**Appendix VIII: Focus Group Transcripts**

**Key:**

(pause) - pause for more than two seconds

[ ] - an overlap in speech

(( )) - laughter, sighs, nods, contextual info (placed on a new line where the action is prolonged/is not intertwined with the speech).

underline - emphasis place on words

:: - stretched vowel

utterance=

=utterance - speech immediately followed by a response without a pause

**Focus Group Interview 1 Transcript**

SC: Thank you everybody for coming, erm, I’d like to start by asking how would you describe your identity?

(5 second pause)

((nervous laughter from the group))

SC: Or which aspects of your identity are important to you?

Amina: Being Black.

Group: Mmm (nodding from all group)

Zara: Erm, being Caribbean (pause) [and British

Shakira: [Especially being Caribbean. It’s like rare to find somebody that is actually from the Caribbean like especially at uni.

Lydia: Caribbean more than British, even though I was born here (laughs) yeah

SC: I forgot to mention, erm, before you give me an answer, could you please, if you can remember, say your name. Otherwise I won’t know who I am recording. (pause). Okay so we’ve got being Black, being Caribbean, are there any other aspects?

Amina: And being a female, a girl as well, yeah.

Shakira: The same, being a girl because I play football and I think, especially as a Black footballer, it’s quite rare to still play football at this age. It’s not really looked at compared to guys.

SC: Would anyone say that their educational experiences had been impacted

Amina: Definitely because I went through a massive, er, complex, from my schooling experience, from like from almost being the only Black girl, in an all-white environment, like very rich, erm very wealthy people and then obviously when you were younger, like primary school and early secondary school, you don’t see any that as a child, I felt like I didn’t see race, didn’t feel like my peers saw race as well. We all just got on with each other. But I felt like as I got older and I started learning more about myself about my identity and my culture, like 17 or 18 I just started drifting away massively from that, so that meant I wasn’t in school as much, I wasn’t integrating socially out of school, like how everybody else was and I feel like my education then suffered slightly because I wasn’t keen on school because I didn’t like going there because I couldn’t relate to any of the people there, like I didn’t share any similar interests to them. I couldn’t relate to them just at a basic level so my schooling dropped off.

Zara: ((nodding)) Yeah, I definitely agree. We had the same kind of environment didn’t we?

SC: Was there anything that helped you to get back on track with your schooling?

Amina: ((laughter)) Yeah, my mum, my mum just like really pushed education. Yeah because basically I was given 100 grands worth of education, I was on a scholarship and bursary, so I couldn’t not go on to achieve, if you know, when I’d been given that kind of head start. I couldn’t not continue to pursue. So obviously I did my A-levels and I’m at university now. I think I want to achieve for myself but it was just, that put me back a bit because I just didn’t enjoy it, I think and I lost interest.

Zara: Yeah there’s that level of discomfort as well, where everybody is so different to you and you start to realise it now and you don’t know what to do about it

Shakira: At my school, it was like mainly Asian people, in my secondary school. So although there weren’t many Black people, I felt that I could relate more to them than I could with the white people. We had the same like family backgrounds and like morals so it was just easier to relate to them so, I didn’t, it didn’t really affect me in school as much because I still felt like I had some sort of like identity, with *them*.

Lydia: I felt like I had a completely different experience at secondary like there was no *race*, obviously, there was Walter, but like, we used to chill [with]

Amina: [Water?]

Lydia: Walter

Amina: Oh! Walter.

((laughter from the group))

Lydia: Walter. He was the only white guy in like, in my secondary school. It was different! But like he wasn’t different and secluded, like he used to join in with us, he used to try and be Bla:: ck*,* basically, because his parents were like basically, *Black* White people who lived in the Caribbean and yeah, and yeah he was cool, we used to like bus’ jokes with him ((inaudible utterance)).

(pause)

SC - So ((clears throat)) we’ve started talking a little bit about school, are there any specific memories of school school which stand out to you?

Amina: What racial memories in particular or anything? Erm

(pause)

Lydia: Does it have to be like a bad experience, or-

SC: No, good or bad as long as it stands out

Amina: I’ve got loads from primary school, I literally just had the best time ever. It was like in year three and we used to have this teacher called Miss Redding and she used to do this thing on Fridays, where she used to say sugar power and when everyone was feeling a bit depleted and a bit low at the end of the week tired after games or whatever, she used to come round and say “I’ve got sugar power!” and she would go round hand out a box of Haribo sweets, Fangtastics, and we were all like, “Ah thanks Miss!” And then if we asked her and we said “Ah Miss do we get sugar power today?” she used to say to us “If you want it you can’t have it, but if-” No. “If you ask you don’t get and if you don’t ask how do I know you want?” It was always like a little thing at school and yeah, she was a good teacher.

Zara: Hmm, It’s cute.

Shakira: Erm, in my school I’ve just been surrounded by sport, like literally my whole life, so in secondary school especially. When I went there, once you do one sport and you’re good at it, they think you can literally do anything.

Group: mhmm ((nods))

Shakira: So uh, I literally ended up doing e: very sport possible. But yeah.

(pause)

SC: How would you describe yourself as a primary school pupil?

Shakira: I was always seen as loud. Like I remember my teacher would always write in my report like, yeah “MaIaika is really strong academically but talks too much and distracts the class” and think I have a loud laugh as well, so er ((laughs))

SC: How do you think teachers responded to that?

Shakira: I used to get my sent out of lessons a lot and the teachers used to like always tell me, even if it was like me and my friend both joking, I would be the one that got in trouble for it. I’d get sent out and get detentions and stuff. It got a bit annoying but I suppose it didn’t really stop me. I was still erm not the best during high school.

Amina: Hm, I think I was just full of energy, I was really happy, erm just like, as a child, having a good time and nothing really fa: zed me and it was kinda like my life was perfect. I went school, had fun, went home and had dinner, watched TV, went to bed. My life was good, I loved primary school, looking back. Looking back then, like it was a madness, [((laughs))

((laughter from the group))

Amina: I was living life!

((laughter from the group continues quietly))

Lydia: Yeah primary school was the one!

Shakira: Yeah! Looking back the little homework I used to cry about and now you wish you had it so much! Like the times tables, but we had it good.

((Laughter from everyone.))

Amina: Looking back there was this one homework, the weekend homework, it was called. Generally you got 10 questions and you had to fill in the answers, so for example to you got 10 questions, the topic could be London and it ask you questions like “What is this building in London and where could you go to this museum?” and at the end you had to answer the questions and draw a picture relating to 1 of the questions. I used to cry: about that homework so much. I used to say to my mom “I don’t want to do it, you do it!” ((laughter from group)) “You draw the picture and I will colour it in.” I used to kick up such a fuss, but looking back now, [that was ((laughter from the group))

Shakira: [if that was an assignment now ((laughter)) you’d jump up, get your highlighters!

((laughter from the group))

((cough))

(pause)

Lydia: Erm I was always kinda the quiet one, but, I think, basically my, my teachers and my friends always knew that my grandma was like quite strict and she didn’t like really stand for no-nonsense, so others would do things and kinda blame it on me and I would always get the worst punishment ever. So yeah that was primary school for me, yeah.

((laughter from the group))

Lydia: In primary school, we, you basically, we’d get like beats, like lashes with whips and stuff when you did stuff bad=

Amina: =By the teachers?=

Lydia: =Yeah by the teachers=

Amina: =In the Caribbean?

Lydia: =Yeah. [My 6th year, how do you say it?

Amina: [Huh.

Amina: Year 6

Lydia: =Yeah Year 6. My Year 6 teacher, it was called Grade 6 in the Caribbean, she had this er, what do you call it? A whip, basically. It’s made out of two tambaran branches twisted together, and she used to call it Betty Butter and she used to beat like all of us. Any time we did like the most minor thing like forget our homework at home, she used to like to beat us with it, and one day, we came into school on a Saturday, to I think like clean up the school yard, and we saw Betty Butter in her draw, and we mashed it up and dashed it away!

((laughter from group))

Lydia: And the next, the Monday when she came into school and she was asking all of us about Betty Butter, and all of us didn’t know what happened. ((laughter from group)) None of us know what happened and we couldn’t get beats again cos she couldn’t make another whip, so yeah.

((short laugh from Amina))

SC: Did anybody get into much trouble in UK schools and how was that dealt with?

Zara: When I was in nursery coming to primary school, erm I did a little bit, cos I had a quite bad temper? And I didn’t realy know how to control it, so I was always, like a few times I had quite controversial issues with other kids? So yeah I like got in trouble quite a lot, with my parents about it, but then as I matured, it kinda went away. I kinda lived with my grandparents for a bit, back in Nigeria for a bit and then St Lucia, so like my bringing up was kinda different and I didn’t know how to handle it.

SC: I can imagine it was quite different.

Amina: I never used to get in trouble, I was literally like a good student, back in the day, I was head girl in my primary school and literally the teachers loved me ((some laughter from group)) yeah.

SC: What were others’ relationships with teacher like?

(5 second pause)

Shakira: I never really like actually got along with any of my teachers. I’d just sort of just get by, like my Spanish teacher in high school, he hated me, and I, we literally just hated each other, like, so I would never ask for help, and like just, I didn’t do well in Spanish, but my dad was always like, just “You’re not like doing it for her=

Amina: =mmm=

Shakira: =so just ignore her=

Amina: =mmm=

Shakira: =and get your work done”. But yeah, it was too much, so. But in general, I dunno, you sort of had to get by, cos I didn’t really like any of my teachers.

Lydia: Erm, I feel like all the schools I’ve gone to, like primary, secondary, as you progress in years, in the school, you get closer with your teachers. So in the younger years, you don’t really get why they do certain things, because you’re younger you don’t understand and you feel like they do things out of spite or whatever, but as you grow like older and move into higher years you kinda understand and you start to build a relationship with them=

Shakira: =Yeah=

Lydia: =And you kind of understand why they did certain things, like it makes more sense. Yeah, so I feel like in my older years, like by grade 6 in primary and like 4/5 in secondary, me and my teachers we were like all buddies, we had like good relationship kind of thing.

Shakira: Yeah I’d say the same for six form. So like I got along with my teachers in sixth form and you start to realise that they’re literally there to help you. You could see like when her mood changes it’s because someone’s done something that’s like disrupted the whole class, like someone’s not done an essay that the rest of the class needed to work on, so you can see how that’s frustrating, so like really if you actually just did what you are supposed to do, then there was no problems.

Amina: I felt like when I was in six form our relationship changed. Obviously I hadn’t been enjoying school as much and so I wasn’t attending everything. If I had free periods in the morning and my first lesson didn’t start till eleven, even though registration was at nine, I would only come into that eleven o’clock lesson and then I would dip as soon as I could go home, I’d dip for lunch time, as I lived really close to school. So I would never really be that social, and feel like I never got that close teacher-sixth form relationship that other people had, with the teachers, but I know that even when I wasn’t attending, they were still trying to help me, they were emailing me saying “I know you wasn’t in the lesson but you need to do this for so and so. They really pushed me with my coursework and A-level and stuff, when they didn’t have to. But then I always had a complex like, was that just because they need their numbers to look good, because they, or do they generally care. I didn’t know, but I thought were really good though, considering I wasn’t always at school.

SC: Does anyone feel they could have been better supported at school?

Zara: Yeah with A-levels. I was taught that you needed to get to a Russell group uni. It was like support if you’re struggling with like A’s, that was their only focus. So we didn’t really have like loads of people in my year were going through mental issues and they weren’t getting support that often because they were just highly focused on grades, so it was quite sad.

Shakira: Erm (pause) Oh yeah so, I moved school in Year 10 and I got to my new school and they’d already been, so you started GCSEs there and then there’d already been, three weeks? Three weeks in school so I sort of had to catch up. And I remember in my English class like, she just didn’t care. They’d already done so much work towards the GCSEs, erm, and she literally just gave me a pile of paper and said “catch up on this.” And I was like, didn’t really know where to start really. I think that sort of set me back, yeah, but I didn’t end up doing that badly in the end, but.

SC: What do you think has supported you to achieve success in education?

(pause)

SC: Or what have been your driving forces?

Shakira: I have like erm, a certain goal that I want to reach right now so I have always wanted to be a solicitor, or like some area in law, so I sort of know what I have to do. And obviously your family, my parents, like I don’t think they’d really let me, slip. So I dunno, I know that if I needed a bit of extra support they would find me a tutor or something, do you know what I mean?

Group: Mmm

Shakira: Just to make sure because they know what, where I want to be in the end and so they would obviously help me get there.

Amina: I can relate to that a lot as well, I feel like my mum would do anything to try and help me get to where I need to go to, even with like my school and me getting the scholarship and bursaries, she would always push us to do the best we need to do, so. I’m not saying I’m doing it for my mom because I have my own goals, but a lot of the time when I see like how much she wants it for me, I think yeah I can achieve that as well. And like sacrifices that she’s done for us as well, that motivates me even more, being like, OK my mums done this and this for me to achieve this, I need to be like excelling like, she’s looking after everyone and all that stuff.

Lydia: Yeah, I can relate to that, yeah like seeing, thinking about the end goal, like what I wanna achieve and that in life, with a job and everything I wanna do, like my dream job and also like making my family proud, for all the sacrifices they made and the money they spent on me, kinda thing, yeah. You just like wanna achieve the best that you can because of everything that you’ve gone through and everything that other people have given up for you, kinda thing, so yeah.

Shakira: Yeah I feel like, especially my grandparents who came to England, from like Jamaica erm and like St. Vincent, erm to work here and like to build a better life for their children. So then, when they get so excited, like when all their grandchildren graduated from uni and stuff, it makes you think like I need to be one of those people as well.

Amina: [Yeah]

Zara: [Yeah]

Shakira: My granny’s got like a whole wall of people who have graduated with the picture with the scroll, like you have to make it onto that wall. ((laughs))

Zara: That’s so nice.

(pause)

SC: Erm, do you feel that you faced any particular barriers to success?

Zara: Erm, while studying A Levels I had like problems with my digestive system, so I was like not in, like hardly ever in during AS’s, mostly in hospital. So that was like a massive barrier to me because the topics I was doing were like very difficult, I was doing like Further Maths, Physics, Spanish and Classical Civilisation, so I was always on, so I was always behind. So just getting back on top was a very big, like difficult barrier for me.

SC: What sort of support did school offer during these times?

Zara: School wise I got emails, but yeah like I said they were just focussed on grades so they were just like “You need to be on top” like parents evening, instead of support any of us, we’d have like this chart and they show tell us like how you’re doing in your mock papers is how you’ll do in exams so they would tell us like stats and stuff instead of helping us with revision and stuff, so it was quite stressful.

Lydia: When I came to this, to er England from the Caribbean to start sixth form, basically because I was like a year younger, so, when I can to start in Year 1 of A Level, I should have been in Year 11 in secondary school, so when I came, they tried, the council tried to put me back in Year 11 in one of the schools, but basically, erm. So all the schools that my mum applied to like Harris and all those schools in my area, they didn’t take me in, I dunno why, but erm, so then the council put me in erm I don’t know what to call it, its called Abbey Manor but it’s a school for basically all the kids that got excluded. So like when I went there, you have to go through a metal detector because all the kids that go there carry knives and guns and like everything. Like all of them, [hoodies, pants down]

Amina: [Was this in your school?!]

Lydia: Yeah the secondary school I went to, I went there for like what, two months? Three months, yeah. It was just a madness like every evening after school, the police would come to the gates cos they would cause problems and like people, there was this one time that a boy got arrested ((laughs)) during like one of the lessons because he like threatened to stab the teacher, or suttin suttin, but yeah like it was just like, it was a madness. I was so uncomfortable there, I didn’t want to be there and like I was always on my ones cos I wasn’t trying to mix with them. And it was just a madness. I mean I would say they were the worst three months of my life, bearing in mind that I did not want to be in this country and basically my mum was still fighting, for me to either go to in sixth form or a normal secondary school and it just so happened that that she, well we’re related to this guy who’s the deputy head of this sixth form and secondary school, and he agreed to take me in and then I went to that sixth form. But I had to catch up on like three months worth of work, in AS work. But yeah I did it and I did well and everything worked out well for me after that, so.

SC: What was the second school like in comparison?

Lydia: Oh it was normal!

((laughter from group))

Lydia: Normal. ((laughs)) Compared to that, that wasn’t, over there, yeah it was a madness, yeah. Like for my first experience in school in England, it was the worst thing ever, because when I went to the normal sixth form I was like “Oh! So it is normal then.”

((laughter from group))

Lydia: It’s not just guns and knives and metal [detectors] [yeah]

Amina: [I’d be so scared if it was me!]

[((laughter from group))

Lydia: It was like legit mad, one of the, one of the, school, school teachers there, at Abbey Manor, I saw him one time after I started going to the other school, and he disclosed to me that sometimes he would wear a bullet proof vest underneath his, his [suit because]

Amina: [to school? Oh my god]

Lydia: to school, he was so shook off the students. Like they used to literally, I remember when I went to English class in Abbey Manor and there was this boy called Chad, he literally used to stand on the table and sometimes strip. Like they were all just mad, [crazy kids!

Amina: [Strip what?

Lydia: They used to beat on the table, they never used to learn. It was just jokes it was just bants for the whole day. ((laughter from group)) Just bants. Legit, doing nothing, just bants. And you only got to do two subjects (laughs) because all of them are illiterate, so they can’t handle more than two=

Amina: =In secondary school?=

Lydia: =Yeah it was a proper secondary school, [yeah]

Amina: [Uh uhh]

SC: Was it a secondary school just for pupils who had been excluded, well mainly?

Lydia: And for people like me who basically came to the country and the normal mainstream schools don’t accept them. Yeah

Amina: That sounds like, you know that pro- Waterloo Road? (laughs) [It sounds like

Lydia: [Yeah it was something like that. Yeah! It was something like that! It was legit, I even saw my school on one of those shows.

((laughter from group))

Amina: ((laughing)) One of those shows! “Oh look, I know him!”

((laughter from group))

Lydia: But yeah, it was a madness. Definitely I would say, the worst and most challenging three months of my life, ever. Because I wasn’t trying to step to no-one, cos when they see me outside, they know who I am fam. They can, nah, they know I’m not inner the drama so they would definitely come for me, so I just stayed by myself like “hi, nice to meet you sir!” ((laughter from group)) Yeah it was traumatising.

SC: Within your second school, were you able to then become more social?

Lydia: Yeah, definitely, so like, I have some friends from there who I even still talk to now, we’re such good friends, it was really good, I enjoyed that sixth form. It wasn’t the best in terms of like organisation, there were still some holes in their system, basically, but it was like so grateful to be there and not be at Abbey Manor=

Group: =Mmmm=

Lydia: =and seeing like, knowing what I worked through in those past few of months, it just motivated me to catch up, it was a lot of work. Cos I basically did Maths, Chemistry and Biology and those are hard topics to like catch up on, like literally, the teachers there, they helped me so::: much, especially my Chemistry teacher, he was amazing, nobody else liked him but I didn’t really care- he was a rude man, yeah, but I don’t really care about that cos I was so mu- like just wanted to do the work, I wanted to catch up and like make my mum proud, cos she fought so: much for me to like go to a mainstream school and then yeah, so like it was really good.

SC: Did you all go to sixth form?

Group: Yeah

SC: How did you find that transition from being in school to sixth form, but in the same setting?

Zara: A lot more hours, erm cos like being the only Black girl in my year they assume I’m good at every sport, put you into every sports team, so I had sport, after school activities, then I had after school lessons to catch up, because I was ill. So that was a lot of hours in school, which made me hate the place even more. ((laughs)).

Amina: I feel like cos my sixth form and school were attached, I was there from Year 7, technically ‘til 18, that’s seven years at the same place with the same people=

Group: =Yeah= ((quietly))

Amina: =So by the time those last two years came, I was so done with it. ((laughter from group)) I just wasn’t really in it like that any more, but the hours, I think the hours reduced for me, like I would have a lot more free time.

SC: How did you decide what to study for sixth form?

Lydia: I had an idea of what I wanted to b- so originally I wanted to be a forensic scientist, so that’s why I did all the sciences, but then I kinda realised that there’s not much jobs in the UK for forensic scientists and there’s like too much competition. So I decided to broaden out a bit more and do like Criminology instead, so that’s why I chose the subjects I did. Cos I always really wanted to be a forensic scientist or something to do with crime.

Amina: I think I chose mine based on my GCSE results, so I did well in English and PE, erm, yeah English and PE are the two that I did really well in, so those two definitely went down, and then I did Photography, so like taking pictures and erm like that seemed quite creative, and then, what’s the fourth one? Oh yeah I did well in History as well so I took that. Yeah I enjoyed that, I really liked History, at school I did.

Shakira: Well I found out that, cos I wanted to do Law at university, I knew that from the start. So I was looking at which subjects I needed to do, to actually do Law, then I found out that you could basically do anything, I basically chose what I like doing, so. Like I’d learnt Spanish since Primary school, so that was definitely one of them, and then Sociology and Psychology just sounded interesting, so yeah.

Zara: So I just hose ones that sounded interesting to me, so I just went from there.

SC: Are there any experiences, from school or sixth form which made you feel like you belonged, or didn’t belong?

Amina: In terms of, in some way I felt like I belonged because I’d been there since I was in Year 7 and when new people come in, in sixth form, you already have your kinda friends, sort of, so in that sense, I felt like I did belong. Also, we had these things called ‘stripy blazers’ which is like a commendation thing, so if you do well in sport and that kinda thing. It’s kinda part of the association of old civilians and if you had it, it was quite, I don’t know how to describe it, it’s like a sports tie, if any of you have had sports ties, like the equivalent of being recognised, but you can have it in music, you can have it in drama like, if you’re exceptionally well at something, when you do something. So I had one for sports and obviously they make you feel proper proud like “Ah yeah, I’ve really done something, they don’t get awarded very often.” So in that sense I really felt like part of the school. I felt like I belonged. But then obviously, on the flip side, I was also having this complex between like my class mates, my peers, I was feeling like I’m not really like you. Like they were talking about buying the next Chanel handbag and like Gucci this, Michael Kors this, and I’m just like not on your wavelength, completely. So yeah, it was like, er, so weird!

SC: What were your friendships like at that point?

Amina: Ooh there weren’t many! ((laughs)) There weren’t many but I did have a few good friends like, so some, a lot of the girls, because obviously we had been together since we were twelve years old, I know their backgrounds, I’ve been round to their houses, I’ve met their parents like, so like we’d all been together for all these years, so even though I’m not really close with you, like if I still saw them today it would be like “Oh hey, how are you?” kind of thing like, we’ve all been like, we used to call in the Solihull bubble, there was no-one out there who knew anything about the world because they all like lived in this bubble, and erm, even now today I was actually organising meeting up with two of my friends who are at Leeds university and yeah I’m gonna go see them, even though we weren’t that close towards the end, we still have a mutual respect thing and when we see each other its like there still my friends but we’re just not as close as, it’s not, not my best friends, but we still have that respect, yeah.

Shakira: I think I’ve found that like throughout all my schools, I’ve sorta tried to make friends with people I associate with the most, so like I was saying my secondary school was predominantly Asian and most of my friends were Asian and then when I moved school, erm in Year 10, I went to a school which was like middle class White and there were like two Black girls and four Asian girls and like they were my friends basically. So, they were my friends through the whole of sixth form, it was weird cos we couldn’t relate to the rest, same as you=

Amina: =Yeah=

Shakira: =like everyone was like their parents buying them cars and like yeah, so.

Amina: I feel like when you’re at that age, as well, erm you’re just learning so much more about yourself, like I dunno what it is between the ages of 16 and 18, but I definitely feel like you have this maturity thing of self, even like having a phone and being more on social media and you’re more in tuned to what you are interested in, for example, I could be on my phone and scrolling down my Instagram feed, and it would be completely different to the feed of my other friend, like, and just things like that, I couldn’t, you know like how with you ((directing speech at Lydia)) sometimes I’ll just send you stuff on Instagram and I’m just bait and we’re both bus’ing joke over it=

Lydia: =Mmm=

Amina: =but I couldn’t do that with my other friends. And it’s like simple things like that, where we just can’t relate, so it puts a barrier up, in terms of friendship and it puts up a limitation because, we’re still young so we should be able to mutually like understand each other but focus on that and not the willingness to want to try and learn. Do you get that like? Yeah?

Group: Yeah. ((nodding))

(Pause)

SC: Did anyone ((clears throat)) learn much about their historical background through any educational context?

Amina: No

((murmurs amongst group and slight laughter))

Lydia: Historical background in terms of ancestors? Erm I learnt quite a lot of that, in history, in secondary school, like it was kinda mandatory, you couldn’t dodge it. So we learnt alo: t, about like Christopher Columbus, Africa, the Bermuda triangle, we learnt a lot about it. It was like drummed in your ears, this is where you came from. Yeah.

Amina: That’s really interesting because I feel like here, it’s the opposite, so we learn about World War 1 and World War 2, we learn about very British historic things like, I think the most we did was like America in the 1920’s, the ‘roaring twenties’ and you hear snippets like oh Black’s had their own water basin and White’s had their own water basin and a little bit about=

Zara: =Jim Crow=

Amina: =Jim Crow. Yeah was it? Jim Crow. And the lynchings, we touched upon that subject but there was never like, we never went deep into it. It was just to say that we’d spoke about it, kinda. Yeah that’s about=

Shakira: I feel like the only time I really sort of learnt about it was i:n, erm English, so you know like you do the book ‘To kill a mockingbird’ so we sort of like touched on it then, like we didn’t go into too much detail but like I learnt a bit then. And I suppose in my first secondary school, in History, we learnt about like, erm the slave trade and all the ships and things, um I found out a lot of stuff about that I didn’t know, to be fair.

Amina: The slave trades in like to Jamaica, to the Caribbean=

Lydia: =To Africa, to Europe, America=

Shakira: =Yeah=

Amina: =We never learnt about that=

Lydia: =That’s all we learnt about. That’s all we learnt about, you see we don’t learn about World War 1. I still don’t know what that is, to be fair like, that’s all we knew, like learned about for History. That was the main thing, when was slavery abolished, when did you country get their independence, like that’s all we learned about.

Amina: I remember when I was younger, like erm my dad used to give me my own History lessons kind of, like he’s quite intellectual and he’d literally be like “Right Amina, we’re gonna learn about the industrial revolution today or I’m going to talk to you about your own heritage and about slaves and what happened between slavery and Africa. So he would teach me the stuff and I wouldn’t learn any of this through school, so I only know this stuff through my parents teaching me. Yeah, they used to talk to me a lot about that stuff.

Shakira: So er, I think apart from the few lessons you had on that, I wouldn’t say I learnt much about it. So in Sociology for example, I think we touched on Rastafarianism and it was interesting to see how the teacher would actually teach the class about it because like there was one other girl in my class and she was Jamaican and we were both just wondering, ((murmuring from group)) I wonder what she’s actually gonna say because=

Amina: =Yeah=

Shakira: =And I wondered, what other people in my class thought, like dreadlocks are dirty and stuff so, ((murmuring from group)) they couldn’t have learnt that much because they still had that sort of idea that like they just smoke weed and have dirty hair and so=

Amina: =Yeah, yeah=

Shakira: =I don’t think she put it across in a good way=

Amina: =Yeah=

Shakira: =Yeah=

Amina: =It’s hard for teachers who don’t even know themselves=

Shakira: =Yeag=

Amina: =Who can’t relate. I dunno I wouldn’t even take her very seriously if she was my teacher, just trying to talk about Rastafarianism, I would just look at her like what do you actually know?=

Shakira: =Mmm=

Amina: Like [unless-

Shakira: [She’s reading from a textbook

Lydia: [Exactly (pause) yeah

Amina: [Exactly. And who wrote the textbook probably a White person=

Shakira: [Yeah]

Shakira: =Probably a middle class White person who’s probably never been around Black [people

Lydia: [Yeah who’s probably never been to Jamaica, [you feel like as well.

Amina: [Exactly

(pause)

Lydia: And I feel like as well, with those sort of things, I feel like White people don’t necessarily know how to talk on the topic on the topic without trying to offend Black people=

Group: =Mmm=

Lydia: =or Rastafarians, so there’s also that barrier where if it was a Black person they would be more able to give a proper description or say things that if a White person said it, people would take offence. Probably not purposefully, but it’s just the way things are in society=

Group: =Yeah=

Shakira: She sort of like looked to me and the girl for confirmation. ((laughter from the group)) Do you know what I mean? ((laughter from the group)). Like you tell me, I’m from England too!

((laughter from the group))

Amina: I find it really awkward when you’re in lessons and then like, for example, I ha- always had it, whenever they touch on something about Black people everyone would always look [at me

Shakira: [Oh that’s so funny=

Amina: =The first thing, it happens, they always [look at me ((nodding from group))

Shakira: [Yeah. (pause) You sort of gotta try and keep your head straight, like act like you don’t [care]

Group: [Yeah!]

Amina: There’s also that and you know when White people have to say like the word ‘nigger,’ [or

Group: [yeah

Amina: like they don’t know how, or they say ‘person of colour’ or they try [and say, it’s awkward]

Lydia: [Yeah they don’t know how to say the word ‘Black’ or [whatever, yeah. (pause) There is some Black people out there

Group: [Yeah]

Lydia: who take offence to every single thing, [that like a White person would do.

Zara: [The say like the word Black person then say no offence when they look at you [and you’re like that’s not offensive=

Group: [Yeah!]

Shakira: =[Yeah like you made it offensive, like directing it at me

((laughter from the group))

Lydia: Yeah.

SC: So you mentioned before that there seems to be a bit of a lack of education in terms of your history, do you think that has an impact at all?

Zara: Due to ignorance, to White people, ignorance to our culture. So if they don’t know about it, how are they supposed to understand? So yeah I do think it has an effect on that.

Lydia: I think like from a European point of view, for Whitle people in this country, if they have no education or no information about how racism came about, say, or how Black people were treated before, they have that certain ignorance towards Black people when they do get offended by certain things, or like cos they have no education, they have no information, they don’t know why we’re offended, kinda thing=

Group: =Yeah=

Lydia: =so that’s like something that probably needs to be addressed like in the UK for example. They need to teach this to like, not just Black people, but to White people as well, so they understand like why people get offended or why slavery is a thing, like why, yeah.

Amina: Recently I heard that someone didn’t know what Black history month was, within our university, like one of the top, top chancellors, like of the, they didn’t even know, it was like “Oh!”=

Lydia: =It’s worrying]

Amina: It’s like they thought it was only a week or they didn’t have a clue about Black history month and it’s like these people in power in education, like the ones ((laughs)) I dunno, [you assume like

Lydia: [you would think, like they’d be educated enough=

Amina: =Yeah! Like how on earth can I expect Sam-Sally over here to know that, if you don’t know and [you’re a big educated university, how can I expect like my peers to understand about

Group: [Yeah]

Amina: Black history month? So I definitely feel that that should be erm like, pushed in a lot more in this country.

Shakira: I remember in primary school, Black history month was like a big [thing, we used to have

A & Y: [Yeah]

Shakira: like school plays, holding up like Mary Seacole, [you know what I mean, showing what they

A & Y: [Yeah!

Shakira: did like, I remember like it was big in primary school, but as you get older it seems to just, sort of, mellowed out yeah

Lydia: It was like I saw on Instagram the other day, basically this sch- the parents of this primary school was kicking up stink because it was Black history month and they sent a letter home to all the parents telling their kids to dress up as slaves for ((laughs)) ((murmurs from the group)) the following Monday for Black history month. Yeah it was an ((undecipherable utterance)) everyone was just cussing. That was crazy. They had to send out a public apology to Black people.

((laughter from the group))

Lydia: So yeah.

Amina: Even in Loughborough University, I believe something came out about them when they had a slave auction as one of their fresher events thing, so basically you could have a fresher as a slave, something like that and they had like massive uproar about that, because obviously, its rea: lly inappropriate ((laughs)) and like, they thought it was absolutely fine to do it, so obviously the mino-, there’s a minority of Black people at Loughborough University, its majority White, so they probably didn’t even think what they was doing was that bad, they were just like “Oh” but obviously, people are gonna be offended=

Shakira: =Mmm=

Amina: =if you’re doing that

SC: Does anyone feel that they have experienced those sorts of incidents of racism in an educational context?

Amina: I don’t think, throughout to be honest, I’ve never experienced it, erm really posi-, I really enjoyed school, really positive. The only time time I can remember is literally, this is the first and last, I was at school, I think I was, I wanna say primary school, but literally be Year 1 or before Year 1, Recep-, kindergarten. And I was in line for the lunch queue and this boy was behind me, he looked at my skin and touched it and he said “Ah you look like chocolate” and that was the first time I ever experienced somebody saying something about my skin and I was like “Oh my God” I was really upset, I went home and told my dad, I was crying, I was like “Oh my God he said I look like chocolate” didn’t even understand at the time and my dad was like “That’s a good thing!”

((laughter from the group))

Amina: But that’s the only racism I ever experienced and I wouldn’t even class that as racism, because we were like, you know, 5 or 6 like, he was just a young boy making an innocent comment. But other than that, no, never experienced it.

(pause)

Shakira: I don’t think I’ve experienced it, no. I can’t think of anything, so.

Lydia: I don’t think I’ve ever experienced racism like on a major scale. Probably minor things I’d just like brush off=

Zara: =Mmm yeah=

Lydia: =and give it no attention.

Shakira: I’ve had like a mi:nor mishap, so playing football, but I think in football its weird, cos people get like aggressive and it’s so competitive that people like say anything just to put you off, do you know what I mean? So I don’t know whether it’s actually intentional or it’s just to make you off guard=

Amina: =Yeah=

Shakira: =Yeah so=

Amina: =Yeah

SC: Does it have to be intentional to be racism?

Shakira: No.

Zara: I do remember actually, we have a thing in my school called ‘Christmas dinner’ where we had little prizes for people for different things, for example, ‘best look-a-like’ and they put me against this Black teacher in the school and we looked nothing alike, it was just the fact that we were both Black. And like my parents got involved in that, it was quite serious ((short laugh))

(pause)

SC: How did you feel about that at the time?

Zara: I was angry. So I took it and I ripped it and walked out. Because we looked like nothing alike, it was just the fact that we were both Black. Like she had really short hair, my hair was like in braids, she had glasses, I didn’t in the picture, but it was just like inappropriate.

Shakira: I don’t think it has to be intentional to be racist but like, it can be, it’s really irritating sometimes when literally the only reason that they’re comparing you to someone else is because you’re Black. Like a teacher, even like a slip-up, so calling you erm your friends name, that’s Black. There’s only like four Black people in the whole year and like they don’t know us enough to call me by the right name.

Amina: Yeah that’s bad. Oh actually, no I can relate to that, in sixth form, there was another girl, erm, Kiante, she was from Bermuda, erm so she was very light complexion though, so I dunno, even if she classed herself as Black to be honest because, even though she was from the Caribbean she was like “Yeah I’m really light, like light-skinned, light-skinned, light-skinned.” ((laughter from the group)). But people used to get us confused, like Kiante, Amina, and they are nothing alike, like Kiante, Amina, it’s not like they both begin with A, it’s not like we look alike, so that was just pure ignorance I think.

Lydia: Yeah. Definitely due to the fact that you’re both Black.

((laughter from the group))

Amina: You know what I mean?

Lydia: Yeah cos that’s the only similarity that you guys have that can cause a confusion with names.

Amina: Exactly.

Lydia: Yeah exactly.

SC: Has anybody have any experiences where they were treated differently because of their race or gender?

Shakira: In terms of like being called the loud one in the class, when you clearly know say like, even in high school, there was a guy in high school, he was just so loud and like made the class laugh, but the teacher li:: ked him. So it was sort of like, she told him off but in a bit of a jokey way, like “Oh” like “stop it.” She’d still actually liked whereas me, I’d get in trouble. Like detentions or call my parents or whatever, he like got away with a lot more.

(pause)

((coughs))

SC: What have you experiences of uni been like?

Lydia: ((laughs)) Leicester’s a madness too, you know.

((laughter from the group))

Amina: Oh my gosh! ((laughter from the group)) I’ll answer your question but before, just while I’ve got this story in my head, so basically, erm last week there was an event called ‘Big clash’ ((laughs)) and at the auditions, it was the auditions for Big Clash=

Zara: =Oh I heard about this=

Amina: =I don’t know if you know what Big Clash is, but it’s basically like this gameshow=

Lydia: =True=

Amina: =and universities go head to head, like so for example, DMU versus Leicester, Aston versus BCU, like kinda thing, so er it’s ACS driven, so all [Afro-Caribbean Society]

Lydia: [Afro-Caribbean Society]

Amina: But it’s just fun, you have like competitions and little fun games and it’s like teams of five. Anyways, so it’s the audition to find out who the five teams from your university are going to be, like represent you. Know last year I had a lot of friends who were in the team, were in the big clash team. So this year I thought I’mma bring all my girls, it’s gonna be a fun event and like my sister was also up from the weekend, she’s erm 16 and she’s like actually in boarding school, sports boarding school in Somerset, so she’s like surrounded by White people as well and she has no experience of university, let’s, that as well, she’s 16. So I thought let me just bring her along to this, let’s see how she finds it ((laughs)) so we get there now and the whole thing’s lock-off, like=

Lydia: =Fire alarm going off when you arrive=

Amina: =Soon as we get there ((laughter from group)) and there’s just floods of people coming out, It’s all Black people, there’s guys in hoodies, she’s not, she hasn’t seen this before. She thought this was university life, she thought this is what university was. ((Shakira laughs)) and there was like floods of people and then everyone just chilling outside, waiting to see if we could get back in, but it was a bit rowdy, there was hustle and bustling, then we hear fireworks going off, people shooting fireworks from the crowd ((laughter from group)). The experience of seeing, your girl, ((laughter from group)) she went, her wig came off!

((laughter from group))

Lydia: When all the fireworks went off, we all ducked down cos we thought it was gunshots or something! ((laughter from group)) I think. So we all ducked down, but somebody held on to her back, so her wig slipped off ((laughter from group)) So people are there ducking down and she’s try’na find her wig to put it back on. It was so much joke=

Amina: =it was so funny. I had to explain to her. She was like “Is this what university’s like?” I was like “No, no, no.” ((laughter from group)) “It’s not like this every day, this is a one-off.”

Zara: I heard they were like chucking fireworks in the queue (?) told me.

Amina: Yeah it was really bad.

SC: What had caused all of the commotion?

Zara: DMU boys

Amina: Yeah basically someone from DMU couldn’t get into the event and as they walked out they hit the fire alarms so that was it, the whole events mash-up, so everyone had to leave the building and we had security shouting “Everyone leave, everyone needs to go home, leave, like don’t just hang around on university property, the police came, it was actually like, cos the whole, you know where the erm, gym is and everything=

Shakira: =Charles=

Amina: =Parcy=

Shakira: =No Charles, Fielding Johnson=

Amina: =Fielding Johnson, that was the, all of that area was just filled with Black people and erm the boys were driving their Range Rovers=

Group: =Hi::! ((Samara enters the room))

Samara: Hi I’m Samara

Amina: And they were all there with the motors and their cars, and it was just like a motive, like a rave and then, my sister, she’s never seen any of this before, she was like “Oh my God! Like is this what uni is like?”

((laughter from group))

Amina: Sorry, what was the question? ((laughter from group)) I just like to tell that story.

SC: Since you’ve mentioned the ACS, are you all members?

Group: Yeah.

Shakira: I’m a member but I’m so lazy, [so I haven’t been to a single event, I just scroll through it

Zara: [same here I just get the emails]

Shakira: that’s it.

Samara: I’m not a member. Last year I was a member, but I didn’t really go to any of the events

Lydia: Same, I was a loner.

Samara: I’m not a loner, but I spend a lot of time in my house.

Shakira: Yeah same. I had a small group of friends and like none of those were Black, like. I still had like Black friends, but like, yeah people I actually chilled with weren’t, so I didn’t want to drag them to the event, so I didn’t even bother going.

Amina: I was a member last year, but I felt like being a member you don’t get anything from your money, you don’t do anything, like a lot of the events, well I don’t know, you don’t have to be a member to go to the events, kind of thing, so this year I’ll go to the events but I won’t sign up as a member.

Shakira: =Ahh=

Amina: I trained with her in Loughborogh and like she’s the only person I know that does that commute, like to Manchester.

SC: I wonder how she’s finding Manchester uni

Amina: She really enjoys it, and she’s very erm, she mixes with everybody, I mean she has Asian friends, she has Chinese friends, she has White friends, like yeah.

SC: What have your friendships been like since you’ve come to uni, how has it been forming them, because you’re in your second year now?

Zara: Yeah just so much better. So much easier for me to integrate, like I made friends really quickly, I think like being in accommodation like (?) and (?) that really helped, cos they’re so close and everyone just got along really quickly.

Amina: First year for me, I was in accommodation called Nixon Court, and it was just pure Black people, like. And for me, coming from where I was coming from, I’d never seen that before, like, so at first it was like oh my God, this is mad like, every night motive, it was all over the common room, like just every night, it was madness. In the beginning, fresher’s week it was brilliant, we made friends straight away, cos everyone was in the same position and like slowly as I like hang out with these people more, it was like filtering out of that circle. Also because I was only a different flex to them altogether, like I was in a relationship and a lot of the girls weren’t in a relationship, so certain things I wouldn’t like, like I’d be in my bed at 11 o’clock and they’d be like still out on the streets kinda thing. So I kinda like drifted from them. Then, I found my new friends really quickly, like you two ((looking at Lydia and Samara)) I’d say were my closest friends in university, well you are my closest friends ((laughter from Amina, Lydia and Samara)) You and Lydia. Like when. To be honest we didn’t become friends [straight away, yeah feel like towards the latter part of the year we

Lydia: [until we was at the sports awards

Amina: like really formed our friendship but I really, I like could still go to you, still talk to you, maybe hang out if I wanted to but we didn’t really form our close, close friendship until like second year, I would say, but now we’re just like girls.

Ezrra: First year for me was very terrible, basically I was 17, I couldn’t go nowhere, and also, there’s this student accomo-, village (OB?) its very far from the uni. And its basically where, I would say, all of the White people went er, who went to University of Leicester and I didn’t check this out, like I didn’t realise that all the Black people were in (?) or Nixon or whatever, so I went to (OB?) because it was like, and I also need my own bathroom too. I went to (OB?) and it was just different. Like one of my house mates was very weird.

Amina: Right?

Lydia: Me and my other housemate just used to hide from him cos he was just a weirdo. And it was just different, like I couldn’t relate to any of them so I was 100% all the time in my room. Like I’d not even go uni, because it was just so far and I just wanted to be in my room. But second year for me was much better like. Yeah I found my girls, my friends and it was just so much better.

Samara: My first year, my little brother moved in with me so I got a house share, so I never got to experience the accommodation experience, so to speak. But I met this one Asian guy on my course, but I don’t really know how to make friends, I’m friendly, I’m sociable once I have a friend but actually going out and getting friends, it’s not really me. So, this one Asian guy he came up to me and we just clicked right away and then he introduced me to all his house mates at his accommodation, and then they formed other friends from the course so erm he was my best friend from my course then I got introduced to everyone else. It’s about like eleven of us let’s say, girls and boys but e:: verybody is from a different nationality and we bond so well, like I would have never thought that I’d get along with all these different people from all these different backgrounds and all these different experiences and so I think that’s my favourite part about uni. And I’m a third year now. But that’s my favourite part. So one girl, she’s Jamaican, but she was born here, one girl is from some other island, I can’t remember, one other girl is Sudanese, one girl is Nigerian, a guy is Ghanaian, another guy is Jamaican-Indian, another guy is Pakistanian, the other guy some other Asian country, erm, yeah it’s such a diverse range, but we all are like super super close. So to have that, right of the bat from first year, if I’d of never met them, then it’d be different for my first year, but they really made my first year experience poppin’. So even though I wasn’t in accommodation, if I needed that accommodation experience, I would go over to (?) or wherever they were. And we’d always be together, we’d always go out together, so, it was pretty lit. Yeah, and there’ll all planning to go with me to Bermuda, where I’m from at graduation, so yeah, after graduation.

Shakira: So my first year was quite, it was a bit dead. So basically, I stayed at (?)=

Group: =Hmm=

Shakira: =I don’t know if you know it, but it’s awful

((laughter from group)))

Lydia: I heard.

((laughter from group))

Shakira: Even the layout was just annoying, it was like a little house, and then there was like ten people in a house, but out of the ten, three of those were international students, two third years or something, so then really, there were only a few people I could actually really be friends with. So we were quite excluded. So yeah I dunno, it was a bit boring. It was annoying because everyone was like “Oh my God, first year is so lit!” like=

Amina: =I know! [I’ts hard though

Shakira: [is it?!

((laughter from group))

Lydia: It was crap.

Samara: Also, in netball, in my first year, there wasn’t many Black girls, in netball at all. At all. But the girls that were there were very welcoming, very nurturing, very, like very inclusive, because apparently, the year before me, it was very snotty, it was very cliquey, so the new committee coming into the year that I started, made sure that everyone was integrated. So it wasn’t like if you’re on the first team you’re elite, it wasn’t anything like that, it’s like everybody’s a big happy family. So that was really nice, to just be included and not looked at for my colour of skin. And was really like “she’s talented”. I was the only fresher on the first team, usually that doesn’t happen, usually it’s like you work your way up the ranks, so that was nice as well, erm, I wouldn’t really party with them outside of netball though. I didn’t really make any bonds like that in my first year, erm, and even the other Black girls that were on the teams, like they had, they was mixed, so they was half White, half Black, so they could go to the raves at the O2 and enjoy that music, but that’s not the kinda music I wanna hear. ((some laughter from group)). So:: then second year, and these guys came! ((referring to Lydia, Amina and Zara)) So:: it was pretty cool! It’s cool to have more Black girls in the netball club. And then yeah.

(pause)

SC: What would you say are the challenges you’ve faced since attending university?

Zara: Having to wake up.

((laughter from group))

Amina: Yeah sleep is just an issue, but yeah.

Shakira: My mum used to be the one yeah, like if I didn’t want to go sixth form, and I was like trying, I would pretend I was sleeping or something ((laughs)) she just made me get up. I had no choice. And like here, no-ones here to tell you what do so, so I’m just like, do I have to go? ((laughs))

Amina: Yeah it’s the freedom. [Yeah and you’re fooling yourself if you don’t actually go. We want

Group: [Yeah]

Amina: to do well and achieve but it’s like self-motivation, if you don’t have that then you’re not gonna go [far.

Samara: [You absolutely need that. Especially like, I do Actuary Science and Maths, so my first year, from A Levels to university, it was a massive jump. Like I just though I love Math altogether, then I had to break it down to calculus, probability, stats and algera and I was like I hate calculus, I hate probability, I like mainly algebra, you know I like some of the other subjects but like, even just the teachers, the teachers weren’t as approachable as like my sixth form teacher, so that was a big shock, and then I’m used to A’s and B’s and that’s it and I come into the uni and they’re talking like yeah I got a 60. I’m like 60’s crazy! Damn, I haven’t had a 60 in my life and people talking like “Wha: t, that’s a 2:1!” ((laughter from group) “40’s a pass!” I’m like, how is a 40 a pass? 60 should be a pass! I think my biggest adjustment was the grading system. Compared to back home, compared to like A Levels and GCSE’s and it’s just like you’ve got a 90 or above or an 80, that’s an A. Or like 70 and above. And this is like upper 2:1 and 1st, so that was like a big adjustment, to like actually be proud of myself again=

Lydia: =Same=

Samara: =Like I got a 65, that was hard. I called my mom and was like “Oh my God, I’ve failed!” and she was like “no you didn’t” and I was like “Momma, this is a fail this time, before when I said I failed, ((laughter form the group)) I probably did ok, but this time no:: this is serious!” So I think my biggest adjustment was the grading system.

Shakira: I think that like, my biggest adjustment was like the way the essays are written, so I did like Psychology and Sociology so I thought I was used to essay writing and then they were like, just write this Law essay, in my first week of uni and I was like I don’t know how to reference, I don’t know what style of writing to do, I need to get different sources from different places, I was just like lost.

Lydia: The same for me because I’ve always done, my whole life I’ve done sciences like Maths, Chemistry, Biology, Physics, and then coming to uni to do like a philosophical subject like Criminology and having to write essays like, I literally cried the first few times, because I have never written an essay since like secondary school for English, and even that, that’s nothing compared to the essays that we write at uni and it was just mad. Like I won’t say the resources weren’t there because they were, but it was just the whole process of like having to bring myself to actually go to the resources and do it myself=

Amina: =Yeah=

Lydia: =Because no-one’s gonna teach me how to write an essay, its=

Shakira: =It’s over [whelming

Lydia: [It’s overwhelming. I had to like ask for a lot of help like, I got it. In the end I came through. It was just the whole process, it was hard.

(pause)

SC: How do you think you’re lecturers would describe you as a student?

Group: They don’t know me!

((laughter from group))

Samara: So with my course, we have some actuaries who are lecturers that’s been in the industry and stuff, so in my third year, I would say that because I’m like working on my dissertation, now that I’m in my third year, a lot of people’s dropped out, people haven’t made it to third year, so the classes are smaller with just the actuarial science, so the actuarial science modules, he knows everybody, you’re missing, he knows you’re missing. But, in my maths one’s it’s like big rooms of 150 people and he don’t even know my name, like if I don’t show up, he won’t even know, but if I email him, he wouldn’t even be able to put a face to my name, you know what I mean. So it depends on the class, even my seminars in my first and second year, it was all like Asian students that were are seminar lecturers that were doing PhD’s or whatever, so it was a language barrier anyway, so for them to even pronounce my name was a miracle type thing. ((laughs)) It’s not very personal in my department, it’s not personal at all

Lydia: [Same]

Shakira: [Same]

Amina: I feel like I’m the same, I could just be another body in the room, however, one of the modules I’m doing this year called ‘Instruction to news’, the lecturer actually knows my name, he’s called me out for a few things in class, like we had this seminar, our first seminar introductions he went along to all the seminar classes, he’s the lecturer for the module, and he, in the seminar everyone went round and said their names and what they wanted to do within media, I actually said that I’m interested in like broadcasting, television, he was like “Oh that’s really interesting and I know a girl who did that as well and also I’m going to remember your name Amina because I know someone who had a party last week and her name is Amina…”, anyway so that next week, so after that I was like oh that’s nice, he made an effort, came to the seminar. Then like the week after he asked a question and no-one was answering and he was like “Oh, Amina!” And I was like “Huh?!” ((shocked expression on face))

((laughter from group))

Amina: I was like so confused! Wow he remembered my name! And he’s done it again since with other people, calling out Luke, and that was very rare=

Zara: =Yeah=

Amina: I never had any of that in my first year. Like you see they’ve made an effort, which I appreciate.

Samara: In my second year as well, one of my modules was with one of the actuaries. I know that I’m already lucky to have an actual actuary as my lecturer, like it gives a different dynamic to somebody who’s studied the course, done the PhD for umpteen years and did so much research and they’re just teaching because with the actuary, they was allowed to, well they was able to take the understanding that we already know and build up onto what we already knew. Whereas, a lot of my other lecturers who have done research for loads and loads of years, they had, their intelligence level was at a point where I’m not gonna reach. And they didn’t know how to build on what I already knew because it’s been so long since they were actually at my stage. So it was harder for them to actually teach me or for me to even grasp that understanding because they already understand it, so they just were going through the motions rather than teaching me what it was. So some of the actuarial lecturers she printed off a sheet with all of our names and our pictures from our, so she tried to just match our pictures to our faces, so she actually got personal and got to know each and every one of us. So that was nice. But it’s only been two lecturers in my whole three years that’s been like that.

SC: How do you see yourself within lectures? For example, do you speak out? Do you offer opinions? Are you a quieter member of the class?

Shakira: In lectures I’m non-existent. I like to just literally listen=

Amina: =Mmm=

Shakira: =write my notes, like I listen to other people’s responses and stuff but I don’t speak at all. But in tutorials, like if I understand it and actually have something to say, I speak out in tutorials. It’s nicer cos it’s like a smaller close-knit group, whereas I feel a bit more=

Amina: =On the spot=

Shakira: =Reluctant to like actually say something

((group talking at same time, incoherent))

Shakira: People in my lectures like, we have some people who are like mature students and it’s like they’ve done like five degrees before becos like they just come out with some madness, they know every single answer and the lecturers like well gonna say that but yeah that’s fine, I’m like I have, I don’t have that same understanding that they have so I’m like if I say something everyone’s gonna be like “Ooh.” ((laugh from Amina)) “What’s she talking about?”

Amina: I speak out a lot of seminars, I have a lot of international students and they really can’t string a sentence together, in English, so they like, they don’t contribute, so it’s just silence. The seminar will be like “Oh what do you think of this?” and the room is silent for twenty seconds before anybody says anything. And I’m not that type of person, I’m not gonna, I didn’t wake up to come here not to talk, you know what I mean=

Group: =Mmm=

Amina: So I will actually contribute towards what’s going on and I feel like if I’m the only one having dialogue, like me and the seminar tutor, like it’s not, I feel like you learn more from other people’s questions=

Shakira: =Mmm=

Amina: =and other answers, and that’s what seminars are about, but in mine, it’s not like that. Sometimes I feel like the only one contributing.

Samara: It’s, in my course it’s like different elite levels, like you know that these are the people, like the elite ones. Like you have the regular ones, the ones who are the top, the bottom. In my lectures, I don’t, speak out. I used to actually my first year I did. Because in A levels I was always the person that was gonna ask. Period. Like I don’t care what anyone thinks of me, I’m gonna get this right, because when it comes to the test, I’m gonna answer it and you won’t. And even like this one guy asked me “can you ask the teacher for me?” and I found that strange! Like just ask her yourself! ((Shakira laughs)) Some people just don’t have that confidence or whatever, so they lose out. And I strongly believe that you learn from other people’s questions and the answers that they do, so even like today for instance, in my Acturial Maths, there’s like 150 people, I wouldn’t shout out and try and stop the flow of the class, because like I know like maybe the majority of people would already understand what I about to ask, so after the lecture I just went to him and asked him to explain it to me quickly. But in my smaller lectures, if I don’t get it, I’m like listen, I don’t, like. And even in one of my lectures, he just, this whole, whole seminar that he did, I just didn’t understand, it was another language and I went to him and I said “Nick, you need, I need to come to your office, and I need to have a one-on-one and you need to go through this with me, because I don’t have a clue what just went on in that lecture. So, er yeah. I’m pretty big on smaller size rather than bigger size, because it’s not so much that I’m scared to speak out, but it’s pretty much that I don’t wanna hinder anyone else’s learning. If they already you know grasped that concept, I’d rather do one-on –one.

SC: Does anybody else feel that they are able to seek that understanding if they don’t get it in lectures?

Zara: In big lectures I can’t. It’s just so many people, I just feel like mmm, I feel a bit uncomfortable. Maybe because I don’t have that confidence yet.

Amina: I think that, you know the office hours that the lecturers offer, I feel like I should utilise that. And there are times when I feel like, ah Amina you should just, you can just like drop an email asking to go see them. But I’ve never actually done it. Erm, but I dunno, I have friends who have done it and they’ve said it’s been really useful. Like I have a friend, like she got a bad grade on an assessment we had and she went back and he went through the whole essay with her and she said that was really good, and she said to me that if you ever feel like you’ve got a low mark you should definitely go. So I will do it then, and I think especially now that second year counts, I will definitely use that more if I’m struggling. But in that first year I never used the office hours.

Shakira: So like, erm, I don’t think I really have the confidence to answer like a question or go to my tutor’s office, but if I don’t understand something, I take it upon myself to just go home and read up on it, and like I search the internet, I find ways to understand it. So I never leave myself just, confused =

Zara: =Yeah=

Shakira: =I’ll understand it in the end, I just have a different approach to it. Like I have like one lecturer, and in every lecture he like, it’s so complicated and he knows, so like he’ll go through something, and then say “Does anybody not understand?” and half people’s hands go up, and he’ll like explain it in a different way and everyone’s like “Ah yeah, I get it.” So I like it when the lectures interactive like that, and then half way through the lecture, he’ll give you like a case study and then be like talk to your partner about it, like what do you think and then like feedback, it’s so helpful for like to try and understand it.

Samara: Erm what was the question again?

((laughter from group))

Shakira: I don’t even know

((laughter from group))

Shakira: It just seemed right ((laughs))

SC: ((laughs)) It doesn’t have to follow the question exactly, it’s fine.

Samara: I had an answer but then I lost my answer because like I forgot what I was answering

((laughter from the group))

SC: I was asking about seeking support when you needed it.

Samara: Oh yeah. My department always offers a lot of support. Even in my first year, they had this thing called peer support, so it was a designated hour where a second year or third year would come in and help us with our homework. So that was very useful and it was like in second year there was less and less of that. So there wasn’t much of that. But I had a mentor through ACS, so when I started up in the first year, I put in my course and everything and they actually paired me up a mentor. And so she was in the year above me and so that was very helpful cos I got all her notes beforehand. So I was able to read up and write in, like write my notes for the lectures prior and so when I was in the lecture I could use the notes and understand better. Having those notes prior was just amazing and that’s been a big plus for my first, second and third year. That was good but my department offers a lot of support and each year they got more and more supportive, when it comes to uh lecturers, some modules are not as approachable as others, some lecturers are not as supportive as others. The one with my big Maths classes, he is crazy, he’s a crazy lecturer like he’s off it, but he knows what he’s talking about. And so there’s also a language barrier with that, so he might not understand what question I’m actually asking. So it’s not the fact that he don’t know the answer, but he don’t understand the question to give me the answer that I want. So then, I just gave up on that. And find the other, find it myself, whatever.

SC: You said you got a mentor through the ACS, so is that something that is open to everybody?

Samara: I think once, with the membership.

SC: OK

Samara: If you sign up with your membership they allocate you a mentor. And then I already had the connection so I didn’t sign up to the ACS again.

((laughter from group))

Shakira: So like this year I’m actually a peer mentor, like for first years, and I think I have like seven mentee’s but no of them have actually [come to me, no. And I had to add like six emails

Amina: [contacted you

Shakira: throughout the year to send them, they have a choice whether to reply or not and no-one’s replied, so, I don’t know if it’s that people don’t really, well they know they can actually come to me, but I don’t know if people just choose not to or, they don’t know what’s out there, so, yeah. They try and like match you to=

Amina: =Your course=

Shakira: =Yeah, like I think I’ve got quite a few Law students, but, no, no-one’s ever got back to me ((laughs)). So ((laughs)

Samara: I think our university as a whole is good in providing you with the help that you need, even our careers service is really good=

Lydia: =Yeah=

Samara: =they do career fairs, they have consultations, like one-on-ones, they can help you with your CV, if you need internships, if you need to get a placement, like they’re really on the job ((clicks)) and they’re available a:: ll hours, you know, through university hours, so it’s not like you have to go out, and they’re on campus, so I think that’s really good. I think it’s just people, whether people wanna seek help or not.

SC: Yeah.

Samara: But it’s there, it’s definitely there.

((Zara yawns))

SC: Its ok, we’re nearly done, I know you must be getting tired.

Zara: Oh no, no

SC: Ok. I just wanted to know what you thought about the persistent attainment gap for students of Caribbean descent - do you had any ideas about what may be causing it?

Samara: Erm, in comparison to African’s I’ve noticed that a lot of African parents are more like [educationally,] drilling education into you, so maybe they’re like more harsh. And then

[((four claps))

even Asians and like Chinese and stuff, their school days are so:: much longer than ours like, it’s crazy. But coming from a small island like Bermuda, I’m a British colony, so I pay regular UK fees, whereas African’s, if they don’t got student finance, they have to pay international fees, and even if they don’t have to pay the international fees, they have to pay for visas, so I feel there’s a lot more at stake for them, being at university. If they fail they get the visa taken from them or different precautions that they have in place. But, I think it’s a lot to do with background. Like, my mummy has three children, one of them, the eldest one, is just a flop. But he-, she’s spent so much money on home school, private school, public school, private tutoring, everything and he just went down the path that he wanted to. Whereas me, seeing my mum, seeing my upbringing, seeing everything, got A’s and B’s and I’m here studying to being an actual actuary. And my little brother, he’s very intelligent but he wants to learn, what he wants to learn, when he wants to learn it. He’s more hands-on, so, he’s doing, I brought him out here with me so he has the opportunity to do his B-Tech and A Levels, or, just sports science or sports therapy or coaching that he’s really interested in, because if something he isn’t interested in, he doesn’t apply himself. If it’s something he’s not interested in he’s not gonna apply himself, even if he has the ability. So he’s all about different interests, I mean he had the same parents I did but-. My parents have always been like, well my parents didn’t go to university, so they told me I was going to university, it wasn’t really a choice. And then I just soared throughout school. But I think it’s a lot to do with your pare-, I’m doing it to make my parents proud. So all the sacrifices that my momma made to get me here, I wanna repay that. I really, I wanna make her feel as through the struggle was worth it and the sacrifice to be here. I think it’s just motivation, if you’re not self-motivated or you don’t have anything to light a fire under your bum, if you actually go and do what you need to do or what you want to do, then, yeah.

Amina: I think, erm, with Caribbean people in particular, I feel like, erm, the kind of jobs we go into, careers, in this country, are more like softer careers? I don’t know how to say that, we don’t really achieve or drive to be the doctors or lawyers or like erm, you know like all the top professions, we kinda go into like social care, or like hospitality, those sort of careers. And I feel like because, it’s a generation thing as well. I’m like the first person in my family to go to university, first time. See my dad went to university as well, he had a career in football first, but then he went to university late. But that’s only because he had to then after, probably if he wouldv’e continued he probably would have gone on to university. So I’m actually the first generation of my family to go to university straight after school. And I know, kind of like around our age group, that’s a bit common, and I feel like with Caribbeam families as well, they are more, I don’t know how to say this, but I feel like the approach- If you don’t like follow through with education it’s fine cos you can just get a job.

Shakira: Mmm

Amina: Like you can just start from the bottom and work your way up, is more accepted than for African families who are more like you need to go to sixth form, university, you need to do a post-grad. It’s just completely different, so the push is not quite as that.

SC: Do you think it’s about expectations?

Amina: Yeah but I don’t know why. Like a lot of Caribbean’s are very proud people as well, and they want the best, they want nice things and they want the best, but actually they do settle for these like, the, I do- is it like lower class jobs or just social, I don’t know how to describe it, [but you know [what I [mean

Lydia: [Yeah] [that need like no qualifications

Zara: [I agree

Samara: Even coming from my island. So my island’s very small but it a tax haven, so all the insu- all the big insurance companies are there. So they have to put money back into the country, so, through scholarships, they do a lot through scholarships, so there’s a lot of scholarships available, even internships. So it’s easier for me to get a job through PWC to KPMG than it is out here. So I hear my friends going through assessment centres and having to do all this to get, just to get an internship and it might not even be paid. I just had to send out applications and I may have an interview, like I got it or I don’t. A::nd, I think, in Bermuda it’s like at first, in generations before, you could just get your GED, if you don’t have a high school diploma they have another qualification, so to speak. So you don’t have to be in school to get that, it’s like a private institution, like type of exam, and then after that you can become a cashier, then work up to being a manager. Or it’s a lot of like maintenance work, plumbers, electricians, all the type of stuff that’s not really taught in school any more. So back in the day, they had a trade school, that’s where you learnt your trade, electrician, plumbing, they cut that out from Bermuda. So there’s none of that any more, anyone that wants to become that after high school, they have to go and, go under somebody’s wing and learn that way. And then uh, there’s a lot of small erm businesses, you know like, it’s more of an incentive in Bermuda to have like your own business? So a lot of people try and get on that road, but they don’t really do business courses, and it’s also all about who you know in Bermuda. It’s really about who you know, not so much what you know. So that’s another downfall as to, I can get all the qualifications in the world, my friend she’s not gonna get them qualifications, but her mom knows the president of (?) so she’s gonna get a job, just like that. And then, so it’s very ups and dow-, like it’s not consistent, really. So even so back then you was just allowed to start working, my nanna, she started working at the age of sixteen, so, but now it’s like ok, all these ex-pats are coming into Bermuda in these insurance companies, and they’re getting all these jobs and work permits when, how come they’re not giving Bermudians jobs? So the incentive was, Bermudians you need to go get your education and come back, and replace these ex-pats, so to speak. So a lot of jobs like actuary, that wasn’t advertised, nobody knew what an actuary was. But these ex-pats are coming in and working in our country. So people started to go into the insurance companies more, people started to become accountants and get the qualifications and then they come back and they’re like “Why don’t you have any jobs for us?” So it’s like governmental issues that we’re battling with and battling with ex-pats versus Bermudians, and it’s like “Ok so we’re qualified, now what are you going to provide for us?” Cos if not, we’re just gonna go abroad and work. And you don’t really want that.

Group: Mmm

Samara: So it’s a lot of controversy in Bermuda but it is, it is like a stage. So first you can go to work, but it’s like, no. First you need to get your education. And second, ok so you’ve got your education, but do you have a job when you come back? So:: yeah.

SC: Do we think that’s an issue in the UK: Having the qualifications but struggling to get jobs, or even, maybe people getting jobs due to who they know, rather than what they have achieved?

Shakira: Definitely=

Amina: =Definitely. Like for my course, in communications, it’s really competitive, like the industry, it’s just, it’s all about who you know and your appearance, like your looks, basically. And as erm a Black female, we did like a bit of statistics actually, about employment in media and it was basically saying that, erm, as Black female, I’m actually in the worst ((laughs)) position to get a job in media at the moment. But also that could also be of benefit because there’s no Black females=

Shakira: =Mmm=

Amina: =actually that could be a way into it, kinda thing. But actually I’m at a disadvantage because the profession is filled with Oxbridge and Cambridge graduates and they’re all upper class, erm a lot of White people, and they take up, I think it’s about 80% of the jobs. And like when you look at the statistics, its actually so crazy, so for a career it is really hard. And yeah, my course especially, it’s gonna be hard. But you just have to be persis- yeah perseverance, stick at it.

SC: It was mentioned before that Caribbean females may have lower expectations about what they can achieve, where do we think that might come from?

Samara: I think it comes from the genera-, it’s a generational thing, like my nan, she went out and worked, yes, but she had babies, the man was always the income. He went out and worked, and women were supposed to stay home and do the housework and do this and that, while the man went out to work and brought in the income for the whole family. So I think just transitioning through the generations, is not as quick as it has been for other countries. Like Africa, I’m sure African women still do that. You know guys want the woman to be home with the kids and doing that, but, I think it’s transitioned quicker in other countries than it has in the Caribbean.

Lydia: I think also, within the Caribbean community there’s a lot of teenage pregnancies=

Amina: =I was gonna say that yeah=

Lydia: =and a lot of these things that are like a barrier to girls achieving and doing well in education and stuff=

Shakira: =I think with the Caribbean it’s more about instant gratification and stuff. Or like when they finish school, they just want to go out and get a job, make money. I’m not sure why that is, like why there’s a difference between Africans and Caribbeans. But it seems like they’re the ones who get the jobs and Africans are the ones who actually go onto university and do like, get a higher job=

Amina: =Yeah=

Samara: =I think another thing is about your economic background, with your family. Like luckily, I got scholarships. My mum has got three children, my dad’s got like so many children ((laughter from group)), and so:: ((laughs)). But, because like my mom has a mortgage and stuff, a lot of people in Bermuda, they would have to take out a loan in order to pay for school, college, university. And we don’t have a university in Bermuda. So, we have to either England, America or Canada. America’s tuition is crazy. Like my whole three years in England, is one year in America. And that’s not including accommodation, so you have to take out loans for like $50,000, that’s just for one year. And in America it’s four years. So that’s virtually like $200,000 that you’ve got to go to the bank, that your parents have to go to the bank for=

Amina: =For one child=

Samara: =for one child=

Amina: =yeah=

Samara: =to pay back=

Amina: =That’s crazy=

Samara: =So people do have multiple children in Bermuda, or even young pregnancies, I’m like are you even thinking about your education? For you children coming out of Bermuda. In England it’s different because you have student finance. And stuff like that, so me getting a scholarship and stuff, that helped completely. It helped completely. But erm, even for my brother, I brought him out here so he could be out here for three years. Then he can apply for student finance. So he could-, it’d be an easier lad for my parents. And my other brother, he went to America. Luckily his momma had a good job, but my daddy could’nt afford the whole tuition for the whole four years. So I think a lot of males who is in my generation, who I went to school with, a lot of them went and got trade jobs, so like solar panelling. You know electrician or like construction workers and stuff like that, right after school, because they wanna help their mom out with the household and stuff like that. So, especially if they have multiple children. So if the oldest child is taking on that responsibility, especially if they’re the male of the house. And if it’s like an oldest brother, he’s gonna go out and work, so he can give his little sister the education that everybody wants her to have. Or him to have, kind of thing. So, it’s a lot about money and availability.

SC: Do you think money and availability impacts those in the UK?

Group: Yeah

Amina: I feel like university is more expensive and like even just to be here. I know that student finance is a blessing but it’s, there’s so many other costs like, and it’s actually a really major thing. I feel like we don’t appreciate it, like as much as university is a very big thing, £9,000 for one year of education, is a lot of money and I don’t know what we get for that money, that’s another story ((laughs)) but erm, in terms of like maintenance as well. I have friends who, their parents like their earnings are too high, so they don’t have a maintenance loan. Or they have like the bare minimum, like £1,000. So their parents are paying for their accommodation outright, and all they have to worry about, all the student finance covers is the tuition fees. And I feel like a lot of Caribbean households, they can’t, like that’s not going to be an option. Like my mum, my mum would love to be like “Oh don’t take out a student loan.” She would love to be able to do that, but she can never do that. Cos it’s too much, it’s like £27,000, something like that. Crazy money that she wouldn’t have to just be like “I’ve got your accommodation for the year.” Ridiculous, like it’s so expensive. I have a friend from Birmingham, who actually lives at home. She’s at uni in Birmingham but she lives at home because of how much her accommodation costs. So she has her maintenance loan just to live off, and she works as well as being a student. So that’s obviously one expenditure for her. She’s from a Caribbean background. Because her mum physically couldn’t afford to put her in accommodation. But she’s in the same city anyway, so.

Shakira: So like I agree with that, because with my like student loan, it literally just, it doesn’t even cover my accommodation, so I still have to, I worked during Summer to take the load off my parents a bit, so I pay like a little bit extra each month out of like, erm, my money. And then, in terms of food, my parents have to give me money weekly.

Amina: =Yeah=

Shakira: =If they didn’t, I’m lucky=

Amina: =Yeah=

Shakira: =because if they didn’t have that money=

Amina: =yeah=

Shakira: How would I afford to eat each day ((laughs)) you know what I mean?=

Amina: =yeah, yeah=

Shakira: =it’s literally like. And then my books, for my course I had to buy seven books and I actually need them. So like for tutorial they might say read this page, and I have to have that book so I spent two hundred and something pounds for these books. And I had to work during summer [just to make I had that money.] So I think like, a lot of people that aren’t really in

Amina: [to make sure you had books]

Shakira: that position would struggle. So it just, university just doesn’t seem like an option.

Amina: Just one more thing I wanted to add, that erm, I know people from back when I was at school, so basically their parents have like a university fund for them. As they were like, so when they were born, they were just putting money [into this account. Sorry my family

Zara: [yeah I heard of that

Amina: weren’t on that, like although they wanted me to go to university, but they weren’t planning ahead. Because they didn’t know the costs, cos you have to know don’t you?=

Shakira: =[Yeah]=

Zara: =[Yeah]=

Amina: =Like if you don’t know, you don’t know it’s going to be this big, big expenditure. Because back when my parents were young, it was easy to go to university. Now, it’s a lot harder=

Zara: =Mmm=

Amina: So I’ve had friends who’ve had like saving funds, just to pay for that, you know, first few years upfront kind of thing, accommodation sorted, like you’ve got your money there, we’ve saved that from time. I feel like a lot of Afro-Caribbean, not saying we’re all struggling. But it’s kinda like get by this year, ok, we’ve done this, ok like its more steps=

Samara: =like living pay cheque to pay cheque=

Amina: =Yeah!

Samara: I feel, that living in Bermuda, it’s more likely for people to be living pay cheque to pay cheque, especially like a Black person, living pay cheque to pay cheque. Whereas I went to a private school, so I had a lot of, to be fair my private school was like 60/40 Black and White, but being around like a lot of my White friends, even though they were down to earth, andthey had money but they didn’t act like they was stuck up, so that’s why I was able to be cool with them. But, their parents had, did had money saved. They have savings accounts just for school. Just for tuition. Especially because you don’t know if your child’s going to-, a lot of went to America more so than the UK. People thought that the UK’s actually cheaper, but the other thing is that the UK is so much further than the US from Bermuda. So, like my friend, she goes to university in the US. Her momma would’ve loved to have gone to university in the UK because it’s cheaper, however, if anything happens, that’s a whole seven hour flight, that cost £1,000 to get from the UK. Whereas in America, the flights are only £100 or £300 from the US. But your tuition is stupid high. So a lot of people, a lot of people who are upper class Black people who’s tuned in, have started doing that for their children. From birth. So like my momma, she wanted to do that but she couldn’t. So she told me about it you know, you need to make, even for my niece and nephews, we can get that sorted at home. Let’s just put five dollars away a week. And then when they’re eighteen, whatever they wanna do. Like if they want to start up their own business, they can start up their own business, or if they want to go to university, that’s covered. So, I think it’s becoming more prominent now for people to start doing that. So with people with multiple children, it’s even harder to do that. And then even if you save that up, if something happens, you’re going to dip into it, you’re gonna dip into that fund a little bit. So you have a harder time saving money than White people who’ve been handed it down=

Shakira: =[Mmm]=

Amina: =[Mmm]=

Lydia: =I think it’s basically just a big cycle, cos if you think about it, Black people find it harder to get like jobs and stuff. So when we do get jobs, we don’t get paid as much as the White colleague, so they can’t save as much as their kids, and they have more kids than White people anyway. And then when you do have that kid, you have less of a fund for them=

Zara: =Mmm=

Lydia: =to go university. And if they do go university, they struggle. And it’s just like a big cycle. That’s just struggle after struggle. [Yeah]

Zara: [Yeah]

Samara: In Bermuda, kids whose parents don’t have the money would go to work first, and save up, and then go to university later. But then it’s also whether years later they still have that momentum to still go to university, or-. Because it’s really hard, even summer time, it’s hard to have a constant income, and then come to England and it’s just going down. It’s no more constant income. It’s hard for people to adapt to that as well.

SC: I thought it was really interesting what has been said about the cycle of struggle

Group: Yeah.

((pause))

SC: What do you think the media depiction of an Afro-Caribbean female is and how does it relate to your identity and experiences?

Amina: I think Caribbean women are represented as being quite sexual=

Zara: =Mmm=

Amina: =Like, but in a positive way, I would say, like we have like carnival, we have erm nice hair, like I feel like it’s positive representations in some aspects. I think they’re very beautiful, like island girls kinda thing. And I feel like it makes me proud to be Carib-, from the Caribbean. I’m Jamaican-Trini, so I dunno, I like it. It’s good.

Zara: I see that strength in pictures, I see on Instagram. You know they look really strong.

Samara: I think it’s just that whole empowerment movement, like Beyoncé, you know what I mean? You know, empowerment of women and I think it’s like without her, becoming actuaries or becoming lawyers, or becoming criminologists, or you know private investigators. This is the generation where there is less boundaries than there were before. Like before, a lot of nurses or like Caribbean women, there are a lot of Caribbean nurses, and those are the type of jobs that they would get into. Like social workers, like you were saying ((directed to Amina)). This is the generation where, we have no limits. If we wanna get there, we can get there, there’s not as much. Well there’s still some push-back. It will always be that, I believe. I think it’s always gonna be that White people might get chosen first, or they’re always gonna have more of a priority or seniority than we do. But it’s not impossible any more. It’s not as far out of reach as it was, years ago. ((some sounds of agreement from group)).

Shakira: I think it’s interesting that like, there aren’t actually, obviously, there are more White people achieving than Black people, in terms of going to university and then getting a high-end job. But it’s interesting that if you look at the degrees that we’re all doing, like we wouldn’t really be going to uni and doing like er, I don’t know how to explain it, do you get what I’m trying to say? Like a degree like=

Amina: =Like I know what you mean=

Samara: =Like B-tech courses type thing=

Shakira: =Yea, yeah. Like if you wann go there, you put everything into it and you like, do like a course that’s challenging=

Lydia: =Yes=

Shakira: =You seem like you just=

Lydia: =Exactly like you don’t just do Psychology at university kind of thing, you would like do something more specific ((some laughter from group)) No, what I mean, is something like broad=

Shakira: =[You wouldn’t just go in and do Art]=

Samara: =[You don’t just do Sociology or]=

Lydia: =Yeah like Art=

Samara: =Yeah=

Lydia: =Yeah=

Samara: =Even, I know one of my friends, he’s been in private school his whole life, I’m convinced he’s gay, but he hasn’t came out yet ((laughter from group)) But he loves, he loves horses! Loves horses, loves horse-back riding. And he came to university to do that. And I’m like, I mean if I was=

Lydia: =Wait, what’s his course?= ((Shakira laughs))

Samara: =I don’t know but=

Shakira: =Equestrian=

Samara: =Equestrian?=

Shakira: =Yeah. [I don’t think our parents would send us to uni to do that

Samara: [I’m like what is this course? And it’s like different modules, his whole university if on a farm type thing ((Shakira laughs)) they know how to take care of the horses kind of thing. And he’s a Black boy! And even my mum, I spoke to my mum about it and she was like “Huh?! You think I’m gonna pay £9,000 a year for you to- What?!” ((chatter from group)). Like I didn’t even know it was a real thing, so it’s like that, the only flip side, it’s like no, my child would not be doing that. It’s no [way

Shakira: [It’s not worth the investment

((lots of chatter and laughter from group))

Samara: Exactly! What are you really coming out with that. You could’ve learnt your whole horse, equestrian camp=

Lydia: =without going uni=

Samara: =Or did it without a degree=

Lydia: =Yeah=

Samara: =((laughs)) so erm=

Lydia: =Really?=

Samara: =I don’t really know what that’s about. That’s what he’s passionate [about

Shakira: [It seems like it’s mainly White people who do those sort of courses.

Samara: Exactly. And it’s inspiring in the flip side that this Black boy, his university probably never really had Black people. But he’s there, and he’s doing that course. He’s kicking ass at this course. And then no-one has done that course in Bermuda that I know of, so he’s gonna be the first one. So he’s gonna start his own, and he could probably charge higher cos he has a degree. He has competitive advantage. He could probably do something in Bermuda that hasn’t been done before. So I applaud him. At first I’m like why would you even do it, why is your mom paying for that? ((Amina laughs)). But then on the flip side, it’s like, why not? You know what I mean?=

Shakira: =Mmm=

Lydia: =It shows how motivated he is as well, cos I’m sure those sort of school or unis are very rare. So the fact that he’s found one and he’s actually going to it, and doing the things that he actually wants to do=

Shakira: =[Mhmm]

Amina: =[Mmm], say’s a lot=

Zara: =Yeah=

Lydia: =He must have a quite big passion=

Shakira: =It’s hard, because it’s easy to make a distinction between like Black people and White people but it’s like, it’s hard to understand likewhy it’s different for Caribbean and African people.=

Group: =Yeah=

Shakira: =I’m still unsure like why the differences are there.

Samara: I can’t really relate to that because, coming from Bermuda, I didn’t know much about Africa. Like Africa, if I went into the store, they had different donation boxes for the poor African child with his ribs showing and we donate to them and. Or people going out to build houses somewhere, or going out to create water, streams or something, fresh water for them to drink and stuff. So Africa was just portrayed to me as, it was a whole country in itself, the whole thing was just a country to me. And they were poor. And are, they don’t have the type of opportunities I do. But coming to Leicester, when I found out it’s Nigerians, Ghanaians, Sudanese, South Africans, and they all have different cultures within Africa, and what they believe and different perspectives. So I don’t, I’m still learning about the African culture. I just know that it’s really strict. Cos even my friend the other day. She’s on my course, I was like “Oh are you going to go back home, to work?” She was like “I would live to, but I’m not living with my mom.” I was like “Why not?” Cos me and my mom are like best friends, so I was curious as to why she didn’t want to go back and live with her mum, like. So when her momma comes home at 5, all the children have to greet her, be home, before 5 so they can greet her. Cook for her. Sit in her room and eat with her and sit in her room and stay with her until she’s ready to go to sleep. They have to have a shower before 10. She can’t go out, she can only go out twice a week, and then she still has to be back by 5

Lydia: How old is she?

Samara: Like 21! ((Lydia laughs)) 21! So I’m like, it’s like this? These type of rules be like this?! ((Lydia laughs)). Like I literally wrote it all down and tell my mom and I’m like momma thank you ((Lydia laughs)) Cos I’m fighting back! I got my (valley purse?) at 16 ((group laughs)) you know what I mean, die my hair all these crazy colours, when this girl, huh? She can’t do what?=

Amina: =Why is it that her mum, why is it her mum, that she has to get back to be with her mum? [Is her mum special, like.] And like the dad, is it like?

Lydia: [Yeah like matriarchal]

Samara: Yeah like the dad, they split up, so she tries to call her, her dad does think it’s all a bit extreme. So when she does want to go somewhere, or want to get her way, she calls her dad, her dad talks to her mom, and sorta talks her out of it. But that doesn’t happen all the time=

Lydia: =Mmm=

Samara: =And so. And so she comes to here, she’s free! to do whatever she likes=

Group: =Yeah=

Samara: =So that extreme is like, I couldn’t imagine not wanting to go back home. Because of that. So that was a different whole other=

Lydia: =Situation=

Samara: =Situation, yeah. They, they’re pushing her to become an actuary. And she went to private school, and she did her A Levels, and she did this and this, and this, and this. And they’re paying umpteen dollars for her to even be her and things like that. And even if my friend group were going on a trip this week, but one of the Sudanese girls, so we have to pay for the tickets, pay for the accommodation and so she had to go and get a visa. And prove everything, and pay £100 for this visa. To travel to these different countries. So I think, the opportunity for them to get out of Africa and get an education, it’s so much more harder for them than it is for us. To do so. Like you don’t have as many restrictions. So Maybe don’t value it as much as they do.

Amina: Yeah, I think they, we don’t value it as much as they do, because it’s kinda like there=

Samara: =Right, so it’s not that we don’t value it, like we value it, but we don’t have [this type of]

Lydia: [the struggle’s not as real=

Samara: =Right the struggle’s not as real. So, who feels it knows it really=

Lydia: =Yeah=

Samara: =So for her, she needs to be motivated to do this course then hopefully get a job in England, so she don’t go back to that. ((Lydia laughs)) Whereas I’m like, I’m ready to go back home! ((group laughs)) Yeah I think it’s just different, it boils down to just different motivations. And where you come from really. And what your situation is. I think we have it easier in the Caribbean. Not that we don’t struggle, it’s just our struggle is less than some Africans. Because some Africans are rich, so=

Lydia: =Trust.

Amina: It’s hard to speak for like a collective=

SC: =Yeah of course=

Amina: =There are a lot of individual cases. So when we say like ‘we’ it’s like, you have to be careful when you say that=

Samara: =Yeah, yeah yeah yeah yeah=

Amina: =Because even like, I could say we for like us in this room, and like you had part education in the Caribbean, you’ve had full education in the Caribbean, that’s like completely different to mine and Zara’s experience, so like ‘we’ is actually different. I dunno, in some cases obviously we can relate as a whole, like we are all in the same boat, going through the same experiences as a=

Lydia: =generally a collective=

Amina: =like as a collective=

Zara: =We’re all Black=

Amina: =Very different individual cases =

Group: =Mmmm=

Samara: =Especially like with individual careers as well. None of us is really in the same field as well, so then we all face different struggles within it. So in Bermuda it was a big motivation for me as there were no female actuaries. So then it became like two female, two Bermudian actuaries, and then. Now there’s like six Bermudian actuaries, but two of them are female. So then because it was that niche in the market, that’s been my motivation since 11. And my parents are very like, I have a beautiful support system, my whole family have been pushing me towards being an actuary, when I decided I wanted to become one. And the fact that I always wanted to be the first female to do something. And I’m not going to be the first female in Bermuda, but I’m going to be one of the first to be female Black actuaries. And let’s not let all these expats come in into the country and make all this money. No, I’m gonna be earning that money. ((some laughter from group)) That motivation in itself is big as well. And my motivation is driven by being female and Black. And my country, and a Caribbean country.

((Pause))

SC: Thank you for all coming together to have that discussion. And I really liked the point made about the fact that whilst you have many shared characteristics, you are all individuals and it is hard to speak for a collective of people. I hope to represent those different strengths and different struggles you all have, rather than saying this is what all Black people need!

Group: Yeah!

SC: I don’t think there is one solution=

Amina: =No=

SC: =But hopefully I can get across that this is what this particular group has experienced which my give some insight into things that may support others. Thank you.

Samara: No problem!

**Focus Group Interview 2 Transcript**

((Participants were encouraged to start the session with their thoughts, however, the participants opted for me to start with my thoughts))

SC: Thank you for coming back, I thought I’d start with an identity poem taken from the transcript of the last focus group

((‘Racial identity and belonging’ I-poem read to group))

SC: What did you think when you heard that back? Did you hear your own voices in it?

Group: Yeah ((laughing))

Amina: Yeah. No I think it was really nice the way we were like “I agree, I agree”, the three linking statements at the beginning. And then the last statement was “It was different for me”. That really stood out, it was really nice, the juxtaposition.

((pause))

SC: I thought that was really interesting as that was (Lydia) at the end saying “there was no race” and it sort of drew that comparison between maybe the experiences in the UK and the experiences elsewhere.

Amina: Mmm

((pause))

SC: In terms of identity, what do you think caused the long pause at the beginning of the session when I asked how you described your identity?

Lydia: I think we didn’t know how to answer like what to say, like what do you mean?

((Malaika and Ezra short laugh))

Lydia: Like yeah, kind of, I think that was why.

SC: That’s fair enough.

Zara: I feel like we’re still young, we still have a lot to see for ourselves, so can’t really say what we are yet.

SC: I like that idea, so your identity is still developing?

Zara: Mmm

Amina: Do we still need to say our names before we speak?

Zara: Oh yeah I forgot.

SC: Only if you remember, I pretty much got used to the sound of everyone’s voice though.

(pause)

SC: Is it a question which makes you uncomfortable?

Amina: Mmm no, I don’t think so.

SC: Does anyone feel that way?

Group: No. ((quiet response))

SC: Does it matter who asks?

Group: Mmm.

Amina: You know when you’ve got a family dinner and relatives say “What you gonna do when you’re older?” or “How do you see yourself now?” and you feel a bit like leave me alone.

SC: Yeah

Zara: So yeah it does matter who asks, for me you know.

Lydia: I feel like for me personally, it doesn’t matter who asks me, but I feel like there is some people that would mind. Like they’d have different answers for different people that asked them. Like probably, if it was a different race person who asked them they’d have a different response. But for me=

Shakira: =I don’t think I’d really like change my identity like, to like, depending who asked me. Like I don’t really mind what they think about it.

(pause)

SC: Do you think people may be asking you different questions, depending who’s asking you?

Shakira: I feel like the reason they’re asking you is probably different. As in say like as a Black person, if someone else that was Black asked me, I’d feel like it was more, sort of to relate to me. Whereas anyone else, it would just be a point of interest=

Amina: =Or judgement=

Group: =Yeah

(pause)

SC: I think it was a question I wouldn’t know how to answer because I definitely felt that people were trying to ask me something different=

Zara: =Yeah=

SC: =In terms of where are you from geographically=

Group: =Mmm=

SC: =as in Manchester/London/Leicester, or where are you from originally?=

Group: =Mmm Yeah! ((animated))

Amina: =Oh definitely, yeah!

Shakira: =You never know what to say=

((laughter from group))

Amina: I know necessarily, if a White person asks where you are from, I know they’re asking me in England where am I from. But I know if it’s somebody else they’ll be like oh yeah, that’s more or less asking about my background. So definitely. It happens so many times, like where are you from? Like where am I actually from or where do I live?

((Laughter from group))

(pause)

SC: (Lydia) in the first group you noted that you felt more Caribbean than British, despite being born here=

Lydia: =Yeah=

SC: =And I suppose that may be because you lived there for such a long time=

Lydia: =Yeah=

SC: =I wondered how the rest of the group related to that statement?

Zara: I think I feel more British. Cos like I haven’t, like I go away to St Lucia some summers then I don’t go for a very long time, so I’ve not really adapted to the culture as much as (Lydia). ((Short laugh))

Shakira: I feel more British. Like if I went there, I wouldn’t feel like ah I’m part of the island=

Zara: =Yeah=

Shakira: Like it’s my country. I’d feel like – so I’m from here, but like, I feel like a tourist

Z & A: =Yeah=

Shakira: =Yeah=

Amina: =Yeah I feel like a tourist as well. I have my roots there and it’s nice to know that my family’s been brought up there and that’s the culture which runs through my veins. But me physically, I think I do identify more with being British.

S & Z: Yeah.

Shakira: But then like, when you’re actually in Britain like, erm, I don’t know, I feel like people like try and like [show they’re Caribbean

Amina: [rep their own country

Shakira: Yeah! You’re like I’m Caribbean, you make sure people know it like=

Group: =Yeah!=

Shakira: =Especially now that we’re older, than when we were younger, like you’re more proud=

Zara: =[You’re more patriotic

Adina: =[Its important! Because within being British, you have your own, like social groups that you, like even though you’re from the Caribbean, you have your British Caribbeans and you identify as your own kind of group. Because you can relate to each other, like we’re all island girls. And you can relate, yeah=

Lydia: =It even shows that when we go to certain parties, like when we go out to like ‘Viva’ or ‘Rep your flag’, no-ones coming out with a British flag.

((Lots of laughter from group))

Lydia: Everyone’s coming out with their Caribbean country’s flag! Yeah, so yeah. And I feel like, erm I know she’s not here, but I feel like (Samara) would relate more to me, ‘cause she’s like , she actually grew up in the Caribbean as well and she just moved over here for education as well.

(pause)

SC: I thought that was interesting as well, that a lot of your experiences related to (Samara’s) and likewise, you two ((looking at Zara and Adina)), in particular had quite similar experiences, mainly through the contexts of your education=

Group: =Yeah

(pause)

SC: It was also noted last time that there weren’t many students of Caribbean descent in the university, I wondered what impact, if any that had on your experiences?

Amina: I feel like in first year, when I was like in student accommodation, halls, as a Black person, I felt like I was the only Caribbean, there may have been others, but it was very much, like within the Africans that were around me, they all spoke Yuroba or Nigerian, like a type of slang. They’re from London, as well so I couldn’t relate to that as well. But they had like their Nigerian culture and they would like switch up the language. So I was like, there’s a language barrier, I don’t understand what they’re saying kind of thing. So there was that physical, there was that difference between Caribbeans and Africans. Also like in terms of food and our culture is very different, like dishes that they would cook, I wouldn’t necessarily say that they were dishes I’d eaten or even like spices in the food as well. And music as well like, I found that a lot African people like to listen to African music or Afro-beats and don’t really listen to dancehall and bashment and reggae. Like how Caribbean people do, so that=

Lydia: =Or soca=

Amina: =or soca, yeah so there are a lot of differences, like culturally.

(pause)

SC: I know (Samara) is not here, but she talked about feeling empowered by images of Black women achieving things, like role models, such as Beyoncé, who inspire her to achieve things. I wondered whether, or what other things or images make you feel empowered?

Zara: Erm, recently Oprah Winfrey did an erm speech, about like standing up to sexual harassment and I really, really like that speech, ‘cause it’s something that’s not really taken as seriously as, in the feminist realm. It really needs to be spoken about more. So I really her speech on that.

Shakira: Yeah that’s really inspiring.

(pause)

Amina: I really like Michelle Obama as well, I feel like she’s a really good role model, and in terms of Black empowerment as well. She’s spoken a lot about racial issues, concerning women but concerning men as well. I feel like she’s a good role model, figure=

Ezra: =And she’s like really high on like education as well=

Amina: =Mmm.

(pause)

Ezra: I mean there’s so many Black role models, but now you’ve asked the question it’s like I can’t think of any.

((Laughter from group and all talking at once – incoherent))

Ezra: It’s hard!=

Amina: =Even like in terms of like films and television that we watch in the media, recently, like say 10 years ago, we didn’t really see many TV shows or sitcoms with like strong female characters. But now we have like ‘Scandal’, ‘How to get away with murder’ and all these like leading Black females and they’re all doing so well=

Shakira: =And they’re all like leaders of the firms a well=

Group: =Yeah=

Amina: =Exactly. And erm what’s that other one?=

Lydia: =Gabrielle Union=

Amina: =[Yeah, and what’s the show again?=

Zara: =[Yeah she’s been doing bits=

Lydia: =’Being Mary Jane’=

Amina: =’Being Mary Jane’, yeah there’s so many=

Lydia: =Yeah and she recently came out in a new one=

Zara: =Yeah where she’s like the tough mum=

Lydia: =Yeah, yeah, yeah that one=

Zara: =I’ve seen the trailer for that.

Amina: Yeah so=

Lydia: =She’s doing bits=

Amina: =I feel like, when you see it more in media as well, it helps like empower you on a daily basis=

Zara: =Yeah exactly.

Shakira: I feel like even in ‘Suits’, you know like Jessica, she’s the head of the firm and like=

Group: =Yeah=

Shakira: =And I feel like, especially for like me, trying to be a lawyer and like seeing all these Black figures, you know like ‘Anna-Louise’=

Amina: =Yeah=

Shakira: =Yeah like, it’s just like wow! You can actually make it like that=

Lydia: =Yeah like even though it’s movies and TV shows, you know it’s fictional like, but it still has a real impact on your life situation=

Group: Yeah

SC: It sort of says –it’s possible

Group: =Yeah=

Zara: =It sort of gives you hope=

Shakira: =Because everyone looks up to them more as well because they’ve like, sort of where they’ve come from and how they’ve made it. Especially in like scandal as well, because she’s like=

Amina: =Yeah=

Shakira: =She’s amazing!=

Group: =Yeah=

Lydia: =And even in like, what’s it called? Empire=

Group: =Yeah ((talking over each other, incoherent))=

Lydia: =Even her real life story, she got into acting at like 35 or something=

Zara: =Yeah late=

Lydia: =Even in her real life story and in her films, she’s played strong Black females ((clicks)) she did like ‘Karate Kid’ she played that kids mom and=

Zara: =’Hidden figures’ as well=

Lydia: =Yeah and like ‘Empire’ where she’s been to jail and she ((laughter from group)) she came out and she’s like the head of the empire=

Group: =Yeah.

(pause)

SC: It’s nice that we’ve got quite a few example=

Amina: Mmmhmm

SC: I personally wasn’t happy with just Beyoncé ((laughter from group)) I mean she sings, but. Ok.

(pause)

SC: Moving back to education. (Zara) you spoke a bit about the transition from being abroad to being in the the UK, I was wondering whether you had any schooling abroad, or whether it was when you were younger?

Zara: Erm it was like, basic, ‘cause I was like really young, living with my grandparents, so it was like basic learning, kinda like streetwise, like how to respect your elders and things like that. So it wasn’t really school at all, from what I can remember=

SC: =Yeah=

Zara: =So that kinda got advanced when I came here.

SC: Do you remember when you first came to school in England?

Zara: Yeah so I was a bit more like, I wasn’t adapting as well. I was more like violent with other kids, not in like a bad way, just like not being patient with them and stuff. Then like, because we had learnt to call our elders ‘uncle’ and ‘aunty’, I was calling them uncle and aunty – my teachers, and they kept telling me not to. So I was trying to transition from being brought up in a respectable household, to coming to the UK.

SC: Did you feel like there were big differences in the UK?

Zara: Yeah, like how the adults would talk to me, like back here and like back home they spoke to me completely differently, so it was quite weird.

SC: What do you think that difference was? Do you remember?

Zara: Erm well my mum would tell me that it’s a lot more relaxed here and whereas elders back home would be stricter and wold tell you what to do and stuff , so yeah, there was a difference.

(pause)

SC: Erm (Shakira), you noted that you had a dislike for all teachers at school and I wondered what caused that dislike and what could have made those relationships better?

Shakira: Erm, I felt that most of the time, I was like picked on by them. Not in like a mean way, but I could be doing the same thing as my friend, but I was the one who’d be called out. And it was just sort of like, made me think like why am I getting in trouble? So we’d both sort of have this sort of like tension. But, and then, I dunno. It made me think why don’t they like me? So I’d just like, it affected my education as sometimes I’d be, out of spite not do something. Even if it was like in the best interest of myself, so yeah. But I don’t know what could have made it better really. I suppose my dad always said like “It doesn’t really matter what they say, like they can say anything to you, but really, what’s important is your grades.” So, I think, if I like listened to that a bit more, then, yeah I suppose it wouldn’t have really affected me.

SC: I suppose that’s quite difficult=

Shakira: =Yeah as a child, you know, you don’t like me then I don’t like them=

Group: =Yeah

Lydia: And I think that, as a child, when you hear that somebody don’t like you, it doesn’t make you think – oh what shall I do for them to like me? You’re just like OK so if you don’t like me, I don’t like you. And you will do things out of retaliation=

Group: =Mmm=

Amina: That’s true=

Shakira: =Whereas now, you just sort of accept that not everyone likes you so=

Group: =Exactly=

Zara: =Maturity does help.

Amina: I had a teacher in school, like primary school, and she would say “I’m not here to be your friends, I’m just here to teach you” like and we would be like -oh my gosh she’s really strict!

((some laughter from group))

Amina: Whereas the teacher before had been like –oh sugar power! Come and have some sweets.

((laughter from group))

Amina: And this one teacher would be like I’m not your friend, I’m here to teach you. I leave at 5 o’clock and that’s it ((some laughter from Zara))

Shakira: We used to like the ones that would actually like gossip and be like ooh I love that teacher!=

Group: =Yeah=

Shakira: =But you only liked that teacher ‘cause they were more like the children

((laughter from group)).

SC: I suppose they were trying to relate to you=

Shakira: =Yeah

Zara: Sorry what is that? ((To (Lydia)))

Lydia: Oh it’s my housemates frozen vegetables ‘cause I hurt my knee I’m just using it for an ice pack

((laughter from group))

Zara: Oh! I’ve just been staring at it for ages trying to like=

Shakira: =Yeah!

((some laughter from group))

Lydia: Oh it’s carrots and swede, I don’t know what swede is.

Shakira: It’s not nice.

Amina: I thought it was carrots and sweet potato

Shakira: That would be a waste of sweet potato

((laughter from group))

(pause)

SC: So belonging was a major theme which emerged from the last group, you know those feelings of needing to belong to the school community=

Zara: =Yeah=

SC: =and your social groups. So I have an I-poem which emerged from that theme. ((Belonging poem read to group, see Appendix VII))

Amina: Aww that was nice. I say ‘like’ a lot!

((laughter from group))

Amina: But yeah, I feel like it still stands, yeah. And I did actually meet up with them since speaking to you lot, over Christmas, and it was nice because like, it was literally through a Facebook group chat, like we’re going to do a reunion over Christmas and we’re all gonna go out for a few drinks, but the girl who organised it basically invited all the girls to her house beforehand. So we all drinks at her house and it was just so weird like, cause we all went to different universities and a lot of them went like, well a group of girls all went to Exeter with they guys as well so it was kinda like our school clique had just stayed together but moved to Exeter. So erm it was nice for me to see them ‘cause I’m like so different from them now. But it was still nice to see them because they’re all like really different and they’re into completely different stuff, you know like doing different degrees but then it was still really nice to see them and just catch up you know. Like even I’m not really interested in you ((laughter from group)) it’s nice to know ((incoherent due to laughter)) got no shame ((laughs)) but it’s like people you’ve known for like 7 years of your life and I’ve seen you every day for so long, so it’s nice to know we can still say hello and have this like ‘friendship’.

(pause)

SC: I also wondered, you both ((looking at Amina and Zara)) said you had a sense of belonging to school and maybe there a time where that sort of broke down and you both talked about it in the way that you sort of changed or your interests changed. I wondered whether you also felt that your peers had changed?

Amina: You see I think, I don’t know about you ((to Zara)) I think I physically changed and they were still in the Solihull bubble. We call it the Solihull bubble. I reckon they stayed in the same bubble and the bubble just moved to the university they all went=

Zara: =I definitely agree=

Amina: =Yeah=

Zara: =‘cause when you say that bubble, do you mean being self-centred like going out within themselves?=

Amina: =Yeah=

Zara: =’Cause I was like the only Black girl in my year, in sixth form, so they were all into their different things so I couldn’t like link with them culture wise. So it was just so different. So when you say a group of them all went to one uni, for me that’s Nottingham=

Amina: =Yeah=

Zara: =And when I seem them, they all have different things they are into and I’m just like so different to them. So yeah.

Amina: Also, they did change in a way, by going to university anyway, your ideas do open up, so you do expand, so some of the stuff that back then, when I was in school with them, they would’ve been like – ooh that’s a bit weird, what you doing? Whereas now, they’re like – ooh that’s actually quite cool, you’re doing this – and their eyes have opened, they’re a bit wider now, but still, they’re still narrow. So they have changed, but just I feel that my change was more drastic and I was on this search for identity and I knew what I wanted. With them it was more like a natural progression, like this is what is gonna go on, because it had happened years and years before them and it’s just like a natural cycle.

(pause)

SC: It’s funny how you have a sense of you changing and then them kinda changing, but in the sense that they’re more accepting of difference=

Amina: =Yeah=

Lydia: =It’s through circumstances, they have a bit more awareness=

Amina: =Yeah=

Zara: =Not being so ignorant=

SC: =It’s funny how the things that make you different become positive=

Zara: =That’s so true.

(pause)

Amina: I do wanna say that it’s not the case for like everyone, I don’t want to feel like I’m generalising, ‘cause there were some individuals who were also different that were not in that stereotype. But I’m talking about the majority.

SC: As part of the process, listening to your experiences, I’ve been reflecting on my own school experiences and it’s funny how many of your experiences also mirror my own. Being in a very similar environment to you guys ((addressing Amina and Zara)) and I think like (Shakira) noted that she became friends with those seen as other – which was Asian pupils for you ((addressing Shakira)) I also befriended others who were seen as different or other. Do to, for example, they weren’t one of the rich ones, they grew up on the estate when the majority of the school was wealthy=

Zara: =Yeah!=

SC: =so it’s like if you feel othered, you look for others who are considered as other.

Zara: That is so true.

((murmurs and nods of agreement from the group))

Amina: I feel that once you are cast as an other, it sort of forces you to go even more other, like it’s like you=

Lydia: =You really wanna make the difference=

Amina: =Extreme! Yeah

((laughter from the group))

Amina: I’m not just gonna be different, I’m gonna be extra different!

((laughter from the group))

Amina: You’re gonna know!

Zara: It put me in that place like –I’m gonna make it show, you know. ((laughs))

SC: I guess you feel the need to claim an identity=

Zara: =Yeah=

SC: I guess one of my theories is that during adolescence particularly, you feel the need to find that strong identity=

Zara: =Mmm

SC: Last time (Amina) you talked about being able to relate to friends such as (Lydia’s) Instagram feeds more than other friends. I realised that I hadn’t clarified who you meant by other or what the difference was.

Amina: I think I was talking about is like there’s like Black Twitter and like Twitter. ((some laughter from Zara)) From that urban definition, on Black Twitter you will see things like memes and jokes and just like general situations that more Black people can relate to. Or just situations or things you will find more funny ‘cause you can relate to it. Rather than stuff like, for example, I dunno, someone whose erm into (pause) like Victoria Secret models or Barbie, you know ((smirks from group)), or something pink. Maybe like, if that’s your following then I’m not gonna relate to that and that’s not going to be on my feed or trending, because I’m going to be more in tune to what I’m into=

Zara: =like watching something like ‘Backchat London’ and something more urban=

Amina: =Like UK chat=

Zara: =Yeah.

(pause)

SC: (Shakira), you spoke about sharing morals and values with your Asian peers and not the majority. I was just wondering what these shared morals and values are and how they differed.

Shakira: Respect is a big one. So, erm just when you hear about how some like, say like for example how White friends talk to their parents, or like, erm yeah like when you hear about an argument with their parents and its like completely different to what ours would be like. And just like, a lot of our lives like revolve around family and that’s really important to us, whereas they’re more I don’t know=

Amina: =free=

Shakira: Yeah! They just sort of do what they want ((agree and not really think of things in terms of like a whole, sort of like a family, it’s more just like, yeah, individuals.

Amina: I think I agree with that but it’s ((laughs)) I know what you’re saying but=

Zara: =They don’t hold the same values as us

Amina: [Its like hard to explain=

Lydia: [Like their upbringing’s like completely different=

Amina: =Completely different=

Shakira: =Like even in just the sense of leaving your house, like they can come home or not come home. Huh? Do you think I could just not come home?!

Amina: What like without telling your parents?!

Shakira: Like in my family we kiss and hug each other, when you come in, when you leave, before you go to bed. Or like if someone comes to your house, you introduce them, like you say hi to the person whose house it is. Whereas I’ve been to like White friends’ houses before and they’re like- just come upstairs. I’m like – is your mum not in there? And theyre like- Oh yeah. I’m like- I’m just gonna go say hi to your mum- and they’re like oh no its fine! Its seems rude to me=

Group: =Yeah exactly!=

Lydia: =Yeah definitely with the other ethnicities, the majority of White people, I don’t think they have the same family vibes as we do. Like with Black people, we’re always talking about our cousin or our these other family members, but with them like they don’t really talk about their family members=

Zara: =No they don’t=

Lydia: =Or like they’re not close with them, as opposed to us.

Group: Mmm Yeah.

Lydia: I feel like that has a lot to do with their values and stuff because they’re like their always out with random, I don’t want to say like random people, like=

Zara: =Friends=

Lydia: = friends they’ve just met or something, whereas we’re like always out with [family

Zara: [family

Lydia: You have like more respect and things like that.

Amina: It’s true that. I feel like Asian people as well, they like stick together=

Zara: =Family orientated yeah.

(pause)

SC: Are there any other examples?

(pause)

Shakira: I don’t know.

Amina: I think like education as well. Like I noticed the school where I was from some of the White parents were really lax about education in comparison to the Black parents who really push education because they know the impact it’s going to have for their children, ‘cause a Black individual, you can’t, it’s hard for us to go far anyway, with an education behind us, it makes it a bit easier, because we don’t have that White privilege=

Zara: =Yeah=

Amina: =So education is like a bigger driver in our culture, our community, I feel like in comparison to them, because it’s almost like, they’re already ahead.

Shakira: = Also like money and the way that we value things. So like. I don’t know if it’s because of the school I went to but their parents would just like buy them cars and like it’d just be the most expensive makeup. Whereas me and my friends would sort of be a bit more=

Amina: =Bougie=

Shakira: =Well like=

Amina: =Had to hustle more=

Shakira: =Yeah!

((laughter and incoherent speech from group))

Shakira: It’s like my parents gave me money but they expected me to have a job and=

Amina: =Yeah= ((laughing))

Shakira: =Sort of make my own money

Lydia: You definitely value things more because you have to work for it, you have to get a job when you’re 16 and earn it yourself=

Group: =Yeah=

Lydia: =and like they just – “Can I get this master, or this car, or this” they just get anything they want. Whereas you have to work for it so you appreciate it more and you value it more.

Amina: Independency as well, I feel like a lot of Black females are independent not in the sense of like doing things but around the house as well, like a lot of us can cook earlier than White people, our peers erm like, cleaning like I dunno, certain values like home values, house value, that make us more independent earlier. Like money management, because we’ve had to struggle with money, maybe we have that advantage as well.

Shakira: I think it’s just really similar for like Black and Asian people like in that respect. Even like looking after your siblings, like I’ve not really had to do this because I’m the youngest, but I just think of other people’s experiences and my brother and sisters looking after me and stuff, like=

Zara: =Yeah=

Shakira: =I just see that more with like Black and Asian families. With White people it’s more like –Mum I’m going out and they’re like ok I’ll get a babysitter then. For us it’s like- You’re not going anywhere ‘cause your little brother’s sat right there ((laughter from group))

Zara: Yeah ((laughs)).

(pause)

SC: Another thing that stood out was ambition. Not only ambition to achieve for yourself, but also for others, for example your family. So I have an I-poem from that theme. ((Ambition I-poem read to group)).

((laughter from group and talking over each other about who said what))

Shakira: I knew that was me, about the wall

((laughter from group))

Amina: Was is it (Samara)?

SC: No, it was you (Lydia).

Lydia: It was me?!

((laughter from group))

Amina: It is hard to recognise yourself isn’t it?

Shakira: Yeah!

SC: I guess as sometimes it’s only using small statements of what people have said.

(pause)

SC: OK I’m going to read you the I poem about understanding of Blackness and Black history ((I poem read to group, see Appendix VIII)

Lydia: That just reminded me of that whole H&M thing ((referring to recent advertisement by H&M clothing store, publicly criticised for its racist connotations))

Zara: Oh! No, H&M

Lydia: Coolest monkey in the jungle!

Zara: Ugh!

SC: While we’re on the topic, what were your thoughts?

Zara: So stupid!

Shakira: I think it’s like the parents. Surely they knew what their child was doing. I mean like, it’s like a stereotype already, so I don’t know why you’d put you child in that position.

Zara: Mmm

Amina: But I like don’t think the parents knew=

Ezra: =No she knew! She reacted on a lot of the posts a=

Amina: =No but as the child was being photographed, was she in the room=

Ezra: =She said that she attends all hers sons’ things=

Amina: =Oh!=

Ezra: =And the thing is, I don’t know how it could pass through so many people, it’s like a big [company

Zara: [Yeah you know how much you have to do, yeah=

Ezra: =Like I’m pretty sure that when you pick out a hoodie, dress the child, put the picture on the internet. Like it probably goes through a lot of stages before it reaches the internet. So I don’t know how it could pass through so many people and they all said “OK yeah that’s fine. It’s good” For a young Black child dressed [in a hoodie that says

Zara: [See they must have had Black people checking it there as well.

Ezra: I just don’t get it. Like it baffles me. I feel like it was almost deliberate=

Zara: =What like got me the most was the reaction, some people didn’t see what was wrong=

Amina: =Hmm=

Zara: And ignorance in this case was not bliss=

Shakira: =Mmm=

Amina: =Hmm I think actually, when I first heard it I was joining the uproar like yeah that’s really bad, but when I had time to actually reflect on it, I don’t think it was actually that deep. I think it was the fact that it was a Black boy advertising it, but the hoodie itself, there was nothing wrong with the hoodie, it was actually kinda cute. Now I’ve, even like myself, I’ve seen little onesies that I’ve picked out for little nephews or family, of like a little monkey, ‘cause I think he would look cute in a cute little monkey, and I completely get that yeah that’s a stereotype and could be seen as racist, but I do feel like the hype was very big=

Zara: =Yeah it did go=

Amina: =It did jump from one direction to another. It was bad but then, I don’t know how to, I can’t justify it for them because they were obviously wrong and as a brand, you’re not gonna, why would you purposefully do something like that to tarnish your brand, like it doesn’t make sense. That why I felt like there must have been some genuine mistake=

Lydia: =It was also like the comparison as well, because it was like three hoodies=

Zara: =And just the Black boy=

Lydia: =the White boys was wearing the other two hoodies and one was saying, I don’t know, [something else (pause) and the only one that] said ‘monkey’ the only Black boy was wearing

Zara: [Didn’t it have like a ((incoherent)) in a swimming costume]

Lydia: So it was kinda like, was this purposeful=

Zara: =Yeah exactly, yeah=

Lydia: =But I also think that it was blown out of proportion=

Zara: =Yeah the slave trade in Libya wasn’t important any more=

Lydia: =Yeah=

Zara: =that was more of a thing=

Lydia: =And I do think like, I think it was South Africa, some people like trashed the store, I do think that was=

Amina: =[That was completely=

Zara: =[That was awful=

Lydia: =it was inappropriate and I feel like this is what they stereotype Black people to do like be involved in violence and stuff and you just gave them, like you fed the fire you did exactly what they expected you to do=

Shakira: =It’s ‘cause like the way that you respond to these things has a massive impact like that’s how they’ll remember it=

Amina: =Exactly!=

Shakira: =It’s like if they did it the right way, if people did feel that strongly about it, if they did it the right [way] I dunno, something better could have come of it.

Amina: [Mmm]

Lydia: [Exactly]

Zara: It was definitely hype though.

Lydia: Have you all seen these memes about Mo’Nique asking everyone to boycott Netflix?

((Laughter an chatter from group))

Amina: Why are they making memes about her though?

Lydia: So basically, the meme says “when Mo’Nique asks you to boycott Mc Donald’s and they show the boy eating ((laughter from group)) people are not gonna boycott Netflix, its what they use, people don’t use Sky no more ((laughs))

Zara: I do understand the message, it’s very important=

Lydia: =Yeah=

Zara: =But boycott Netflix is a bit of a jump.

((laughter from group))

Lydia: It was so funny, I was laughing at it because you can see the kid ((drowned out by laughter from group))

Zara: I really do like Mo’Nique but that was a stretch=

Amina: =What she saying, as you said, was actually really important=

Zara: =Yeah=

Amina: =It’s a valid point but you have to work with people step by step=

Lydia: =I feel like equality is an issue in itself, it’s not like new, or something like, we all know about inequality especially between Black people but to ask us to, I dunno ((laughter from group)) she did not get the response she was looking for! ((laughter from group))

SC: I wonder if adding that she wanted people to boycott Netflix actually tarnished the message she was trying to send=

Group: =Yeah=

Zara: =Because then more people made memes on it and nobody remembers the message.

Amina: =Exactly

SC: When really what she was trying to say is – “Its not right, I’m paid less”=

Lydia: =It’s kind of like=

Zara: =I mean why are they getting a million when she’s getting 500,000?

Amina: =Yeah she was paid like, between the two Black were getting [150,000

Zara: [But the one who did ‘Trainwreck’ she got 15 million=

Amina: =And (Amina) can’t even get £2 ((group laughs)) can’t even get paid ((speech drowned out by laughter from the group))

Zara: =15 million though, that’d be nice!

SC: Did anyone have any other comments on the first focus group?

(pause)

SC: I had another question, so last time, most of you said that you hadn’t really experienced racism=

Amina: =Well that has changed since the last time I saw you all, let me tell you. So two weeks ago, I just got back from Italy, where my boyfriend had the most awful experience there. It was horrible, very racist like. Racist is like an understatement. So I could say that until last week. To the point where me and my boyfriend were boarding, He lives in France, so I flew to Nice. And the first time I went to Nice, I though France was a bit racist because people would just stare at us, especially in the South of France, quite rich area. So if people see him, they think what is he doing here. I thought that was bad, but nothing like Italy. It was ridiculous. So as we were boarding the plane from Nice to Rome, everyone on our plane was staring at us, they were just watching us and we were the last ones to board the flight, and everyone else was already sitting down. And as we were walking down, the seat number was like 25 or 26, we were like right at the bottom, we had to walk through the plane, every single head looked up at us and were like staring and watching us, watching everything we were wearing. We were wearing quite nice clothes and I think they were like shocked like -Oh my God there’s Black people on the plane. I don’t think they expected to see Black people and they were literally just staring at us. But not a staring like- ooh what’s this? Like staring with disgust as well, and as we got of the flight, erm we had an altercation at the airport where my partner left to go get some money and someone whispered prostitute in my ear like=

Zara: =Yeah that’s like what my mum said=

Amina: =Really? Well that was literally like two minutes after we got there, like in this airport in Rome and we were just there like -what do I do? And I turned around and the guy ws just laughing and smiling, he found it hilarious, like I didn’t even know what to do, erm, obviously I didn’t really understand what he said, I just recognised the words “prostitute, prostitute”. And then that was it and he was gone. Then after that, as me and my partner were going towards the taxi, the taxi driver turned around to my boyfriend and said “Oh, so you’re a football player” And he was like -No. I’m not a football player, you’re just assuming because I’m tall and Black, no actually. Am I not capable of being a business man? Am I not capable of having a reputable job? So I have to play sports to be able to afford to go away on holiday? No that’s not the case. He didn’t say all this but we were talking about it after. So that was literally within the first hour of arriving in Rome and everywhere we went, everyone was staring at us, I was walking down the street, like just doing simple tourist stuff, like the coliseum and people were looking me up and down from my foot to the top of my head. And they’d be looking me in my face and I’d just have to smile at them, like what are you looking at, because what are you looking at? Like have you never seen a Black person before? But then, there were like Black people there, but they were like immigrants, like African immigrants trying to sell you things. You know like when you go on holiday and they like ((sounds of agreement from group)) sell to tourists and try and put stuff in your hand, like it’s a present, It’s a present and then 5 euros. ((sounds of agreement from group)). That’s the only, because they have such a negative perception of Black people they saw, they literally looked at us like we were just scum and then erm, basically there was one time when I spoke to my friend, I have a really good friend, she’s Ghanaian/Italian, and she’s like I thin she was raised in Ghana, maybe for a little bit, lived in Italy. And she recently moved to the UK because the racism she faced living in Italy was so brutal. And I’ve spoken to her and said “It’s my second day here and I’m literally ready to leave, like I’m hating it so much, because I don’t know how to deal with it. I’ve never experienced this kind of racism, ever before in my life. Like do you, is this the same for you? Is it just me? Like is it just Rome? And she said “(Amina) I’m really surprised you said that because Rome is supposed to be the most metropolitan area in Italy, so you shouldn’t feel it anywhere there, like it’s usually like North of Rome, like Milan and Venice,” I was like – that’s crazy because I feel uncomfortable just walking down the street. And she said “They all think that Black people either live in mud houses or they think the women are prostitutes, like if they’ve got nice clothes on and it’s just, I was saying to her how backwards this is, it’s so backwards. It’s 2018, we’ve had a Black president since then, we’ve had so many accomplishments of Black people and you’re still like trying to ((murmuring amongst group)), I mean how many? You need to wake up and see the light. I feel like it was a thing where my boyfriend felt uncomfortable as well because a lot of men were staring at me, but like in a sexual way, like they were looking at my bum as we were walking past and like in those type of situations, you can’t fight like every person who’s going to, you know, basically like disrespecting you. But then we’ve travelled all this way to see this beautiful city, I mean it was beautiful, like the architecture and everything is lovely, but then we feel like we can’t even go out for dinner in a restaurant because as soon as we walk through the door of the restaurant, every single head is looking at us. Or like there was a moment with my boyfriend in the taxi when we went back to the airport and he hadn’t taken cash out. So the taxi driver was like –oh Black people so they’re not gonna pay for the taxi. My boyfriend was like I’m just going to take cash out, from the cash point, relax. And there was so many negative perceptions, I felt like they were all just like on us. And it was just horrible, a really horrible experience, I really wouldn’t recommend anyone to go there. People have had different experience, like for some people it’s not as bad, but I didn’t like it and I’ve never experienced anything like that until going there, so I’m not in a rush to go back.

(pause)

SC: It sound quite shocking compared to you perceptions before and you’ve gone to a different country and feel differently=

Amina: =Exactly. And from what I’ve heard, it’s not just English people, like I didn’t realise how lucky we are in this country, like the English people we have, I’m not saying like they’re all really accepting, but the majority, I don’t really feel like they’re racist, racist, racist, Italian people were racist. Like if you have a dark colour of skin, they don’t like you. That’s how I was made to feel. So I feel like I’ve been very privileged living in this country and having my education in this country as I’ve never experienced anything of that extreme before. So I feel like we need to appreciate this country and the fact that, you know, we’ve had it quite easy growing up, in comparison to like my friend, because she was on the verge of suicide, she was depressed, didn’t want to go to school, bleaching, like all sorts of things to try an like, because she was so dark skinned. Now she’s come away from that and she’s fine. But it’s sad.

SC: Yeah, to feel like she has to change herself to fit in.

Amina: Yeah

(pause)

SC: Well does anyone have anything they’d like to add? (pause) Ok thanks again for all your time.

((Conversation around the focus group topics resumed once the tape recorder had been turned off))