

**UCL Fellowship Research Project 2009-2010**

**Cultural Influences on Education:  
students' journeys between FE and HE**



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## **Rationale**

This research project explores the relationship between culture and education, in order to inform teachers about the nature of cultural influences, and the effect of these on different stages of students' education. The particular focus is on examining students' choices regarding progression from Further Education to Higher Education. Teaching at City and Islington Sixth Form College requires a constant dialogue between a diverse range of cultures and student experience; this study will address a need to understand factors that affect students' experience in order to maintain and widen participation in inner city institutions. A small number of students from City and Islington Sixth Form and University College London will be interviewed and their experiences analysed in a qualitative manner; this will allow discussion of the detailed information students provide. Hence the advantages and disadvantages of students' educational journeys and their choices regarding progression to Higher Education can be evaluated in the context of their cultural experience, and with reference to the previous body of research in this area. For confidentiality all names in this study have been changed.

## Research Context: key concepts

For the purposes of this essay the use of the term 'culture' will refer to students' backgrounds in terms of their class, ethnicity, economic status, birthplace and parents' birthplace, and the effects of these elements on these students' experience of living and studying in modern multicultural London. In order to encompass the cultural elements just described, the term 'habitus', created by the French sociologist Pierre Bourdieu, is useful to refer to the effects of socio-cultural aspects on behaviour. Throughout this essay, habitus will refer to the key principles, values and behavioural norms which a group upholds. 'The habitus is necessarily internalised and converted into a disposition that generates meaningful practices and meaning-giving perceptions'. (Bourdieu, *A Social Critique of the Judgement of Taste*, p.169) Bourdieu believes habitus are largely unconscious and therefore difficult to change. In Bourdieu's view this dynamic creates cultural insularity and immobility, and is particularly operative through institutions such as education. This research will use Bourdieu's terminology to explore his deterministic view of society in a modern context.

Tariq Modood is professor of sociology at the University of Bristol. In his recent paper *Multiculturalism, Citizenship and Identity* Modood explains that it is important to recognise the complexity of ways in which class, culture, and colour intersect. While Bourdieu specifically refers to 'class' in his 1979 study, the identification of other cultural factors in this essay will address the multicultural development of modern London and the necessity of appropriating Bourdieu's concept and his classification of groups.

The qualitative nature of this study will recognise the recent 'turn toward narrative' in educational research as identified by Phillion/He/Connelly in 2005. This style appeals to my study as it is 'peopled with characters' rather than categories, and provides 'a way of understanding the nuances of multicultural life and the complexity of multicultural issues' (*Narrative Experience in Multicultural Education*.p.10/2).

This process will involve tackling pre-determined cultural categories which have been 'imagined, constructed, re-worked and developed in the English mind.' In this study the 'English mind' will not be the determining element, rather, students will be asked themselves to define their culture. This will recognise identity not as 'fixed, unitary, bounded or static, but active, fluid, permeable and ever-changing.' (Grosevnor, *Assimilating Identities*, p.185/199).

Through this study each student's particular experiences will be examined in the context of previous research, essentially echoing Gillborn's concern that:

'Culture, [not colour].....must be returned to the centre of the debate'

*(Racism and Antiracism in Real Schools, p.78)*

## **Methodology**

### **Initial questions**

- What choices are students making regarding their further and higher education?
- Are students making independent decisions for future study regardless of cultural background and influences?
- How do cultural issues affect their options?
- How do educational establishments deal with these cultural issues?

### **Problems**

- To avoid stereotypical assumptions, care must be taken to ensure that students' educational choices are discussed, but that definitive conclusions are not drawn in relation to culture, rather that the 'interplay' of these influences is explored.
- A typical problem associated with qualitative research concerns the unreliability of interviewee's statements. The contrived nature of the interview situation must be taken into account when discussing these accounts.
- Because of the small number of participants, broad generalisations regarding the effects of culture on education cannot be made in the conclusion. The method of 'narrative enquiry' previously mentioned justifies this approach, as the focus here is to gain an 'understanding

of experience' rather than a statistical evaluation.  
(Phillion/He/Connelly, *Narrative Experience in Multicultural Education*,.p.10)

## **Research methods**

Six students from different cultural backgrounds will be interviewed in depth, taken from the AS A2 and undergraduate populous of the establishments. The important statements gained from initial questionnaires and interviews will be related to significant findings in recent research, and the interplay of these concepts discussed. Although definitive conclusions cannot be drawn from such a small group of participants, considerations arising from the study will be explored in the conclusion.

## **Case Studies**

(Names changed for confidentiality)

- City and Islington SFC AS (first year) students: **Zac and Mia**
- City and Islington SFC A2 (second year) students: **Fiona and Gerry**
- UCL undergraduate students: **Kai and Juan**

## **Analysis of Results**

City and Islington Sixth Form College is an over-subscribed government funded college based in Angel, Islington. It belongs within the wider 'City and Islington College' and enjoys Beacon Status after being judged 'outstanding' in every department in the most recent Ofsted Inspection. Students have the opportunity to study A-levels or GCSE re-takes and most go on to university, with 440 out of 514 finishing students securing places last year.

### **Zac and Mia**

On her college application form Mia categorised herself as 'Asian British-Bangladeshi'. In her interview she said she thought culture was about, 'my attitude, values, practices and goals', and subsequently described herself as Bengali/Muslim because of her religious and cultural habitus.

Zac categorises himself as 'Black British-Caribbean' on the college application form. On his questionnaire Zac wrote that his parents were born in England, but that their parents were born in Jamaica so 'I guess that makes me Jamaican'. In his interview, when asked why his grandparents and parents' culture dominates his sense of identity Zac revealed that he, his mum and step-dad were all Rastafarians, therefore the Jamaican culture was referred to most often at home.

Both of these students define themselves most strongly in terms of their parents' cultures, with no mention of the place they themselves live or of their race. The most important factor for them at this stage is their parents' influence which underpins their upbringing. Although they are obviously part of a different culture (British/ youth) which is being formed significantly through their contact at school and college, they do not see themselves as autonomous enough yet to refer to these habitus in a definition of their cultural identity. This disconnection is not aided by a history of British imperialism.

When both speak of 'the mix of cultures in their previous school or college' they list a number of cultures with no mention of 'British'. As well as a distancing from the white British culture, there seems to be a connotation of cultural 'neutrality'.

The unconscious division between 'British' and 'cultural' experience that these two students make may also relate to comparisons and differences in habitus that they are made aware of; Zac has been told that in London he lives in 'luxury' compared with the Jamaican way of life, and Mia's family do not get along with their white neighbours because 'they're noisy, and have different timetables than us'. Mia sums up by saying 'we don't join in with them so it's a problem'. In acquiring identity it is important to create group solidarity. Grosvenor's quote from Wallerstein can be used to explain why identity which is based purely on cultural heritage can be negative, 'pastness is a mode by which persons are persuaded to act in the present in ways they may not otherwise act....it is a tool persons use against each other' (*Assimilating Identities*, p.187). One purpose of this 'tool' is to discourage certain groups from higher education by ensuring habitus are reproduced. I will discuss this further in the conclusion.

Mia's parents both came to England from Bangladesh when they were teenagers. 'Dad came for work, Mum came with her family for an arranged marriage'. Both parents support her education; they understand the need to read and write to a good standard and rely on her help 'answering the phone and filling in forms'. Ball refers to Bourdieu when he says 'working class ways of life remain largely organised around the "practical order" of simply getting by' (Ball, *Circuits of Schooling*, p.162). However, when Mia explains their expectations of her in terms of future career prospects her vague answers suggest uninformed views. She says that if her education progresses her parents would want her to choose a career in which she will earn a lot of money such as to become 'a banker'. She also says that the reason for this is so that she can 'pay for my wedding'.

Ball describes these expectations as 'generic', sometimes unrealistic and weakly linked to 'real' imagined futures.' (Ibid.p.219) These prospects are not unrealistic in terms of Mia's capabilities, but rather a realistic route for this career has not been thought out or planned. This affects what Ball calls the 'imagined future' of the student. 'The student and family have fewer direct links to HE experience...At this point they are "condemned to experience [the culture of HE] as unreal" (Bourdieu and Passeron in Ball, Ibid., p.219).

The possibility of marriage, on the other hand, is a familiar and safe option; this may be why Mia feels no great pressure to push herself to progress to HE. This mirrors Ball's findings of working class ethnic school 'choosers': when the HE territory is an unknown for parents 'processes of information gathering and choice are mostly left to the student' (*Circuits of Schooling*, p.162).



Zac finds the mix of cultures in City and Islington 'really exciting'. In a question about whether students had had any negative experiences which made them feel different because of their culture, Zac gave more examples than any of the other participants. He explained that previously at school he was 'the only Rastafarian', which, in primary school led some to ask him if he was 'a boy or a girl' due to having long dreadlocks, and in secondary being 'well-known' because he 'represented' his culture. Zac also felt that at school teachers 'doubted his potential'. As Zac would have been at primary school in the 1980s this is an example of the 'stereotype judgements' that some teachers made, highlighted in the 1985 Swann Report. (Grosvenor, *Assimilating Identities*, p.73) Examples included the judgement that 'West Indians are given to 'protest' and 'high profile'.

Zac is used to standing out and feeling different, which explains why at City and Islington he enjoys being more anonymous in an adult environment where many cultures combine. It is important to Zac, and to this study, that he feels 'welcomed' at City and Islington College, especially in the context of the stereotypical views he encountered in his past. According to Ball, Zac represents a 'chooser' who is 'race-aware' and is suited to 'Institutions which offer an ethnic mix, with a good number of the students' own ethnicity but no predominant group'. (*Circuits of Schooling*, p.219).

## Fiona and Gerry

On her college application form Fiona describes herself as 'white British', and in her interview the same. The most notable point in Fiona's interview was the fact that she had very specific ideas about her progression to HE. She said her parents expected her 'to attend a red brick Russell Group University (not ex-polytechnic) with a 3B or above minimum offer and getting a 2:2 or above in my 3<sup>rd</sup> or 4<sup>th</sup> year'. This is very different than, for instance, Mia's views of university. Fiona is extremely well informed and guided by her parents, and with this knowledge, university is not only a 'real' imagined future; it is wholeheartedly encouraged and expected of her. Ball provides an explanation for the differences in these approaches: 'A working class discourse is dominated by the practical and the immediate and middle class discourse...by the ideal and advantageous.'(Ball, *Circuits of Schooling*,.p.175)

Fiona's study is also interesting in terms of her experience of being 'white British' in multicultural London. Vicky Simmons' recent study of white working class boys' achievement in City and Islington College, surrounding secondary schools, and in UCL, has found that there has been a declining number of white students in London Schools in recent years and the achievement rate for white boys has gone down.

As well as achievement, this statistic may have had an impact on race relations. In the earlier studies I have referred to, the 1986 murder of Ahmed Iqbal by Darren Coulburn is often quoted to represent race relations in education at the time. The event was symbolic of a climax to the issues that were mounting in the 1970s and 1980s, but through frequent reference it could perpetuate a stereotype of black victim and white aggressor. In David Gillborn's 1995 study he states that 'In the classroom, the corridor and the playground, minority students experience school differently to their white peers, often in ways that disadvantage them'. (Gillborn, *Racism and Antiracism in Real schools*,.p.2) While this statement is undoubtedly true, as illustrated in Zac's account, the focus here is on the experience of ethnic minority students with an assumption of superiority of the 'white peers' which excludes the latter from isolation or victimisation.

As well as being in a secondary school in which she said, 'white children were the minority in some years including mine' Fiona was also the only white girl in the AS Drama class which I taught in 2008/9. Fiona explained that she thought the most dominant cultures in the AS Drama group were the Ghanaian and Nigerian cultures and that their habitus dominated the group. Although it was ignored by this student, I witnessed an active dislike towards her by groups of other cultures within the class. This situation could contribute to a modern multicultural issue: a change in the balance of cultures in inner city establishments, and the implications this has on race relations. The racist dynamic which affected Zac due to circumstances in the 1980s may now be affecting students such as Fiona, because of a shift in modern cultural elements.

Gerry displays an attitude which would challenge Bourdieu's view of education being determined by cultural habitus. He comes from a Ghanaian family and his parents have a limited knowledge of higher education in England, and yet he has made significant progress with his applications to university and is influenced by his two older brothers who have both been through the university route. A culture of higher education has evolved in his family, which has given Gerry the impetus to progress academically. When Gerry talks of his parents expectations of his education, the answers he gives are as idealistic as in Mia's interview: 'My parents would much prefer me to pass with all As and become a lawyer or a doctor'. 'They are not too happy with me doing subjects like Media and Drama because they don't see necessary jobs coming out of it.'

By incorporating the higher education route into their lives Gerry and his family exemplify habitus as 'dynamic and capable of change'. (Hayton and Paczuska, *Access, Participation and Higher Education*, .p.144) In Bourdieu's terms however, they have increased their 'cultural capital', a term used to explain 'the extent to which individuals have absorbed the dominant culture.' (Mc Kenzie, *Changing Education*, .p.50).

Although when asked, Gerry said he wouldn't mind if the cultural mix at university was different, he still would prefer as much diversity as at City and Islington. His behaviour shows that maybe he would have more of a reaction to cultural change than he purports in his interview. Gerry admittedly spends a lot of time with students of his own culture as 'they have more in common', Mia also said 'there's just more in common with the Bengali group'. The comfort that these groups provide individuals suggests that their experience of university may be difficult if this mix changes. 'For those who lack familiarity with university life or whose parents did not participate in higher education, the pathway is frequently disjointed and isolated' (Macrea and Maquire, *Access, Participation and Higher Education*,.p.37

## Kai and Juan

These two students are undergraduates at University College London, a highly competitive and high achieving London university which specialises in Science subjects. Historically, UCL was the first college to admit women and ethnic minorities. In the prospectus UCL says it has 'almost 140 student nationalities' and says that 'university can and should aim to shape students' personal and social development as well as encourage their intellectual growth.' Last year 6 students from City and Islington SFC secured places at UCL out of approximately 60 applicants.

Juan is originally 'Colombian' and is studying Engineering at UCL. He previously went to City and Islington College to study A-levels. Juan says that compared to London, Colombia is 'culturally rich'. This supports the view that London is lacking a sense of culture which is tangible and encompasses the variety of cultures which live along side each other. As Juan says, 'Modern Colombia inherited Indigenous, Spanish and African cultures and developed its identity over time.' In London the influx of immigrants started in the 1920s, as opposed to the history of multiculturalism reaching back to the 16<sup>th</sup> century in Colombia. This may be the reason that Joaquin describes many cultures which contribute to his identity, while the previous interviewees had difficulty making a connection between the 'British' culture and their parents' birthplaces and cultural make up. I will discuss this disconnection between London cultures further in the conclusion.

For students such as Juan, who is used to a multicultural society, and is academically confident and informed due to his parents' experience of higher education, he does not feel excluded in the cultural mix of UCL. But for students less integrated into the higher education system, the experience could prove alienating, 'the formal barriers have been removed but the cultural barriers, with all their mysteries and petty humiliations, remain.' (Macrea and Maquire, *Access, Participation and Higher Education*, p.16)

As class has traditionally been a defining factor in entry to university, for some it is still seen as an inaccessible; 'Discourses of elitism are interwoven into the beliefs, perceptions and attitudes' of the institution. (Macrea and Maquire, *Access, Participation and Higher Education*, p.37)

This could explain why '40 per cent of all minority ethnic HE students are in London HEIs, mainly in the 'new' universities. (Ball, *Education Policy and Social Class*, p.217) Despite ethnic communities existing in different parts of the UK, universities outside London can be seen to be cautious ethnic choosers as predominantly white, and part of the traditional exclusive background which is to be avoided. Juan exhibits this view: when asked if he had had a negative experience regarding his culture he said 'No. I think if I went anywhere outside London to a less culturally diverse place it would have been very different.'

For Juan, City and Islington College provided a diverse environment where he learnt about other cultures such as 'the Muslim community and their religious views' which he would not have had the opportunity to do otherwise. He says the cultural mix at UCL is noticeably different, and that there is less of the Bangladesh and also the Afro-Caribbean communities.

Kai is an international student who won a government scholarship to study Electronic and Electrical Engineering at UCL. He describes himself as 'ethnically Chinese' and 'born and raised in Malaysia'. Kai describes an upbringing in which both his parents 'excelled in their studies....they both got scholarships to pursue a tertiary education....and again got scholarships to pursue postgraduate degrees in their respective fields'. Kai thinks that this motivation to succeed academically came from living in a developing country in the 1950s and 1960s, when Malaysia became independent. His parents both saw this as inspiration for their own independence through education. This work ethic is an example of habitus which has obviously been inherited by Kai; this exemplifies habitus as 'a system of practice-generating schemes which expresses systematically the necessity and freedom inherent in its class condition'. (Bourdieu, *Distinction: A Social Critique of the Judgement of Taste*, p.172). Furthermore, Kai's admission that 'the majority of students on the course are Asian' shows a significant movement within a culture which is an example of habitus operating within the collective context.

## Conclusions

Having achieved some movement from an elite to a mass system, policy makers now urge the higher education sector to address how to achieve a more representative student profile that reaches out to economically and socially excluded groups. (Hayton and Paczuska, *Ibid.*, p.201)

How 'representative' is the student profile in HE? A significant comparison to be made between the ethnicities of current students in 2009/10 in both the establishments in question (statistics: Appendix 4) between the percentages of 'black' and 'white' students. In City and Islington Sixth Form 26% of students class themselves as 'white' and 26% as 'black', whilst in UCL white students make up approximately 53% of the cohort, and black students only 3%. This reflects one of Juan's observations that compared to City and Islington SFC 'there are less of the Afro- Caribbean cultures' in UCL.

### FE: A Unifying Culture?

It has become apparent through this study that to widen participation in HE building a sense of an 'encompassing' culture for students in FE could support and promote progression to HE. There is a London 'youth' culture which students are a part of but do not necessarily recognise as part of their essential cultural make-up. This factor is evidently lacking in their sense of identity, and, is compounded by residual resentment about a history of bad race relations and a lack of confidence about moving into unknown 'territory'. The fact that two international students described an identity which is influenced by the 'host' culture and others made the Londoners' lack of multicultural consciousness more significant.

Disjointedness in identity ensures that Bourdeiu's cultural habitus still dominates the decision making process for students. If students feel that their school/college life belongs to a culture which is separate, culturally, from what they call 'theirs', higher education is an unknown territory and an extension of this, making it easier to see why students from some cultures make this journey more rarely. Habitus is also evident as a strong influence on education through trends in subject choice such as Juan's observation that 'the majority culture on the engineering course is Asian'.

Students who stick to the habitus of their own cultural group, could be encouraged to extend this and become conscious of another cultural 'membership'. Mia, who is working class with Bangladesh heritage, is the most apprehensive of other cultures and has friends mostly from her own cultural group because 'I feel they can relate to me....I won't fit in to another cultural group'. Gerry, also from a working class background whose parents have no experience of higher education, has friends from mainly a Ghanaian background; 'thinking about it, the majority of my friends are of the same

culture.....we have more things in common'. It is clear that students need a sense of their own culture, but some are lacking in an explicit sense of 'belonging' to another culture which may create the confidence to take other opportunities, and to include HE as Ball says, in their 'imagined future'.

In his paper 'Multiculturalism, citizenship and national identity' Tariq Modood explains a notion of citizenship which involves a 'multilogical' relationship between cultures but within an encompassing group, 'the plurality, then, is ever present-and each part ...has a right to... speak up for itself and for its vision of the whole.' In this way cultural specificity is retained but the cohesiveness of the group is strengthened and made explicit.

I suggest that this model of citizenship could be introduced into the tutorial system at City and Islington College. The tutorial system currently includes a guided careers service which allows students develop their understanding of the university application process throughout the two years at the college. This system is invaluable for students such as Mia, so that she becomes as informed as Fiona, ensuring that students' 'imagined future and...route to that future remain clearly in sight' (Ball, *Education Policy and Social Class*,p.182) As well as *informing* students about this process, a citizenship programme could work to tackle issues regarding culture and identity in order to promote a sense of entitlement in society, and subsequently, in the university process.

The Citizenship Foundation explains: 'citizenship is not about trying to fit everyone into the same mould...rather ... it's aim is to equip citizens for the sort of active role required of them in today's complex and diverse society.' This statement combats Bourdieu's dated terminology: gaining 'cultural capital' (absorbing the 'dominant culture') is not the aim of this innovative course, instead issues of politics, society and the individual are discussed with the aim of revealing these dynamics.

The argument for continuing citizenship in post-16 education, is the need for this subject to be 'Inclusive, Pervasive (not limited to schools but an integral part of all education for young people) and Lifelong'( *What is citizenship, and why teach it?* [www.citizenshipfoundation.org.uk](http://www.citizenshipfoundation.org.uk)) Indeed, issues of identity and diversity, for example, do not stop at GCSE level, and this study has identified a specific need for citizenship education to continue, in order to address progression from FE to HE.

Examples of citizenship include include 'teaching students to work together and take practical action...for example, after learning about human rights, diversity and inequality....students might decide to set up a project to address racism in their school or local community'( [www.wikipedia.org/wiki/Citizenship](http://www.wikipedia.org/wiki/Citizenship))

This collaborative approach, which aims to make issues of identity and diversity explicit, is the factor which could also help to ensure that, in terms of race relations 'that questions of power and oppression remain clearly in sight.' (Gillborn, *Racism and Anti-Racism In Real Schools*.p.85) This means that the dynamics of racism which affected Zac due to stereotyping in primary school, and affected Fiona due to a shift in the balance of cultures in sixth form, could

be discussed and a language developed in order to deal with them. In its extreme this consciousness could help to alleviate the 'symbolic violence' which Bourdieu identifies.

### **HE: a support network?**

The educational system....reproduces the hierarchies of the social world....it is no doubt in the area of education and culture that the members of the dominated classes have least chance of discovering their objective interest. (Bourdieu, *Distinction: A Social Critique of the Judgement of Taste*, p.389/390)

Bourdieu's 'symbolic violence' is operative in elitist institutions which deter certain groups from entry so that they *choose* not to apply. For Gramsci also, 'achieving hegemony was about winning consent' (Allen and Ainley, *Education Make You Fick, Innit?* .p.43) In their 2002 study, Leathwood and Hutchings quote from a 1998 DfEE report which found that students' fears were compounded by 'representation' of students in higher education: for the ethnic working class student many responses showed the view that 'university....students were widely represented as middle class (and white) and different to oneself' (Hayton and Paczuska, *Access, Participation and Higher Education* .p.111).

Despite the photographs on a prospectus for UCL named 'global citizenship' showing students of different ethnicities, the large majority of students pictured are white (63) while only 8 are black and 39 are Asian, Chinese, Mixed or unidentifiable. The message that this could send out to potential students, particularly black applicants, is that their culture as is a minority at UCL which could deter them from application. In the extreme this could be seen as a form of Bourdieu's symbolic violence.

Whilst this is a harsh judgement of UCL's cultural representation there is currently a low number of black students in attendance at UCL. The concern that Zac has over the cultural mix of college/university shows a possible reason for others' non-participation and the manifestation of this low statistic. In order to gain the confidence of these students it is therefore necessary to deconstruct the first stages of the application process and the 'signs' that the establishment put out.

Through his application to university, Gerry has made a positive step in subverting the oppressive nature of habitus, and, in Bourdieu's terms, of recognising his 'objective interest', however initially, he is in danger of finding



the university experience difficult if his familiar cultural group is under-represented.

It is important for students to feel 'welcomed' into university: 'At the point of transition into higher education the provision of accessible, informed and responsive advice and guidance is essential in order to widen participation' (Hayton and Paczuska, *Ibid.*, p.13).

UCL appeals to prospective students concerned about the move from FE to HE by including a link to the universities 'transition programme' on their website. Although it might be easier for students such as Gerry to find this link if it were included on the undergraduate page, it provides comprehensive information on student support such as the student mentoring system.

The mentoring system involves experienced second year students being available to help first year undergraduates. They are chosen specifically for their skills in 'empathy, leadership and communication' and, in the video-link in which previous mentors describe their experiences these skills are apparent, the mentors seem well informed and approachable. Two of these students are white, and one Asian. It may be significant for British Caribbean or British African potential students such as Zac and Gerry that there are no black mentors in this video.

Providing student profiles on the transition website is another way that UCL encourages a personal connection with prospective students. The accounts which are presented are positive and reassuring and could make students feel at ease when considering this university. However, there are no black students in the photos which accompany these accounts, the majority of student profiles being shown are of white students.

UCL needs to address the cultural representation in the first stages of their application process, if students such as Gerry and Mia, who have expressed an explicit desire for cultural familiarity, are to feel welcomed at UCL. This may help to address the issue of cultural imbalance in their recent statistics.

This study has revealed a need to make culture itself, and cultural issues more explicit in FE and HE. With this premise, programmes such as career's tutorials, citizenship studies, access to student profiles and transitional mentoring could encourage students from diverse backgrounds to participate in HE and, in Bourdieu's words, 'to discover their objective interest.' (Bourdieu, *Distinction: A Social Critique of the Judgement of Taste*, p.390)

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# Appendices

## **Appendix 1: Research Context: cultural equality and access in education**

In the post-colonial world, where the walls of empire have crumbled....A crisis of identity has emerged...the migration and settlement of post-colonial peoples within the metropolitan centre has resulted in... the white British having to learn that being British isn't what it was.

(Grosvenor, *Assimilating Identities: Racism and Education Policy in Post 1945 Britain*, p.188/189)

In the 1960s, attempts to integrate different cultures were focussed on fitting in with the host society, under the term 're-socialisation of migrants' (Grosvenor, *Assimilating Identities*, p.50). These attempts were followed by the introduction of the minority cultures' customs and practices into schools: in his 1997 study Grosvenor trivialises these attempts, calling them the 'the saris, samosas and steel bands approach' of the late 1970s. It wasn't until the 1985 Swann Report *Education For All* which led to the Education reform Act of 1988 that the government made a conscious effort to equalise the experiences of students from different cultures in education.

The 1980s recognised a need to combat racism, as well to try to promote multiculturalism in educational establishments. Therefore in 1988 'most education authorities had anti-racist or multicultural education policies' (Ibid., p.68/80). With this as a basis, public interest surrounded more opportunities in education in the 1990s; this inspired confidence and promoted education for all in a more culturally-conscious environment. McKenzie explains:

More young people were staying in school ....and more were moving to further and higher education....promoted by British governments committed to expanding further and higher education to generate greater economic prosperity via a 'learning society'....

perhaps the most interesting data to emerge from research during the 1990s related to the 'academic drift'....of many people from ethnic minorities into further and higher education.

(*Changing Education*, p.271/298)

Access to this 'learning society' had its limits. When Labour won the general election in 1997, there was a focus on 'linking education policies to wider efforts to reduce social inequalities and social exclusion'. An example of this is the 1999 piloting of means tested maintenance allowance (EMA) for 16-18

year olds in FE. Unfortunately, after giving more young people the financial means to access FE the government subsequently made it harder to progress to higher education, with the 1998 Teaching and Higher Education Act New Labour which abolished all maintenance grants and 'broke away from the commitment previous governments had to free education for full-time students in higher education.' (McKenzie, J., *Changing Education*, p.274).

In 2004 The Children Act showed that monitoring the welfare of young people, and creating opportunities for all children regardless of difference was firmly in the minds of educationalists; the 'Every Child Matters' sets specific guidance for facilitating this process.

Within this context of promoting multiculturalism, confronting the issue of racism and creating opportunity for students from all cultures and backgrounds, the experiences of a small number of students from London institutions are explored.

## Appendix 2: Statistical Data

### City and Islington SFC Current and completed AS and A2 Students – Ethnicity Breakdown for 2009/2010

<b>Ethnicity</b>	<b>Percentage</b>	<b>Group includes</b>
<b>Asian</b>	<b>19%</b>	<b>Bangladeshi Indian Pakistani Any other</b>
<b>Black</b>	<b>26%</b>	<b>African Caribbean Any other</b>
<b>Mixed</b>	<b>11%</b>	<b>White and Asian White and Black African White and Black Caribbean Any other</b>
<b>White</b>	<b>26%</b>	<b>British Irish Any other</b>
<b>Chinese</b>	<b>3%</b>	<b>Chinese</b>
<b>Turkish</b>	<b>6%</b>	<b>Turkish</b>
<b>Kurdish</b>	<b>0%</b>	<b>Kurdish</b>
<b>Any other</b>	<b>9%</b>	<b>Any other/ not known</b>

### UCL Students – Ethnicity Breakdown for 2009/2010

<b>Ethnicity</b>	<b>Percentage</b>	<b>Group includes</b>
<b>Asian</b>	<b>19%</b>	<b>Bangladeshi Indian Pakistani Any other</b>
<b>Black</b>	<b>3%</b>	<b>African Caribbean Any other</b>
<b>Mixed</b>	<b>5%</b>	<b>White and Asian White and Black African White and Black Caribbean Any other</b>
<b>White</b>	<b>53%</b>	<b>White</b>
<b>Chinese</b>	<b>13%</b>	<b>Chinese</b>
<b>Any other</b>	<b>10%</b>	<b>Any other Information refused Not known</b>

### Appendix 3: Initial Questions

Students filled in questionnaire sheets prior to interviews. Specific questions were then prepared relating to their answers.

1. Describe your cultural make-up. How would you describe *your* 'culture'?
2. Describe your parents cultures.
3. Describe your parents' experiences of education.
4. Do your parents have specific expectations of your education?
5. Describe the mix of cultures at your previous school/college.
6. Did you feel your 'culture' was addressed and respected there? For example, did you explore a wide range of cultural material in lessons, and have the opportunity to use your own unique cultural experiences as a basis for learning?
7. Have you ever had an experience which has made you feel 'different' in a negative way, because of your culture? Please explain.
8. Why are you studying at City and Islington College/ UCL?
9. What/who affected your choice to study at your current college?
10. Describe the cultural mix at your current educational establishment.
11. Do you find the material on your course 'culturally diverse'? Explain.
12. Describe the cultural mix of your peer group. Do you tend to have friends of one particular culture? Why is this?

## **Appendix 4: Notes from interviews**

**Zac**

### **Extra Questions:**

1. Your parents were born in England but the Jamaican culture dominates your identity, why is this? Can you explain the Rastafarian culture?
2. Is the fact that your mother is studying affecting you?
3. Were there any other Rastafarians in your previous school?
4. How did primary school 'affect your confidence'?
5. Is it important to feel comfortable at College? What benefits does the multicultural environment have?
6. Do different cultural groups mix? Why/why not?

### **Zac's answers in discussion:**

- Zac has the desire to experience Jamaican culture when he gets opportunity to go there.
- He has been told the British way of life is seen as 'luxury' and knows it would be 'very different' in Jamaica.
- Rastafarianism is about 'knowing yourself and your roots' it has its roots in African culture.
- Zac's Mum and step-dad hold these principles. They encourage having a different perspective, asking questions; 'don't just take for granted what's on the surface'.
- Zac's mum is studying for a degree, they're in the same boat-she understands juggling responsibility and study and Zac thinks this is positive.
- Zac has a 'laid back' personality, 'GCSEs don't define me'.
- Zac was the only Rastafarian in his school.
- He felt this gave him a connection with Caribbean students in school.
- His experience of primary school was difficult due to teachers 'doubting his potential'.
- Zac felt more welcomed at City and Islington SFC.
- He thinks sharing experience is important, therefore it is good to have more cultures in SFC.
- In SFC people can be a bit cliquey, as Zac 'gets on with everyone' he can diffuse this.



## **Gerry**

### **Extra Questions:**

1. Why do you see yourself as 'predominantly Ghanaian'? How is Ghanaian culture different to others?
2. Do you see your British culture (friends etc) as separate or overlapping your Ghanaian culture? Why?
3. How did you explain to your parents the desire to do Drama and Media Studies? Can you get them to change their views at all?
4. What job do you see yourself doing with your chosen subjects?
5. How do you see British Culture?
6. Why was there segregation in your previous school, despite having the opportunity to express cultures through organised cultural events?
7. Why is there segregation at City and Islington SFC? Is there anything that could be done to change this?
8. Do you think it is important to have a connection with others who might understand your strong culture at home?
9. How would you feel if your university were not as culturally diverse?

### **Gerry's answers in discussion:**

- Gerry's parents came to England from Ghana in their 20s. They see things differently- if I'm with a girl they think she must be my 'girlfriend'.
- He does see the cultures as overlapping, but makes different decisions based on what situation he's in. For example, Gerry must respect his 'aunties' at home. When they say 'that would not happen in Ghana!' he laughs it off, they agree to disagree. He sees British culture as what's 'mine', Grime music etc.
- Gerry's parents do support his education but it must be a means to an end 'no Cs only As!' he may do Law or Psychology at university, Gerry's mum is happy with him taking Law.
- Gerry wants to be a child psychologist. Knows the subject broad so options available.
- There was segregation in his previous school because cultures didn't have a lot in common.
- He would not have taken part in opportunities to 'express culture' because 'it's embarrassing' he feels the culture would be out of context.
- Gerry says, 'Culturally its better at SFC', he explains: 'people are older and understand each other, also they are more willing to learn'
- Gerry's brothers were at Kingston University: there was a good cultural mix there. Because of this, Gerry may apply to Kingston University and doesn't think the cultural mix will influence his decision.

## **Mia**

### **Questions:**

1. Do you see your religion as important to include in your culture?
2. Do you see a connection between your parent's culture and your experience of British culture?
3. When did your parents come to Britain?
4. What do they think of your choice of subjects?
5. Were there no 'white British' at your previous school?
6. Why don't you relate to other groups as much as the Bengali group?
7. Would the cultural mix at university be important to you? How would you feel if it were different?

### **Mia's answers in discussion:**

- Yes, Mia thinks the Muslim religion is important in her sense of culture. 'Mum would say we're British Bengali Muslim because we're westernised'. Mia and family get called 'Londonis' when in Bangladesh.
- She sees college life and home life as separate because there are different rules for each environment which don't overlap. E.g. Praying happens at home and not elsewhere. Parents don't understand Mia's British experience, can't understand Mia wanting to wear different clothes. They do support Mia's education and she uses this to help with answering the phone and filling in forms.
- Both parents came to England in their teens 18 years ago. 'Mum wanted to learn the language but her duties held her back. Dad came for work, Mum for arranged marriage.' Mia's cousins are now coming over from Bangladesh to have an English education, Mia thinks this is happening more frequently within her culture.
- Mia's subject choice is up to her. Her mum doesn't mind as she is 'not pushing her to go to university', in fact she thinks this would make the process of education longer and could interrupt marriage plans.
- There weren't many white people in her previous school.
- Mia has Somali, Turkish and Pakistani friends but has much more in common with her Bengali friends. She doesn't have white British friends as 'they clash and see things differently.' Her neighbours are white and Mia doesn't get along with them, 'they're noisy and have different timetables than us. We don't join in with them so it's a problem.'
- Less Bengali students at university would affect Mia's choice but not to the extent of not wanting to go.

## **Fiona**

### **Questions:**

1. Your parents have very specific expectations of you education, is this pressure or a motivation for you?
2. Do you still feel that it is you who is making the choices? What do your parents think of your choice of subjects?
3. You have had a rich multicultural experience in previous schools. How have you dealt with being a minority culture?
4. Is a diverse environment important to you?
5. You say you don't notice the culture of your friends, why not?
6. Do you experience a London culture which transcends ethnic heritage?
7. If your university were not as culturally diverse as City and Islington SFC, would it affect you?

### **Fiona's answers in discussion**

- Fiona's parent's expectations are both a pressure and a motivation. 'They want me to do well'. Her Mother doesn't make decisions for Fiona but she 'hints' at the route she would like her to take.
- History was Fiona's choice. She took the subjects her parents studied at GCSE and 'didn't get anything from it', so she chose her A-levels herself. They suggested Drama: for confidence.
- Fiona's family moved to be in catchments for 'the most ethnically and culturally diverse secondary school'. Fiona usually tells people about her mum being gay early on to save 'surprise' later on. She says she is 'used to being different'. Fiona has dealt with insults very well, sometimes through instigating positive debates. In her previous school, because the emphasis was on other cultures (not white British) her culture did not seem as important. Because Fiona is not religious she felt that no celebrations applied to her.
- Culture is important to Fiona, she would not want to go to a university outside London where 'white people are the majority' because this would be 'weird'.
- Yes, Fiona does think there is a London culture which transcends specific cultures. She enjoys this part of her identity.

## Juan

### Questions:

1. How do you relate to/ or fit in to the cultural mix of Colombia which you describe?
2. Why did you decide to study in London, was it your choice?
3. How do you deal with the fact that you enjoy the 'culturally rich' Colombia but feel England offers more opportunity?
4. Why did you choose City and Islington as a college?
5. Do you see yourself fitting in to the British culture?
6. From your experience, can you explain why there is such a high intake of Asian students on your course?
7. Do you still see the friends you met at City and Islington?
8. Describe the cultural mix at UCL from your experience?
9. How could UCL promote Engineering to other people from other cultures?

### Juan's answers in discussion:

- Juan has Indian influence in mother's family who is half Indian 'Indian/Spanish mix is most popular' in Colombia. Dad is Spanish and has an Irish Grandmother Juan doesn't have much knowledge of this culture. There are still a lot of tensions between cultures in Colombia causing some isolation; traditional values may affect this segregation. However, Juan enjoys the mix of cultures.
- Juan's Father has said that in London 'all doors are open'. Because his parents went to university they think it is important to create good opportunities. Juan chose the university he wanted to attend because the subjects were not available in Colombia. His Father dissuades from going back to Colombia, but Juan misses his family.
- Juan went to school in Hackney first so was used to a multicultural environment. City and Islington SFC was seen as the best college in the area. There he learnt about the Muslim culture and religion which he enjoyed.
- Juan doesn't see himself as fitting in to the British culture. He thinks that British people are more traditional outside London and is wary of that.
- Juan still sees his friends from City and Islington.
- He thinks Asian students tend to study more Maths subjects. There are also not as many girls or British students on the Engineering course.
- There are a lot of different cultures at UCL noticeably large Chinese groups 'who stick together', but it is not as diverse as City and Islington SFC. There are noticeably less Bangladesh and Black African/Caribbean students.
- Juan says 'with more engineering opportunities in the Third World there is more demand for engineering skills and experience; maybe UCL could use this fact to attract more or, different students.'

## **Kai**

### **Questions:**

1. Explain the Malay and Indian influences you have?
2. Is there any tension between these cultures? In what way are they 'insular'?
3. Explain why you are not 'as conservative' as your parents?
4. Has your parents experiences of education affected you?
5. Is learning about other cultures important to you?
6. Has being amongst other cultures in London made you conscious of your own values and behaviour?

### **Kai's answers in discussion:**

- Kai sees his ethnicity as Chinese, but speaks Malay language. Indian food is very popular in Malaysia which is how the cultures combine.
- There is tension between religious and cultural elements in Malaysia, 'there are churches which are burnt down because of this which is scary.'
- Communities are insular because they are big enough to sustain themselves, not geographically but in terms of networks. Kai thinks this is not a good thing because communities get suspicious of each other. Kai sees the western and Chinese cultures as separate because of the traditional views of the older generation.
- The younger generation are 'more westernised' because they are exposed to more liberal views and have less conservative opinions.
- Kai's feels his parents' academic success can be difficult to live up to, as all his siblings and his Father are in the same business: Electrical Engineering. However Kai doesn't think this influenced his choice to study the subject. He believes the majority of Engineering students at UCL are Asian as it is ingrained in their culture to achieve highly and, 'engineering helps developing countries which my people have first hand experience of.'
- Kai feels learning about other cultures is important. He has joined a Salsa class and enjoys mix the of cultures in London. He would like to study more about different cultures, and maybe learn another language but he feels this would be hard to justify as it wouldn't contribute to his career.
- Kai has had to moderate his sense of humour, as it is 'more dry' than his friends and has 'got him into trouble on occasion.'