one individual interviews would be perhaps safer and more likely to give greater freedom for BAIS to share a nuanced version of their lived experiences. In addition, BAIS come from different countries and cultures, which may be a barrier to expressing views freely in a group setting.

- Most importantly, the lessons above, along with my review of the literature, helped me to develop my draft interview schedule, which I piloted with two BAIS from the FGD group.

Pilot interviews

The pilot testing of a draft interview schedule helped me to secure some valuable feedback to shape the final interview schedule for the study. Among other things, I secured the following key feedback that informed my final interview schedule:

- In answering all the questions, both BAIS made reference to three aspects of their identity – being black, being from Africa and being international (or foreign) – even when the question made no reference to their identity.
- Both interviews were more revealing, and interviewees were able to share deeply personal stories of alienation, isolation and unfair treatment that pervade their lived experiences both inside and outside the university.
- This led to a broadening of my research questions to include and foreground the three aspects of their identity, so that a full exploration of BAIS's lived experiences was possible.

The interview schedule

The interviews were based on a semi-structured interview schedule, with a narrative approach where questions were loosely structured allowing greater freedom for interviewees to impose their own structure (examples are provided in Appendix 1). The interview schedule combined semi-structure with narration where interviewees were invited to share their stories/narratives about events or situations they had experienced. Thus, the focus was on the topic, situation and/or 'the episode' (Flick, 2009) about which the interviewee had an experience and was relevant to the study. In my study, this involved asking interviewees to recount their specific experiences, for example, of a particular interaction with a peer or a lecturer, or of racism and discrimination. In the process, they also shared things they have experienced vicariously. As I

show in the analysis below, this technique helped to secure some narratives and counter narratives that, as (Gillborn, 2006a) asserts, ‘... turn dominant assumptions on their head’ and reveal the lived realities of BAIS that portrays poor experience.

The interview schedule included introductory icebreaker questions, some background questions, and questions about motives for choosing to study in UK higher education, academic experiences in their current universities, experiences of being an international student, and experiences of racism and discrimination. In a face-to-face context, the duration of the interviews ranged from half an hour to one and a half hours. The interviews were very open and invited students to talk about their lived experiences at the university and outside it, with supplementary questions to clarify or probe the evolving stories. I found all the interviewees very enthusiastic and cooperative to share their stories, and many of them expressed the view that the interview session was a cathartic release, as it was their first opportunity to talk about their experiences of racism and discrimination in the UK.

The interviews were conducted between November 2017 and March 2018 across ten different universities located in eight English cities with 21 undergraduate BAIS. Once a student was identified as a potential participant, I made a phone call to introduce myself and explain the procedure for the interview. I then emailed an information sheet about my research along with a consent form (see Appendix 2), which participants signed and sent back to me before the day of the interview. All the interviews were conducted at the convenience of the interviewees, and all of them took place at their respective university campuses.

Contextual information sheet

I used a one-page contextual information sheet to gather some background information about the research participants. It had three sections. The first section recorded the date, place and duration of the interview. The second section recorded some biographical data about the interviewee, including current course and their parents’ education and occupation. The third section recorded any peculiarities of the specific interviewee such as mood and any

unforeseen circumstances that could affect the interview. This information was helpful to contextualize individual stories during analysis.

In the section below, I present some information about the research participants and how they were recruited, using pseudonyms.

Sampling, recruitment and sample size

The research participants of this study were sampled from BAIS who came from English-speaking Sub-Saharan African (SSA) countries. This choice was based on two factors. First, as these countries use the English language as an official language or as a medium of instruction in their education systems (Obanya, 2005) , it is much easier for students from these countries to express themselves in English than those who come from French-speaking SSA countries. Second, students from English-speaking Sub-Saharan African countries comprise 83% of all African international students in the UK (HESA, 2014/15, Student Statistics).

A combination of criterion and snowball sampling strategy (Patton, 2002) was used to select the participants of this study. While the former determines inclusion in the study, the latter informs recruitment of research participants. Thus, research participants are recruited using a purposive snowball sampling method (Biernacki & Waldorf, 1981), which is a convenience sampling strategy well supported by the research literature (Robinson, 2014). Kruger (1988: 150) writes that the qualitative researcher can identify participants who ‘... have had experiences relating to the phenomenon to be researched.’ Thus, I sought to recruit students from SSA who identify themselves as black and have come to the UK for the sole purpose of studying for an undergraduate degree.

The specific selection criteria were:

- Being a national of a SSA English-speaking country
- Identifying oneself as black or black African
- Enrolled as an international undergraduate student at a UK university (be on Tier 4 student visa)

- Have had his/her secondary school education in his/her home country
- Is in his/her second or third year of study in an undergraduate programme (this helped to ensure that participants had enough experiences to share their stories).

Recruitment

Despite official data indicating the presence of over 14,000 undergraduate BAIS in UK higher education at the time of my study, I struggled to find research participants at the beginning of my research. I started with my personal contacts to recruit interviewees, but I was unable to meet and interview a single student for over three weeks, since the few I contacted were not able to keep appointments. I decided to broaden my search strategy and developed a 'call for research participants' advertisement (see Appendix 3), which I posted on the Facebook pages of over twenty African student societies, as well as emailing it to all my existing contacts. No mention of 'race' or experience of racism was made in the 'call for research participants' to avoid the tendency of recruiting only participants who have experienced racism. The advertisement simply asked if they were a BAIS and if they were willing to share their views on 'what it is like for them to study at a UK university'. Once a few students had responded to my advertisement, I mainly snowballed to recruit more students who met the criteria, and were willing and available to share stories of their lived experiences in a face-to face audio-recorded interview setting. All participants were offered £10 as reimbursement of any transport cost they might have incurred however over half of them refused as they felt it would be unfair to take money from a fellow African student.

Sample size

Qualitative interviews generate a huge amount of data, and aim at a very deep exploration and understanding of the phenomenon and the participants involved in the study. By focusing on a small number of students, this study aims to deepen understanding of BAIS's lived experiences. It does not claim

to make any generalization, but argues that the stories of BAIS in this study could resonate with the lived experiences of similar groups of students studying under similar circumstances in the context of UK higher education.

Baker and Edwards (2012) reviewed responses given by 14 leading UK researchers to the question 'How many qualitative interviews is enough?'. They pointed out that the decision about sample size depends on the epistemological stance and theoretical orientations adopted for the study, and also on some pragmatic considerations such as the time and financial resources available for the researcher or researchers. In view of the social constructionist theoretical orientation that informs this study and the qualitative research methodology adopted, a large sample size would not only be unsuitable but also not necessarily relevant. As Walker (1985:3) argues, the main purpose of qualitative analysis is to establish, 'what things exist [rather] than determining how many such things there are.' For this reason, it was important that the study targeted a small sample size of research participants. Scholars (Crouch & McKenzie, 2006; Creswell, 2012) recommend a sample size of between six and 20 for studies that employ a qualitative methodology, so that focused in-depth analysis of data is possible. The interviews produced over 180,000 words of transcript from which the quotations used in the analysis were drawn.

Research participants

As described earlier, I contacted students from over twenty universities through their national student society Facebook pages, and emailed over sixty students individually. I interviewed 21 BAIS (12 males and 9 females) who met the criteria for inclusion in the study and gave full consent to participate in my research. The 21 students came from four Sub-Saharan-African countries, and were studying on five undergraduate courses in ten English universities located in eight cities. While 12 of the participants were studying at Russell Group universities, nine of them were studying at non-Russell Group universities. All the 21 participants self-identified as black Africans, although I later learned that one participant (Wanja) had a different citizenship status.

Wanja was the only participant who was not an international student per se. Like all other participants, I first talked to him on the phone to introduce myself and explain the interview procedure. As with all the participants, I asked Wanja if he was an international student from Africa, and he confirmed that he was. I then emailed him the information sheet about my research, which explained the inclusion criteria. Wanja read the sheet, signed the consent form and sent it back to me. For some reason he chose to identify himself as BAIS, but after the interview I found out that he had a British passport. This would mean that he is free from immigration control and does not pay tuition fees upfront like the rest of the international students. I reflected on this, and consulted my supervisor about it, and decided to keep Wanja in the study, as the only difference from the rest is his citizenship status. He meets all the other criteria to be included in the study. He was born and raised in Africa, and had his secondary education in his home country. As he came here in his 20s, he comes with his social/racial identity shaped by the constructions of 'race' and ethnicity of his home country's communities and not that of Britain's society (Fries-Britt et al., 2014). As we will see later in the analysis, his stories of his lived experiences show a striking similarity with the rest of the BAIS, and gives an insight that 'race' could be a more important factor than citizenship for black students.

Profile of participants

The table below presents some information about the research participants. To ensure confidentiality, I have used pseudonyms for participants and universities.

Participant	Gender, nationality, age	Type of secondary school attended	Entry qualification	University, course and year of study	Parents' education
Tibu	Male, Nigerian, 18	Mission, Private	IGSCE	Canal, Accounting and finance, 2nd year	Father: BA Mother: BSc
Bena	Female, Nigerian, 18	Private	Foundation course	Canal, Business	Both degree

	9			management with marketing, 2nd year	educated
Poni	Female, Nigerian, 19	Private	WASCE and Foundation course	Canal, Law, 2nd year	Mother: Diploma Father: BA
Jaka	Male, Kenyan, 20	Private	International Baccalaureate	Castle, Finance, 2nd year	Father: MBA
Beku	Male, Kenyan, 21	Private	A Levels (A*, A, A)	Castle, Philosophy, politics and economics, 2nd year	Father: Master's
Astu	Female, Kenyan, 21	Private	A Levels (3 A*)	Castle, Law, 3rd year	Father: degree Mother: high school
Baso	Male, Serra-Leonean, 28	State	BA political science, and work experience	Downtown, Law (Hons), 2nd year	Father: MSc Mother: Teaching certificate
Domu	Male, Serra-Leonean, 29	Mission	BSc and WASCE	Chapel, Law, 3rd year	Father: BSc in accounting
Rosa	Female, Nigerian, 19	Private	A Levels (A, A, A)	Hillside, Law, 3rd year	Father: Law degree Mother: Accounting and finance
Lara	Female, Nigerian, 19	Private	A Levels	Song, Law, 2nd year	Both have degrees
Ruth	Female, Nigerian, 19	Private	A Levels (A, A, A)	Hillside, Law, 3rd year	Both have BA degrees
Wasa	Male, Nigerian, 22	Private	A Levels	Port, Biomedical sciences	Both have degrees

Yomi	Female, Nigerian, 19	Private	IGCSE	Port, Biomedical sciences, 3rd year	Father: BA Mother: MSc
Demba	Male, Nigerian, 20	Private	A Levels (A, A, A*)	Woods, Aerospace engineering, 3rd year	Father: Master's degree
Olu	Female, Nigerian, 20	Private	A Levels (A, B, B)	Woods, Bioengineerin g, 3rd year	Father: degree
Katu	Female, Nigerian, 22	Private	BSc Economics	Canal-Great, Law, 3rd year	Both have degrees
Pala	Male, Serra- Leonean, 36	Mission	BA degree	Canal-Great, Law, 3rd year	Both: Diploma
Mufti	Male, Nigerian, 24	Private	WASSCE	Canal-Great, Economics, 2nd year	No formal education
Arno	Male, South African, 26	Private	Credits from New York Course and Matric	Canal-Great, Acting, 3rd year	Father: BA honours Mother: MSc
Ade	Male, Nigerian, 19	Private	WAEC	Canal-Great, Law with criminology	Both have degrees
Wanja	Male, Kenyan, 31	State	A Levels	Parkside, Business management, 3rd year	Father: BA degree

The demographics of BAIS differed by the type of university they attended. Those studying at Russell Group universities (Canal, Castle, Port, Hillside, and Woods) were younger (a mean age of 19), straight from secondary school, and were admitted with traditional A-Level grades. Whereas those BAIS studying at the non-Russell group Universities (Canal-Great, Downtown, Chapel, Song, and Parkside) were older (a mean age of 26), spent time in the world of work and were still working part-time and had additional family commitments back home. While 12 of the participants were at Russell group universities, nine of them were studying at non-Russell Group universities. This demographics is slightly different from UK home BME students who

tend to be concentrated in non-Russell group universities (Harrison, 2017). However, while 'race'/ethnicity along with social class seems to be the main factor behind choice of university for home BME students, economic capital appears to be the key determinant in case of BAIS as judged from my data.

For BAIS in my study, choice of University was mainly informed by information secured from university ranking on league tables, from their fellow countrymen/women who studied in the UK before, affordability of course, and in some cases from agents who operated in their countries. And in some cases career advisors advised BAIS who went to private international schools. This pattern slightly differs from university choice for UK home students where they choose universities they feel they are more likely to fit-in (Reay et al., 2005) because there are 'people like them'. BAIS do not have the opportunity to secure sufficient and reliable information to identify universities with 'people like them' since they were in their home countries during the application process. Astu's remark in this regard represents the views of many of the research participants.

you never had the chance to come to see the schools; it's really blind choice; so everything was secondary; it was definitely challenging to make your ultimate decision on your future but you have to do it at 16 years old; so it's very difficult; I definitely felt that pressure because I have to pick a good university so I can have a good future

(Astu, female, 21,

Castle)

As we will see later, their choice had implications for many aspects of their lived experiences including the amount of institutional support they received.

Data analysis

The interviews with the 21 BAIS generated a large volume of data (over 180,000 words). All the interviews were transcribed verbatim. I transcribed the interviews as I went along and did not wait until I had completed the interviews with all the participants. This gave me the chance to listen to the interviews and reflect on what I could improve for the next interviews. Doing all the

transcription myself gave me a valuable opportunity to be immersed in the data and to be on top of the material during my analysis.

Following the transcriptions, I produced 'thick descriptions' (Ponterotto, 2006) – a description of the demographic and other background information, along with a summary of the transcribed data for each participant. The process of producing the thick descriptions helped me to be even more familiar with individual data, and most importantly helped me to organize and categorize my data in preparation for further analysis.

I transferred the verbatim transcriptions of all interview data into NVivo qualitative data analysis software (Version 11) for ease of retrieval, organizing and reorganizing, and multiple coding and recoding. In the main, I used two methods of coding. First, I used a priori codes derived from the subheadings of my interview schedule to create initial categories that reflect issues I was interested to explore. Second, new refined codes often emerged when I looked for a pattern by making connections across the participants' stories.

The table below presents the initial a priori codes used to categorize participants' responses under common headings.

Table 2: A priori codes

1	Previous educational experience
2	Current Academic experience at a UK university
3	Student profile on current course: who does well and who does less well
4	Factors affecting achievement and performance
5	What is it like to be a BAIS at current university?
6	Being a BAIS versus being a white/home student
7	Being a BAIS versus being other international student
8	Has 'race'/ethnicity been an issue in your experience?
9	Is racism and discrimination a problem at your university?

10	Racism and discrimination hinder academic achievement and performance
11	Personal experiences of racism and discrimination

The coding of the data was an iterative process. I had to return to the data numerous times, in particular whenever I believed a particular theme was emerging during my interrogation of the data in depth and at length. I had to go back and forth across my a priori categories to ensure there was consistency in the relationships and /or connections across the data set that were giving rise to an emerging theme. Although I started with a priori codes, none of them appears in the final codes used in the analysis. They helped me kick-start my analysis and look for a pattern across my data set, leading to the emergence of a theme. For example, although my a priori code 'racism' guided me to explore experiences of racism, the emergence of BAIS's stories of being excluded and discriminated against on the basis of some coded ways of talking about 'race', such as 'place of previous education' or 'the perceived backwardness of Africa', led to the identification of Othering as one new theme.

An example of the coding procedure

Here, I will briefly describe the procedure I followed to identify a theme or themes from the transcribed data and provide an example of the procedure in table form. This very laborious but very rewarding process helped me make sense of my participants' stories. This process involved indexing- which involves thoroughly reading the data-set and identifying extracts that correspond to a particular theme or category (Ritchie & Spencer, 2002). This was followed by creating brief memos stating my understanding and interpretations of the indexed data which facilitates further in-depth engagement with data and generating more robust analytic categories as I look across the data set for patterns and an over-arching theme.

A particular challenge was when a participant's account contains more than one theme. For example, Domu's account of how his identity as a black

person, his accented English, and the reaction of British students to the way he speaks was one example of an account containing more than one theme. Domu said he stopped answering questions in class even when he knew the answer to a question because of the deligitimization of his accent. I placed this under linguistic capital since as Bourdieu said, 'Speakers lacking the legitimate competence are *de facto* excluded from the social domains in which this competence is required, or are condemned to silence,' (Bourdieu & Thompson, 1991:55). However, I have covered the intersection of his linguistic and racial identities in his account through the theoretical insights that explored the conflation of language proficiency with 'race' in the analysis.

Table 3: An Example of Initial analysis procedure

Priori code: Current academic experience	Initial memo on emerging themes
<p>Transcripts: Indexing-marking the words</p> <p>'So when I first came here, I was suddenly all alone; you really had to either fall off or you push through and grow.' (being detached from one's social capital)</p> <p>'Academically, it was kind of new to me because even though I would say the method of education is better, it wasn't something I was used to. It's kind of different; the assessments were judged differently; the teaching and lectures are done differently. It wasn't hard to cope, but I had to cope, if you get what I mean, because it was different.' (practice-related cultural capital)</p> <p>'... so throughout my first year I sat in front because I wanted to hear the lecturer, and then in my first class, I didn't really hear her. I had contract law, and I wasn't hearing, and then I was stuck journaling, I was stuck like taking notes, and there will just be a</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Various forms of Capitals affecting BAIS's current academic experience • Feelings of under-preparedness because of their previous education experience • Loss of social support from back home • Struggling to adapt to new teaching and assessment methods without much support (initially) • Despite a good level of English proficiency, BAIS experience challenges to speak in class – mainly due to lack of recognition of their English language skills which is different from the mainstream <p>Initial/potential codes</p>

<p>whole passage where she is like talking, talking, talking, and I am just like calm down, calm down.’ (language-related cultural capital)</p> <p>‘I would say being used to and being conversant with the form of assessment, helps a lot. For example, I am not used to writing a lot, so writing up a report, writing up essays, these are not the things I normally did for assessment, so it was kind of completely new environment for me when I came here.’ (assessment related cultural-capital)</p> <p>‘I asked a question, and the lecturer walked up to me, and I thought it was to answer my question. He kind of questioned my qualification, like if I did A levels, if I did chemistry in my normal level, if I did chemistry in my secondary school at all, and I was like, ‘oh, yes I wouldn’t be here’ [if I didn’t]. And then he insinuated that if I did those, I should know what this is ... [the answer to his own question]. So it kind of felt like rather than teaching me what I am supposed to learn from him, he is judging me based on my past experiences, my previous education, my qualification – which didn’t make sense to me.’ (Intersection of Capital and Race)</p>	<p>Current University experience</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • adjustment challenges • language proficiency and accent • Different teaching/assessment methods <p>BAIS’s accounts refer to different forms of cultural and social capitals (Bourdieu, 2011) and their new educational setting demand that they have them. Some of their challenges concern cultural capital and some concern social capital.</p> <p>Teachers judgement blurs the line between capital and ‘race’ and racism -Yosso (2005). I am questioning if being Black African and secondary education outside the UK combine to mark Wasa out for discriminatory/prejudicial treatment.</p>
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The above coding procedure was greatly aided by the use of NVivo, which allows a quick and easy return to the data set, conduct reorganizing, recoding and retrieval of information. However, I remain the main instrument of analysis doing all the interpretations and making and remaking decisions on naming of codes and the emergence of themes. I drew on my knowledge of the issues

from the literature review and also theory-led indexing to code and categorize specific stories from my data into themes. In a highly iterative process, I did the coding in two parts. First with a priori codes followed by a more explicit theory-led indexing of the data as exemplified in the table above. Second, I did a more data-driven coding, which involved my deep engagement with the stories of BAIS that allowed specific themes to emerge.

The example of short memos shown above in the table were very helpful as they allowed me to capture my first impressions of themes emerging and making links between data and theory and also between and among codes. In this way, I was finally able to merge codes that reflect similar issues into an overarching theme. The table below presents such an example.

Table 4: An Example of a refined coding framework once initial categories are reduced through constant and iterative interrogation of the data-set

Initial codes/themes considered	Final code
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • adapt to a new culture • arriving late due to visa • Different teaching styles • Different assessment methods • Language proficiency and accent • Loneliness • Support available • culture shock 	<p>Capitals and adjustment challenges</p>

Each of the final codes are used as analysis chapter headings and as categories to organize the major themes under each analysis chapter. The final framework of codes used in this study is shown in Appendix 4.

Ethical considerations

This research was conducted within UCL/IOE's ethical standards and guidelines. Ethical clearance was sought and obtained before commencing all research activities, including pilot work.

The study was conducted on the basis of obtaining informed consent, which was achieved using a written consent form signed by every participant after reading an information sheet about the study. The information sheet detailed what my study was about, what participants could expect, and their right to withdraw from the study at any time. I usually emailed the information sheet a week before the interview date to give time for participants to digest the information and get back to me if they had any questions or concerns. All 21 participants agreed and enthusiastically participated in the study. The participants were given my university email address, my personal mobile phone number and the email address of my supervisor so that they could raise any concerns they might have.

As promised in the information sheet, I have made all efforts to ensure confidentiality of the information that participants shared with me, as well as their anonymity and that of their universities. I have kept all their data securely as per the data storage and security requirements of UCL/IOE and the Data Protection Act (DPA, 1998), and I have altered labels that might reveal the identity of the participants. I have used pseudonyms to refer to the participants and their universities. Participants were given pseudonyms that reflects their cultural background to make the representation of their voice in the analysis as authentic as possible. I have securely stored the list of their real names and other demographic information, and only I refer to it when needed.

I prioritized the safety and well-being of my research participants over my research throughout the research process. For example, when a couple of my research participants were deeply emotionally affected while sharing their experiences of racism and cried, I interrupted the interview and asked them if they wanted to take a break or stop the interview altogether. Once they had settled down, I followed the principles of Munhall's (1993) 'process consent'

and asked for a renewal of consent to continue the interview, rather than relying on the consent they had given at the beginning.

Reflections on my role as researcher

In this section, I will present my reflections on how various aspects of my identities might have influenced the research process throughout the study.

My insider/outsider status

Social research scholars have emphasized the need for researchers to reflect on and explicitly identify their positions in relation to the researched, as the identities of both could potentially impact the research process (Bourke, 2014). It is especially important to be aware of how researcher proximity or familiarity and/or unfamiliarity with the research participants (his/her insider/outsider status) influence the study. Whether a qualitative researcher should be a member of the group being studied or an outsider has been discussed in the literature, with a focus on the need for the researcher to be critically aware of how his/her identity interacts with and shapes the research process (Dwyer & Buckle, 2009; Smith, 2013). A researcher with an insider status is usually assumed to have greater access to, and acceptance into, the group being studied, in addition to knowledge of the culture of the group. Patton (2002) argues that involving an insider as a researcher helps to secure the ultimate insider perspective. However, there is also the real risk that both the researcher and the researched could make assumptions about similarity of experiences, which could particularly affect data collection processes and later analysis and interpretations. Although I do not claim to know the full impact of my various identities on the research process, I have reflected on those visible aspects of my identity (both the ones I share and the ones I do not share with my research participants) that I believe have impacted my study.

In my study, I found myself to be both an insider and an outsider, which had implications for the research process. Like my research participants, I am a black African person who has had my secondary and tertiary education in my home country in Africa. However, what benefited me most are the visible phenotypical characteristics such as skin colour and accent that I share with the students. I am a visible member of the black African community who

embodies similar bodily hexis, which (Bourdieu, 1977a:93) defines as a ‘... political mythology realized, em-bodied, turned into a permanent disposition, a durable manner of standing, speaking, and thereby of feeling and thinking.’ Thus, the fact that I speak in a similarly accented English and display a public persona with which they can identify greatly facilitated access and, most importantly, acceptance whenever I met a BAIS for an interview or talked to them on the phone. They seemed to believe that I shared similar life experiences in the UK, with which they can easily identify. The following two extracts demonstrate this point. In response to my question about whether he thought his experiences would be different if he was a white/home student, Domu contrasted the comfort and the ease with which he communicated with me and his difficulty interacting with white home students and teachers because of his accent:

... me and you can identify each other in this way because we talk in the same way; I don't need to pronounce in another way; you understand me easily; but if it's them [a white person], I have to take my time about the way I pronounce; and I have to be careful like my pace should be slow and all of those difficulties; whilst for you and me, it's just like this [easy] because we identify each other easily.

(Domu, male, 29, Chapel)

Many of my participants appeared to share Domu's feeling. They did not feel constrained or embarrassed by the way they spoke, and were very comfortable and forthcoming while talking to me before, during and after the interview. This helped to secure some powerful stories, including about some deeply personal life experiences. Phoenix (2000) argues that black students are more comfortable and more open when interviewed by a black researcher. Archer (2002) also reports that interviewees may respond differently to an interviewer from a different 'race' than their own.

At the end of my interview with Jaka, he made the comment below, which shows that I was accepted with a sense of solidarity and a feeling that the research was making a contribution to the cause of BAIS:

Solomon: Alright, thank you, Jaka. I will listen to this, transcribe it, and if I have some more questions or need clarifications, I will get back to you.

Jaka: Thank you for having me as well; and I appreciate what you are doing for the international students and black students as well bringing their voices out, I believe it should be brought out a lot more and I really commend you for doing that.

I have received similar commendations from many other participants, who also indicated that it was the first time they had shared experiences of racism, discrimination or being Othered. Some said that they would not have shared this if I was not a black person from Africa. Another important way in which I benefited because of similarity of 'race' is that we were able to freely and openly discuss their experiences of racism using direct language, such as 'slave', 'nigger' and 'monkey', without any fear of offence. I would argue that this could be very different for a white researcher. Participants felt safe to criticize white students, teachers and the officials of their universities freely because they looked at me as one of their own, and were assured of sympathy and understanding. For example, Pala said 'they [white teachers] give good grades to their own kids.' , Olu was critical that her university punished a black student with expulsion for posting online a quotation from the Bible that was deemed homophobic, while two white students were only required to attend some educational classes for repeated racist posts. Olu lamented:

I am, like, are you trying to say that hate crime in quote against homosexual people is more severe than hate crime against 'race' and black people; so that's the only reason for the double standard.

(Olu, female, 20, Woods)

However, despite these benefits, I would not claim that I have secured the most accurate and truthful description of participants' lived experiences, as I am aware that the solidarity and enthusiastic support between us might have influenced my interpretations and analysis in ways that I may not yet fully understand. But throughout the research process, I have always attempted to be aware and critical of the potential of my personal biases and subjective perspectives to colour my analysis and interpretations.

Furthermore, I acknowledge that my identity is not entirely comparable to those of the research participants. In fact, I am an outsider in many ways. I differ from some research participants in terms of age, gender and ethnicity, and I come from the only African country not colonized by European powers in the colonial era: Ethiopia. However, not all of these axes of difference were important in the context of my study, and from the ones that were important, not all of them necessarily negatively affect the research process. For example, I was worried that I might struggle with younger female participants opening up and sharing stories of their daily lived experiences. In fact, during the pilot phase, one of my young female interviewees was a bit shy and cautious, and did not seem quite comfortable sharing her experiences. During the debriefing session she said she was having first-time jitters, as it was her first ever interview talking about her racial identity and, more importantly, she said she was nervous as she did not know me as a person. That was incredibly important feedback in preparation for recruitment of participants for the main interviews. In an effort to establish rapport and build more trusting relationships, I offered more comprehensive background information about myself to participants, including my family background, country of origin, and how and why I contacted them. This has allowed me to establish excellent rapport and more trusting relationships with all of them, and a couple of times I have even been invited to do an interview in a participant's student accommodation. Although the literature establishes that matching the gender of the researcher and the researched is important for the success of an interview, especially on sensitive topics, as far as I am concerned, I have not found this to be a problem in my research after the first interview mentioned earlier.

Difference in age is perhaps what marks me as a true outsider to the research participants. The age of the participants ranged from 18 to 36 years, and 15 out of 21 of them were under 22. The difference in age may have cultural implications, and could even determine to some extent the relationship between the researcher and the researched. This is important in the context of my study, as in most of Africa an older person is revered simply because they

are older (Rwezaura, 1989), and younger people are expected to show respect in social relationships. This cultural norm in particular promotes expectations that African students' behaviour towards their teachers should be reverential (Clifford, 2009). In the context of a research study, this could be a double-edged sword: students could be very cooperative and forthcoming because of cultural expectations, but the distance might hamper free communication and interaction. Many of my participants revealed that one of their first struggles in the UK was calling their lecturers by their first names, which meant breaking away from their cultural traditions. For example, Astu remarked:

I am very used to 'Sir', 'Ms', and then coming here you are told 'call me Julie' and I am like 'What?!' [laughs]; somebody who is, like, literally, like, three times my age telling me 'just call me Tom', and then coming from the culture of respecting elders, where everyone is like 'Aunty', 'Uncle', 'Mr', 'Sir', you do not call them by first name if they are older than you by a certain age.

(Astu, female, 21, Castle)

However, in the context of my study I believe that I have benefited from the age gap in view of the very cordial and respectful reception I have received, and the camaraderie that participants showed, for example by refusing my offer to cover the cost of their bus and/or train fares. They have also looked up to me as an older brother figure, and a new ally that they might one day call upon for some advice and help. This created a very positive environment and trusting relationships for my interviews.

Researcher's positionality and the findings

The theoretical framework I adapted for the study influences how I position myself in relation to the researched and, most importantly, my stance in analysing and interpreting the results. For example, my theoretical framework conceives of social identities such as 'race'/ethnicity and gender as social constructions, and I acknowledge that both my identity and the identity of my research participants is not fixed and immutable. They do not constitute a homogeneous group. Apart from skin colour, the only thing that typifies my research participants is perhaps a shared experience of racism and

discrimination and the colonial legacy of the continent of Africa. However, since they identify themselves as black Africans while studying in the West (as highlighted in the review of the literature), I use the term as a unit of analysis in the study.

I am aware that my insider status as a black African person and also a student living in the UK, along with the CRT theoretical framework I adapted and my personal experiences of racism, influence the whole research process and the way I make sense of my participants' stories and interpret them. As a qualitative researcher, I also understand that I am the main instrument of data collection, analysis and interpretation, and I remained reflexive about the possible effect of my biases and assumptions emanating from the above.

I also understand that realities can be plural, and no claim is made that my participants' experiences represent the only truth. There can be multiple versions of lived experiences of BAIS depending on context and individual differences. I also acknowledge that I was more interested in how my participants' stories affected their lives and shaped their lived experiences than in the veracity of what they had to say. My analysis and interpretation of the story was aided and/or constrained primarily by my theoretical framework, by my insider status, and by my capacity as a researcher to represent the voices of my research participants.

I present the findings and my arguments in the next chapters.

Chapter 5: Capitals and adjustment challenges

I think, therefore I am. (René Descartes, Discours de la méthode, 1637).

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Ubuntu [I am because we are]. – (African philosophy)

This chapter presents analyses of BAIS's lived experiences, mainly using Bourdieu's capital theory as an analytical tool. It shows that BAIS encounter some barriers and adjustment challenges related to, and arising from, the volume and types of capitals that they have accrued from their upbringing, socialization and previous educational experiences in their home countries. This phenomenon seems to have shaped their experiences, positioning and trajectories from the very beginning of their lives in the UK. Bourdieu uses the analogy of a game to explain a social field (Bourdieu & Wacquant, 1992). He argues that players have different knowledge of the rules of the game, and this affects the position they take in the field. Individuals' knowledge of the rules of the game in the field of higher education is determined by their habitus, the dispositions they bring with them and the fit these dispositions have with the current field of higher education they are in.

For example, BAIS come to a new, highly competitive UK higher education field with their habitus formed in their home countries, and compete for educational success mainly with UK-born home students who possess capital valued by UK higher education institutions, and whose habitus perhaps more closely fits with the institutional habitus of the universities. Although BAIS come with their own cultural capital, its value and utility are lower in the new higher education field, which values the capital and habitus of home students. As a result, home students will be in possession of what Bourdieu and Wacquant (1992: 98) call 'trump cards' that enhance the power of the capital and habitus of home students, putting them in an advantageous position to win the game. By contrast, BAIS will be at a disadvantage due to devaluation and misrecognition of their capital and habitus.

The central argument in this chapter is that BAIS face extra adjustment challenges due to an infelicitous encounter with the UK higher education field, the need to adapt to a new societal culture, and the loss of their social capital, which is at times exacerbated by poor institutional support. Consequently, they may be overwhelmed, and experience greater levels of stress and difficulties in their transition to higher education than home students' experience. In addition, the hefty fees they and/or their families pay lead to an expectation and pressure to succeed in a new field of higher education that does not value their capitals, and at the same time demands that they possess the capital and habitus that it does value.

The themes in this chapter are organized under three major topics: (1) experience of additional challenges of adjustment; (2) social capital and adjustment challenges; and (3) cultural capital and adjustment challenges.

Experience of additional challenges of adjustment

Although all students face challenges in their transitions from secondary school to higher education, the accounts of BAIS show that they experience some additional challenges, mainly due to being a foreigner and/or having experienced their secondary education in their home countries, and also some inadequacies on the part of their universities. The three accounts below show slightly different aspects of these additional challenges that BAIS may face while studying and living in the UK:

As a home student, you don't battle the amount of things that an international student does; you don't battle the immigration things, you don't battle visa things, you don't battle the high fees, and you don't battle all these different stereotypes.

(Astu, female, 21, Castle)

First of all, internationals pay more than double of what home students pay; so that burden is almost more than halved if you are a home student; second, if you are a white student, you would come to a place where you are still a majority, so you are not really going to stand out as much; so it will be extra added layer of assurance you would have coming to Castle, that you are not going to be different from everybody

else. I think I would have had an easier transition, a much easier one; I could even enjoy it a lot more.

(Jaka, male, 20, Castle)

I will be a privileged person if I was a home student; because the fact remains when you are a home student, you don't have to grapple maybe with the communication aspect; because the pitching, the pronunciation and everything is there already; all you have to know is just know the material and just go and smash it; whilst for me I am fighting to know the material, I am fighting to present my tone and pitching to rhyme with you [home student] that has been born and brought up here; so the difference about them [home students] is also then the lecturers can identify with them; I have never seen a black lecturer all these four years in my class LLB Law; I didn't see anyone that is black that took me through any module.

(Domu, male, 29, Chapel)

These accounts suggest that being foreign and being an international student bring with them additional challenges for BAIS's adjustment and also experience. Both Astu and Jaka stress the economic burden of higher fees that are paid upfront, unlike home and EU students who pay much less and pay through loans. Being a visible foreigner, they will need to battle stereotypes, as they stand out as minorities. White home students may not have to battle all these, as they resemble the majority, and are familiar with the culture, and this arguably facilitates adjustment. BAIS do not have this advantage, and are likely to have problems adjusting and fitting in. Domu raises two issues that confer privilege on home students while denying him such privileges. First, the two-fold challenge of mastering the content of teaching and speaking with acceptable accent and pronunciation. While home students accrue an acceptable level of accent and pronunciation (a form of cultural capital) from childhood, Domu struggles to learn it belatedly with little success as he 'fights' to present his work like a home student. Bourdieu (1973) critiques education systems that demand that students have such linguistic capital as appropriate/acceptable accent and pronunciation when they do not provide it. Second, Domu also feels that the predominantly white

teachers identify with home students, making fitting in easier for them than for him.

Social capital and adjustment challenges

Possession, or lack thereof, of the different forms of capital could produce and reproduce inequality, reifying the status quo, or opening up and facilitating new opportunities. For example, while cultural capital (the required knowledge and skills) in higher education would position students in an advantageous position, social capital (one's connections) in the field could greatly facilitate adjustment and enrich experiences. Making friends and meeting new people nurture a sense of belonging and acceptance into a new social group. The opposite may lead to developing a sense of marginalization and isolation, making adjustment difficult and having a detrimental effect on academic success.

The BAIS in this study have been successfully admitted to their respective courses in their UK universities, which partly shows that they have one form of the desired institutionalized cultural capital – the entry qualification required of all students admitted. In fact, the data from the self-completed contextual information sheet show that all BAIS in this study joined their courses at their respective universities with what the Higher Education Statistics Authority (HESA) terms level three¹ entry qualifications (one of the highest entry qualifications), with A level results as the low threshold. However, there are other forms of capital, such as linguistic/educational, economic and social capital, which are much more unequally distributed among students. Although BAIS come with their own capital, the new higher education field devalues some of their capital, in particular academic ones, and in other cases their mobility across a national border removes them from their social capital. This

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According to HESA, a level three qualification is a category of qualification which includes A levels and highs (https://www.hesa.ac.uk/support/definitions/students#HQ).

situation seems to affect them right from the start of their study in the UK. Three themes emerged from analysis of BAIS's account of the interplay of their social capital with their lived experiences: (1) loneliness and isolation; (2) difficulty adapting to a new culture; and (3) the adequacy of institutional support available/provided.

Loneliness/isolation: A difficult start

Social capital refers to who one knows, 'the sum of the resources, actual or virtual' that one accumulates through relationships and membership of certain groups or clubs (Bourdieu & Wacquant, 1992:119). Previous studies (Trice, 2004 ; Maundeni, 2001) indicated that having connections and contacts in the host community helps new students adapt to a new educational environment. The accounts of BAIS in this study show that the large majority did not have access to this type of social capital, especially at the start of their courses, and as a result they suffered from problems of loneliness and/or isolation. As the quotations below show, a number of BAIS spoke of how they felt lonely in their new environment as they are cut off from their social networks. The effect of this for some of them was really overwhelming, and at times caused them feelings of exclusion and lack of support and acceptance:

It has been difficult at first, especially because I am so far from home; it's very dirty; that's one of the most difficult things; ... because I am studying with a lot of English people and Europeans, it always is back to a base kind of thing [referring to his native South Africa]; I kind of feel like it's me against the world; but you just have to do it when you are so far away from home;

(Arno, male, 26, Canal-Great)

The idea of moving away from home and moving away from the entire support structure that you were accustomed to was challenging; So, for example, the difficulty to say something like 'I have had a really bad day, I can go and see my mum' was definitely a big thing. Because I came to the UK alone and you suddenly realise that I don't have a family and their support here. It was a bit more difficult particularly during holidays or longer breaks when all your classmates are going home and say to you, 'oh, I am going to see my family' then I feel like 'where am I going?' That definitely was a big challenge.

(Astu, female, 21, Castle)

So when I first came here, I was suddenly all alone; you really had to either fall off or you push through and grow.

(Jaka, male, 20, Castle)

I feel it; I notice it but very discretely; a lot of times you will be the only black person in the room, maybe the only black person in a society; like I remember last year I was in societies that were only just Europeans or Americans or just no black people, so I would notice that; ... it has been distinct in the sense that you are different from a lot of people.

(Beku, male, 21, Castle)

I just thought it was a bit lonely; I was having something serious in my health, and I had to call the ambulance; they got me into the hospital, but they don't care how I get home; and in my head, I am like 'you just came to pick me up, I am new here, I am wondering how I am getting home, because I can't see a way to go back home; and that was really shocking to me; like how can I just be going home by night? what if something had happened to me?, I was in PJs and everything; that wasn't nice; I was angry.

(Katu, female, 22, Canal-Great)

Another change is how you spend most of your life in a house or in a room; this is something different and new to me; In my country, you can always go out and meet with friends; but here it's not like that; to meet someone you must arrange; it's something good, but it's really harsh sometimes when you feel bored but you have to remain in your room; I don't have any local white friends; I don't have any friend apart from some people from my country; we sometimes meet in the university but they are not my close friends; but I never had and I don't have any white friend.

(Mufti, male, 24, Canal-Great)

These accounts show how different aspects of social capital (support from family, ethnic groups and friends) affect BAIS. This is partly because BAIS encounter the new UK culture that is different from their previous environment and social conditions that formed their habitus – the hysteresis effect of habitus. Bourdieu (1990b:62) explains that the hysteresis effect means that

habitus encounters ‘... an environment [that is] too different from the one to which they are objectively adjusted.’

The feeling of loneliness can be very overwhelming. Jaka explains the sudden nature of his loneliness: ‘... I was suddenly all alone; you really had to either fall off or you push through and grow.’ Beku realizes that he could be the only black person in various social spaces, which could cause a sense of loss and a sense of not belonging – in Bourdieusian terms, feeling like ‘a fish out of the water’. There is a mismatch between habitus and field, which brings about the hysteresis effect of habitus (the lag between the habitus formed in their home countries and the one required in the UK society and/or field of education).

Arno and Astu also spoke of how being far away from home and the support structure of their families and friends have made them feel lonely. For Arno, the feeling of loneliness was exacerbated as it provoked memories of experiences of fractured race relations he may have endured back in his home country of South Africa. Studying with white British people and Europeans makes him feel ‘it’s me against the world’, suggesting that he has to face all his challenges without the support of his friends and family from his social network in his home country. Astu relates that she experiences ‘emotional loneliness’ (Weiss, 1973) because she can no longer rely on her family for emotional support when she has a bad day. Sawir et al. (2008) explain that students who seek emotional support often opt for their parents. The interplay of economic and social capital seems to be at work here. For example, Astu feels intense loneliness during longer breaks and holidays, as students leave campus and it could be very expensive for her to travel over 6,000 miles to visit her family. Although such feelings of loneliness diminish as time goes by and students start making some new friends, it could have far-reaching ramifications if they are unable to make friends and feel connected. Baloglu (2000) notes that the most crucial support for international students comes from friendship networks, and friends are their preferred source of help and support, followed by parents and then teachers.

Katu's and Mufti's accounts also show how not having a friend blights the start of new life in the UK. Katu's experience left her feeling lonely, shocked and angry as she had no one to lean on at a time when she was 'having something serious' going on with her health. Mufti also feels bored in his flat as he does not have either 'close friends' or any local white friends within the community. Trice (2004) point out that more frequent contact with home students supports the adjustment of international students in general, although as Andrade (2006: 143) highlight '... friendships and teamwork with domestic peers is problematic as the latter are not always responsive'. As we will see later, in Chapter 7, this situation can be heightened for BAIS as they are left out of friendship circles and seminar discussion groups. 'Race' and ethnicity complicate experiences of isolation and exclusion and the utility of habitus disjunction becomes very limited.

Difficulty of adapting to a new culture

BAIS's loss of social capital can deny them the opportunity to benefit from some key guidance and support to help them understand and navigate the host culture, particularly at the start of their life in the UK. They did not have a point of reference to help them understand how they are expected to behave and act in a variety of social situations. As the following quotations from Jaka and Lara show, they have been challenged by the differences between the way things are done in their home countries and in the UK. These include the expectation to lead a more independent life and figuring out the social code of conduct in communication:

so, personally for me the cultural shift has been huge; you have a very laid back society here as opposed to, for example, Kenya where it's more rigid, and it's more family value-based system ... but over here everyone is for themselves, so as an international, you having to adjust to that has been one of the biggest challenges.

(Jaka, male, 21, Castle)

It would be difficult especially coming here [UK] for the first time; it will be difficult to adjust; and in a sense I guess it was difficult for me because there will be cultural differences; you don't know how to address people in conversation; maybe in Nigeria they will do it one way, but in the UK they would do it another way; so coming to university and coming from Nigeria, we're frowned upon or seen as confusing because you don't know how to understand [interpret] people's communication.

(Lara, female, 19, Song)

Both Jaka and Lara are challenged by their new environment, which seems discordant with their habitus. This is due to a mismatch caused by the hysteresis effect, where 'practices are always liable to incur negative sanctions when the environment with which they are actually confronted is too distant from that to which they are objectively fitted' (Bourdieu, 1977b:78). Jaka spoke of the challenge of moving from a 'rigid' family-based society to one that is 'laid back' and where 'everyone is for themselves'. He found the expectations to be independent to be his greatest challenge. Indeed, higher education institutions in the West in general promote and perpetuate 'the independence model ... in curricula, institutional policies and teaching practices' (Stephens et al., 2012: 1181). The term 'laid back' also implies that one may not need to worry about others' reaction towards how one behaves, but focus only on one's own needs and wants. Thus, for Jaka coming from a culture where he might have been expected to behave in conformity with familial and societal expectations, it could be quite a challenge for him to be laid back about his behaviour. Indeed, Markus and Kitayama (1991) explain that such challenges may entail a new perception of the self:

Achieving the cultural goal of independence requires construing oneself as an individual whose behaviour is organized and made meaningful primarily by reference to one's own internal repertoire of thoughts, feelings, and actions, rather than by reference to the thoughts, feelings, and actions of others.

(Markus and Kitayama, 1991:

226)

This implies the need for what Bourdieu calls the transformation of habitus, which brings with it feelings of guilt caused by the tension to abandon the

more social and 'family-based' value system and adapt the habitus of 'independence' that universities promote.

Lara also spoke of the challenge of not knowing 'how to address people', and as result being 'frowned upon' and being seen as confusing. Furnham (1997: 19) describes this as culture shock – 'individuals lacking points of reference, social norms and rules to guide their actions and understand others' behaviour'. As a new arrival in a new country, the experience of being frowned upon by people from the host society could be seen as a sign of disapproval because one did not know the rules of social conduct in social interaction. As Bourdieu explains, 'practices are always liable to incur negative sanctions' (Bourdieu, 1977b:78) when habitus encounters a new sociocultural context. As a newly arrived BAIS, Lara has not yet developed the 'feel for the game' which one can only develop through time and experience, as 'it follows rules or regularities that are not explicit or codified' (Bourdieu & Wacquant, 1992: 98). Thus, Lara may not know the social rules to understand why she is frowned upon and to interpret the behaviour of members of the host society. The lack of contacts and friends who might serve as mentors and guides exacerbates such problems.

A different dimension of the challenge of adapting to a new culture, related by Astu of Castle, is the conflicting nature of some societal values around the concepts of help and support:

I feel like in African culture things are always community based. In the family there is always that culture of 'so and so can help you', if you need support. At school too, I go to the girls, my dorm mates and ask, 'can you help me?' and people volunteer to help you. However, that is not the culture here. It is more of a competitive culture here, and nobody talks about struggling even if they are struggling. In my first year, I really struggled in that respect since I was always used to that offering of help and people offering you help. However, since I came here, I am always offering to help others but there is not that reciprocation and it is a very competitive environment. This is more so at my university since it is a very competitive university to get into. Everyone came with that attitude of 'I am here to succeed, it's just me, and I don't care about everybody else.' *But I was used to the idea that succeeding means succeeding together, not just yourself.* This was

something I really struggled with. To be honest, it was very hard in my first year, so much so that I had moments when I said 'Oh my gosh, did I make the right decision coming here?' That was one of the things where you have to either swim or sink. It was tough, and I now realize that is the culture here, but I am not going to conform to it. I am still a very helpful person. I am still a very outgoing person. I want people to understand me like that. When I tried to be like everybody else, I almost ended up making myself feel depressed.

(Astu, female, 21, Castle)

Astu describes her experiences of suddenly losing her culturally valued spirit of mutual help and support, and feeling 'out of habitus' (Reay, Crozier, & Clayton, 2009) in an unfamiliar field. For Astu, 'succeeding means succeeding together, not just yourself.' This mismatch of values was so bewildering for her that she even questioned whether she had made the right choice coming to the UK. She seems to have experienced shock of the habitus, and declares that she almost ended up making herself depressed when she tried to change and be as competitive and individualistic as like everybody else. Constantine et al. (2005) explain:

Cultural value conflicts are negative affect (e.g., guilt, anxiety, or shame) and cognitive contradictions that result from wrestling with the values and behavioural expectations from an individual's culture of origin and the values and behavioural expectations present in the host culture.

(Constantine et al. 2005:58)

Nebedum-Ezeh (1997) study on BAIS from Nigeria and Kenya reported that they place a high premium on communal values, and believe in 'succeeding together' and showing solidarity while studying abroad. However, Astu misses exactly that solidarity as there are very few black students in her university. In her seminal work 'Whose Culture has Capital?' Yosso (2005) reconceptualises social capital as community cultural wealth, where black communities inculcate a sense of solidarity and support for each other in navigating educational spaces. This resonates with the famous African saying Ubuntu-(I am because we are). As Astu above underscored, 'succeeding means succeeding together' and failure of one might cause feelings of being

diminished by association. Yosso (2005:79-80) writes, ‘... historically, People of Colour have utilized their social capital to attain education, legal justice, employment ...’, and the absence of such supporting and reassuring networks would jeopardize the lived experiences of black students such as BAIS, especially when they live and study so far away from home.

In the absence of strong social networks in the UK and connections to support BAIS’s adaptation and adjustment to life in the UK and their transition to post-secondary education, university support services appear to be crucial in helping them cope with challenges. However, even with a strong social network/capital, universities pastoral work for international students has been identified as indispensable (Sawir et al., 2008). The section below discusses BAIS’s experiences of using university support services.

Adequacy of institutional support available

Bourdieu (1990a: 90) writes that one’s habitus ‘... becomes effective and operative when it encounters the conditions of its effectiveness, that is, conditions identical or analogous to those of which it is the product’. Coming to the UK, BAIS’s habitus encounter a new field – an institutional habitus of their respective universities culturally constructed with white middle-class values. BAIS may feel alien in their new environment, which may not have the social conditions favourable to the functioning of their habitus. As a result, it is highly likely that they will be challenged by their new social and academic setting and may need to draw on different support to overcome their struggles. Indeed, the literature on the international student experience shows that universities in the West would normally design various support programmes/services to address the perceived academic and social adjustment of international students. These include academic support services such as writing seminars, mentorship and counselling services.

In this study, analysis of the data shows mixed feelings towards the level and amount of support that BAIS received from their universities. The level of support provided appears to have affected the students’ academic adjustment and overall satisfaction with their sojourn experience. For example, despite

the newness and/or unfamiliarity of its methods and delivery, teaching was in general praised as positive and supportive, although there was some ambivalence:

'The teaching is top-notch, the teaching is good to a considerable extent' **(Ruth, female, 19, Hillside)**;

'The teaching generally is really engaging' **(Yomi, female, 19, Port)**;

'The education I have got here has been second to none; it's brilliant!' **(Arno, male, 26, Canal-Great)**;

I feel like for most of the lecturers they did try to explain more' **(Katu, female, 22, Canal-Great)**.

'The way lectures are delivered might feel intimidating, the hall is big but like when you have a seminar group of 20, 15 people you feel more comfortable to ask questions, you don't feel comfortable asking in the lecture hall' **(Ade, male, 19, Canal-Great)**;

'I don't think I was quite ready for that [the teaching]; it was very fast paced, so it was a very intimidating; and I began feeling left behind every single lecture even if it is the first lecture.' **(Beku, male, 21, Castle)**

This ambivalence about their teaching experience is consistent with the research literature. While Andrade (2006) found that international students in the West are generally more satisfied with their teaching experiences, Read et al., (2003:270) reported that even home students from non-traditional backgrounds 'found the formats for learning at university strange; for example, the contrast between lectures and seminars or tutorials'.

Some BAIS, in particular those from older Russell Group universities, suggested that good teaching is supported by some form of pastoral care. For example, Tibu and Yomi seem to be very content with the level of academic support they received:

... there's a lot of support; if things are harder, you have someone to help you, if you are having any setbacks, if you cannot make up your assessment, someone is there to help you, to give you extra time; things are met, materials are made available to you, ... for you to achieve your goals.

(Tibu, male, 18, Canal)

Then the school has different programmes and seminars to help with like exams, exam stress, exam revision, so there's a lot of support.

(Yomi, female, 19, Port)

Notwithstanding that the UK probably has among the most advanced academic reputations in the world (described by one BAIS as the 'citadel of education'), it is also important to put the participants' satisfaction with teaching and teachers in the context of the commercialization and/or marketization of higher education, and BAIS previous teaching experiences. In the current environment of dwindling government funding for higher education in the UK (Cuthbert, 2010), commercialized international education seems to be increasingly seen as the way to fill the gap. In fact, Wang et al., (2011) suggest that some academic programmes in some universities may be unsustainable without significant recruitment of international students. This could have direct implications for the way students are treated by teachers and the university as a whole.

BAIS also contrasted their current experiences of teaching with their previous secondary school teaching-learning experiences mostly in under-resourced environment and praised the resource rich nature of teaching and learning in their current universities. This phenomenon has contributed to their rating of teachers and their perception of supportive teaching.

However, as Poni describes below, not all support comes from the institutions. She received crucial support from multiple sources:

For the better part of my September when I started school, I was really lost; I was very, very confused ... we have student mentors, so I met up one of my student mentors and then she put me through ways that I could get better at listening [to lectures], referencing, etc.,; because I was very, very confused at how to reference my sources in my essays; so it was a thing I will be shouting my mentor, I will be shouting my personal tutor and then like there was support all around; [besides] both my dad and my brother are lawyers and did study here; so I sort of already knew what to expect as I was starting my law degree; he already kind of told me what to expect; like, it is possible you will not hear [the lecturers], there's the possibility that they will talk too fast;

plus there are people that won't even care about you; I also had support from the other black girls in my class I became friends with; and they invited me to their study group, so I became a member; and we do reading and keeping up with each other on education and that kind of stuff; so at any point where I actually like 'oh I don't understand what this assessment is about, I always have people to go back to'; like, I ask them often, 'oh, in your year how did you guys go about this assessment, how was it like?' So I always feel like there is support at every point of the road, so it has been good.

(Poni, female, 19, Canal)

Poni received support from her university, family, and black girl peers. Her account shows that support could differ between institutions. In particular, support from mentors in addition to a tutor was not mentioned by the BAIS at other institutions. Poni and the other three BAIS from Canal all appreciated the support given by mentors. This was not the case with other BAIS in the other institutions.

Poni also drew on her social capital and had arrived in the UK with some idea of what to expect. Although this might have helped her to cope with some serious challenges, it is interesting to note that she was seriously challenged. She faced problems of listening to her lecturers and referencing her work, which left her 'lost and confused'. Institutional support and the support from fellow senior BAIS proved to be very important in this regard. In particular, the support she got from her black peers was more frequent, informal and enthusiastic, and more importantly they offered crucial support on issues that her tutor may not have had the experience to offer, such as their experiences of preparing for or doing an assessment for a particular module. Bourdieu (2011) explains that the value of social capital derived from different networks differs based on the type of capital possessed by the actors to whom an individual is connected.

However, support experiences were mixed. Some BAIS, such as Pala, described a mixed picture of the support made available by universities:

Generally it's good ...especially my personal tutor is very helpful and any time you need him he will come in; the only time they will not come in, they will not even answer is when you have a financial issue; that

one they won't help you – you have to sort yourself out. It just makes me feel that I am not part of them; those people [administration] have no sympathy, and the sad part of it, you won't even see them face to face, you only have to call them on phone.

(Pala, male, 36, Canal-Great)

Pala rates highly the academic support from his personal tutor, but laments the lack of support on financial matters. Like many of the BAIS from post-1992 universities in this study, Pala at times experienced financial problems paying his fees on time. His university not only had no support or advice about his financial worries, but was also indifferent and treated him in a way that made him feel excluded and that he was 'not part of them.' He is a mature student who sponsors his own education and works part time while studying full time. BAIS like him have to live frugally and work part-time during term-time to alleviate the burden on their sponsors and sustain their lives and studies in the UK. This causes additional problems of adjustment, and such students miss out on the full and intense university experience (Munro, 2011). It is important to note that none of the BAIS from the Russell Group universities mention money problems, and all of them are funded by their families. If they have to work, it is usually for additional pocket money, not to pay rent or buy food. This shows the variation economic capital brings in lived experience among BAIS.

Other BAIS have also expressed their frustrations about institutional support for non-academic matters, in particular concerning health and well-being. As discussed below, this issue has highlighted the most inadequate institutional support in the lived experiences of BAIS.

Poor support for issues that are not deemed academic

A particular theme that emerged during analysis of BAIS's accounts was poor support for issues that may not be deemed academic. This poor service could have serious implications both for their educational experiences and personal well-being. Tauriac & Liem (2012) found institutional support for black undergraduates to be key for the demands of their academic adjustment.

Katu of Canal-Great explains her experiences of seeking support for a health problem from her university:

When I meet my personal tutor at times, I think it's just like sticking to the point; I am not really sure if she is really worried about you as a person or if they are just like 'this is what we have to do', because sometimes I try to explain to them like 'I am asthmatic' and it's not easy for me to like cope with this and that. Because of my health, at times I don't have that strength of using inhalers to be OK and also still attend all those classes and everything. People are not just fair about the whole thing, because it's a health thing and it just seems to be you are on your own; so I thought that's like sort it out yourself. When I saw the last doctor who was a specialist, I was trying to explain my background from Nigeria – my health issues. She just told me, 'I don't care about Nigeria, I don't care about what happened in Nigeria; she was, like, I don't care actually ... I didn't just simply book to see her, it was something that the doctor I have been seeing felt and said, why don't you see a specialist to know exactly what is going on because they felt that the inhalers are not helping ... There must be something, but the way she was just talking and acting that day, I just felt so mad that I just felt that she doesn't want anything really; first of all, I didn't just come to the UK but the attitude was just somehow ... [discourteous].

(Katu, female, 22, Canal-Great)

Katu's account above shows that she has been treated with indifference in her university by her tutor and discourteously, to say the least, by the doctor outside the university. Experiencing a health problem on its own is very distressing. When seeking help is so challenging, it could have a severe impact on both academic and social adjustment. Katu expresses her frustrations with the 'this is what we have to do' attitude of her tutor and the feeling of helplessness that ensued. She expected her tutor to listen to her and understand her worries and challenges. However, Katu is left on her own to sort herself out in a new country while dealing with a serious health problem. She is asthmatic and on a strong inhaler that seems to be not working effectively. Her GP sent her to a specialist for further diagnosis and her experience with the specialist also left her disappointed as she felt judged and not supported. Incensed by the way the doctor treated her, Katu commented 'first of all I didn't just come to the UK', suggesting that current

discourses of immigrants as 'scroungers' contributed to the doctor's attitude and discourteous treatment of her. She is a legal, fee-paying international student who expects and deserves to be treated with respect. Katu feels let down by both her tutor and the specialist doctor, and is left without any help, so much so that she said at the end of the interview that she is contemplating moving to another city. With her tutors, her key source of social support, failing her and no-one else to turn to, it may not be surprising that she considers moving out of the city. There is some evidence that tutors and/or teachers in English universities concentrate only on academic issues and fail to engage with international students experiencing health problems. Bradley (2000), in a study of institutional response to the health needs of international students at a university in the North of England, reported that some lecturers feel unskilled and not qualified to deal with such problems.

Ruth is another BAIS who related a similar experience of difficulty in securing any meaningful help or support when she suddenly experienced difficulty with reading:

I struggled with reading; so I thought I may have like dyslexia or something ... That was a big struggle, and they said I couldn't get funding from the school to take a test [diagnosis] because I am an international student. I feel like they are hiding under this canopy of 'oh there is so much support, there is so much help, but in actuality there is no help. ... When I was facing my issue and was struggling, I went to every single department; I went to the student support, who blanked me; they pushed me everywhere. I cried to every single person, directing me to this place, directing me to that place, directing me to disability support centre; they say they can't fund international students and cannot provide any help because I don't have evidence or proof that I have dyslexia or I am struggling ... I went to my personal tutor and I thought he really cared, but now thinking about it I just think he would act like that to every other person. I don't even know if he understood my problem, and I am just like 'are you really taking it into good consideration?' I thought you try to fight for my right to an extent by trying to make sure that people try to get me the help I need, but how far did he push it? That was really disappointing because I felt that I really had a real conversation with him because that's what they encourage us to do, to talk about your experiences ... and he didn't check up on me on how I went through my essays and everything, which I really found disappointing; and when we see [each other] on the

road, he just acts [as if] we don't even know each other. It seems like an act because that's what your job is [acting as if you are helping].

(Ruth, female, 19, Hillside)

Ruth describes her struggles in seeking help for a reading problem that appears to have severely affected her studies and caused deep emotional effect. During the interview, Ruth cried many times, and I had to stop a couple of times, trying to comfort her and ask her if she was still able and willing to continue the interview. Ruth confirmed that she was happy to continue, and said that the interview was an opportunity to share her story in a safe manner and that it was a cathartic relief. Like Katu above, Ruth expressed her frustrations with her personal tutor and all the other institutional structures that she contacted for help and support. Both Katu and Ruth, and indeed other BAIS, in this study describe their relationship with their personal tutors as too formal, business-like and mechanistic, and lacking a human touch. There seems to be a mismatch between BAIS's expectations of support and the institutional support offered. Interestingly, Osler (1999:47) reported similar experiences of home BME undergraduates in an English university, where they described their tutors as 'distant', and a Sikh student on a law course said 'my personal tutor is a good bloke ... but if he sees me in the corridor he doesn't know who I am.' Such feelings of resentment have led Ruth to believe that her tutor's nice gesture of offering to help during their meetings is 'an act', rather than a reflection of genuine concern for her well-being and educational challenges.

Ruth needed immediate help, as her difficulty with reading happened at a very busy time of the school year. However, despite her university's apparent promotion of 'support and help available' advertisements, she did not get help. She took me to a noticeboard on the ground floor of her student accommodation and showed me countless pieces of papers advertising all sorts of help and support services for students. She exclaimed in anger, 'but in actuality there is no help!' She was desperate for help as she was almost

unable to complete her assignment and prepare for her exams. She desperately continued seeking and pressing for help, and has been directed to the university's counselling service, which she found even more frustrating. Her experiences of counselling may resonate with experiences of other BAIS in similar circumstances:

I was saying, please I need help, I need help. I don't have evidence doesn't mean I have to suffer like this ... they also directed me to counselling; so she is there to listen to you and [do] nothing; I was like 'oh my God, they say if you need help, there's always someone to talk to ... I went to her, and she is just like 'hmmmm'. So I was crying, and I think they are not allowed to pat you or say something like 'oh, don't cry' ... She tried to act like neutral; she was just like 'emmm, yeah, yeah, and just giving me the tissue [paper] ... and I am like 'what's this?' ... I went there, and I felt helpless and worse than before I came in; it was so frustrating. I feel like I was depressed. I would have committed suicide if I didn't have a good set of mind.

(Ruth, female, 19, Hillside)

Studies in both the UK (Bradley, 2000) and the US (Constantine et al., 2005) report that BAIS are very reluctant to use university counselling services for reasons that include the stigma that associates counselling with mental health. However, Ruth's experience might give us another insight: inadequacies on the part of university counselling services that fail to meet students' expectations could be part of the reason why BAIS might be reluctant to use such services. Ruth did not find the counselling helpful, and indeed complained that she was left feeling worse than she did before the counselling. It is very concerning that Ruth felt depressed and suicidal mainly because of the failure to secure any meaningful institutional help. She believes 'her good set of mind' helped her cope with the depressive period. As she later explained, prayers, living with her sister, and a very supportive father might help to explain how she coped. Maundeni (2001), who looked at BAIS's friendship networks in a Scottish university, suggests that medical professionals suspect that BAIS somatize psychological stress as physical ones and seek medical help instead of psychiatric help. However, as Ruth's

experience shows, failure to meet BAIS's expectations on the part of institutions could also be one reason for the often cited underutilization of counselling services by ethnic minority students (Baloglu, 2000 ; Constantine et al., 2005).

Summary

The first section of this chapter has analysed BAIS's accounts of the extra adjustment challenges that in particular blight the beginning of their courses in the UK. It has also presented analysis of BAIS's account of the interplay of their social capital with their lived experiences under three themes: (1) loneliness and isolation; (2) difficulty adapting to a new culture; and (3) adequacy of institutional support available. Being foreign and being removed from their social capital, coupled with the lack of adequate support and guidance to help them overcome the intense struggle for resources in a highly competitive field, have made their adjustment more challenging. In comparison with home students, who largely maintain their social connections, this might have put BAIS at a disadvantageous position, thereby reproducing inequalities in lived experiences.

The next section of this chapter presents analysis of BAIS's accounts of how the intersections of cultural capital and 'race'/ethnicity shape their educational experiences and trajectories.

Cultural capital and adjustment challenges

Cultural capital, in particular in its embodied state, encompasses knowledge and skills, and the ability to use academic language that is legitimated by a particular field – in this case, the field of higher education – and an understanding of 'the rules of the game', which are 'not explicit or codified' (Bourdieu & Wacquant, 1992: 98). In this study, some specific forms of cultural capital, such as English language proficiency, adaptation to new pedagogies, and conventions of academic writing, shaped BAIS's learning experiences, including how they interact with other students and staff, the quality of their

writing assignments, and ultimately, as we will see in the next chapter, their performance and attainment.

Linguistic capital

English language proficiency has been identified as one of the issues affecting the educational success of international students studying in the Western world in general (Andrade, 2006). However, while language proficiency tends to focus on the acquisition of sufficient vocabulary that would enable a person to effectively communicate in social situations, linguistic capital (Bourdieu and Thompson, 1991) goes far beyond fluency in speech and writing and includes legitimacy of language used and the power relations between speaker and listener. Analysis of the data in this study highlighted the role that linguistic capital (the embodiment of legitimated academic language) played in shaping BAIS's overall educational experiences. In particular, linguistic capital in the form of accent, for example, influenced participation in classroom interactions and the ability to access resources such as lectures.

Domu explains how British students' reactions to the way he speaks initially prevented him from engaging in classroom interactions, even when he was confident he knew the response to a question posed by the lecturer:

It is really a challenging thing. First, you came from a different country and second your colour is different. At the end of the day, you are among people who have a different background than you. So sometimes they don't even understand what you are trying to say. When I talk to some British students, they will say 'what did you say?' or something like that. So that creates a shock. At first, I was really shy when I wanted to talk. Because I was thinking, 'ha, but look the way I talk, I have accent and the way they talk is different from mine.' So even if I know the answer to a question a lecturer asks, I don't want to answer.

(Domu, male, 29, Chapel)

Domu speaks a very good standard of English, and comes from a country where English is the official language of government and the medium of instruction right from early years of education. The issue for him is the way

home students react to his accented English. Domu makes a connection between his accent and skin colour by saying ‘... your colour is different’, suggesting that ‘race’ plays a part in the way people respond to his accented English, in addition to the difficulty they may experience in listening to his enunciation. Motha (2006:497) considers ‘... linguistic identities to be inextricable from racial identities because I believe Whiteness to be an intrinsic but veiled element of the construct of mainstream English.’ The reaction of the British students to Domu’s accent is so profound that it ‘creates a shock’ in him. He suddenly realizes that the English, which he has so confidently used all his life, is seen as incomprehensible even though he speaks grammatically correct language. A previous study documented a BAIS’s experience of a similar issue. A female Gambian student in the UK in Hyams-Ssekasi’s (2012: 113) study said: ‘... one time a male said to me, “Excuse me” and I said “You are excused” and he said, “that is not the way we speak English here”’. The response from the Gambian student was maybe not appropriate given the context. Appropriacy of language use in social situations includes manner and accent, which is a form of cultural capital that native speakers accrue during their upbringing. This helps native speakers maintain a close fit of capital to field. Schmitt (2007: 67–8) argues that ‘[...] native speaker fluency is derived [...] from the use of a shared set of memorised stock phrases that native speakers understand and tacitly agree are efficient and expected ways of expressing ideas.’ However, BAIS do not have access to this shared memorized stock of phrases – a legitimated linguistic capital. Bourdieu and Thompson (1991) write:

The competence adequate to produce sentences that are likely to be understood may be quite inadequate to produce sentences that are likely to be *listened to*, likely to be recognized as *acceptable* in all the situations in which there is occasion to speak ... social acceptability is not reducible to mere grammaticality. Speakers lacking the legitimate competence are *de facto* excluded from the social domains in which this competence is required, or are condemned to silence.

(Bourdieu & Thompson, 1991:55)

Worried about the effect of this situation on his learning experiences, Domu sought help from a fellow African student who had lived in the UK much longer but still speaks his accented English with confidence. Domu recalls:

I said to him, 'I have an issue as I am really shy to talk because I don't think the way I talk is nice enough. I want to really polish my way of speaking.' He said, 'look, just be yourself. Do what you think is right, just say what you have to say. Because you cannot change yourself easily, and if you focus on that you leave other things undone.' Since that day, I was inspired. I said to myself, I don't mind because I can't wait any more.

(Domu, male, 29, Chapel)

Previous studies (Robertson et al., 2000; Tompson & Tompson, 1996) have indicated that lecturers believe international students' lack of participation in general is due to lack of confidence in their ability and/or due to weak English language ability. Domu's experience above perhaps gives us a new insight: BAIS may not participate in classroom discussions because they believe the way they talk is not 'nice enough'. This self-categorization based on accent could also be a manifestation of 'a hierarchy of styles which expresses the hierarchy of corresponding social groups' and conveys notions of distinction 'through systems of differences which are both classified and classifying' (Bourdieu & Thompson, 1991:54). In other words, Domu's 'African' habitus is shaping his capacity to classify and recognise what is valued and acceptable way of speaking in the new field.

This may be an area for universities to be proactive so that students like Domu will not suffer the stigma of accent and miss out on a positive start to their educational experiences in the UK. Domu speaks a very good standard of English, and as we will see later he became president of the Law Society at his university and took the lead in various other committees.

Wanja, from Parkside is another BAIS who shares his experiences of challenges caused by the different accents of teachers from different social and ethnic backgrounds influencing his learning experiences. He explains:

because there are different types of people, the first thing that you had to deal with is the language, the accent. It's one of the major barriers

because you will find that one of your lecturers comes from Liverpool, the other one comes from Scotland, the other one comes from Newcastle; those are completely different accents.

(Wanja, male, 31, Parkside)

The challenge of having to adapt to listening to the different accents of lecturers from different parts of the UK or beyond is seen as 'the major barrier' affecting BAIS, especially at the beginning of their courses. This is significant as BAIS may experience a serious challenge of listening to lectures and leave sessions without understanding what was being said. This could also affect their motivation and sense of belonging.

Some other BAIS struggled to listen to lectures not just because of teachers' accents, but also because of their speed of speaking:

... so throughout my first year I sat in front because I wanted to hear the lecturer, and then in my first class, I didn't really hear her. I had contract law, and I wasn't hearing, and then I was stuck journaling, I was stuck like taking notes, taking notes, and there will just be a whole passage where she is like talking, talking, talking, and I am just like calm down, calm down.

(Poni, female, 19, Canal)

Poni had difficulty understanding a lecturer who spoke too fast, but she was persistent and resilient to overcome this understandably frustrating experience. She had to make the extra effort of securing a place in the front of the class and had to listen to recorded lectures repeatedly to familiarize herself with the different accents of her lecturers, which caused an extra challenge.

but all in all I didn't let that set me back; so I persistently sat in the front seat to hear the accents that I couldn't hear; ... and then anywhere I missed out, I will listen to the Panopto [lecture recording software] over and over again, so that I get used to how this lecturer speaks and how the other lecturers speak, so that their voices will be like in my head – I could basically like imitate their accents in my head.

(Poni, female, 19, Canal)

This ability of a student to survive in an institution such as a university, and thrive and succeed despite constraints, is what Yosso (2005) termed as

navigational capital. This is an extension of the traditional conception of Bourdieu's cultural capital from the perspective of students from minoritized backgrounds. Yosso (2005:80) writes that navigational capital 'infers the ability to manoeuvre through institutions not created with Communities of Color in mind.' Poni, in a UK university, which historically designed its academic practices with middle-class and upper-class white students in mind, had to draw on her resilience and determination, arguably partly arising from her determination and commitment to invest and come to the UK for an international education.

Another issue of linguistic capital that emerged from the analysis was BAIS's challenge to cope with the demands of written academic English. Astu narrates her challenges for academic essay writing despite the fact that she is one of the interviewees' with a strong English language proficiency. She explains that no matter how fluent an international student like her might be, the fact that English is not their mother tongue could mean they may need more time to process information in English. She observes that academic writing is a challenge for many international students, even in their final year:

I know that's something a lot of international students tend to struggle with even now in our third year ... because English is not my mother tongue, things sometimes are not glamorous. For example, structuring my essays was something I really had to put a lot of effort into learning it. I had to make that my priority to ensure that I am really good at it, something that British national students may not have struggled with that much. This might sound a very small problem, but when you realize how much writing you need to do, it is huge barrier. When you are writing an essay which would normally take someone just two hours, I might need three hours or more just because I have to take more precautions. I will usually worry if my grammar is right, if my punctuation is right, and so on. Thus, it takes me longer and I will have to do two drafts, three drafts on something somebody else would have probably done just one draft on as they may not have to worry about grammar and punctuation as much as I do.

(Astu, female, 21, Castle)

Astu's account that it takes her more time and effort to write essays is consistent with the literature. Andrade, (2006) documented that international

students in general tend to take more time to read assigned textbooks, and sometimes have to reread them several times. In Astu's case, she speaks of the challenge of structuring her essays, a challenge not necessarily arising from poor English language proficiency but from the culturally constructed nature of specific disciplinary genres of writing. Astu's account suggests that writing academic essays could be quite challenging, even for students with much stronger English language proficiency such as herself. Spack (1997) in her longitudinal case study found that English language proficiency acquired in English language lessons (which is the case for BAIS) does not necessarily translate into success in disciplinary based academic writing. Schmitt (2007) argues that learning successfully in a specific discipline can best be achieved through a process of acculturation where students are socialized into the academic discourse of their discipline over time through a sustained engagement. As a new BAIS in the UK higher education system, Astu has not had this opportunity to acquire one of the most valued types of cultural capital of the field – writing properly structured academic essays using legitimate language. Bourdieu & Passeron (1977) also explain that linguistic capital encompasses specific genres of language valued in a certain field. Being well aware of this expectation, Astu declared that 'structuring my essays was something I really had to put a lot effort into learning it.' She is also aware how this situation would put her at a disadvantage in comparison to home students who may be better prepared than her. However, it is worth mentioning that research shows variation among home students in this regard (Read et al., 2003). Having their secondary education in their home countries, rather than in the UK, is a key difference between BAIS and home students. This could be further evidence that UK higher education is not a level playing field for all students.

These findings contradict previous studies on BAIS which suggest that they do not seem to have problems with English language (Blake, 2006; Hyams-Ssekasi et al., 2014). In fact, to an extent, even the most proficient BAIS in this study, such as Astu and Wasa experienced challenges in academic

writing. Commenting on her longitudinal case study participant of three years Spack (1997:51) wondered, 'if such a privileged, accomplished student could have such a difficult first-year experience, what must it be like for students with fewer advantages?' – a question that is pertinent here.

Capitals and new teaching and assessment methods

The other theme that emerged was the need to adapt to what BAIS called new or different teaching methods than the ones they were used to. Most BAIS said that the teaching methods at their UK universities are different from the ones they were used to in their previous educational experiences.

The following quotations from Olu, Wasa and Beku represent this view from across the nine universities in this study:

It was a huge change from the hands-on to independent study; it was not really a transition [it was a radical change]; at my A level school, the teachers were still hands-on, sort of, -not as independent as this; it was a huge change for me, but it's something you get used [to]; you just need the first few months and then you get into it, and then it's fine; but I like it, especially in Woods how we have lots of labs; so we have the lecture and then labs help you understand more ...

(Olu, female, 20, Woods)

Academically, it was kind of new to me because even though I would say the method of education is better, it wasn't something I was used to. It's kind of different; the assessments were judged differently; the teaching and lectures are done differently. It wasn't hard to cope, but I had to cope, if you get what I mean, because it was different. You get lecture notes beforehand, or it's podcasted. It's not, like, directly taught, but I feel like that's a change from secondary school to university; it's more like you are given information for you to handle.

(Wasa, male, 22, Port)

I am used to having information ... just spoon-fed to me in high school and everywhere else; like information is just there and you pick it up and you go. Here the information is so scattered that it becomes hard

to assimilate what is needed and they really bombarded you with so much information.

(Beku, male, 21, Castle)

These accounts describe the challenges of the transition from more supportive and teacher-dependent types of pedagogy to a more independent learning environment, which requires the possession of different skills, knowledge and dispositions (Bourdieu's capital and habitus). They all speak of a huge change to working independently, a marked shift from being 'directly taught' and 'spoon-fed' during their previous education. The transition to the new field of UK higher education required them to take more responsibility to manage, organize and 'assimilate' information. This shows the type of knowledge and skills (cultural capital) and dispositions (such as independence) that is valued in their new educational environment, things they may not have necessarily accrued from previous education. For example, Beku said, 'information is just there and you pick it up and you go', suggesting that the requirement was to memorize information and facts provided by the teaching, rather than assembling information himself from 'scattered' resources such as reading lists, which requires a new set of skills such as researching and organizing information.

The account of Ade below suggests that the new pedagogy is also different in terms of its wider coverage of content compared to his previous education experience:

it's [the teaching] new obviously because I have never schooled outside the country [Nigeria]; it's new and if I had to compare it to that of Nigeria, let's be honest, I would say it's a wider knowledge that you get from here. It's new and sometimes it's a bit demanding because this is a different style from what I am conversant with already.

(Ade, male, 19, Canal-Great)

Ade's account shows that having previous education in his home country is a factor in adapting to new teaching methods. Compared with his previous educational experiences in his home country, he finds the teaching in the UK

provides 'wider knowledge', suggesting that his previous education might have focused on a narrower curriculum content.

The accounts from some BAIS, such as Lara and Arno, give further insights about how the teaching methods may be different or new in terms specific teaching strategies employed:

It's more interactive, so you go to more detail; and you prepare answers for questions and like that, and you just discuss that with the lecturer, that's the tutorial. Like obviously the workload was different because there was more intensity in university than before, but obviously it is expected.

(Lara, female, 19, Song)

... a lot of our work is very practical and it's very intense. It's 9 to 5 of basically, every day Monday to Friday for the past three years; Lots of practical, extremely practical; so we are working on physical stuff; so we are doing physical training, we are doing vocal training, things that kind of need to be embedded into your subconscious mind ... so it's very difficult and it's very testing.

(Arno, male, 26, Canal-Great)

As both Lara and Arno highlight, the teaching is more 'interactive', involving lots of practical work, with an intense workload which they found 'difficult' and 'testing'. The interactive nature of the teaching in particular is significant as it demands BAIS adapt a new disposition to compete for educational success-to be active participants in the teaching/learning process. They have just come to a new field of higher education where they compete, among others, with home students who perhaps embody a better interactional disposition than them (notwithstanding the variations among home students) for resources such as grades.

Assessment requirements and capitals

BAIS face challenges adapting to some established and legitimated skills of writing assessment papers, such as adherence to referencing and citation conventions, writing within a word limit, using online resources, and managing and dealing with the assessment workload.

Buti and Olu highlight the need to learn newer conventions of academic writing. They both explain that they were challenged by the need to learn how to produce properly referenced academic essays that are free of plagiarism, something they said they were not taught or were not required to do in their previous educational experiences:

... the way we wrote essays in Nigeria was kind of different from the way we write essays here, because in Nigeria it just seemed easier. It was easy to write an essay and [you] know that your teacher would understand what you are trying to say; but here you need to do further research and use references. In Nigeria, we didn't use references in essays ... so [here] you have to reference, [use] in-text citations and all that. It was kind of difficult writing essays.

(Buti, female, 19, Canal)

Plagiarism wasn't the thing that was taught to me; I had to learn how to rephrase the words without plagiarising in a way because it wasn't a thing that was taught to me; so I didn't know what approach to use not to have it [plagiarism] ; I am still a bit worried that my percentage of similarity will be higher [on turn-it-in check], stuff like that, but it's OK.

(Olu, female, 20, Woods)

The two accounts above show BAIS's struggles and anxieties around adapting to newer practices, expectations and standards. Buti and Olu raise two related issues of the essay-writing challenges: referencing and plagiarism. Buti explained that she was not required to use references in her previous education, and her teachers understood what she was trying to say. Olu's account reveals the related issue of plagiarism, failure to acknowledge sources consulted through appropriate referencing, which was not taught to her or expected of her before. Academic writing conventions are culturally constructed, and students need a sustained engagement with the legitimated style of writing in a particular field before they can be reasonably expected to meet standards. Carroll (2014:161) stresses that 'variations between past and current assessment practices has an impact on students' understanding and use of current assessment practices.'

Another challenging aspect of academic writing that emerged was the use of word limits in written assessment submissions. Many BAIS have not experienced word limits in their academic writing submissions in their previous education, and they could find it confusing and very frustrating. Katu laments:

... in a formative assessment where I had the opportunity to write whatever I wanted to write, I had a first in that because I had no limit in what I was going to say ... By the time I had the word limits you would feel that you are going to merge, you have to cut so many words. I don't know how I am expected to put all the statutes there in; you want the case, you want us to break things down, it's not that easy because the word is limited and you want us to go straight to the point not just explain, which do you want? I got a lower mark in the summative – the final exam.

(Katu, female, 22, Canal-Great)

Katu is challenged by the requirement of writing to set assessment criteria when she is not clear about expectations. Writing to a word limit is a new assessment practice for her as she was not required to do that in her previous education. Katu is also worried that word limits had a direct bearing on her grades, as she got a first when she wrote without the requirements of keeping to a word limit but her grades were lower in the summative assessment. Given the fact that home students who have had their secondary education in the UK probably have had such experience, universities need to understand how this difference in exposure to a key cultural capital affects attainment.

Online methods both as an assessment format and mode of submission were also mentioned as a challenge by most BAIS. The accounts of Wasa and Beku highlight the views of most of the BAIS in this study. They explain that using computers for assessment-related purposes was rather new in their educational experiences:

The other thing that was different was [there is] a lot of online research, [and] a lot of online based assessment; so basically everything is kind of like, do it yourself, so that was different as well – more independent, really independent.

(Wasa, male, 22, Port)

The idea of submitting work online, you know you are meant to, but you don't understand the significance because obviously, before that you have only ever used computers for silly things, you can't ever take it seriously; maybe I was late on a few things and knew that seriousness aspect [later] but it took away from my experience.

(Beku, male, 21, Castle)

Both of these accounts suggest that BAIS may not be familiar with the use of online-technologies and/or customized software such as Moodle that many universities in the UK use as learning and assessment platforms. This is significant as universities in the UK may take for granted that all students are familiar with the use of online platforms both for learning and assessment.

In conclusion, the challenge of adapting to and/or acquiring all these assessment-related cultural capitals belatedly could sometimes have profound influence on BAIS. Indeed, Reay, (1998:523) made similar observations about working class home students and noted, 'the lack of fit between a habitus still powerfully influenced by a working class past and the middle class field of higher education generates a sense of uncertainty and feelings of anxiety'. Rosa at Hillside is overwhelmed and expresses her frustrations and anxieties about her decision to come to the UK:

The assessment it's totally different, the way to write is totally different; sometimes I am just like, 'do I really have to be here?' I just feel this has been the hardest period of my life mentally and educationally because it's like you gonna come to a new environment and trying to know how they do their things.

(Rosa, female, 19, Hillside)

At the beginning of her interview, Rosa said she has been rated as a very good writer during her secondary education in Africa and thought she would not have any serious problem with academic writing in her UK university. In fact, Poulton (2009), cited in Jude Carroll (2014) noted that students normally expect some cultural differences, but do not specifically anticipate the difference in teaching practices and a different meaning of assessment until they encounter them in practice.

Summary

In this chapter, I have discussed how BAIS face additional challenges. First, I presented how analysis of my data shows BAIS's relocation to the UK leaves them without their established network of contacts. Their accounts illustrate that being far from family and friends means being far from much-needed help and support which contributes to a difficult start to their lives in the UK. Institutional support services and/or structure were also inadequate, particularly for BAIS's non-academic challenges. In the second section, I considered how various forms of cultural capital demanded by the UK field of higher education affects BAIS's adaptation to newer teaching and assessment methods. BAIS may not have some of the forms of most valued and legitimated cultural capital, such as accent and citation conventions for academic writing, and dispositions such as independence, which they therefore need to learn belatedly and quickly. Overall, the chapter has argued that BAIS experience additional adaptation challenges due to their encounter with a new field that does not fit their habitus. They play on an unlevel field of higher education, with a pressure for high attainment.

The next chapter will present analysis of the factors that BAIS said shape their academic performance and attainment while studying in their respective UK universities.

Chapter 6: Academic performance, 'race'/ethnicity and capitals

Introduction

As discussed in the literature review section, much of the research literature on the attainment gap in the UK focuses on comparing the attainment of home white and ethnic minority students. In most cases, it is very difficult to tell if the category 'minority students' includes international students as the UK does not gather ethnicity information from international students (HESA, personal communication). Research on the attainment gap also routinely pinpoints the racialized nature of the white/black attainment gap in higher education, but fails even to consider if racism contributes to the gap (Harper, 2012; Gusa, 2010). This study has focused on BAIS, and has also gathered information on 'race'/ethnicity through a self-completed form where all participants identified themselves as black Africans.

In this chapter, I explore the factors that BAIS said affected their academic performance and achievement while studying in the UK, and extend the argument made in the previous chapter about BAIS's overall disadvantage in comparison with home/white students. All the 21 study participants were asked the question, 'What would you say are some of the factors that affect your academic performance or achievement at your university?' Their responses covered a wide variety of issues, ranging from educational background to racism and discrimination, and from significant events in their lives to a biased curriculum. I present the themes that emerged during analysis which reflect the lived experiences and interpretations of the large majority of the research participants.

In particular, I explore how BAIS are challenged by newer forms of assessment in the new field since their cultural capital of exam performance-oriented skills from previous education is rendered less valuable. Capital is valued differently in different fields (Bourdieu, 2011). Perceived lack of the capital that is demanded by the new field, coupled with perceived racism and discrimination in marking, grading and overall judgement of their academic

work mediates their academic performance. The central argument of this chapter is that in view of these disadvantages that BAIS face, it is a Sisyphean climb to compete with home/white students to attain high, especially first class degrees.

Analysis of BAIS's responses are presented under the following main topics: (1) cultural capital and academic performance; (2) social capital mediates academic performance; and (3) perceived racism and discrimination and the attainment gap. Each topic contains themes that emerged from the analysis.

Cultural capital and academic performance

Bourdieu (1973) argues that although distribution of the cultural capital valued by the dominant society varies by social class, educational institutions assume and demand that all students have similar capital. This demand jeopardizes the chances of educational success for students from lower social class backgrounds, who do not possess the demanded cultural capital. Bourdieu writes:

By doing away with giving explicitly to everyone what it implicitly demands of everyone, the educational system demands of everyone alike that they have what it does not give. This consists mainly of linguistic and cultural competence and that relationship of familiarity with culture which can only be produced by family upbringing when it transmits the dominant culture.

(Bourdieu, 1973: 181)

Although Bourdieu's theory is mainly based on class differences, his notion that the education system demands of all students alike what it does not give is perhaps more applicable to BAIS who come from different educational systems and/or cultures. This is important, as in Chapter 5 we saw that BAIS indicate that they may not have some of the most valued forms of cultural capital demanded by their new field, such as essay writing, referencing and assessment skills. While possession of cultural capital varies with student background characteristics including 'race' and previous education, BAIS's teachers often demand possession of similar capital as if it is equally

distributed. A number of BAIS in this study shared stories of how their academic performance has been affected because teachers demanded that they have the same background knowledge and information about their course as home students. I will discuss these stories under the following themes.

Better academic preparedness

Many BAIS spoke of how their previous education could affect their academic performance and achievement. The accounts from Beku, Demba, Poni, Ruth, Astu, Rosa and Wasa illuminate how they feel they are disadvantaged because of not having their secondary education in the UK. Beku, who is studying politics, philosophy, and economics (PPE), at Castle had the following to say:

I think the people that do really well are the people that have a better information about the image of PPE; the people that know that it's very economic centred [course]; and the people that usually know that are people that went to specific schools within the UK and knew Castle as their end destination; so people that are from grammar schools and schools that feed the Russell Group institutions; those are the people that do really well because they are mentally very well prepared what to expect. Their friends are here, they have circles; so, from Year 11 your school tells you about it, and tells you Castle is the best for PPE, so you do economics-related A levels and you have shaped your extracurricular around that, and you get in and nothing surprises you. The concepts being taught in class, you have a familiar grasp, you have been prepared. So those are the people that do very well. The people that do less well are people that are not ready; people like me, who assume PPE is a third, a third, a third [equally apportioned among the three subjects], when in reality it's not – it's 70 or 80 per cent economics. So you come unprepared ... and knowing the way Castle teaches from the second you land [fast-paced], you are already like a couple of foot behind everyone else.

(Beku, male, 21, Castle)

Beku's account shows how cultural capital accrued by attending specific schools, such as grammar schools or schools that feed the 'Russell Group universities', prepares home British students to do much better at university.

Once they arrive at Castle, their social capital gives them another advantage as they have supportive friendship circles because 'their friends are there'. They belong. On the other hand, Beku did not even have accurate information about the composition of his tripartite course, let alone its contents. These home students from a particular educational background have also done relevant extracurricular activities to sensitize them to the fundamentals of the course. They seem to have acquired the demanded cultural capital through 'concerted cultivation' (Lareau, 2002; Lareau, 2003) on the part of their schools that engaged them in extracurricular activities and career advice. Having the support of their social network both in and outside the university meant they have acquired some of the dispositions required for higher education, so they are not 'surprised' and 'have a familiar grasp'.

In contrast, Beku, who comes from a different country, did not have the same opportunity to accrue the required capital and dispositions, and feels that he came 'unprepared'. As a result, he felt a palpable sense of inadequacy and of being left 'a couple of foot behind everyone else'. Beku's disadvantage is exacerbated by the fast-paced teaching at Castle which demands that all students have the same level of academic preparedness for PPE when in reality white/home students have cultivated an extra advantage through previous educational experience. The accumulation of capitals through extracurricular activities, even in the context of home students, has been documented by Bathmaker et al. (2013), who reported that middle-class students in two English universities used extracurricular activities as a strategy to build up and accumulate capitals to advantage themselves both in education and in future labour markets.

Similarly, Demba and Poni describe how students who have had their secondary education in the UK possess relevant prerequisite knowledge and skills – an embodied cultural capital (Bourdieu, 2011):

I feel like it [previous education] could put you in a slightly lower position; because I feel students from here [the UK] have done a lot more than students from Nigeria, where I am from; Here, a student entering uni could probably have background in coding, probably have

background in SolidWorks – it's some app you use to make engineering construction and stuff; they could have background in electrical stuff, like actual circuitry. I met some first year friend of mine who can actually solder chips and stuff; they did it in some private high schools in the UK. So you could probably be in a disadvantage in terms of, like, quality of education;

(Demba, male, 20, Woods)

I think there seems to be a lot that they [home students] learnt in A levels that we didn't, even if we did A levels in Nigeria, since their syllabus was wider than us, they learn more. So there are some things in first year the teacher says 'you probably did this in A levels' and [I say] 'no we didn't!' I am like, 'when did this happen?!'

(Poni, female, 19, Canal)

Although both Demba and Poni have been admitted to Russell Group universities with an A level qualification (the required institutional cultural capital), their accounts suggest that there is a difference between the knowledge and skills they accrued and those that home/white students accrued from previous education (embodied cultural capital). This has clear implications for academic performance, as some groups already possess more knowledge and skills (capital) than others right from the start in a highly competitive field of higher education.

Demba, who is studying aerospace engineering at Woods, believes that home students have acquired more background knowledge relevant for the course from their secondary or college education than he has, because he had a different curricular experience from his secondary education back in his home country. This has put him 'in a slightly lower position' than home students who have done a lot more than him and are better prepared for the course. Poni too explains that even though she did A levels in Nigeria, home students benefited from 'a wider A level syllabus', which prepared them better. Despite this difference, however, teachers demand that both home students and BAIS have similar background knowledge and information. These realities for BAIS show that university is not a level playing field for all students. Home students have extra-unacknowledged advantages, and BAIS could potentially be on a trajectory of low attainment since they are not starting their course on an equal

footing. Having better prerequisite knowledge and skills could also mean that home students arrive with a better 'feel for the game' and are better positioned to do well in assessments and attain higher. This would mean that BAIS have to do additional catch-up work in order to internalize the 'rules of the game', in addition to their day-to-day learning of the course content.

Un/familiarity with assessment methods mediates performance

Despite years of exam-taking experience and a history of being high achievers in their previous education, BAIS found the assessment practices at their UK universities unfamiliar, new and challenging. As I argued earlier, this is partly due to a change of field. There is a sudden shift from BAIS's experiences of predominantly a high-stakes exam culture in their previous education to an assessment practice in their new field of UK higher education which, according to Bloxham et al. (2011: 255), '... involves decentralised, subject specific decision-making processes' that give rise to various methods of assessment which BAIS have not experienced before. Leathwood (2005: 315) also underscores that 'assessment systems are rooted in academic cultures and institutional habitus', both of which are new to BAIS and need to be socialized into over a relatively short period.

As a result, a number of BAIS pointed out that especially their first year experience was fraught with challenges because of the need to understand and adapt to new assessment formats and/or practices. As the accounts of Astu, Wasa and Rosa show, BAIS did not understand how the assessment regime works, or did not understand the feedback on their work, or had to learn some new skills:

So in the first year a lot of us did not do as well as we thought we would do, just because of the lack of understanding of how we are going to be assessed or lack of understanding of the marking scheme. So, it was not that we did not understand the content, it was just about that whole element of not understanding how we were going to be assessed. We all struggled with that. If you look at our exam results of the second year, it was definitely better, because there was now that understanding of what is actually expected of us. We did not get that understanding in the first year.

(Astu, female, 21, Castle)

I would say being used to and being conversant with the form of assessment, helps a lot. For example, I am not used to writing a lot, so writing up a report, writing up essays, these are not the things I normally did for assessment, so it was kind of completely new environment for me when I came here – things like being taught how to write up. I made a lot of mistakes – things that I wasn't supposed to do, things like citation. You learn how to cite as well, so pulling up bibliographies, things like that. They are like new, so if you are conversant with things like this before you come in, it does help you a lot.

(Wasa, male, 22, Port)

Astu speaks of how she and other international students did not do well in their first year despite not having difficulty in understanding the contents of their modules. They did not understand how they were going to be assessed and/or how the marking scheme works. The literature on assessment of student work in higher education in the UK recognizes Astu's challenges. There is a seemingly perennial problem of communicating and sharing common meanings of marking schemes (the criterion statements against which students work will be marked) to all types of students, including home students in higher education (O'Donovan et al., 2008; Price et al., 2011). This difficulty in understanding marking scheme criteria could be more serious for BAIS such as Astu, who may be less familiar or even new to such schemes.

Wasa explains how he is not 'conversant with the forms of assessment', and that he is not used to writing essays for the purpose of assessment. Scholars who looked at the writing experiences of international students in the UK have made similar observations. Schmitt (2007: 63) writes, 'I have learned that many students, from a variety of countries, have actually been asked to write very little in their secondary school years ... and have never done more than sentence level writing.' Wasa also had to learn such new skills as citation and putting a bibliography together, and he believes it would have helped his academic performance if he had such skills prior to coming to university in the UK. Not having these skills (cultural capital) has put him in a 'completely new environment' – Bourdieu's field – where he has to compete to achieve higher

grades with home students who are better equipped than him, as most were required to produce some form of writing during their A levels.

Rosa's account below offers a specific example of a marking scheme criterion statement that perhaps many students find challenging. She speaks of her difficulty in understanding a particular recurring feedback comment on her coursework assignments. She lamented:

Sometimes when I see my feedback on my course works, they are really, like, 'I didn't analyse', and in my mind I am, like, I don't know how you want me to analyse it; in my mind, I do so good but when I see my score, I am like 'wow!' They always say 'I am being vague; it's always vague or not really clear', or maybe the structure is not really great', or something like that. It's not really lack of effort; if it was, I would put times ten [more effort]. I am putting in the effort; sometimes I go to the library and I spend hours, especially on course works. That's what annoys me the most; it's so discouraging. Maybe I am not doing the way they want it, but to me, to a certain extent, if I kept this effort back in Nigeria, I would do exceedingly above [the standard]. Some of my essays, I feel if I was in Nigeria, I would have been the best.

(Rosa, female, 19, Hillside)

Rosa relates how she struggled throughout her three years at Hillside to understand what her teachers meant by 'analysis', when in her mind she believed she 'did so good'. Here again, the new field of assessment demands the 'analytical ability' in essay writing, the meaning of which is not quite clear to Rosa despite the recurring feedback from her lecturers. She was so confused and frustrated, and remarked, 'maybe I am not doing the way they want it', which suggests that she did not develop the feel for 'the assessment game' that would enable her to understand her lecturers' comments. O'Donovan et al. (2004) and Sadler (1987) have argued that assessment standards are in general difficult to wholly articulate explicitly, and that to a large extent they reside in the minds of the assessors (not in the written feedback) and can only be understood through socialization into the institutional assessment culture. BAIS have had their education outside of the UK, and therefore have not had that opportunity.

This exacerbates their challenge, as they are completely new to the UK field of education, which takes for granted differences in capital and disposition that

are key to unlock the codes, the cultural norms and 'the rules of the game' of academic assessment (Bourdieu & Wacquant, 1992). This makes it harder for BAIS to work out their lecturers' expectations of the extent of analytical writing they need to do. Despite putting in a lot of the effort, and being a high achiever in her previous secondary education experience, Rosa keeps on getting the feedback that 'she did not analyse, she is vague, or the structure is not clear'. Rosa believes she would have exceeded the expected standard in a Nigerian field of education. However, in her UK university, it is difficult for Rosa to make progress in this regard if she does not understand what her teachers want or the expected standard of analysis she needs to meet. Lea and Street (1998) report that students struggle in essay writing in higher education is partly due to differences in expectations. Bourdieu and de Saint Martin (1974: 338) also indicate that teachers may be looking for 'brilliance and originality' in university essay writing, and they may be looking for 'intangible nuances of manners and style' rather than just evidence showing achievement of the learning outcome for the specific task. Van Dyke (1998), in a study of the progress of ethnic minorities in two English universities, and also NUS (2011), documented similar experiences of BAIS who felt that they are penalized for nuances such as writing styles.

Another BAIS, Jaka, raised a specific challenge concerning group work assessment. He explained that the business school at which he is studying uses assessment by group work for all his modules, and that the allocation of group members could be a serious problem at times:

All of our modules are graded by group work. If you do have by chance a bad group, you are really going to have either do a lot more than your share demands or you goanna have a bad grade. For this reason, we group ourselves with people from our country, or with those who speak the same language or in some extreme cases with people who have the same 'race' or religion. If you don't find a group you are fitting with, you are going to be in the sideline. My course in particular is very European and France-centric. I am one of the only two or three African students in the group. The French students really stick together, so if you don't speak the language, you are going to have big hurdle to get over.

(Jaka, male, 20, Castle)

Jaka highlights the disadvantage that could arise from being in what he calls a 'bad group'. Allocation to a 'bad group', leading to either increased workload or risking a bad grade, has been identified by Osmond and Roed (2009), who explored home and international students' views of group work in a UK university, located a few miles from Jaka's university. They found that students form groups on the basis of common ethnicity, and where the tutor allocates group members, one international student said he will be concerned that he may end up in a group that does not appreciate his strengths and that this could affect his results. Jaka also said that one could end up doing a lot more than one's share demands if allocated to a bad group. Interestingly, it was a home student in Osmond and Roed's (2009: 119) study who said 'sometimes it means more work', referring to his experiences of writing the share of a Japanese international student's group work assignment. Jaka explains the impact of his 'race' on his sense of belonging to his group, which is 'very European and France-centric', and who 'really stick together', so if one does not speak French one is 'going to have big hurdle to get over.' Jaka feels he may be required to work more or otherwise risk a bad grade, as the course is offered in English and his peers in the group discuss in French. This shows that students' group work experiences cannot always be framed as home students versus international students, and that 'race'/ethnicity more broadly can shape experiences. While shared racial background and habitus provided the French students with an advantage, it has alienated Jaka and has put an additional burden on him both academically and socially as he found it difficult to fit in.

Eurocentric curriculum content and academic performance

A number of BAIS also spoke about how the Eurocentric and/or biased nature of the contents of the curriculum of their courses could affect their academic performance and achievement. Bourdieu underscores that biased curriculum content favours middle- and upper-class students by valuing and including their capitals. This inclusion of content to which they can relate enhances the

learning and achievement of white home students and disadvantage BAIS. In this study, the curriculum as an objectified cultural capital (Bourdieu, 2011), especially in some courses, appears to totally exclude the experiences and histories of BAIS, and perhaps other non-white students, to the advantage of mainly white home students.

Domu, Lara, Ade and Poni relate how the contents of the curriculum of their law course favours white/home students and disadvantage them, as they need to put in extra effort:

If you are doing law as an international student, you are studying the jurisdiction of another state. I can tell you the 1991 Constitution of Sierra Leone [his country], its clauses and the key facts and sections. But here I have to learn everything from scratch, and that means it needs all the focus and undivided attention.

(Domu, male, 29, Chapel)

In constitutional law, you need an understanding of the British political parties, but then you just have to read it up on your own, but maybe they [home students] would already know that as they have been here for their entire lives. So maybe they would have a better understanding of the politics in their country as opposed to me, because I am not familiar with their political parties.

(Lara, female, 19, Song)

Because of the curriculum in this country, a white [British] person would be comfortable with it because they have grown up here and know how things work here, whereas me coming from Nigeria, this is new to me. I am just coming to learn how things are done here, so it's going to take me more time to get more comfortable with it. That's why people who have already been here all their lives are more conversant with how things work here; that's why it's easier for them to perform better.

(Ade, male, 19, Canal-Great)

For example, a particular module that I do right now 'legal foundations of the European Union', I genuinely think this module is very redundant [irrelevant]. There's no point doing this module right now because we are about to leave the EU ... but we have to do it because it's just part of the curriculum. ... There are very, very foreign cases; so, we are dealing cases from Germany, from Luxembourg – really extreme

countries, and then you have to learn these case names, and learn the dynamics of these countries as well, and understand how this kind of situation may have come up. Most times I think 'maybe I am prepared for this seminar', and I go into the seminar and I come out more confused rather than my questions being answered. Just because of the fact that it's EU and is very confusing. I don't really understand EU politics because it's a completely different region that I am not really exposed to per se.

(Poni, female, 19, Canal)

Ade asserts 'because of the curriculum in this country, a white person would be comfortable with it', suggesting that it is biased towards white home students. Domu and Lara give specific examples of their law course content that makes it easier for home students but requires them to make more effort and learn more background knowledge to understand it. Domu explains he would have enjoyed a similar advantage to the home students, had the content been about his country's constitution. Lara points out that home students might benefit from background knowledge of the politics and political system of the UK, to which she is new. As Domu says, they need to learn these topics 'from scratch', while home students might already come with some prior knowledge that they can build on. It may be taken for granted that the UK higher education field is meritocratic, but BAIS's actual lived experiences in this case show that their law curriculum content is skewed in favour of white/home students.

These experiences of BAIS demonstrate Bourdieu's concept of field as 'a configuration of objective relations between positions' (Bourdieu & Wacquant, 1992:97), where different students take different positions within the field of law study and compete for grades on an unlevel playing field. In fact Bourdieu (2010:37) describe field as '... a structured social space, a field of forces, a force field. It contains people who dominate and others who are dominated.' Although Bourdieu's conception of this domination is class based, in this case one can also see the racialized nature of the domination caused by biased curricular content that is not only Eurocentric but also excludes the African Jurisprudence- a content BAIS could find more relevant and relatable. This

phenomenon may not be limited just to Law and other disciplines in social science and humanities. Ehuid (one of my two pilot interviewees), a final year computer science student at the time of the pilot interview expressed his frustration by saying,

For example, when they teach us about using data-base to create some kind of system of communication like a software, they use their own system, city, or hospital as a case study; you can't use your own system or city because they will be giving you the case study. **(Ehuid, Male, 40, pilot interviewee)**

Despite official policy from the Higher Education Academy encouraging the design of an inclusive higher education curriculum that considers 'students' educational, cultural and social background and experiences' (Morgan & Houghton, 2011:5), these accounts show that the curriculum remains biased and non-inclusive. This state of affairs in UK higher education has recently inspired some radical initiatives such as 'decolonizing the curriculum', which critique the unfairness and/or non-inclusivity of the current UK higher education curriculum. In his piece on University World News, Dr Hall quotes Dr William Ackah of Birkbeck College: 'The contemporary university curriculum is, according to Ackah, "affirmative action for the white middle class"' (Hall, 2019). The findings in my study brings the international dimension to what is usually thought just as white UK middle class privilege and complicates class privilege across national and racialized lines. The findings show the field does not value even middle class black African international students capitals.

Social capital mediates academic performance

Bourdieu conceptualizes field as a site of struggle for access to scarce resources, such as academic grades, between students with differing capital (both social and cultural), dispositions (habitus) and understanding of the unwritten rules of the game. BAIS in my study explained how their social capital mediates the cultural capital they can acquire through a network of friends and/or families, and how this affects their academic performance and achievement. For example, as most BAIS rely on their family to pay their fees,

significant events that affect their family exacerbate economic responsibility for them and bring additional emotional distress. Or in other cases, having the support of friends helps gain assessment-related knowledge and skills that enhance their chance of educational success.

Beku's experience demonstrates how tapping into some crucial capital accrued by senior student friends can help to cope with the demands of an assessment:

Course reading lists are ridiculously long and they are not prioritized. They are maybe 20 books long, and those books are thousands [of] pages each. They just scatter the thought so much and expect you to pick up concise bits of information, when at the end the exam is literally an hour long. So I would say that in a sense hampers a lot of my performance – just the time taken to sift through all these information and just know what's relevant. From my experience, how I dealt with it was using my friends that have done the exact same exams, that have been through the exact same problems, so they begin to form a sort of cultural capital where they then easily are able to present these data to you. So I was in groups of friends that were from third year to second year and had sat the exact same exams, and they said this is not relevant, just do this; and maybe a few white home friends just visited some lecturers outside of lecture during their office hours and they got more specific relevant information. I would say that system of cultural capital between people that have sat exams and people that haven't, and just passing that information, was useful. They can literally tell you, just go to this one page, this is enough for the whole exam, and that saves you hours. So that's what happened to me. I was in circles where I was just told, this is good, this is bad, read this, don't read that, and that worked.

(Beku, male, 21, Castle)

Beku had been overwhelmed by long reading lists for his modules, and had some serious difficulties sifting through the information and identifying what was relevant with a view to preparing for assessment. Having specific friendship circles containing people with accumulated knowledge about the most relevant content and who had developed specific study skills helped Beku to secure a key cultural capital. These people include those who 'visited some lecturers outside of a lecture during their office hours and got more

specific relevant information.’ In Bourdieu’s terms, these may be students who have acquired and/or internalized the unwritten ‘rules of the game’ (Bourdieu & Wacquant, 1992), and have gained insights into and access to the most relevant parts of specific modules for their assessment. Although the opportunity to visit lecturers during office hours might be a stated policy offering equal opportunity, the actual interaction between lecturers and students may be mediated by a host of factors including ‘race’/ethnicity (Chang, 2005). Previous studies (Richardson & Skinner, 1992; Terenzini et al., 1994) report that black and non-traditional students such as Beku find it difficult to develop and maintain close relationship with their lecturers. In a large-scale survey, Lundberg and Schreiner (2004: 549) report ‘Relationships with faculty were stronger predictors of learning than student background characteristics for all groups, but strongest for students of colour.’ This is important in the context of my study too as some BAIS said they rarely interact with lecturers. For example responding to my question ‘how would you explain your relationship with your teachers and tutors?’, Rosa replied, ‘We don’t have a relationship here; they barely know me, I barely know them, I barely meet them,’ **(Rosa, female, 19, Hillside)**. Future research can explore how this affects BAIS’s learning.

Jaka, a BAIS at the same university as Beku above, did not enjoy similar benefits like him, as he did not have such friends or friendship circles. This could be because Beku had some acquaintances, senior students from his city who are already studying at the university.

Initially, I was really left behind in terms of getting into friendship groups and study groups. I even thought of it [the education] is gonna be just the same as back home [which] really did held me back. So you have to be over and above when it comes to making new friends. I think it’s the thing that you will be the average of those you hang around, so if you have a larger pool of people to hang around, you goanna have people who are smarter than you; so, by essence, if you have people who connect with you on that level and you stick together as a group; then you have more opportunity to study together and help each other out.

(Jaka, male, 20, Castle)

Jaka relates that not getting into friendship groups held him back, especially at the beginning of his course. He seems not to have realized the need to get into supportive circles, as he thought that education would be just the same as in his home country. He did not realize that the change in teaching, learning and assessment culture entails newer power dynamics, contestations and connections (Bourdieu, 2010). Thus, being late to make friends 'held him back', and by the time he realized the need to make connections, he needed to put more effort to get into peer groups or make friends. As he mentioned above, friendship circles at his university are organized along racial and religious lines, and that made it challenging for him as there are very few black students. He said that he had to be 'over and above when it comes to making new friends'.

He recognizes that it is important to get into friendship circles with peers who perhaps possess the most valued cultural capital when he says, 'you will be the average of those you hang around'. Bourdieu (2011:51) explained that someone's social capital depends both 'on the size of the network of connections he can effectively mobilize', and perhaps more importantly, on 'the volume of capital possessed' by those to which he is connected.

Similarly, Olu below emphasized how having friends to talk to, study with, and ask questions about difficult topics would help, and not having such friends could make things more challenging:

If you have friends who are doing your course that you can study with, and you can just say, 'this is not clear to me, could you explain it to me?' that helped me a lot. So in a course where everyone sort of know each other, it's most likely you are going to pass because they are all asking themselves for help, but if you are one of the students that do not have friends in your course, it might be a bit more challenging. If you don't understand something, you have to go to lecturers. Sometimes it's not bad to go to lecturers, but sometimes your course mate can explain it to your level compared to a lecturer, and most lecturers are busy except when you meet them after lecture. Otherwise, you probably would have to wait for an appointment, and that might delay your reading time. My friends were great in this sense.

(Olu, female, 20, Woods)

Olu points out a unique advantage of seeking help from peers, as they may be able to 'explain it to your level compared to a lecturer', suggesting that friends may be able to word their explanations in a language that she can relate to, and in a non-threatening atmosphere. Students talk in a way that makes more sense to their peer than lecturers, who may use formal academic language that may be a bit too distant for students. Help from friends could also be more timely than from a busy lecturer. Read et al. (2003) report that in their study, even home students from non-traditional backgrounds (mainly students over the age of 21 and coming from 'working class' and minority ethnic backgrounds) experienced difficulties in understanding academic language, and that created distance between them and their lecturers.

Mufti describes how feeling lonely and homesick, along with a less supportive campus environment, affects his academic performance:

Sometimes I am overthinking and overwhelmed. Sometimes I miss home, I feel like I didn't settle down to study, so that minimizes my performance. I feel lonely, so it's not easy for anyone to leave home, to focus and read. I believe that there is lack of balance in life in this university. I have a friend who told me that in their uni, they got clubs, they got swimming pools, they got recreation places, so obviously they balance their lives, so that would make them focused when it comes to their studies. They balance play and study, so you have time to play, you have time to study, whereas in this uni you only study. We don't have time to play, so that will make you Jack the dull boy [referring to the saying 'All work and no play makes Jack a dull boy']. ... Sometimes you are a human being and you need to [relax].

(Mufti, male, 24, Canal-Great)

Mufti explains that feelings of being overwhelmed by loneliness unsettle him profoundly, and that it affects his academic performance. He was unable to make friends and did not seem to have people he can talk to and seek help and support from. There is a dissonance between his habitus and his new environment, which has affected his sense of belonging. This feeling is exacerbated by the lack of balance between study and life, as his university does not have its own recreation facilities, and he said that he cannot afford to go to recreation centres in the city as they are too expensive. It is important to note here that institutional fields differ even within the same city. His friend's

university in the same city has one of the best recreation and sports facilities, and a large open space. This means that students have space to relax, socialize and make friends, creating a campus atmosphere where students feel they belong to a community. However, Mufti's university does not have such facilities to help him alleviate his problems of loneliness. As a result, he finds it difficult to focus on his studies. There is research evidence that such feelings of loneliness and difficulty to settle affect academic performance and progress, and may even lead to dropping out from university (Tinto, 1999).

Misfortunes happening to families and friends

BAIS identified some misfortunes or significant events happening in the lives of their immediate and extended families back home as one of the factors that affect their academic performance and achievement. These include illness of a relative or family member, political developments at home, and an emergency or accident happening to family members.

So there was like a big election in Kenya and that the safety and concern of your family, being away from them when things are in turbulence, that really affected me when I am here. So when things happen at home politically, you will be worried for the safety of your family. You hear that there's a bombing in your city, stuff like that would affect you a lot more than racism here. Maybe that's a big factor in affecting academic achievement that may be overlooked as opposed to other factors.

(Beku, male, 21, Castle)

Recently, my mum's house got burnt down. I stayed home for a few days, not going for lecture, so just imagine if that would have happened during my examination time, while doing my assessments – it would have really, really affected my grades ...

(Baso, male, 28, Downtown)

This is a very difficult environment, especially in the context of being an international student. At one point in time, my dad was ill and I found it difficult to work. ... and imagine, you don't have anybody that will help you, you don't have that friend you can ask to help you with money, and then your parent is ill and you can't even buy lunch for yourself, then how are you going to survive. That's the key thing.

(Domu, male, 29, Chapel)

As these accounts show, unfortunate incidents in the lives of BAIS's families while they are studying in the UK could be very detrimental to their academic performance and success. As families are their main source of income and sponsors of their study, any misfortune happening to them exacerbates economic responsibility, especially for those BAIS in non-Russell Group universities whose families have limited financial capability. In addition to a crippling economic problem, this situation also has a psychological impact. The fact that they are far away, and may be unable to help the situation in any viable way, may add to their mental anguish, affecting the time and undivided attention they would like to put into their studies. Bradley (2000) also documents parents' 'vicissitudes of fortune' and other pressures arising from serious incidents happening to their wider families affecting the mental health of international students studying in the UK, and hence their academic performance.

Perceived racism, discrimination and the attainment gap

In addition to their struggles of adjustment to a new field of education that does not quite fit their habitus, a significant number of BAIS also identified racism and discrimination as a factor affecting their academic performance and/or achievement while studying in the UK. Analysis of their responses show that there seem to be two main ways in which 'race'/ethnicity mediate their academic performance and/or achievement. BAIS believe either that their 'race'/ethnicity as marker of their racial identity and cultural background makes it harder for them to achieve, especially higher grades, or they believe that they could be marked down or harshly graded because of who they are. As their accounts below show they could confront being marked down harshly, but they find being questioned, doubted, and unwelcome insidious and harder to dismantle.

Both Lara and Ade describe how daily experiences of racism could affect academic performance, as BAIS feel uncomfortable and hence disempowered:

When you are not settled and you don't feel comfortable, or you just feel targeted, yes it could affect your academic performance. When you don't feel welcome, it just makes it difficult to perform at your best.

(Lara, female, 19, Song)

In a learning environment, you want to feel welcome, you want to feel comfortable, but if every day or every two days you are experiencing one racist comment or you are being discriminated by your lecturer or by your fellow students, definitely, it's going to thwart your chances of finishing with a better grade or finishing with a good result, because it is obviously going to affect you; so yeah I think discrimination would have an effect on someone's academic performance at this university;

(Ade, male, 19, Canal-Great)

Both Lara and Ade highlight that experiences of everyday racism (Essed, 1991) could have insidious effects and could 'thwart ...chances of finishing with a better grade' or make 'it difficult to perform at your best'. They believe that experiences of racism are part of the fabric of their university campuses and that it affects BAIS's academic performance.

Arno, from the same university as Ade, believes that he needs to work a little bit harder because he is a black African:

Definitely! It does affect my achievement. It just means that I have to work a little bit harder to get first [class], I have to do a little bit extra; that's what it is. I wouldn't have come to this country [if I didn't accept that]. It just means that on that basis I should be able to put myself on a par where I could be seen as black British. It's a big thing being black, especially African as well, there's accent, culture, that's, I mean [important] ...

(Arno, male, 26, Canal-Great)

Arno alludes to the often quoted American aphorism 'You have got to work twice as hard ...' to lament his racial disadvantage and that he needs to put in extra effort to get good grades. In a recent study, De Sante (2013) provides empirical evidence that supports this aphorism. Arno also appears to suggest a racial hierarchy between black British and black Africans when he comments 'I should be able to put myself on a par where I could be seen as black British.' This is very important, as any racial categorization has meanings and is a

manifestation of power relationships. As such, Arno says 'it's a big thing being black, especially African as well, there's accent, culture ...', indicating that he may be subject to a greater oppression and marginalization as a black African than a black British. Critical race theory expounds that there are extricate layers of racism and discrimination that a black person could experience based not just on skin colour, but also on accent, immigration status, surname, phenotype (Solorzano & Yosso, 2002). As we will see in Chapter 7, BAIS also suffer racism from black British people- and 'race' as organizing principle gets complicated across national lines.

Beku from Castle concedes that racial discrimination affects academic performance, but he sees it as an individual problem rather an institutional one:

Obviously, when you are being discriminated against, you feel less empowered. It's just the same feelings you get when you are being put down, so especially if a department puts you down, then you know that's obviously going to affect your performance, but I think the university has so many measures against institutional racism. When teachers are marking your paper, they don't have to know your name, they just know your student number, so there's really no way for them to discriminate. So it's [racism] not a systemic thing, it's not a systematized, agent of oppression; it's very much individually biased, so you have, like, maybe one rotten administrator that would make things harder for you than the others, so it's not rampant and it's very individually skewed.

(Beku, male, 21, Castle)

Beku describes that racism and discrimination disempowers and obviously affects academic performance, but, like many BAIS in this study, he expresses confidence that the measures that his university has in place – such as anonymous marking – protects him from institutional racism. But there is very little empirical evidence that teachers would not know the identity of their students during marking, in particular students like BAIS who have various markers, such as style of writing among many others. Beku asserts that racial discrimination at his university is not 'rampant', but is the work of some racist individuals ('bad apples') in his words, 'one rotten administrator who makes

things harder for you than the others'. Beku buys into the narrative that racism is aberrational and not systemic. However, critical race theory (CRT) tells us that racism is embedded in Western society and operates in taken for granted ways.

Domu of Chapel shares an experience that suggests that low achievement of BAIS could be more systemic, and offers the most sinister of all explanations for the attainment gap that I have come across:

Honestly speaking, for us from Africa, although we work very hard, it was very hard for anyone of us to get a first class. But home students, including those I do help sometimes and some who rely on me so much, they get first class. It could be based on their merit or luck or I don't know exactly. But when we started, we the international students were really very committed, and we work so hard while most of them were partying, and we have had to assist them most of the time. *I do not know how the gear changed at the final stage; I feel it is most of the home students who finish with higher class degrees.* The problem is there is no evidence that can really point to that, to say this happened because of racism. So, you know this [racism] happens and it really deprive you of something, but at the same time if you don't have evidence, you can't make a claim. But I will say this, if I was a white student, looking at how hard-working I am, I think I will have gotten a fantastic first. That is what I believe.

(Domu, male, 29, Chapel)

Domu describes how African students work hard, and show more commitment, but still find it difficult to achieve as well as home students, who party a lot and depend on internationals such as him to complete assignments. There is some research support for the claim that international students are very committed and hardworking. Andrade (2006) found that international students in general are more academically engaged than home students particularly in their first year of study. Domu remarks, 'I do not know how the gear changed ... [but] home students finish with higher class degrees', including those whom he helped complete their assignments. Black students complaining about receiving lower grades than white peers they helped have been reported before. Van Dyke (1998:121), in a study of

academic progress of minorities in two English universities, documents similar grievances, reporting that a black student said:

So and so never gives black students above 55. I helped a white student with an assignment and when he got them back he asked me what I got. He got an A and I got a C. He couldn't believe it.

Domu believes that racism has a role to play and asserts 'you know this [racism] happens and it really deprive you of something'. However, he also explains the difficulty of securing evidence to prove racial discrimination in this regard. This is probably because the underlying cause of the problem is more structural and/or institutional than a deliberate attempt by individual teachers to mark down a black African student (although that's not unheard of, as we will see later in this section). In his piece addressing white racism in the academy Scheurich (1993:7) argued that:

People of colour and those Whites who have concluded that White academics are racially biased are correct [...] the ways of the dominant group become universalized as measures of merit, hiring criteria, grading standards, predictors of success, correct grammar, appropriate behaviour, and so forth, all of which are said to be distributed as differences in individual effort, ability, or intelligence.

Critical race theorists (Ladson-Billings, 1998; Gillborn, 2008) point out that educational assessments standardized on past performances of the dominant cultural and racial groups not only unfairly discriminate against ethnic minorities but also reproduce the historic inequality in attainment. That seems to be the explanation that Domu offers for his attainment when he declares that he would get a 'fantastic first' if he was a white home student. Domu was so concerned and dissatisfied with the black/white attainment gap at his university that he raised the issue at a National Union of Students (NUS) conference, where they discussed, 'Why minorities who work so hard can't get just above 2:2?' Professor Glynis Cousin has suggested that the BME attainment gap could be due to teachers' bias and/or prejudicial judgement associating BME students with a certain degree class. Like Domu, she

pondered (in Steventon et al., 2016: 206), 'When teachers behold BME, do they behold 2:2 students?'

After the NUS debate, Domu then raised the issue with an official in the university. The response he said that he got is something I have not heard or read about before and merits some attention. Domu explains:

I even took up this matter with the administration once, and I was struck by what he said during our conversation, which he told me is strictly off the record. I just raised the issue by saying, 'Why is it that international students are not getting first class grades?' He said, 'Well, this is off the record, Domu, but this is an institutional policy since the home students took loans, they are expected to have good results to get jobs so that they will repay their loans. But you, international students, you have a big advantage, you came here, you spend your money and maybe you have to go back. If you get jobs here, then that might disenfranchise the home student that may have to work and pay the debt they owe. So this is one incentive for them to get a first.'

As struck by what I heard as Domu had been, I asked him the following clarificatory question:

S: Is he saying they work more/harder because of that incentive or the university gives them an advantage to get a first?

D: Well, I feel it is the latter. But I don't have the evidence to support what he said. But that was what he was trying to tell me. The guy is one of the key stakeholders at the university then.

(Domu, male, 29, Chapel)

As Domu explains, a 'key stakeholder' at his university told him 'off the record' that there is a surreptitious policy assisting home students to attain higher grades so that they can get an advantage in the labour market and repay their loans. This is very concerning and needs serious thought and investigation. I am not entirely sure whether such investigation is possible by academic researchers alone. However, the conversation is hardly 'off the record', and might well have spread and impacted BAIS, and perhaps other international students' morale and confidence. This also raises issues about how effective whistleblowing is in universities since, if proved, this would be an unlawful organized institutional discrimination.

Marked down because of my 'race'

Another sub-theme that emerged from analysis of BAIS's responses to the factors that affect their academic performance is the perception that they have been marked down or harshly graded because of their 'race' and/or an assumption of lack of intelligence because they are from Africa. The literature identifies, inter alia, bias, prejudice, stereotyping (Brown & Knight, 2012) and intellectual positions/values/personal taste (Bourdieu & de Saint Martin, 1974) as reasons for subjectivity in marking student work in higher education. Although the practice of anonymous marking has been implemented as the main tool to ameliorate such problems in UK higher education (Bloxham et al., 2011), it would be very difficult to argue assessors will not be able to identify foreign students such as BAIS due to writing style and/or language use which may be distinctly identifiable. Previous UK study, albeit in school, reported that 'black pupils are routinely marked down by teachers' (Asthana et al., 2010).

Astu, Wanja, Rosa, Baso and Pala all share stories that suggest that 'race'/ethnicity might play a part in the way they are assessed, how they perform or the grades they are awarded for their work.

Astu relates her experiences of 'chasing' one of her teachers because she was dissatisfied with her grade:

My last piece of work was an essay that I did last term last year. I had to chase my module tutor as I wanted to ask for some personal feedback because I didn't understand why somebody who had written a very similar essay, as we worked on it together, got a higher mark than me. I literally had to chase her for maybe two or three weeks just to get an appointment to go and see her. I sent her back all the materials and my transcript, and she sent a two-sentence explanation, which was not satisfactory to me. It was only when I chased her up again a lot that I got the chance to get that actual feedback. It turned out that she had to move up my grade. If I didn't persist and chased her up, my grades would have stayed the same. Then I wondered if I was marked down. That incident really made me question a lot of things. I wasn't given any reason why my marks changed and my grades moved up. It happened just because I chased her up, and my personal tutor, who was not also convinced by the marking, helped chase her up. And also, from the

generic feedback I now feel that I was marked a lot harsher than some other people. I think I was harshly marked. That kind of gave me the motivation to ask for a remarking of another essay but it didn't succeed.

(Astu, female, 21, Castle)

As Scheurich (1993) above argued, white academics can be biased against black students, as their own ways of thinking and their values have been universalized as measures of grading and merit. It is not possible to determine from the evidence whether Astu's teacher meant to intentionally mark her down. However, what is significant is that Astu's confidence in the system is dented, and she already believes that she is discriminated against because of her 'race'. The series of events in her account reinforce this belief. Astu, who had expressed confidence in the anonymous marking practice at her university, was not convinced with her grade on this occasion, as a friend who she says submitted a similar piece of work was awarded a higher grade. Her personal tutor was also not satisfied with her grade, which strengthens her doubt that she was given a fair grade. Astu then had to chase her teacher, who later 'moved her grade up'. Although it is entirely possible that a student's grade can be changed after remarking for any number of reasons, Astu was concerned that she had to chase her teacher for feedback: 'If I didn't persist and chased her up my grades would have stayed the same.' Besides, the fact that no explanation was given for increasing her grade seems to have eroded Astu's confidence in the grading practice of her university and made her question if she had always been marked down. That is why she applied for the remarking of her other essay from the past, albeit unsuccessfully.

The literature highlights subjectivity in marking based on axes of social difference such as gender could also exacerbate such issues. For example, (Francis et al., 2001) explored possible gender differences in achievement by analysing undergraduate History students essays from four London based universities and found some evidence that '...male students who adopt a bold (masculine) style alongside a competent use of English, and conformity with academic conventions, may be particularly highly rewarded in assessment,'

(p,324). The authors argued this advantage to male students emanates from the norms of undergraduate academic writing style reflecting masculine values than feminine ones. This implies BAIS who are not the norm in the white-middle class dominated UK higher education culture (Crozier et al., 2016) could face an even greater disadvantage, among other things, due to bias and prejudice which may position them the deficient Other.

Objectivity in marking is also challenged by Bourdieu (1990b) who argued subjectivity is an inherent part of a social practice such as assessment and marking could not claim total objectivity. It is the combination of some subjective tacitly held beliefs about learning and objective assessment measures that generate 'the logic of practice' (Bourdieu, 1990b) for assessment. While 'objective' may refer to prescribed marking criterion-standards, subjectivity includes epistemological positions, biases, prejudice and racism. The experiential knowledge of BAIS in this study secured some evidence that would challenge the discourse of marking as 'objective' and colour-blind judgement of student work.

Wanja and Rosa also shared stories of their friends who believe they have been marked down, or negatively assessed because of their 'race', English language, and/or cultural background.

Wanja describes stories of two black peers at his university: a male BAIS, and a female home black student, who was assumed to be BAIS and judged accordingly:

Story one

One Ghanaian guy who studies with us together here had problem with one of the tutors; she is a white English woman. Basically, she doesn't like people from Pakistan, or black people, or if you have accent. But for this Ghanaian international student, he was marked as failed and then it was marked by someone else and they said, no, it's good enough he will pass. He was very broken and he was in tears; it was really bad for him.

Story two

I have also even seen a girl, who is born here, but she was told her English is not good in her feedback ... 'Your English is not good because I believe you are foreigner'. She was completely angry. I think

she is from Zimbabwe [but] she is born here, so basically this is her home. She was very angry. She went to the lecturer, and she asked 'How can you tell me that my English is not good and I am born here just like you? She complained. She was born here, but because of her name, someone just looks at her name and say, 'Oh, this person is not from here, so I assume his/her English is not as good'. But to be honest, according to my academic experience, many people from abroad, they got a very good written English, you know, more than people from here. That's one thing I have noticed, but because of where you come from it's still there [racism].

(Wanja, male, 31, Parkside)

Rosa also shares the experiences of one of her female BAIS friends at another university who has been excluded by her peers from group work and finally awarded a lesser grade than the group:

In terms of, like, assessing presentation in a group work, if they are all white, it could be a problem. One of my friend from another uni was telling me that all of them ganged up, and they were all saying she wasn't contributing. I don't know if it was because of her skin colour or something, I wasn't there. But it was something that, if it's me, I would have fought, because of that they gave everyone a certain mark, they didn't give her the same mark, equal mark.

(Rosa, female, 19, Hillside)

Wanja's Ghanaian friend is similar to that of Astu: he applied for remarking and his grade changed. Wanja describes that the experience had an emotional impact on the Ghanaian international student, who broke down in tears. It is Wanja's observation that the tutor involved does not like ethnic minorities and people who have accents. It is important to note that issues related to BAIS's English pervade many aspects of their lived experiences as discussed in (chapter 5-linguistic capital, and as we will see below-chapter 7-pathologising talk, and chapter 8- expression of surprise).

In his second account, Wanja shares a story of a female home black student whose assessment was negatively judged because the teacher believed her to be a foreigner and therefore to have inferior English language proficiency. However, the student was born in the UK and has a foreign surname because of her African heritage. In a recent report EHRC (2019:30) reports a home black British student experiences of being mistaken for an international student and mistreated.

Although I was not an international student but because I was black and dressed in religious garments he would assume I was an international student and often ask me and my fellow students questions like I'm not sure if they have things like this in your country. **(UK national postgraduate, Welsh university).**

These stories provide a further insight that 'race' could trump citizenship.

There is some research evidence that BAIS believe they could be marked down because of their 'race', both in the UK (Maundeni, 2001) and in the US (Lee and Opio, 2011). In their study of BAIS's social experiences in a UK university, Maundeni (2001: 270) reported a female student's account of discrimination based on her skin colour and accent. However, it is interesting to note that despite Lasisi's clear reference to her 'race', the author makes little or no reference to racism in analysing the case:

One of my lecturers has a negative attitude towards me just because of my colour and accent. When I was studying in my own country, I never experienced this. I mean, he gives me low grades all the time no matter how much effort I put on my work. His course is the only one that I get low marks in. When I arrived, some African students told me that one way to survive academically is to work extra hard, to put double the effort that a white student puts in his/her work because some lecturers just assign grades on the basis of one's colour. I have experienced this. **(Lasisi, 21)**

(Maundeni, 2001:270)

There is a 16-year gap between Wanja's and Lasisi's accounts, suggesting that the perception of being discriminated against in grading and assessment based on skin colour and accent (the things that mark BAIS as visible minorities) is persistent. In a study of BAIS's lived experiences in a US university, Lee and Opio (2011:639) reported that a Zambian student related that 'Some professors, if you seem or feel like you are better from Africa, will not give the grade you deserve.'

In this study too, BAIS seem to strongly believe that they suffer from low expectations and discrimination because of their racial identities. Baso and Pala related stories that allude to the strong suspicion and perception that they could be racially discriminated against in grading, and do not always get the grades they deserve because of their 'race':

It's very distressful sometimes, to see that you do your coursework properly, submit it and at the end of the day, you don't get the grades you think you deserve. You look at it and say, 'Is it because I am a black [person]?' Sometimes you don't get the help you think the other white students get from lecturers. You see that and say, 'Is it because I am a black?' Sometimes the lecturers they do it [racism], but they do it professionally, because they know the codes of [conduct] of the university, so they try to do it in some kind of way that they would not be exposed.

(Baso, male, 28, Downtown)

It's embedded, it's not clear. They pretend as if it [racism] is not there, but for you to get a first class, I think that one is discretionary on the part of lecturers, for example, if you get 69 or 68 [marks], so you can see that to give you first class is discretionary. So there, I think if they do [want to discriminate], there it comes. But, like, it's embedded, it's hidden, it is not conspicuous, you can't spot it, like, that easy, but you can see, like, their own kids easily get first class – the white British citizens and those who are born and bred here.

(Pala, male, 36, Canal-Great)

These two accounts reveal some serious misgivings and a lack of trust on the part of BAIS that they may not be earning the grades they deserve because of their 'race'. They also doubt if they are getting a similar level of help to that given to white students. They believe that lecturers may demonstrate racial discrimination that is 'embedded', 'hidden' and not conspicuous, so it cannot be spotted easily. According to Baso, this is because lecturers are cautious due to fear of retribution. Pala indicates that the discretionary power of lecturers in borderline grading between a first class degree and a 2:1 is a space of possible racism. He believes that they exercise this discretionary power to award 'their own kids' (white British students) a first class grade. CRT asserts that racist beliefs can be part of the 'normal' taken-for-granted practices of educational institutions such as universities, where assessment practices may be seen as neutral and more often than not escape critical inquiry (Gillborn, 2008). CRT also acknowledges that 'race' and racism are central, permanent, fundamental parts of Western societies (Bell, 1992;

Gillborn, 2008), and should be seen as a central factor in defining and explaining individual experiences of minoritized people such as BAIS.

Bourdieu (1984) offers a seemingly rival explanation when he argues that middle-class teachers tend to reward those students who possess similar types of cultural capital to themselves. BAIS who have come to their UK university with a different type of cultural capital may be seen as lacking. However, this seems very inadequate to explain the lived experiences of BAIS in this regard, as even black and other minorities who seem to possess similar embodied cultural capital appear to struggle to be accepted and valued as their 'authenticity' is constantly questioned. Crozier et al. (2016) found that even home BME students in UK higher education find it difficult to 'assert their authenticity' let alone BAIS, who come from a completely different sociocultural setting. Bourdieu (1984) also argues that students who succeed in accruing upper- or middle-class cultural capital belatedly are identified as 'different' because they have not accrued their cultural capital at home in a 'natural setting' during their upbringing as middle- and upper-class home students do, but rather through some deliberate interventions, which might make it easily identifiable. Bourdieu is not sufficient to understand BAIS's experiences, as their accounts discussed above show. They experience discrimination based on such axes of difference as surname, accent and skin colour. Although the concept of habitus can be stretched to understand these features as embodied forms of habitus, markers of distinction in the field of higher education, Bourdieu does not articulate this and more importantly does not draw attention to the permanence of racism in society based on these embodiments as CRT does. These findings provide evidence that the UK higher education field disguise structural inequalities in assessment practice as neutral and meritocratic, and reproduces white middle-class advantage. It is not a level playing field for BAIS to fight for educational success. As my data shows, Bourdieu and CRT together provide a stronger intersectional lens since the injustices and privileges are complicated across 'race', class, gender, and nationality lines.

Summary

This chapter has presented analysis of BAIS's accounts of the factors that they believe have affected their academic performance and/or achievement while studying in the UK. This includes analysis of how both embodied and institutionalized forms of cultural capital influence their ability to adapt to assessment practices and perform as well as home students. I have also discussed the effect of possession, or lack thereof, of relevant social capital on academic performance, including the profound influence of friends, and of misfortunes happening to BAIS's family back home, which exacerbate economic responsibility, cause distress and affect their academic performance. Finally, I have presented analysis of BAIS's accounts that identified racism and discrimination as one factor shaping their assessment and feedback experiences and influencing how their work is judged and graded. I believe this finding is significant in view of the fact that extant literature on the attainment gap in UK higher education identify 'race'/ethnicity as one of the major explanatory factors, but fails to investigate racism and discrimination as a possible cause. For example, in a large-scale study commissioned by the DfE, Broecke and Nicholls (2006) reported that ethnicity accounts for 50% of the attainment gap between white and BME undergraduate qualifiers.

The next chapter will focus exclusively on analysis of BAIS's narratives and accounts that show how racism pervades not just their academic performance, but also all aspects of their lives in various social and physical spaces.

Chapter 7: Experiences of racism

Introduction

Although all international students experience adjustment problems while settling in a new country (Andrade, 2006), black African international students suffer the additional problem of racism and discrimination based on their skin colour, ethnicity/culture and the perceived backwardness of the continent of Africa (**Lee & Opio, 2011**; Boafo-Arthur, 2014a; Lee & Rice, 2007 ; Irungu, 2013; Brown & Jones, 2013). In this study too, BAIS's accounts and/or narratives highlight the various ways that 'race' and ethnicity pervaded their interactions with members of the host society, as well as specifically with their peers, lecturers and other staff. Analysis of the data shows that BAIS's experiences of racism and Othering while studying in the UK can emanate from their dealings and interactions with teachers, students, university staff, shopkeepers, taxi drivers, other international students, and from their employers while working part-time or while on internship.

Some scholars view racism as one form or dimension of Othering (Powell & Menendian, 2016), while others look at racism as a consequence of Othering (Dervin, 2015). However, many agree that racism and Othering are two intertwined and overlapping processes that reify domination and subordination, especially in the West, where the legacy of historical oppressions such as slavery and colonialism evidently influence and shape practice in major institutions including universities. This is particularly significant in the context of my study participants, BAIS, who have come to study in UK universities- institutions strongly implicated in historically providing justifications of racism. In fact, in a blog post Emejulu (2017) argues '... to speak of universities is to recognise them as spaces of exclusion and discrimination which hide their epistemic violence behind a rhetoric of meritocracy, collegiality and the "free exchange of ideas"' (<https://www.versobooks.com/blogs/3148-the-university-is-not-innocent-speaking-of-universities>). The stories of BAIS in my study reveal the spaces and the

processes of these exclusions and discriminations, which shape their lived experiences in UK universities.

While recognizing the conceptual complexity between the two very closely related concepts, I have decided to present the themes emerging from the analysis of the data regarding racism and Othering in two separate chapters as 'Experiences of racism' and 'Experiences of Othering' for two reasons. First, I have too large a dataset to put all of this information into a single chapter; to do so could force a reduction of the data to an extent that I may not be able to do justice to my interviewees' voices – the major drive behind my study. Second, the division into two chapters will help me to capture the subtleties that mark the exclusion and discrimination based on 'race' and blatant racism, and the exclusion based on other, 'coded', ways of talking about 'race' and difference that exclude and marginalize BAIS. While this chapter focuses on BAIS's Experiences of Racism, the next chapter will focus their experiences of Othering.

The central argument in this chapter is that both overt and covert forms of racism pervade all aspects of BAIS's lived experiences in various social and physical spaces, both inside and outside the university. Although they use various coping strategies to alleviate its impact, this phenomenon exacerbates their disadvantage for achieving educational success, and it cannot be explained by Bourdieu's cultural capital theory.

The findings in this chapter confirm the historical evolution of racism from more overt forms based on biological conceptions of 'race' as fixed, immutable and hierarchal (Bonilla-Silva, 2017; Rattansi, 2007), to more covert forms of racism that are known as by such names as new racism (Barker, 1981), cultural racism (Blaut, 1992) and neo racism (Spears, 1999). Thus, I have categorized the racism experiences of BAIS in this study as 'overt racism' and 'racial microaggressions'. While overt racism more openly focuses on 'race' as biology, covert racism focuses on culture and/or ethnicity, nationality, previous education, accent and so on. However, it is very important to underscore that there is no sharp dividing line between the two racisms, except that they are

enacted in different forms. Thus, what is termed covert racism or, more specifically, racial microaggressions is just as much racism as the more open, obvious and direct racism enacted by bigots. In fact, their effects are very similar, with some arguing that covert racism has a more insidious and pervasive effect, and is much more difficult to dismantle.

This chapter has two major sections: *experiences of overt racism* and *experiences of racial* microaggressions. Each section is in turn organized into sub-themes that emerged from the analysis.

Experiences of overt/violent racism

This section includes BAIS's experiences of racism where a direct reference is made to their skin colour, or they are openly told to go back to where they have come from, and/or are attacked with missiles and told to leave the UK, and other denigrating encounters. The category of 'overt racism' presents the open, direct, relatively obvious ways that BAIS experienced racism, and the public humiliation and denigration they suffered as a result. This finding is consistent with existing literature in the UK on the racism experiences of BAIS. Brown and Jones (2013) found that postgraduate BAIS in one university in the south of England experienced overt racist attacks along with other international students. This study extends the literature, finding that undergraduate BAIS from ten different universities in England experienced overt racism.

Four themes emerged during the analysis of BAIS's accounts of their experiences of overt racism: *being called a racial slur*, *being told to go back to Africa*, *racist missile attacks* and *denigration*.

Being called a racial slur

Croom (2011: 343) explains a slur as “‘a disparaging remark or a slight’ ... used to “deprecate” certain targeted members.’ Racial slurs are offensive and derogatory names used to denigrate members of a certain ‘race’. The word ‘nigger’ is, according to Kennedy (1999: 87), ‘... the superlative racial epithet

– the most hurtful, the most fearsome, the most dangerous, the most noxious'. So much so that petitions for its removal from a Merriam-Webster dictionary have been submitted, as people believed '... it was defined as a synonym for a black person' (Henderson, 2003: 53). Despite this, however, some BAIS reported that they have been called by this racial slur, or that white people justified its use to refer to black people.

A white student told Wasa from Port University that it is not a problem if white people call a black person 'nigger':

We were discussing how there is a stigma that white people shouldn't use the word nigger because nigger is for slave; if you are using it, you are looking down on black people. A YouTuber used the word nigger, and then people were like 'oh, no he shouldn't have, dah, dah, dah ...', and he came out and apologized, and that was fine. And then a friend of my friends who was in the group said to me, 'he shouldn't have apologized!' I am like, 'what do you mean that he shouldn't have apologized?', because for them [whites] it's just a word, it's just 'nigger'; but the word has a lot of historical meaning and has effect on people, and when someone comes like 'oh, you shouldn't have apologized, it means it's normal to insult people. But it's not normal ... it's offensive.

(Wasa, male, 22, Port)

In this account, a friend of Wasa's friends (basically a stranger to him) tells him that there is no need for a white YouTuber to apologize for using the word nigger. Wasa is right in stressing the historicity of the word nigger when he says that 'the word has a lot of historical meaning and has effect on people'. Nigger was historically used as a demeaning and derogatory word to refer to black people. This seems to have been universally recognized, and nigger is now perhaps unambiguously a racist term to be avoided by white people to refer to black people. Henderson (2003: 65) refers to Merriam-Webster's online *Collegiate Dictionary* (MWOC 2001) and summarizes why, as Wasa says, it is a stigma especially for white people to use the word nigger. He writes, 'the word *nigger* has special status as a slur, and its usage has a socially volatile history. ... It now ranks as perhaps the most offensive and inflammatory racial slur in English.' Despite this a person who is a stranger to Wasa cannot see the racism in using the word nigger and defended its use to

refer to black people. As Wasa said, it is taken as normal because 'for them it's just a word'. This normalcy alludes to the permanence of racism in society, as argued by CRT (Bell, 1992). Research on racism encountered by BAIS in the US reported similar experiences. For example, Constantine et al. (2005) reported that a female Nigerian was called a 'stupid nigger' by a white teaching assistant in her seminar class. Unsurprisingly, Wasa found the encounter very offensive, and he later told me that he has avoided the whole group to protect himself from similar injurious interactions.

Another BAIS, Arno from Canal-Great shares two experiences of racism with a white classmate. On one occasion, he was publicly called one of the most offensive racial slurs, and on another occasion, he was made an object of ridicule:

Encounter 1

The last character I have played was a servant in the show [as part of his acting course], and I was walking up the stairs and one of the guys at the school was like 'hello slave!' He is a student in my same year; and I said [long pause and very disturbed], and he came out and apologized, 'oh, no, no, I am sorry, I didn't mean it, I meant servant for your show', and I just said don't explain, that for me is just deep-rooted; he probably was trying to say servant, but the fact that I was a black individual walking in the school, the first thing that comes to his mind is 'hello, slave' tells me that's racist, that's core racism.

(Arno, male, 26, Canal-Great)

Encounter 2

And another one is, it's the same person, actually. He said, 'oh yeah, I am not racist, I just have a racist penis'. And, I am like ... 'ehhhhh! What do you mean? What does that mean?' ... It irritates me; it frustrates me. It's the second time he has done something like that. It tells me something. No, it does! It says to me that this person is racist; I know, I have an idea of how he sees me; I am not under any false ideas or any illusions ... I know that there is something there that makes him feel superior or better, or whatever it is, and it has got to do with my 'race'.

(Arno, male, 26, Canal-Great)

The moment that Arno described this experience during the interview was one of the most difficult times, not only for him but also for me. Arno was visibly

distressed, and his voice was shaking while sharing this specific experience with me. I had to comfort him. I had to fight tears looking at the anguish in his tearful eyes while he shared this terrible experience. Understandably, Arno feels disrespected by this public humiliation. As he described, he was not impressed with the apology offered and believes that the racial slur is a sign of something 'deep-rooted' and a manifestation of 'core racism' – a notion that alludes to the idea of the hierarchy of races. The white student's metaphoric reference to the word 'penis' also evokes historical negative narrative of the sexualisation of black masculinity as nothing more than a penis. In *Black Skin White Masks* Fanon (1952:130) describes white Europeans' image of the black man as, '...one is no longer aware of the Negro but only of a penis; the Negro is eclipsed. He is turned into a penis. He *is* a penis.' This historical link could explain the white student's mention of the word 'penis' in his encounter with Arno.

The fact that the white student used the racial slur publicly inside the university space might be indicative of a negative campus racial climate, which Solorzano and Yosso (2000:62) define as '... the overall racial environment of the college campus'. This is very significant in view of the fact that the same white student used slurs twice against Arno.

Whatever his friend meant by using the word 'slave', the impact I observed that it had on Arno should serve as an apt reminder of the profound effect of such unambiguously offensive slurs on black African students. In addition to emotional impact, studies in the US (Harwood et al., 2012 ; Solorzano et al., 2000 ; Yosso & Solórzano, 2009) have established that black students' college success and persistence to graduation could be highly affected and/or shaped by the presence of a positive racial climate that protects black students from racial discrimination. Obviously, a negative racial climate will be detrimental in more ways than one.

Another BAIS in this study, Mufti, from the same university as Arno, also shares his experiences of being called derogatory slurs both inside and outside the university. Mufti spoke of feeling insulted and also disillusioned,

especially in the second encounter, when he was called a slur by a person he expected it from the least – a teacher. Mufti laments:

Encounter 1

I was in a barber shop. The barber is a black person who I believe is born here. I was asking him if he has ever visited his ancestors [in Africa] or something like that, but he was telling me that he never had, but he would like in the future to go and visit where slaves are. So he indirectly insult me; he is black but indirectly insulted me. I was quite, at that moment, I wasn't so sensitive. After I went out, I thought about it, then I realised the insult. I made up my mind, and I wanted to go back and tell him something, but one of my friends told me that if something is past, just leave it because it's over.

(Mufti, male, 24, Canal-Great)

Encounter 2

I had a white teacher in my foundation. He asked me, and I told him that I am from Nigeria from North, and he was telling me, Boko Haram, Boko Haram, so I was like 'oh gosh!' He did call me in the sense that it should make me shameful that this is the problem of that country. I did not feel good. I told him that now things are settling anyhow, and I have nothing to do with it [Boko Haram]. I have nothing do with that, and I should not expect this from my teacher. This happened outside the classroom.

(Mufti, male, 24, Canal-Great)

Mufti's first account describes his experiences of racism with a black British barber, who is supposedly from the same 'race' as him. Mufti related throughout his interview that he had difficulty making friends and adjusting to life in the UK. He probably initiated a conversation with the black British barber in the hope that he could relate to him better. However, the conversation finally offended Mufti. He remarked, 'he is black, but indirectly he insulted me', suggesting that he probably expected solidarity and not animosity from the black barber. It took him some time to understand the meaning of what was said to him. International students of colour are often left confused and take some time to understand their racism experiences, as they may not have developed racial awareness in the host country (Fries-Britt et al., 2014).

More importantly, the experience of racism from a supposedly same 'race' person shows the inextricable layers of oppression that BAIS face while

studying in the UK. Critical race theory has expounded the intercentricity of racialized oppression, which could be based on not just skin colour but also other markers of difference, such as accent and immigration status (Solórzano & Yosso, 2002). In this context, Mufti's African accent perhaps marked him out as an outsider during his conversation with the black British barber. One might argue that the barber was simply expressing his desire to go and visit historical slave trade sites in Africa, rather than racially abusing Mufti. However, Mufti does not read the context of the conversation that way, and the facts that he was not 'sensitive at the moment', only felt insulted after he left the barber's shop, and took time to reflect on their conversation, all seem to support the idea that he did not jump to conclusions without reflection on the context. Besides, previous research on BAIS (Constantine et al., 2005; Traoré, 2004) reports that BAIS encounter racism and discrimination from other international students and native blacks. In Traoré (2004:361), African Americans in the US stereotyped black Africans as less civilized, and made degrading comments: 'They say negative things. Yeah, like if we walk into a certain room or something, you'd smell, the first thing a student would say is, "Them Africans, they stink!"'

In his second account, Mufti describes that his white teacher called him 'Boko Haram' – the name of a terrorist organization that is based in Mufti's home country. This happened because Mufti told the teacher that he is from Northern Nigeria- where Boko Haram is based. The teacher probably holds a prejudice that people from Northern Nigeria are Boko Haram members or sympathizers, and stereotyped Mufti. Ballen (2007) argues that these stereotypes are not only unsupported by facts, but are also contrary to what is indicated by public survey results of major Muslim nations about rejecting terrorist attacks. Ballen (2007: 1) reports that public surveys both in the US and Europe show that 'nearly half of Westerners associate Islam with violence and Muslims with terrorists.' Mufti explains that he was called Boko Haram as if he should feel 'shameful' because that is a problem of his country. He is forced to explain that he has nothing to do with Boko Haram. He rightly points out that 'I should not expect this from my teacher.' As an authority figure,

teachers' remarks to, and views about, their students may carry a lot of weight.

To be called by the name of an internationally outlawed terrorist organization, if such information was to spread, does not just marginalize Mufti but could potentially make him a subject of interest for the security forces. As a foreign national on a conditional student visa that may cause Mufti serious problems, including potentially being deported, after having spent an exorbitant amount of money, and perhaps after making some life-changing decisions to come to the UK for international education. Teachers are expected to be supportive and responsible for their students. In fact, the large majority of BAIS in this study described their teachers as being very supportive, and that their greatest satisfaction of their international sojourn was the teaching and teachers. However, even one teacher making such disparaging and dangerous remarks could alienate and endanger the well-being of a student.

Being told to go back to Africa

The second theme of experiences of overt racism that emerged during analysis concerns students being told to go back to Africa and/or implying that they are out of place here in the UK and are behaving as if this is Africa. Poni shares her racialized encounter while she was working in a city centre:

I got this Christmas job, and I was meant to pitch the sales to people, like 'oh do you have internet at home?', 'we are selling internet', 'get surprises', stuff like that, and I kept approaching people. So I was about to approach this white guy, and he just raised his hand and dismissed me saying that I 'should go back to where they brought me from', I 'should go back to Africa where I came from', and that I am not needed here. It was so funny because it had never happened to me before. I was just like 'ah! wow!; sorry, I didn't mean to offend you', 'if you are having a bad day, just go and educate yourself', that kind of thing, that was what I said. And then, like, it was so funny, like when I was telling people that one mad man did something to me today because it was, like, genuinely really, really funny, because I never imagined people presently say that out, as people should be more informed or more sensitive of these things.

(Poni, female, 19, Canal)

Poni has been subject to very aggressive hostility by a white man, and was told to go back to Africa as she is not needed here. This echoes current debates on immigration issues and discourses that depict immigrants in the UK as a burden and as scroungers who are here to benefit from the country and therefore are not needed. *The Economist* (2014) in its 8 November issue seems to have captured this view succinctly:

Pesky immigrants: They move to Britain, taking jobs, scrounging welfare benefits, straining health services, overrunning local schools and occupying state-subsidised housing. That, at least, is the story recounted by politicians from the UK Independence Party (UKIP) and, increasingly, by members of the Conservative Party. A new study by two economists tells a very different tale.

Such discourses of 'pesky immigrants' might have contributed to the abuse that students such as Poni receive despite the evidence. The white man clearly seems hostile towards people from Africa, as indicated by the words 'go back to Africa where they brought you from'. It is interesting to note the phrase 'where they brought you from', which suggests that the man thought that Poni was an asylum seeker who is allowed as a refugee in the UK. His remarks are ignorant, disrespectful and disparaging. Without any knowledge of who she is, he seems to have relied on his ignorance, and chose to abuse her. Her fault was nothing other than coming from Africa, which he presumably surmised because of her skin colour and accent. The truth is that Poni is one of the nearly half a million international students in the UK, who make significant contributions to the economy.

Poni's reaction to the racial abuse as being 'funny' needs some nuanced understanding. When she said 'it was so funny', she was not saying it was a happy experience. What I read from her face was not a big smile of happiness, but a rueful grin expressing feelings of shame and humiliation. She also says, 'it never happened to me', which suggests that she has not experienced any such racism before in her life. Previous studies on BAIS report that most of them have been members of the dominant cultural group in their home countries, and have not experienced racism prior to arriving in the West (Beoku-Betts, 2004 ; Constantine et al., 2005; Lee & Rice, 2007; Fries-

Britt et al., 2014). That may be the reason that Poni is shocked, and expressed her surprise by saying 'I never imagined people still ... presently say that out.' Kim and Kim (2010) explain that international students in particular could be at a loss about a proper reaction to racist attacks, especially when, like Poni, they, encounter them for the first time.

In fact, Olu below describes her first experience of racism in the UK, which is very similar:

I think for me I didn't know I was black. OK, I knew I was black, obviously, but I didn't know what it meant to be black because in Nigeria everyone is black. My first racial experience was when I went for my sister's graduation in a different city and we were walking with my friend and the family. We are all black, and we were walking and looking around, and the white guy was just, like, 'oh go back to your country Africa!' I was just, like, 'OK, Africa is not a country though'. We were with girls 8, 9 and 7, so those are, like, young children and they are British, so they will probably have more knowledge [experience] than I did, but for me that was my first racial experience. It was really sad because the youngest one knew what was going on, and she was, like, 'oh, why is he racist?' I didn't know what that was at that age. that's all we could talk about for the rest of the day; it affects.

(Olu, female, 20, Woods)

Olu and her all-black group, many of whom were black British, were told to 'go back to Africa' while walking in the street. This suggests that citizenship may not matter for black people. All the white person could see was that they were black, so they do not belong and should go back to Africa, although many of them were born in the UK, and the UK is perhaps their only home. Race seems to have trumped everything else. It appears that Olu was the most shocked, since it was her first experience of racism in the UK. Olu says, '... they will probably have more knowledge [experience] than I did', suggesting that she is unprepared and had not developed skills to manage and/or cope with experiences of racism. As indicated above, most BAIS seem to have rarely experienced racism prior to coming to the West (Phinney & Onwughalu, 1996; Roberts, 2013). Olu was also sad that the racial abuse happened in front of young children, where even the youngest knew what was going on and wondered why the man was racist to them.

Olu not only had an encounter with racism for the first time, she also seems to have experienced an epiphany in realizing that she is black, or, in her own words 'what it meant to be black.' For Olu, being black was perhaps never a degrading experience while she was in her home country, Nigeria. Thus, she sympathized with the young child, who had to face and endure racism from such a young age. The experience spoilt their day and, as Olu said, it affected them. In addition to the emotional distress it causes, researchers have documented that some BAIS who experience racism have gone back home (Brown & Jones, 2013), withdrawn from modules (Constantine et al., 2005) and suffered mental health problems (Bradley, 2000).

Domu is another BAIS whose blackness and/or Africanness have been used to criticize his behaviour:

I had a white British girl who worked with me as an executive committee member of the Law Society board. She was organizing parties using the name of the Law Society and inviting others who are non-members. I said if anything happens during these parties, I am not going to accept any responsibility. I told her, if you want to organize a party and have a party, do it on your behalf and we can all go. But don't say it is the Law Society's party. Because if anything happens there, they will say it is the Law Society, and I am the president and I am not willing to accept any responsibility. Because I am an international student, I don't want to have any problems with anyone. My purpose here is to study. We had this issue, and she said, 'look this black man, how he is behaving, this is not Africa!' I think some people feel that's racism and maybe it is. I didn't take it up because I know my point has been made and I didn't report.

(Domu, male, 29, Chapel)

Domu had a conversation with a white girl over organizing a party in the name of the university's Law Society, of which he is the president. She attacked his blackness and his place of origin, Africa, suggesting that it explains how Domu has behaved during their conversation. This is arguably an echo of classic racist views towards black people in general on the basis of the stereotype of being uncivilized and not knowing how to behave in the West. While the girl may have the right to contest Domu's decision to ban her from organizing parties, her reference to his skin colour and the reminder that 'this is not Africa' – implying that Africa is where he can behave inappropriately because it is

less civilized – have very strong racist overtones. Although Domu was upset, and feels it could be racism, he did not report the incident. This may be partly explained by the fear of getting into problems over making allegations of racism, and that confrontations with a white female student will cause him trouble, distracting his full attention from the main reason why he is in the UK: ‘my purpose here is to study’. International students in general are afraid of reprisals or being labelled a troublemaker if they lodge complaints of racist abuse. Lee and Rice (2007) note that international students in the US refrained from reporting racist attacks, including physical ones, because they did not trust that they would be heard, or feared that they might be deported ‘for stirring up trouble’.

Racist missile attacks

The third theme of experiences of overt racism concerns stories of racist attacks involving throwing missiles. In two accounts, Demba of Woods and Rosa of Hillside share similar stories of violent racist attacks on their friends by white people:

Some of my friends here that are girls have actually experienced something like that [racist attacks]. They said there was a time they were going back to their hostel at night and apparently a car actually drove by and white guys threw eggs at them. I will probably say that was the only time that I probably thought people might look at me differently because I am black ... They felt really bad about it. I mean, if I was walking on the street and a group of white people drove by and kind of threw eggs at me, definitely I will feel really bad about it.

(Demba, male, 20, Woods)

Demba relates a story where his female friends were attacked by a missile while walking to their hostel. Understandably, this violent physical attack could affect the girls in more ways than one. One could argue that this dangerous and hostile attack might have made the girls feel less safe to walk at night, and feelings of insecurity could go a long way in undermining self-worth and sense of belonging. In fact, despite not experiencing any racism himself,

Demba says the racist attack on his friends made him think for the first time that people might look at him differently because he is black.

Rosa shared a similar story of a missile attack, albeit experienced by a Malaysian student instead of a BAIS:

One of my friends was telling me a story that she was stoned with egg. She is Malaysian, and she had the hijab on and was walking on the road when a couple of white guys from a car stoned her, and they are like 'go back to your country'. She just stopped wearing the hijab, and she didn't tell her parents because they might have taken her back. That disturbed us all.

(Rosa, female, 19, Hillside)

Rosa's Malaysian Muslim friend was attacked by a missile, and was told to go back to her country. The effect was profound. The girl was forced to adjust her behaviour and stopped wearing hijabs. Rosa was very angered, and also scared, while relating this story. The girl did not report the incident to university officials or to the police, nor did she tell her parents. As Rosa explains, the girl feared that her family might decide to take her back, fearing for her life, if she told them of the attack. One could argue that the attack in this case appears to be based on hostility towards the girl's religion, Islam, and not to her 'race'. However, it is possible that 'race' intersected with religion and played a role in the attack. Interestingly, Moosavi (2015), in his study of white converts to Islam, found that they are re-racialized as non-white, giving us deeper insights into how 'race' can be conflated with religion to shape non-white people's lived experiences. Besides, this experience seems to have caused fear and insecurity for the BAIS like Rosa who the Malaysian girl befriends. In fact, Truong et al. (2016:227) write, 'When individuals experience second hand racism, they can come to the realization that they are also vulnerable to the racism that they have vicariously experienced and they can encounter harmful emotional, psychological, or physiological consequences as a result of these experiences.' Rosa seems to have suffered exactly that when she says, 'That disturbed us all'.

Denigration

Racial and cultural denigration of BAIS through degrading and stigmatizing remarks (at times violent and hostile verbal attacks) was another theme that emerged during the analysis. BAIS spoke of experiences where they were stigmatized as disease carriers, and verbally violently attacked. Katu from Canal-Great describes her experiences in a classroom setting, where she was treated in a stigmatizing manner just because she coughed:

I was coughing in class one time because I have asthma; and this girl who was beside me, she did try to give me a tissue, and I thought that was great. And then she went to the other side and that was it; she doesn't even say 'hi' or anything at all after that, and so it hurts. I felt really bad because in my head I am, like, everybody coughs, you know. It's as if you are a victim [of some disease], you know, ... that's even hard to take.

(Katu, female, 22, Canal-Great)

When Katu coughed in class, her white classmate first appeared to be helpful by offering a tissue, but then chose to move to the other side of the room, and avoided her altogether. Understandably, the situation seems to have caused serious distress for Katu, who was made to feel that she was a disease carrier. Katu senses the dehumanizing and stigmatizing treatment when she underscores that she is singled out, while the truth is that 'everybody coughs'. This behaviour may be informed by racist views that black Africans are victims of, and carriers of, serious disease and that contact should be avoided. Howarth (2006: 445) documented the recollections of stigmatizing treatment experienced by Monica, a black woman in her 50s during the study, as a child in a London primary school. Although Katu's and Monica's experiences are decades apart, the similarity is striking:

I tried to do good by them (her white school teachers) and one of them, who is the English teacher, she dropped her handkerchief one day and I saw it and I picked it up and I gave it to her. And in front of me, she literally rubbed her hands – her fingers on her skirt and I asked her why was she doing that, 'was my hands dirty?' And she said, no. She said

'you touched me so I need to wipe my hands'. And I didn't quite understand. I was very upset and from that day I felt I couldn't do anything right by her. (Monica)

This shows the historicity of stigma attached to black bodies in the UK, including in educational settings. This could also support CRT's insistence on historical analysis and rejection of ahistoricism.

Another BAIS, Yomi, relates her humiliating and violent treatment by white girls in student accommodation as a new arrival at her UK university:

My whole first year living in that flat was terrible, since I always got this racist vibe from two white British students. I was a lot younger than them. I was 16 when I got in, and turned 17 by December. I had a lot of Nigerian friends coming over, and me and my other flatmate cooked and then we are all together in the common room at the dining table. This girl came in and started shouting, 'are you laughing at me? What do you think you are doing, you fuckin' 16-year olds?' She swore at me. We looked at each other, and we were so confused. We were like, 'what are you talking about? We are just talking and laughing', and she is like, 'I am talking to you, why are you laughing at me?' And I am like, 'are you confused or something? Why are you shouting while we have so many people over? Are we not allowed to have dinner?' She is always like that every day. And there is this night she came back from clubbing with her other flatmate, and then they were making noise, being loud, and then they came and began banging on my door. They were drunk, banging on my door, yelling and shouting and everything. I just never had a nice experience in that flat, and they cause trouble for everybody, and two of my flatmates moved to a different flat, so it was just always terrible. I felt attacked, so I couldn't just stand and watch someone attack me constantly, so I spoke back. I reported this to the head of the flats, then we had a meeting about it, but it was still the same; it was just more subtle after I reported it. I didn't hear racial slurs, maybe I didn't know but it was obvious ... There were times where I walk into the sitting room when they were there, and they may be just reducing their voice and giggle something or say something.

(Yomi, female, 19, Port)

Yomi describes how she was singled out and repeatedly attacked and harassed by the white student. The white student seems to have acted with a sense of entitlement to the space, and attacked Yomi in particular because she tried to resist when her friends either left or decided not to react. Gillborn

argues that this type of behaviour could be linked to white supremacist feelings. Gillborn (2014: 30) quotes Ansley (1997), who explained that according to CRT, white supremacy includes ‘... conscious and unconscious ideas of white supremacy and entitlement ... and relations of white dominance and non-white subordination ... daily enacted across a broad array of institutions and social settings’. It is also interesting to note that the institutional intervention failed to stop the attacks. Yomi reported the issue to the head of the flats, who convened a meeting, but ‘it was still the same’ afterwards. Behaviour including banging on the door and shouting, which left a child under 18 – a minor – in a new country feeling unsafe with little or no protection should have merited disciplinary action, not just a meeting. This alludes to what Macpherson (1999) calls institutional racism, ‘the collective failure of an institution’ to protect minorities from racial discrimination.

Although Yomi did not hear the white students using racial slur, she thinks ‘... maybe I didn’t know but it was obvious; there were times where I walk into the sitting room when they were there and they may be just reducing their voice and giggle something or say something.’ Sue (2010:172) writes, ‘While international students are able to identify overt acts of prejudice, their internalised “outsider” status in a host country may lead them to underrate the subtle slights and indignities.’ And they may be undecided whether racism has taken place or not. Gillborn & Youdell (2000:5) argue that ‘the presence or absence of “racial” terms ... is not necessary to define a discourse as racist.’

In summary, BAIS’s experiences of overt racism cause emotional distress, feelings of alienation and, above all, a hostile environment, contrary to the claims by universities to be an inclusive space where all students feel safe and welcome (Killick, 2016).

The second section of this chapter deals with BAIS’s experiences of racism that are more subtle, but no less harmful, which usually arise from seemingly innocuous statements and may be committed by offenders who are unaware of the racism of their words.

Experiences of racial microaggressions

The literature shows that BAIS suffer layers of oppression and discrimination, not just based on their 'race' but also on their culture, gender, accent, stereotypes, and perceived intelligence owing to their place of education (Boafo-Arthur, 2014a ; Beoku-Betts, 2004 ; Solórzano & Yosso, 2002). This part of the analysis captures the more subtle and often, but not always, unconscious racism and discrimination that BAIS experience based on their 'race', culture and place of origin, which is conflated with 'race' – normally referred to as racial microaggressions. Sue et al. (2007: 271) define racial microaggressions as '... brief and commonplace daily verbal, behavioural, or environmental indignities, whether intentional or unintentional, that communicate hostile, derogatory, or negative racial slights and insults toward people of colour.' Offenders, who may be very decent and well-intentioned people, are more often than not unaware of the impact of their microaggressions. Although microaggressions are seemingly innocuous, they have real consequences for marginalized groups in society. This phenomenon is more complicated in the case of international students such as BAIS, who may be unable to work out the exact meaning of microaggressions, as they are outsiders to the host culture in the countries in which they study.

Based on a review of the literature, Kim and Kim (2010) theorize about microaggressions experienced by international students mainly in the US. Although Kim and Kim's model makes an important contribution to the study of racial microaggressions, it presents international students as a homogeneous group or an undifferentiated mass. However, the few studies available show that experiences of racial microaggressions could vary between 'races'. Empirical evidence from diverse contexts is needed to support and enrich Kim and Kim's model. To my knowledge, there are no studies on the racial microaggression experiences of black African international undergraduates studying in UK higher education. Thus, my study extends the literature on racial microaggressions against international students by analysing the lived

experiences of BAIS studying in UK higher education. This may also help to lift the voices of BAIS, which tend to be silent in the literature.

Analysis of the interview data in this study demonstrates that unfriendly and hostile environments are created due to mostly unwitting acts of ignorance, seemingly innocuous questions or remarks, and subtle put-downs that underestimate the perceived intelligence of BAIS, blighting their experiences of international education in the UK. Themes identified include: *assumptions of poor/inferior previous education in Africa, ignoring/undervaluing contributions in seminar classes, being made invisible, and being seen as a criminal.*

Assumptions of poor/inferior previous education

Experiences of racial microaggressions under this theme relate to BAIS's accounts that implied or assumed BAIS have had poor or inferior education in Africa, and are therefore less capable than students who studied in the UK and elsewhere in the West. Some BAIS were considered less intelligent because they did not study in the UK, others felt constantly challenged to prove that they deserve to be at their universities, and others were pathologized by being talked to in a simplified manner by students, teachers and the wider academic community in their universities.

Beku from Castle speaks of how he was made to feel odd and atypical, and that he needed to prove that he deserved to be there:

You feel challenged to prove that you have earned your place here, or that you are worthy of the merit that other people have. Sometimes people look at you and they think that you must be some extraordinary genius to come from Africa and study here and be doing well, so there are a lot of assumptions – like you must be the smartest in the country, you have to be like the president or something; so you feel you certainly need to prove something.

(Beku, male, 21, Castle)

Beku's account illuminates that he is made to feel out of place and unusual. On the surface, the suggestion that Beku must be smart or a genius to study at the university seems like a compliment. Even BAIS themselves can be

complacent, and may take such views as 'natural' admiration of black achievement. Baso's account is very revealing in this regard:

Honestly, tutors and colleagues do admire me; they do admire black students because they look at it and think that for a black student to study Law means you are very smart, very intelligent. It is just like you being a black studying a doctorate, [or] being a medical doctor, you are being admired. It's just natural; same thing that is how they look at us, and some of them they don't even hide it, they come face to face and say, 'I admire you so much for studying law'.

(Baso, male, 28, Downtown)

Baso's account shows that not all BAIS understand subtle microaggressive messages. While Baso takes the admiration at face value, Beku is made to feel that he did not gain admission to his university on merit and that he must be the exception, 'the smartest in his country'. This sends the message that he is an outsider to the traditional student population in his university. This is a typical example of racial microaggression that perpetuates the negative stereotype that black African students are intellectually inferior or not good enough to study in the West as their education is too poor to prepare them for a higher standard of education in the UK. Those who study in the West, such as Beku and Baso, must be exceptionally talented and/or atypical. This ignorant, homogenizing view is deplorable. Beku went to a famous international school with lots of well-trained teachers who came from all over the world. Beku remarked, 'I would say 80 per cent of the pupils that graduate from my school go to study in the US or in the UK.' Despite earning his place at the university like everyone else, Beku is made to feel that he 'needs to prove something' simply because he is a black African who has had his previous education in Africa. In their study of peer relationships in UK universities Crozier et al. (2016: 48) found that even home 'Black and Minority Ethnic and White working-class students have to struggle to assert their "authenticity" and "right" to be at university.' Being seen as inauthentic could affect every aspect of a student's life at university, including their sense of belonging, their progress (Read et al., 2003), and even persistence to graduation (Tinto, 1999).

Similar experiences are shared by three BAIS whose authenticity has been questioned on the grounds that they did not study in the UK:

So I was talking to someone and I didn't understand something because the concept was quite new, and they were like, 'oh, yeah, you didn't study here', in terms of like I studied somewhere that's less ... [rigorous]. I was just like, 'what do you mean?'. So let's be honest, there are some things that are racist. Like, you didn't study here so you wouldn't know. That's like saying they don't teach it anywhere else ... if you are in a place where there's a lot of racial discrimination against you, that's going to affect your mission there.

(Olu, female, 20, Woods)

Olu was assumed not to have knowledge or information on the subject of a conversation because she had substandard education in her home country. The racial microaggression seems to be that you have had poor quality education in Africa, so you are not as knowledgeable as students who studied in the UK. Olu reiterates the point that this could be racist, as it implies that good education is available only in the UK and not anywhere else. She warns, 'if you are in a place where there's a lot of racial discrimination against you, that's going to affect your mission there.' Her warning seems to be well supported by research on the effect of racial discrimination and racial stereotypes on students of colour. In a seminal work, Steele and Aronson (1995) have established that black students could be at a higher risk of conforming to negative stereotypes and performing poorly in academic assessments if they are put in an environment where they are always reminded that they are not competent or belong to a group that is not competent. Making generalizations about BAIS's knowledge of something based on where they have had their previous education could be detrimental.

Similarly, Wanja from Parkside relates his interaction with a white teacher in the classroom, when she made a judgement that he could not know what a certain acronym stands for because he is not from the UK:

A white teacher came to me and remarked 'oh, I can't ask you that, Wanja because you don't know about that; isn't there any other person who knows what SMART stands for?' You know, like specific, measurable etc., those things. And I was like, 'why did you just think I cannot know that?' I raised my hand and asked her 'why did you say that?, you don't know if I know it?' And she said, 'actually you are not from here' [the UK], and [I said] being not from here doesn't mean that I don't know what that means; She just assumes you don't know, so basically she is taking you like you are dumb, you don't know nothing.

(Wanja, male, 31, Parkside)

Wanja challenges his white teacher on how she can judge whether he knows what an acronym stands for. Her response, 'you are not from here [the UK]', is even more bewildering. The immediate effect of this openly hostile racial microaggression on Wanja is profound. He is made to feel that he is being treated as 'dumb', one who 'knows nothing'. This subtle put-down may have dented Wanja's learner identity by communicating low expectations, which could in turn affect his learning, progress and achievement.

Besides, the teacher's remark, 'actually, you are not from here [the UK]', may have affected Wanja in another serious way. Wanja is the only participant in the study who holds British citizenship. Prior to that, he was recruited by the British Army as a Commonwealth Citizen and served for eight years deployed in several British overseas territories, before settling in the UK. Wanja expresses a lot of pride in being British, and an ex-soldier who has put his life in harm's way to defend the nation. He truly believes he belongs to Britain and to be told 'actually, you are not from here' might well put him at a loss about his sense of national identity. To be fair to Wanja's teacher, she might not know all of these details, and might not mean to be racist when making these remarks. However, scholars have underscored that this lack of awareness on the part of offenders is what makes racial microaggressions so damaging to people of colour. Sue (2010) explains the detrimental and very powerful effect of racial microaggression, as it disguises the prejudicial racial bias of the perpetrator by allowing him or her to hold on to his or her unwitting beliefs about racial inferiority, and continue to denigrate marginalized groups in a guilt-free manner.

Wasa, from Port, describes a very similar microaggressive experience during a classroom interaction with a teacher:

I asked a question, and the lecturer walked up to me, and I thought it was to answer my question. He then kind of questioned my qualification, like if I did A levels, if I did chemistry at a normal level, if I did chemistry in my secondary school at all, and I was like, 'oh, yes I wouldn't be here' [if I didn't]. And then he insinuated that if I did those, I should know what this is ... [the answer to his own question]. So it kind of felt like rather than teaching me what I am supposed to learn from him, he is judging me based on my past experiences, my previous education, my qualification – which didn't make sense to me. And it ended up with me not being answered, because I got kind of triggered by the questions that he was asking. I didn't ask him any question anymore. And the worst part was moving forward, I found out that I wasn't the only one that had a problem with the exact topic he was teaching. A lot of students in the lecture room had the same problem; I tried to find out from other people what I cannot get from the lecturer, and a lot of them just didn't know what was going on.

(Wasa, male, 22, Port)

This is another example of racial microaggression based on judgement of Wasa's previous education. As Wasa reflected, the teacher insinuated that he is unintelligent and may not deserve to be on that course. Wasa felt judged with a hidden microaggressive message of you did not qualify to be a student on this course. The effect is immediate and very concerning, as Wasa decided not to ask the teacher 'any question anymore'. He felt even worse when he sought help from his peers to find an answer to his question, and learnt that they too had a problem with 'the exact same topic' the teacher was teaching. But Wasa was made to feel inadequate and not well prepared for the course.

This could be interpreted in many ways. For example, the teacher seems to make an assumption that students on the course would somehow all have a similar level of academic preparedness, or he or she is simply biased or prejudiced that BAIS come from poor educational backgrounds and has set low expectations for them. Bourdieu's theory of cultural capital (Bourdieu & Passeron, 1990) explains that previous educational background affects student learning and achievement because educational institutions value a specific form of cultural capital and undervalue other forms. Wasa's

experience demonstrates that this undervaluing of previous education could be based on 'race' and not just class as theorized by Bourdieu. Wasa's case also demonstrates the inadequacy of the cultural capital theory to fully understand BAIS's lived experiences. That the teacher questioned Wasa's qualifications only, when all the other students had similar difficulty understanding the lesson, could have racial overtones that reinforces the deficit view that BAIS such as Wasa lack the requisite cultural capital to study in the West. Critical race theory challenges this deficit view of black cultural capital (Yosso, 2005).

Pathologizing talk

Another BAIS, from Castle, explains how low expectations can be communicated not just by casting doubt on a student's previous education, but also through pathologizing talk while interacting with a BAIS. Jaka speaks of how he felt disrespected and underestimated because of the way some people talk to him:

You will have people who will try and speak down to you, trying to make you understand a point that's simple. They do think you are not going to understand, so you goanna have those moments where you really have to step in and say that this isn't right, I do deserve to be treated with respect here.

(Jaka, male, 20, Castle)

Jaka describes experience of racial microaggression through pathologizing talk. Some people at his university speak to him more slowly, using simple and qualified words because they assume that he may not understand their English. This, in most cases, is probably totally unintentional, and could be done by a well-meaning teacher or peer who simply assumes that non-native speakers may have problems following the natural native speaker's speed of talking. Indeed, in chapter five some BAIS have said that the accent and speed of speech of white teachers is something they struggle with, especially during the first few months of their course. However, there should be an awareness that not every student is the same, and that the appropriateness of a communication act always depends on topic and context. Jaka points out

that some try to speak in a pathologizing manner even when they are talking about very simple matters. The subtle microaggression message is that you do not understand even simple English.

Wasa shares similar experiences of pathologizing, which he thinks could be racist:

My 'race' is a factor in the way I am talked to, definitely! I feel like people feel the need to oversimplify when they interact with me – which I don't like. I am trying to ask you a question, and then I don't even know if you understand my question, because you are going through so many different things that are basic info to me – that's not what I want to know. Some lecturers do feel the need to oversimplify. It's racism in a sense, because it's a case of them trying to overcompensate, so the overcompensation kind of does feel very discriminative. It feels annoying sometimes. So, I feel like they are trying so hard not to be racist, they become racist.

(Wasa, male, 22, Port)

Wasa's experience gives us an important insight that some lecturers appear to operate on the basis of a blanket assumption about BAIS's language proficiency. In such cases, the hidden message of this microaggression is that all BAIS have poor English and that they have problems of understanding and are less intelligent. This finding is consistent with the literature. Kim and Kim (2010) identify ascription of unintelligence, especially against those students whose first language is not English, as one major theme of racial microaggressions against international students. This pathologizing talk may also allude to colonial legacies, where whites more often than not spoke in a degrading and dehumanizing manner to the colonized black. Fanon (1952) observed that this phenomenon was commonplace among professionals in the colonial era, and this arguably could have been absorbed into the institutional habitus of the universities. Fanon wrote:

A white man addressing a Negro behaves exactly like an adult with a child and starts smirking, whispering, patronizing, cozening. It is not one white man I have watched, but hundreds; ... Talking to Negroes in this way gets down to their level, it puts them at ease, it is an effort to make them understand us, it reassures them ...

(Fanon, 1952: 19)

BAIS's experiences of pathologizing talk along with the other microaggressive experiences discussed here also resonates with Phoenix's (1987) couplet notion of 'normalized absence and pathologized presence' where minorities are Othered based on stereotypical assumptions, inter alia, about their abilities and behaviour. BAIS whose voice is normally silent within their educational setting are pathologized when they engage in some kind of interaction with white and/or home students and staff. For example, Jaka's and Wasa's experiences above show their engagement is pathologized as they are seen as deficient learners who may not understand even simple matters expressed in English. This pathologised presence surfaces in various social spaces as BAIS's experiences of being ignored in seminar classes below show.

Ignoring/undervaluing BAIS's contributions in seminar classes/lab sessions

Despite acclaimed benefits of internationalization to bring diverse perspectives and experiences to the classroom (Jones, 2009), the academic space of seminar classes seems to be one key site of deracination for some BAIS. This more often than not results in exclusion from learning activities. The microaggressions under this theme generally assume that BAIS are not intelligent enough to make a meaningful contribution to academic discussions and debates. BAIS share stories of simply being left out, of not being listened to, or of their ideas being rejected, only to be accepted when presented by a white person:

Rosa, a very confident BAIS, shared her frustration at being denied the chance to contribute to seminar classes even when she believed the rest of group members did not understand the task at hand. Rosa explains:

I don't like it [her seminar class], because some of them feel like they know too much; and it's something that I don't understand them; if it was my normal Nigerians I could say, 'no that's not what to do'; but I just let them to be doing whatever they are doing; I will just sit on my

own and go; well, some of them think they know too much, but they don't know nothing; they just feel like yeah we should do all the work; they will not give you a chance to speak;

(Rosa, Female, 19, Hillside)

Seminars and tutorials, although quite new to many BAIS at least in this study, are common academic practices in the UK and are intended to offer students an opportunity to learn through interaction with other people. And in the context of international education there is arguably the opportunity to develop intercultural competence for both home and international students (Trahar, 2010 ; Harrison & Peacock, 2009). By denying her the opportunity to speak in her seminar group, Rosa may not only just miss the opportunity to deepen her understanding of the topic at hand through meaningful interaction but she might also have felt unimportant. Her voice is suppressed. There is an invisible power operating in the classroom (Giroux, 1981) that silences black students such as Rosa and privileges the voices white and/or home students.

Ruth also share a similar experience of being made to feel she is not part of the seminar group.

I started attending my seminars in my first year [and] the seminar groups I was in where I was the only black person, I really felt left out. You could see the conscious out-casting. It's just like, 'oh yeah she is there' ... and it was not just one seminar, it was almost all my seminars. I think three of the seminars were like that [where she is the only black student], and some of them had the same people in them, so I was kind of with the same people; and in terms of relating with them, I think that's where I feel the most out-casting. In terms of racism, I don't think they have been racist to me explicitly, but you can feel the 'oh yeah you are different from us'. I definitely think they feel not comfortable working with black people.

(Ruth, female, 19, Hillside)

Ruth's first-year experience of study in a new country and a new university has been blighted by the 'conscious out-casting' in her seminar classes. Being the only black student in all her seminar groups, she felt left out. The microaggression message is 'you are different from us', the exception to the rule, and do not belong. Although they have not been explicitly racist to Ruth,

Sue (2010) explains that racial microaggressions can be communicated not only verbally, but also through actions/behaviour that exclude. Racial microaggressions include such behaviours as dismissive looks, snubs, subtle put-downs, gestures and avoiding eye contact. Ruth seems to be wondering if what she has experienced is racism or not. Scholars (Solorzano et al., 2000; Sue et al., 2008) have explained that the subtle, often automatic, and seemingly innocuous nature of racial microaggressions often leave their victim wondering and figuring out what has happened, its intent, and meaning.

Another BAIS related how his ideas are simply ignored but the same ideas were more readily taken up if put forward by a white person:

I would say, giving your point in group work, people won't take you as serious or they just consider your point only if brought up by someone else, especially a white home student; and they accept that point more readily.

(Jaka, male, 20, Castle)

Jaka describes his experiences of racial microaggression, where his ideas are less seriously considered or just ignored.

Wasa's experiences of microaggression in a similar context give a slightly different insight:

You also still get students that do not think you are good enough or suiting for the task, even though they do claim to listen to your opinion, but there is always an oppression into the side, so that feels very condescending and annoying. In a lot of cases when you have done your research and things like that, [and] when they press your opinion aside, you will find out that, they don't think it is wrong, but they just feel high and mighty. And I am like, but you don't know what you are talking about dude (lol).

(Wasa, male, 22, Port)

White students are not comfortable taking contributions from BAIS seriously, as they consider them less knowledgeable. Wasa describes that even when white peers claim to listen to his ideas and know that his contributions are valid, they press his opinion aside. DiAngelo (2006), in her study of the production of whiteness in international education, found domination of

classroom interactions by white American students where they, inter alia, displayed a sense of entitlement to prevail in academic spaces. As Wasa said, they just feel 'high and mighty'. Wasa also remarks that '... there is always an oppression into the side' – that is, the token acknowledgement of his contributions, while at the same time rendering it of a lower quality than theirs. This microaggression sends the message that 'although you may have the right ideas, ours is superior because you are not good enough to be here'.

In a similar vein, another BAIS, Yomi, describes her experiences where she was told by a white peer to stay away from contributing to a lab practical they were supposed to do in pairs:

There was this one girl I worked with in lab practicals. We were working together on something; she just assumed that I was going to mess the practical or something, so she just kept doing everything herself ... telling me, don't worry, don't worry, and then she did the whole practical herself and that makes me feel weird, actually. She was a white home student.

(Yomi, female, 19, Port)

Yomi was told not to worry about taking part in a learning activity because her white peer thought she would mess up the practical. This is a racial microaggression with the hidden message that you are not competent and cannot be trusted to do an academic task. Some research has documented UK home students' deliberate exclusion of international students from group work. In their study of contact and interaction between UK home and international students, Harrison and Peacock (2009b: 494) write: 'There was, therefore, a perceived threat that an international student could bring the marks of the group down through his or her lack of language ability, lack of knowledge of the United Kingdom or understanding of British pedagogy.' They also present some data that show how home students colluded to leave out an international student's contribution. What is deplorable is that like many other studies looking at experiences of international students in the UK, they framed the whole issue as being about UK home students' 'instinctive strategic approach to cross cultural communication' (Harrison & Peacock,

2009b:487), rather than being about domination and exclusion. This is another testament to how researchers minimize racism in reporting their research findings, using 'assorted explanations' that argue 'anything but racism' (Harper, 2012). Such deficit-informed conceptualization not only shuns naming the reality their data revealed to them but could also sadly perpetuate the view that international students are responsible for poor intercultural communication.

Being made invisible

Experiences of BAIS where they were simply ignored or not acknowledged both inside and outside their universities are categorized under this theme of 'being made invisible'. Buti describes her experience of being totally ignored by white students in a social setting:

I was working with my friend and she asked me if I could escort her to her presentation; so I went and she had this other white English friends, so proper white. So my friend is Iranian, then her friends were white English people ... and they were talking to her, and I was right beside her when they were talking to her, and they didn't say anything to me, so I was like, 'OK, did I become invisible? Does anybody can't see me?' I am right there! They didn't say anything to me, so I said, 'OK, that's their problem, not my problem.' So I left. I just felt like it wasn't necessary to do any of that. You can just say 'hi'. I am not asking you to ask me my name or where I am from, just say 'hi'.

(Buti, female, 19, Canal)

Buti was expecting the common decency of being acknowledged and greeted by the white students, just as they greeted her Iranian friend. This is consistent with literature that reports black students suffering more racialized discrimination. Being ignored in such a manner left Buti feeling invisible and wondering why it was necessary to behave like that. Sue (2010:181) argues that 'the implicit message of these snubs are that international students are unnoticeable and insignificant'.

BAIS experience invisibility both inside and outside the university. Poni from Canal shares her experiences of being repeatedly ignored by bus drivers in her city:

I also get some racist vibes from some bus drivers. It happened to me three times now. I was at the bus stop, and then I waved the guy and he didn't stop. And they always do the same, where they look the other way, like the other side of the road. It seems like they didn't see you. The other time, I had to check the bus stop again to find out if the bus actually stops here and then it did, and I am like, 'what has happened?'; and the last time it happened, there was a short traffic or traffic that wasn't red basically, the bus was still in front of the bus stop, and I was waving at the guy and he just kept looking the other way, and I was like, I know exactly what was happening; and I will be waiting at the bus stop for 30 minutes because bus 50 doesn't move very often. I am very angry!

(Poni, female, 19, Canal)

Poni's experiences with bus drivers show that she is made invisible, when she was actually hyper-visible because of her skin colour in a predominantly white area. Brown's (2009) study in an English university found that skin colour mediates vulnerability to discrimination and racism, as skin colour separateness may be reflected outwardly. The repeated racial microaggression against Poni sends the message that a black person (and perhaps a black woman especially) is unnoticeable and insignificant, and may not be treated with the same respect and dignity as a white person. In addition to the emotional impact of anger and frustration, the microaggression also disrupts Poni's daily routines and schedules, as she has to wait even longer for the next bus.

Jaka's experience shows that BAIS are made invisible and treated with disrespect and less regard than white people in various public spaces. He relates that they can be disdained as customers in shops:

Some people are a bit conservative in their view and not fully accepting. So I walk into some high-end shops with either an Indian or a white friend. The people working there pay more attention to them than to me, and you can already notice because they are making eye contact with them and not with me, because they assume that I don't have the funds to be in that store.

(Jaka, male, 20, Castle)

Jaka's story shows that BAIS may not be given the same attention as lighter-skinned people. This echoes old-fashioned ideas about the hierarchy of races, where the white race is at the top and the black race at the bottom. Thus, Jaka is assumed to be poorer than his peers, and therefore considered to be unworthy of the shop assistant's attention. This deliberate and conscious out-casting and racial derogation of black people damages their well-being (Sue et al., 2007). The provision of poor service and/or rejection of black people in public spaces has been identified as one of the most frequent incidents of discrimination, followed by verbal epithets (Feagin, 1991).

Being seen as criminal

BAIS reported being policed both inside and outside the university. They are perceived as potential criminals because of their skin colour, their music, or their hypervisibility as blacks. This finding is consistent with the literature. Douglas (1998), for example, reported blacks being policed as they moved around campus.

Rosa from Hillside describes two racialized encounters where she was treated like a potential criminal. In her first racialized encounter, she was chased away with her black friends from a university hall where they went to practise dance and have some respite from the stress of academic work:

We were having a dance practice for our East African Society event, We are in particular place and we already asked for permission, and the next thing we saw – the police was there. It wasn't necessary for you guys [white peers] to call the police; it was within the university. I don't know why the police had to be involved, even dogs were involved. The leader of our group told them that we already took permission. The leader was trying to explain there was no need for police to be involved, but they said you guys need to go. You know, their accent and everything was hostile. You would think there was a robbery. We are all blacks. There was no white person there. It's an East African Society, so one of the girls was like, 'you know we should be already used to this, it's because of our skin colour'. I said, 'no, I am not used to this'.

(Rosa, female, 19, Hillside)

Rosa's experience shows the racial profiling going on at her university and the hyper-surveillance against black students. Although Rosa and her friends secured permission to practise their dance in a university space, they were first asked to leave by a white person. Previous studies (Smith et al., 2007 ; Allen, 2010) report that police are called usually by white individuals when black students gather for various events, both in school and higher education contexts. The police arrived and, without any investigation, followed suit and asked them to leave. The failure of the police to engage in any investigation of whether the students had permission to stay echoes the permanence of racism (Bell, 1992) and, more specifically, the claim that the police in the UK are institutionally racist (Macpherson, 1999).

In another experience, Rosa was harassed by a white man while working as a fundraiser along with her white friends:

I got this job. It's called home fundraising, so I was at the door and this white guy literally brought his dogs, and said, 'I will release my dog, go away'. I was like, 'OK, sorry, I was not even knocking at the door [and] that's what is pissing me. And then he looked for us while me and my team members were still around the neighbourhood, and he was like, 'who is the team leader, can I talk to the manager?' And he said, 'She was trying to get into the house'. I was like, 'are you mad?' I was so angry, I started crying. I was like, 'wow, like you people think I need this job'. I was proper angry. The next day, I have resigned.

(Rosa, female, 19, Hillside)

Although Rosa was working with a team, none of them were accused of breaking into a house. She was singled out and seen as a thief trying to get into the white man's house. Rosa was deeply hurt, and she cried again as she related the story to me. The hidden meaning of this microaggression is that whites may automatically assume that a black person at their doorstep is a threat and cannot be trusted, as they are all susceptible to criminal behaviour. Negative media representations of black people as criminals in the UK (Cushion et al., 2011) and disproportionate use of policing practices such as surveillance and stop and search (Dodd, 2017) might have contributed to white people's view that black people are prone to crime.

Mufti from Canal-Great describes his experience of being put under surveillance whenever he goes shopping:

Whenever I go for shopping, I realize that they feel suspicious. They put all eyes on me, or something like that. So I don't understand why they are doing that. I realize that they do this to blacks unlike the whites, so I was asking myself 'why are they doing this to black people?' This is part of the experience that I have from this country;— that if a black person went for shopping they put eyes on him! I feel disrespected because I realize that they are not doing this to the white people, so I keep asking myself, why are they doing this to black people? And I had a lot of conversation with my black friends, and they all say they have the same problems.

(Mufti, male, 24, Canal-Great)

Mufti's story reveals that hyper-surveillance of black students is ubiquitous. This is consistent with literature that reports that black males in the UK are over-policed as perpetrators and under-policed as victims (Grieve & French, 2000). Mufti wonders why blacks are singled out. His account above also shows that being seen as being suspicious in shops seems to be a common experience for BAIS, as his friends suffer the same problems. In a striking similarity, a black student in Douglas (1998: 442) remarked, 'you just feel people's eyes following you'.

On a personal level, as an international student who pays thousands of pounds upfront, both in fees and living costs, and as a devoted Muslim, Mufti feels very disrespected that he is seen as a criminal simply because he is black. It is also very sad that Mufti says, 'it's part of the experience that I have learned from this country'. That is definitely not an experience his university would want him to go back home with.

In conclusion, the analysis here shows how racial microaggressions shaped BAIS's lived experiences in different social settings, both inside and outside the university. Many of the findings are consistent with Kim & Kim's (2010) model and produced empirical evidence for the themes. However, the two themes of *assumptions of poor/inferior previous education* and

ignoring/undervaluing contributions are relatively new and could extend the model.

The next section presents the strategies that BAIS employed to cope with the racism and racial microaggressions they experienced.

Strategies of coping with racism and microaggressions

Racial microaggressions create a negative campus racial climate (Solorzano et al., 2000), cause isolation and a sense of insecurity (Sue et al., 2007), increase the risk of developing depression, anxiety and physical illnesses such as high blood pressure (Utsey et al., 2000), and seriously damage the self-esteem of black students (Nadal et al., 2014). These studies concern people of colour in the US, and only a few studies looked at the effects of racism and racial microaggression in the context of international higher education. However, they reported similar effects. Racial discrimination impacts the academic success of international students (Lee & Rice, 2007), impacts their overall well-being (Hanassab, 2006), and takes time and energy away from their studies (Huber & Solorzano, 2015). Engagement in fighting perceived discrimination is emotionally draining and could have serious health impacts (Fries-Britt et al., 2014).

The findings of this study also show that racism and racial microaggressions limit BAIS's learning opportunities and diminish their sense of belonging, leading to poor experience and perhaps to poor educational outcomes. BAIS have used various coping methods to ameliorate the effects of racism and discrimination that they face both inside and outside the university. These include *joining co-national spaces*, *ignoring racism*, *resilience*, and feeling that *it's not my struggle*.

Joining co-national spaces

Many BAIS join their national student societies or churches or study groups to cope with the effects of racism and racial macroaggressions. Many BAIS

reported that they turn to such spaces especially when they experience exclusion:

I could at times feel excluded; I have my African society that makes me feel welcome when I don't feel welcome in the whole school. You also have church. Those are the things that would help you if you are not mixing.

(Katu, female, 22, Canal-Great)

If I experience any racist vibes or anything like that, I get support from our fellow black people. We have like societies here, so most of us really care for each other.

(Yomi, female, 19, Port)

My student society made it easy to interact with people like me. There were a lot of people I could relate to, like Nigerians, also many Africans.

(Ade, male, 19, Canal-Great)

The different African societies make you feel you are not alone in adjusting to a new way of life in the UK; I felt at home a bit.

(Olu, female, 20, Woods)

These four accounts reveal that national and/or cultural support systems serve as a safety net for BAIS – a place for solidarity. The difficulty of making friends and the poor institutional support, especially for non-academic issues (discussed in Chapter 5), make these spaces crucial for BAIS.

BAIS also use co-national friends as protection in the face of the risk of an attack. Yomi, who described that she was violently verbally attacked by her white flatmates, had the following to say:

The vibe and the whole experience was just very upsetting. It would have been worse if it was just me in the flat with them, but I had my flatmate from Nigeria as well, and I always have friends over, like our other Nigerian friends. I don't study at home and I usually leave the house at 6:30 and study in the library, so I never saw them when I study.

(Yomi, female, 19, Port)

Yomi felt very insecure and unsafe because of the experience, and feared for her life, so she avoided being alone. She needed the company of her friends at night so that she could feel safe. Besides, she had to modify her study time to minimize the chance of contact with her attackers and avert the risk of violence. She stopped studying at home and left very early at 6:30 to avoid meeting them. She is effectively denied a safe environment to live and study despite being legally entitled. Yomi's experience here resonates with what (Yosso, 2005:77) calls aspirational capital black students bring with them- 'the ability to maintain hopes and dreams for the future, even in the face of real and perceived barriers.'

Ignoring racism

A number of BAIS in this study reiterated that they simply ignore their experiences with racism and racial microaggressions, mainly because a focus on it will distract them from their key mission in the UK – to study and to get a degree:

It's natural, there is racism everywhere in the world; this is something we cannot hide from; We try to ignore it and try to pretend as if it doesn't exist, but it does. As a black student, I have experienced racism in the UK. But I have got my focus, so I tend not to make it an issue and ignore it, because if you take things like that into consideration, it will definitely hinder your progress.

(Baso, male, 24, Downtown)

If you just want to rise above certain situations, I feel you can just ignore racism. Sometimes you are made to feel different because of the colour of your skin or your ethnicity, but you have to rise above that. You don't allow that to weigh on you; otherwise everything will be tough.

(Domu, male, 29, Chapel)

Baso's and Domu's accounts suggest that they decided to ignore racism, as they do not have the time and the energy to invest in challenging racism. They believe that a focus on racism will 'hinder progress' and 'everything will be tough'. They seem to feel helpless and powerless, which suggests that there

may be a lack of institutional support for BAIS to deal with racism. Challenging racism alone might be too difficult for BAIS.

Wasa thinks that ignoring racism is important for his sanity:

I ignore it, basically, because it just helps my mental health. I don't want to go through the day being pissed because someone was racially abusive to me. I have to be able to claim my mind, because if I don't ignore it, it builds up and plays differently and ends up affecting your day, whereas you could have just ignored it.

(Wasa, male, 22, Port)

Although Wasa says that ignoring racism helps his mental health, studies show that it might actually take its toll on one's psychological well-being (Pierce, 1989; Sue et al., 2007).

Resilience

This theme concerns the coping strategies of BAIS who decided to stand up and fight racism and racial microaggressions through personal resilience. Astu describes that she experienced racial microaggression because of her colourful traditional African dress, and how she resisted that:

During my first few weeks walking in campus, some people look at me and my dress and tell me, 'Oh, the theatre department is on this side' or 'the journalism department or the literature department is on that side'. I didn't fit into stereotypical view of what a lawyer is supposed to be because of the way I dress. I am always wearing colour and African accessories that I love. That's because I am very proud of who I am and where I am from. The pressure to change came from both individuals and the institution itself, but there was nothing formally done. It was an expectation. I said, 'No, I am not going to change'. And people would tend to celebrate who you are when you actually stand up for yourself. But that comes only post-oppression and not during it. If anything, my flowers on my hair got bigger just to prove a point. In my second year, I was inundated with invitations that say, 'you need to be in this photoshoot for the university', 'you need to be in this one, in that one, you need to be there'; I am now on the prospectus of the university for promoting the law school. I really thank God that I am a very confident person to overcome that.

(Astu, female, 21, Castle)

This type of pressure on Astu to change her cultural dress has been reported by Patton et al., (2007:47), who write: 'students of color who dress with clothes representing their culture and speak a language other than English could experience cultural assaults in the form of discrimination and stereotypes.' Despite the pressure, Astu forced the university to 'celebrate' her identity. Without taking credit from Astu for being resolute, the university finally wanted to use her identity in its promotional work since, as Bell (1992) said, its interests converged with the interests of Astu.

Similarly, Pala refuses to be put down by experiences of racism, and rather relishes the challenge:

You just feel bad about racism, but I will not allow those things to be damping my spirit. Those actions or inactions always inspire me to work very hard and to be awake. I like challenges. I like to go and circumvent those things, and break the ceilings and go up there.

(Pala, male, 36, Canal-Great)

Pala's coping involves working even harder to prove his worth in the face of adversity, and to 'circumvent' the barriers put up by racism and to tackle it.

Still, some BAIS, such as Rosa, will go all the way to fight like with like and stand up to any hostile racial microaggression:

Some of them could be very [rude] to be honest. Well, when they are rude, I will be rude back to them; both of us will be rude together, that's it (lol).

(Rosa, female, 19, Hillside)

It's not inherently my struggle

Although BAIS experienced many similar forms of racism that black British students experience based on their 'race', some BAIS seem to separate their racism experiences from those of black British students. This is a unique theme where BAIS felt that they do not actually own the struggle against racism in the UK. Beku of Castle had the following to say:

When you come here as an African, the struggles you take here aren't really yours. You have second generation African students that are born and grown up here who are British. They will have issues that they have experienced that you won't have experienced, so you come here, you are not able to, like, fight those issues the way they are able to fight them. You may experience them, but they are not inherently yours. You have a home and you have your own identities, so it's very separated. So you come here, you are a bit angry about the slavery in America and some of the institutions of slavery that happened here, or some of the discrimination, for example, there was a big conversation about universities not accepting black people, and you will be a bit upset by that, but then it's not your struggle, because that racism is targeted at indigenous black people so you are not very intimate about the problem.

(Beku, male, 20, Castle)

Beku feels that his black identity is 'very separated' from UK-born black students, who he believes are the primary target of the racism against black people. In a striking similarity, (Fries-Britt et al., 2014:5), in their study of the racial identity development of foreign-born students in the US, reported that Sarah from Nigeria related:

...when you talk about racism here in the U.S., I mean it doesn't really mean anything to me 'cause I didn't grow up here. But people that it means a lot to, I don't blame them because I've seen movie on how the ancestors were treated.

Despite knowledge of the history of racism in their host countries, both Beku and Sara feel unconnected with the struggle against racism. Beku stays away from issues of 'race' and racism in the UK, and uses the 'it is not my struggle' explanation as a coping strategy for his own experiences of racism – 'you may experience them, but they are not inherently yours.'

In a similar vein, some BAIS are in a dilemma and appear to question why it is home black students and not BAIS who are more actively engaged in fighting racism.

The people who talk about 'race' and do a lot of the activism against 'racism' on campus, I have to say this very politically correct, ironically are the black British students and not black international students. I find that personally very interesting; and I don't know why it is so. I just wonder, 'is it because they are more aware of the institutional racism

that may be going on? or 'is it because they are more actively looking for it?'; or 'Is it because that as an international student you are less bothered about it or not just interested in it?'; of course, there are racist actions especially post Brexit that made a big surge everywhere; somethings are blatant racism like where somebody will just shout something or do something racist; but I think in general especially at least at Castle, such an international university, I think there's also that defensive thing;

(Astu, female,21, Castle)

Astu suggests that Black home students should share the blame for racism as they may be 'looking for it'. Astu is in a bit of dilemma. She does not repudiate racism but her dilemma appears to come from her conceptualisation of racism as a blatant act of hurling racial epithet or blatant physical racial attacks. By her own admission she feels she may not be as aware about the racism in the UK as home black students. Indeed, Kim & Kim (2010) highlighted that international students who are new to the host society have difficulty identifying subtle acts of racism and it takes them longer to understand what has happened to them. Besides, there is a difference in the way home Black British students experienced racism and BAIS experience racism in the UK. Home black students may have experienced racism growing up both in society and in their past educational experiences through such practices as ability group setting and exclusion where black British students are disproportionately placed (Gillborn, 2008) and also through everyday racism experiences (most of it covert). This arguably makes home black students more 'race' conscious and able to identify and recognise racists discourses much more easily than BAIS. Astu's account confirms Fries-Britt et al's., (2014) assertion that foreign-born black students racial identity development follows a different path/model than home black students. Such students at first show indifference or even denial of racism experiences until they experience repeated racialized encounters themselves. Although, Astu did not deny racism as her own experiences elsewhere show, she seems to have interpreted home black students vanguard role in fighting racism as overly defensive and adopted 'it's not inherently my struggle' as one of her coping strategy.

This strategy in particular and BAIS's overall experiences discussed in this chapter shows how racism gets complicated, misrecognised, and slippery across national boundaries making the concept of 'race' a more complicated organizing principle. Although both BAIS and British black students could experience racism based on their 'race', BAIS experience racism in particular due to a stereotypical assumption of black African as inferior beings, including from Black British people. While CRT's tenet of the permanence of racism against black people perfectly applies here, my findings show that the black 'race' is not a monolithic concept that organizes lived experiences for all black people in the same manner across national borders. BAIS come to the UK with a different understanding of 'race' and racism and may not, necessarily share (especially as new arrivals), UK's meaning and/or understanding of racism. Skin colour is rarely used to refer to one's racial/ethnic identity and community affiliation in many black African countries (Irungu, 2013), as is the case in the Western world.

Summary

In this chapter, I have presented BAIS's experiences of racism and racial microaggression in a wide variety of contexts while they live and study in the UK. The first section presented BAIS's experiences of overt racism that involve making reference to biological justifications to hierarchy of races, including the use of racial epithets. The second section presented BAIS's experiences of racial microaggressions – the more subtle racism embedded in seemingly innocuous remarks in day-to-day interactions. Arno of Canal-Great lamented, '... it's no longer in your face racism but more so subtle, a lot more tricky, and I think that's what needs dealing with'. I also presented the strategies that BAIS use to cope with their experiences of racism.

The next chapter of analysis presents BAIS's experiences of exclusion and discrimination, which may be based on other axes of social difference – disguised forms of 'race'. Rattansi (2007: 99) noted that 'race operates in a whole variety of guises and a myriad of taken for granted assumptions that have become embedded in public and private cultures.' The analysis of BAIS's

narratives and accounts in the next chapter is framed as Othering – processes and practices that mark out BAIS as the other in their academic and social life in the UK.

Chapter 8: Experiences of Othering

Introduction

All 21 BAIS in this study shared experiences of Othering and/or racism, where they experienced some invasive personal questioning, exclusion, condescension or shocked reactions during interactions and/or contact with white/home students, staff and members of the wider community. In this chapter, I draw on the concept of Othering – the process of identifying persons perceived as different from, or not the same as, members of a dominant group in society. Dervin (2012: 187) explains that ‘Othering consists of “objectification of another person or group” or “creating the other”, which puts aside and ignores the complexity and subjectivity of the individual (Abdallah-Pretceille, 2003).’

This chapter builds on BAIS’s experiences of racism presented in Chapter 7, and shows the depth and layers of domination and subordination they experience. The central argument in this chapter is that BAIS are positioned and constructed as ‘Others’ through processes of Othering mainly, but not exclusively, linked with their place of origin, Africa, and the stereotypes associated with it. I argue that being Othered demonstrates not only the disadvantage experienced by BAIS, but also the privileges of being a white home student. This situation further complicates the terrain of the educational landscape that BAIS need to navigate on an unlevel playing field.

The specific processes of Othering identified include: homogenization of BAIS’s experiences and identities; being stereotyped based on the perceived backwardness of Africa; being exoticized and fetishized; being excluded from, and avoided in, social spaces; Othering based on immigration status; Othering and discrimination in the labour market; the expression of surprise at their English language proficiency; and recognizing white privilege- being a BAIS versus being a white home student. I address each of these processes in the following sections.

Homogenization of BAIS's experiences and identities

The process of homogenization involves making sweeping generalizations about BAIS's identities based on a stereotyped image of Africa as one big country during their interactions with home students, staff or the wider public. This representation erases BAIS's individuality, and perceives them as one distinct group originating from one place. Madrid (1988: 56) writes, 'If one is *the other*, one will inevitably be perceived unidimensionally; will be seen stereotypically; will be defined and delimited by mental sets that may not bear much relation to existing realities.'

Interviewees shared experiences where their identities have often been homogenized. As the accounts of Olu, Jaka and Yomi show, international students from Africa are very often described as an undifferentiated mass originating from 'one country' called Africa – a country that does not even exist. Olu describes the lack of recognition for her country of origin, or the lack of decency shown in failing to ask her the name of her country and the wilful assumption that the continent of Africa is her country:

Then the worst thing is white British people's remark '... your country Africa ...' I hate it! Africa is a continent with 54 or 57 countries – the largest continent, with the most countries and so many different cultures, so many languages. How can you go and mistake the whole thing as one country? It's just weird; it's just very ignorant.

(Olu, female, 20, Woods)

A conversation that Yomi reports further illustrates how people from the West generally continue to homogenize the identities of black African students. A white American assumes that Yomi knows all of Africa, even when she clearly says that she is from Nigeria. The American girl continues the conversation by homogenizing all Africans, and expects Yomi to know all the countries in Africa:

I met one white American girl one time and we were having a conversation. She asked me where I was from, and I told her 'Nigeria',

and she just went on to tell me how her mom works in African countries, and then she started mentioning different African countries I have never heard of. And I was, like, 'What has it to do anything with me?' That's what most people do when you tell them where you are from; they just say 'oh, I have a friend that does this in this country ...'

(Yomi, female, 19, Port)

Jaka discusses how black African students' behaviours have been homogenized by a career adviser of his university. She singles him out and asks him, as a black student, to explain the behaviour of other black African students whom he does not know and with whom he has had no relations:

I have heard of cases at Castle where people have been treated differently just because of their colour. One of the Castle career officers singled out black students as being late to submit applications and disadvantaging themselves, and then put the question as to why that happens to one of the black students in the seminars she was giving. So, of course, that not only reminds you of that you are different from everybody else, it also shows you how they actually think of you. So I think as a black international student, it's going to be very difficult to truly believe that you are 100% accepted.

(Jaka, male, 20, Castle)

These three accounts show that Olu, Yomi and Jaka are essentialized and Othered through homogenization of their behaviour and/or place of origin. Rather than being asked which country she comes from, Olu's country is assumed to be Africa. Yomi is assumed to know all the countries in Africa. Jaka's account shows how the discourse of 'lazy Africa' is used to single out and publicly embarrass a fellow black student by a white career adviser, which reifies a stereotype that marginalizes black African students. BAIS are ascribed a common identity or behaviour of being 'lazy' black students who do not apply to university on time. Although Jaka was not present in the seminar in question, the effect on him seems evident when he says he finds it very difficult to truly believe that BAIS 'are 100% accepted'.

These three lived experiences suggest that there is a tendency to deny the individuality of black African international students by representing them as one group, usually stereotyped as inferior or lesser beings. This is a rejection

of individuality and individual identity as a person having his/her own personality, social location, talents, likes and dislikes. Coupland (2010: 248) describes the discourse of homogenizing as 'a productive means of outgrouping and minoritisation'. Thus, through homogenization of their behaviour and identities, BAIS are Othered, paving the way for marginalization, exclusion and reduced opportunities to fully participate in their universities' academic and social life.

Stereotyped based on the perceived backwardness of Africa

Dervin (2012) explains that stereotypes involve having relatively fixed beliefs about the qualities and characteristics of categories of people or places, which mostly communicate negative messages. There are a bewildering number of stereotypes about the continent of Africa. These include that the continent of Africa is just one large country that is too hot and too poor, where 'primitive' and/or less developed people live (Jarosz, 1992). Widespread negative perceptions of Africa in the West, mainly due to disproportionately negative media accounts of the continent (Nothias, 2018), have been documented to have contributed to less than positive lived experiences for Africans studying in the West (Beoku-Betts, 2004). In this study, a number of BAIS shared their accounts of how they were made to feel different or treated differently because of the negative perceptions that people in the UK have about the continent. They were constructed through a stereotypical understanding of Africa and/or Africans.

Olu narrates her encounters with fellow students as a new arrival in the UK, and also with a taxi driver:

Encounter 1

People's knowledge about Africa is not good, I am not gonna lie. I should have said it the first time [during the interview]. The first time I got here, people are like '... where are you from?' I say 'Nigeria' ... uffff ... I have had so many stupid questions. Someone asked me, 'oh, how can you afford to go to university? Are you on benefit?' It's weird because I find out that in the West everyone knows about them [Westerners], but they don't know about other people, so it's quite

ignorant, and that's one thing that gets into me. They hear one piece of news and they use it like the whole country is like that: 'oh, I heard about those girls who they took ...' [school girls kidnapped by terrorists]. This is quite sad because the Boko Haram situation shouldn't be the first topic you need to learn about me.

Encounter 2

Sometime on my way to see my aunty in Canal, my Uber driver asked me 'oh, you are Nigerian, do you see animals?' and I am like, 'yeah, in the zoo!', because I only see animals in the zoo. We don't have animals running up and down, you obviously know.

(Olu, female, 20, Woods)

Olu's capacity to fund her own education is automatically questioned as soon as she tells people where she is from. This could have a direct link with the stereotype that perpetuates the view that 'everyone in Africa is poor'. Global media representations of Africa as a poor continent (Tsikata, 2014) that depends on food aid from the West have perhaps shaped people's understanding of Africa. Olu also rightly points out the lack of knowledge on the part of some Westerners about Africa when she says 'everyone knows about them, but they don't know about other people'. This feeling is shared by BAIS in the West in general. Constantine et al. (2005: 60) report that BAIS in their study expressed a similar view that 'many people in the United States had little awareness of global issues outside of U.S. domestic concerns.' This situation could make interaction between BAIS and Westerners difficult. The knowledge that Westerners have largely depends on negative media coverage of Africa. Olu is the second BAIS in this study to be implicated in the actions of Boko Haram. That is a dangerous Othering. As Madrid (1988: 56) explained the Other 'provokes distrust and suspicion.'

The question to Olu about whether she is claiming benefits reveals that the lack of knowledge has gone further, and one could argue that some Westerners (in this case Olu's home student friends) may not even know about their own welfare system. If they knew, they would probably not have asked Olu, an international student, whether she is claiming benefits. International students do not have any recourse to public funds, a condition

that is clearly set out in their Tier 4 student visa. Being a black student from Africa has contributed to Olu being Othered as an impoverished person who could not be at her university without some form of financial aid.

Olu seems to be a victim of another stereotype about the geography of Africa. The Uber driver asks her, 'do you see animals?', suggesting that wild animals are found everywhere in Africa and that its people live in close proximity with its wildlife. Adams and McShane (1996) in *The Myth of Wild Africa* explain how colonial representations of Africa gave rise to this stereotype of Africa as a jungle full of wildlife. Thus, Olu is seen as a person from the jungle who lives with animals. Olu vents her frustration and responds, '... we don't have animals running up and down, you obviously know!' It appears that the context did not convince Olu that the driver's remarks emanate from lack of knowledge, but rather from a stereotypical perception of someone from Africa as perhaps less 'civilized' or 'modern'. One may wonder if the same driver would ask a student from Canada if he/she sees grizzly bears? It seems that skin colour, along with accent, singles out BAIS as visible minorities and a target for ridicule and demeaning remarks.

Astu from Castle shares a similar experience of being received with a shocked reaction ('really?') from home students when she told them that she pays for her education in the UK:

A lot of people actually expected that I am here on scholarship and react by saying 'really?!' when I tell them I sponsor myself. Because international students pay higher fees compared to European international students, there's that expectation of, like, 'really, you can afford that?!' It's like that stereotype perpetuated into it a lot. There's also all these stereotypes about Africa and Africa's poverty – all those things. So especially when I arrived, that was something that kind of drove me to really want to be part of the 'Africa Summit' [a conference she organizes]. It was to really promote and show that element of Africa, not that stereotypical view that you see on Africa all the time – like the needy child, the desert region; and I am, like, 'no, we live in cities too'. Yes, the desert and the poverty are still a part of Africa, but I said, 'no, I don't live in a forest; I do not have a pet lion!'

(Astu, female, 21, Castle)

Astu was unsettled by the negative monolithic view of Africa stereotyped as a desert full of poverty and nothing else. As Madrid (1988: 56) articulates, 'Being *the other* means feeling different; is awareness of being distinct; is consciousness of being dissimilar'. Despite being from a cosmopolitan city and from an affluent family, Astu was made to feel that she is different – one who lives in a forest and has a pet lion. This inspired her to depict the other, more positive face of Africa by organizing an international conference. Pieterse (1992:9) pinpoints that 'the legacy of several hundred years of Western expansion and hegemony ... continues to be recycled in Western cultures in the form of stereotypical images of non-western cultures'. Like Olu, Astu felt the denigrating and degrading effect of the 'poor Africa' stereotype that made people think that she lives in the forest with animals. Her first few months in her UK university were blighted by cultural denigration. As the accounts of Olu and Astu suggest, some white home students first contact with BAIS could be heavily influenced by negative stereotypes about their continent. This could potentially have far-reaching ramifications. Research (Hausmann et al., 2007; Cabrera et al., 1999) shows that negative first-year student experiences are related to problems with adjustment, achievement and student persistence towards graduation.

BAIS also share their accounts of how they felt Othered simply because of their international student status, their skin colour, and/or their religion. At times, some home/white students have alienated BAIS just by avoiding contact, without the use of any words. Wanja from Parkside remarks that '... some people mix up with anyone from different parts of the world, they are friendly, but some others they just don't want to mix'. A number of BAIS expressed the view that they feel stigmatized and positioned as different, and others explained how they are seen as untrustworthy and as being more likely to abscond from the immigration system. Pala from Canal-Great lamented:

They are just blind to the truth. They just don't believe that you will finish your course and go back. When I go to the airport, they will start asking me some funny questions, thinking that I come to the UK and hide. If you come here, you will be scrutinized at times.

(Pala, male, 36, Canal-Great)

Pala laments being asked 'funny question' and being scrutinized at airports. This scrutiny could differ by country of origin, as can be evidenced by the requirement for registration with the police for international students from selected countries (UKCISA website).

According to the Home Office (2017:11) second report on statistics being collected under the exit checks programme, 97.4% of those with study visas leave the UK after completing their studies. However, despite the evidence, there seems to be a culture of disbelief that blights the student experience. As Pala said, 'They are blind to the truth'.

Wasa from Port explains how he feels he is positioned as less knowledgeable and uncivilized:

If you are talking in general sense if there is stigma, there still is. It's not as much, but you would still get discrimination, you would still get the vibe that you are different – the vibe that you are not fully accepted yet. You would still get the vibe that people look at you differently. I feel like it's mostly based on ignorance more than anything else, because, for example, when you meet students for the first time, they give you this feeling that you are from a less civilized place, and they are right in a sense. I am from a developing country, so I am from a less civilized area in general, but then they kind of overplay that in their head, so they feel like you shouldn't know as much, you shouldn't speak as well as they do. You just get those kind of vibe from students when you meet them at first, especially those white students from more civilized areas, basically. So that's why I am saying it's ignorance in the sense that they don't know that you do have proper education in developing country, that we are civilized, even if it's not like a general thing where the whole country is civilized like the way it's in the UK. But we do have places that are civilized, and we do come from good backgrounds as well.

(Wasa, male, 22, Port)

Wasa is evidently stereotyped as a less capable student simply because he comes from a 'developing country'. He is unhappy that they think of a developing country as a homogeneous entity, and highlights that BAIS come from a variety of social and economic backgrounds. Wasa has been to one of

the most expensive private secondary schools in his home country, and he comes from a family that can afford £19,000 a year tuition fees, excluding his living costs, which could be as much again. However, Wasa seems to have internalized the discourses of 'uncivilized' Africa and 'civilized' West: 'they are right in a sense ... I am from a less civilized area.' The notion of civilization, and the relationship between the 'civilized' and 'uncivilized', is defined more by power, dominance and exploitation. Udah (2018) reports that 'Othering practices can impact' how black African people perceive themselves when they experience insidious discrimination over a period.

The fact that Wasa says that there is still stigma against black African students is more concerning. As far back as 1963, Goffman argued that a stigmatized group's identity is defined on the basis of the negative perceptions that people hold about them (Goffman, 1963). In Wasa's case, this might mean white/home staff and students alike believing that BAIS such as Wasa are from 'less civilized' areas and possess inferior academic capacity and language proficiency. Dervin (2015) explains that Othering discourses can easily lead to patronizing attitudes such as 'my education is better than yours', such as experienced by Wasa. Thus, it would not be illogical to think that, on this basis, white/home staff and students might arguably exercise discrimination and exclusion that disadvantages BAIS's educational success and affects their overall well-being in more ways than one. For example, from Wasa's words we can see that his academic capabilities are being negatively judged or doubted, not on the basis of his individual capabilities but just on his place of origin or 'race'. As discussed in Chapter 6, similar judgements have been made by one of his teachers in the classroom, which suggests it could be a serious cause for concern, not just for Wasa but also for other BAIS. In view of the fact that many teachers are may be less likely to make their experiences of negative and prejudicial judgements against BAIS public, the problem may be more pervasive than this evidence suggests, and this needs further study.

Being exoticized and fetishized

Fanon (1952) explains that racism and white supremacy can be reinforced and perpetuated through expressions of seemingly positive complimentary comments that fetishize and exoticize black people as the Other, outsiders and strangers who have qualities of being intelligent, or beautiful or successful – qualities traditionally associated with whiteness. Ladson-Billings, (1998:9) calls this phenomenon ‘conceptual whiteness’. Analysis of BAIS’s accounts of their lived experiences reveal instances where their black bodies were either fetishized and/or their personhood seen as interesting or entertaining by white people.

Astu from Castle shares an interesting encounter with a white peer at her university:

And there’s this idea that you’re unique. You meet some of those people who say to you, ‘oh, I would love to date an African girl, just kind of just for experience’. I am, like, ‘nooooo’ [laughs, bemused]. I remember in my first year a white guy literally asked me, ‘Oh my God, I would love to know what this hakuna matata lifestyle is by dating an East African girl’, and I was like, ‘is that really your pick, is that really how you want to approach me?’ I feel like this is because of the media, which always portrays this over-sexualized image of what the African girl is in music videos. There’s that expectation that you will be very loose, and all you are focused about is maybe like shaking (slightly shakes her waist) and all that stuff, and if you are not, that it’s just like almost a disconnect.

(Astu, female, 21, Castle)

Scholarly theories about Orientalism (Crozier et al., 2016: 45) explain that ‘Historically, the White view of Black and Minority Ethnic people, is as Said (2003) observed, “fascinatingly strange and entertaining”’. Similarly, Astu’s black body is fetishized as an entertainment through a stereotype of ‘an over-sexualized image’ of what an African girl should be – a loose, easy-going, and waist-shaking girl. Astu is bemused by the way she was approached by the white guy, ‘kind of just for experience’, rather than for a genuine interest in her character or personality. Astu reacts to this dehumanizing, degrading objectification as a submissive, exotic piece of entertainment with an exercise of strong agentic self, and says, ‘is that really your pick, is that how you want to approach me?’ Astu recognizes the stereotype and resists it or, as

Althusser (1971) would say, did not respond to the hail. That is significant, as Althusser says that the moment of self-recognition is the moment when identity comes into being. Turning to the hail (Althusser, 1971) is a metaphor for an ideology that women are encouraged to internalize and accept as if it is their own through an invisible but consensual process.

In a similar vein, Baso, a mature BAIS from Downtown, depicts a dating experience with a white British girl, which he attributes to being an intelligent black man:

Presently, I am even dating someone here, and it happens because of my academic pursuit ... she admired me, my excellent work, my effort, being hard-working and then she was like, 'OK, I think I need to go closer to this person, I need to see what's trickling down this thing'. She is very helpful, she is a white British girl! She is very helpful, and she has been nice to me, and I see it is because I am an excellent student. So when you are black, you are here, you try to do your best, and then people will come around, and then it is easy for you. So, I say my ethnicity coupled with my hard work has benefited me a lot.

(Baso, male, 28, Downtown)

Baso is chosen as boyfriend because he is perceived as a hard-working, helpful black man. He asserts that being black one needs to work hard, be smart and show that one can be of some utility, so that life will be 'easy'. So, his 'ethnicity', coupled with his 'hard work', earned him fame and a white girlfriend, who is attracted to benefit from what would 'trickle down' from the black mind. It appears that BAIS are more easily accepted and seen as less alien when they are easy to talk to, friendly, smiling and fun-loving.

In his account, Demba, who describes himself as a person who 'likes to have fun and chill with friends', says life has really been nice for him at his university:

People look at you like a celebrity at times because you are black in the midst of white; I don't know why I make friends easily ... I am seen like a celebrity in the sense of, like, you don't see many black people around. You see some, but, like, not a lot, so some people just call me in the uni. It's actually their first contact with, like, people from other races.

(Demba, male, 20, Woods)

Archer & Francis (2006:151) conceptualised the positioning of British-Chinese students as smart through seemingly innocuous remarks as 'negative positives' – indicating 'the subtlety and 'slipperiness' of the racism' they experienced. Similarly, by virtue of being one of the very few black people in the university, and the only BAIS on his course, Demba is inscribed the status of a celebrity. He is a subject of interest for at least some whites at his university since it is their first contact with a black person. He is also interesting since he is on a course that is expensive and traditionally white dominated – aerospace engineering. His friendly, easy-going and fun-loving character appears to have made him less threatening as a black man to white people. However, the subtle othering operating is that Demba is an exception to the rule for displaying qualities not normally possessed by a BAIS.

Olu shares similar experiences of being seen as fascinating while performing a pacifying act, such as saying prayers in a church congregation in the presence of white people:

In my church there are a few white people. They look at us, like, in fascination; not like, 'oh these people are loud they need to put it down'. They enjoy the culture. You can see that we actually come out more when we are with our people [all black] than with a mix of people. So there is a sort of a difference. So it's more like you just need to behave with the situation and environment and stuff.

(Olu, female, 20, Woods)

Olu, who described a less than positive experience interacting with white students at university, appears to have experienced a more positive reception and recognition of her racial identity in a social space outside the university. In a church setting, a group of black people are seen with 'fascination', and the usual stereotype of being 'loud' does not seem to apply here. They seem to be tolerated to be themselves in a church context, rather than in their university. Olu implies that coming together as a group empowers them to assert themselves: 'we actually come out more when we are together'.

Being excluded from, and avoided in social spaces

The theme of being excluded and avoided concerns stories of BAIS being marginalized by white students in various social settings and left out of friendship circles. Poyrazli & Lopez (2007:272) found international students are more vulnerable to discrimination 'because they may speak English with an accent, and because they may belong to a visible racial or ethnic minority group.'

Wasa describes a less than positive experience of his relations with white home students in academic spaces. He believes that BAIS are Othered based on perceived ability and also accent:

For example, they are not going to look down on the people that come from the US because they do think their education is on par with the education in the UK; whereas, if you are coming from an African country, there is the notion that your level of education is less than the one they get from European countries, so I feel like that makes a difference. And also the fact that they do not expect you to speak English properly, especially if you have an accent, you get a lot of stigma. A lot of them will ignore you, basically. You get ignored in group work assessment and similar things. You just generally get ignored because you are from a lower background and you don't speak properly. This affects Africans and Asians more than the Europeans; so in terms of how they view education, it definitely varies among different countries. So you would get better treatment if they feel you are from a better background in your education.

(Wasa, male, 22, Port)

Wasa's account shows that BAIS are treated differently not just from home students but also from other European international students whose education is deemed 'on par with the [standard of] education in the UK'. As noted by Canales (2000: 23), 'the visibility of one's Otherness: skin color, accent, gender or age', which Goffman calls 'discredited attributes' (Goffman, 1963), could potentially have a stigmatizing effect. Wasa says, 'if you have an accent, you get a lot of stigma'. It is interesting to note from Wasa's account that students from the US, although they have distinct accents of their own, do not seem to be ignored or looked down upon. Thus, it appears that it is the

intersection of being from the continent of Africa, with a perceived low level of education, and the physical embodiment of an 'African accent' that causes the Othering of BAIS from academic life at their universities. Solórzano and Yosso (2002: 25) underscore 'the layers of subordination' that people of colour could face 'based on race, gender, class, immigration status, surname, phenotype, accent, and sexuality'.

Wanja from Parkside also expresses the view that people are Othered based on their accent, and are treated as less capable students. He remarks:

I will be honest with you, the moment you have an accent, people believe you are not from here. They believe you don't know English just because you got an accent. Don't take me wrong, not all of them, but most will just say 'ahhh ... their English!' That is what happens to me.

(Wanja, male, 31, Parkside)

Wanja has a different legal status than the rest of the participants in this study, as he holds a British passport. Despite living in the UK much longer, and despite his inclusion in the UK through British citizenship, his lived experiences are very similar to the other BAIS. Wanja is still positioned as different and Othered through his identifiable African accent, just like the rest of BAIS who arrived just a couple of years ago to study. Legally and officially a home student, he nevertheless shares a common lived experience of being automatically identified and Othered through his accent. This provides evidence that length of stay in the UK and/or change of legal status, for example by acquiring UK citizenship, may not do much to increase acceptance by the host society. This demonstrates the importance of how someone looks and sounds to how he or she is perceived. Munro (2003:38) also reported, 'negative attitudes toward foreign-accented speech have led to discrimination against second-language users in Canada.'

There are many instances where BAIS reported feelings of alienation caused by white and/or home students not wanting to interact or to sit down with them, even in a classroom context. When asked what it has been like studying at her current university, Buti emphasized the challenges she faced making

white friends and reiterated, 'I feel like if you are an Australian, you blend in well more because it's easier for them to be friends'. This suggests 'race' trumps being international and white international students enjoy a more positive friendship experience with white home students. Buti narrates her experiences of making friends at her university:

Racism is kind of like an undertone thing. To be fair, white home students won't talk to you. I don't know if they are afraid of you or they don't know what you're like, but, like, they won't talk to you. Chinese, Asians, all of them, they will talk to you. International students will talk to each other, but white home students will not talk to you. They don't engage with me unless, like, they are looking for something. Like yesterday, someone saw me on the road and asked me for directions, but talking to me, as in getting to know me or want to be my friend, no! In my first year, I did want to have diverse friends and I had one white friend, but the way his white friends kind of treated me and kind of spoke to me or looked at me wasn't nice, so I just closed the whole idea. If you want to talk to me, you can talk to me, but if you want to give me odd looks, then don't talk to me, that kind of thing.

(Buti, female, 19, Canal)

Buti's account gives an insight into the friendship patterns operating at her university. She explains that in her experience white home students fail to establish meaningful collegial warm relationships with her, but she seems to have had no problems making friends with other international students, mainly Asians. This finding challenges previous research (Brown, 2009b) that argued that international students stick together and form co-national friendship and fail to gain from the benefits that international education has to offer. Buti's account gives us some evidence that white and/or home students not only refuse to engage and get to know her as a friend, but also appear to respond negatively to overtures from a BAIS such as Buti. That seems to be the case when she met the friends of her white friend, who she perceived as being unfriendly and uninterested. Madrid (1988: 56) writes, 'Otherness means feeling excluded, closed out, precluded even disdained and scorned.'

Rosa's account below echoes similar experiences of white home students not wanting to have a meaningful, genuine friendship with BAIS other than for the exchange of pleasantries. Rosa's statement shows that she has internalized

this, and seems to have given up trying to make white home student friends, just like Buti:

For me, it's hard. I say, 'hey, hi how are you?' but to make people like my close friends, it's really hard because people tend to annoy me. I am sorry, but, like, it's really hard to get someone close to you, do you get it? ... to open your heart to someone, but I am really, like, if I see everyone, 'hi, how are you doing, how is your weekend?' ha haa ... but that's it, that's where it ends.

(Rosa, female, 19, Hillside)

Even a cursory glance at the websites of many UK universities reveals that they pride themselves on being international or global campuses offering opportunities for developing intercultural communication skills, including opportunities for making new friends (Killick, 2016). However, Rosa's and Buti's accounts show how seemingly diverse social spaces may remain highly stratified. There may be diversity of population, but not so much diversity of interaction. Rosa explains how her interaction with white home students ends at a very basic level with the exchange of greetings and nothing more. Vincent et al. (2018: 367), in their study of friendship, diversity and class (albeit in a school context), conclude that 'cultural and social hierarchies remain intact' even when white and minoritized British nationals 'access and share social space and resources'. Similarly, BAIS's experiences in this regard show that there are processes of Othering that insulate white spaces within their universities.

Katu narrates a gloomier experience of being excluded in her classroom, where she felt, in her own words, 'secluded' in the middle of her classmates. She laments:

The first year was hard for me. It's just like you have been secluded in a way. You are just on your own. Every other person is sitting down somewhere else. White or home students didn't want to sit down with me. There are spaces, and you don't understand why there is one particular space they all want to stay in. So it was a bit odd at first. You feel like it's just that seclusion, but having met some other black friends,

I think it has been much better. But it's not just easy, sometimes you just always feel it wherever you are. It's just that gap in a way,

(Katu, female, 22, Canal-Great)

The feelings of isolation experienced by Katu in her first year should be a cause for great concern. She feels secluded, as if she is a danger that should not be approached or contacted. As Madrid (1988: 56) explains, '... being *the other* sometimes involves sticking out like a sore thumb. What is she/he doing here?' This situation is very unfortunate, as many BAIS in this study said one motivation for coming to the UK was the chance to meet and mix with people from different cultures. Previous research documents similar experiences of white home students across the West in general avoiding sitting with international students. In Leask (2009:8), for example, Aziz, an international student in Australia, recounted '... beside me is an empty chair, but this girl she, I remember, like, I was like smiled at her, then she just went back and she sit at the back of the end of the class ... why didn't you just like sit here.' This resonates with the historical colonial phenomenon of pathologizing the other. Spivak (1985) documents that historically, white colonial powers have depicted blacks and other colonized Others as being pathological and inferior and that they should be separated or avoided. In education, Ladson-Billings (1998) built on Harris's (1993) idea of 'whiteness as Property', and elaborated the exclusionary power of whiteness that perpetuates the isolation of blacks and other marginalized groups in the educational context.

Katu sought solace from 'other black friends', which she later said are a group of fellow BAIS from her church. Yosso (2005: 79), in her Community Cultural Wealth model, illustrates how 'peer and other social contacts provide both instrumental and emotional support to navigate through institutions' for students of colour. Without such support, Katu could arguably be at real risk of isolation and possible mental health problems due to her feelings of seclusion. As mentioned earlier in Chapter 5, Katu already suffers from asthma and has had a daunting experience seeking medical help from a health provider in her UK city. Researchers (Bradley, 2000; Littleford & Wright, 1998) have

established that experiences of social exclusion are associated with negative mental health outcomes, such as depression and other stress responses.

Mufti from Canal-Great was very hesitant when asked what it was like for him to be a BAIS at his university. He expressed appreciation for my question, and began by pointing out the difficulty of coming to the UK and being in the middle of a white population. He initially chose to focus on the few white students that he perceives as being really nice to him and that show him love:

That's a very good question. Well it's not easy to come here and to be in a company that are all white, but at the same time you got some few friends that are white but they really love you; they like something about you. They are quite friendly to be honest, and they are good to talk to, but I cannot tell you more than this.

(Mufti, male, 24, Canal-Great)

Mufti appeared overwhelmed with his experiences when he said 'it's not easy to be in a company that are all white'. Coming to a place where one's identity has no or limited representation has been identified as one possible strategy of Othering (Coupland, 2010). Mufti is now in a place where the majority of the population do not look like him. He says 'I cannot tell you more than this', and he was visibly feeling uneasy to share more on the topic. I followed this conversation with a related question, and asked him if he thought he would have had a different experience at his university if he was an international student from another part of the world:

M: ... if I was Asian or American, like, obviously, it would be different. To be a black man, they always underrate you!

S: How is that?

M: Maybe they have bad thinking about black people, so they have that mindset. So you have to be extremely good to them, instead to be normal. You have to put extra more effort to show them that you are not what they think; like you have to be more friendly to them.

S: Who are they, when you say 'they'?

M: The majority of the white.

Back and Solomos (2000) argue that being normal is colonized by the idea of being 'white', and in the West distance from the norm implies Othering. Mufti's assertions that some whites tend to underrate black people, and that a black person has '... to be extremely good' to white people to be considered normal suggest Mufti's awareness that being white is the norm, the standard against which all other 'races' are defined. Gusa (2010: 471) writes, 'Another aspect of white privilege emerges from the ideology that normal social and academic behaviour is that which corresponds to white standards of decorum (Baldwin, 1990; Headley, 2004).' Mufti, as a black African person with different cultural values, codes, tastes and norms, does not act with the standard of decorum expected by white students, so he is not conferred the distinction (Bourdieu, 1984) normally offered to white bodies at his university. As a result, he has to make 'extra more effort' and be 'extremely good' to white people to be seen as normal.

Othering based on Immigration status

Contemporary discourses in the UK political landscape of immigration control and bringing down net immigration to tens of thousands (Partos & Bale, 2015) appear to pervade the international student experience throughout their stay. Some BAIS have particularly stressed how they felt Othered and that they did not belong because of the UK Home Office's policy requiring international students to sign periodically as a checking mechanism of their compliance with the conditions of their student visa. As indicated earlier, this requirement is not uniform and varies by nationality – a concept conflated with 'race' in the case of BAIS:

International students are supposed to comply with the rules of the Home Office. They would like to know what you do. So when you come to campus as an international student, you have to do a check-in always. You go to the counters and you give them your card and put it on top of a machine for a scan. But home students don't have to do this. And I was dating a white girl and she once asked me, 'Domu, why is it that you always have to give them your card so that they have to check you in? What is wrong with you?' I said, 'well I am an international student and I have to do this always. If I don't do it two or three times, they will report me to the Home Office and my visa will be

cancelled.' And sometimes, when we are at home together, she may not want me to go to some classes; but I will just say, 'please let me go quickly before they close, so that I can give them my card to check me in so that I will be safe.' As I said, if you miss more than twice or three times, they send you a letter to know why you didn't check-in and you have to explain.

(Domu, male, 29, Chapel)

Domu feels he is being monitored and put under surveillance, as opposed to home students and also European nationals who are free from signing-in requirements. In a way, international students seem to have been treated like 'failed asylum seekers' who are required to sign-in periodically until they are deported to their country of origin. As Domu told me, the signing process can take more than an hour, especially at the beginning of the academic year, since there will be a long queue of continuing and new international students. It could be a bit humiliating. In addition to the risk of deportation, Domu's experiences gives us insight that this controlling government policy intervention can have an impact on students' social lives on university campuses. Domu feels the signing in requirement has singled him out and caused him feelings of embarrassment and shame when his white British girlfriend wondered if something was wrong with him as she sees him signing regularly. He had to interrupt having quality time with his girlfriend and leave to go and sign when he clearly did not want to.

Pala also expresses his frustration with the signing on policy, which he believes is discriminatory:

The other thing which I am not happy about is in this university, every month you have to go to what they call UKBI, and sign. They say it's immigration control policy or something. You have to go and sign. To me, that's discrimination. I tell them, like, 'OK, you are telling us that we are not part of you, that's why you are making us sign'. And they are asking us questions, 'blah, blah, blah ... yeah'. So if you fail to sign, I have forgotten how many times, they will report you to the Home Office, saying this person has not been calling or signing for the past two or three or four months. They will send some email reminding you that they will report you to the UKBI. I don't like it, honestly. I am not happy about that, because it's just telling us that we are not part of them.

(Pala, male, 36, Canal-Great)

Pala feels alienated and that he does not belong to the university community. The fact that he and his international colleagues are subject to a signing requirement seems to have damaged his sense of belonging at, and acceptance by, the university. Such feelings of scepticism about belonging reflect the feelings of many BAIS in this study, who doubt if they are accepted one hundred per cent. Students treated as Other seem more likely to experience exclusion, limited opportunities and poor mental health (Bradley, 2000; Suarez-Balcazar et al., 2003).

This finding is consistent with research literature on the marginalization of black students in higher education (Solorzano & Villalpando, 1998). However, it is interesting to note that it is only Domu and Pala who shared feelings of discrimination because of the signing requirement, despite the policy apparently being common to all international students. Both are Muslim and come from the same country, although they do not know each other. This might suggest the need to further explore how the signing-on requirements might be differentially experienced by students of different countries, religions or even gender. The dividing, controlling and policing of BAIS through an immigration policy of regular signing-on seems to have Othered black African students, further blighting their lived experiences in the UK.

Othering and discrimination in the labour market

The labour market has been identified as one of the social spaces where BAIS are Othered and discriminated. Securing a work experience placement and/or a part-time job emerged as one of the most serious challenges almost all BAIS faced during their UK sojourn. This phenomenon mirrors the UK national labour market context where black Africans have the highest unemployment rate even among ethnic minorities especially in big cities and inner London boroughs (The University of Manchester, 2017).

The overwhelming majority of BAIS have voiced their frustrations with the discriminatory practices of the UK labour market. BAIS's experiences in this

regard once again suggest that being international and their racialized status have put them at a disadvantage. The following statements from across universities illustrate these challenges:

It has been really hard to get a part-time job and also getting internships. It's not good to be international student. I don't know why, but none of my friends that are black that have applied for internship and got one. Most black students even discourage against applying and encourage that we just rather go home and do our internships. They wouldn't want to actually take an international black student for work, and when you go to, like, all these law firms, you don't see enough black people there. There's no wide representation of blacks.

(Ruth, female, 19, Hillside)

When I tried to look for jobs, I can't find any. I feel, like, certain stores would rather have white people than black people, that's what I think. It took a while for me to think about it 'oh this is the reason [racial discrimination] why this happened'. I go for many interview, but eventually they don't call you back to come and work. I heard somewhere that it's because I had my natural hair out – they didn't want that, they want straight hair. It was just some very, quote unquote, racist things.

(Buti, female, 19, Canal)

At present, I am looking for work placement. I feel like there's more confusion for me because I am not a home student. I don't really know the process as well, and there was just a lot to know about work experience. I have never worked here. I think I am at a disadvantage here. I don't get interviews.

(Lara, female, 19, Song)

I don't think there are, like, a lot of opportunities. So, for example, we have careers fair now. I am international and I am black, and then I walk up to one of the companies that they bring and ask them, 'how can I actually get into your firm as an international student?' And they give me the whole generic information. What I am asking them is how can I get into your firm and work for your firm long-term because I want to actually have experience in the legal sector in the UK, but they do not have that much information on it. They refer me back to the fact, 'oh, yeah, we have a couple of openings now in Africa', stuff like that, but I am asking you specifically for you to be able to tell me how I can

get into your job market, but most of the firms never have that information to give me.

(Poni, female, 19, Canal)

I don't know if it's my colour or my blackness or my Africanness, but it has been really hard to get a part-time job just to get extra cash. It has been really hard. I don't really need the money that much, but it has been really hard to get a job. I apply for jobs, but I barely get an interview.

(Rosa, female, 19, Hillside)

BAIS's experiences seem to demonstrate the seemingly insurmountable problem of securing employment as black Africans. They tell a story of rejection that has frustrated them and have, as a group, decided to seek opportunities at home than in the UK. A recent BBC article reported the magnitude of the discriminatory nature of the labour market in the West, particularly for people from Africa and Asia (Coughlan, 2019). Exclusion of BAIS from the labour market has serious implications for their adjustment, economic security and progress. In particular, being Othered and left out of placement opportunities could be very damaging to their self-esteem, sense of belonging and, above all, their educational success and career trajectories.

Pala's experiences show that BAIS experience even greater discrimination than other international students in the labour market:

They structure their society in hierarchical class, so it's very difficult, especially if you are a black. If you apply for job, you will see they will ask you if you are a black African or a black British, so there is a motive behind that. They will prefer their own black British than black African, so you find out that black African will always be at the bottom. You have limited options in the work place. If you are an EU student, when it comes to work, they treat you differently. You find out if you are a white, you get certain types of jobs; if you are a black, you get certain jobs. For example, in cleaning jobs, most of the time you find lots of blacks than whites; to serve people in the restaurant, you will see a lot of white Europeans; so there you can see the discrimination and racism – you can see it. If you are black and you go and register with an agency, what is easier for you to get is to become a cleaner or a kitchen porter, but if you are white, they will send you to the bar, you go and help them

serve, OK. ... Yeah, it's clear. Well, they would pretend as if they are doing it equally, but it's not like that.

(Pala, male, 36, Canal-Great)

Pala speaks of his experiences of being asked to fill in ethnic monitoring forms. He believes this is the government's method of structuring UK society by social class, and suspects that there may be some sinister motive behind its use. It could be a relatively new experience for many BAIS to be asked to classify themselves by skin colour, as tribal ties probably have more prominence while living in their home countries in Africa. Irungu (2013: 170) writes, 'For most African students marking a box that identifies them as "foreign" and also as Black, White, Multiracial, or otherwise can be a confusing experience and its effects should not be underestimated.' Racial discrimination in the labour market could well have its roots in the way immigrants from different nations to the UK have been historically racialized based on skin colour. Carter et al. (1996: 135) write:

Through immigration and nationality laws, governments ranked human populations into hierarchies of assimilability, in which some groups were regarded as more likely to 'fit in' than others. Once racialized in this way, migrant workers found themselves allocated to particular areas of the labour market and confined to particular positions within the labour process.

Hanassab (2006) reports that Africans in the US reported the highest incidences of discrimination in the job market, and that employers prefer white Americans or Europeans.

Surprise at English language proficiency

Almost all the BAIS interviewed mention that issues related to their English language proficiency are a key aspect of their lived experiences while studying and living in the UK. The issue discussed here specifically concerns how students (both home and other internationals) and teachers express surprise at a BAIS speaking good English, and use a typical discursive strategy of Othering, such as asking 'how is your English so good?' Many BAIS find this very hard to accept, as most have had a high-quality secondary education,

mostly in international private schools, and they come from countries where English is the official language of government. BAIS attribute this surprise and shock reaction at their English language speaking ability to stereotype, ignorance or simply an underestimation that shapes expectations about specific racial groups.

Researchers have reported that assumptions of low language proficiency shape the way teachers interact with international students, including judgement of their academic performance (Ryan & Viete, 2009). Yomi describes her experiences of being assumed not to be able to communicate in English by some of her teachers:

There have been times where I got this vibe from teachers when I talk to them. I was talking to a teacher, and then he was like, 'oh, are you from London, that you speak English so well, how do you speak English so well when you are from Nigeria?' I said like, 'what do you expect me to speak? Some other language?' English is our official language. People always get surprised when we speak English properly compared to other international students, that's one. So when I am trying to talk to, like, a lecturer or a staff about something, they just always assume that 'oh she might not know what she is saying'. They just keep quiet and look at me, 'oh are you sure you know what we are talking about?' I always get this vibe that they expect me not to know how to communicate, what I am trying to say. They think she probably does not know what she is trying to say, so sometimes, but not all the time, yeah.

(Yomi, female, 19, Port)

Yomi's account reveals the deficit-laden view of BAIS's language proficiency manifested through expression of surprise when she speaks well, and also the doubt that she may not understand. This may be a conscious questioning of the black African student's language competence as a result of internalized deficit thinking (Valencia, 2012) or Othering her due to dysconsciousness (King, 1991). In his seminal work, King (1991: 113) explains that 'dysconsciousness is an uncritical habit of mind (including perceptions, attitudes, and beliefs)'. Whether through deficit thinking or dysconsciousness, the assumption of ignorance or the expression of surprise at Yomi's English-speaking ability has communicated low expectation and prejudicial treatment,

which may corrode Yomi's confidence in her teacher and arguably in the system as a whole. The assumption on the part of the teacher that Yomi must be a black student from London because she speaks good English demonstrates how Yomi is constituted and positioned as a racialized Other, giving insights into the marginalized and racialized experiences of black students in the context of UK higher education (Crozier et al., 2016). Yomi also said that she gets the vibe that she does not know how to communicate. This is very serious, as it suggests that Yomi experiences Othering due to the hostile educational climate created, and not just from the verbal comments. Augoustinos and Reynolds (2001) explain that Othering can also be experienced from the manner in which one is spoken to and not just from the words themselves. Through the questioning of her ability and/or expressions of surprise, Yomi was made to feel Othered and that she was not a typical student who belongs to her university.

This finding is consistent with the literature. Beoku-Betts (2004) reports that teachers showed misgivings and criticized the accent of female African students in the US. Sawir et al. (2012: 447) report that even proficient international students in Australia, 'suffered from assumptions that they could not communicate, triggered by their appearance alone, or by a comprehensible but non-native accent.' A 19-year-old female international student described how she felt degraded by the contents of a referral letter to a doctor. She lamented:

It was stated that I might not be able to communicate properly, that I might have some language problems – would the doctor at the hospital please keep the explanation simple and straightforward. Which was very insulting. I mean, it's my first language.

Astu from Castle shares a similar experience of being seen as different from what the home students believed was a normal/typical international student. Astu remarks:

It is very interesting, because a lot of the time I am seen here like an anomaly. They say 'Oh, wow your English is so good'. I got that a lot, especially in my first year. That is a bit frustrating. There's that

stereotypical view of what an international student is supposed to be: a bit reserved, a bit quiet, unsure of themselves, broken English.

(Astu, female, 21, Castle)

Astu is positioned as an anomaly because her English is unexpectedly good. She finds that frustrating, since it communicates low expectation. Jaspers et al. (2010: 244) write, 'Othering is the process of representing an individual or a social group to render them distant, alien, or deviant.' Astu (and also Yomi) are rendered an anomaly and unsure of themselves, and are discursively Othered and positioned as students who do not fit into the normative traditional type of university student in the UK.

BAIS can also experience surprise at their ability to speak English even from fellow international students. Poni relates:

One day, my friend in my seminar group came up to me one time and she was like 'how do you speak so well? Are you a home student or are you an international student?' She is from Singapore – which even baffled me more. I was like, 'so you think because I am black I only speak well if I grew up here!' But I didn't, like, scold her for asking me that kind of silly question. I thought, it's just because of the fact she didn't know.

(Poni, female, 19, Canal)

Poni is baffled that a remark expressing surprise at her ability to speak English, which normally comes from white/home students, has come from another international student. This is consistent with previous research findings in the US, where BAIS reported experiences of being discriminated against and marginalized by international students from other cultures in addition to home students (Constantine et al., 2005). In the UK, the recent report by EHRC (2019) also found some evidence that African students and also home black students are subject to racial slurs and derogatory language by Asian and Arab international students.

Beku is another BAIS who observes that white/home students and academics tend to underestimate and are surprised when black international students are intelligent or speak good English. He laments:

Sometimes people underestimate you as a black international student. Sometimes people will be surprised if you are, like, successful or smart or well spoken. I remember that was one thing that came out here in a class. I would speak and everyone is like, 'oh you speak such good English', and I am like, 'oh did I? Is that why you are surprised?'; they will be surprised, and you are not used to people being surprised by you speaking, so that happens sometimes. So maybe it's ... but I wouldn't say it's, like, racial, it's more maybe ignorant to some extent. But it's something you are very much made aware of; so making assumptions, expecting low.

(Beku, male, 21, Castle)

Beku says that he is not used to people 'being surprised' by him speaking English. In his previous educational experience, Beku saw himself, and was seen by others, as a proficient user of the English language, and it was never a subject of interest or doubt. The new discursively constructed identity of 'a surprise English language speaker' has communicated to him that the new educational setting in his UK university may have a low expectation of him as a student. The discourse of 'surprise' about BAIS speaking English could have a profound effect on their identities as learners, and on their learning. Coll and Falsafi (2010: 215) argue that 'The identities that are formed and the learning that takes place are mutually influential.' Thus, the discourse of 'surprise' could potentially affect Beku's previously formed identity as a confident and proficient user of English, and could have a detrimental effect on his motivation for, and feelings of inclusion in, the new learning environment. Beku believes that people underestimate him.

Recognizing white privilege: Being BAIS versus being a white/home student

One key aspect of Othering that BAIS said shaped their lived experiences differently was the status of being a BAIS, which brings disadvantages that white/home student do not experience. Participants argued that their educational experiences might have been different if they were white home students, and that whiteness and/or white privilege- 'an invisible package of

unearned assets' (McIntosh, 1988:30)- has given an unfair advantage to white/home students.

A number of the interviewees said that white students are privileged just for being white, and as a result they find life and education easier than do BAIS. These advantages include the ability to mix more easily and to develop stronger social capital, advantage in the labour market, identifying more readily and easily with the mainly white teaching staff, less difficulty in academic communication, and ultimately having an easier transition to university life and education.

Arno from Canal-Great is perhaps the only participant who comes from a country where the white/black divide is so intense and racial discrimination pervades all aspects of his life. Arno believes that being white is like being given a 'head start':

Being white, you are born into a certain privilege, a certain class where you know you are able to achieve and you are mingling where you put yourself ... you are given a head start to start within our industry [acting]. It's like that, and the majority of the industry is white, so there is that unspoken easiness. They just get along with each other a lot more. I don't know how to explain it, but in that sense it would make things, I believe, easier if I were a white middle class home student from here [UK]. I wouldn't be worried so much, I just wouldn't! I wouldn't have to worry about so many things that I worry about now on a day-to-day basis.

(Arno, male, 26, Canal-Great)

Arno underscores that white students, especially in the acting industry, will accrue special privileges that make it easier for them to make friends and to navigate the labour market. Kendall (2002: 1) explains that 'White privilege is an institutional (rather than personal) set of benefits granted to those of us who, by race, resemble the people who dominate the powerful positions in our institutions.' This provision of privilege benefits whites whether or not they are aware of it or without them consciously demanding it. Arno speaks of his perception of the benefits of white privileges to white students by saying, 'there is that unspoken easiness; I don't know how to explain it.' This difficulty

to explain has been captured by (Bourdieu, 1990), who talks of 'ontological complicity', describing the fit between an individual's habitus (in this case, that of white students) and a particular social space (Bourdieu's field). Bourdieu and Wacquant (1992:127) note that 'when habitus encounters a social world of which it is the product, it is like a "fish in water" – it does not feel the weight of the water and it takes the world about itself for granted.' However, for Arno, with a black habitus (Lofton & Davis, 2015), it could be an infelicitous encounter with an unfamiliar and/or alien social world.

Arno believes that his life would have been easier and he would not worry about so many things that worry him on a day-to-day basis. These possibly include taken for granted things such as codes of conduct in social interaction, and the feeling of sense of belonging that would make 'mingling' with others in a social space easier. Bourdieu (1990a:11) articulates this relative ease to mix and interact afforded by one's social position by saying that one needs 'to merely be what they are in order to be what they have to be.' In this case, they just have to be white to earn white privileges.

Baso shares a similar view of how white students have an advantage over black students because of their racial positioning as white. Scheurich (1993), along with Bourdieu (1977), explains that educational systems in the West assume the possession of middle and upper class (which is, more often than not, predominantly white) cultural capital, and success depends on the capacity to learn and reproduce the ways of these dominant groups. Baso has the following to say on how being white affects success:

One thing about white students, they already have an advantage over you, just because they are white! Trust me! Because they are white, they already have an advantage over you, so one thing that's goanna help you as a black student, it's you being good. You coming out as a very good barrister or solicitor – that's the one thing that will help you, but if you are not and you are just an average barrister or solicitor, just like the white students, trust me, you are not goanna make it. You will be a barrister or solicitor for, like, a whole month without having a single case, despite your knowledge.

(Baso, male, 28, Downtown)

Baso asserts that black students, unlike white students, cannot afford to be just average if they are to have any chance of success in the labour market. A black student needs to be 'good' to have any chance of success. This echoes the often quoted saying among black people that you have to be twice as good to have any chance to succeed (Osler, 1999). There is evidence in the research literature that supports Baso's assertions. Studies (Runnymede Trust, 2019; Pettigrew & Martin, 1987) have reported that black and ethnic minorities face racial discrimination in employment. Runnymede Trust (2019) reported even high achiever black Africans in the UK are in non-graduate jobs and many have to change their names into English names to get job interviews.

Jaka from Castle also shares the view that white students do not have to fight stereotypes in the way that blacks do as they navigate social and educational spaces at their universities:

As much as you say we are all the same, but you are always going to be different. People are going to judge you, if not by colour, by religion, maybe even by the place you are born at. So, of course, being different is going to affect how you move around, how people interact with you. So being black means we have a lot of negative stereotypes. You are going to have sometimes prove that you are not part of that stereotype, and that, I think, is one of the things that would make a difference from being a white student who don't have to be labelled stereotypes that they have to prove that they are not that stereotype. As a black student, I think that extra layer of effort you have to put in is what is going to impact you most.

(Jaka, male, 20, Castle)

Jaka expresses that being black puts him at a disadvantage as it shapes how 'he moves around' and how 'people interact with him'. Negative stereotypes associated with being black put on extra pressure, so BAIS need to put in an 'extra layer of effort' to fight it. White students do not have that burden. Critical race theory scholars (Leonardo, 2009 ; Solórzano & Yosso, 2002) have explained that whiteness is the default standard from which all other 'races' are judged. Thus, whiteness not only enables whites to make judgements and form stereotypes about black people, but also protects them from being

negatively stereotyped as they are constructed and defined as the norm, the default, and seen as normal.

Jaka feels the pressure to prove to people that he does not conform to the stereotype they hold about black people. This 'extra layer of effort' impacts on his life in the UK. Although Jaka did not detail these impacts, research, especially in the US (Fries-Britt & Griffin, 2007; McGee & Martin, 2011), reports that even high-achieving black students were judged based on prevalent stereotypes and have to manage these stereotypes in order to succeed and survive academically.

In a similar vein, Olu narrates how the threat of being stereotyped as an angry black woman forces her to shape her behaviour and suffer the burden of managing negative emotions, even if she is angry or upset. She worries about confirming to anti-black stereotypes:

There are so many stereotypes about black people. I do not naturally fit into most of the stereotypes, but I also make a conscious effort not to, in terms of black people are aggressive, black people are loud, black people are violent. For example, when I get emotional about something, I have to take breath and just try and portray in a way that doesn't seem arrogant or aggressive to people. If you get emotional about stuff, you can easily just lose control, and it seems like you are getting aggressive or speaking your mind. So I always try and, like, think of the best way to relay my message without boiling into any of the stereotypes. I want to be, like, the exception and make them say, 'oh, I thought black people were this but you are not – stuff like that. It's always better to show them what black people really are not and what the media wants them to think they are.

(Olu, female, 20, Woods)

Previous research confirms that both male and female black students modify their behaviour so as not to be stereotyped. Shorter-Gooden and Jones (2003) report that black women in the US change the way they talk and the content of their talk to be accepted in white spaces. In their study of the racism experiences of black male resident assistants at predominantly white universities in the US (**Harper et al., 2011: 191**) report that black males who suffered racial insults and unfair treatment said that they are forced to swallow/harbour their emotions, 'maintaining composure to positively thwart

the caricature of Black men as angry.' All this brings with it an extra pressure that takes their energy away from their studies – something white students do not necessarily have to experience. There is less or no expectation on them, and they will let their emotions out without fear of being judged or stereotyped.

Summary

In this chapter, I have presented the Othering that BAIS experience through such processes as homogenization, being stereotyped, being exoticized and fetishized, and being Othered by immigration status and language, as well as the overall discriminatory Othering BAIS experience because they are denied the privileges of white home students. I have argued that being Othered demonstrates not only the disadvantage experienced by BAIS, but also the privileges of being a white home student, which complicates the terrain of the educational landscape that BAIS need to navigate on an unlevel playing field.

In the next and final chapter, I will conclude this study by summarising my findings, outlining the contributions of my thesis, and providing some implications for practice.

Chapter 9: Conclusion and Implications

The purpose of this study was to explore the lived experiences of black African international students (BAIS) from sub-Saharan African countries who have come to the UK for undergraduate study. I employed a qualitative research design to interview 21 BAIS, and explored their stories mainly through the theoretical lenses of Bourdieu and critical race theory (CRT). As I explained in Chapter 1, this thesis tells a story of how students' visible racialized identities, such as skin colour, accent and educational background, influence how they are perceived and judged in the new host country and its universities. My story elaborates about how the requirement to possess the cultural capital demanded by the new educational setting is enmeshed with BAIS's racialization as the unprepared and/or undeserving 'Other' and work in tandem in shaping all aspects of their lived experiences. In this final chapter, I summarise my findings and arguments in relation to the current literature. Then I consider the theoretical and empirical contributions of my thesis, followed by its limitations and implications.

The overall findings show that BAIS's lived experience is a function of the possession of capitals demanded by UK higher education, lower expectations and multiple racialized domination. Their overall experience is fraught with lack of acceptance, and they are positioned as lacking outsiders who are admitted to the institutions but not truly included. They experience racism and/or Othering from home white (and also black), other non-white international students, and members of the community in various social settings, both inside and outside the university. Within their universities, institutional structures and practices, such as online submission, seminar groups, predominantly white teachers, a Eurocentric curriculum and newer assessment methods, were unfortunately found to be sites of further disadvantages or racialized discriminatory treatment when BAIS did not readily fit into these practices and/or were perceived as deficient learners.

Summary of findings

I begin by presenting my finding on the distinctness of the BAIS who participated in this study in terms of some demographic characteristics and also some of their commonalities in terms of lived experiences. I will then outline the main body of the summary of my findings under the four categories I used to organize my analysis chapters.

Two groups of BAIS

I have found two groups of BAIS studying in UK higher education, with important implications for their lived experiences. First, there are younger, traditional university-age BAIS who have come straight from secondary school, and attend more prestigious universities and come from more affluent families. Second, there are mature, non-traditional BAIS (over 25s), most with some form of post-secondary educational experience, studying in less prestigious universities, who have less financial support from their families, and as a result have to work if they are to persist to graduation. Financial worries mean they have less social life and face greater adjustment challenges than the younger BAIS. This extends the findings from previous studies in the UK on BAIS, which predominantly focus on graduate students or only mature BAIS (Brown & Holloway, 2008 ; Brown, 2009 ; Brown & Jones, 2013; Maundeni, 2001 ; Hyams-Ssekasi et al., 2014).

Commonalities

The data show that although the lived experiences of BAIS who took part in this study sometimes varied based on gender, age, individual differences and economic capital, there were some commonalities. First, almost all the BAIS have expressed a positive view of the standard of teaching and the ability of their teachers. In particular, the mature BAIS compared their UK experiences of teaching and teachers with their previous experiences back home in an under-resourced setting, and praised it by saying that it is dream come true. Second, all BAIS across all age groups, genders, type of institution and course have experienced racism and discrimination themselves or know someone who has, or both. Third, all BAIS experienced a lack of black

lecturers in their courses, and the large majority were taught only by white teaching staff throughout the duration of their courses. These findings are consistent with the research literature (Andrade, 2006 ; Brown & Jones, 2013; ECU, 2018).

Main findings

The major findings of this thesis are categorized under the four main topics used to organize the four analysis chapters. In Chapter 5, under the topic of 'capital and adjustment challenges', I focused on the difficulties that BAIS face due to the devaluation of their cultural capital and the demands to possess the capitals valued by the new system. The specific challenges that emerged include being a foreigner, loneliness/isolation, difficulty in adapting to a new culture, inadequate institutional support, language issues, and the challenges of adapting to new teaching and assessment methods.

BAIS face extra adjustment challenges that their peers would not necessarily face because of their status as foreign and black African internationals. They experience challenges with obtaining visas and financial difficulties, as they had to pay fees upfront, which are much higher than the fees that home and European students pay. These findings are consistent with previous research (Caldwell & Hyams-Ssekasi, 2016).

I have also shown how BAIS's relocation to the UK removes them from the close contact and support that they could receive from family and friends. This study found that BAIS experience loneliness and a lack of sufficient and appropriate institutional support, which contributes to their difficulty in adapting to the culture of the new host society. Previous studies (Markus & Kitayama, 1991 ; Nebedum-Ezeh, 1997) have established that black Africans who are socialized to be interdependent and have communal values can be challenged by Western culture, which promotes independence in higher education (Stephens et al., 2012). This study confirms this finding, but also extends the literature by including the experiences of undergraduate BAIS in the UK. It also challenges the claims of meritocracy on the part of universities (Killick,

2016) by demonstrating how the education system reproduces inequalities by failing to provide BAIS with adequate institutional support, in particular for non-academic issues.

In Chapter 5, I also analysed language proficiency issues. Research on the experiences of international students in general have long identified that they are challenged by problems with English-language proficiency (Andrade, 2006). In this study, too, BAIS's adaptation was challenged both by the need to belatedly learn academic writing conventions and also by the perception that even their most proficient English is not the legitimate. The findings in this regard not only confirm but also extend the literature, in that they show language proficiency is entangled with racialization. For example, previous studies (Robertson et al., 2000 ;Tompson & Tompson, 1996) argue that international students do not participate in classroom discussion because of problems with English-language proficiency. However, the findings from this study show that even proficient BAIS may fail to engage in class discussions because of home students' reaction to their African accents. As Motha (2006:497) explains, '... linguistic identities [are] inextricable from racial identities,' and, as Domu says, he refrained from speaking in class because his accent and colour are different from his white peers and he thinks that the way he speaks is not 'nice enough', and that he needed to polish his way of speaking – a feeling shared by the older BAIS.

Challenges of adapting to new teaching methods was another theme that emerged. BAIS said that they found the teaching in the UK new in its organization, interactive methods and its wider coverage of content. This contrasted with their previous experience, which was largely teacher-dependent. This is a finding consistent with the literature (Andrade, 2006), and it was surprising that there was no difference reported between those BAIS who attended international private schools and those who attended very poorly resourced state secondary schools .

In Chapter 6, I explored BAIS's accounts of the factors they believe affect their academic performance. Building on their positioning as under-prepared

students lacking the required cultural capital, discussed in the previous chapter, I analysed stories of the disadvantage that BAIS experienced because they had their secondary education in their home countries, which led to unfamiliarity with the assessment methods in current use in their universities. They explain that this put them in a position of disadvantage compared with home students, and also some other European peers, who are more likely to have experienced similar methods in secondary school. Many BAIS expressed that understanding marking schemes, essay-writing skills, being analytical in writing, and the application of academic conventions such as referencing were new to them, and they struggled to learn them, especially in view of the fast-paced teaching organized in short terms of eight to ten weeks. A number of BAIS also raised the Eurocentric nature of their course curriculum, which favours home students. This is consistent with Bourdieu's (1984) assertion that educational institutions enhance the learning and the educational success of students whose cultural capital is included in the curriculum, and that teachers reward students who possess similar types of cultural capital to themselves. I also presented analysis of how BAIS's volume of social capital, and/or any misfortune that may affect their social capital, can mediate their academic performance. While having senior student friends or access to an established study group facilitates BAIS such as Beku and Olu in preparing better for an assessment, not having access to such vital support, as in the case of Mufti and Jaka, heightens difficulties with better performance in assessments. BAIS also related how some serious incidents happening to their families and friends back in their home countries could become distressing, and could affect their academic performance. These findings extend the literature on the black versus white students attainment gap in higher education which mostly is quantitative and focuses on pre-entry student characteristics such as entry qualification and socio-economic background (Broecke & Nicholls, 2006). Using Bourdieu's theoretical tools of cultural capital and field and voice from CRT my study unearthed evidence that show how BAIS are disadvantaged as the field 'demands that they have what is does not give'- for example, as in the form of academic conventions into which

one can only be socialized over time. The finding that BAIS are disadvantaged in relation to home students who are more likely to have prior experience of the teaching and assessment methods provide empirical evidence to Tichavakunda's (2019) explication that a field-informed analysis offers the space for the examination of the relational aspect of lived experience.

BAIS's accounts also revealed that they believe that their 'race' and cultural background influence how their academic work and/or performance is assessed and judged. Stories of not receiving higher grades because they are black Africans, and in some cases experiences of being harshly graded and then moving their grade up through successful appeals, were common themes. This finding is consistent with the literature that report the prejudicial judgement of the performance of both home black students and BAIS (Steventon et al., 2016 ; Maundeni, 2001). However, this study unearthed (albeit from a single BAIS) what is, to my knowledge, the first story of a university being suspected of deliberately favouring home students to earn a first-class degree to help them secure employment and pay their debts, as opposed to international students who leave after graduation. Besides, as presented below, racial microaggressions, rejections and exclusions were insidious, in that they erode students' confidence and self-esteem, contributing to poor performance.

In Chapter 7, I explored BAIS's experiences of overt and covert racism, and their coping strategies. BAIS shared stories about overt and violent racist attacks, where they were called racial slurs, told to go back to Africa, denigrated in public spaces, or about occasions that their peers were attacked by missiles. They also shared several stories of racial microaggressions, where they were subject to subtle but very insidious hostile racism expressed verbally and non-verbally. This happened both inside and outside the university, and the perpetrators were people from various walks of life. To my knowledge, these findings about BAIS's experiences of microaggression are the first in the context of undergraduate BAIS studying and living in the UK. In particular, this study has identified seminar sessions, the much espoused academic space of intercultural learning, to be sites of racial microaggressions

that exclude and undermine BAIS. This is significant if the ideal of international education providing the opportunity to develop intercultural competence is to materialize. Also, if universities want to truly project an image of being global spaces and progressive centres of excellence promoting equality and social justice, they must address this pervasive problem of alienation and exclusion. They cannot claim otherwise when the lived experiences of BAIS show that they are not all-inclusive and welcoming spaces for all groups of students.

Chapter 7 concluded by exploring the various coping strategies that BAIS used to ameliorate the effects of their experiences of racism. These include just ignoring their racism experiences, joining co-national student societies, being resilient, and protecting their victimhood by saying that it is not their struggle. BAIS sought solace and safe spaces in their co-national student societies or churches, where they find solidarity and support, or in many instances simply ignore their experiences of racism, since they feel powerless and helpless to protect themselves from further accusations of being 'troublemakers'. In addition, the colour-blind ideology that actively works to avoid talk of 'race' and racism discouraged BAIS from reporting their racism experiences. This finding confirms that experiences of racism in the UK in general are underreported (Brown and Jones, 2013). However, some show resilience and confront their oppression, at times fighting back like with like – as Rosa did, saying that when they are rude to her, she will be rude back to them.

The most interesting finding is the 'it is not my struggle' strategy. Some BAIS argued that the fight against UK racism is not inherently theirs, because they lack the capacity to fight it or they have a separate identity as blacks from British blacks, who have knowledge and understanding of racism that is rooted in their own history and lived experience. Some BAIS like Astu even seems to have bought into the narrative of 'British black students being over sensitive and/or defensive' - a narrative used by the dominant culture to minimize racism. In their explication of Bourdieu and CRT (Tichavakunda, 2019) rightly pointed out the limited utility of CRT in explaining black students

experiences that may not be aligned with the tents of CRT. They recommend Bourdieu's concept of habitus 'can aid in engaging with students' complex and varying histories and social positioning,' (p,13). Indeed, habitus as a subconscious and built-in way that organize how we understand and categorize the world around us including experiences of racism may help us to explain why Astu might think some racism experiences are due to the defensiveness of black British students. However, in this context issues of nationality and Africanness are additional layers of nuance that should be considered. BAIS's previous understanding of 'race' and racism gets complicated as they face a newer understanding and meaning of 'race' and racism in the UK. I believe this finding here may call for an extended framework that would enable us to address issues of Africanness, accent, foreign status, culture, identity and phenotype that influence the lived experiences of BAIS along with 'race'.

CRT's previous adaptations extended its scholarship and gave birth to newer theoretical branches, such as Dis/ability Critical Studies, or DisCrit, and Latina/o Critical Race Theory, or LatCrit. Solorzano & Bernal (2001) explain that LatCrit is a framework that helps to explore the specific ways in which Latinas/os experience 'race' and racism along with issues of language, immigration status, culture, phenotype, and/or the intersection of these axes. Annamma et al., (2013:1), on the other hand, developed DisCrit, 'a new theoretical framework that incorporates a dual analysis of race and ability'. They argue that racism and ableism are embedded in society, and that both reinforce, normalize, and perpetuate social inequality.

In line with this trend, it may be time to consider AfriCrit, a body of scholarship that focuses on the racial realities of black Africans in the West, or in diaspora more generally. I am imagining a framework that can address the specificity of the lived experiences of black Africans, which gets complicated by their foreign status, accent, phenotype, culture, and the perceived backwardness of Africa. As the lived experiences of BAIS in this study show, it is not just their 'race' as black that mattered, but also their identity as black Africans. In his

critique of multiculturalism, Smith (1993:76) wrote, ‘...to conflate blackness into "multiculturalism" alongside miscellaneous other forms of identity is to obfuscate an understanding taught to us through long, bitter experience.’ I am using the same analogy here, and argue that to use blackness as the only analytic lens obfuscates the intricacies of the lived experiences of, especially, immigrant black Africans, who suffer layers of oppression that may not be experienced by black people born and raised in the West. AfriCrit, if developed, could potentially serve as a framework that specifically addresses the unique ways in which black Africans with a foreign status experience ‘race’ and racism in the West.

In Chapter 8, I built on BAIS’s experiences of racism in the previous chapter, and explored the depth and breadth of domination and subordination that they experience by employing the post-colonial notion of Othering. BAIS shared stories of how they are constructed as outsiders through such processes of othering as homogenization, stereotyping, exoticization, and expression of shock/surprise at their English-speaking abilities. Their stories of being Othered show not only their relative disadvantage, but also the privileges of being a white home student as compared to a BAIS. During social interactions, white home students, or white individuals in general, use language that homogenizes identities and experiences as one group of people who originate from one big ‘country’ called Africa. In particular, I have analysed how such discursive strategies of Othering as referring to ‘your country, Africa’, along with the use of such negative stereotypes of Africa as being poor, backward, or full of jungle, were used to inscribe BAIS in a demeaning, homogenizing manner.

BAIS are also Othered and excluded from various social spaces based on their immigration status, ‘African accent’ and perceived ability. Some BAIS spoke of how they are put under constant surveillance by government policy, which profoundly affected their sense of belonging. Othering through an ‘African accent’ shows that how BAIS look and sound is key to how they are perceived and treated. They are criticized or looked down upon for speaking

with a heavy 'African accent'. As a result, BAIS at times make extra efforts to modify their behaviour to fit in. As Mufti related, he had to be 'extremely good' to (or compared with) white people to be considered normal. This exacerbates their adjustment challenges.

My findings also show that the intersections 'race', gender, and class shaped the lived experiences of some BAIS. Below, I will briefly reflect on the concept of intersectionality and the intersectional experiences of BAIS.

Intersectionality and BAIS's intersectional experiences

Intersectionality is a theoretical framework first developed by Crenshaw (1989 ;1991 ;1994) as a response to feminism's marginalization of black women. Crenshaw argued that a single analytical lens that focuses on only one axis of social identity, such as being a woman, would not capture the discrimination and oppression of black women. In her seminal work, Crenshaw (1989) developed a black feminist criticism of how mainstream feminism essentializes women's experiences. In response, she introduced the term 'intersectionality' to address the multiple discriminations and oppressions experienced by black women. Crenshaw (1989:140) explained that hegemonic and '...dominant conceptions of discrimination condition us to think about subordination as disadvantage occurring along a single categorical axis', mainly historically anchored in the experiences of white women for gender and black men for 'race'. Ever since Crenshaw's introduction of intersectionality as an analytical lens, scholars from across the disciplines, including education Solorzano & Bernal ,2001; Solorzano & Yosso, 2000 ; Sue et al., 2008; Smith et al.,2007), have used it to engage with the issue of the multidimensionality of oppressions experienced by different social identities in higher education. The main theoretical framework of this study, critical race theory, underscores how 'race' intersects with other markers of social difference such as gender, class, and immigration status, and shapes the lived experiences of black students in education.

The concept of intersectionality sheds light on BAIS's racialized lived experiences, complicated by notions of Africanness stereotyped as a marker

of lower socio-economic status. There are examples in my data, where the intersecting identities of 'race', class, and gender shaped BAIS's lived experiences.

Race and class

US researchers who explored African Americans' lived experiences (Anderson, 2012 ;Roberts, 2014;Collins, 2004; Wingfield, 2007) highlighted how racialized notions of being black American can be linked with being poor 'because of the ascriptive character of race and the history of American race relations' (Anderson, 2012:20). Some of BAIS's experiences of racism and/or racial microaggressions discussed in Chapter 7 appear to be rooted in similar dominant perceptions of social class. For example, because of media stereotypical representation of Africa as a poor continent (Tsikata, 2014), some BAIS were automatically assumed to be poor. Five BAIS who come from upper-middle-class socio-economic backgrounds experienced such racialized notions of being poor. 'Race' and place of origin (Africa) served as markers of social class status regardless of their personal socio-economic backgrounds, and all of them were automatically assumed to be poor. Olu described being asked by white students if she was 'on benefits'; Jaka was assumed not to have the money to afford items in a supermarket; Astu was automatically questioned about whether she could afford the fees; and a white man accused Rosa of trying to break in to his flat while she was working as fundraiser. Beku and Wasa experienced racial microaggressions, as white home students doubted how they had managed to secure admission to prestigious UK universities. Both said that white students and staff alike saw them as atypical students. Beku said, there are 'lots of assumptions, so you feel you certainly need to prove something.'

These are racialized and classed assumptions, invoked in BAIS's everyday interactions within university spaces. This is consistent with the literature. Both Ladson-Billings (1998) and Anderson (2012) explained that conceptual categories such as 'welfare benefit recipients', 'joblessness', and being prone

to criminality have been racialized and imposed on black people, whatever their social class. While the US literature shows how blackness and poverty collapse together in the context of African Americans, my thesis extends this by demonstrating how blackness as a marker of low social-class status cuts across national boundaries, ethnicity, and immigration status through the lived experiences of BAIS in the UK.

Race and gender

For some BAIS, the intersection of 'race' and gender generated the specific experience of being exoticized and/or fetishized. For example, Astu was approached by a white peer at a networking event who depicted her as the exotic other. Astu related:

In my first year, a white guy literally asked me, 'Oh my God, I would love to know what this "hakuna matata" lifestyle is by dating an East African girl, just kind of just for experience'.

Astu explained that her white peer's behaviour was 'because of the media, which always portrays this over-sexualized image of what the African girl is in music videos.' This resonates with historical and also contemporary constructions of black women as promiscuous (Collins, 2004) and hypersexual (Wingfield, 2007). Thus, Astu's white peer wants to date her just for experience, not for romantic attraction.

This invokes a historical construction from the days of slavery, of black women as exotic objects for the entertainment of white men (Davis, 1981). The legacy of such construction is that young black females such as Astu are stereotyped as hypersexual, and experience what Essed (1991) refers to as gendered racism – the interlocking impact of racism and sexism in the lived experiences of black women.

Another way in which 'race' intersected with gender to shape lived experience was when female BAIS felt the need to alter their behaviour, or rather suppress their emotions, to fend off accusations of being an angry, aggressive black woman. This phenomenon dovetails with Collins's (2004:123) articulation of the historical construction of black women as 'aggressive, loud, rude, and pushy'. In a recent study, Corbin et al., (2018:639) explored the impact of such negative constructions on black women in US universities, and reported: 'The dominant and problematic mass media-perpetuated controlling image of the Angry Black Woman continues to structure the lives of Black college women.' BAIS in my study shared similar impacts of such negative constructions of black women. For example, Olu remarked, 'if I get emotional about something, I have to take breath and just try and portray in a way that doesn't seem arrogant or aggressive'. Olu also explained the motive for modifying her behaviour; in her own words: 'I make a conscious effort to show them black people really are not what the media wants them to think they are.' Olu's conscious efforts to counter media images of black people corroborates the findings from Adams-Bass et al., (2014:94) that 'many black women recognize, contest, and oppose stereotypes that they perceive demean themselves, their mothers, grandmothers, sisters, aunts, and other members of the black community.' This need to fight such racialized and gendered stereotypes places additional burden on BAIS's adjustment challenges.

Reflections on my theoretical framework

I also argue that this study has some theoretical significance, demonstrated by reflecting on the two main theoretical lenses I used in this study: Bourdieu and CRT.

In Chapter 1, I indicated that the theoretical tools of Bourdieu are necessary but not sufficient to fully capture the lived experiences of BAIS. This thesis argues that BAIS's lived experiences in UK universities, and their lives beyond, cannot entirely be explained by possession of, or lack of, the cultural capital demanded by the UK higher education field. Their overall experiences

are heavily shaped by experiences of racism, and by how they are positioned and constructed as visible 'Others' based on some coded expressions of 'race', such as accent, immigration status, and images of their place of origin, Africa. For this reason, I have used CRT along with Bourdieu's theoretical tools of capital, habitus and field. In this section, I will discuss how the application of the two theories helped my analysis, and also the implications of the findings of the study for the theories.

Bourdieu and BAIS

In relation to my data, Bourdieu has been very helpful in providing me with an alternative to the normative understanding of student attainment as meritocratic (that is, based on effort and ability), and also in viewing the disjunction between BAIS's identities as students and the new field through the concept of the 'hysteresis of habitus'. I will briefly discuss both of them.

Capital, and academic performance and attainment

Bourdieu's tools of cultural and social capital have helped me to challenge normative assumptions that educational success is solely based on merit and effort. Bourdieu explains that embodied cultural capital, acquired during upbringing within the family and the wider social circle – often unconsciously, but sometimes consciously through 'concerted cultivation' (Lareau, 2002 ;Lareau, 2003) – is the most powerful determinant of educational success. Bourdieu (2011:49) explains that because the transmission of embodied capital is more disguised than the transmission of, for example, economic capital, it is misrecognized as capital and '... recognized as legitimate competence.' Educational institutions then reward students with a certain type of embodied capital, usually manifested in language proficiency levels which Bourdieu and Passeron (1977: 74) refer to as linguistic capital. Bourdieu (1984) also argues that middle-class teachers tend to reward students who possess and embody similar cultural capital to themselves mainly through linguistic and cultural competence.

In my analysis in Chapter 6 of the factors that BAIS say affect their academic performance, I have shown, *inter alia*, how embodied cultural capital (knowledge and skills accrued) and social capital (who one knows) mediate academic performance. BAIS pointed out that their home student peers have accrued better knowledge and skills because of their upbringing and education in the UK, which equipped them better for university. BAIS do not have the same opportunity, as they had their previous education outside the UK. For example, as shown by the accounts of Beku, Poni and Demba academic performance is partly influenced by prior knowledge and skills gained through previous schooling, extracurricular activities and by being a home student who was born and educated here. BAIS's stories also show that social capital allowed white home students to have better contacts and relationships outside of class, which offers the chance to internalize the 'rules of the game', especially the assessment game. BAIS experience disadvantage, since the education system rarely recognizes their prior knowledge and experiences which could be a form of 'social closure' (a "process of subordination whereby one group monopolizes advantages by closing off opportunities to another group of outsiders beneath it which it defines as inferior and ineligible" (Murphy, 1988:8, cited in Harrison & Price (2017:113). This is an important way elites keep their privilege. BAIS are also disadvantaged since their access to and interaction with teachers is constrained by lack of cultural proximity. The findings in this regard confirm Bourdieu's theorization that educational success is mainly determined by possession of valued capitals, and not just by merit and/or effort.

Field and the hysteresis effect of habitus

The concept of field was also very important to understand BAIS's lived experiences, in particular their academic challenges. Bourdieu and Wacquant (1992:97) explain that field constitutes 'a network, or a configuration, of objective relations between positions'. They also underscore that cultural capital and habitus are functional and meaningful only in relation to a specific field of practice. Thus, while compatibility between students' habitus and that

of the institution increases adaptation, disjunction between the two slows it down. Therefore, when BAIS join a higher education institution which reflects in its operations, curriculum and pedagogy the habitus of the dominant social and cultural group, they will be at a disadvantage, with a serious bearing on their educational experiences and success (Bourdieu & Passeron, 1977). Since there is not one global educational field, BAIS have difficulty transferring their capitals from their home educational field to the UK educational field. This conceptualization of field and habitus has been key to my understanding of aspects of the lived experiences of BAIS.

The findings show how BAIS's cultural capital and habitus interact with the demands of the field. The overall findings summarized above show how BAIS's habitus does not quite fit with a field that devalues their capital and demands the one it values. As a result, they feel discomfort, and experience greater difficulty, which is exacerbated by the additional challenges of immigration that they have to battle. They are perceived unidimensionally, and treated accordingly. They find themselves in an unfair competition on an unlevel field of higher education. On the other hand, BAIS highlighted that there is a close fit of habitus and field for white home (especially middle class) students, who by comparison feel better comfort, experience less difficulty, and perform better academically. In Bourdieu's terms, white/home students may be in the doxic mode –fish in the water – while BAIS suffer from the lack of fit of habitus and field – they are very much fish out of the water. Bourdieu's concept of 'the hysteresis effect of habitus' (Bourdieu, 1990b) helped me to understand and explain some of BAIS's struggles in this regard. Bourdieu (1990b: 62) explains that the hysteresis effect means that habitus encounters '... an environment [that is] too different from the one to which they are objectively adjusted.' BAIS encounter a new world in the UK that is different from their previous environment and the social conditions that formed that habitus. This lag between the habitus formed by previous socialization and education experience and the one that their UK field of education demands helps to explain and understand aspects of BAIS's academic and social experiences. For example, Beku expressed his initial classroom experiences

by saying 'you already feel like a couple of foot behind everyone else'. A number of BAIS also spoke of how they struggled to adapt to new conventions of academic writing in the UK, despite being perceived as good writers and high achievers in their countries of origin. For example, Buti said 'the way [we] wrote essays in Nigeria was different, it just seemed easier, your teacher would understand what you are trying to say; but here you need to do further research and use references. In Nigeria, we didn't use references in essays.' Other BAIS said that they were challenged by the need to use online technologies as learning tools, and the requirement to be an independent learner. All these can be understood as the effect of the hysteresis effect of habitus.

In Chapter 5, BAIS highlighted the differences between the way things are done in their home countries and in the UK, such as the social code of conduct in communication or expectations of behaviour. Lara said, 'we're frowned upon or seen as confusing because you don't know how to understand [interpret] people's communication.' Many others expressed a feeling of loneliness and alienation because of the loss of their social network and the difficulty in building social capital outside of their black African student community. This too can be partly explained by the hysteresis effect of habitus making it difficult for BAIS with different dispositions and orientations to function effectively in a new social world, in Bourdieu's words a world to which it is not objectively adjusted. However, I find the utility of Bourdieu limited in view of the alienation and loneliness that BAIS experienced as a result of the 'conscious outcasting' and rejection by white/home students when they attempted to mingle and make friends. I argue that there is a need for a theoretical lens that foregrounds and centres 'race' in the lived experiences of BAIS, hence CRT.

CRT and BAIS

CRT, which developed from critical legal studies and was first introduced to the world of education by Ladson-Billings & Tate (1995), has five basic tenets, which have since been used by educational researchers interested to explore 'race' and racism in education. The five tenets are the intercentricity of 'race'

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and racism, the challenge to dominant ideologies, the commitment to social justice, the centrality of experiential knowledge of blacks and minorities, and the utilization of transdisciplinary approaches in researching lived experiences of blacks and other minoritized groups. Critical race theorists (Solorzano & Yosso, 2001; Gillborn, 2008; Delgado & Stefancic, 2017) argue that the five tenets together challenge traditional dominant modes of scholarship that historically silence the voices and perspectives of minoritized people.

Three of the tenets have been particularly important in the context of this study. First, the tenet of CRT that recognizes the experiential knowledge of black and other minoritized people as legitimate and valid is key to this study. In addition to informing its very inception, design and analysis, the study draws on the experiential knowledge of BAIS and secured stories and counter-stories that refute the claims of universities to be colour-blind, post-racial and meritocratic institutions. BAIS shared accounts of their racialized lived experiences while studying and living in the UK through their own stories and those of their peers. Unearthing the role of their 'race' and/or ethnicity in shaping their experiences would not have been possible without the use of CRT as a methodological and analytic lens. For example, in Chapter 6, BAIS told stories about how their 'race' is implicated in their assessment experiences, as teachers underestimate them, or in some cases harshly marked them down. This was made possible because of the use of the tool of counter-storytelling, which Delgado & Stefancic (2001:144) define as a method that makes it possible 'to cast doubt on the validity of accepted premises or myths, especially ones held by the majority'. Counter stories from BAIS that they have to work a lot harder than white students, and are constantly being doubted and questioned, challenge the view of 'assessment as a neutral technology' (Gillborn, 2008), and give insight that it is in fact a highly subjective endeavour inflected with, *inter alia*, 'race'/ethnicity. As Delgado & Stefancic (2001:41) explain, this experiential knowledge secured from BAIS's stories reveals to the dominant culture 'what life is like for others' within a system that may be thought just and fair for all. The findings of this study concur with CRT in asserting that epistemologies that do not include the

experiential knowledge of BAIS are not just incomplete and inaccurate, but also perpetuate deficit-laden views of racialized lived experiences (Solórzano & Yosso, 2002).

Second, the tenet of the intercentricity of 'race' and racism, which acknowledges that racism is permanent and embedded in society in the form of taken for granted practices and behaviours, is very instrumental for this study. The findings show that BAIS experience overt and covert racism from people from different walks of life, both inside and outside the university – a testament to the ubiquity of their experiences of racism. Inside the university, people routinely assume that BAIS have had poor previous education. They ignore the contributions of BAIS in seminar classes. BAIS are called by racial slurs, experience injurious interactions in student accommodation, and are denigrated by a careers advisor as lazy black students. Outside the university, they are stereotyped as primitives who live in jungles with animals, told to go back to Africa, discriminated against in the labour market, and are assumed to be criminals. Based on these findings, I conclude that racism was permanent (not aberrant) in the lived experiences of BAIS, and this confirms that CRT is a useful lens to unearth how 'race' and racism shape their lived experiences. In fact, Baso explained the normalcy of racism by saying it is 'natural' and it is something that they cannot hide from as black Africans.

Third, this study is also informed by the commitment of CRT to a transdisciplinary perspective that promotes the application of knowledge from across disciplines, and by its insistence on historical analysis, rejecting ahistoricism. The analysis of the findings of this study used theoretical insights from sociology, 'race'/ethnic studies and post-colonialism, and made references and connections between historical racialized oppressions of blacks and BAIS, drawing on both scholarly work and past relevant research literature on the lived experiences of black people across time and national borders. This has enabled my analysis to trace some of BAIS's social realities that could stem from historical stereotypical constructions of black people still embedded in the practices and operations of institutions such as universities. For example, BAIS's lived experiences of being pathologized during

interactions with lecturers and peers as the inferior other and deficient in language proficiency can be legacies of the colonialism era, as documented by Fanon (1952) and Spivak (1985).

Bourdieu and CRT: The intersection of capital and 'race'/ethnicity

The Bourdieusian lens is fundamentally a class-based theory that attempts to explain differences in experience and outcome in terms of possession, or lack thereof, of the capital and habitus demanded by a specific field. However, the findings from my study raise serious doubts about the extent to which change of field alone explains BAIS's lived experiences. First, social class mean different things in different nations/cultures and it is very difficult to define the class of BAIS in UK society. My findings also show that 'race' trumps BAIS's socio-economic status, or even citizenship status (as in the case of Wanja), in their actual lived experiences. In fact, they were seen unidimensionally and perceived stereotypically, rather than as individuals.

When change of field devalues BAIS's cultural capital and values the cultural capital of middle-class white home students, the dividing line with other practices of domination and subordination, such as racism and Othering, gets blurred. For example, in Chapter 7, Wasa explained that his teacher 'judged him based on his past experiences' and questioned 'his previous education and qualification' when he asked him a question related to the lesson being taught. Through a Bourdieusian lens, this may be explained as Wasa's lack of prerequisite knowledge for the lesson (not having the required embodied cultural capital), but Wasa explained that all his classmates had the same difficulty understanding the lesson. The teacher insinuated that Wasa's previous education in Africa was inferior. Reference to ethnicity or culture can be a coded reference to 'race', and talk of ethnicity is often racialized. My findings also show that some BAIS struggled to speak confidently, not just because they did not have the legitimated linguistic capital (pronunciation/accent) but also because of the negative reactions of white home students, which corrodes their confidence.

For example, in chapter 5 Domu said 'his colour is different, the way he talks is not 'nice enough' and the reaction of white home students when he speaks in class creates a shock in him. As a result, he wanted to polish his way of speaking. The concept of habitus as disposition could help us to understand that Domu's 'African habitus' might shape his capacity to classify and recognise what is valued and acceptable way of speaking in the new field. However, it does not help to understand the shock reaction from white home students and the role of his skin colour (the coded 'race') in shaping this particular experience. If we look at such exclusionary experiences only in Bourdieusian terms, they will be understood as driven by lack of cultural capital or the dislocation of habitus. However, based on my findings, I argue that those experiences are more fully understood and explained by a CRT framework, which allows the investigation of the intersections of 'race' and racism in the social realities of racialized groups such as BAIS (Harper, 2012).

In summary, Bourdieu has helped me to explore and work out how, in comparative terms, white/home students possession of the capitals demanded, along with their 'race' and their previous UK education, serves them as embodied symbolic capital that 'resides in the mastery of symbolic resources based on knowledge and recognition' (Bourdieu, 2005: 195). CRT has helped me to explore and unearth how this embodiment of symbolic capital, and the recognition afforded to it by the universities, is enmeshed with racialized discrimination through low expectations, prejudicial treatment, and overt and covert racism and Othering. I conclude that research and scholarship on the lived experiences of BAIS living and studying in the West must of necessity use analytical lenses that foreground race and racism for a just and complete analysis.

Contribution of the thesis

In addition to contributions to the literature, this thesis also makes some theoretical and empirical contributions. First, this thesis contributes to the debate on the international student experience by producing evidence that disrupts universities' complacent views of themselves as being post-racial and

meritocratic. The in-depth analysis of BAIS's stories and accounts exposes the fact that the higher education field is unlevel, and that there exists a significant amount of racism and Othering that blights the experiences of BAIS. In my analysis, I have presented how being denuded of their social capital leaves BAIS lonely, while the devaluation of their cultural capital relegates them to a position of educational disadvantage. I have also shown how this perceived lack of capitals, coupled with racialized positioning as deficient learners, affects their academic performance and achievement. Yet, the most significant contribution that this thesis makes to knowledge is the detailed analysis of the racism and Othering that BAIS experience overtly, or in some coded ways, and the fact that this goes unchallenged, as it is very rarely reported or talked about. This thesis fills that lacuna by giving BAIS voice.

Second, this thesis makes theoretical contributions to the field of higher education research, which has been described as fundamentally atheoretical (Tight, 2004; Abdullah et al., 2014). In their comprehensive review of research on the international student experience conducted over a 30-year period, Abdullah et al. (2014) found that only a third of the 497 journal articles that they reviewed employed theories to frame their research. The majority of the research used theories or models related to adjustment and push–pull factors, and none of it used either Bourdieu or critical race theory. In this thesis, I have beneficially married Bourdieu's theory of cultural capital and CRT, which together helped to shed light on the role of institutions and other structural forces that shape the lived experiences of BAIS. I have shown that while Bourdieu allows exploration of how prior knowledge and skills fare in the new field, and what types of capitals are valued and legitimated, CRT allowed exploration of the intersection of devaluation of capital and racialized domination.

Third, my thesis also makes an empirical contribution, as it has produced evidence about a group of students that are rarely the subject of empirical investigation. In particular, the thesis has produced empirical data for the first time on the racial microaggression experiences of undergraduate BAIS in UK higher education.

Limitations of the research

I acknowledge that there are limitations to this study, and I make no claim that the conclusions here are generalizable to other BAIS studying in other UK universities. In fact, generalizing to a population was never the aim of this study. However, I argue that the findings of this study challenge or, in Popperian terms, falsify (Popper, 1963) any theorization of UK universities as spaces offering an objective, post-racial, meritocratic student experience.

Also, my sample contains only students from English universities, and had I included BAIS from the other three countries of the UK, analysis of the influences of contextual differences would have been possible. Some BAIS who took the initiative to participate in my study might have been motivated by particular experiences and have the confidence to share their stories. I did not also include BAIS from French-speaking Sub-Saharan African countries, whose experiences could have been even more affected by English language problems and differences in colonial history and legacy.

My analysis is also limited in its focus on gender. Both Bourdieu and CRT do not prioritize gender as analytic category and if I used a feminist theoretical lens, I might have been able to foreground gender more.

Implications

The findings of this study have implications for universities, their staff and teachers, and the students themselves. The empirical findings could deepen institutions' and teachers' knowledge and understanding of BAIS's overall lived experience, and help them reflect on their practices. The findings could also serve as one monitoring mechanism of policies and procedures put in place to support international students such as BAIS. In particular, the findings have important implications in the following areas:

- BAIS's lived experiences are perhaps a manifestation of the hidden curriculum for which they are unprepared. Killick (2016: 21) explains that 'the hidden curriculum carries messages about our institutional and

disciplinary values and about what and who is valued (Leask, 2009).’ The findings of this study show that the Eurocentric curriculum, the absence of black teachers, the rejection of contributions in seminar classes, the lack of institutional support for issues deemed non-academic, and discriminatory assessment experiences all communicate the message that BAIS are not truly accepted and that their prior knowledge is not valued. This calls for a rethink of curricula, teaching staff recruitment strategies, pedagogy, task design and the recognition of the salience of ‘race’ in lived experiences. Universities, for example, could take such measures as:

- a. Diversifying the curricular content to include world views that challenge ‘Eurocentric’ knowledge. However, as Brookfield (2007) warns us, this diversification should be more than a symbolic insertion of content into the mainstream curriculum that eventually reifies its normalcy and the marginality of the newly added materials. To alleviate this problem, new content or modules to be included should be mandatory rather than elective, and should be properly resourced. This could show BAIS that their experiences are valued. It is very difficult to argue that any work on diversity will succeed unless a meaningful curricular change is achieved.
- b. To facilitate this, universities should be required to have a policy that enables the development of inclusive curricula, and also one that ensures that students from different backgrounds equally share high attainment. From the challenges faced by some current initiatives that attempted to encourage universities to tackle ‘race’ equality, I understand the messiness of making and instituting such a policy.

In particular, the Equality Challenge Unit (ECU), now Advance HE, developed the Race Equality Charter (REC) (ECU, 2016), which aims 'to improve the representation, progression and success of minority ethnic staff and students within higher education.' The charter, *inter alia*, recognizes the pervasiveness of racial inequality in UK higher education and 'provides a framework through which institutions work to identify and self-reflect on institutional and cultural barriers standing in the way of minority ethnic staff and students.' However, as Sabatier (2019) explains, the policy process involves dealing with the needs, priorities, and beliefs of different actors, and their debates on the magnitude, causes, and alternative policy solutions take a long time to resolve. Bhopal & Pitkin's (2018) study, which explored the impact of REC in encouraging institutions to address race inequality, highlighted some of the serious challenges in this regard. Bhopal & Pitkin (2018) reported such challenges as poor allocation of resources and funding to staff involved in REC, widespread assumption that 'race' inequality is only the concern of BME staff, and the lack of stronger commitment and investment of senior management to the cause of REC, which jeopardizes the need for embedding the principles of REC in institutional culture and practice for long-term impact.

Bhopal & Pitkin (2018:26) underscored that to achieve such a shift, there needs to be 'an acknowledgement and recognition of institutional racism and structural disadvantages in HEIs'. Unfortunately, however, there seems to exist an unconscionable lack of such recognition on the part of universities, when, for example, the Higher Education Policy Institute lament that 'Racial inequality is in danger of being an accepted fact in higher education' (Busby, 18 September, 2019). It is in view of such danger that I am arguing for stronger measures, which put the

onus on universities to show that they are closing the attainment gap and promoting BME staff to senior management positions. One strong measure already recommended is Bhopal & Pitkin's (2018) suggestion that the REC should be linked to UK Research and Innovation (UKRI) funding, so that universities that fail to address 'race' inequality would not receive funding. This is important in the context of my study too, as BAIS highlighted that the lack of black teachers and senior managers (a seemingly insurmountable problem that universities have simply failed to address) affects their adjustment and learning experiences.

- c. Thus, I add my voice that universities need to diversify their management and teaching staff to enhance black students' sense of belonging. BAIS said home students (especially white home students) relate and communicate much more easily with teachers than they do. For example, Rosa lamented, 'We don't have a relationship really here; they barely know me, I barely know them, I barely meet them,' **(Rosa, female, 19, Hillside)**. **Lundberg and Schreiner (2004: 549)** report 'Relationships with faculty were stronger predictors of learning than student background characteristics for all groups, but strongest for students of colour.' Universities could enhance the awareness of white teachers that BAIS have a different experience relating and communicating with them.
- There needs to be acknowledgement on the part of universities that 'race' and racism affect BAIS's adjustment and shape all aspects of their lived experiences. Universities need to place race consciousness at the centre of institutional policy and practice. This would mean ensuring that considerations of 'race' and racism are central and not marginal in universities' planning, design and implementation of internationalization policies, from recruitment to placement and

graduation. For example, evidence shows some universities and their students are not even aware of the attainment gap between white and black students (Leathwood et al., 2011).

- For example, the findings show in particular that experiences of racism are not reported and go unchallenged. This is partly because BAIS do not have confidence in the system and fear possible repercussions, since reporting racism could fracture relations. This is corroborated by EHRC (2019) report international students especially in England showed very low confidence in reporting racial harassment, as they feared the impact of reporting on their futures. Universities should devise ways to make reporting safe, simple and confidential, and respond to it as quickly as possible. Most importantly, universities should take action. The lack of decisive and proportional action against racism hugely discourages victims from coming forward. It is very difficult to improve reporting until universities show their commitment and seriousness with the actions they take. Olu accused her university of a double standard when white students involved in repeated racism were just given educational classes, while a black student who posted quotation from the Bible deemed homophobic was automatically expelled from university. Writing in *The Guardian*, Lawton (2018) related the similar experiences of Kaya, a female home black British student, who reported to her university counsellor the blatant racism she suffered from a white student. Kaya said 'Yet when I told my university counsellor, she said I couldn't know for sure if my housemate was actually racist ... that I needed to live and let live.' As a result, Kaya had to quit her studies.
- Universities could also institute a system to regularly assess the racial climate for students within their campuses and take actions. It is impossible to fight racism by avoiding talking about it.

- Seminar classes have been identified as sites of isolation and exclusion, hugely jeopardizing their potential for being spaces for intercultural learning and competence. Universities should have policies that require that departments design academic tasks that inherently require the students from diverse backgrounds to work together to achieve an educational objective that counts to their final grades.
- Universities should allocate more resources and spaces for the formation of student societies, as these seem to be the spaces that provide much-needed protection for BAIS from loneliness and discrimination, as well as being spaces for the preservation of their dignity, culture and identity. Allocation of funds and all the other support they need to initiate, run and sustain co-national associations should be made available. Although this might seem to encourage segregation, I argue that getting organized and having their own supportive platform would give BAIS a capacity to negotiate and make more meaningful cross-cultural relationships especially with white home students. If they are organized, they will have a stronger voice than they otherwise would.
- In addition, provision of resources such as funding could be attached to projects that promote cross-cultural understanding and that could help to reduce prejudice and stereotypical understanding of black Africans. Many BAIS voiced their concern that their white peers' knowledge of them is mainly based on Western media depiction of black Africans through racial stereotypes and generalizations. Universities can encourage the design of activities that promote interpersonal contact and relationships, and hence intercultural communication, This could include events and activities that intentionally bring white home students and BAIS together to achieve some educational objective.

These projects should go beyond a mere awareness-raising exercise through communication of information about other cultures or 'races'. They should be activities that involve actual intergroup contact in an equal, respectful and enjoyable way.

- The findings also have implications for assessment practices in universities. The experiential knowledge of BAIS in this study unearthed narratives that challenge the discourse of marking as 'objective' and colour-blind judgement of student work. Bourdieu (1984) have argued that teachers value their own cultural capital including styles/tastes and reward students who possess and demonstrate them. Bourdieu (1990b) also challenged objectivity in marking and argued subjectivity is an inherent part of a social practice such as assessment and marking could not claim total objectivity. It is the combination of some subjective tacitly held beliefs (such as epistemological positions, biases, prejudice and racism) about learning and objective assessment measures (such as marking schemes and set criteria) that generate 'the logic of practice' (Bourdieu,1990b) for assessment. The lived experiences of BAIS, such as Astu's and the Ghanaian student's successful cases of remarking and BAIS's belief that their hard-work is not equally rewarded shows the subjectivity involved in assessment practices. Universities need to recognise and acknowledge this and take measures and review support given to BAIS and other international students. For example, it is unrealistic to expect BAIS who have done very little extended writing in their previous education experience, to learn the conventions and standards of academic writing in the UK just from some random comments given by tutors on their written submissions- an opportunity that may not even be available on all modules. Universities should come up with a more comprehensive and sustained program of teaching academic writing than the current 30-minute booking where academic writing tutors more often than not talk meta language rather dealing with actual language and discourse used in academic writing.

Concluding thoughts

From the inception of this study, I have very conscientiously grappled with how and/or in what ways BAIS's visibility, as embodied by their skin colour and accent, along with their cultural identities and prior education, mediates and impacts their lives as they interact with local British people inside and outside their universities. At the beginning of my study, I was challenged by a white academic not to use the term 'phenotype', as she believed that it would be nonsensical to talk about skin colour in this day and age, and that the very mention of it would shock the academic community. I surmised that the academic was suggesting that 'race' is not biological but a social construction, and that a focus on skin colour would reify the fixedness of 'race'. However, the white academic repeated the comment several times and it became clear to me she is suggesting 'race' does not matter anymore in UK's higher education. As Pala of Canal-Grate related many white academics 'hate to admit racism, and they do not want to talk about it'. This unfortunately is perhaps a sign of a bigger problem of whiteness silencing the voices of minoritized people and promoting a false image of a post-racial and colour-blind UK education system (Bhopal, 2018 ; Gillborn, 2019).

Although I totally accept that 'race' is not only constituted by the visible aspects of those that are racialized, I know from my personal experience that the visibility of my skin colour is the entry point. That is why I was very hurt by the very insensitive, and I would say ignorant, comment, as I feel it invalidates the frequent racial profiling I experience as a black African refugee living in the UK. I simply refused the suggestion, and I am happy I did.

My study found that BAIS experience racialized exclusions and discrimination, and that the visibility and corporeality of their 'race' plays a key part. I found evidence that some people underestimate them or position them as deficient others, even before they have any conversation or any kind of engagement with them. This affects both how they are positioned as students and how they see themselves in many ways. What worries me most is that there seems to be a deafening silence around the centrality of 'race' in the lived experiences of black students and, as Pilkington (2014: 207) has articulated, '...

universities are extraordinarily complacent. They see themselves as liberal and believe existing policies ensure fairness; in the process, they ignore adverse outcomes and do not see combating racial/ethnic inequalities as a priority.' This complacency of the universities is exacerbated since BAIS do not report their experiences of racism for reasons that include lack of trust in institutional remedies. I hope this thesis contributes to disrupting this complacency and silence.

Finally, I would like to say that as a result of carrying out this study, I have had the opportunity to challenge my own long-standing beliefs, most importantly about what constitutes 'race' and racism, but also about what shapes educational success and opportunities. As much as I learned from my reading, reflections and consultations, I learned the most through listening to the stories of my research participants, which at times were very painful and disturbing. Their stories illuminated to me that they are subject to multiple oppressions, not just based on skin colour but also because they are from the continent of Africa. Sadly, BAIS's stories also show that they can be Othered and discriminated against by black and other minoritized local British people too, and that whiteness thrives on this. Thus, I learnt that research and scholarship that conflate British black people with BAIS risk silencing their unique challenges and experiences. The next step for me is to look for, or create, opportunities where I can make use of the knowledge, insights and skills I gained through this doctoral study. I am determined to continue my engagement with issues affecting BAIS and other marginalized students in education, both from within and without academia.

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1.

Appendix-1: Interview schedule and Contextual Information sheet

Interview Schedule

A. Ice Breaker

What subjects are you studying?

B. Background questions

1. How would you describe yourself/Tell me about yourself
2. Tell me about how you decided to start your course at your current university (Application, sponsorship, choice of uni, choice of subject)
3. Tell me about your educational experiences back home in Africa

C. General Academic Experience

4. What has it been like for you, studying here?
5. Can you tell me about your educational experiences here in your university?
(probe: learning, teaching, assessment, broader too)
6. If you look back, is there any particular unforgettable moment or interaction, that you have had with a teacher, tutor, or with a fellow student?
7. What is the student profile like on your course?
8. Who does well and who does less well on your course?

D. Assessment

9. In what ways are you assessed on your course? (Tease out the different methods of assessment used in their course)
10. What would you say are the factors that affect your academic performance and achievement here at your University?
11. Have you got any ideas about why different groups of students have different academic performance or achievement?

E. Feedback

12. In what ways do you receive feedback on your work/performance in your course (different modules)?

13. What would you say your experiences of receiving feedback on your work or performance from teachers/tutors here at your university are like?

F. Identity and Academic Experience

14. What is it like to be an international student?
15. What is it like to be a BAIS here at your university? (In what ways has being a BAIS been a challenge (benefit) to you?)
16. How might your experience be different if you were a home student or a White student, or other ethnic background e.g. Asian, American, Australian etc?
17. If you look back, can you recount a situation where you think your identity had been an issue in your academic and/or social experience?
18. What would you say your experiences of working with your teachers/tutors is like? (does being a BAIS make any difference or not to your experiences)???

G. 'Race' and Racism and Academic Experience

19. In what ways does your 'race'/ethnicity as a black African influence your studies here at your university?
20. Do you believe racism and discrimination to be a problem in hindering your academic performance and achievement at university?
21. Have you experienced racism/discrimination in any way shape or form? What happened? How did you feel? What impact did it have on your well-being, attainment, progress etc.

Contextual Information sheet

Participant _____

No	Identifier	Profile
1	Date of Interview	
2	Place of Interview	
3	Duration of Interview	
4	Interviewer	
	Interviewee's Biodata	
5	Nationality	
6	Gender	
7	Age	
8	Ethnicity/ 'Race'	
9	Name of Secondary School	
9	Type of Secondary school (private, state, mission)	
11	Previous Educational qualifications	
12	Parents' Education	
13	Parents' Occupation	
14	Current Field of Study	
15	Entry Qualifications	
16	Year of study	
17	Name/Type/location of HEI	

Appendix 2: Call for research participants

Call for Research Participants

Are you an undergraduate African International student studying in a UK University?

What has it been like for you, studying in a UK university? What are the positives? What are the challenges?

We are looking for African International undergraduate students who are 2nd year and above or who just graduated within the past year to interview about their educational experiences in a UK university.

If you are interested please contact Solomon Zewolde at solomon.zewolde.14@ucl.ac.uk or by phone on [REDACTED] You will be sent an information sheet that gives further details about the research.

Interviews will last about 90 minutes

- You will be paid £ 10 as a lunch/transport allowance
- You will be interviewed at a place, a date and time of your choice.

The research has full ethical approval from UCL Institute of Education (UCL/IOE)

Appendix 3: Information sheet and Consent form

Lived Experiences of Black African International Students from Sub-Saharan Africa in UK's Higher Education

Information sheet for Black African International Students (BAIS)

Who is conducting the research?

My name is Solomon Zewolde and I am inviting you to take part in my research project which looks at the lived experiences of Sub-Saharan African International Students in UK's Higher Education.' I am currently a PhD student at University College London (UCL) in the Institute of Education (IOE). I have been a lecturer and researcher in higher education in Ethiopia where I have taught various undergraduate courses for over 14 years. I have conducted research in the areas of student attrition (why students discontinue their university education) and students' evaluation of teaching effectiveness. This interest in researching the student experience enthused me even more after I came to the UK and experienced a new educational culture. My brief personal experience has inspired me to look at the literature on the experiences of different groups of students in UK higher education, which reveals that ethnic minority students in general have a different experience of higher education than other students. I decided to study one group of ethnic minorities, Black African International students, by focusing on their lived experiences as they study and live in the UK.

Why am I doing this research?

I am hoping to find out if your identity ('race'/ethnicity, gender, etc.,) as an African international student shapes your lived experiences while studying in a UK university. I would also like to explore how previous educational experiences might shape your lived experiences while studying in a UK university. I very much hope the results of the study will give voice to the experiences of Black African international students, which seem to be silent in the international student experience literature. By doing so the results will help UK universities and their staff to better understand the lived realities of black African international students and help them provide a more satisfying experience. I very much hope that you would like to take part in this important study.

Why am I being invited to take part?

You are being invited because you are an International student from Sub-Saharan Africa studying in a UK University and have the relevant experience this research is interested in.

What will happen if I choose to take part?

If you decide to be part of this study, you will take part in an individual interview session that lasts between 60 and 90 minutes. To allow me to listen attentively and lead the interview session with undivided attention, I will ask your permission to audio-record the interview. I will send you a brief summary of the kind of topics or questions you may be asked to discuss one week before the discussion session.

Will anyone know I have been involved?

No. I will not tell anyone that you have been involved in the study. Both you and your university will not be identified by name when I write the research report. I will ensure that your words remain strictly confidential at all times.

Could there be problems for me if I take part?

I do not anticipate that you will have problems if you take-part in the study.

What will happen to the results of the research?

Once the interviews are transcribed, I will analyse the data and the results will be included in my PhD thesis. In all written reports, I will not use your name or the name of your university.

Data Storage

The transcribed interview data will be anonymised and encrypted and stored in a secure UCL network drive.

Do I have to take part?

It is entirely up to you whether or not you choose to take part. I hope that if you do choose to be involved then you will find it a valuable experience. I would like to reassure you that there are no consequences whatsoever if you choose not to participate in this research. Even after you are in the session, you have the right not to answer any single question, as well as to withdraw completely from the interview at any point. I will not use any of your words if you ask me not to when you withdraw.

Thank you very much for taking the time to read this information sheet. If you would like to be involved, please complete the following consent form and return to (solomon.zewolde.14@ucl.ac.uk). If you have any further questions before

you decide whether to take part, you can also reach me by telephone at **07454722225**.

If you have any concerns about my research you can contact my Principal supervisor, Dr Alice Bradbury, email: (a.bradbury@ucl.ac.uk)

CONSENT FORM

Project Title

Lived Experiences of Black African International Students from Sub-Saharan Africa in UK's Higher Education

If you are happy to participate, please complete this consent form and return to [Mr Solomon Zewolde \(solomon.zewolde.14@ucl.ac.uk\)](mailto:solomon.zewolde.14@ucl.ac.uk) by (date)

	Yes	No
I have read and understood the information leaflet about the research	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
I agree to take part in the study as outlined on the information sheet.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
I am happy for my interview to be audio recorded	<input type="checkbox"/>	
I understand that if any of my words are used in reports or presentations they will not be attributed to me	<input type="checkbox"/>	
I understand that I can withdraw from the project at any time, and that if I choose to do this, any data I have contributed will not be used	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
I understand that I can contact the researcher, Mr Solomon Zewolde , at any time	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

I understand that the results will be shared with
relevant staff at UCL/ IOE and examiners

Name _____

Signed _____

Date

Researcher's name _____

Signed

Appendix 4: Framework of final codes used

Capitals and Adjustment challenges

- Loneliness
- adapting to new culture
- Institutional support available
- Linguistic capital
- Adapting to new teaching methods
- Adapting to new assessment methods

Capitals and Academic performance

- Academic preparedness
- Unfamiliarity with assessment methods
- Euro-centric curriculum
- Misfortunes affecting social networks
- Perceived racism and discrimination

Experiences of Racism

Over Racism

- Racial slurs
- Go back to Africa
- Missile attacks
- Denigration

Covert: racial microaggressions

- Assumption of inferior education
- Pathologizing talk
- Ignoring seminar contributions
- Invisibility
- Seen as criminal

Coping strategies

- Co-national spaces
- Ignoring
- Resilience
- 'not my struggle'

Experiences of Othering

- Homogenization
- Stereotyping
- Exoticize and fetishize
- Exclusion and avoidance
- Immigration status
- Labour market discrimination
- Surprise at English language proficiency
- Being BAIS VS Being a white student

