



**University of
Sheffield**

Thesis Title

**An Autoethnographic study of the experiences of a university teacher's
academic journey and transition to Higher Education as compared to three
current students**

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Abstract

The Education Act of 1944 in the United Kingdom introduced secondary education from the age of eleven. However, it mainly benefitted children from middle-class backgrounds. This left children from working-class and ethnic minority families at a disadvantage, thus creating an unequal education system. Subsequent policies and reports, such as the 1965 Government Circular and the Plowden Report of 1967, aimed to address these inequalities. Yet, there was still inequality for the working-class and children from diverse backgrounds because these policies failed.

As a Black woman and an educational practitioner, in higher education, I have questioned how I managed to become a university teacher. This is because I see myself as a '*non-traditional*' student, who was an underachiever, left school early at sixteen but returned to education as a mature student. To understand my educational journey, I conducted an autoethnography study, which takes the reader on a personal journey from my childhood to my doctoral program at the University of Sheffield. I combined my autoethnography with semi-structured interviews with three postgraduate students to explore their educational experiences in the UK. I was guided by three research questions: *1: How do postgraduate students view their educational journey in relation to their social background and becoming a part of the academic community? 2: How have students incorporated academic literacies into their studies? What support, if any, did they receive to achieve academic success? 'How did I transition from a school pupil to a university student and become a university teacher? What challenges did I encounter along the way?* This study gives an historical account of our educational experiences which spans from the 1960s to 2000s. I use a reflexive thematic analysis (RTA) process to analyse both my autoethnography and the semi-structured interviews. Through the process of RTA four themes were identified: Social Class and Family Background; Academic Literacies; A feeling of Insecurity and Confidence Knockback. Employing critical race theory (CRT), intersectionality, and Bourdieu's concepts, I found that inequalities significantly influenced our educational trajectories.

Key words: Black women, Black middle-class, Critical Race theory (CRT), Intersectionality, Bourdieu, social class, inequality

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Declaration

I, the author, Olivene Angela Aldridge-Tucker, confirm that the Thesis is my own work. I am aware of the University's Guidance on the Use of Unfair Means (www.sheffield.ac.uk/ssid/unfair-means). This work has not been previously been presented for an award at this, or any other, university.

CHAPTER ONE

Introduction

1.1: Background and rationale for this study

I have worked as an English language Tutor at a university since 2014. As an English Language Tutor, I give academic support to undergraduate and postgraduate students. This support includes teaching both home and international students to understand the difference between formal and informal writing, helping them to use academic language in their writing and presentation skills. While the support I give is for all students, my classes would mostly have international students.

My journey to becoming an English Language Tutor has not been easy and I view myself as being a '*non-traditional*' learner. I questioned why the support I gave as an English Language Tutor would often only include international students in my class. This brought back memories to how I studied for my first degree, e.g. without having academic support. It also brought back memories of my school days and thoughts about how I was educated in a British educational system.

This thesis uses an autoethnographic platform and semi-structured interviews. First, by taking an autoethnography approach, I inform the reader of my journey from school to university, both as a student and a teacher. To enable readers to have a deeper understanding of my experiences, I also take a reflexivity approach and employ analytical and evocative means. Being a Black female adds to the challenges and obstacles that I faced in school, work, and university, and, therefore, telling my story, I hope to add to the reader's imagination of what it was like growing up in Britain at a time when there was a lot of uncertainty and confusion about the national educational system in a multiracial society. This study found that there are many negative issues that had an effect on ethnic minorities, such as me, over several decades. Second, using semi-structured interviews allowed me to gather an insight about how the Indigenous population in Britain were educated. It is hoped that by conducting this research for my Doctorate in Education readers will understand how my journey to becoming an English Language Tutor has been challenging.

As mentioned above, my experience as an English Language Tutor at university has not seen a high level of commitment from home students in comparison to international students accessing academic support. This notion of home students not accessing academic support led me to think about my own educational journey and the struggles I had as a pupil at school to become a doctoral student. So, it was this idea that led me to question my trajectory of becoming the professional I am today.

1.2: Terminologies used to describe diverse groups in the UK

During my research for literature and educational policies between the 1960s and 1980s, I was reminded of the different terminologies that were used to describe those from a diverse cultural background. It was confusing and very complex (Gillborn, 1990). Sometimes it was upsetting trying to make sense of the terms used in the literature that was used about someone like me. In a way, my identity was challenged. As I recall, I remember some of the terms used as a child, but I was not aware at the time of the connotations behind them. Some of the terms I present below are no longer in use because of their discriminatory and colonial connotations. However, as this study looks back into my educational journey between the 1960s and 1970s, the terminologies used in the literature I read were difficult to ignore. I include some of these terms to enable me to understand how those of other ethnic backgrounds were perceived by those in authority in the educational system. It will also give the reader a deeper understanding of how people from other ethnic backgrounds were described in comparison to their White counterparts. I include quotations from scholars in the past, therefore some of the terms mentioned below are used in this thesis.

It is a common factor that as time moves on through the centuries - years, our language changes with those times. The post-war years saw Britain experience a large influx of people from many different countries. For instance, during the 1950s through to the 1970s many people, known as the Windrush Generation, came from the Caribbean islands to live and work in the United Kingdom. In relation to the large influx of immigrants who came to the UK, in particular the West Indies, Jamaica, it can be said today that the language used to describe these groups of people was often derogatory. But the language used during the 1960s and 1970s was the language of the times (Tomlinson, 2008a) and as Tomlinson (2008a) states, "*it was language of the decade*" (p. 43). Terms such as West Indian, Asian, immigrant, New Commonwealth; other terms such as racial minorities, racial disadvantage or discrimination were used in different government publications, and some saw this as "*political labels*" (p. 68). Tomlinson (2008a) reports that in the 1970s the younger generation of ethnic minorities began to adopt the term '*Black*' but the older generation of the Asian community disputed this. They saw the term as parallel with racial discrimination and colour-discrimination which "*obscures the cultural antipathy to Asians and therefore of the character of the discrimination they suffer*" (Modood, 1994, p. 859). By using the term Black for all ethnic groups, indicated that all ethnic minorities had something in common thereby ignoring the different cultural values. The Asian community believed that it was no more than a political stance and therefore the term Black was seen as a "*political label*" (Modood, 1994, p. 859; Modood, 2020).

To help combat discrimination because of the colour of one's skin the Commission for Racial Equality (CRE) "*adopted the practice of distinguishing between black and white groups with further sub-divisions in terms of regional origins, for example, Afro-Caribbean, Asian, European*" (Gillborn, 1990, p. 5). In addition, the term Black was often used to refer to people from the "British West Indies and the Indian subcontinent who faced oppression on the common grounds of race. As mentioned above, Black can refer to someone of African/African-Caribbean descent" (Warmington, 2014, p. 5 as cited in Dumangane, 2017, p. 897). In this

study I refer to myself as a Black female, but I do so as a simple way to write about myself for this thesis and not to make political statements.

1.2.1: Afro-Caribbean

There are other terms that I came across whilst searching for literature. Terms such as Afro-Caribbean – which refers to both parents of an individual whose ethnicity is African and/or Caribbean and the term ‘*coloured people*’. I have refrained from using ‘*coloured people*’ as I found it personally discriminatory. This term was used to describe people from Black backgrounds, especially from the Caribbean, after the post-war years. When researching literature, I came across a book aimed at White teachers entitled ‘Education of Coloured Immigrants’ by Gordon Bowker. Bowker (1968) gives a descriptive analysis of the cultural background of Black children from the Caribbean and how they should be taught as he viewed Black children as difficult to handle. Bowker (1968) uses the term ‘*coloured people*’ extensively in this book. Reading the book, it is understandable how teachers, during the 1950s and 1960s, perceived children from other backgrounds. Although there were other ethnicities attending the same school, this book extensively discusses how West Indian, in particular Jamaican children should be treated in schools. However, to reiterate Tomlinson's (2008a) statement, language such as ‘*coloured people*’ was the language used at that time. This term is no longer used today as it is classed as a racist adjective, both politically and socially, but in this study the term ‘Afro-Caribbean’ is used partly because it is a term that many use today, and it is also used in this study when quoting or referencing from other scholars.

1.2.2: West Indian - Jamaican

I have used the adjective Jamaican because I have discussed my background and educational school experiences and besides, this is my ethnicity. During the 1960s and 1970s it was used to describe children in schools. Lastly, reading literature dated during the 1960s and 1970s, it was common to use the term West Indian. I have used this term in this study because I have referred to direct quotes to enable the reader to have a clear understanding of the context in which it was used. However, the connotation of this term is a reminder of being a colony of Britain and it is very rare to hear this term used today in the UK (Gillborn, 1990, pp. 5-6). One might argue this is partly because I was born here and so I see myself as a Black British female of Caribbean origin and I would not refer to myself as a West Indian.

1.2.3: Ethnic Minority

From the 1970s, as academics began to research terminologies used to describe people from different ethnic backgrounds, the terms minority or ethnic minority were/are used widely (Tomlinson, 2008a). While I may use the term ethnic minority it is fair to say that this term was contested during the 1970s/1980s as it has been argued that the term was roughly defined and coined. For instance, Giles (1977) conducted a study investigating the experiences of West Indian children in schools in London. Part of his remit was to find the percentage number of children who were from a working-class or West Indian background and if teachers were experiencing problems in teaching these two groups of children. His findings highlighted the inconsistencies made between schools and teaching staff in defining the terms ‘working-class’

and West Indian'. This resonates when Jeffcoate (1984) and Gillborn (1990) also state that there was no defining definition of ethnic minority which created problems. For example, Giles' (1977) stated "*when children were considered to be in one of these categories, most Heads admitted that many members of their staff*" (p. 6) tended to treat these two groups differently in comparison to their White counterparts who were part of middle-class society. There were heads and teachers who were comfortable in using these terms, even though the two groups of children were treated less fairly. However, it is fair to add that he states there were some heads of schools and teachers who found these terms as stereotypical and therefore objected to using them.

Jeffcoate (1984) claims that there are three elements to the ethnic minority terminology: "*relative powerlessness, relative smallness, and cultural differences*" (p. 8 - 9) meaning that different communities such as the Irish, Italians or the Jewish communities who have lived in Britain since and before the 1950s have in common the suffering of discrimination while at the same time have in common being powerless to fight against government. Thereby, the common factor between all ethnic groups is the powerlessness and the smallness is the cultural background. Therefore, it is not just those from the Caribbean who suffer from discrimination. Gillborn (1990) supports Jeffcoate's (1984) statement by reiterating that the Irish have long been established citizens in Britain for many decades, but they too have suffered from discrimination. Ethnic minority means to me a group of people who have the same cultural values who are outnumbered by the Indigenous population of that country. I have, therefore, used this term several times in this study. I also use 'Black' several times in this study. Black "*refers to people having origins in any of the Black race groups of Africa*" (Garner, 2009, p. 95). So, to reiterate, throughout this study I refer to myself as a Black woman because I find it easier that way to describe myself.

1.2.4: The elites, middle-class and working classes

For centuries Britain has grouped its population into different social classes putting them into categories that reflect the level of access towards money, resources such as housing, health, and education (Savage, 2015). Taking the latter into account, education has been one of those life resources that was placed within a certain category of affordability. As a member of British society and based upon your economic status, you were either an elite or middle-class who could afford a good education (Aronowitz & Roberts, 2018), or a working-class person who was often given unfair treatment when it came to education (Johnson, 2006). Because the participants in this study refer to themselves as being a middle or working-class individual these terms are used throughout this study. And in relation to this study about my educational trajectory and that of others, I define being an elite or middle-class person as meaning that you had more privileges, for example, when it came to accessing a good education more than a working-class person. So, throughout this study, I use the working-class term when referring to past histories of education and about myself. There is no intention of calling anyone, unless they specifically state, as they do in this study, that they are a working-class person or from a working-class background (Archer, 2003).

1.3: Situating the Context: secondary education - comprehensive schools

To help me as a researcher and to tell my story of how I transitioned from school to higher education and becoming a university teacher I must give the context to which this study draws upon. I give a brief historical account of how comprehensive schools began and who had access to higher education. By giving the reader some context of how I was educated, it allows the reader to imagine what school life was like for me, and ethnic minorities in general. I begin by describing the school age for starting and leaving school; the situation of comprehensive schools during the 1960s to the late 1970s to when I left school.

1.3.1: Selecting, streaming, and banding leading to qualifications

I started school when I was five years old. After the introduction of the 1944 Education Act, this was the starting age for children in the United Kingdom during the 1950s and 1960s. By the time I left school, the school leaving age had risen from 15 to 16 years old. As will be discussed in Chapter two, most children going to secondary comprehensive schools were given an IQ test. Some children took the 11-plus grammar test. Comprehensive schools during the 1960s and 1970s were developing, but there were difficulties reforming as not all local authorities wanted to change from the tripartite system. The tripartite system is further discussed in Chapter two.

The difficulties of reforming grammar schools included issues around qualifications. School children were pre-selected into class groups from primary schools before they started comprehensive schools. Some schools were still using the 11-Plus system, even though the 11-Plus system was supposed to be phased out. Teachers did not make their own evaluation of a child's ability, instead, teachers in comprehensive schools had made assumptions based on the label they were given by teachers from a child's primary school (Ball, 1981; Milner, 1983). Once in secondary school, children were then put into a banding system based on their pre-selected ability. In most schools, there were three bands of ability, Band 1- where children were deemed to be at an academic level and classed as being 'intelligent' and would further advance into university; students in the Band 2 category were seen as 'deviant' not academic enough to teach in a band one class (Ball, 1981). These assumptions are better described as stereotypical because the teacher had already had the notion that Band 2 children were not intelligent like their Band 1 opponents. If you were in Band 3 there were more negative connotations, as such these groups of students were seen to have "*low ability, were maladjusted, anti-school, emotionally unstable and ...a waste of time*" (Ball, 1981, p. 39). The relevance I am making here is that at the start of my secondary educational journey, I was already categorised as potentially being a failure and therefore would not achieve academically. In addition to the 'banding' system, in some schools, research during the early 1970s and 1980s suggests that most comprehensive schools had mixed ability classes (Benn, 1979, p. 200). The consequence of this was that it influenced a pupil's social development if you were grouped as a band 2 or 3 children (Ball, 1981). However, in one study based on Beachside Comprehensive during the 1970s, it was reported that having a mixed ability system enforced better discipline and work ethos among pupils who were in bands 2 and 3 (Ball, 1981).

The qualifications during the 1960s to the early 1980s consisted of the General Certificate in Education (GCE); Ordinary Level (O Level) and the Certificate of Secondary Education (CSE). You also had the Advanced Level (A Levels) for students who were able to succeed to the sixth form. Students who could work towards the Advanced Level (A Levels) in the sixth form, were classed as taking the academic route (Ball, 1981).

While grammar schools were slowly being phased out to become comprehensive schools, there were issues surrounding the qualifications stated above. For instance, GCE, O Levels were seen as good quality courses, usually for middle-class students – those who attended grammar schools (Ball, 1981). However, as schools became comprehensive it was only a matter of time before schools had to equip all children to be able to work towards gaining a GCE qualification and enable all children to take CSE examinations. This meant that schools were increasingly working towards equality for all children from all social class backgrounds to work towards the same examinations (Benn, 1979). If schools operated the band system, it meant that there were children who were not able to take GCE qualifications. In addition, if you were in band 2 or 3 children took the CSE qualifications. Having mixed ability classes meant that there were more children who were able to study for qualifications that only those who attended grammar schools or who were in the band one category could take. But many children were excluded from taking them because of the selected system. Those who failed their examinations or achieved a grade one GCE were able to continue into the sixth form to retake them; some pupils left to look for work; some went to evening school to gain the qualifications that they failed (Deem, 1981). I fit into the latter category as I did not achieve the right grades in my CSE examinations. I was asked to leave the sixth form and go to college to try and gain other qualifications that would help me to employment.

1.3.2: Afro-Caribbeans underachievement

Factual evidence shows that between the 1960s – 1980s children of Afro-Caribbean heritage were underachievers in education. Subsequently, governments commissioned enquiries to investigate the reasons for underachievement amongst ethnic minority groups. One of those enquiries was the Anthony Rampton Report: *West Indian Children in Our Schools*, by the Secretary of Education and Science in 1981. The Committee focused on “*the need for an inquiry*” into underachievement but the Committee “*felt that it should be concerned with the needs of children from all ethnic minority groups with priority being given to children of West Indian origin*” (Rampton, 1981, p. 1). It is surmised that the reason for the focus on West Indian children was because at that time 3% of West Indian pupils achieved five or more O Levels in comparison to their Asian counterparts who achieved 18% and 16% for other groups (p. 1).

Four years later in 1985 Lord Swann published a report that advocated ‘*Education for All*’. In comparison to the Rampton Report, Lord Swann emphasised the need for *All Children* to be educated equally and not how to educate children of ethnic backgrounds as discussed by Bowker in 1968. In this report, one of the main findings was that “*behaviour and attitudes*” (p. 767) towards the teaching of children of ethnic backgrounds needed “*to change throughout Britain*”. Lord Swann also concluded that schools were not expected to take the full charge of

this change but should take a leading role (Swann, 1985). As mentioned above, unlike the Rampton Report, whose focus was on the West Indian child, the main emphasis of the Swann Report (1985) was on educating everyone as the government had recognised that Britain was a multiracial society.

Both Rampton (1981) and Swann (1985) used data from a School Leavers Survey, conducted by the Department of Education and Science (DES). The survey found that West Indian children did far worse than their White counterparts, whereas Asian children did as well as White children except in the English subject (Chan, 2008). The survey stated that the average IQ scores between West Indian and other ethnic groups were partly because of socio-economic status (Chan, 2008). Coming from a low socio-economic status, i.e. working-class background and being Black, came with it prejudice and discrimination in the educational system. Both reports concluded that racism played a part in West Indian children being underachievers (Gill & Blair, 1991; Ratcliffe, 2004; Solomos et al., 2010).

1.4: Situating the context of university education

Simultaneously, universities were also included in the Education Act (1944). It was noted that universities needed to make changes to enable more students to have access to higher education including allowing more female students. As with most schools during the last century, universities were made for the elitists, for example, many politicians, and judges were educated at Oxford or Cambridge (Savage, 2015) Those who could afford to send their children could attend leaving the working-class population unable to improve on their educational ability and thus prevented from occupations that would require a more advanced level of knowledge such as working in service industries. Only if a working-class child was deemed as 'successful' would they be able to access higher education (Chitty, 2014).

Although there was slow progress to incorporate changes suggested by the Education Act (1944) the 1950s saw more universities being built. In 1964 the Ministry of Education published a report on the future of higher education ((Robbins, 1963). The Committee investigated the number of young people attending university. Their findings concluded that there was a low number of students attending universities and of those low numbers, students were from the elitists who were educated in a grammar or public school. It also concluded that more universities should be built to cater for the expansion of the birth rate and to cater for the reorganisation of comprehensive schools as more children from all backgrounds were being educated (Chitty, 2014). Another reason for expanding higher education was because of the "*trend for increasing numbers of students to stay on at school beyond*" the school leaving age (Chitty, 2014, p. 199). The realisation amongst politicians was that a more well-educated population was needed for service industries professions.

The Robbins Report (1963) estimated that there would be an increase in the numbers of students of both home and international, requiring university places (Chitty, 2014, p. 201). As such, the Robbins Report (1963) predicted that there would be a large influx of students from 216,000 in 1962 – 63 to 558,000 in 1980-1981 and suggested building even more universities to cater for those numbers.

Between 1964 and 1970 there was the 'binary policy' for higher education. The policy was created by the labour government to help with the uprising of students attending university. This policy divided higher education into two parts. The first part 'autonomous' which consisted of old and new universities and colleges of advanced technology and the second 'public', which meant that higher education would be under the control of local authorities and included technical colleges and teacher training colleges. This sector was later known as colleges of education (Chitty, 2014).

There were criticisms of the binary policy because critics saw that the policy perpetuated "*the elitist and hierarchical system falling far short of the undifferentiated comprehensive system of higher education...*" (p. 202). Universities, for example, which were known as polytechnics, and other technical organisations were accused of progressing in the same way as grammar schools moving into comprehensive institutions (Chitty, 2014).

By the latter years of the 1960s and early 1970s, universities were under extreme pressure to justify their purposes as Ashby (1979) noted "... *their functions have been defined traditionally in terms that are self-justifying, superior to public criticism and divorced from social need*" (p. 304). In addition, many questioned the philosophy of university education, as the ethos for such privilege to be educated at a higher level was based on the notions of "*impartiality, knowledge, excellence and scholarship*" (p. 304). Based on these concepts and ideas, and as mentioned previously, most of the population were excluded and only those from an elite group of society were able to attend university. Nevertheless, there were changes made by governments to ensure that it was made possible for all to access further and higher education. While these changes were made welcome by many, especially the working-class communities, children from ethnic minorities were still at a disadvantage. I will refer to the issue of being Black and disadvantaged in my literature review as this is important to discuss my transition from school to university.

The reader may note that the policies discussed so far are ones that occurred during the middle part of the last century from 1944 to the early 1970s. I have cited the policies above because when those policies were created, I was at school, and they are the ones that affected me the most as a Black child of Caribbean heritage.

1.4.1: Afro-Caribbeans progressing to university

There is a hidden history of how Afro-Caribbean children were educated. For example, it is not a subject that is often talked about but when the topic does emerge it is usually about the negative aspects of education for ethnic minority children. For instance, there are several research studies of academic underachievement among Afro-Caribbean pupils in the UK, but studies have concentrated on boys. There are some studies that report on the successes of Afro-Caribbeans going on to further and higher education and thus becoming undergraduate and postgraduate students (Rhamie & Hallam, 2002) but these are few (Dumangane, 2017).

In the early 1970s, Open University was created by the Wilson government. Open University enabled students over twenty-one to study degree courses on a part-time basis. However, not

everyone saw this as an achievement in giving others an opportunity to study at a higher level. In October 1983, Richard Hoggart, a Warden of Goldsmiths College in south-east London reported to the Times Higher Education Supplement:

that the socially privileged character of higher education had hardly been challenged over the previous 20 years” and the working-class people have been left almost untouched (Chitty, 2014, p. 204).

A few weeks later and again in the Times Higher Education Supplement an article by Gareth Williams from the Institute of Education in London claimed that research conducted demonstrated that:

the relative position of working-class and middle-class participation in higher education had hardly changed between 1960 and the end of the 1970s (Chitty, 2014, p. 204).

These reports suggested that although there were many policies set out to make changes for the working-class population, these groups of people were still disadvantaged. And while these policies were meant for everyone, to be equally educated and have equal access, there were still issues if you were from a minority background (Giles, 1977; Grosvenor, 1997; Tomlinson, 2008a).

In addition to Open University, from the late 1970s onwards to the present, through various schemes and different routes, students from all walks of life have been able to enter and study at universities. For example, ‘widening participation’ schemes have enabled home students to attend university. As reported by Moore (2013, p. ii); to qualify for such a scheme, students were able to access courses if they were:

- “People from lower socio-economic groups
- Mature students
- Part-time learners
- Learners from ethnic minority groups
- Vocational and work-based learners
- Disabled learners
- Care leavers”.

Therefore, fitting into one or more of the categories listed above enabled students to attend university and achieve success. This is a far contrast with that of the 1950s to the 1970s and it is also an indicator of governments trying to understand and include the working-class population, as well as inclusion from diverse communities thus promoting cultural diversity in the UK into higher education (Busher et al., 2014; Lillis et al., 2015). Hence, making it possible for all to be educated at a higher level. As mentioned above, it is possible that I fitted into one of these schemes because my degree course I attended was one of its kind and was not repeated another year after I graduated in 1993.

Another example of enabling others to attend university was promoted by governments during the 1980s. These programmes were labelled as 'positive action' programmes such as 'Access Courses' for ethnic minorities (Wilkinson, 1997). Students who attended these courses during the 1980s were students who had literacy and maths skills deficiencies for example and wanted to have a second chance at gaining these basic qualifications (Dillon, 2011). By attending and completing an 'Access' course allowed students to go onto further and higher education or onto study professions such as social work.

1.5: Stating my purpose for the study

The above section is a brief historical account about the history of comprehensive schools, and the opportunities that became available for the UK population to access higher education. Giving a brief account helps to give the reader an insight into how my trajectory was mapped from secondary school to university life as a student and a teacher. Moreover, my discussion on the history of comprehensive schools gives a brief account of how ethnic minorities in the UK were schooled, and about some of the challenges that I faced as an ethnic minority child.

As stated previously, this is my autoethnography of my journey from being a child at secondary school to becoming a teacher at a northern city university. My thesis is written in the first person as the flexibility of autoethnography allows me to refer to myself using 'I' and to use reflexivity when discussing and reflecting on the challenges that I encountered during my educational journey and the writing of this thesis.

Academia is a different world and a world that requires you to conform to the rules that have been set for many years. It requires you to change your persona and as such your identity is different to the identity with which you began. To reiterate, the main purpose of this study is to explore how I transitioned from being educated in a '*non-traditional*' way to becoming a university teacher as I experienced many obstacles along the way. Some of these obstacles and challenges I did not foresee, nor did I understand until now what they were and or of their effects. What has emerged from this study is the fact that "*black and white school children experience schooling differently*" (Wright, 1992). For me, these experiences also relate to work. In addition to my own journey, I interviewed three other students, who are my White counterparts as postgraduate students, to find out their perspectives on becoming a member of academia and to find out if they had any challenges during their school life.

1.6: Additional discovery

My doctoral journey has led me to discover many other issues relating to how I was educated. It has led me to discover truths about how people of ethnic minorities were perceived, treated, and educated in the UK education system. A system that was prejudicial and which has lasted for decades, and some might say it is still going on even today as Gillborn et al. (2017) reports in their study about the Black and White achievement gap (Giles, 1977; Gillborn, 1990; Jeffcoate, 1984; and Tomlinson, 2008a). There were always issues and debates about different policies about education by government parties during the time I was at school. There was slow progress to make changes because the governing parties could not properly agree on policies that they created, and which influenced how children of ethnic minorities were taught.

I found that there is very little positive research or literature about how ethnic minorities, especially Black girls, were educated. In contrast, there is a considerable amount of literature regarding Black boys of Afro-Caribbean heritage. But this research often portrays Afro-Caribbean boys in a negative and stereotypical manner. This is a constant reminder of how as a Black child of ethnic origin I was treated at school. This is another reason for my motivation and rationale to conduct this study so that I can, hopefully, contribute to educational literature, for others to read, and enable others to explore their own educational trajectories.

Thinking about my educational experience and comparing it with that of others has helped me to shape my study into researching how I transitioned from school to higher education and becoming a university practitioner. I do, however, question why I was not able to gain the necessary qualifications needed to be an academic student during my school days. There were schemes by the central government that enabled people like me to gain access to further and higher education, and as mentioned above, one such scheme was 'widening participation'. This was available to many if you came under a certain category in society. Looking back into my history, I concluded that I must have accessed one of those opportunities as I was able to study for a full-degree part-time.

To help me discuss my educational trajectory, I discussed in my own narrative how challenging it was to be a part of an academic community because of my background, and the fact that I was a Black woman with young children and working full-time. There was no support to help me to do this. It is fair to say there are those who class themselves as working-class, who had similar issues of trying to fit into the academic community, especially if they needed financial and family support.

1.7: Becoming part of the elite group: the academic community and understanding academic literacies

As well as having to contend with being a Black working-class woman there is also the challenge of being a member of an academic community. This has meant learning how to speak and write in an academic style. For example, Ivanič (1998) states that '*literacy practices are particularly relevant to the study of identity in academic writing*' (p. 65). For example, starting university as a mature student I experienced issues surrounding my identity because I wanted to fit in. I class myself as a working-class person, a '*non-traditional*' student who started university late. While this study does not focus on academic writing, it is an important aspect to mention as academic writing is a part of development into an academic community. Academic writing also resonates with the participants in this study as they discuss their ability to make themselves clear when writing an academic paper for publishing. As I develop and progress throughout my studies, my writing has also become an important challenge to become a full member of the academic community. Thus, academic literacy has enabled me to change my identity in making myself clear to others when giving my own views on different topics.

1.8: Aim and research questions

I stated above that the aim of this study is to explore mine and others' educational trajectories through an autoethnographic platform. To help guide me through the autoethnography process and to answer questions regarding issues surrounding my education, I use the following research questions as a guide, as well as to seek answers:

1. How do postgraduate students view their educational journey in relation to their social background and become a part of the academic community?
2. How have students incorporated academic literacies into their studies? What support, if any, did they receive to achieve academic success?
3. How did I transition from a school pupil to college/university student and become a university teacher? What challenges did I encounter along the way?

In addition to answering my research question(s) through autoethnography, I have drawn on my memories of my school, home-life, and work experience as part of my qualitative data collection (See Appendix 18). This includes secondary school reports, college work, self-written interview notes, and reflective analysis. Alongside my personal data, semi-structured interviews were conducted with three postgraduate students. Reflexive Thematic Analysis (RTA) was used to identify key similarities between my data and participant data, while simultaneously offering reflective insights into the challenges I faced.

1.9: Thesis Structure

This thesis has been organised into nine chapters. After giving background information and relevant terminologies used in this study in Chapter 1, I follow this by discussing the literature in Chapter 2. The literature mentioned in Chapter 2 developed from the reflexive thematic analysis process (RTA). For example, Critical Race Theory, Intersectionality and Bourdieu's work are critical theories that developed after analysing my own data. This is a 'bottom-up' approach as highlighted by Braun and Clarke (2022) who advocate that theory can be developed after the coding and theming process of analysis. I explain in Chapter 2 how Critical Race Theory (CRT) and Intersectionality were first coined and the relationship they have to this study, for example, CRT is used to explain how educational policies during my secondary school days were seen as normal yet to others can be viewed as discriminatory. I use intersectionality because as I have analysed my own data, I realise that my identity as a Black female woman from a working-class background has influenced my education. In addition, I discuss Bourdieu et al. (1977) concepts of *habitus*, *cultural capital* and *symbolic violence* and *field* because these concepts resonate with myself and the participants in this study who are all Caucasian. Connecting Bourdieu's work, I discuss our class status and the link to cultural capital in the field of education.

In Chapter 3, I discuss my ontological and epistemological positions labelling myself as a 'interpretivist' researcher. I justify my choice of methods that I employed to gather data and

the reason for using reflexive thematic analysis. I also discuss the ethical implications of this study i.e. relational ethics for my own narrative and ethical procedures and considerations for the participants in this study. Chapter 4 discusses the process of collecting my own data and that of the participants and how I created codes and themes. It was important to give a full reflexive account of how I analyse the data, and so in Chapter 5 this is discussed with added visuals demonstrating the process I took.

Participant bio-data is provided, followed by the presentation of themes, the analysis of semi-structured interviews, and my own data in Chapters 6 and 7, respectively. My own analysis has tried to give the reader an analytical and evocative perspective including related literature, i.e. critical race theory (CRT), intersectionality and Bourdieu's concepts. Bringing these two types of data analysis together, in Chapter 8, I make comparisons between myself and the participants including literature that resonates with my data. In Chapter 9, I discuss the conclusions to each of the research questions and then follow this with contribution to knowledge, implication and recommendations for future research in the field of Education. Finally, I end this thesis with a personal reflection.

CHAPTER TWO

Literature Review

2.1: Introduction: Overview

In Chapter one, I explained how I was inspired to conduct this study by reflecting on my childhood educational experiences and comparing them with three postgraduate students who took part in this study. Reflecting on the past made me question my educational trajectories and led me to ask the following three research questions:

1. How do postgraduate students view their educational journey in relation to their social background and become a part of the academic community?
2. How have students incorporated academic literacies into their studies? What support, if any, did they receive to achieve academic success?
3. How did I transition from a school pupil to a university student and become a university teacher? What challenges did I encounter along the way?

In this chapter, I present literature that is significant and relevant in helping me answer my research questions stated above. The literature discussed below was developed after analysing the data through the reflexive thematic analysis (RTA) process. RTA is best carried out before employing theory because RTA is a process that helps the researcher to develop themes and connect theory from interview data (Braun & Clarke, 2022). Therefore, as I analysed my data and created themes, the themes that developed allowed me to connect them with different theories such as critical race theory (CRT) and intersectionality. To make this clearer, *“the analysis of the data was conducted using an inductive “bottom-up” approach in which I did not attempt to fit the data into existing theory”* this was carried out in reverse (Braun & Clarke, 2022, p. 122). Also known as an iterative process (going to and fro into the data) RTA helps to strengthen the validity and relevance of the final research findings in Chapter eight and thus enhances the overall quality of the study.

This chapter is divided into four sections. The first part of this review details how I researched literature and the issues I encountered. Second, I give a historical review of the policies that were put in place for all children to have the right for an education. I also discuss how these policies affected children of diverse backgrounds. In the third section of this literature review, I discuss the relevant theories and concepts that are related to this study. I refer to Critical Race Theory (CRT) which is used to analytically discuss and connect the literature to my findings; in support of CRT, I draw upon intersectionality. This is another theory, which developed from the analysis of the data; therefore, I draw upon intersectionality as a framework to connect my identity over different layers of oppression such as my race, gender, and social class. Another theory that developed through the RTA process was Pierre Bourdieu. Bourdieu's notion of

'cultural capital - symbolic violence' highlights the inequalities in education that exist between social classes. This theory helped me to understand and have a sense of how the working class, and those of ethnic origins fit into the British world of education (Bourdieu, 1986; Bourdieu et al., 1977). Furthermore, this concept fits into this study because as a Black woman, who experienced inequality during my educational trajectory, I connect my past to the present, and with the participants of this study who view themselves as White middle and working-class. In the final part of this literature review, I link literature and discuss the four main themes created from the data using an iterative process of RTA. These main themes are: Social Class and Family Background; Academic Literacies; Returning to Studying, and A Feeling of Insecurity Confidence Knockback. In relation to these four themes, I include discussions about the impact these four themes had for ethnic minorities. First, the following section gives an overview of how I located literature for this study.

2.2: Locating literature

I think it is important to discuss how I located literature for this study because as a novice researcher it was difficult to find sources that provided me with the right information to support my opinion and personal lived experiences as a Black woman teaching in higher education.

It is understandable that if I am researching educational policies then I would have to go back many years to find original Acts and policies for education. My research took me to the Education Act (1944), which still has an impact on education today. From researching and understanding the 1944 Education Act, I began to increase my knowledge of the different policies that came after it, leading me into the 1960s, 70s and the early 1980s. As discussed in Chapter one, some of the policies that I encountered were centred around Black children underachieving at school. There were, at the time of writing this thesis, very few studies that centred on Black children achieving (Dumangane, 2017).

My process of finding the right literature involved using search engines such as Google Scholar that can be linked to a university's library search page. I used keywords *such as 'ethnic minority; the UK education system; or Black girls in British schools in the 1970s'*. I reviewed reference lists in articles and books that I read. Reading reference lists gave me an understanding of how other scholars supported their own research and the common references and citations they referred to. I browsed the UK's Government website to help me understand and develop my knowledge about different policies enacted during the last century. Another website that helped me to understand in detail the policies administered, is a website called *Education in History*. This website provided a wealth of information about educational policies which had an impact on Black children's lives in schools and in higher education.

While searching the University's library portal, I came across journals such as the *Caribbean Quarterly* in the Sociology section. While the Caribbean Quarterly had articles that were about Black people – ethnic minorities in the Caribbean, I found that this journal did not equip me with the right sources that I could relate to in my field of social science – education. This was because I was going back in time when there was scarce material about how Black children were positively educated in the UK. However, to compensate for this lack of journalistic

articles about Black children in education in the UK, towards my final writing of this thesis, I came across the British Educational Research Journal (BERJ) that had articles on research projects that involved Black British students. One such article is that of Dumangane (2017), which I refer to in this study.

As this is an autoethnographic study and in addition to using the above methods of finding sources to support my study, I also looked at other theses to see if there were any studies like mine. Autoethnography is emerging as a methodology as well as a method, and so it is not a common approach; thus, it was not surprising that I would find a limited number of theses that incorporated semi-structured interviews alongside the researcher's narrative. As a result of this, I hope that this study will contribute to knowledge and educational research in the UK to have an influence in using these two methods to collate data.

The studies that I came across were conducted using autoethnography, but they were from overseas, for example, the US or the Caribbean. In addition, autoethnographic studies from Black British females seem to be rare. This was disappointing because I was hoping to compare my study with that of others and to see if my research fitted a gap especially as my study is from a Black perspective. In hindsight, this demonstrates the lack of literature that is available to others and shows how undertheorized Black initiatives are within the field of sociology and social sciences - education. This is echoed by Dumangane (2017) who informs us that *"British Black African Caribbean academic success is an under-researched area [and there] are few studies in the UK [that] have sought to identify factors that support and promote it"* (p. 875). Dumangane (2017) argues that there is a *"need for more research to develop an understanding of social processes that can positively impact achievement in academic settings for British African males through their experiences in UK educational institution"* p. 875). While I agree with his statement, I would add that not only should there be more research on British Black African & Caribbean male academic successes this should also extend to Black female academic achievements. In Chapter one, I state that there is a lack of positive research about Black achievement and /success stories. This was because the studies that I came across focused negatively on Black boys. My findings on this issue are supported by recent research conducted by Wright, et al. (2020) who state that: *"...texts in the field of race and education have tended to view education as a site of struggle which reproduces inequity and a negative representation of Black masculinity..."* (p. 2). Their research focused on reporting about the educational experiences of young Black men in school and in higher education and secondly, highlighting the *"intersectional nature of young Black men's educational capability and success rather than underperformance"* which I also believe is ingrained in *"political and educational discourse"* (p. 2). This resonates with my own narrative and confirms in a way how political forces were at play when it came to the education of ethnic minorities. However, while Wright et al. (2020) sets out to change the narratives of negative research projects by focusing on success stories of young Black men, this study like Dumangane (2017), fails to include success stories of Black British females. Hence, literature is lacking about Black female professionals in higher education, therefore, I hope that this study

will help to fill that gap so that other Black female professionals are able to discuss and share their own stories of achievement.

In relation to Wright et al. (2020) statement regarding political agendas and in relation to education, in the following paragraphs, I give a brief historical account of the Acts and policies that had an impact on all children in the United Kingdom (UK). These Acts and policies interlink with the participants' (in this study) educational timeframe over a fifty-year period. To reiterate, these Acts and policies had detrimental effects on ethnic minorities who came to the UK or were second generation born in the UK. Children of ethnic backgrounds in the UK were perceived as being low achievers and lacked aspiration (Wright et al., 2020). This is a further notion of how my educational trajectory was impacted negatively because of these perceptions by the government and the educational system in the UK.

2.3: Historical account of Acts, policies & circulars, and the effects on the working-class and ethnic minorities

The data for this study (see Chapters six, seven and eight), highlighted various policies that were enacted by the central government over the decades that myself and the participants in this study were educated. When race and racism were implicated, for example, in low achievement figures for ethnic minorities, the government would employ some form of inquiry and intervention. This is demonstrated in Table one presented below.

Table 1: Below are some of the Acts and policies employed by central governments between 1944 and 1981.

As this study is based primarily on my own perspective of how I was educated it seems appropriate to include the ones administered during my time as a school pupil.

Year	ACTs/Policies	Description
1944	Education Act	Introduced secondary (comprehensive) education for children up to the age of 15. The Act was more beneficial to the middle class. Separated children at 11 who went into grammar, secondary modern and technical schools (Tripartite). Some concessions were given to the brighter 'working class children'. Those who could afford - sent their children to private schools. The Act did not promote equality of opportunity for working-class children.
1948	British Nationality Act	This Act allowed those from The Commonwealth countries and those in British Colonies to become British Citizens. These groups of countries included the West Indies - Windrush Generation.
1967	Plowden Report, 1967:70	This report discusses whether an immigrant child was deemed intelligent enough, culturally shocked or was unable to communicate for reasons of underachieving in

		schools. The report includes a section on how to educate ethnic minority children in a system where it was culturally biased - aimed at the elites in education.
1963& 1964	Newsom and Robbins Reports	Higher Education – rejected deterministic theories of intelligence. Newsom – <i>“intellectual talent is not a fixed quantity but a variable that can be modified by social policy and educational approaches”</i> (Newsom Report, 1963: para. 15).
1965	Government Circular	Request for all schools to be reorganised into comprehensive schools.
1965	DES Department of Education and Science – Circular 7/65	The Education of Immigrants – A section in this circular focused on a recommendation of local authorities to adopt a policy of having one-third of immigrant children in a class or school.
1965	The Government White Paper	Official policy of local authorities to only have one-third of immigrant children in a school/class. This policy was eventually deemed to be racist and illegal in 1975. Not many LEAs adopted the policy – mainly because it would cost them money in transportation of children – and not because it was deemed to be racist.
1966	Section 11 Policy Local Government Act 1966: S11	Grants given to local authorities for special provisions for large numbers of immigrant children in schools – from the Commonwealth and whose language and culture differed from those in the local community.
1971	Scholarly Article/report on immigrant children	A series of articles written by teachers about immigrant children and their level of intelligence. Suggestions made that those of Irish or Black backgrounds have lower IQs than other groups.
1974	PSI Report – Racial Disadvantage in Britain	The report introduces the concept of ‘indirect discrimination.’
1976	Third Race Relations Act – Education under sections 17 -20, 36 and 71.	The Commission for Racial Equality (CRE) was set up. The Working party of Chief Education Officers sought alternative funding to Section 11 grants.
1977	Select Committee – DES Consultative Paper Education in Schools	Race Relations and Immigration reports: The West Indian children; eight recommendations made including an inquiry into the education of West Indian children. The government accepted the need for an inquiry into Black school achievement in 1978.

1978	Home Office Response to Select Committee Report	West Indian Community (paras. 17 -24) - on education
1979	Rampton Committee set up	Inquiry into the education of ethnic minority children.
1981	Home Affairs Committee	Racial Disadvantage Report: 36 recommendations made about education.

Information adapted from: Tomlinson (2008a, pp. 44-46)

As illustrated above there were several Acts and policies that were administered between 1944 to 1981. Research during the 1950s demonstrated that social class had a major influence on educational achievement and that school segregation and school practices of “*streaming (tracking)*” and *setting pupils*”, disadvantaged the children of manual and working-class parentage (Tomlinson, 2008b, p. 65).

Although the Education Act (1944) was implemented in 1944 it was not implemented appropriately as many local authority-run schools did not comply with the Act. Local education authorities (LEA) across the UK did not make the necessary provisions to cater for children from all social class backgrounds (Benn, 2012) as the Act instructed. Many disadvantaged groups such as the working class were unable to access education like those of the middle-classes. Two years after the Act was administered, 80% of working-class children were educated in secondary modern schools but with inadequate resources and unqualified teachers (Tomlinson, 2005). This contrasted with the middle-class society who benefitted from the provisions of grammar schools, which helped prepare them for professional and white-collar jobs. Working-class children were educated to a level to cater for jobs in factories, offices, or manual labour for men. Therefore, the structure of the educational system after the Education Act (1944) came into force still allowed for those in the high social class system to flourish. For example, parents would complain and worry that there were less places for their children because of the new comprehensive system that catered for all children, and so would place their children in the best grammar schools (Tomlinson, 2005), which was another way to ensure that grammar schools remained for the middle-classes (Tomlinson, 2005). Floud et al. (1958) reported that there were few working-class children who had access to grammar schools during the 1940s/1950s and those who enjoyed the privilege of gaining a place at a grammar school were all too happy at not being classed a working-class citizen and seen as unintelligent.

To encourage more local authorities to convert to comprehensive schooling and to make the schools more accessible to the working-class, the Labour Government issued Circular 10/65 which asked schools to reorganise. This demonstrated that twenty years after the Education Act (1944) was first introduced, the objectives of the Education Act (1944) were not realised.

The lack of local authorities, who complied with the request, negatively impacted the working-class population because they were not able to access the same level of education as the higher social classes. This was because those who were privileged still dominated educational

establishments through the 11-plus selection process despite the 1944 Education Act's aim to end this type of selection. As a result, equality in education continued to be denied to many working-class children in British society (Ball, 1984; Benn & Chitty, 1996; Gillborn, 1990). As mentioned previously, this study incorporates comparisons between many decades of the participants' educational journey and so this explanation of the Education Act (1944) and Circular 10/65 connects with the findings in Chapters six, seven and eight, and demonstrates the impact of the educational system on some of us in this study.

So, to reiterate, the Education Act (1944) and Circular 10/65 was aimed at all children in society to include those from the working-class to access free education. However, what has been omitted so far in this discussion is education for ethnic minorities. My understanding from reading literature is that shortly after the second World War, there were few ethnic minorities in Britain, and this could explain the omission of children from ethnic backgrounds in the Education Act (1944). For example, Tomlinson (2008a) stated that at the time the 1948 British Nationality Act was administered, there were "*492 workers from Jamaica*" who entered Britain (p. 20). So, it is not surprising that there is no specific mention about educating ethnic minorities. However, in 1965 the Department of Education and Science issued Circular (7/65) which included sections about the education of immigrant children. The circular, entitled, '*The Education of Immigrants*' and under a section entitled '*Spreading the Children*' emphasised that children of immigrant backgrounds should be dispersed to avoid "*de facto segregation*". Schools should be limited to having 30% of immigrant children in their schools. This meant that if there were too many children from ethnic backgrounds attending a school, they would be sent to schools in other areas so as not to overwhelm the White population (Gillborn, 1990; Jefferson, 2004; Tomlinson, 2008a). The Conservative Minister for Education Sir Edward Boyle in the 1960s visited a school in Southall after complaints from parents about the number of immigrant children. It was after this visit that he made a decision to limit the number of ethnic minority children to one third. In the Circular (7/65) it states:

About one-third of immigrant children is the maximum that is normally acceptable in a school if social strains are to be avoided and educational standards maintained. Local Education Authorities are advised to arrange for the dispersal of immigrant children over a greater number of schools in order to avoid undue concentration in any particular school (Circular 7/65 as cited in Esteves, 2018, p. 752).

Many local authority-run schools administered this policy of 'bussing' children out to other areas, away from their communities. By issuing Circular 7/65, with a 'dispersal' of children policy, the Department wanted to alleviate parents' fears by reassuring them that practical measures were in place to avoid any disruptions that teacher and their children may face due to the "*linguistic and other difficulties of immigrant children*" (Saltzman, 1968, p. 339). These policies coincide with the findings of this study as I state that behind the scenes there were policies put in place to satisfy the Indigenous population and to disadvantage children of ethnic backgrounds. This system clearly added to the unequal education that many children received and was seen to be discriminatory as the 'bussing/dispersal policy' was aimed only at ethnic minority children (Tomlinson, 2008a). It is fair to say, however, that not all local authorities

agreed with the dispersal policy. Local authorities such as Birmingham, who had many children from ethnic backgrounds, rejected this policy (Tomlinson, 2008a). But it was in 1975 that the policy, after a court ruling, was viewed as discriminatory and therefore made illegal.

So far, I have discussed the introduction of the 1944 Education Act and its implications for educating children from all backgrounds. I have also mentioned the Circulars introduced to encourage local authorities to reorganise their schools into comprehensives but had limited success as many schools continued to operate as they did previously. This enabled those in the higher classes in society to continue to gain academic control. In addition, Circular 7/65 had a detrimental effect on children from ethnic backgrounds because they were sent to a school further away from their local community. If ethnic minority children constituted more than 30%, they were seen as a problem for the middle-classes. This is another reason why it can be seen that the middle-classes had an influence on education.

In addition to the above policies, between the 1950s to the 1960s the policy of '*assimilation*' was introduced and enforced in a second report by the Commonwealth Immigrants Advisory Council (CIAC). Grosvenor (1997) reports that in relation to ethnic minorities attending schools in Britain and trying to access equal rights in terms of education, this assimilation policy came at a price. Children from diverse backgrounds, for example, such as Pakistan, India, the Caribbean, were expected to '*assimilate*' into British culture, e.g. education. In a bid to tackle issues surrounding the '*welfare of immigrants*' the report stated that:

a national system of education must aim at producing citizens who can take their place in a society properly equipped to exercise rights and perform duties the same as those of other citizens. If their parents were brought up in another culture and another tradition, children should be encouraged to respect it, but a national system cannot be expected to perpetuate the different values of immigrant groups (Grosvenor, 1997, p. 50).

Therefore, parents and their children were expected to comply and to "*fit-in with established cultural patterns*" (Grosvenor, 1997, p. 50). Grosvenor argued that the policy of assimilation viewed the culture and traditions of ethnic minorities to be less inferior than the British Indigenous population. By 'fitting- in' into the British way of life, ethnic minorities would either be successful by complying or risk not obtaining equal opportunities via education and employment because of cultural differences (Grosvenor, 1997; Tomlinson, 2008a). To soften the impact and to avoid further criticisms of the assimilation policy, it was renamed to 'integration' in 1985. The only difference in renaming the policy was to recognise that ethnic minorities had religious, cultural, intellectual, and linguistic attributes. So, ethnic minorities were still expected to conform and assimilate into the Indigenous population. To restate, this was only a slight change to the assimilation/integration policy and as such was still met with criticism as many observers labelled it as another form of racism (Grosvenor, 1997; Tomlinson, 2008a; Watson, 1988).

2.3.1: Ending the non-selective process system: the Education Act (1976) to ensure comprehensiveness

As discussed above, the Education Act (1944) and Circulars 7/65 and 10/65 were enacted and administered to end the selective process of the 'tripartite' and the 11-plus systems but failed to do so because local authorities did not reorganise their schools and wanted to keep the selective system. So, in 1976, the government issued the Education Act (1976) to allow for a 'non-selective' system and thus forced local authorities to make changes in the school selection process.

The Education Act (1944) included the tripartite system which meant that children either attended a grammar, secondary technical or modern school. The tripartite system was aimed at those who were able to pass the 11-plus test. In relation to this study, two participants benefited from the grammar testing system, first the 11-plus system during the 1960s and later in the 1980s as grammar schools were still in existence.

The Education Act (1976) made a huge impact because forcing local authorities to make changes saw an increase in the number of children being educated. For instance, figures show that in 1965 there were only 240,000, (8.5% per cent) of pupils who were in comprehensive schools. After the 1976 Education Act was enacted by 1979, this had risen to 84.9 percent thereby increasing the total number of pupils in comprehensive schools to 3,061,597. These figures seem encouraging and tell us that all children, despite their backgrounds, have had the opportunity to be educated (Ball, 1984, pp. 2-3). However, it is important to note that during the periods of reforming comprehensive schools, there were controversies surrounding the meaning of 'comprehensive' as the Conservative and Labour Governments did not give a clear definition of what it meant to be educated in a comprehensive school, nor did they elaborate or clarify the meaning in their 1976 Education Act (Benn & Chitty, 1996).

Benn (1979) argued that:

It was impossible to ensure equality of opportunity without a definition of those minimum opportunities which should be available to all boys and girls in any school called 'comprehensive'. To try to define them would have conflicted with the laissez-faire policy of governments in implementing the reform since 1965 (p. 197).

There was no control from central government or local authorities of how schools became comprehensive, and as previously stated, some were left to continue to select students of their choosing. Normally, the selection was made by the elites or the middle classes of society (Benn, 1979). However, as Ball (1984) noted in the late 1960s, schools began to experiment with new ideas of pedagogy - teaching and learning - such as incorporating group work and including teaching mixed-group abilities, which later became the norm in comprehensive schools.

There were limitations to the policies of educational reform during the 1960s and 1970s and limitations that had serious consequences for ethnic minorities. The Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies (CCCS), for example, reviewed the 1976 Educational policy and concluded

that while “*comprehensive schools did remove forms of separations and allowed a greater autonomy for teachers and pupils*” there was no encouragement from government(s) to promote equality and hence there were few local authorities and schools who took equality seriously (CCCS, 1981, p.129 as quoted in Ball, 1984, p. 4). One such inequality resulted in boys from ethnic minority backgrounds who were sent to “*Educationally Subnormal*” (ESN) - schools without the right assessment or correct consultation with their parents because they were deemed unteachable (Coard, 1971, p. 5). Research has shown that the situation regarding ESN schools was quite alarming as it further demonstrated the inequalities and discrimination that occurred during the late 1960s to the late 1970s against ethnic minority children. This argument is still ongoing as fifty years later research has reported on a high number of “*Caribbean pupils [who] are over-represented in statistics for moderate learning difficulties (MLD)*” (Strand & Lindorff, 2018, as cited in Wright et al., 2020, p. 6). This demonstrates that past historical events of educating children from ethnic backgrounds has not changed and perceptions of how Black children are perceived and labelled as difficult learners continues. In relation to my own narrative (Appendix 18), I recall how lower set classes were made up of Black boys. In addition, the perception of Black children as underachievers was a silent challenge for me.

Benn (1979) noted that “*comprehensives were first discussed in the 1920s, [but] not tried until the 1940s, not made national policy until 1965, ... [and] not subject to legislation until 1976*” (p. 194). By 1976, out of ninety-seven local authorities in England and Wales, there were only twenty-three local authorities that had a comprehensive system under the 1976 Education Act. This was quite astonishing and portrayed the indecisiveness of the Education Act (1976) and the process of reforming to a comprehensive school system.

In summary, if there were no central controls as to how local authorities operated their schools during a fifty-year period, there was little hope for a child of a different ethnicity, this is especially so if you were Afro-Caribbean. Over the last fifty years, it is fair to add that children who were White working-class were also treated unfairly during these transition phases of reforming to comprehensive schools.

The final themes presented in Chapter eight are themes that combine the two analysis of the interviews and autoethnography. These final themes enabled the framing of this literature review. As will be discussed in section three, I take a critical stance discussing critical race theory (CRT), intersectionality and the work of Pierre Bourdieu and how they link with the data, which was analysed through the RTA process as mentioned above and in Chapter three.

2.4: Theoretical perspective: critical race theory (CRT)

As previously stated, when researching literature and analysing the data, I looked for recurring themes and related theories. One of the theories that was prominent was Critical Race Theory (CRT). As a Black child/woman educated in a predominantly White environment, it is understandable why this theory would emerge. The educational policies that were enacted during my time at school were created to address and challenge what the government thought were racial issues, i.e. large influx of immigrant children ascending to schools in predominantly

White communities. I admit that I was not sure that I wanted to venture into this theory as I originally did not view that my research would include race. However, the more I read about the Acts and policies that were in place at the time of my school education, and about other scholars' work or educational journey, for example, becoming a principle or a teacher, and using autoethnography as a methodology, it became clearer to me that I was also researching and analysing my own educational trajectory as a Black female. Therefore, CRT fitted quite well into this paradigm.

2.4.1: Defining critical race theory (CRT)

Critical Race Theory (CRT) was developed more than 60 years ago in the United States (US). CRT began in the 1960s when a group of lawyers in the United States responded to a series of events that occurred over time in relation to policies that were classed as being equal, i.e. 'colour blind'. A group of leading scholars and activists contended that the legal system in the US mainly had a negative impact on people of different races, gender, and class. A decade later saw CRT develop further into other areas such as Asian and American law, and lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender (LGBT) interest groups (Delgado et al., 2017, p. 3). In relation to these different areas, Delgado et. al. asked scholars and researchers to use their academic tools to:

challenge dominant racial stereotypes of social dysfunction and inferiority with new perspectives on events and social practices in the U.S.A. CRT calls for a larger body of published work by scholars of colour to provide a more balanced portrayal of the lives of politically marginalized peoples (Chapman, 2011, p. 220).

Closson (2010) defines CRT "*... as a critique of racial reform efforts and can be seen as a theoretical and or an interpretive framework in which the theory mixes strategy, research method and definitional premises*" (p. 264). CRT can be viewed as an umbrella term, as over the years scholars in different disciplines and various practices such as immigration, language rights, and discrimination based on accent or national origin, CRT would enable scholars, lawyers, or activists to examine historically traumatised events that took place against ethnic minorities.

CRT is a strand of critical legal studies (CLS). Critical legal scholars "*used the concept of class*", for example, as a primary focal point in their research, but those who created and developed CRT felt that race should be the focal point of any analysis before class or gender, as those who were experiencing injustice were people of colour. Once race was identified as a primary factor then gender and class could be integrated into the analysis (Chapman, 2011, p. 220). Hence this is how 'race' became a focal point in '*critical race theory*' because it centres on race.

As previously stated, CRT was created in the US and has many years of being used in different situations that has had a negative impact on people of colour. Here in the UK, CRT has slowly developed in the realms of different disciplines such as sociology and social science – education. Because I am the only Black participant in this study, CRT resonates with me because I see that I was educated in a different way to that of the participants who took part in

this study. I use CRT in this study to analytically describe and connect literature to my educational trajectory. I use this critical lens to have a deeper understanding of how everyday practices and experiences are considered by many Black people as being 'normal' even though these practices are or can be deemed as racist because they have negative effects on people of colour.

Critical race theory has a set of original principles that guide those who are following the theory. But over the years, different scholars have adapted CRT to fit in with what they are analysing thus creating their own set of principles and adding their own literature (Delgado, et al., 2017). There are five principles that make up critical race theory (CRT). These principles are often named as 'tenets' by leading scholars of CRT. The principles can be adapted to suit the type of research that a researcher is conducting.

First, race is endemic (Chapman, 2011, p. 220); Racism is central (Bhopal, 2020) and as Solórzano and Yosso (2002) state, the first principle is "*The intercentricity of race and racism with other forms of subordination*", p. 25). Second "*Interest convergence*", which is the crossing of epistemological boundaries or conceptual analysis of white supremacy and the challenge to the dominant ideology. All meaning the same thing but written differently by different scholars (Bhopal, 2020; Chapman, 2011; Delgado et al., 2017; and Solórzano & Yosso, 2002). Third, as stated by Delgado et al. (2017), "*social construction*" is the third principle of CRT. Chapman (2011) views the third principle as "*reinterpreting civil rights law but undermines those laws before they are administered*". While Bhopal states "*intersectionality*" and Solórzano and Yosso (2002) simply says it is the "*commitment to social justice*". The fourth principle seems to be confusing as scholars each have their own definitions. For example, Delgado et al. (2017) state "*having a voice*"; Chapman (2011) "*portrays dominant legal claims of neutrality*"; Bhopal (2020) states the fourth principle as "*interest convergence*" and lastly, Solórzano and Yosso (2002) views the fourth principle as "*the centrality of experiential knowledge*". For this study, the fifth principle is the one that fits best. This is because CRT is understood more clearly by all scholars as they each see the fifth tenet for people of colour having a voice so that they can make challenges about ahistoricism and by insisting on ahistoricism using the CRT framework, stories can be told. Solórzano and Yosso (2002) state:

The transdisciplinary perspective: A critical race theory challenges ahistoricism and the unidisciplinary focus of most analyses and insists on analysing race and racism by placing them in both historical and contemporary contexts. Critical race methodology in education uses the transdisciplinary knowledge and methodological base of ethnic studies, women's studies, sociology, history, law and other fields to guide research that better understands the effects of racism, sexism, and classism on people of colour (pp. 26–27).

Therefore, taking these five principles into account and since this autoethnographic study is based on empirical data, i.e. my own story and that of others, CRT fits well with my analysis of my own data as race is situated centrally within this study. In addition, everyday situations such as how I was educated, and the perceptions teachers had of me was, and became the norm.

Hence, under scrutiny, there were racist connotations. In my narrative, I give historical accounts of my lived experiences around my education, work, and as a foreign language English teacher. During those journeys, I had challenges that I now view as racial disparities.

2.4.2: A Tenet of CRT - intersectionality

As mentioned above, linked to Critical Race Theory (CRT), intersectionality is another critical theory that has its benefits in Black research projects especially for women. In reviewing literature around intersectionality and CRT, intersectionality is viewed as a strand or one part of the tenets that CRT offers. Intersectionality, as stated by Capper (2015) "*Considers race across races and the intersection of race with other identities and differences*" (p. 795) for example, my race, gender and class status. Chapman (2011) states:

Inter-dependence among issues of race, gender, class and sexuality [that] further complicates academic and practical understandings of how and why people are being oppressed or have been oppressed in the past (p. 5).

In this study, I make a distinction between myself and the participants in that I am the only one of a different ethnicity while the others are Caucasian. In addition, two of the participants are of a higher-class status and I view them as having a different educational experience to the one that I had. Critical race theory and intersectionality helped me to make sense of this.

The term 'intersectionality' was formulated over thirty years ago by Kimberle Crenshaw a leading critical race theorist in 1989 who argued that different areas of disparities, race, gender, and social class overlap. In trying to understand my educational and trajectories, I use intersectionality as a framework to analyse my findings and with an aim to understand power dynamics and how power intersects within my educational trajectory. Unlike my White counterparts in this study, intersectionality gives me a critical lens to understand the challenges I faced as a Black woman (Coaston, 2019).

In addition, as I review my own data and narrative, by applying the critical lens of intersectionality, I understand that my race, gender, and social class have helped to shape my educational and work trajectories. For example, my levels of achievement during my compulsory school years, the average grades I received during my first degree can be viewed through the critical lens of CRT and intersectionality (Gillborn et al., 2017). Hence this understanding has highlighted the importance of me considering different areas of identity and social categories when examining disparities and power dynamics. Furthermore, it allows for a deeper understanding of how my identity interacts and influences my opportunities, access, and experiences.

I believe that by employing intersectionality, as a framework in this study, is valuable because it has helped me to recognise that there are different forms of oppression and privilege that interlink in my educational experiences, and therefore need to be examined together. My view is supported by McWhorter (2004) who argues that different forms of lived oppressions cannot be separated because they interlock and thus "*race, sex and class are simultaneous factors*" (McWhorter, 2004, pp. 38-39 as cited in Coaston, 2019, p. 25) Hence, intersectionality allows

me to analyse my data with a holistic view of the complexities of power, privilege and how inequality operates (Coaston, 2019).

In Caldwell's (2022) study about perceived barriers and challenges in educational leadership and the lived experiences of completing an administration licence course for Black women, the use of CRT and intersectionality helped her to understand from her findings how there is an underrepresentation of Black women in educational leadership in the US. Caldwell (2022) believes that this underrepresentation *"is caused largely in part by sexism, hiring practices and lack of support/mentorship"* (p. 4). While this study is not about leadership but about the journey I have had in comparison to the participants, Caldwell's (2022) study provides further indication of how critical race theory and intersectionality can illuminate the experiences of oppression that I have experienced.

In relation to education, Gillborn et al. (2017) employed intersectionality as their critical lens to focus on the achievement gap between Black Caribbean students and their White counterparts. They confer that, historically, Black Caribbean students have always fared badly when it came to *"achievement and exclusion"* (p. 851). In addition, Black Caribbean communities have always been at the *"forefront of political agency against White racism"*. Furthermore, the scholars stated that *"the contours of Black Caribbean education speak directly to deep structures and processes of racial injustice in education"*. This study, conducted in 2017, informs me that nothing much has changed from my own schooling experience. I was put at a disadvantage because of the low grades I received in my final year at comprehensive school. I was told to join a college programme at the age of 16 to learn office practice skills. The aim of this course was to equip me with the right skills to find employment in an office. This puts me into Gillborn et al. (2017) argument about their study on Black and White achievement gap. However, the scholars do not just focus on race, they also include class, gender, disability, and sexuality as important factors which interlink under the CRT and intersectionality. In summary, from the outset of my educational trajectory, I have been an outsider of the British education system because of my race and gender. I was taught in a White environment learning about a culture that did not include my own. Thus, I had to conform and assimilate into the British system. These two intersections put me at a disadvantage because of the power relations that influenced my educational experience and social ability. In turn, being part of a Black working-class community also had an effect on my education and career aspirations because of the power relations that I encountered from a school pupil to my first teaching experience. Therefore, intersectionality illuminated my educational trajectory as being a challenge from the beginning of my school experience to conducting my final student journey of being a doctoral student. In addition, my educational journey has been different to my White counterparts in this study. This is highlighted in Chapter eight as this critical theory allowed me to explore the differences in our educational journeys.

2.5: Introduction to Bourdieu's concepts

Critical race theory and intersectionality have highlighted in this study how race, gender and class have illuminated my understanding of how power relations within education affected children. As this study comprises three Caucasians and myself as the only Black female, I

sought to find another theory which could be linked to the data findings and which could connect all participants, in particular, our class status. Upon researching other studies, most literature refer to Bourdieu and Passeron (1977) work titled 'Reproduction in education, society and culture'. As will be discussed in the following paragraphs, Bourdieu (1986) developed three concepts, habitus, cultural capital and field from his work in Algeria as an anthropologist, whilst studying Algerian communities during the 1960s. His main focus was on class and not on race. He observed how disadvantaged communities in Algeria were in terms of education and work, which prompted his beliefs that there was a class system of inequality (Bourdieu, 1986; Grenfell, 2012).

2.5.1: Habitus, cultural capital and symbolic violence - education for ALL and the link to CRT

Several researchers have used Bourdieu's work to gain an understanding on domination and discrimination based on class, but race has been uncommon in studies such as mine (Dumangane, 2017; Jackson-Cole & Chadderton, 2023). Bourdieu (1961) studied Algeria's "*minority communities that were stigmatized and marginalized by both French colonialism*" [such as the] *Kabyle villages*" (Calhoun, 2006. p. 3). There are researchers who state that Bourdieu's theory does not adequately explain how race and class interact (Adewumi, 2020; Rollock et al., 2015). The focus of this study was not race but about my educational journey from school to become a university teacher and the inequalities that I encountered. As mentioned previously, my ethnicity is different from the participants. Therefore, it seems appropriate and an opportunity to innovatively refer to Bourdieu's work with CRT because of the themes that developed from the data, and which includes myself as the only Black working-class woman. Thus Bourdieu (2001) helps to identify and acknowledge that as a Black woman I was denied the same privilege as my White counterparts' connection with Bourdieu's concepts of habitus, field and cultural capital. My link with Bourdieu's work in this study will add to the field of knowledge that is lacking about achievements of Black women. This study will also add to future research to inform others of how CRT and Bourdieu's theories can be used together to explore and understand the different race, gender, and class status disparities.

While reading for literature to apply my data to theories through the inductive process of reflexive thematic analysis (RTA), Pierre Bourdieu, known as one of the leading sociologists in the 20th century, was one of the first to use a critical framework to analyse how our social backgrounds influence our life's journeys through education and employment. He believed that no matter what social class we come from, we each behave in accordance with the habitus that we are a part of and the field that is forced upon us. For example, we share a common language, religion, ethnicity, and social class. Within our habitus, we then share / pass on, creating the same social characteristics to our children, family members, which then results in class reproduction within that field (Bourdieu & Passeron, 1977; Wallace & Wolf, 2006). In relation to 'field' we adapt to the conditions with which we are presented. For example, in this study it is the field of education which is discussed in my narrative and through the narratives of the participants' educational experiences. As mentioned above, Bourdieu observed these

habitus and field concepts when he studied a group of Algerians. In this study, this is evident when participants refer to their family members' influence of going to higher education.

Bourdieu developed the concept of habitus further by stating that we each have capitals in which we use to advance our aspirations. These capitals are presented by Bourdieu (1986) as three types of capital that connect. One type leads onto another with or without a desired outcome for an individual over time. Bourdieu stated that the “*structure of the distribution of the different types and subtypes of capital at a given moment in time represents the immanent structure of the social world*” (p. 242). The three types of capital that Bourdieu refers to are: economic, cultural, and social all of which intertwined with each other. Calhoun (2006) interprets Bourdieu's forms of capital as:

Economic capital is that which is ‘immediately and directly convertible into money’ (Bourdieu, 1986: 243). Educational credentials (**cultural capital**) or social connections (**social capital**) can only be converted indirectly, through engagement in activities that involve longer-term relationships such as employment, family and marriage. Different social fields create and value specific kinds of capital ... (pp. 11 - 12).

Studies such as Dumangane (2017) studied Black British men's faith as a form of cultural capital, which helped them to achieve their academic aspirations to higher education. He used Bourdieu's concept of cultural capital as a framework because it intersects with race, class, and gender. Like Dumangane (2017), I refer to Bourdieu and Passeron (1977) because of the same intersections, the only difference is that I am a Black woman. In addition, cultural capital also links with the participants of this study, i.e. middle and working-class status. In another study, Rollock (2007) adapted Bourdieu's theory to analyse their data on gender and ethnicity. The connection between my study and Rollock (2007) is that this is one of the few studies that I have encountered that gives an in-depth analysis of why Black British girls are usually omitted from educational research as the emphasis is usually on Black boys. Rollock (2007) uses Bourdieu's theory to:

explore the ways in which Black girls are positioned as absent in staff perspectives of academic success, and examine in the discussion how this may contribute to their exclusion from key debates on school achievement that focus on solely on ethnicity or gender (p.198).

This perspective resonates with this study because of the lack of literature surrounding Black successful women in higher education. In searching for literature that include critical lenses and social class, it was rare to find a study that uses both Bourdieusian and critical race theory in studies that complement each other. My lack of finding studies of this kind was confirmed when I located an article by Tichavakunda (2019) who states that:

Despite their usefulness and popularity, a theoretical discourse between the two frameworks [Bourdieu and CRT] has not yet transpired and the two are sometimes constructed as incompatible, if not at odds ... (p. 651)

Tichavakunda (2019) argues that:

CRT has never fully engaged with Bourdieu's Theory of Practice... Bourdieu's Theory of Practice and CRT, although distinct, are not necessarily in opposition, and ... CRT and Bourdieusian concepts have the potential to inform each other, resulting in a more nuanced engagement of the interplay between structure, agency, and racial realities in education (p. 651).

For example, Reed-Danahay (2001) studied influential White women who were placed in a nursing home suffering from Alzheimer's disease. They were cared for by “*stigmatised*” Black female staff (p. 47). In this study, Bourdieu's work is used to analyse the findings because of the association with social spaces. Even though the study comprises two races, Bourdieu's work is referred to because of the social contexts that are involved. As Reed-Danahay states, “*Intersections of race and class, as well as gender and age, form an important context for social relationships within this space*” (p. 47). This would have been a prime example of using both Bourdieu's theory and that of critical race theory, and in addition, the tenet of CRT - intersectionality. Tichavakunda (2019) refers to Yosso (2005) study about Community Cultural Wealth. Their study uses Critical Race theory but in a partial way of linking Bourdieusian frameworks in education. Tichavakunda believed that the two theories were not adequately addressed in their study. Hence, this adds to Tichavakunda (2019) notion when they say that scholars do not adequately explore both critical theories in research.

In addition to the above lack of race being included in Bourdieu's work, these could be reasons why scholars such as Adewumi (2020) and Rollock et al. (2015) claim that Bourdieu's theories do not adequately address the issue of race in educational inequalities. It could also be a reason it is rare to find literature surrounding narratives on race in education that uses Bourdieu and CRT. Tichavakunda states:

While much education research neglected the role of racism in education, scholars took a bold stance, employing CRT to argue that race and racism matter in education (p. 651).

As mentioned previously, and throughout this thesis, this is an autoethnography study, but which includes three White participants. I compare my and the participants' educational journeys to higher education. The comparisons I make about my educational trajectory with three participants, demonstrates how race has had an impact in how I was educated. Understanding Tichavakunda's argument, I hope to have demonstrated an appropriate use of Bourdieu and CRT in Chapters seven and eight. Hence, I hope that by using both theories will help to show the reader that I have an in-depth understanding of my educational trajectory. Furthermore, in connection to my race, the policies shown above demonstrates that race was at the forefront of policy making and changes within the educational system in the United Kingdom.

Conversely, in more recent studies, such as Jackson-Cole and Chadderton (2023) who studied White supremacy within elite universities of the Russell Group, suggest that it is possible that more researchers are venturing into combining Bourdieu's work with CRT. Thus, adapting both theories to connect with their research focus. However, as mentioned in Chapter one, and in section two of this chapter, most studies focus on the negative side of ethnic minorities in education. In the study by Jackson-Cole and Chadderton (2023) this is no different as their focus was on the inequalities of ethnic minorities accessing a place in an elite university in the UK.

So far, I have discussed the concept of capital(s) and how Bourdieu's (1986) theory can be used with the critical lens of CRT. I have also discussed how some scholars believe that researchers inadequately combine both theories as a way of making a thorough analysis of inequalities that include race or that centres race. In the following section, I refer to Bourdieu (1986) explanation of symbolic violence and how this concept relates to this study. Like cultural capital, symbolic violence was coined when Bourdieu (1986) developed his idea of field, habitus, and cultural capital; symbolic violence is viewed as a subsection of cultural capital.

Unlike cultural capital and CRT, there are numerous studies that include the subsection of cultural capital, i.e. symbolic violence and CRT. However, it was rare to find studies that include Bourdieu's three concepts of capital, habitus, and field in relation to education and CRT, together. In a study about workplace equality and diversity, Rodriguez (2022) also found that there was a *"lack of empirical work that operationalises Bourdieusian concepts"*. So, to help add to this lack of literature/studies, and in order to understand how structures are formulated within higher institutions that marginalises ethnic minorities in higher education, Rodriguez (2022) found it useful to apply Bourdieu's three concepts and symbolic violence to their study alongside critical race theory. CRT is used because they wanted to:

make sense of, deconstruct and challenge racial inequality based on the understanding that race and racism are products of social consciousness and power and seeks to expose the way racial inequalities are maintained through systems and structures that appear normal and unremarkable (p. 81).

For example, Rodriguez (2022) states that in higher education professions it is mainly White men who are privileged, and who keep top positions. This explanation by Rodriguez (2022), connects with this study as I explain below and in Chapter eight how the practice of everyday schooling was seen as normal. Furthermore, in relation to this study, after conducting the analysis via reflexive thematic analysis/inductive process, including Bourdieu's work became more applicable to apply. For example, I include symbolic violence to depict how I was subjected to authority rule in education, but I did not at the time understand how Bourdieu's other concepts of cultural capital, field and habitus intertwined until completing this literature review and linking this with the data analysis. This understanding has helped put the data into a clear perspective of the power relations that were involved during our educational trajectories.

For example, Bourdieu and Wacquant (1992) explain that “...*notions as habitus, field, and capital can be defined, but only within the theoretical system they constitute, not in isolation*” (p. 96). Two of the participants were able to acquire professions that connect with the cultural capital and habitus of the middle-class in their field of education, unlike myself and another participant, classed as working-class. In addition, I explain in my narrative how my everyday work practice includes me as a minority Black woman. Therefore, in this study, I hope that I have applied the three concepts appropriately to the data to give a clear picture of my and others’ educational journeys.

From the concept of cultural capital, Bourdieu and Passeron (1977) and Bourdieu (1986) symbolic violence theory describe how the elites and middle-classes have been able to access education and remain dominant in academia. For instance, in Chapter one I discussed the disadvantage that the banding, setting/tracking system had imposed on working-class and ethnic minority children in the UK. In a study conducted by Archer et al. (2018) they related Bourdieu’s theory of symbolic violence to setting. They used Bourdieu’s theory to see if they could extend their understanding of participants’ views about setting, in particular those who had experienced the “*sharpe end of setting*” (p. 121). Archer et al. (2018) findings concur that by using Bourdieu’s framework, i.e. symbolic violence, the system of setting was a way to “*reproduce the interests of dominant social groups by reproducing relations of privilege and domination as ‘natural’*” (p.121). As stated in my narrative and in Chapter one, children from the lower-classes and ethnic minorities were usually in the bottom sets in schools, whereas those from the middle-classes kept their place at the top. Hence, within a Bourdieusian framework, this is an example of symbolic violence within my school experiences. I also link CRT to this notion because as Archer et al. (2018) states, the domination of the system of setting was seen as a normal pedagogic practice that reproduced the higher classes within their habitus and kept those who were Black in the bottom sets. In Chapter eight, it is highlighted that Bourdieu’s cultural capital and symbolic violence, through pedagogic action, was enforced during my and the participants’ educational journeys. Hence each of us keeping within our habitus status of middle and working-class. This study also highlights how the two theories of CRT and symbolic violence interconnect because of the ‘norm’ of practice under a pedagogical environment. Bourdieu’s concepts and that of CRT have helped me understand how education and the policies that were administered for all to have an equal education has been a misconception.

Leading on from Bourdieu’s concepts of habitus, field, cultural capital (symbolic violence), the following paragraphs will discuss how I managed to acquire a different cultural capital, and habitus within the field of education.

2.5.2: Recapturing my original class status via change of habitus and cultural capital

The work of Bourdieu’s habitus, field, cultural capital and symbolic violence concepts continues to stream through this literature review and in Chapter eight because it is the most prominent theory that helps to make sense of our social worlds, whether you class yourself as an elitist, middle or working-class person. To reiterate, there are many studies that incorporate

Bourdieu's theories but very little that includes both critical race theory - intersectionality and Bourdieu's concepts.

From the theme of social class and family influence, in Chapter eight, it is important to discuss the changes that can occur if one is given the chance to make changes within their lives. When embarking on researching literature and analysing my own data and that of the participants', it became apparent that I, along with the youngest participant of this study, had transitioned from working-class to middle-class status (Rollock et al., 2011). As mentioned in my narrative, my mother came from a family in Jamaica and her family were seen as middle-class because of the privileges they had in terms of their parents having their own business, property, land and access to education. However, what has been termed as "*class-downsizing*" by Rollock et al. (2013, p. 256), after arriving in the UK to find employment as a secretary, my mother had to settle for working in a factory, therefore becoming a Black working-class woman.

As discussed in Chapter one, the social class system in the UK has been prevalent for centuries. In this study it was highlighted how being in a class system influenced how society saw you and thus how one's future could be mapped out. Relating this to Bourdieu's concept of habitus and cultural capital, through the field of education I have had to work hard to gain a place in the habitus of the middle-classes, hence an upward social mobility (Basit & Tomlinson, 2012). Although I do not directly class myself as a middle-class person, being classed as a Black middle-class person has its differences between myself and the participants who are all White.

It is important to explain that there is a significant gap in research on the Black British middle-classes in the UK compared to the US, where studies date back to the 19th and 20th centuries (Meghji, 2017). This was highlighted by Rollock et al. (2013)'s study on Black middle-class professionals. This lack is evident in recent studies by Adewumi (2020) who highlights the scarcity of research on Black middle-class parents' educational aspirations for their children, compared to the abundance of studies on underachievement in the UK. Further, in support of this point, Campbell's (2020) research on a local football team revealed his surprise at the limited research on sports with ethnic minorities in the East Midlands, which reinforces this lack of research. Moreover, and as mentioned previously, Cartwright (2022) also states that in comparison to cultural capital where there is a vast amount of literature, this is not the same for cultural capital and race. Her focus was on cultural capital and racial disparities. However, Cartwright informs me that scholars of the sociologist field are developing studies of cultural capital and race to help change the narrative on the lack of literature. In relation to what is termed as Black cultural capital, by Wallace (2017) who carried out a study on race, using Bourdieu's cultural capital concepts, on Black Caribbean youths in London, the Black British middle-classes, it is evident that there is the need for further research and contribution to literature about the Black middle-classes in the UK, particularly regarding the impact of Bourdieu's cultural capital, habitus and field, which has changed my class status. With this viewpoint, instead of commenting about the lack of literature regarding Bourdieu's concepts and the inadequacy of including race, and studies that include CRT, as researchers and scholars,

we should look to improve this by changing the negative narrative to positive stories. This frustration is echoed by Pennant (2020) who is a third-generation Black woman. She states:

While I was happy to have knowledge of Black British literature and educational research, I began to view it as limited in that Black British girls and young women were largely invisible and there were established underachievement discourses characterising Black British students as a whole (p. 248).

The literature she encountered did not resonate with her personal experiences and that of her friends. She therefore focused her research on identifying and exploring other positive alternatives to highlight diversity within Blackness as well as achievements of Black British students, especially, Black British girls and young women. This positiveness is a welcome acknowledgement that it can be done. What is interesting is that this notion is coming from a third-generation Black student of dual heritage of Jamaican and Nigerian, who has gained Bourdieu's cultural capital in terms of shifting from her parents' working-class habitus to a middle-class habitus. As a second generation, I have passed on my cultural capitals to my children, which could be viewed as the same Pennant (2020) because they have learned how to navigate and thus had good experiences in school and university.

2.5.3: Navigating spaces of a Black middle-class woman

In Chapter one, I describe how the White working-classes in the UK were disadvantaged when it came to education in schools. This was no different in higher education, especially accessing the best universities in the UK. For a working-class student, Black or White, to access prestigious universities, they need to have the right habitus and cultural capital passed on from their families in order to make the right choice of university (Archer et al., 2003). For the Black working-class student, for example, being a second or third generation student and having a different skin colour was an added pressure. Not only were there economic constraints within families of both White and Black, but working-class families also needed to understand the process of the education system, which was an advantage to the elitist and middle-classes (Archer et al., 2003). When working-class students did/do access universities the question of fitting-in and identity change becomes another challenge (Archer et al., 2003; Rollock et al., 2011). As discussed in my analysis, juggling multiple identities was a way of coping in different situations, especially where you could be viewed as an '*Other*' within a middle-class environment such as in education (Wright, 2020).

Wright (2020) in her autoethnography about her journey to become an educational psychologist, uses the term "*othering*" to describe her feelings of being on a professional training course as a Black woman and juggling her identity between work, community and education. She comments that "*being Black comes with a variety of descriptions and perceptions... [she states] Othering could be described as a comparison marker used as a basis to form a judgement by some assumed standard*" (Rollock et al., 2011; Wright, 2020, p. 2). Rollock et al. (2011) also refers to the term '*othering*' in their study about Black middle-classes. In other words, this is a form of stereotyping and racialisation (Canales, 2000). This resonates

with myself as in my own narrative I write about my culture and upbringing in a working-class environment to fit in with the British way of life. For example, I have always been a minority on courses that I have attended, such as completing this doctorate, and in my work environment, whereby my behaviour, intellect and ability were all judged (Rollock, 2015; Rollock et al., 2011). This is common in British society (Rollock et al., 2011). Although I have changed my class status through education and my profession, employing critical race theory, to me, stereotyping and racialisation is seen as a normal way of life for a Black woman in the UK.

Juggling multiple identities when in the company of family members, friends and White spaces such as work, I have utilised what Lacy (2007) calls a '*cultural tool-kit*'. This means these changes of identity are navigated by identifying the White space that is presented to me. In a study by Rollock et al. (2011) the work of Lacy (2007) is drawn upon to use as a framework when they studied the strategies used by the Black middle-classes in the UK to survive race and class discrimination. Therefore, as Black middle-classes we have a '*cultural tool-kit*' - resources - in which we use to adapt to the White spaces we find ourselves. For example, in order to reduce the level of stereotyping, racialisation, as Black middle-classes, we change our language interactions with White others (Lacy, 2007; Rollock, et al., 2011) in order to fit-in especially in educational environments. Not only do these adaptations, and accessing the '*cultural tool-kit*', refer to educational institutions, utilising Black cultural capital applies when in spaces that are mainly associated as White spaces such as museums, art galleries, and theatres (Rollock, 2015). In sum, these are the challenges that a Black woman encounters. These are challenges that I describe in my narrative. Whether it is in your own community, work or in education, as a Black woman I constantly navigate through different spaces to fit-in within the context presented to me.

2.5.4: White working-class fitting-in and the sense of belonging

Rosewell (2022) states that "*belonging is considered to be a positive foundation for students' well-being and success at university*" (p. 1), yet for many of us, fitting-in to higher education is a challenge for the Black student as well as for the White-working class student. As highlighted in this study, a working-class student coming from a northern city in the UK is judged in a different way to a White middle-class student but will also utilise their cultural capital in a new *habitus*.

There are numerous studies researching how students from White working-class backgrounds fit into higher education. Bathmaker et al. (2016) focused their study on how students coped with being an undergraduate working-class student in higher education in the southern part of the UK. In their study they looked at the process by which these students used to '*fit-in*' in the context of the social and academic environment in line with middle-class students. These working-class students were viewed as a minority amongst those from the upper-classes at the university. In their study they wanted to learn if as other scholars such as Reay (1998) and Reay et al. (2009, 2010) contend, that there is a sense that working-class students feel that they do not belong in higher education and whether, from their first to their final year, these feelings of not belonging changed. Using the concepts of Bourdieu and Wacquant's (1992, p. 127)

habitus and social capital they referred to the term “*fish in water, fish out of water*”, and how Bourdieu and Wacquant says [a fish] “*it does not feel the weight of the water, and it takes the world about itself for granted*”. This refers to the privileged who believe that they belong in higher education in comparison to the working-classes who are faced with different challenges such as economic, social and who may lack academic abilities (Bourdieu, 1986). Similarly, Ivemark and Ambrose (2021) studied first-generation Swedish students, aged 25, and their siblings' experiences of attending university. The scholars examined the educational backgrounds of the students' parents. They found that if one of their parents had a college degree, then their child would be better equipped to adjust to university life. In another study, Bathmaker et al. (2016), wanted to learn about the experiences of how first-generation students fitted into academic life in relation to their cultural capital gained from their family background. In comparison to Reay et al. (2009, 2010); Aries and Seider (2005) believed that first-generation students do not have enough cultural capital for them to endure academic life. However, to help change the narrative about students with limited cultural capital, Ivemark and Ambrose (2021) set out to make a change by focusing on the various resources they bring with them to higher education in order to survive. For example, by developing new tastes and interests, but they state that these working-class students still felt estranged from both their environment of origin and the social spheres that higher education gave them access to (p. 192), which supports Reay et al. (2009, 2010) statement that working-class students will always feel out of place. Quoting Reay et al. (2009) she states that the working-classes:

in society have limited options can either accept their ‘spoilt identity’ or reject the label working-class. At the same time to claim middle-class status is not the same as inhabiting a middle-class identity (p. 264).

In comparison with a Black student using their ‘*cultural tool-kit*’ to fit into White spaces, this is another example of scholars identifying that White working-class students also have a form of a ‘*tool-kit*’ in which to use to enhance their cultural capital and to fit in White middle-class spaces. However, it must be noted that White working-class students do not have the same challenges as Black working-class students. Meghji (2017) supports my perception as he states that:

Black middle classes in South Africa, the UK and US do not just experience their middle-class status differently to White middle-class people, but they are a different category to the White middle classes altogether (p. 3).

Therefore, as I have mentioned several times in this study, the difference between myself and the participants is my race, culture and gender which all intersect in oppression within society. Hence, these intersections are entwined when it comes to being in an academic community. In contrast, however, it is highlighted that once Black students or staff are engaged in dialogue with others in their same field, the feeling of guilt of being an outsider within the same habitus becomes unformidable because they are able to adjust according to the space that they are presented with.

Comparably, a collaborative autoethnographic study by seven women (Gillaspy et al., 2022) explored their narratives of transitioning from working-class backgrounds to academia. These women, some 'non-traditional' students with families and work responsibilities, investigated how their working-class identities impacted their teaching. Despite their hard work and success, the women in the study felt uncomfortable with the label 'academic'. They viewed themselves as imposters due to their backgrounds and the extra effort required ("grafters") compared to others. Consequently, they preferred the label "educators," seeking to use their experiences to help others from similar backgrounds succeed in higher education. Gillaspy et al. (2022) agrees with the argument given by Broecke and Hamed (2008) who state, *"that despite their newfound freedom, [these women's] identities will never be able to escape the constraints of the way others perceive them"* (p. 2). This is summed up when they draw on the works of Robinson and Richardson's (2015) study about gender in women's studies, who believe that there are:

many culturally acceptable concepts of subordination in terms of women as academics, such as the burden of women's domestic responsibilities, perceived gendered work roles, and gender stereotypes within the UK education system (Robinson & Richardson as cited in Gillaspy et al., 2022, p. 2).

These notions reinforce the stereotype of women as domestic and emotional, particularly those with domestic responsibilities. This view is given more attention in the work of Rickett and Morris (2021) who investigated how women disclose their feelings about belonging to academia. Their study, conducted with 12 women mostly from a White working-class background with the others of diverse backgrounds explored how academic women's feelings were perceived and reproduced in a UK HE institution. They concluded that the working-class women in their study, continuously felt as the 'Other', undervalued and with the feeling of being an imposter in academia. This is also reported by Rosewell (2022), who states that *"socially constructed and gendered notions of women as caregivers"* (p. 713) enforces working-class women to have extra workload in teaching, administrative tasks, and emotionally supporting students (pastoral care). Thus, and as highlighted by Rosewell (2022), working-class women may feel valued and belonging by carrying out support care, even though there is a persistence of gender inequalities in HE (Rickett & Morris, 2021; Rosewell, 2022). As Gillaspy et al., (2022) states, this is an ongoing battle that working-class women are challenged and whereby working-class women will continue to view themselves as inferior to the opposite gender.

The above discussion resonates with my personal experience of having to endure questioning about having a place on the Doctor of Education course (EdD). I was subjected to questions about my ethnicity and was asked about the number of children I had. In my narrative, I describe encountering this scepticism from another EdD student about my place on the course. This encounter instantly made me feel that my race and academic ability was in question. It made me feel as if I did not belong on the course. The common theme across these experiences implies how we each need to navigate, adjust and sometimes, justify ourselves within a middle-class habitus and cultural capital and, therefore, having to work harder to succeed.

In summary, this section has explored the challenges of navigating White spaces as a Black woman in academia. This section also looked at how White working-class academics perceive fitting within White middle-class and gender spaces. The literature tells me that both Black and White working-class students and staff in academia will utilise a tool-kit in which to navigate these spaces. However, Black women face an additional challenge due to their ethnicity, while White women may face inferiority due to the perception of being emotional. In academia, the working-class, regardless of race, are often seen as *'Other'*, adding another layer of stereotyping, discrimination, and racialisation to contend with.

Moving on from the working-classes trying to fit into academia, the next section explores academic literacies. As a mature *'non-traditional'* student the added pressure of belonging extends to how my academic abilities developed. For instance, completing this thesis, I have understood how my academic skills are imperative to successfully complete my doctoral journey.

2.6: Developing our academic literacies abilities

Throughout this thesis, I have given historical accounts of my educational trajectory, partly because of when I attended primary and secondary school, and about the policies that were in place while being a school pupil. Therefore, in following the theme of giving historical accounts about my educational trajectory, it seems equitable to continue this theme by giving a brief understanding of how academic literacies began.

As mentioned previously, I have had to develop my academic literacy skills in order to successfully complete my degree courses. So, in the following paragraphs, I discuss the origins of academic literacies and how the theory of academic literacies interlinks with my and others' educational learning journeys.

2.6.1: Conceptualisation of academic literacy / literacies

Over the last thirty years, there have been multiple conversations amongst scholars about which term (single or plural) to use when referring to research that includes students' abilities to communicate effectively in academia. In most literature, both the singular and plural terms have been used interchangeably. For instance, in Lillis and Scott's (2007) article on academic literacies they make a comprehensive exploration of the concept. They not only define 'academic literacies' in detail, but also trace its development over the past three decades. and questions the usage of singular vs. plural literacies. In addition, Lillis and Scott (2007) advocate for clarity, viewing academic literacies as a field of study with a specific approach to academic communication, particularly writing (p. 5). Hocking and Fieldhouse (2011) echo this, highlighting the need to empower students to develop their own epistemological and ideological stances (p. 35). In contrast, Lea and Street (1998) proposed three modes of academic literacies, which is discussed further below, but left the singular/plural issue unresolved. Lillis and Scott (2007) go on to explore the term 'advanced academic literacy', used for writing by master's or doctoral students, or within specific disciplines. They argue for academic literacies as the preferred term, emphasising its focus on the specific approach to

writing and communication in academic settings (p. 13). However, they acknowledge that both singular and plural forms carry different meanings for other scholars.

The plural form, for instance, can encompass expected writing conventions, a critical approach reflecting the social nature of literacy, or a programmatic approach based on genre theory for learning writing conventions (p.14). Lillis and Scott (2007) suggest these interpretations are linked to the researcher's perspective, not strictly tied to singular or plural usages (p. 14). Lea (2016) echoes this, calling academic literacy a broad term. She contrasts this with practitioners who favour the plural literacies highlighting the contested nature of writing practices across disciplines and student work (p. 89). Moreover, Lillis and Scott (2007) argued for a unified term due to the inconsistency in usage across various contexts (p.6). Both academic literacy and academic literacies refer to the writing demands placed on university students, encompassing essay structures, referencing, research proposals and thesis statements (Hicks, 2016; Jacobs, 2012).

In research settings, academic literacies/literacy relates to specific courses or initiatives aimed at student success and acquisition of necessary linguistic, rhetorical, and cognitive skills (Lillis & Scott, 2007). Both terms are used within research papers or presentations, emphasising writing and texts related to academic study. Ultimately, regardless of the singular or plural form, both terms refer to the reading and writing practices expected in higher education and in addition, as Lillis and Scott (2007, p. 6) state, this includes research into teaching practices, students' achievement and "*cognitive structures*". Academic literacies is considered a theoretical framework. Building on this concept, Paxton and Frith (2014) explored how academic literacies can enrich the study of knowledge and curriculum development in higher education. They acknowledged that reading and writing are integral to any field of study, and therefore, curriculum designers (specialised practitioners) should consider these processes when creating curricula. In a recent study, Li (2022) reviewed literature regarding the development of academic literacy research between 2002 to 2019. Through a systematic review approach of academic literacy studies, Li (2022) states that it is still unclear what academic literacy means with regards to research and pedagogy. Therefore, it is understandable that many scholars will adapt to using either term as they find appropriate to their research. As will be discussed below, in view of the above debate, throughout this study I use the plural term 'academic literacies' rather than the single term 'academic literacy'. This is because it incorporates all the skills needed, e.g. reading, writing, technology, research, to achieve academic success whether you are an undergraduate or postgraduate student.

2.6.2: Academic literacies beginnings

Since the late 1980s, academic literacies has been at the forefront of debate because of the inadequacies of how students are integrated, taught and expected to know academic writing conventions especially coming from a '*non-traditional*' route in education. Historically, the term academic literacies emerged during the 1980s - 1990s when higher education lecturers and researchers were concerned with how students develop academic writing skills. As discussed in Chapter one, this concern stemmed from the large influx of students, from diverse

backgrounds, accessing further and higher education during the 1990s through the expansion of higher education institutions, and schemes such as 'widening participation' in the UK (Horner, 2013; Lea & Street, 1998; Lillis, 2001; Lillis & Tuck, 2016; Moore, 2013; Wingate, 2015). It was noted by scholars that the increase in the number of students accessing academic studies were '*non-traditional*' students who had been excluded from higher education during the previous three decades (Lillis, 2001; Wingate, 2015). When referring to diverse backgrounds, this includes the working-class (home), mature students as well as international students. In this study, we are all home – local students.

During the 1980s, the term, academic literacies, was used at the Institute of Education, London, during monthly Academic Literacies meetings chaired by Mary Scott. Subsequently, Lucia Thesen and Cecilia Jacobs referred to this term in South Africa during student debates and protests in relation to the teaching of academic literacy. Students protested against the teaching of academic literacy because "*academic literacy requires profound shifts in student identity ... [they also noted that] it is not surprising that students describe these often alien encounters on academic literacy courses as 'colonial', or 'white' "*" (p. ii). Additionally, in the late 1980s, amidst the transformation of polytechnics into 'new' universities in the UK, Phyllis Crème incorporated the concept into a language policy designed to acknowledge and celebrate the diversity of student language practices (Lillis, et al., 2015). There were three models by which to teach academic literacies - reading to writing skills. The first, through a *study skills* approach, which was seen as inadequate. Students still struggled to produce the level of writing expected by their tutors/supervisors. This ineffectiveness of the *study skill* classes prompted scholars Lea and Street (1998) to research into the "*study skills* model" for teaching academic literacies (Lillis et al., 2015, p. 6). As the new universities acknowledged a more diverse group of students, the challenge of equipping them with academic writing skills became apparent. This initial approach often focused on generic methods to "fix" students' writing mechanics, such as grammar, punctuation, and spelling. Lea and Street (1998) defined academic literacies as an approach to teaching and learning that goes beyond just skills. As previously mentioned, the *study skills approach* focused on students independently developing grammar and spelling skills for academic writing.

A second approach was '*academic socialisation*' in which students would be orientated during their first year at university, thus making them accustomed to what is expected in terms of learning the skills needed for academic studies. In addition, Wingate quotes Duff (2007) by stating:

experts or more proficient members of a group play a very important role in socialising novices and implicitly or explicitly teaching them to think, feel, and act in accordance with the values, ideologies, and traditions of the group" Novices, on the other hand, teach the more expert members of the community what their communicative needs are, making the process 'bidirectional' (Duff, 2007, p. 311 as cited in Wingate, 2015, p. 7).

However, Lea and Street (1998) criticised this approach because it did not take into account the different diversity of students and the varied disciplines they would be studying. They also viewed this approach as a “*transparent medium of representation*” [which did not] assess the “*deep language, literacy and discourse issues*” that would occur during making meaning in discourses for their department (p. 159.) The third approach is identified:

as a *social practice* in which people engage with texts for culturally meaningful purposes, and text use occurs within *communities of practice* or groups of people who share a commitment to a goal or objective’ (Jacobs, 2012, p. 244).

The theory of ‘*communities of practice*’ has a similar notion that socialisation is involved. As Lave and Wenger (1991) states: “*communities of practice are realized in the live-in world of engagement in everyday activity*” (p. 47). For instance, in the context of everyday life such as the home, leisure activities, work; these different practices will consist of a different set of communication skills needed to communicate effectively within that community (Wenger, 1998). In Tapp’s (2015) study, she includes three theories to help investigate how students are positioned in academic literacy practices. First, Tapp (2015) believes that academic literacies is a barrier for students not familiar with the knowledge of the conventions of academia and thus what is expected of them. In addition, “*academic writing is challenging for new students*, and so uses academic literacies as a theory to “*illuminate the problem*”. Second, Tapp (2015) refers to ‘community of practice’ as a way of “*providing an analytical perspective on the process of exclusion*” (p. 711) to higher education. And third, she refers to Bernstein’s work “*into how academic literacy practices can be reimagined as a bridge rather than as a barrier to the academic community*” (Bernstein, 2000, as cited in Tapp, 2015, p. 711). What is important about this study is how Tapp uses Lave and Wenger’s theory of communities of practice. The concept of communities of practice views learning as a journey to increase participation within a community. For example, a working-class student can be viewed initially as an outsider until they fully engage in “*legitimate peripheral participation*” (Lave & Wenger, 1991, p. 29) into the community. Over time, students move towards becoming independent by taking on more complex practices. By taking on more complex practices, their journey of becoming a full member of the community will equip them with the right tools and shape their identity as a member.

Connecting these notions about peripheral participation resonates with myself. For instance, when I was an undergraduate student, I was an outsider trying to learn the ropes of academic study/life but without the support of lecturers or study skills classes. Returning to the definition of academic literacies, in a study by Nallaya (2018) who investigated the insights of lecturers and students about how the development of academic literacies is included in a study program, she defines academic literacies by stating:

academic literacies are forms of oral and written communication - genres, registers, graphics, linguistic structures; interactional patterns that are privileged, expected, cultivated, conventionalised or ritualised (p. 1).

Therefore, if an undergraduate student, during their first year, is to succeed then they must be proficient in academic skills needed for their particular discipline. However, as mentioned above, diversity and cultural backgrounds will have an effect on their succession (Nallaya, 2018). Lillis and Tuck's (2016) definition of academic literacies is viewed as an ethnographic methodology that encompasses exploring reading and writing conventions as a social practice. In a way this definition is similar to Lave and Wenger (1991) when they say literacy is a social event and practice. According to Lillis and Tuck (2016) academic literacies (plural term) refers to the various ways that reading, writing and thinking are specific to different academic disciplines. Hence, each discipline is structured by the institution and the power relations within them.

Power dynamics include those that are privileged, the *traditional* student, as they are already knowledgeable about academic conventions. Unlike those from the working-class, '*non-traditional*' students, ethnic minorities who are disadvantaged when they first embark on their higher education journey. For example, Lillis (1997) examined how Black women, juggling student, mother, and worker identities (p. 184), struggle with academic writing conventions (explored in Chapters 1 & 2). Within the UK's expansion of universities that includes more diverse groups in society, Lillis (1997) argues for inclusivity, for Black women's voices to be heard through their writing thus, emphasising the importance of diverse student voices in academic meaning-making.

Vacek (2016) investigated the identity and academic writing practices of postgraduate students and professionals within higher education and as a workplace, focusing on multilingual academics/professionals. Vacek explored how participants developed their academic writing skills. Drawing on various scholars (Burgess et al., 2010; Robinson-Pant & Street, 2012) to compare studies, they found that academic professional writing included genres like supervision notes, book chapters/reviews, reports, and articles for publication. In addition, they also drew on Lea and Stierer's (2009, 2011) work in which they included everyday writing as a connection with participants' academic writing. Although Vacek's (2016) study mainly focused on multilingual participants, I would add that investigating how doctoral graduate students and professionals from working-class and Black ethnic backgrounds develop their academic skills would resonate with this study. It must be noted that developing academic literacies is a continual process for *all* students whether they are home or international (Wingate, 2015).

My definition of '*academic literacies*' is the ability to communicate effectively in various academic settings by drawing on diverse language, experience and technical skills. For example, oral and written communication, critical thinking skills, reading to writing, computer literacy, and writing for different genres in higher education. Therefore, when using the term academic literacies this is what I refer to in this study.

2.6.3: Misunderstanding of what constitutes academic / study support

For the past 25 years, in relation to academic literacies, a key area of research in higher education has been academic/study support for students. Scholars like Lea and Street (1998),

Hallett (2013), and Wingate (2015) argued that universities should equip students with the necessary skills to navigate academic conventions in reading and writing. Studies by Hallett (2010, 2013) and Wingate (2012, 2015) highlight the discrepancy between the level of support offered and students' actual needs. For example, Hallett (2013) suggests that some lecturers may be unaware of students' struggles with academic writing, potentially due to time constraints. Wingate (2015) emphasises that inadequate university support contributes to students' difficulties with understanding academic conventions, such as first-year students who might not grasp plagiarism or referencing until explicitly taught. Additionally, Wingate (2015) and others point out that students may lack the ability to apply their knowledge of how knowledge is created (epistemology) to academic writing.

Research by Hallett (2010, 2013) highlights a gap in understanding academic support. Hallett (2010) identified a lack of research on postgraduate support, revealing the often-unfounded assumption that postgraduates already possess strong academic literacy skills. This assumption of prior academic knowledge in English is further echoed by Sibomana (2016) and Mimirinis et al. (2024). Both studies analyse how students, particularly those from diverse backgrounds (Mimirinis et al., 2024) or studying in an additional language (Sibomana, 2016), navigate academic development. Their research highlights the potential for misunderstandings between students and staff about what constitutes 'study support' and the inequalities some students face (Mimirinis et al., 2024). Sibomana's (2016) work specifically reveals how universities' assumptions about prior English language skills disadvantage students who require additional support. This, in turn, can lead to a lack of confidence and even withdrawal from studies, as Sibomana argues some universities function as '*academic border guards*' (p. 127) by trying to exclude students perceived as not meeting the university standards.

Mimirinis et al. (2024) specifically highlight the gap in literature regarding Black British students' understanding of academic support, echoing Hallett's (2010, 2013) broader call for more research on student support in general. This lack of research on Black students' experiences is a recurring theme throughout my study, reflecting a wider gap in social science research on Black students in higher education. As previously discussed, I have consistently reported experiences of discrimination, racialisation, and unequal access to resources. Overall, this lack of focus on Black students' experiences reinforces their sense of being an "Other" within a predominantly White institution, further impacting their sense of belonging (Mimirinis et al., 2024).

2.6.4: Navigating the academic landscape: The role of identity

As discussed above, identity is a main factor in developing academic abilities. A student's identity influences their writing style, vocabulary choice, and ability to follow academic conventions. These factors can significantly impact a student's ability to complete their course if they are not able to adjust. Ivanić (1998) argues that literacy practices are particularly relevant to understanding identity in academic writing. For instance, '*non-traditional*' learners often struggle to conform to academic conventions due to factors such as working-class backgrounds and extended breaks from study. Over time, I have gradually developed my academic skills. Ivanić (1998) also suggests that mature students experience identity confusion as they strive to

become part of the academic community. This resonates with my own experience navigating between my family life and the professional world, i.e. academia, requiring me to balance different aspects of my identity. Furthermore, building on Bartholomae's (1986) ideas, Ivanić (1998) emphasises that students often adopt new roles to fit into academic communities, by taking a position of authority. Consequently, in writing this thesis, I am positioning myself as an authoritative member of the social science community.

Ivanić (1998) identifies several identity issues that writers often face, including “ [is] *a sense of inferiority* [and] *a lack of confidence*”, which can be viewed as “*a sense of powerlessness*” (p. 88). These feelings can stem from limited knowledge and a perceived lack of authority, particularly for students from “*working-class background or age and gender*” (p. 88) or those who have experienced academic setbacks. As such, students may question their right to belong in academia.

When I first started university, I felt like this. I was unsure how to fit-in at university. Later, however, when I returned to study at university and through my job role as a university teacher, I began to understand what academia was about because I had developed my academic skills. For example, being a mature student and working with others a few generations below, developing academic skills in terms of technology was at first daunting. However, as I began to utilise my skills from previous studies, work experience, and my understanding of academic literacies, I have been able to, hopefully, conform to producing academic work.

2.7: Student-teacher/supervisor dynamics

The following paragraphs discuss the last of the themes created by the RTA process. Due to limited space in this thesis, I have chosen to discuss what I believe to be the most important studies connected with this thesis. It reflects events that occurred in my narrative and highlights the issues mentioned in the analysis chapters.

There is no doubt that having a good relationship with a school teacher, tutor or supervisor, in higher education, is of paramount importance to succeed. Consequently, a poor relationship can lead to academic failure and negative psychological impacts, and these effects can last a lifetime.

A strong teacher-student relationship is fundamental to learning. When there is a good rapport with a teacher, pupils have a better understanding of learning expectations and accept constructive criticism to achieve. Hence, if there is a good relationship, school pupils will have the motivation to learn, and they will prosper (Pandolpho, 2020). This includes having a mutual respect and trust for each other and as such, these components contributes to student achievement. In comparison to school children having a good relationship with their teacher, this also applies to adults studying in further or higher education (Al Makhamreh & Kutseyuruba, 2021; Liang et al., 2021).

In addition to having a strong student-teacher relationship, students need to develop a growth mindset to succeed, as emphasized by Dweck (2012, 2015). In her study about ‘mindset’, Dweck states that “*nonacademic skills are the necessary foundation for learning*” (p. 22). This

is a notion that I agree with as my own school days were impacted with many issues such as not being considered to be academic material and failing my exams in math, English, and science subjects. However, as I matured into an adult, I began to access resources that allowed me to study for my basic qualifications in Maths and English, which I thought I would not be able to do.

Dweck (2012) coined the theory of 'mindset' when she studied two groups of students over a two year period to answer questions that were above their average level. The groups were labelled as '*fixed mindset*' and '*developing mindset*'. Students with a fixed mindset often believe that intelligence is innate, and that effort is unnecessary for success. They believe that if they put an effort into tasks, they are not smart enough. Whereas students who have a developing mindset, are more inclined to succeed because they are able to take constructive criticism and slowly develop their skills needed to achieve success (Dweck, 2012). In my view, a child's ability to succeed depends on their social environment and access to resources. Providing a supportive learning environment, including positive teacher-student relationships and challenging stereotypes, coupled with adequate resources, can significantly impact student achievement.

Building on the importance of student-teacher relationships and a positive study mindset, interactions with supervisors and the feedback provided by university teaching professionals can significantly influence students' experiences, both positively and negatively. For example, they can foster feelings of insecurity and limited autonomy over one's work. Studies have shown that a student's well-being is influenced by the student-supervisor relationship. For example, Green (2019) investigated postgraduate students' perceptions of feedback comments received from their supervisors in relation to a marking criteria. They argued that supervisors ought to give constructive feedback that is explicit to aid students understanding and not just comment on their academic language skills such as vocabulary and grammar. Students in this study felt disadvantaged as supervisors failed to provide specific guidance on how to improve their task completion. In addition, Green (2019) argued that there needs to be dialogue and not monologue in giving formative or summative feedback. Al Makhamreh and Kutsyuruba (2021) focused their study on the "*nature of trust in ... doctoral supervision*" ... [and the] "*impact on the doctoral students' well-being*" (p. 124). Their findings revealed that trust was the most important aspect of the relationship in order to progress. Similarly, Liang et al. (2021) also studied postgraduate students' relationship with their supervisors. A longitudinal study conducted in China revealed that first-generation students experienced greater challenges in building positive relationships with their supervisors compared to their second-generation counterparts. The researchers emphasised the importance of supervisors actively working to enhance postgraduate students' overall satisfaction and well-being to address potential issues arising from low levels of reciprocity and probable negative consequences (Liang et al., 2021).

In relation to diversified groups in the US, microaggressions was highlighted by Ramsey et al's (2024) study as a major factor affecting counselling trainee students' well-being. Centred around the discussion about student-supervisor relationship, the study comprised of ethnic minorities from various backgrounds such as African American, Asian, Hispanic and students

with disabilities. The findings disturbingly found that these groups of students were subjected to negative feedback about their academic performance. They were not treated as equals in comparison to their White counterparts and often felt as the ‘*Other*’. Ramsey et al (2024) stated that “*students who hold minority identities encounter inequitable, exclusive and harmful environments during their training*” (p. 37). Although the studies mentioned above have been carried out in different countries, the findings of the studies have a relationship to this study in terms of the student-supervisor relationship. Even though these studies were conducted in different countries, their findings are relevant to this research on student-supervisor relationships. Similarly, research conducted by Ritter (2023) for the Centre for Equity & Inclusion (CEI) in the UK also highlighted microaggressions experienced by ethnic minority postgraduate students.

2.8: Chapter summary

This literature review identifies a significant gap in empirical research on the academic achievements of Black British students in higher education. Existing studies predominantly focus on the negative experiences of underachievement and the racialization of Black British boys and men. Moreover, there is a dearth of research on Black British women academics, particularly those from working-class backgrounds. Examining academic literacies reveals how identity is shaped within this context. Additionally, the literature suggests that the nature of academic support can significantly impact the success of ethnic minority students.

The last section of the literature review has discussed the implications of the student-supervisor relationship, emphasising the importance of a positive rapport for student well-being. While research has highlighted the experiences of various student groups, a significant gap exists in understanding the specific challenges faced by Black postgraduate students and their supervisors in the UK. This gap underscores the need for further research to explore the experiences of Black postgraduate students and their supervisors in the UK.

In the following chapter, I will discuss the methodologies, procedures and methods used in this study.

CHAPTER THREE

Methodology

3.1: Introduction

In Chapter one, I described my role as a tutor and explained my position as a researcher in this study. I also include background information about how schools and universities were formulated in the United Kingdom (UK) during the nineteenth century. Giving a brief historical review of the education system, and explaining my positionality helped set the context for this study. My discussion about the education system in the UK was further discussed in Chapter two whereby I give an historical account and view of the policies that were enacted during my time as a school pupil. I also discussed in Chapter two literature that is relevant to the final analysis of this study. In this chapter, I aim to discuss the methodology and methods used to gather data for this research project.

It was my introspection of my personal experience of studying, and as a practitioner in higher education, that first enlightened me to investigate my own journey in education. This was after I witnessed through teaching others, how academic support was not being utilised in the way that I would have done if the opportunity was there for me when I studied for my first degree. So, the main purpose for this study was to explore and make sense of how I transitioned from being educated in a '*non-traditional*' route to becoming a qualified teacher at a university. In addition, and for the support of my own data, I also aim to understand and make sense of others' experiences of their educational trajectories. To do this, and as discussed in Chapters one and two, I aim to answer the following research questions:

3.1.1: Research Questions

1. How do postgraduate students view their educational journey in relation to their social background and become a part of the academic community?
2. How have students incorporated academic literacies into their studies? What support, if any, did they receive to achieve academic success
3. How did I transition from school pupil to a student and become a teacher at a university? What challenges did I encounter along the way?

As will be discussed, I conducted this study through varying methodologies and methods, for instance, my own narrative, artefacts from my school days, a self-written interview, which is explained further in this chapter, as well as semi-structured interviews with three participants. These research methods were used to help me answer my research questions. In addition, this chapter will discuss the philosophical and theoretical lenses on which this study is based. Leading on from this, the chapter will explain the methods used in this research. This will include the research design, data collection, and analysis approach. I will also explain my

justification for the choice of methods. The limitations of this study will be discussed in the concluding chapters.

3.2: Qualitative research

Braun and Clarke (2022, p. 158) highlight that Qualitative Research (QR – Big Q) *“is not a single approach to research, with one single theory that underpins it”* [and so] *“can be viewed as an umbrella term for a variety of approaches that share some assumptions in common”*. As mentioned above, I include different methods to collect my data, for example, because I wanted to have a deeper understanding of my educational background and experience, I position myself at the centre of this research via autoethnography. Nguyenn (2019) as cited in Nkouaga (2021) confirms my belief that *“Autoethnography is an intriguing and promising qualitative method that offers me a way of giving voice to personal experience to extend sociological understanding”*. So, like Nkouaga (2021), I find that autoethnography *“is unique”* [because] I can share [extracts] of my journey and *“analysed it in a way that highlighted my perspective in the field of education and doing so helped address inequalities that my experience has brought”* (p. 54) to the forefront. In addition, autoethnography has helped me to make sense of my educational trajectories in comparison with that of others in this study.

Within this study I include extracts of my narrative, combined with excerpts from interviews conducted with other postgraduate students like me. I analysed these data through the Reflexive Thematic Analysis (RTA) process, which created themes that link the four of us together in this study.

3.3: My paradigmatic position

My paradigmatic position is that of interpretive and constructivist paradigms, therefore, my approach to answering my research questions is through those modes. For example, as well as in Education, in social science disciplines such as Psychology, social scientists may analyse data through interpretive and constructive modes. Social scientists will summarise people's lives and meaning-making around people's opinions on different social events, which may or may not be controversial. Using interpretive and constructivist paradigms, researchers *“develop accounts and versions of significant events in social interaction and through which they perform identities and social life”* (Jupp & Sage Publications, 2006, p. 154). Hence, as mentioned in Chapters one, two and above, I set out to make sense of my educational experiences by interpreting my own and others past educational trajectories. To reiterate, my aim for this study is to explore and make sense of my educational trajectory and that of others, to higher education.

Society uses paradigms daily. For instance, these include our court systems or work policies (Guba & Lincoln, 1989). Researchers also have paradigms that are used to give guidance through research projects. Paradigms are *“worldviews or belief systems that guide researchers”* (Guba & Lincoln, 1994 as cited in Tashakkori & Teddlie, 1998, p. 3). This definition was first derived by Khun (1970), who argued that *“paradigms are the models that are imitated within any given field, and that competing paradigms may exist simultaneously*

...” (Khun, 1970 as cited in Tashakkori & Teddlie, 1998, p. 3). Trying to understand Kuhn’s notion of paradigm I will explain in this study that my paradigms overlap. I do not make any revolutionary assumptions or changes from this research but follow through from the outset with what I understand my ontology beliefs of reality to be from my lived educational experiences and research practice. I take a critical stance in the way I was educated in comparison to others in this study because I am Black, and the education system was not suited for all children because of their background and culture.

Within quantitative and qualitative approaches, there are two paradigms, positivist which utilises numerical methods in scientific research whereby the researcher is objective; and interpretivism - methods that involve the researcher in the study and are subjective (Middlewood et al., 1999). My study lies within the paradigm of interpretivism. Interpretivists interpret what is seen and heard and to their best ability will try to orchestrate data for others to understand what has been researched. Strauss and Corbin (2015) contend that when analysing results, this includes *“assigning meaning to raw data in the form of concepts”*, and thus the idea of interpreting also suggests that a *“researcher’s concept is a researcher’s understanding of the meaning implicit in the words and actions of participants”* (Strauss & Corbin, 2015, p. 66). This idea of interpretation is supported by Denzin and Lincoln (2008) who highlight that:

The hermeneutic act of interpretation involves in its most elemental articulation, making sense of what has been observed in a way that communicates understanding. Hermeneutics contends perception itself is an act of interpretation. The unfamiliar always demand the attempt to make meaning to make sense (p. 414).

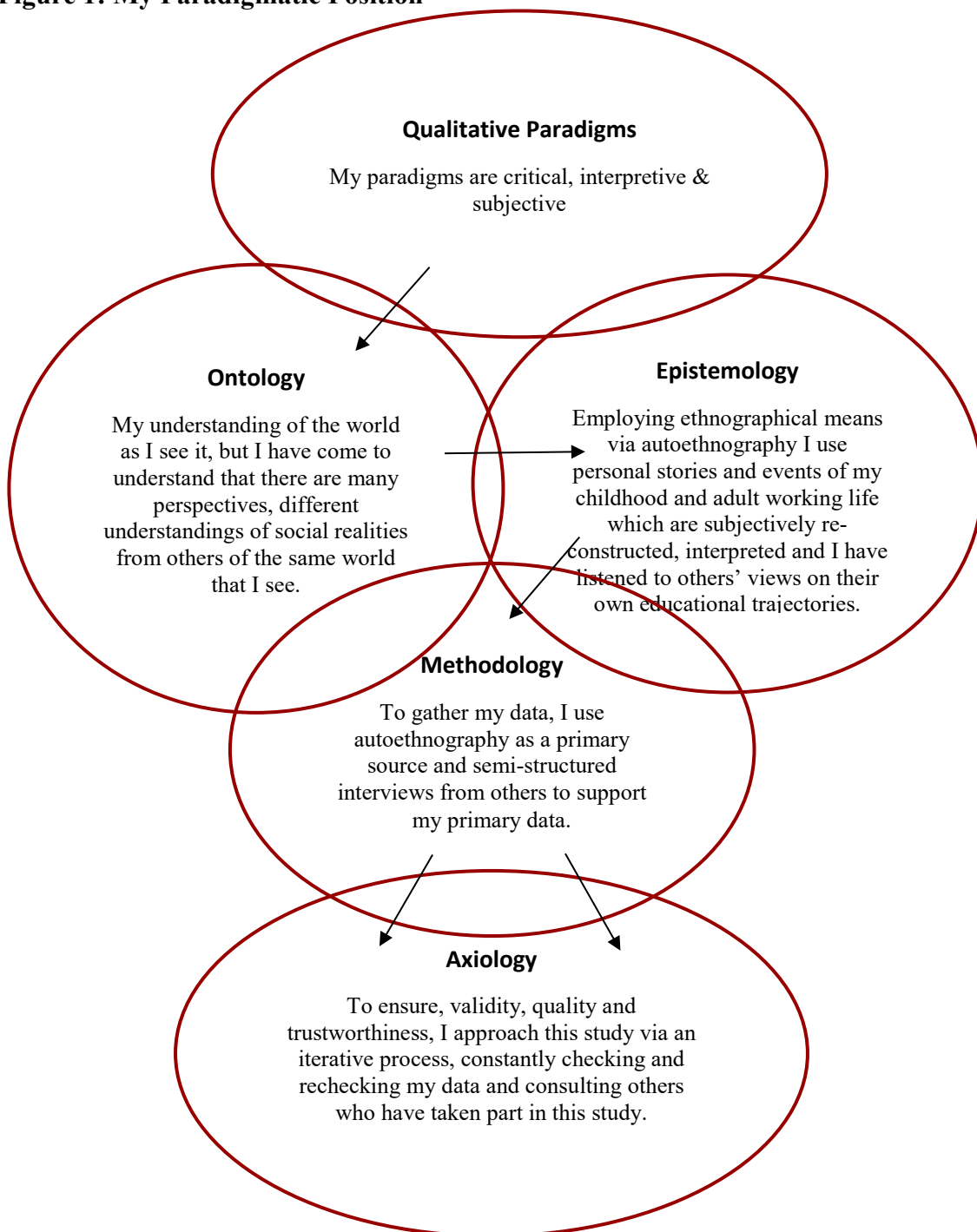
To reiterate, the aim of this study is to explore and make sense of how I transitioned from being educated in a *‘non-traditional’* way’ to becoming a qualified teacher at a university. Alongside my own educational journey, I try to make sense and interpret others. Hence, understanding the above quote, I hope to make sense of others’ educational journeys as well as my own.

When I started my doctoral journey, I did not fully understand the concepts of ontology (What is the nature of reality?) and epistemology (What counts as knowledge; What is the relationship between the researcher and that being researched? - knowledge and how knowledge claims are justified). While trying to strengthen my understanding of these two concepts, axiology is another important concept to understand, as within this study, I believe as a researcher, I am responsible for ensuring that I follow ethical guidelines as I include others in my narrative and include participants as subjects. Axiology is the *“role of values in research”* (Creswell, 2013, p. 20). The outcome of this part of my learning journey is that these concepts are imperative to relate because they interconnect with my position (Finlay, 2002) and methodological choices in this study. It is what forms the base of this study. To interconnect my ontology, epistemology, and axiology positions - methodology is the final phase of this process. The philosophical stance or a holistic view helps shape and inform my research design (Jupp & Sage Publications, 2006). Therefore, it is essential for me to clearly understand my position and the methodology I use to collate data from the outset.

I have an inquisitive mind, and I like to learn how people connect, what they think about issues that affect their lives; how they form their ideas about the world, and how their worlds are constructed (Merriam, 1998, p. 5; Thomas, 2009). This resonates with what Merriam (1998) says about *“learning about my participants’ educational experience and how they interact with their social world and the meaning it has for them is considered an interpretive qualitative approach”* (p. 4). So, to help answer my research questions as stated above, I employ the following qualitative and interpretive approach by using autoethnography, and Reflexive Thematic Analysis (RTA) to analyse my own data and data from the interviews held with the participants in this study.

I am a visual learner, and I usually employ a diagram when trying to understand different processes and concepts. Therefore, so that I have a better understanding, I illustrate below my understanding of the philosophical concepts. There is no clear division between each paradigm, but as I work through this study, my paradigms overlap.

Figure 1: My Paradigmatic Position



Reed-Danahay (1997) contends that ethnographic research “*connects the person to the cultural experience through research and writing*” (Reed-Danahay, 2006 as cited in Jupp & Sage Publications, 2006, p. 15). That it is a “*form of self-narrative*” which places the author/researcher “*within a social context*” (p. 9). I take on board the two ways that Reed-Danahay (1997) views the term auto-ethnography; first, as an *ethnographic study of a group* or second, as “*autobiographical reflections that include ethnographic observations and analysis*” (Reed-Danahay, 2006 as cited in Jupp & Sage Publications, 2006, p. 15). In this study, through autoethnographic means, I combine my own narrative with semi-structured interviews to understand others in a similar ‘societal culture’ to that of my own, namely in how we were educated in the United Kingdom (UK).

The approach to this study is unprecedented because there is limited research that has been conducted with a mixture of autoethnography and semi-structured interviews. I first came across Carl (2016), who used autoethnography and semi-structured interviews in her study about Politicians, Professors and Ombudsman. I consulted her research to make sense of how to conduct my own study and to see if there was a possibility to combine the two approaches. Carl’s (2016) study confirmed that it was possible. I located other studies such as Hamdan (2019) and Nkouaga (2021) who both use autoethnography and semi-structured interviews in their research. Therefore, including my personal narrative through an autoethnography platform with the support of semi-structured interviews, allows me to make my story of transitioning from school to higher education central to this study. It helps me answer my research questions about how I transitioned from secondary school as a pupil to higher education as a teacher and the challenges I encountered. By including myself in this study, it connects with Chang’s (2008) statement that “*Self is a subject to look into and a lens to look through to gain an understanding of a societal culture*” (p. 49). This means I use a narrative inquiry platform to gain an in-depth understanding of myself and my culture with the aim of comparing my ‘societal culture’ to that of others in this study.

As previously mentioned in Chapter one, I gave an insight into my educational and work experience. This was the starting point for me to think about this research project and to explore how I and others transitioned from school to university. Using this as the basis for my research and to help guide me during the interview process, I created research questions, which I have presented at the beginning of this chapter. At first, my method to analyse the data was to use the narrative analysis process whereby those who participated in the study would each have their own story to tell based upon the questions I asked. However, after several attempts to analyse the data, for example, I tried to see if taking a ‘dialogic analysis’ or ‘discourse analysis’ approach would be suitable, but they did not seem to fit my idea of incorporating my interpretations, feelings, reflections and thus my own narrative into the analysis. Therefore, I discussed these concerns with one of my supervisors who suggested using autoethnography as an approach that would allow me to use my own story with that of others. To make this clear to the reader, the idea for this study stemmed from noticing, from a practitioner’s point of view, how there was a lack of home students who accessed study skills in my Departmental Language Programme classes. This observation made me reminisce about how I was educated and the

lack of support that I encountered during my first degree. I always had the notion of including my own narrative but as I continued to develop as a doctoral student, and began to understand different methods, I was informed by my supervisor that including myself in the study was autoethnography.

As I developed my knowledge about autoethnography, I read an article titled '*Autoethnography as a Transformative Research Method*' by Dwayne Custer (2014). In this article, Custer (2014) tells us that autoethnography has seven lenses that create different functions. One of these lenses provides the conditions for the autoethnographer to become vulnerable. Custer (2014) explains that:

Vulnerability is not weakness, and the uncertainty, risk, and emotional exposure we face every day are not optional. Our only choice is a question of engagement. Our willingness to own and engage with our vulnerability determines the depth of our courage and the clarity of our purpose; the level to which we protect ourselves from being vulnerable is a measure of our fear and disconnection, (p. 4).

This explanation reassured me to let go of the past and be able to share my stories and personal experiences through the lens of autoethnography. Allowing myself to be vulnerable led to another of Custer's lenses, i.e. that of transformation. Custer (2014) states when we open up and become vulnerable:

Transformation occurs dramatically for the individual who is courageous enough to reveal him or herself to the world and readily embarks on a fantastic journey. It also occurs for those that participate in the process of introspection, reflexivity, and contemplation with the autoethnographer. (i.e. the readership, audience, or other researchers) (p. 11).

In retrospect, if I want to become a more confident researcher, then allowing myself to be vulnerable and be transformed, choosing autoethnography was the best choice of methodology for my thesis.

On the other hand, Custer (2014) discussed lenses of vulnerability, while Peshkin (2001) discusses different lenses through which a researcher has different ways of seeing things subjectively. One of those lens Peshkin (2001) terms is '*time*' because we often look back at historical events to better understand the current time. As he puts it, history can be seen as a lens "*become knowing what happened earlier is critical for grasping the meaning of what currently is going on*" (Peshkin, 2001, p. 242). As I include my own narrative as data, I look back in time to discuss historical events that took place with a lens to viewing and understanding them today. In addition, I make a connection with other historical events via interviews. We live in the moment that becomes the past, and in the moment, we look back by trying to understand the past. Autoethnography gives me the platform to do this, and because I

have included semi-structured interviews, this gives me the platform to try and understand others' pasts too thus connecting their experiences with that of my own.

3.4: Historical account of autoethnography

The term 'autoethnography' can be traced back to 1966 when the anthropologist David M Hayano first heard it used by Sir Raymond Firth at a structuralism seminar in London. Sir Raymond Firth talked about a research project that involved the Kikuyu people undertaken by Jomo Kenyatta in 1938 (Hayano, 1979, p. 99). Kikuyu is in Kenya. In 1979, Hayano wrote the article "Auto-Ethnography: Paradigms, Problems and Prospects". In his article, he discusses how concerned he was about how other anthropologists were conducting and presenting their ethnographic work. Of particular concern were three areas related to the overall ethnographic research process. The first was about *"how anthropologists were conducting and writing their ethnographic research on their 'own people'; the second, the problems of methodology and theory associated with this approach and third, whether anthropology can profit from these exercises"* (Hayano, 1979, p. 99). Voicing these concerns, he labelled them under the term 'auto-ethnography'. He stated that *"This definition of auto-ethnography encompasses a wide range of studies, as it includes the works of other social scientists who have done intensive participant-observation research in natural field settings"* (Hayano, 1979, p. 99). Hayano did not view auto-ethnography as a specific research technique but instead viewed it as having three areas of research that can be problematic for researchers conducting ethnographic research and for those who are involved with their subjects. He stated that issues of observation, a researcher's epistemology, and objective scientific research procedures were of critical concern (Hayano, 1979, p. 99). However, these concerns helped shape the development of autoethnography as a process and methodology for social scientists as well as anthropologists.

3.5: Defining autoethnography

While conducting this research, I came across an array of definitions of autoethnography, which can be problematic for new researchers in the social science field. So, as a developing researcher, I found it was important to have a clear understanding of which definition is best suited to this study's purpose. Below I give five definitions of autoethnography that I thought were important to mention and to help me with my research process in this study.

In addition to defining autoethnography, it is also important to distinguish between autobiography and autoethnography. In the Handbook of Autoethnography, (Holman Jones et al., 2016) inform us that the main characteristic of autoethnography *"is the use of personal experiences to examine and or critique cultural experience"* (p. 22). I situate my own narrative with a critical lens and analysis highlighting different "cultural practices; making contributions to existing research; or embracing vulnerability". Autoethnography also includes the perspectives of others in the study. An autobiography is the opposite of this, as the author will mainly write their own narrative without engagement from others.

The most notable autoethnographic study(ies) is that of Ellis et al. (2011, p. 1) They first dissect 'autoethnography' into three components. The prefix '*auto*' means self, e.g. including oneself

in the research; '*ethno*' is the root word that relates to others, e.g. race, culture, or people. It is often the main component used when researchers study others in their communities. In this study, I include three participants; The suffix '*graphy*' is the third component, which enables the researcher to begin to present their work in written form. Putting these components together, I quote Ellis et al. definition:

autoethnography is an approach to research and writing that seeks to describe and systematically analyse personal experience in order to understand cultural experience" (p5).

Ellis et al. (2011) idea of autoethnography situates well with my study because I use autoethnography as an approach to give my narrative of my trajectory from school to university. In addition, I critically analyse my own experience to understand my education's cultural experience.

As mentioned above, there are many definitions of autoethnography. Hence below are further definitions given by scholars as they try to find the most suited definition of Autoethnography. For instance, Reed-Danahay (1997) defines autoethnography:

as a form of self-narrative that places the self within a social context. It is both a method and a text (p. 6).

In a similar definition to that of Reed-Danahay (1997), Spry (2001) states that:

autoethnography is "a self-narrative that critiques the situatedness of self with others in social contexts (p. 710).

Putting these three definitions together, I connect them with my own study. They have helped me piece together my story of becoming a higher education teacher and overcoming various challenges. They have also helped me to reflect on past events and connect them with others in this study via semi-structured interviews. However, I find that I have a stronger connection with Spry's (2001) definition of autoethnography because of producing my own narrative, using a critical lens to dissect my experiences of my education, working trajectories, and thus giving the reader a rich insight into my personal life.

Other scholars place a criterion against autoethnography. For example, Chang (2013) outlines three main characteristics of autoethnography. The first:

the researcher using their own personal experiences as primary data; second, autoethnography expands the understanding of social phenomena and uses various writing products; third, autoethnography processes can vary and result in different writing products (Chang, 2013, p. 108).

Whereas Anderson (2006) gives five characteristics of autoethnography:

analytic autoethnography; complete member researcher; analytic reflexivity; narrative visibility of the researcher self; dialogue with informants beyond self and a commitment to theoretical analysis (p. 378).

In the Handbook of Autoethnography by Holman Jones et al. (2016), Carolyn Ellis writes:

autoethnography is not simply a way of knowing about the world; it has become a way of being in the world, one that requires living consciously, emotionally, and reflexively. It asks that we not only examine our lives but also consider how and why we think, act, and feel as we do. ...observe ourselves observing, ... interrogate what we think and believe, ... we challenge our own assumptions... (p. 10).

Interpreting this quote from Ellis (2013), I interpret it to inform us how autoethnography has evolved to allow researchers to become more than just passive observers in an ethnographic research project. An autoethnographer has become an active observer by channelling emotions through reflexivity in the hope that they can make a difference to others. I hope this study will set out to inform others of how I was educated in a '*non-traditional*' way to become a teacher in higher education and in comparison, to how others were educated in a 'traditional' way between the 1950s - 2000s.

Therefore, in understanding these arrays of definitions of autoethnography for my study, I define autoethnography as a means for me to be able to explore my educational trajectory from being a school pupil to becoming a university teacher. Thus, by giving a narrative of my personal educational trajectory and through reflexivity, I hope to give the reader an analytical and evocative view of my own narrative enabling the reader to understand my education trajectories.

3.6: Critiques of autoethnography

While there are scholars who have welcomed autoethnography as an approach to qualitative research there are those who are sceptical and critical. For example, they accuse autoethnographers as being:

narcissists, [and] too emotional; have carried out very little field work; observing too few cultural members and not spending enough time with others from other backgrounds or culture (Buzard, 2003; Fine, 2003; Delamont, 2009 as cited in Ellis et al., 2011, p. 283).

In addition, autoethnographers are seen by critics as:

Catering to the sociological, scientific imagination and trying to achieve legitimacy as scientists, while at the same time, autoethnographers neglect the "literary, artistic imagination and the need to be talented artists (Gingrich-Philbrook, 2005 as cited in Ellis et al., 2011, p. 283).

In response to the critics, conducting my autoethnography research has been challenging. This was because writing my own narrative required me to delve into the past to recall events that occurred throughout my educational trajectory. Some of those events were emotional as I recall how I left school. I looked back at artefacts, such as writing a profile of myself, (Appendix 21)

that required me to make sense of what those artefacts meant at the time and how they have affected me today. I incorporated what Anderson (2006) says should be, i.e. analytical, and what Ellis et al. (2011) says is evocative.

As well as using my own narrative as data, I use semi-structured interviews with autoethnography to gather other peoples' experiences of how they were educated. Therefore, while an autoethnographic study is usually about one person, this study includes three other participants. However, it cannot be said that this study is an 'autoethnographic - collaborative' study whereby the participants would, for example, write their own stories.

In discussing further criticisms, Jones (2008) claims that autoethnography is a blurred genre because:

it overlaps with, and is indebted to, research and writing practices in anthropology, sociology, psychology, literary criticism, journalism, and communication . . . [and the work of] storytellers, poets, and musicians (p. 765).

I agree and understand that autoethnography is indebted to and first derived from the anthropological field and has since evolved to more disciplines; it is more than just storytelling, poetry, or used by musicians. Other studies, such as Dethloff (2005) and Bellinfantie (2018), use autoethnography to report on their challenges in becoming principals in a university. Some theses report on the use of video games for example, Rhodes (2021) or comics to tell their stories such as Bailey (2022), which further demonstrates that autoethnography is evolving. In this study, I use my own narrative that includes artefacts from my school days, and with that of others to critically interpret how we transitioned from school to university.

Anderson (2006) is another critic of autoethnography. He views autoethnographers as being lazy, not doing enough field work such as spending time with others as participants/subjects or observing others in a study, for example, in ethnographic studies. He sees autoethnography as being too emotional, and by reporting on one own's story, he claims autoethnographers could be biased in their research data. He states: "*the dominance of evocative autoethnography has obscured recognition of the compatibility of autoethnographic research with more traditional ethnographic practices*" (p. 373) and claims that autoethnography should be more analytical. As will be discussed in the following chapter, I employ an analytical process that Anderson suggests. This analytical process comprises Anderson's five criteria as discussed below.

Further, critics such as Ellis (2009); hooks (1994); Keller (1995) all argue that under scientific standards, autoethnography is lagging in being rigorous, theoretical, and analytical but can be seen as being too aesthetic, emotional, and therapeutic. In conducting this study, I fail to resonate with these criticisms as I find producing my narrative as part of the data for this study quite challenging in terms of how I tell the story(s) that I include in my narrative. I include others within my narrative, but also, by conducting semi-structured interviews, I include an ethnographic aspect to this study, so producing a report of the data is another challenge that I

had to develop to keep the reader engaged. I believe, as I hope this study will show, that autoethnographers can produce a scientific study that aligns with scientific standards. For example, through analysis I employ a critical theoretical framework and in addition, this study has incorporated semi-structured interviews. These are my own examples that resonate with Ellis et al. (2011) examples of what critics say that autoethnography lacks. Ellis et al. (2011) quoted Moro (2006), who says, "*it takes a 'darn good' writer to write autoethnography*" (p. 283). Therefore, conducting this study has been reflexive and reflective throughout the process, and as I write, I think about three questions that Ellis et al. (2011) ask: Who will read my work? How will they be affected by it? And how will it keep a conversation going?

To reiterate, I employ both Anderson's analytical criteria and Ellis's evocative style as I tell others of my life story, which has been challenging and emotional recalling incidents that occurred. This autoethnographic study aims to illuminate how our educational systems were administered for school children, particularly those from diverse and disadvantaged backgrounds, between the 1960s and 2000s. Inequality significantly impacted how ethnic minority children, and the working class were symbolically marginalised within the British education system. I discuss the implications and recommendations further in Chapter nine.

3.7: Anderson's five list criteria

As mentioned previously, Anderson's criteria list five points an autoethnographic researcher should include to create an 'analytical autoethnography'. First, the researcher should be part of the research group or setting; second, the researcher should engage in analytic reflexivity, demonstrating that he or she is aware of the effect that a researcher will have on the study; third, the researcher should be "*committed to an analytic research agenda focused on improving theoretical understandings of broader social phenomena*"; fourth, a researcher must have "*dialogue with informants beyond the self*" and the fifth, autoethnographers should commit to theoretical analysis (Anderson, 2006, pp. 373-375). Therefore, Anderson's criteria is incorporated into this study.

Anderson's notion of autoethnography sits well with my study as it outlines that I should be transparent, truthful, and give a clear interpretation of my data; I include some of the features he suggests. For example, I use my own experiences through narrative text as data as part of this study. I also employ analytic reflexivity to reflect and make clear the position that I have in this study, making my position clear from the outset and transparent to those who will read my work. By including my narrative, I hope to inform others of the social issues that occurred when I went to school. However, some of the elements of Anderson's analytical autoethnography overlap with that of Ellis' evocative autoethnographic ideas because by including my own narrative, as Anderson states, I hope to "*evoke emotional resonance with the reader*" (Anderson, 2006, p. 387; Ellis et al., 2011 as cited in Denzin & Lincoln, 2013, p. 74) to give thick descriptions so that the reader can have a deeper understanding of the challenges I encountered.

3.8: Employing a narrative approach

As previously discussed, this study is about my educational trajectories of becoming a higher education practitioner. My story encompasses challenges and achievements and is told through an autoethnographic and narrative platform. I also include themes that developed through reflexive thematic analysis (RTA) by interviewing others to gain a deeper understanding of the challenges they may have experienced at school and how they transitioned from school to university. A narrative inquiry method overlaps with that of autoethnography and is found to be the best-suited platform for me to include my story. It also connects with Jones' (2008) notion that "*autoethnography is a balancing act... works to hold self and culture together, albeit not in equilibrium or stasis*" (p.763). Therefore, while using an autoethnography platform where I refer to myself using 'I', a narrative platform is also used to tell the reader my story.

Lieblich et al. (1998) state that "people are natural storytellers; their stories give coherence and continuity to their existence" (Lieblich et al., 1988, as cited in Muncey, 2010, p. 43). In this study, I give my own narrative so that readers have a deep understanding of my background, culture, and challenges that I encountered and an understanding of how my story connects with that of others. I give my story so that there is coherence with how it has connected with the world both in the past, the present and possibly, the future, which resonates with continuity. In addition, I include myself in this study because I want to inform and give others an understanding of my culture and the journey I took to be where I am today.

In this study, I will refer to my story as a 'narrative' rather than 'narrative inquiry'. Some scholars state that both terms are used interchangeably, so it is best to define which term will be used for this study. For instance, Clandinin (2006) stated that we needed to take care in "*how we use the terms 'narrative' and 'narrative inquiry'*" (p. 44) because as we begin to explain these terms, they become more intertwined with each other in relation to ideas and methodologies than we realise. Bruner (2004) believed that telling a narrative is "*an astonishing thing*" (Bruner, 2004, as cited in Clandinin, 2006, p. 44). It is a way to tell others what we know and what we have experienced and as termed by Clandinin (2006) "*narrative is a mode of knowing*" (p. 44). Therefore, while Bruner (2004) directs us to the notion of the narrative being a way of knowing, on the other side of this is narrative being a method that a researcher can use in research (Clandinin, 2006, p. 44). I chose to do both. First, I give my narrative, where I discuss my educational experience. Second, I use narrative as a method to tell the stories of the participants in this research.

Using narrative as a method of storytelling and including data collected from interviews is another example of Lieblich et al. (1998) definition of narrative as a methodology to use in research. For example, Lieblich et al. (1998) see narrative research as any data collated from an interview or a text to be analysed as narrative research (p. 3). This idea resonates with the data collated from the interviews I conducted with the participants in this study. Varying themes were developed through the analysis, which helped to understand better the experiences the participants encountered during their lifetime to the present.

In another debate, Hendry (2010) believed that research overall is narrative and, therefore, narrative is not a method. A similar view by scholars such as Carless and Douglas (2017) viewed narrative as a “*research method and a way of theorising psychological and social phenomena*” (p. 307). Both these definitions are understandable and, in a way, come under autoethnography as there are different ways to produce writing and so resonates with Maree’s (2019) view that narrative research can be seen as an “*umbrella*” term used for different approaches, which include individuals telling their story through text, visuals or interviews and in essence, this correlates with Clandinin and Huber’s (2010) notion of narrative research.

As mentioned previously, I use my own narrative, artefacts from my school days, in addition, emails, my self-written interview and data collated from semi-structured interviews. I connect with Creswell and Poth (2018), who say that narratives can include the researcher’s own life experience because as a researcher gathers information about their participants, the researcher may connect different themes and events that may have meaning for the researcher (Creswell & Poth, 2018). For example, using Reflexive Thematic Analysis (RTA) to analyse my semi-structured interviews’ data, themes such as ‘*social class and family background*’ were developed because there is a connection with my own experience. Therefore, using a narrative platform has helped me to “*communicate and understand*” [other] *people and events*” (Hardy, 1968 as cited in Conle, 2010, p. 50). I found using a narrative method of research rewarding because it was a way of organising and making sense of information and knowledge that I gained from researching literature, recalling my past through memory, artefacts, and conducting interviews. For example, understanding the differences of how each of us in this study was educated over fifty years. Having participants who were educated between 1950 to 2000s created a deeper understanding of the educational policies in place and their effects on each of us. Using autoethnographic and narrative methods enabled me to have a voice and allowed themes to be recognised (Creswell, 2013) and link to the participants.

To restate my position, including me in this study helps me to understand my past experiences through school, work, and study. Bellinfantie (2018, p. 67) cites Charmaz and Mitchell (1996), who puts this as a “... *construction of meaning for both me and any participants that may be involved*” (Charmaz & Mitchell 1996, p. 58 as cited in Bellinfantie, 2018, p. 67). However, writing one's own narrative has its challenges; for instance, some scholars believe that ethnographic studies should be conducted without including the researcher. I disagree with this notion because including myself in this study has helped me to compare and understand why I had different educational experiences.

Furthermore, and as discussed above, this study uses an autoethnographic and a narrative perspective. Both methods are intertwined and allow me to use the first-person singular - ‘I’ so that I connect with my reader to have a deeper understanding of “*contextual details, dialogue, emotion, and self-consciousness and stories affected by history, social structure and culture*” (Ellis & Bochner, 2000 as cited in Dethloff, 2005, p. 68). It enables the reader, as stated by Dethloff (2005), to “... *draw on the author's experience to support their understanding of a particular culture*” (p. 59). For example, my educational background is part of my story that will impact readers because of the challenges I encountered before I succeeded at university.

Hence, as mentioned previously, I include myself in this research, and I, therefore, employ various interpretive modes to do this. In defining narrative, Muncey (2010) states (that) it is an approach that overlaps with that of autoethnography. In a further definition by Muncey (2010), she quotes Polkinghorne (1988), who contends that *"narratives are people's identities; the stories people tell shape and construct the narrator's personality and reality as the story is retold and reconstructed throughout that individual's life"* (p.43). This means that my narrative helps shape this study.

In my narrative, I show others my identity of who I have become as a teenage mum, student, and teacher. Here I portray three different types of identities, which all have a consequence on the outcome of my life, and these identities have helped shape my personality. Polkinghorne *"argues that a recorded narrative is a snapshot in time; the story changes according to the context in which it is told"* (as cited in Muncey, 2010, p. 43). I take a different view because my story is one of emotion and is unique, and I have given a full narrative of my life; I try to make sense of the experiences and challenges that I encountered throughout my journey (Mishler, 1986 as cited in Muncey, 2010, p. 43). Most of what I have told in my narrative is from memory, artefacts such as school reports, college work, and emails that have helped me assemble my narrative. I use the term narrative to avoid confusing it with 'storytelling' as some scholars will use it interchangeably. Storytelling is when another person reads someone's story, and it is a repetitive activity. However, Denzin, (1989, p. 37, as cited in Muncey, 2010, p. 43) defines storytelling as a *"sequence of events that are significant for the narrator and his or her audience"*. In essence, this study uses a narrative method and autoethnography as they intertwine, centring the self.

3.9: Interviews

In qualitative research, interviews are a powerful tool for collating data (Tashakkori & Teddlie, 1998). Interviews enable the researcher to converse with their participants on a one-to-one basis in the *"attempt to understand their world from the participants' point of view, and to unfold meaning of their experiences"* (Brinkmann & Kvale, 2015, p. 65). While it appears to be easy to say that a study will incorporate interviews to collate data, conducting interviews requires the researcher to have a method of conducting those interviews. For instance, the way in which interviews are carried out is influenced by the purpose of the study. For example, my research questions were used as a guide to formulate and structure questions for the interviews and my self-written interview. In addition, the interviews are also influenced by my ontology position, for example, my *"...unvoiced assumptions about the nature of social science"* (Arksey et al., 1999, p. 1). I wanted to learn about the experiences of my participants' educational trajectories. Therefore, I created questions to ask about feelings, such as *'What was it like being in an all-girls school'* (Saldaña, 2013, p. 61). My epistemological stance is aligned with my questions of wanting to have a deeper understanding of the participants' perceptions of being in school or work. As Saldaña (2013) suggests, this is found when analysing the data. For instance, questions such as: how did you ... or what ...? (See Appendix 1) These questions were part of my process of analysing the data using Reflexive Thematic Analysis (RTA).

3.9.1: My self-written interview

My reason for doing a self-written interview was at first the encouragement from one of my supervisors. I felt uncomfortable about doing a self-interview because I could not see the connection between myself and the participants in this study. I did not believe that it would work. However, after careful consideration, my self-written interview allowed me to analyse how I would answer the same questions I put to the participants and whether the answers would be adequate for rich data.

When writing this thesis, there was limited literature regarding written self-interviews. However, I came across Black (2015), who did a self-interview entitled *'The Beginning of Social time: an interview with myself'*. His reason for this was that he was not satisfied with how interviewers asked him questions about his work, so he felt he needed to ask himself the questions he thought were appropriate. He also states [that] *"interviewing myself also allows me to go into as much detail as I wish"* (p. 382). In my self-interview, I tried to give as detailed an answer as I would if an interviewer interviewed me.

3.9.2: Semi-structured interviews

As mentioned above, I have included my own narrative as primary data for this study through an autoethnographic platform. The reader may ask, so why add semi-structured interviews? I wanted to experience and capture the stories of others to obtain an in-depth understanding of how others were educated and in addition, how academic literacies were incorporated into their educational trajectories. To support my choice of using these methods, I drew on a study conducted by Carl in 2016, whose aim of the study was to encourage developing researchers to *"anticipate how they will feel"* (Jewkes, 2011: 64 as cited in Carl, 2016, p. 33). I drew on another study by Hamdan (2019) on International Students' Identities and their Educational and Social Trajectories using autoethnography and semi-structured interviews. The researcher explored their *"own experiences around identity, education as an international student and other participants' experiences"* (p.1). In addition, another study looked at identity with Japanese teachers of TESOL (Teaching English for Other Languages) using various methods that included narrative analysis, case studies, autoethnography and interviews. Drawing on these studies helped me to structure my study using autoethnographic means.

3.9.3: My decision not to use other qualitative methods

Arksey et al. (1999) state that in deciding whether to use interviews to collate data, deciding not to use other methods need to be justified. I decided to incorporate semi-structured interviews because I wanted to have an in-depth understanding of my participants' experiences of their educational trajectories and collate rich data from their interviews, e.g. transcripts. There were other methods that I considered such as case studies, but it was deemed difficult to do because of the COVID-19 restrictions. In addition, there was no face-to-face teaching during the time I was collecting data, so it was not possible to conduct any observations during class time which would form part of collecting data under a case study method.

Focus groups were also considered to collate data as another qualitative approach, but I viewed it as inappropriate for this study. This was because the participants are from various backgrounds and of different ages and I felt that the participants would feel uncomfortable talking about their educational backgrounds. For example, one of my interview questions asked about feedback from their tutors/supervisors. The response I received from one of the participants was emotional, and they did not want to be identified. Two of my participants went to private schools and I think this would have had an emotional effect on another participant as they went to a state school. Therefore, incorporating a focus group was not suitable for this study because it may have discouraged some participants *“from sharing sensitive or personal information”* because there would be no guarantee that their *“anonymity could be ensured”* (Adler et al., 2019, p. 11), therefore, it was important to keep their confidentiality, anonymity, and trust (Bloor, 2001).

3.9.4: Conducting the interviews

Generally speaking, *“...an interview is a conversation that has a structure and a purpose”* (Brinkmann & Kvale, 2015, p. 65). In semi-structured interviews, a *“general structure”* is organised *“in advance”*, for example, deciding on what areas are to be covered and thus what type of questions will be asked before the interview. Then, the *“detailed structure is worked out during” the interview* (Drever & Scottish Council for Research in Education, 2003, p. 1). Drawing on Drever and Scottish Council for Research in Education (2003) definition of semi-structured interviews, this is how the interviews were conducted for this study. For example, interviewees could answer questions at their own pace using their own words. The researcher can listen and, if necessary, prompt the interviewee by asking prompting questions to allow the participant to expand on their answer. In this study, semi-structured interviews gave me the opportunity to seek answers beyond what was expected from my initial question and thus go into a non-structured dialogue with the participants, hence, learning more about their social, educational, and working life (Arksey et al., 1999; May, 2011; Walliman, 2016). For example, I listened to a lengthy anecdote about ‘risks’ during the interview with participant two. Furthermore, interviews are flexible and conducting my research using semi-structured interviews gave me the flexibility to ask questions that were structured as open-ended, for example, ‘Why do you think they changed it?’ (question put to Lester regarding his diploma/master's degree) and closed-ended, for example, ‘where are you from?’ or what was your first degree? (See Appendix 1)

During the 2020 pandemic, a traditional research method of face-to-face interviews was not feasible for me to conduct this study. So, from March 2020, during the COVID-19 lockdown period, the Internet became the main source of communication worldwide. Online video meetings and interviews became the new norm, and as Adom et al. (2020) confer, *“... it became the fastest and reliable means of collecting qualitative data”* (p. 3). Although it was going to be challenging for me, I had to find a solution for collecting my data during the pandemic, and so, individual online interviews were the way forward.

There are many different types of applications (Apps) that can be used to interview participants

in a research project, for example, Facebook, WhatsApp, Skype, or Google Meet, whereby you can see the person you are talking to (FaceTime). However, unlike Adom et al. (2020), who state in their study that online interviews “*is just like a face-to-face interview*” (Nehls, Smith & Schneider, 2015 as cited in Adom et al., 2020, p. 3) for me, none of these apps has the same effect as being in the same room as the other person. This is partly because if a participant and the researcher are in the same room, body language, facial expressions, and interference with sound are not distorted, and the fear of losing connection is not experienced. However, there was no way around this, and I was going to have to decide whether to wait for the pandemic to ease and see if there was an opportunity to meet my participants in person or to choose an app that would allow me to continue with my research, albeit online. In the end, I opted to conduct my interviews using Google Meet. I then had to work out how to conduct my interviews safely, following the correct procedures outlined in the ethics policy, by the University of Sheffield, to ensure confidentiality. Therefore, conducting individual interviews online needed to be carefully planned.

The COVID-19 pandemic had restricted people's movement and being in a room with others, so the only option for conducting the interviews was in the participants' own environment. As a teacher and researcher my workstation was in the same place in my home - in the attic - and this was the same for all the interviews. The participants were informed that interviews were going to take place online, and each had ticked the box on the consent form to indicate that this would be alright for them. They were asked about a time that was most suitable for them. I also had to think and check whether they were in a comfortable place in their home. When I met them, I asked if they were comfortable with where they were to conduct the interviews. Once I was told that they were fine, the interviews began. All participants were given the opportunity to stop or withdraw if they needed to. In hindsight, conducting my interviews online allowed the participants to have a certain amount of naturalness synchronously as if being in the same room (Nehls, Smith & Schneider, 2015, as cited in Adom et al., 2020). The online interviews were also accommodating for one of the participants, who was a long-distance student. In Goodwin's (2022) thesis entitled 'Working Class Women's Academic Lived Experiences of Wellbeing in Higher Education', she comments on her own and the participants' home environment by saying how their environment “*added to the richness of their stories...*”. (p. 70). This is what I experienced when I conducted my interviews with two of the participants. They were talking to me in their homes, which was invigorating. I agree with her statement when she adds the “*power imbalances between the participant and researcher*” (p.70) were balanced out because we were each in our own homes and spaces, which took away the feeling of authority over the other. The first interview conducted with participant one took place in her workplace. This did not affect the relationship we developed during the interview; it enhanced it because we talked about our experiences of taking a leave of absence from our studies and working.

3.10: Autoethnography ethics

In the Handbook of Autoethnography, Tullis (2013) confirms to me that doing autoethnography is more challenging than it sounds just because it is a method of collating data that includes the self as a primary source. It requires the same level of ethical scrutiny as other ethnographic studies.

Including oneself in a study requires the researcher to be aware of the ethical problems that may be encountered and how writing about oneself, which includes personal experiences to understand certain aspects of culture, does not eradicate or resolve ethical issues. Tullis draws on Clandinin and Connelly (2004), who states that *"including oneself opens up more and complex ethical dilemmas, which may be scrutinised by the institutional review board"* (p. 244). Therefore, autoethnographers need to think about the personal, social, political, and ethical considerations of using their personal experiences as a primary source of research data. When I set out on this doctoral journey, I was always aware of the importance of protecting my participants in my study. As a qualitative/interpretive researcher, I knew the procedures required to ensure that I thought carefully about how I was going to collate data from participants in a safe manner and how that data was going to be safely stored.

As will be explained in the data analysis section, I followed the procedure to obtain ethical approval for this study from the University of Sheffield. I also state that the main aim of this study is to explore how I transitioned from a school pupil to become a university practitioner as well as others' experiences of their educational trajectories. Hence, in this study, ethical considerations are twofold. First, I need to ensure that I am protected, and second, to ethically protect others in my narrative, as well as my participants.

Sikes (2015) points out that there is an ethical burden upon researchers when researching, writing, or representing lives. For example, my name is on the front page of this thesis as well as the name of the University. Others reading this study could connect who I am with my family members, who are not named in my narrative. I was also reminded by Tullis (2013) and Ellis (2009) that *"drawing upon memory or engaging field notes or interview data autoethnographically"* (Tullis, 2013, p. 247) *"writing about yourself always involves writing about others"* (Ellis, 2009a, p. 13). This notion of others being identified corresponds with Sikes (2015) who tells us that *"if autoethnographic accounts really are autoethnographic, everyone who appears in the narrative is potentially, if not explicitly identified"* (p.1). My narrative is a real account of my experiences and challenges from school, work, and university. This falls in line with Tullis' (2013) notion that *"autoethnographers who choose to use memories and emotional recall as the basis for narrating experiences"* need to ensure that they adequately inform the institution's review board of their intentions to use previous knowledge for data (Tullis, 2013, p. 247). Being informed that I had an ethical obligation to inform others of my intent to use myself as data enticed me to develop further my understanding of the importance of ethical issues that could affect myself, that of my participants, and those who are connected through my own narrative.

I was constantly conscious of the process and how this worked in relation to myself as an autoethnographer, for example, my vulnerability. This consciousness led me to follow guidelines adapted over the years from various scholars. For example, Sikes (2015) lists a few guidelines offered by other scholars, such as Ellis, 1995 & 2007; Chang, 2008; Tolich, 2010; Sikes, 2010 and 2013, for autoethnographers to think about when conducting autoethnographic research and writing (Sikes, 2015). I believe in following ethical guidelines in any study, and in this autoethnographic study, I have incorporated some of these guidelines.

As mentioned above, one of the scholars for suggesting guidelines in autoethnographic studies is Ellis (2007), who suggests that a researcher considers three ethical dimensions. The first is procedural, which I briefly described above, and how my study fits into my institutional ethical procedure system. The second of Ellis' aspects concerns "*ethics in practice*" or "*situational ethics*," for example:

the kind that deals with the unpredictable, often subtle, yet ethically important moments that come up in the field.... For example, what if someone discloses something harmful, asks for help, or voices discomfort with a question or her or his own response? (2007, p. 4)

When planning semi-structured interviews, I considered the potential vulnerability of participants. To address this, I developed a system to support participants who might become distressed by my questions. So, any confidential information disclosed by the participants was securely stored using my university's account.

As discussed previously and will be further discussed in the data analysis chapter, one of the participants talked about how unhappy they were about their first feedback on an assignment. This disclosure fits in with Ellis's (2007) aspect of dealing with an unpredictable moment that could occur during research, in this case, during my semi-structured interviews.

3.10.1: Relational ethics

The above paragraphs briefly describe the procedural process of ethics and situational ethics. In addition, Ellis (2007) also gives us 'relational' ethics. Relational ethics is about ensuring that the researcher has a duty of care to themselves and that of others in their study who are alive or have passed away. Ellis goes on to tell us that "*Relational ethics recognizes and values mutual respect, dignity, and connectedness between researcher and researched, and between researchers and the communities in which they live and work*" (Lincoln, 1995, p. 287 as cited in Ellis, 2007, p. 4). Recognising the potential impact that my narrative will have on others, I am mindful of the implications for both living and those who have reached adulthood. This is because they may one day read my work. Therefore, I intend to inform those implicated to "*act from*" my "*heart and mind; to be caring [and]... to bring respect and dignity to the researcher relationship*" (Denzin & Lincoln, 2013, p. 75). Are we obliged to inform others who are implicated in our research?

In answer to the above question, Denzin quotes Ellis and Bochner (2000), who state that "*autoethnographers are obliged to share their work with those who are implicated in their*

texts, including giving them space to talk" (Ellis & Bochner, 2000, p. 275, as cited in Denzin & Lincoln, 2013, p. 75). While I partly agree with the idea of informing those who are implicated in my narrative, this study was limited to that aspect of relational ethics. The reason being this study is a small-scale study and some of my data goes back to my childhood. With regards to my childhood, most of those who are implicated are no longer living, for example, most of my school teachers. However, my immediate family members are still living apart from my stepfather. My immediate family members are the ones that are implicated in my work experiences and courses: master's degree and Doctoral programme (EdD). In comparison to the participants, each had the opportunity to discuss their first interview responses during the second phase of interviews. This falls in line with having an ethical connection with those who were being researched. I quote Ellis (2007) who says by "*repeatedly questioning and reflecting on my ethical decisions, I have gained a greater understanding of the range of my choices and the kind of researcher I want to be with my participants*" (p. 5). Therefore, taking these relational ethics aspects into account I strive to continuously take into consideration how my narrative will affect others in this study.

3.10.2: Semi-structured interviews & ethical processes

Online interviews were conducted for this study, except for the second interview of the first participant, where this second interview took place in a classroom. A researcher needs to consider certain criteria for online, as well as face to face interviews. Due to the pandemic restrictions, I needed to think carefully about where I would conduct the interviews and how I would keep my participants' personal details secure. The University was closed because of the restrictions imposed by the pandemic, so my options were limited, and therefore, it had to be in the comfort of our homes. For me, this was in the attic room where I worked and studied; for the participants, this was in their homes or workspaces. I also had to think about whether I would be intruding on their privacy and to make it clear that if they wanted to withdraw, there was no penalty to do this (James & Busher, 2009). In hindsight, conducting my interviews online allowed the participants to have a certain amount of naturalness and synchronously as if being in the same room (Nehls, Smith & Schneider, 2015, as cited in Adom et al., 2020).

As well as thinking about their environment, participants' emotions and feelings need to be considered. As the researcher, I needed to assure the participants that anything they conversed with me was kept confidential. To illustrate this, I was aware of how emotional one of my participants was about her first feedback. This was portrayed through her body language, her tone of voice and her chosen words. For example, she states how getting a low grade, i.e. 56%, brought back school memories. She clarified that she did not want anyone from her course – department to know what was said, but she was happy for me to highlight her concerns. As a tutor for the university, I understood how a marking criterion is theoretically created and organised. Still, as I was an insider, a participant in this study, and an outsider - researcher/teacher, my moral, ethical duty of care in this situation was to ensure that I listened attentively and made notes. As the outside/teacher, I told her I would pass on her concerns to the department about how she received feedback about her first assignment. As part of the ethical confidentiality process, she would be kept anonymous. (This part of the interview was

recorded, but as stated in this methodology section and on the ethical approval application, all recorded data will be destroyed after this doctoral process has been concluded.)

It was paramount that ethical approval be sought to progress with my research. In 2019, I received approval from the University of Sheffield to carry out my research face-to-face and in a classroom environment. However, because of the changes due to the pandemic - COVID-19, I had to ensure that I amended my ethical application form to cover this. In December 2020, I sent my ethical application to the ethics department. Minor changes were made to incorporate the pandemic, but it proved to be more complicated than the first time. It took longer because there was a new set of reviewers looking at my application. Even though it passed the previous time, a few issues, such as grammar or informing participants about the recording of interviews, was not clear to them. I applied in December 2020 and received approval in February 2021 (Appendix 2: Approval Letter).

In the 'Specialist Research Ethics Guidance' notes for researchers (2018) provided by the University of Sheffield, it states that:

If you are processing (i.e. collecting, storing, using, disclosing, or destroying) identifiable personal information about living individuals, then you should ensure that you comply with the requirements of the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) and the Common Law Duty of Confidentiality (2018, p.1).

Therefore, following those procedures, I needed to secure my participants' data as the interviews would be conducted online. Each of my volunteers was required to read an information sheet, and if they agreed to take part, they then read and signed a consent form (Appendix 3 & 4). To help me do this, I used the DocuSign software provided by Google. This allowed the participants to sign the consent form securely and for me to save their signed forms electronically on my student's Google Drive account in a secure folder on an electronic device. Once I received a signed consent form, DocuSign gave a date stamp, assuring that the consent form had been signed.

3.10.3: Keeping confidentiality and the choosing of pseudonyms

After ethical approval was granted, some of the participants were recruited using the University's emailing system, and two of the participants were recruited through one of my Departmental Language Programme (DLP) classes.

Scholars such as Coolican (1999); Creswell (2013) and Roberts (2016) remind researchers that it is important to keep participants' confidentiality. Identity needs to be protected throughout the research process, from the initial recruitment through to the publishing stage of the research. Participants' privacy must be respected and protected by giving them fictitious or pseudonyms. In reporting findings, the research should "*avoid disclosing information that would harm participants*" by using "*composite stories so that individuals cannot be identified*" (Creswell, 2013, p. 59, as cited in Allen & Wiles, 2016, p. 150). However, guidance and use of templates for ethical approval by institutions include statements such as the following, but they omit to inform researchers how to assign pseudonyms (Allen & Wiles, 2016):

All the information that I collect about you during the course of the research will be kept strictly confidential and will only be accessible to members of the research team. You will not be able to be identified in any reports or publications unless you have given your explicit consent for this; Participants' personal information will be anonymised and unidentifiable (p. 150).

This also applies to place names, although this is not made explicitly clear in the participant information sheet where it states, "*Participants' personal information will be anonymised and unidentifiable*" This is assumed that it refers to place names also. (See Appendix 4)

3.11: Recruiting the participants

I used two criteria for recruiting participants. First, participants needed to be undergraduates or postgraduates in their studies, and second, students needed to be home students. The reason for asking for home students was because in my role as a DLP teacher, it was noticeable that home students did not attend academic support classes/workshops in comparison to international students. Being educated in the UK was the other reason. Therefore, using these two criteria points would help me learn about home students' perceptions of academic literacy and would help me to understand how students perceived their journey into a UK higher education institution.

In a handout, I stated:

My study is about academic literacy'. This is a term commonly used across the academic community in the UK. I would like to know what this term means to you and to hear your views ... of the Departmental Language Programme (DLP) provision as a 'home' student.

If you are an undergraduate and a 'home' student, in your first year of study, I would like to hear from you." (Appendix 5)

The number of participants I was aiming for was six. My first attempt at recruiting students was between November 2019 and January 2020, but recruitment was unsuccessful. I had handouts, as stated above, that I had given to work colleagues and students during class time, but I did not receive any volunteers. When this failed, I used the University's email system, i.e. to students who opted to receive emails about participating in research, to ask for volunteers, but unfortunately, this also failed.

During the COVID-19 pandemic in 2021, I made a second attempt at using the University's emailing system to recruit volunteers, and I successfully recruited two students from my email (Appendix 6). The students who responded to my email and the two students I previously asked during my class sessions, returned a signed Google document to confirm that they would like to take part in my research. (All were home students). In total, three students were postgraduates, and the fourth was an undergraduate in their final year. Initially, I aimed to recruit only undergraduate students, but this was proving difficult to obtain the right students for this study, so in the end, I worked with three postgraduate students.

Each of my participants was given the right to withdraw from the study without any penalty. As stated above, I had three willing participants who signed the forms to say they wanted to take part. However, the undergraduate student decided to withdraw. In an email they wrote:

Thank you for sending this information. I would like to withdraw my interest in the study. I do hope the research project goes well! (Personal email response, March 2021)

They would have been a crucial participant in my research because I originally aimed to recruit only undergraduate students. However, as the information sheet stated and under GDPR (2018) and the University's ethical guidelines for participant recruitment, no questions were asked as to why they wished to withdraw. I thanked them for getting in touch and wished them the best for the future.

As mentioned previously, I conducted two interviews with three postgraduate students. The first sets of interviews were up to 60 minutes long, and the second interview with each participant was for 30 minutes. Each recording was transcribed by me using online software - *Descript*, Microsoft software called *Audacity* and *TranscribeKit*. Further details about how I transcribe each interview is discussed in the following section.

Online interviews were conducted for this study, except for the second interview of the first participant, where this second interview took place in a classroom. A researcher needs to consider certain criteria for online, as well as face to face interviews. Due to the pandemic restrictions, I needed to think carefully about where I would conduct the interviews and how I would keep my participants' personal details secure. The University was closed because of the restrictions imposed by the pandemic, so my options were limited, and therefore, it had to be in the comfort of our homes. For me, this was in the attic room where I worked and studied; for the participants, this was in their homes or workspaces. I also had to think about whether I would be intruding on their privacy and to make it clear that if they wanted to withdraw, there was no penalty to do this (James & Busher, 2009). As described above, all interviews, except for the second interview of the first participant, took place online and in their homes, except for one who was at work during the pandemic between March and April 2021. These interviews lasted around 45 minutes to one hour. The second set of interviews took place online, apart from one participant who I met face-to-face in December 2022. Each interview was shorter and lasted around 30 minutes.

The interviews were transcribed within a few days of conducting them. After listening and transcribing the first set of interviews, I realised that I needed further personal details, e.g. age and location. So, each participant was sent a form to complete and return to me by email (See Appendix 7). Before the second interview, I asked the participants to read their transcripts for clarification. Two of them agreed to read their transcripts, while the third participant was comfortable doing the second interview without reviewing what they had said in the first interview. The two participants who wanted to read their transcripts were sent a copy. I then prepared a Google document of their transcription which was shared and restricted only to the participant to review.

I also asked the participants to suggest a pseudonym. Two of the participants gave me pseudonyms, whereas the third participant allowed me to choose a name for them. I give the pseudonyms in Table 2. These names will be used during the remainder of the thesis.

Table 2: The Participants in this Study

Participant	Age	Nationality/Ethnicity	Gender	Identified	Work Experience
Charley	25	White - British	Female	Class/Face-Face	11 + years
Lester	73	White - British	Male	Email	50 + years
Crystal*	47	White - British	Female	Class/Online	20 + years

Further details about each participant is given in the data analysis section. All the participants are postgraduates, and none are registered disabled.

3.11.1: Creating themes for an interview guide

Kvale and Flick (2007) suggested that there should be two types of interview guides, the first should be based on the study's academic research questions, and the second should be formulated into themes using everyday language to ensure that participants understood the questions. I followed Kvale and Flick's suggestions because Kvale and Flick's guidelines for creating interview questions gave me a strong structure to follow, ensured that my questions were appropriate, and were able to answer my research questions. For example, RQ 3: *How have students incorporated academic literacies into their studies? What support, if any, did they receive to achieve academic success?* For the interview, this question was formulated: *'Have you sought any academic support, for example, the Departmental Language Programme provided by the ELTC or any other staff?'* Or I used a simpler version by asking, 'Have you attended any DLP support sessions/classes?' These 'closed' questions came under the theme of 'academic support'. Depending on their answers, I would then elaborate further, giving them the flexibility to expand on their answers. (See Appendix 8)

Therefore, careful thought was needed to appropriately formulate themes for the semi-structured interviews and thus the right questions. To enable me to formulate questions for the interview, I thought about my personal experience as a student and my work experience as a university teacher. For example, I wanted to find out about their experience as an undergraduate student which led me to the theme of previous studies. My research questions: *'How do postgraduate students view their educational journey in relation to their social background*

and become a part of the academic community?’ And ‘How have students incorporated academic literacies into their studies? What support, if any, did they receive to achieve academic success?’ Helped to formulate the following themes: previous studies, motivation, ability (strength and weakness), the course (they were currently studying) and academic support.

As mentioned above, using the guide of Kvale and Flick (2007), I put together these five themes from my own experience as a student and practitioner. First, previous studies because I have completed various courses, such as, my first and second degrees, and my doctoral qualification. Second, I very often think about how I have been motivated to be where I am today and the challenges that I had, so I wanted to find out what motivates others to study and work. Third and fourth, motivation overlapped with ‘ability’ - what are the strengths and weaknesses that students had, and did it get in the way of their course? Linking these themes to myself, there were times when I thought that I would not pass this doctoral course because of the challenges in working with various supervisors and my academic writing ability. The last theme of academic support, I thought was important to include because if students were struggling, they would seek help. These were my reasons for creating the above themes for the semi-structured interviews.

As shown in Appendix 8, there are 25 questions. Like the themes above, my questions were formulated using my memories, e.g. as a student and my present position as a practitioner. I was uncertain how each interview was going to work, and so I over-prepared questions. Not all questions were asked; for example, Q1 was not asked because all the participants were postgraduate students. Whereas Q.7: motivation, was asked of all the participants. Further analysis of the questions will be discussed in the data analysis chapters.

In the information sheet provided to all the participants, they were asked if they wanted a copy of the questions before the interview, but none of the participants requested this. In a way, this was a good thing because the interviews were carried out spontaneously, i.e. their answers were not pre-prepared, and this gave rich, in-depth data.

My interview questions were a mixture of open and closed questions. They were grouped into themes so that it was easy for the participant to continue with their accounts of their rationales/motives when talking about their education trajectories. Some were designed open because I wanted the participants to be able to respond to “*construct their answers in ways they found meaningful*” (Riessman, 2008, p. 25), i.e. give as much information as they could and at the same time, enable them to delve into their educational experiences thus creating a narrative about their histories. For example, question 7 was themed under motivation and asked what motivated them to return to study. They were all able to give lengthy accounts of their answers. Questions 8 to 16 were themed under ‘the course’. For these questions, there was a mixture of open and closed; this is illustrated in Appendix 8. In order to help answer my research question, specific responses were needed, for example, asking the participants a closed question about their assignments, e.g. if they had submitted any assignments, required a yes or no answer. I then asked a follow-up question which allowed them to elaborate further, thus creating a

lengthy dialogue. Not all participants had any difficulty in answering the questions under the 'course' theme; in fact, it was quite the opposite, as they all gave lengthy accounts of what happened when they received feedback about their first and second assignments.

However, after I began to analyse the raw data, I wanted more information from the participants, such as asking about accessing further academic support. I looked at the data from the first interview to see who had answered the question about academic support and then created sub-questions that were tailored to each participant for their second interview. (See Appendix 9)

3.12: My positionality

Choosing to conduct semi-structured interviews has enabled me to interpret and create meaning-making from the participants' data. For instance, how they viewed their learning journey and use of academic literacies in work and studies. My research, as Merriam (1998) puts it, "... brings a construction of reality to the research situation, which interacts with other people's constructions or interpretations of the phenomenon being studied". The findings, which will be discussed in the following chapter, are my interpretation of the participants' views on the different themes, such as academic literacies, which were filtered through my own experience as a student, practitioner and researcher and were identified during the RTA process (p. 22).

To enable the process of this study to be valuable, I question and reflect on my position as a researcher because of the 'insider-outsider' position that I hold. First, I am part of this study, and second, I am the researcher, so stating my positionality is paramount. I am also the only Black person in this study. As Thomas (2009) says, "*Positionality is saying where you are and where you are coming from*" (p. 111). Starting in my introduction, I give a brief account of my position as a practitioner. I then follow this up by giving further details in my narrative of who I am, from being at school and my work experience to becoming a student and teacher in higher education. I also discussed my experiences with the participants during the interview. As stated by Thomas, an interpretive researcher should position themselves in the research that is being conducted, and by talking to participants, a researcher should listen carefully to what is being said to effectively analyse and be able to fully understand (Thomas, 2009). By immersing myself in this study and conducting semi-structured interviews, I have enabled myself to have an in-depth understanding of how the participants and myself were educated in the UK. This position of being part of this study leads me to a further comment by Thomas (2009), who also says:

You should be a participant in your research situation and understand it as an insider. In doing this, you have to recognise your position – your social background, likes and dislikes, preferences and predilections, class, gender and ethnicity – and how this position – positionality is likely to affect your interpretation.... (pp. 75 -76).

To take both these viewpoints on positionality by Thomas (2009) and Yanto and Pandin (2023), and to reiterate, I am a participant in this study and as discussed in Chapter one and my own

narrative, I am a Black woman who lived in a working-class environment. My educational trajectory to becoming a teacher in higher education took a different route from that of my participants, for example, I was not educated in the traditional way, i.e. school, college, then university. I left school with low grades, attended a part-time course, I had a family and started work before studying for my first degree. My participants left school and then onto further education in the 'traditional' way of gaining their first and second degrees. The participants in this study have added voices alongside my own giving a different view of how we were educated. By using an autoethnographic platform, I am able to give my narrative, which includes the challenges I encountered in achieving success in higher education.

3.13: Generalisability v Transferability

In this study, I give accounts of my educational trajectory as a Black woman who was educated during a turbulent time in the 1970s UK Education system. While writing this thesis, there were times when I had conversations about my study with others outside of the university and at events that I attended. One event took place in August 2022 when it was Jamaican Independence – weekend. I attended a trip to the Peak District where a group of us, all Jamaican descendants, took part in planting a tree to commemorate Jamaican Independence Day. A meal was laid out for everyone, and a show was put on that included poetry, singing of Jamaican folk songs and a couple of speeches about those who made lifelong achievements in the UK. One of those speeches included a woman talking about her education experiences during the 1960s. I was amazed because it resonated with my research and what I wanted to report.

Claiming generalisation of a small study is complex. Some scholars argue that the term 'generalisability' is more suited to those who are conducting quantitative research and should be replaced by another term, such as 'transferability' for those conducting qualitative research. On the other hand, some scholars believe that 'generalisability' could be used but should be developed and valued in the form of the 'Big Q' (Braun & Clarke, 2022, p. 143).

In trying to understand these terms, I focused on what I wanted to report and how my reporting of my and others' educational experiences would benefit others. I asked myself whether I wanted to say things that will, as Braun and Clarke say, "*go beyond the specific*" (p. 143). My purpose for doing this study is to try and understand how I was educated and the challenges that I encountered. In addition, compare my journey with that of others. The RTA process has enabled me to do this, but am I generalising or transferring? In answer to these questions, I drew on two of Braun and Clarke's proposals of generalisability and transferability. The first one is 'transferability': inferential (Lewis et al., 2014 as cited in Braun & Clarke, 2022, p. 144). Yardley (2015) tells us:

where the specific context, participants, settings and circumstances ... are described in detail ... [to] ... evaluate the potential for applying the analysis to other contexts and settings. ... the researcher has to demonstrate 'sensitivity to context' (Yardley, 2015 as cited in Braun & Clarke, 2022, p. 144) [in reporting their research to maximise the

potential for transferability].

This description aligns with my study as I describe myself as a participant and that of the other participants. Through ethical considerations, I am conscious of ethical issues that can arise through my analysis and reporting of what others have said about their experiences.

The second proposal I drew on is the 'naturalistic' type of generalisability. This is where the:

researcher resonates with the reader's experiences and/or they recognise similarities between the analysis and other research. As with transferability, the researcher must demonstrate 'sensitivity to context' in their reporting (Braun & Clarke, 2022, p. 144).

This second type of generalisability also resonates with my study. When I write analytically and evocatively, I intend to evoke the reader's imagination to have an in-depth understanding of my experience while, at the same time, being cautious and sensitive to the information that is portrayed both for myself and those included in my narrative and in addition, the participants. Both these concepts overlap and are suited for RTA.

By conducting this autoethnographic study and including semi-structured interviews to explore others' perspectives on how they were educated in the UK and how they transitioned into higher education, I do not claim to say that this study is a generalisation of anyone in my age group or of the participants' background, or culture.

The data collected through this qualitative approach cannot be used to generate information; however, the study would give information from a small aspect of what was happening when I and others in this study attended school. For example, this study only outlines what are possible answers. In addition, this study cannot be generalised because a small number of participants participated in what was being studied.

As others will read my thesis, this could mean that if the readers had the same interests in the perceptions of students' ideas about transitioning into higher education and being part of an academic community, my thesis would enlighten the readers' prior ideas and would illuminate a reader's experience or their existing generalisation. I am mindful of the possible sensitivity that can be caused and therefore claim that this study embraces transferability.

3.14: Chapter Summary

This chapter has presented a detailed account of the methodology and methods used in this study to explore my and others' educational trajectories. I discussed my justification for using autoethnography and semi-structured interviews as research methods for this study. My reasons for employing two research methods falls in line with my paradigmatic position as an interpretivist & constructivist researcher. In addition to the methods used in this study, I also gave my justification for using a narrative approach for my own story upon which this study is primarily based. The following chapter will discuss in detail how I collected and analysed my data.

CHAPTER FOUR

Data Collection

4.1: Introduction

The following sections give a reflexive and analytical account of how I collated and analysed the data for the research. I did not keep a journal to use to help my reflexive writing, but I used instead notes that I made on the transcripts. In addition, I used emails between my supervisors in relation to my development as a researcher, and lastly, as mentioned in Chapters one and five through an autoethnographic - narrative platform, memories of my past experiences.

4.2: Presenting the data

As an autoethnographic researcher conducting data analysis can be quite challenging. For instance, collating and analysing data can happen instantaneously with varying results. As Hughes (2008) points out, *“autoethnography in educational research can be published”* in various formats, for example, in educational journals, books, dissertations, and other academic mediums. Researchers who adopt autoethnography normally use this qualitative research method because of its efficacy when confronting their lived experiences, which can include learning, teaching, or taking a lead role with a critical lens (p.156). In this research, how others have transitioned into higher education is of great interest to me. Therefore, autoethnography allows me to represent *“this educational phenomenon”* through the stories of three other students and myself. It has enabled me to use the writing process to find solace and understand the experiences I have encountered during my educational journey. Within this phenomenon, I am placed *“within a larger context of a cultural context with others”* (p. 156). Although each has their own story to tell about how they transitioned into higher education, it still formed part of the larger context in which the participants and myself are intertwined.

4.3: How I collected my own data

The creation of my data is primarily from memories of past events presented in chronological order from primary school to working in a college. As Chang (2013) states:

Recalling is a free-spirited way of bringing out memories about critical events, people, place, behaviours, talks, thoughts, perspectives, opinions, and emotions pertaining to the research topic (p. 113).

When I started this doctoral research journey, it was my memory of being a student that helped me to focus on the idea that support and transitioning to higher education were important:

Memory is the brick and mortar of autoethnography; we build the narration of lived events with what we can recall and what we forget or choose to forget (Giorgio, 2013, as cited in Holman Jones et al., 2016, p. 407).

Hence, in my own narrative, my first recollection of school was that of a little girl who sat on the floor reading to a teacher (Appendix 18). It is not in written form, only a visual memory which has stayed with me during my lifetime, and it is this memory that helped me to shape and narrate my story in this research. There is no doubt that my own story may have events missed, but my story forms the foundation upon which this research is based. I hope it can be used as a platform for others to read and better understand my experiences. As Poulos (2008) states, autoethnographies allow the researcher to present “*traces of the whole story*” (p. 64). When the memory of my experience at primary school emerged, I began to write. It was not in detail at first. I would write an extract of an event from my memory and move onto the next event that took place. For example, I first began to write about being in infant school (as it was known in the 1960s), and then I moved onto secondary school. From writing about my secondary school experiences, I then started to think about what I did after leaving school. At this point, I did not think about why I left school, I just remembered that I left school and started a college course. The first draft of writing about my childhood took about a week.

After visiting the local Archives in the Central Library in my city, I began to make notes about what happened during my time and the time of one of the participants - Lester's school days. I presented my first draft to my supervisors who made constructive comments. However, after focusing on writing and analysing the data I collected from my participants, it was a year later (2023) that I looked back at the comments I received and then I rewrote my narrative, but this time I included years and where possible dates to link my events. This process took around three weeks to write because I went back and forth checking my details and linking my events with artefacts such as old school reports and booklets from school that I had stored away at home. In the end, what started off as six pages ended with 17 pages, but these pages include photos and images of artefacts related to my school reports. While I was writing my narrative, I employed critical race theory and intersectionality, both of which are discussed in Chapter two and relate to my findings in Chapters five and eight.

4.4: Emails & my old-school memorabilia

In addition to using memory as a primary data source, I drew on old-school reports and college work to support my recollection of events (Appendix 18). My old school records helped to put the sequence of events into the right place. They reminded me of how my school progress was reported to my mother and how the teachers at my secondary school perceived me as a pupil. I include extracts of emails between myself and my supervisor on my master's degree course as well as a written college task asking me to write a self-profile.

To reinforce the recollection that I had about school and how as pupils, we were placed into classes, while at the local archives, I looked for further information about the policies that were in place whilst I was in secondary school and how the comprehensive school I attended was managed. Under the GDPR 2018 guidance and signing a form to adhere to keeping confidentiality produced by the library, I could view documents dated between 1965 and 1974. I read a lot of documents that included committee reports and letters of complaint from parents to the education department. Reading these brought back memories of how things were when I was in secondary school. I could now understand how we were treated and taught in school

during the early 1970s. Reading these documents highlighted the difference between the working class and middle-class students.

4.5: An interview with myself

As I explained in Chapter three, as a guide, I used the main interview questions I asked the participants to create additional data about myself. The interview questions helped to shape and focus the data collection for the study. For example, answering the questions myself helped to see if they were appropriately structured under each theme; for example, question seven was about the motivation for studying. This question is open-ended, and the participants could give a short or a long answer. I wanted to see how I would answer this question and if it linked to my research questions (Appendix 10).

4.6: Analysing my narrative

Chang (2008) informs autoethnographers that when it comes to meaning making from data, “*there is no one size [that] fits all approach*” (p. 116). I found this out when I grappled with my thoughts about how to transform my own data for this study. For the semi-structured interviews, I was content that I had made the right decision about using Reflexive Thematic Analysis (RTA), thus creating, and identifying themes that connect my story and self-interview with the participants’ interviews.

Using a narrative reflexivity approach, I link my own narrative with that of the participants. As I read through the transcripts, coded, and created themes, I also analysed my own self-written interview data to seek answers to the research questions I posed about transitioning from school to university becoming a university teacher.

In the following sections, I describe analysing the participants’ data using Braun and Clarke (2022) Reflexive Thematic Analysis (RTA) method.

4.7: Analysing participants’ transcripts verbatim

The first phase of analysing the participants’ data came after conducting the semi-structured interviews. Due to the participants’ commitments, the first interviews took place between March and May 2021. I then started transcribing the data within a few days of the interviews using a software called Descript. This software enabled me to transcribe up to sixty minutes of recording. Each transcription was saved in a file for each participant and encrypted. Two of the participants’ interviews took more than sixty minutes, so I created two files and followed the same procedures of encryption for the second file. For each participant’s file, their chosen pseudonym was used.

There was a challenge to upload the third participant’s recording. This challenge became apparent when I realised that working on a different device created a different way to upload the recording to Descript. I was working at the university’s library in a private room to work on my transcriptions, but for the last participant, I worked from home. Working on a smaller device, I had to ensure the recording was saved as an MP3 or a WAV file. To do this, I used a software programme called ‘Audacity’ in which I was able to import the recording and then

save it as an MP3. Once this step was completed, I could upload the file to Descript, ready for transcription.

The next step in the data analysis process was to decide what style of transcription I would use. The advantage of using Descript software was that it transcribed orthographically what each participant said, including utterances such as 'um'. Upon the first reading of the transcript, I decided to retain all the participant's words so that it showed the true way of how they spoke and how they articulated what they said even though there were grammatical errors. While going through the script, if I came across a word that I thought was different to that of the software, I highlighted this in grey because I did not want to alter the transcript, which could change the meaning of the conversation. There were only a couple of occasions where I understood what was said clearly, and the software transcribed a word differently. I repeated the process of listening and checking the transcript three to four times for all interviews to thoroughly understand what was being said and, in comparison, with the transcription that Descript produced. I would not definitively say that what I transcribed was accurate, but rather the data that I produced from transcription has been checked and transcribed thoroughly; as Braun and Clarke (2013) state, *'transcript of an audio recording is not the same as facsimile; it's a representation'* (p. 162). Bearing this in mind, I had to ensure that the data I produced from semi-structured interviews were carried out with validity and of high quality.

Braun and Clarke (2013) recommend using a 'notation system' for orthographic transcription, which they adapted from Jefferson (2004). Foremost, this entails identifying who is speaking. For example, the first time I listened to the recording, I wrote in the first column 'interviewer' or 'participant'. A second example of the notation system is the use of punctuation. In the transcript of the first participant, the word 'so' was often used. If this were a written word, it would be punctuated with a comma in most places, but because this was spoken, I did not punctuate it as it would create a different meaning to the data. Another feature includes *"accents, abbreviations, vernacular usage and mispronunciation"*. This was a prime example of how the first participant spoke, and it was important not to transform her speech into standard English as it would compromise the data and misrepresent her (Braun & Clarke, 2013, p. 166).

I used another software called *TranscribeKit* to transcribe the second set of interviews. This software transcribed the recordings almost accurately. The only exception was when I or the participant said 'um'; the software omitted this.

4.8: Approaches to creating codes & themes

There are many options to analyse qualitative data, whether it is manually or using software, like the ones mentioned above. The transcripts from the three recordings produced a lot of rich qualitative data, and I had to decide on the method of analysis. As the data collated was from a small sample of participants, it was easier to look for codes in the transcripts manually. Hence, I did this by manually using a semantic RTA approach. This will be further discussed in the following sections.

I considered using another tool to help me with coding and theming, so I investigated how NVivo would work on my transcripts. After careful thought and investing time into how the tool would work, I decided it was easier to manually read through the transcripts and use the highlighting function in Microsoft Word to identify recurring themes. Besides, I saw NVivo as a tool that was too subjective, as it is an 'assisted tool'. Its main function is to help the researcher to analyse textual data, for example, looking for certain words or phrases, so NVivo would not analyse my data for me. There was a sign of relief when I sought reassurance from one of my supervisors about not using NVivo. She informed me that it was okay not to use the software as NVivo could be considered too scientific. This is how I felt when trying to insert data from my transcripts; working with the software felt too scientific. The literature also discusses whether a researcher embraces or loathes NVivo as an analysis tool (Thomas, 2009; Wellington, 2015). My position was that I loathed it.

I continued to look for other options for analysing my data. I consulted Saldaña (2013, 2016) and Riessman (1993, 2008) during the first stages of the analysis. During this first stage, I created codes. For example, table one demonstrates some of the codes that I developed whilst coding and conducting the first few phases of analysis.

When I first started reading through the transcripts, I found myself coding automatically, coming up with codes/themes that captured the meaning of the interview. It was a challenge to make sense of what I was reading, but I continued to create codes while simultaneously questioning and reflecting on my own educational trajectory. Fugard and Potts (2016) remind researchers that this is part of the researcher's process, interpreting the data and identifying patterns of meaning that have developed. Presented below is Table 3 that shows examples of the participants' data and the codes I created.

4.9: Table 3: Examples of candidate excerpts, codes/themes at the first stage of analysis

Participant 1: Codes	Participant 2: Codes	Participant 3: Codes
Code: <u>Grammar rules at school</u> Excerpt <i>So I kind of write how I speak. But which isn't very grammatically correct. So that was just a lot of grammar rules I worked out really kind of familiar with, I guess I just didn't write very well, especially for a native speaker.</i>	Code: <u>Returning to study after a long period of absence</u> Excerpt <i>"So, I I've returned to the academic world, which I left in 1971. (Yeah) And Um, um, I returned to it four or five years ago after a gap of 45 years".</i>	Code: <u>In the bottom set at school</u> Excerpt <i>"So, um, as a result of that, always, you know, at school saw myself as a bit stupid because I was kind of, you know, in the lower group for things".</i>

Code: <u>Use of slang in oral and written work</u> Excerpt “... where I'm from everybody speaks a lot of slang and kind of using the wrong words and things and so I never noticed it until I realised, I checked them in academic writing ...”	Code: <u>Being able to cope & Remembering how to do mathematics, keeping a reputation</u> Excerpt “Um, having not thought about mathematics for years, uh, having forgotten a lot of stuff that I previously knew. And, um, there's always the fear, huh. Uh, because there were stories in mathematics particularly, but that you make your reputation before you're 30 years old. And after that it's downhill all the way”.	Code: <u>Teacher testing – use of slang at school v correct spelling of a word</u> Excerpt “... there's real moment when I got to, um, my sixth form college and my, uh, English teacher kind of took me aside and said, um, um, asked me to, um, asked me how to break down the word doesn't, and I can always remember it. And I went well it's does or not. And he, he said, so how do you spell does? And I went D O D O E S. And how do you spell? Not N O T and then he said, so why are you spelling? Doesn't D O S apostrophe E N T”.
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For each participant, the codes that I initially identified had few similarities, such as the use of slang for P1 and P3, receiving feedback for P1 and P3. Participant 2 codes were about returning to study after a long gap as he worked in service for many years. Creating these initial codes took many hours over several months in the summer of 2021. In the following chapter, I further discuss the analysis of the data.

4.10: Is there another way to identify themes?

I questioned whether there was another way to transcribe my data. Whilst looking for another tool, I came across Thomas (2009), who suggested an internet software *Word Cloud* that helps to identify and generate themes (See Appendix 12). As shown in Appendix 12, the themes identified from the ‘word cloud’ were similar to the themes I manually highlighted in the first participant’s transcription. This result reassured me that I was on the right path to identifying relevant themes that linked with my research questions. Saldaña (2016) also highlights the use of internet tools called *Wordle*, which is used to describe the same system of generating codes and themes. Each software gives a researcher a visual look at the text taken from the transcription and what the most salient words and potential codes and themes could be (p. 223). This is further demonstrated in Figure 2 below.

After using 'word cloud' to confirm my ideas of identifying codes/themes from the transcript, I drew on Riessman's (2008) "*dialogic analysis*" (p. 105) approach. A dialogic analysis is a combination of "*structural analysis of interview text*" (p. 102) and "*thematic analysis*" (p. 73). During the first phase of reading through the first transcript, I had already begun to make notes on segments of the participant's events and experiences and their use of slang, and this fitted well with the concept of Riessman's (2008) dialogic analysis. Another reason for incorporating dialogic analysis was because it allowed me to "*become an active presence in the text*" (p. 105). However, I wanted to find a different way to analyse my raw data and a process I could fully understand and follow. So, to further guide me on analytically analysing my transcripts, and in addition to Reissman (Riessman, 1993; Riessman, 2008), I also consulted Braun and Clarke (2013). Braun and Clarke's (2013) guide to analysing qualitative data.

4.11: Reflexive thematic analysis (RTA): The steps

Reflexive Thematic Analysis (RTA) "*is a method used to identify themes and patterns of meaning across a dataset in relation to research questions...*" in alliance to use the researcher's positionality, subject knowledge, and epistemology (Braun & Clarke, 2013, p. 174). This method of analysing raw data fitted well with my researcher positionality, and my interpretation of the data as the process of RTA allowed me to identify extracts that related to my research questions.

Braun and Clarke (2013) state, creating codes from raw data "*provides the building blocks of analysis*" and "*the foundation for theme development*" (Braun et al., 2016, pp. 191-205). Coding can be deductive (theory-driven) or inductive (data-driven). In this study, I use the inductive process to analyse the data. This will be further discussed in the following sections. In addition to using the inductive process, when coding the data initially, I made semantic codes that focused on the explicit meaning of what each participant said. This is also discussed further in the following sections of this chapter.

Braun and Clarke (2022) recommend six steps to analyse raw data. However, these steps are not linear. They are meant to be guidelines so the researcher can use them as a map to guide them through their research journey.

The first step is about familiarising yourself with the dataset: The researcher is familiar with the raw data by reading and re-reading to have a holistic understanding of the data, e.g. asking questions and making assumptions.

Coding is the second phase of RTA. The researcher, in this phase, begins to develop the initial candidate codes created during phase one. This process was iterative, with codes merged or divided as the analysis evolved.

As the coding(s) in phases one and two are developed, phase three involves generating initial themes. This is carried out after all the data is coded. I discuss this further in the analysis chapter.

During phase four, themes are reviewed and developed further so that the themes created are relevant; for example, some initial themes may need to be created into sub-themes and become simpler to understand and relevant to the research questions. During this phase, the researcher should ensure that the themes created must be meaningful and separate.

Moving into the fifth phase is refining, defining, and naming themes. The researcher will define and further refine the themes presented for analysis and then analyse the data. As Braun and Clarke (2022) state, “*define and refine means identifying the ‘essence’ of what each theme is about (as well as the themes overall) and determining what aspect of the data theme captures*” (p. 92).

The final phase is the writing up. Once the researcher is satisfied with the first five steps of RTA, e.g. codes and themes, then writing up the findings will begin (Braun & Clarke, 2022).

My understanding of how to conduct RTA did not only stem from reading articles by Braun and Clarke (2022); Trainor and Bundon (2021) I also attended an online webinar held by Braun and Clarke in August 2022. The webinar not only informed the audience about RTA, but the seminar also helped further enlighten the misconceptions about RTA. It was also about promoting their latest book on Thematic Analysis dated 2022, which I found very clear and helpful. During this webinar, I learned that I did not need to just list their recommended steps in my writings as they state so many authors do, but to articulate in a way that will help the reader understand how I came to analyse my raw data. This suggestion gave me the confidence to include them in my discussion rather than make a list to make my writing more effective and to give a narrative form of description rather than a simple list of steps that I followed. Braun and Clarke stated in their discussion that RTA is flexible. In addition, Trainor and Bundon (2021) give a more thorough description of how to carry out RTA, which I found very easy to follow. This article helped me to develop my understanding even further and with confidence in how to analyse my data in the six phases that Braun and Clarke (2022) suggested for Reflexive Thematic Analysis (RTA).

4.12: Chapter Summary

This chapter has presented a description of the process of collecting data to explore my and others' educational trajectories. In the following chapter, I present how the data was analysed using Braun and Clarke's (2022) RTA process. In addition, reflexivity was used to analyse further the process of the analysis, which includes linking my own reflective accounts and interview data to the themes that developed from the participants' interviews.

CHAPTER FIVE

Data Analysis Using Reflexive Thematic Analysis (RTA)

5.1: Introduction & Research questions

In the previous chapter, I discussed the process of collating data. In this chapter, I describe the process of creating and developing codes, themes, and subthemes as well as the process of categorising and organising each theme. I drew on Braun and Clarke (2022) and Trainor and Bundon (2021) suggestions of how to incorporate Reflexive Thematic Analysis (RTA) in order to answer my research questions under a constructivist paradigm.

1. How do postgraduate students view their educational journey in relation to their social background and become a part of the academic community?
2. How have students incorporated academic literacies into their studies? What support, if any, did they receive to achieve academic success?
3. How did I transition from a school pupil to a university student and become a university teacher? What challenges did I encounter along the way?

The way in which this chapter has been structured is to first give a brief account of linking another study that used autoethnography and semi-structured interviews in their research. I refer to two of their theories they refer to as these theories seemed to have a resonance with elements of my narrative. The first is Harro's theory (2016) and the second, intersectionality which Nkouaga (2021) discusses and of which I found to have a clear connection with my own study. Intersectionality is further discussed in Chapter two.

Second, this chapter gives an in-depth overview of the process I undertook to analyse the participants' data. The process of RTA was then repeated for my own data collection, and this is discussed in Chapter seven. As this is an autoethnographic study, and as mentioned in previous chapters, it is important to convey that I include my own narrative, self-written interview notes, as well as emails, artefacts such as school reports for data analysis.

The codes and themes created came from transcribing the interviews of the participants first and then my own data. My choice to analyse the interviews first was because each participant had a separate historical narrative to tell. Each participant, including the researcher, were educated over a fifty year period so, it seemed appropriate to view their narratives first and then compare them with mine. In addition to this, due to COVID-19 restrictions, the first set of interviews were conducted first before I conducted my own self-written interview and completed my own narrative.

The data presented in this study recounts the past – historical moments that continue to influence our educational journeys in the present. This study combines interview transcripts from participants alongside my own narrative and artefacts from my school days. I present the participants' data first, in Chapter Six, to enable me to take a step back and then interweave my journey with the participants' analysis in Chapter eight. By including artefacts, such as fifty-year-old school reports, I add a layer of authenticity and strengthen the richness of the data. In addition, I use RQs one and two in Chapter six and RQ three in Chapter seven, to help shape the data and analysis. Therefore, I hope the reader will understand that presenting the analysis in this sequence gives more credibility to the analysis that follows.

Third, in the following sections in this chapter, I describe the process of analysing and organising the data and I illustrate reflexively how I coded and themed the transcripts from each interview. The last section of this chapter discusses the iterative process I used to ensure that validity, clarity, and quality of the research process was transparent.

5.2: Semi-structured interviews - data analysis

During a period of a year and a half, each participant was interviewed twice. As mentioned previously, I used a software called Descript and 'TranscribeKit to transcribe the recordings from the six semi-structured interviews conducted in 2021 and 2022. Each transcription was carried out verbatim to become familiar with the transcript and to engage deeply with the conversations I had with each participant; I read each transcript multiple times. This helped me to better understand what the data was telling me, and to think about questions and any assumptions I had about the data.

Many scholars state that analysis is not the data but rather an analysis is an active process (Trainor & Bundon, 2021, p. 8). The analysis takes the form of the researcher going to and fro. It is recursive and is, therefore, not a linear process. I drew on Braun and Clarke (2022) Reflexive Thematic Analysis (RTA) steps to guide me in analysing the data. First, I familiarised myself with the data. I interpreted the findings rather than describing the data; interpreting helps me to analyse the data inductively, allowing me to develop codes and later themes. Janesick (2002) makes a clear point when they say:

the qualitative researcher uses inductive analysis, which means that categories, themes, and patterns come from the data. The categories that emerge from field notes, documents and interviews are not imposed prior to data collection (Janesick, 2002, p. 389 as cited in Dethloff, 2005).

There are six steps to incorporating RTA, and in the following section, I give a comprehensive account of how I conducted my analysis for the semi-structured interviews and my own narrative.

5.3: Autoethnography data analysis

In a study by Nkouaga (2021), autoethnography and semi-structured interviews were used to collect data about his educational journey between different countries. In his data analysis, he

uses Harro's theory (2016), in which Harro discusses the different levels of socialisation that help to shape who we are as a person and help us understand how we see the world. Harro (2016) demonstrates this via a circle of socialisation that shows how a person can be trapped within society, and as individuals, we think:

about the world in a singular way and in a way that deprives one of the ability to imagine a different reality of the world unless one has a moment of awareness that triggers the need for change (Harro as cited in Nkouaga, 2021, p. 63).

Part of my narrative encompasses this as I strive to understand, for example, how I was kept from progressing at school to retake my CSEs.

Intersectionality is another theory I looked at to see if I could apply it to my autoethnography study. Intersectionality was first coined by Kimberlé Crenshaw in 1997. Nkouaga (2021) also uses this theory, and in his defence, he states:

This concept is important ... to understand the experience that marginalized people are going through. These experiences can vary based on who you are, and it is often difficult to assess just by looking at someone [at] all the different layers of oppression they are victims of (p. 29).

I link intersectionality to my educational experience at secondary school, for example, being considered a lost cause, partly because of my background as a Black working-class girl. In my work at the college, this theory also resonates with my experience, as others thought I was not worthy of having a managerial position over them. In their eyes, I was not worthy of being a Course Leader - a supervisory position.

As mentioned in Chapter two, Critical Race Theory (CRT) is a theory that has been used in the United States for many years. It is a theory that is developing in the UK as other researchers are using this theory as a critical approach to their research, e.g. in Education. CRT has five tenets that can all be or selectively be applied to research. I chose to use the fifth tenet because it fits my narrative well. I am Black, so I wish to use my voice to make challenges about ahistoricism, and by insisting on ahistoricism using the CRT framework, stories can be told (Solórzano & Yosso, 2002). In addition, using CRT helps me better understand why there are limited stories like mine, why there seem to be cover-ups about how Black children were educated in the UK, and, most importantly, how I was educated. Considering the critical lenses described above, CRT is the most appropriate out of the three that fits my narrative. In addition, intersectionality is also applied as it fits well with the participants in this study, that is, being female and classed as a working-class person.

5.3.1: Phase one: delving myself into the data

After familiarising myself with the data, I created a separate file for each transcript under their pseudonyms. I then created a table in a Word document with three columns. The columns were

labelled *speaker*, *transcript*, and *codes*, respectfully. After checking with the recording and transcript to see if they matched, I began making notes in the third column of each transcript to create codes. For example, for the first participant's transcription, I began to immerse myself in what the participant was saying, and as I did this, I also began to make notes and ask myself questions which I made a note of in the third column. Making these notes helped me to formulate additional questions for the second interview.

Participant 2: Interview - 1:05:00 Lester (Pseudo name)

	So, universities began to change the way of their degrees that they were offering and how they were recruiting students, how they were getting students into the university. So Cambridge sounds like one of those like samples and change it from diploma to master's and tried to be, you know, uh, try to attract students.		
Participant	So yeah, changing from nothing. To a masters. Yeah. Um, I think I've I've, I did, I, um, very nearly delivered a course to a first year MBA student at the business school in Sheffield. (Okay) um, uh, introduction to Statistics course, uh, various reasons irrelevant that didn't didn't happen, but it was delivering a course that had been written by somebody else. (Yeah) And I looked at it and I thought this is not very demanding. Uh, if I had written this course not very knew anything about teaching. Um, but I, I would, I did, uh, uh, not Imperial. That was very similar in many ways to, MBA. Yeah. But 50 years ago, um, that was harder than the course I was being asked to teach and I thought um, um is this right? Is this right? (Laughter) So, uh, um, more, we might be worse. Yeah. (But you did well, you got through it...) I didn't in the end to the core scope for other reasons entirely, (right okay) but it was the aspect of it that not the reason that it's not the reason I didn't do it, but, um, it was the aspect that I found most difficult. So, I thought this isn't, this isn't quite right. (Okay) And actually it was in some technical statistical senses. Uh, it was in fact quite wrong. This is a big, big issue. I don't know if you are aware of it but um I didn't enjoy it, but, um, the, uh, standard of statistics courses taught to people who are not statisticians in a business school, for example, or statistics courses for scientists (Yeah) are often quite poor. (Right okay) Uh, and the reason for that is that they are very rarely taught by statisticians they are taught by practitioners, um, who, um, are out of date or frankly got it wrong in the first place. And, uh, and so, um, that there's some standard questions which statisticians know how to ask that. What do you teach them about such and such? Oh do you? Oh dear. (laughter)	1:00:00 Delivering a course to other students Planning to teach again but the course was written by someone else – wasn't happy with it. Didn't find the course demanding to teach. Questioned if it was correct to teach in comparison with what he learnt 50 years ago 1:04:00 Poor courses delivered to others Statisticians rarely teach Criticisms of those who teach statistics courses – not qualified to do so Statistic courses taught by other teachers from other disciplines 22/01/21 Interesting that he criticises how statistics are being taught by unqualified teachers in statistics – this can be seen as a contrast to how I was taught by unqualified/in experience teachers – possibly this is also reflected with the others – teachers' qualifications	Teaching others Confidence not at creating a better course Upset that others are teaching statistics in an ad hoc way Criticisms of course design Teaching qualifications
Interviewer	No. Um, yeah. Uh, that definitely wouldn't be for me, no matter what course they're doing. Definitely. But, um, but thank you. Thank you so much again.		
Participant	And the same to you.		
Interviewer	But thank you. Bye-bye		
Participant	Bye-bye		

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Figure 3: *This is an example from one data set in which I first approach coding the data latently over a period of three weeks.*

5.3.2: Phase two: creating candidate codes

In this phase, I used the notes I made on the transcripts. Using each participant's responses, I then began to formulate candidate codes from their responses in relation to the question I was asking. (This is illustrated in Table 4.) As discussed in the previous chapter, part of analysing

raw data was to decide whether creating codes and themes would be inductive or deductive, latent, or semantic. I wanted to find answers to my research questions, so in analysing the data, I used the inductive process and created codes semantically.

I found making codes challenging, so I listened to the recording while reading and making notes. I did this for each transcript on different days and over several weeks. For example, I would only focus on one interview at a time. This allowed me to semantically, and analytically code each transcript, which took more than a week to analyse. When creating codes, I would make notes using a different font colour. Using another colour, I would highlight the data corresponding to the interview and research question. For example, interview question 20 would connect with my research question on academic literacies (See Appendix 13) I would add the conversation time in the end column to help identify the differences from the previous notes that I made. Adding the time to different parts of the interview transcript helped me to go back to the recording if I needed to clarify points and aid understanding. As well as using a different font colour to show where I had made further codes, I would use the find function in Microsoft Word to find excerpts where the participants made comments in connection with my research questions. This helped to extract their responses to the RQs, and it helped to identify how they expanded on those responses.

Table 4: an example of colour coding the transcript and adding a timestamp.

Researcher: "What do you understand by the term academic literacies "?	Lester: <i>"I'm not sure I do understand that anything much about it. Um, I assume it's, um, It's a completely new term to me"</i> .	31:21 Meaning of Academic Literacies 32:40 Taking things for granted Explaining things in detail Whether to reference or not
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As I actively engaged with the transcripts and created codes, I began to make notes of literature that I thought was associated with the participant's responses. For example, while making sense of participant - Lester's responses, I associated his responses, about being in academia, with Lave and Wenger (1991) Communities of Practice.

In Table 4, I tried to see if participants knew the meaning of academic literacies. As illustrated above, Lester's response is a negative one, but he links his thoughts to referencing. During the interview, the conversation included his transition from school to university and his world of work. While talking about transitioning from school to work, I asked Lester how he was feeling being part of the academic community following his long spell in the workplace. The question

I asked below came under the research question, ‘*How do postgraduate students view their educational journey in relation to their social background and become a part of the academic community*’? As Table 5 shows - to keep with the flow of the conversation, the question I asked changed but kept within the focus of the leading research question. As mentioned previously, as I listened and read the transcript, I coded what I thought I understood to be the meaning of the response. To protect the participants’ identity, I have used *three dots* to indicate missing data regarding place name or work. I have kept the transcript verbatim to keep the authenticity and to provide an emic description of the conversation (Holmes, 2020).

Table 5: Lester’s Excerpt - Creating Codes

Main question:	Participant 2: Lester	Developing Codes
How are you finding being part of the academic community? Sub-question that emerged during the conversation (verbatim) What about when you have to produce like essays or, uh, maybe assignments or any written work? How do you feel about that and how is it?	<i>Um, well I said that I had 16 years in ... Yeah. Um, and the tools in ... in those days, probably still are words. ... I had some pretty good training ...to write,... I had my stint in banking and, ... where no writing has ever been done. Um, went back into the audit, uh, government audit world, which is not the audit of accounts, the audit of performance. And so my product was written reports that were published. ... so by the time I retired, I had either written or supervised literally dozens of, um, reports of publishable quality. ... having to write stuff is absolutely no trouble for me at all. ...</i>	25:27 This is an example of analysing the data semantically. ● The need to write ● Working at ... had training at producing reports ● Published reports

By going back and forth reading the transcripts and making codes, I noticed the differences in how the participants were speaking. For example, Participant One – Charley. I think I had a deeper understanding of her characteristics because I have had the most contact with her, for example, in class as her teacher and then for an online and face-to-face interview as a researcher. For instance, it was not my intention to analyse lexical semantics, but the way that Charley came across - how she spoke was very noticeable compared to the other participants. So as not to give her any notions about her accent and to avoid giving any influence on what she had to say in her second interview, when asked, ‘*Do you think you’ve changed*’ (...going to university), her response to this question was reflected in what she had to say in her second interview. My thoughts about her response enabled me to link Trudgill’s (1975) work entitled Accent, dialect and the school.

After developing my understanding of how to create codes, I created 67 simpler codes from the first interview and noted these in the fourth column of the transcript. For the second interview, I created 57 more codes. However, the codes were not all unique, and I had to go through them again to check for repetition. This led me to create another Microsoft Word document for each participant. In each document, I added each of the codes to a table, making it clearer to see the codes and how they connected to the data and whether they were understandable.

To further support me in identifying codes and themes, I decided to use Excel, where I was able to colour code the codes, thus grouping the codes together according to the colour I allocated to each one. I also used the filter function to sort the codes. Using a colour code scheme helped me better understand the data, how it related to my RQs and the analytical notes I made during the first and second rounds of coding. In addition, I could view how the codes connected with the transcript. Drawing on Trainor and Bundon (2021) for guidance, I then printed, separated, and grouped the codes together to understand better how I could create themes from the codes. For example, Lester's response to the question '*What do you understand by the term academic literacies?*' The response he gave generated the code for *academic literacies* that related to reading, speaking, and writing components of academic literacies. Therefore, for this participant, I created nine codes for academic literacies.

Table 6: Example of colour coding codes in Excel

Academic literacies
Academic literacies - reading
Academic literacies - references
Academic literacies and use of references
Communities of practice
Comparing qualifications
Competitiveness
Confidence at creating a better course

Figure 4: Example of codes grouped together before giving them a theme.

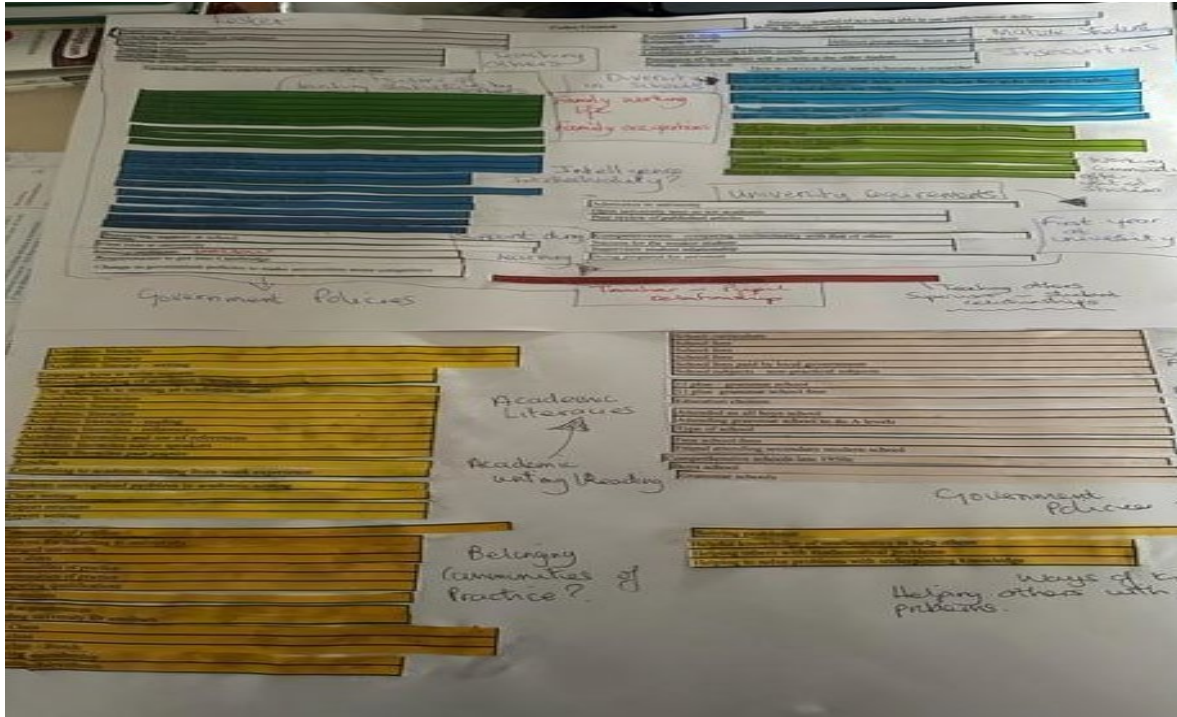


For Charley, I created 119 codes in the second round of coding her transcript, and for Crystal, there were 221 codes. Some of these codes were repetitions; for example, Crystal discussed her reading skills on a few occasions during the interview, statements such as: “... *finding the time to sit down and just read. ... what I needed to do was kind of get used to reading and reading...*”. There were approximately 25 different uses of reading. So, for reading repetitions, I narrowed these down into reading skills and under the main theme of academic literacies.

Overall, I created 464 codes from all three transcripts, which was too many to work with to create themes. Therefore, I went over the codes and picked out the ones that were meaningful and relevant to my research questions, and in addition, codes that interrelate with each of the participants. There were codes I did not know how to narrow down and a few that were too vague, so I discarded them into another document should I need to return to them.

The most obvious code for all participants was ‘*academic literacies*’, and this code linked well with my research question, ‘*How have students incorporated academic literacies into their studies*’? I kept this code name the same to create the theme of academic literacies because I viewed this as an umbrella term for different components of academic literacies, such as the use of technology, writing skills, speaking skills and the ability to read academic articles.

Figure 5: Narrowing down the codes for participant two. From 120 codes, I then reduced this to 22 codes.



Following on from creating codes, the next step I took under this phase was to narrow down the number of codes I created from each transcript. So, I made another Word document, copied, and pasted each set of codes into a table to refine them, and to look for shared meaning across each of the participant's data. After carefully identifying repetitions, and codes that were too vague, I could further narrow down my codes to 63. However, having 63 codes was still a challenge to reduce. I realised for each participant; their experiences were different in terms of the years they were at school. The common theme among them was being at university. This further helped to narrow down the codes and create other themes, which linked all the data together, such as academic literacies, developing academic skills, work experience and family influence.

5.3.3: Phase three: theme writing

As highlighted by Braun and Clarke (2022):

The basic process of generating themes and subthemes, which are the subcomponents of a theme, involves collapsing or clustering codes that seem to share some unifying feature together, so that they reflect and describe a coherent and meaningful pattern in the data (p. 63).

Therefore, in this step, I reviewed the 63 codes. I did this manually by printing out the codes and cutting them up. When I was satisfied that I had clustered them in the right group, I glued them onto A3 paper. This enabled me to review them at a distance, make notes and move them

around into similar categories if needed. I looked for similarities between each participant and the stories they told via the data, such as their family connections to their education. For two of the participants, their data were similar, and as such, the codes overlapped. For example, when they answered the question *'What type of school did you go to'* they discussed how they were in a selection process. Even though their experiences were around thirty years apart, they had similar answers, which demonstrated that the selective school system had not changed during their time at school, so the theme *'school selective processes'* was created from their data. This theme is also linked to other scholars' work, such as Ball (1981, 1984), where his study focused on the comprehensive school system in the UK.

The following is an example taken from Lester and Crystal's data:

Lester: *"Um, grammar school or a free place? Yeah, did well in the 11 plus, yeah. And if you fail the 11 plus, it would be secondary modern..."*

Crystal: *"... is a selective, so you had to take an exam to get in there and I I didn't get in at first" ... (verbatim)*

Using these quotes gave the code of the school selection processes and an initial theme.

As mentioned above, placing the codes onto A3 paper helped me to see how the codes and themes connected with my RQs. It also helped to move some of the sub-themes around. Phase three allowed me to narrow the number of codes to 15 while simultaneously creating themes and sub-themes. There are four final key themes and 11 subthemes. This is shown in the following chapter as Diagram two and Appendix 14.

5.3.4: Phase four: review

After tentatively creating codes in phase three and then moving on to create themes, phase four is about revisiting and developing those themes (Braun & Clarke, 2022). Following the advice given by Trainor and Bundon (2021) and Braun and Clarke (2022), I reviewed my themes a few times to ensure that they were analytical, semantic, and not descriptive. They needed to demonstrate a higher-level analysis of the data rather than summarising or describing it. They needed to tell a story and to show *"an important pattern of shared meaning related to the dataset"* (Braun & Clarke, 2022, p. 35; Trainor & Bundon, 2021, p. 718). They also needed to be coherent in accordance with the data extracts and the full dataset (Braun & Clarke, 2022, p. 35). However, I found this part of the process also challenging because there were so many themes that I wanted to include in relation to my research questions. Still, I understood that I needed to select the most important extracts from the data set that would be compelling to answer my research questions (RQ) reflexively and narratively. Hence, I created another document to help me go through this phase (See Appendix 15. In this document, I created a table. Then placed each research question and theme that connected, under each theme in the table; Doing this allowed me to obtain an overview of how they all connected. I then looked at each participant's dataset to locate responses for my RQs and the themes and placed these in the table to see if they connected with each other. This process also helped me to have a better understanding and focus on the *"central organising concept"*, which Braun & Clarke clearly

state that having a good code will capture one idea and that a theme will have a central organising concept which will contain different ideas relating to that central organising concept (Braun & Clarke, 2013, p. 224; Braun & Clarke, 2022, p. 35). Upon reading this, I looked back at my collection of codes and themes to see if I had encompassed the codes and meaningful themes.

5.3.5: Phase five: finalisation – revisiting the data & recordings

Once I was content with the themes in phase four, in phase five I began to further define and clarify the themes with the data set to ensure that they captured the importance of each participant's story. In addition, this phase also helped to ensure that each theme had a central organising concept that related coherently to each of the research questions. As discussed in phase 4, I looked at the raw data to ensure that each theme, subtheme, and research question corresponded with the participants' responses. In a way, this was a test to see if my approach to RTA was working. The final themes are shown in Diagram 2.

For one of the key themes, I initially created three sub-themes, 'government policies, different types of school, paying school fees', but after re-considering the themes, I realised that they could be combined, so under the key theme 'school selection' I developed sub-themes: 'different types of schools' and 'school fees' which encapsulates all types of schools. I give a detailed account of each theme in the following chapter.

5.3.6: Phase six: the final phase - writing up

The final phase of RTA is writing the report. Braun and Clarke (2022) confer that writing an analytical RTA should begin in phase three. This includes making analytical notes about the data, informal writing to begin the journey, writing down the processes taken to analyse the data, and journal writing. I found writing informally very helpful for me, as I began the writing process, because it allowed me to write down my early thoughts. I also found making analytical notes, asking myself questions about the data useful. I would then return to those notes and edit them formally for this thesis. In addition, and most importantly, the report aims to give the reader a clear, logical, coherent, and persuasive narrative about the dataset. I have endeavoured to do this and to include extracts from the data to address each research question (Braun & Clarke, 2022).

5.4: Quality, trustworthiness and ensuring transparency in researcher and participants' questions

Throughout my doctoral journey, I regularly met with my supervisors. During these meetings, they helped me understand how I could analyse my data. Sometimes, comments were made that left me a little confused, but I would go away and think about the constructive criticism I was given. In addition, I would discuss my concerns or confusion with my peers on this course and my work colleagues who would reassure me that my research project was going to be fine. For example, upon showing one of my supervisors my own written interview in comparison with my participants, my supervisor commented:

When I look at your interview (the written one) in comparison to the others, it seems to me that there are a lot more questions in your interview than in the interviews with others - have you gone through and checked that you have data on all the questions that you included in your own interview? It looks to me as though you might have to be flexible with the follow-up interview, and tailor it to each individual, to ensure everybody had a chance to talk about the same topics. For example, you asked Hach (changed to Crystal) about a class system at school, but that doesn't feature in your own interview, and several of the other interviewees talk about slang or local dialects (Personal email: 31st October 2022).

Reading this message from my supervisor made me realise that I needed to map out precisely the questions I asked myself and the participants.

By revisiting the raw data to locate the questions, I ensured that I was adhering to applying validity and transparency of the data and that I was also ensuring that trustworthiness was maintained. In so doing, I created a table and then identified from each transcript the questions I asked of each participant. As a guideline, I used the initial set of questions, which had four categories and under each category, I placed the question that I asked the participant. As the researcher, it was easy for me to answer the questions, but when it came to the participants' questions, they were verbally worded slightly differently. This was because the conversation that was taking place at the time of the interview did not develop linearly, and so a long conversation took place around questions such as '*Are you the only one that went to university, or do you follow others...*'? When I decided to identify my first interview question(s) and compare them with the researchers and each participant, it highlighted the next set of questions. As shown in the following table, each participant is from a different era in the education system.

Table 7: An overview of our education

<i>Lester 1950s/60s</i>	<i>Researcher 1960s/70s</i>	<i>Crystal 1980/1990s</i>	<i>Charley 1990s/2000s</i>
<i>No National Curriculum schools set their own curriculum</i>	<i>No National Curriculum?? schools set their own curriculum</i>	<i>New National Curriculum</i>	<i>National Curriculum still in place</i>
<i>Qualifications: 11 Plus system O' Levels & CSEs</i>	<i>Qualifications: Comprehensive school system developing O' Levels & CSEs</i>	<i>Qualifications: New GCSEs</i>	<i>Qualifications GCSEs</i>

So, it was therefore important to ensure that I asked the right questions that covered my research questions and to highlight and justify any differences.

Braun and Clarke (2022) explain how to employ good research practices. They discussed several strategies to help with being a good reflexive thematic analysis and produced a 15-point criterion that can be checked against each phase of the RTA process (See Appendix 16). After receiving feedback about inconsistencies in my interview transcripts from my supervisors, I used this checklist during my RTA process to ensure that I maintained good RTA practice. While Braun and Clarke (2022) approach to ensuring quality in thematic analysis research on a philosophical level, I also sought guidance and employed Guba and Lincoln's (1989) quality criteria for qualitative research.

5.5: Ethical considerations for the participants

As discussed in Chapter three, I sought ethical approval to carry out this study through the University of Sheffield's ethical process. All participants were asked for their availability to take part in the first interview via email at a time that was convenient for them. So, I scheduled the interviews at their convenience.

For the second interview, they were asked by email if they wanted to continue participating in my research, and all agreed (See Appendix 17). Participants were given the option to read their first transcripts to remind them of what they talked about a year previously to the second interview. They were also allowed to read the transcripts from the second interview. Two of the participants wanted to do this. In addition, and as discussed in Chapter three, each participant was given the option to abstain from the research, but all three agreed to continue.

After transcribing the first set of interviews, it became clearer that one of the participants was emotional during their interview when they talked about their first university assignment feedback. It was also evident when transcribing the data that emotional language was used. For example, Crystal used the words '*upset*', and '*unhappy*' to show how she felt about her feedback. As the researcher there is an ethical duty of care to try and defuse any situation that would cause upset and discomfort, as experienced during the first interview with the third participant. In the interview, I checked to see if the participant was okay to continue with the interview and the study. This was an ethical decision. It was also an ethical decision to seek their permission to ask if they wanted to continue in the study for the second interview.

5.6: Autoethnography and ethical considerations

While the above is part of ensuring ethical principles are carried out and the University's guidelines are followed for participants taking part in a study, this research project is twofold. I use a qualitative approach in this study. First autoethnographic and narrative because I include my own story as data. The second, semi-structured interviews are used as another method to explore others' perspectives of their educational journeys, and to add support to my own data. Therefore, relational ethics and an ethic of personal care need to be considered and employed (Cooper & Lilyea, 2022).

5.7: Chapter Summary

This chapter has discussed how Braun and Clarke (2022) Reflexive Thematic Analysis (RTA) was used to analyse the data. I gave reasons for my choice of analysis of the raw data and following this, I discussed the process in which I carried out RTA and how there were challenges. The process of RTA took longer than anticipated, but with the help of using my own narrative; extensive reading; the process of being iterative; discussions with my supervisors and work colleagues, I could complete this part of the research.

To provide a full analysis of the data, this section is divided into two chapters. Chapter six delves deeper into the key themes and subthemes identified from the participants' semi-structured interviews. Chapter seven shifts focus to my own data collection, drawing connections to the themes established in Chapter six.

CHAPTER SIX

Data Analysis **Semi - Structured Interviews**

6.1: Introduction: Overview of the chapter

In the last chapter, I provided a detailed reflexive account of my data transcription and analysis processes. Because this study comprises both autoethnography and semi-structured interviews, I have divided the data analysis into two chapters. This chapter will present the themes and subthemes identified from the semi-structured interviews, along with connections to relevant excerpts from the transcripts. I followed Braun and Clarke (2022) Reflexive Thematic Analysis (RTA) process analysing the data from the six semi-structured interviews conducted with three participants. The participants participated in two separate interviews, each within a year and a half of conducting the first interview. The analysis of the semi-structured interviews will be presented in this Chapter.

Chapter seven is the second part of the data analysis. In this chapter, I will analyse my own data using some of the themes and sub-themes created through the RTA analysis process using an inductive approach. I also incorporate Chang's (2008) suggestions for analysing the autoethnographic data.

In Diagram two, I present the main themes and sub-themes. For each theme, I give an explanation and discuss how each theme relates to my research questions (RQs). I then describe and explain how I generated those themes. Following this, I explain my research questions and include the participants' excerpts that link each theme and subthemes to the RQs. Participants' pseudonyms are used in the discussion at the start of each excerpt and each excerpt is presented verbatim.

I decided to present each excerpt verbatim because it was important not to exclude any utterances or tidy up each participant's responses so that the reader could envisage how each participant would have spoken, thus keeping in mind the participants' dialect and [possible] accent (Devault, 1990). To connect each excerpt to the theme/sub-themes, I use three dots (...) to denote that words have been omitted (Braun & Clarke, 2013). I also underscore words or phrases that were emphasised to give the reader a sense of how the participants were emotively speaking. After presenting the final key theme and sub-theme with participants' excerpts, I give a summary to conclude the chapter.

6.1.1: Diagram 1: educational Acts and policies linking each participant

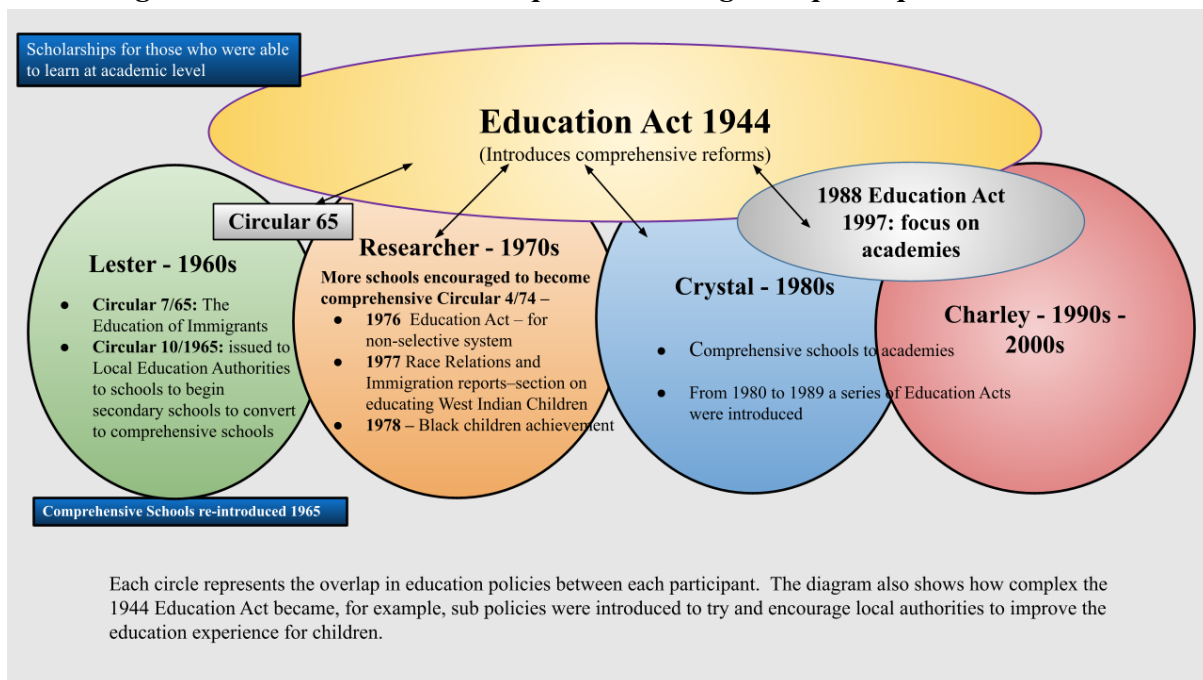


Diagram one: To help set the scene and put into context the participants and my educational trajectory, Diagram one presented above, shows when we were all educated in schools and the Acts and policies that were administered during our time.

6.2: Participants bio-data

Below I give a brief bio-data of the participants who were interviewed, including my own. I thought it was important to give a picture of the level of qualifications each participant achieved during their academic career. By contributing their bio-data to this study, I hope to show the comparison in achievements that each of us has obtained. The age of the participants mentioned below were at the time of their interviews, i.e. at the beginning of this study.

6.2.1: Researcher

At the time of the interviews, I was 58 years old. I grew up in Sheffield, South Yorkshire. I am educated up to master's degree level in Literacy and Language in Adult Education. I work full-time as an English Language Tutor; I teach English for Academic purposes to undergraduate and postgraduate students while I am a part-time student/researcher in this study.

6.2.2: Charley

The youngest participant is Charley who was 25 years old when I first conducted the first interview. She chose the name Charley because she says this is what her mother calls her as a pet name. Charley comes from a northern city in the UK and is part of a blended family. Charley is educated up to a master's degree level in Statistics and Mathematics and is currently studying for a PhD in the same discipline. While studying, Charley works and studies with

others in her course/department, producing publications for journals within her field. Charley also teaches other students within her department part-time.

When I met Charley in 2019, I was teaching a Departmental Language Programme (DLP) class, usually made up of international students wanting academic support, so I was really surprised to see Charley in my class. During the first DLP class, Charley openly talked about the advice she was given to seek help and guidance in relation to her academic writing skills, and this was her reason for attending a DLP session.

6.2.3: Lester

I met Lester after he responded to one of my emails to recruit participants for this study. Lester is the oldest of the participants at the age of 73. Lester worked as a Civil Servant in the south of England for over 16 years. He also worked abroad for an investment bank for more than 20 years. His academic career has enabled him to obtain a first and second degree in pure Mathematics. After a break in academia of 45 years, he returned to the academic community to study for a PhD in Statistics and Mathematics. Lester also has experience teaching on other Mathematics courses.

6.2.4: Crystal

Crystal is a 47-year-old mother and carer for her disabled husband. She graduated with a first degree in History of Psychology from a university in the south of England. After graduating, she worked for over 20 years as a civil servant. Returning to academic studies, Crystal is studying for her second degree at the master's level in Education and Psychology at a northern university.

I met Crystal as her teacher in 2020 in one of my online Departmental Language Programme (DLP) classes. After attending only one session, Crystal felt she needed no academic support. When she did not attend the second class scheduled by her department, I contacted her via email to find out why. She wrote back and told me that she had worked out what to do and that her education and work experience background would help her through her studies.

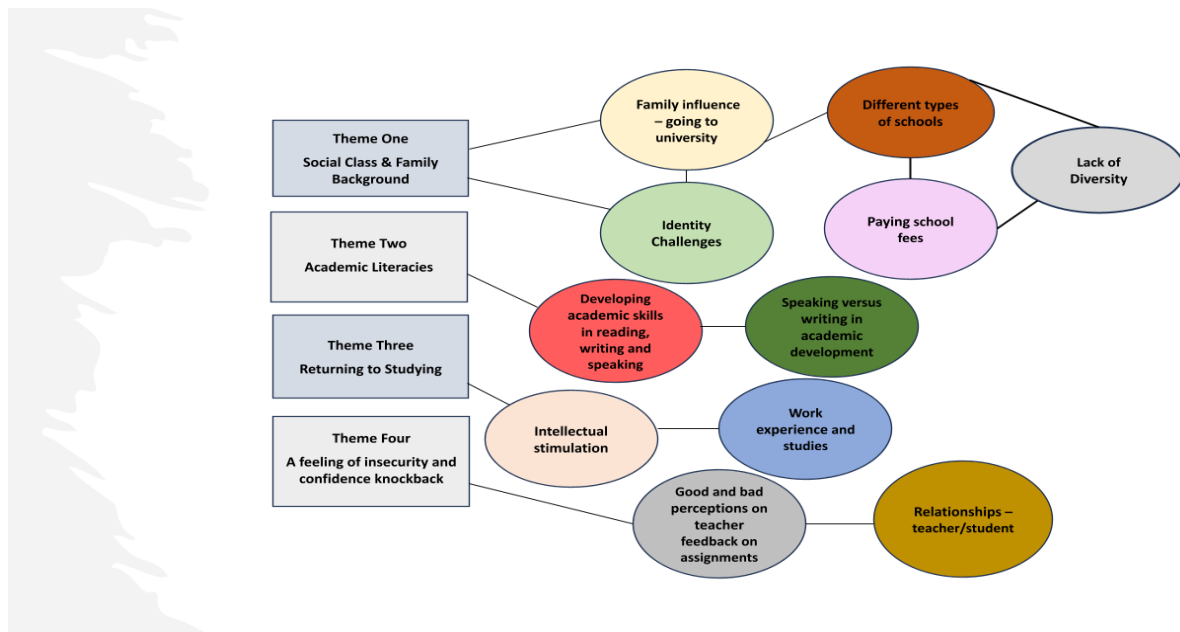
6.3: Semi-structured interviews - identifying themes

As mentioned above, this chapter discusses the themes and subthemes created from the semi-structured interviews. First, illustrated in Diagram two are the themes that were identified after conducting phases four and five of RTA. Each theme was created to include all participants' responses. As illustrated in Diagram one, the participants were educated in different periods, and therefore are of varying ages, so their responses differ to fit their period of time.

The following research questions were used as a guide for the semi-structured interviews. They were also used as a guide to help find the main themes and sub-themes.

1. How do postgraduate students view their educational journey in relation to their social background and become a part of the academic community?
2. How have students incorporated academic literacies into their studies? What support, if any, did they receive to achieve academic success?

6.3.1: Diagram 2: themes & sub-themes map



Each theme and sub-theme were created using Braun and Clarke (2022) reiterative Reflexive Thematic Analysis (RTA) process, the result of which are four key themes with 11 sub-themes as illustrated above. To create a narrative around the participants, I followed Braun and Clarke's (2022) guidance to think about how I would present the themes as a coherent narrative. They suggested these points: logical order, whether one theme is more central to the other; if a theme is longer than another one, and if this should come first; to think about which theme/s could be presented first so that an analytical narrative can be linked to the themes that are

presented at the beginning (Braun & Clarke, 2022). I followed these suggestions to help create a logical narrative for each participant.

From the main theme, each sub-theme was constructed using a '*central organising concept*'. To give a rich - in-depth meaning to the data, I have sequentially presented each theme to give a narrative, show transferability, (Braun & Clarke, 2022) and connect the data with that of my own narrative (See Appendix 18) in the next chapter. As discussed in Chapter three, I hope that each theme will evoke the lived experiences of the participants' educational trajectories. To support each theme, I identified excerpts from the participants' transcripts verbatim to address the research questions. Each excerpt is highlighted with direct quotation marks; I state which interview the responses were extracted from and I use the participants' pseudonyms at the beginning of the discussion, followed by their excerpts. So, for RQ 1: *How do postgraduate students view their educational journey in relation to their social background and become a part of the academic community?* As will be discussed below, the following key themes and sub-themes were generated.

Under the above research question, I wanted to understand and explore how each participant viewed their educational journey. In addition, I wanted to compare their educational experiences with that of my own experience. So, from the participants' responses to the interview question about family background, the following key themes and sub-themes were created. As stated above each excerpt is presented verbatim.

6.3.2: Key Theme 1: social class and family backgrounds

For two of the participants, family played an important role. During the interviews, participants were asked about their backgrounds and if other family members went to university. From their responses, they talked about their grandparents and parents' educational backgrounds and other family members who had the opportunity to go on to higher education. Therefore, this key theme and sub-theme was created.

Sub-theme 1: family influence of going to university

As mentioned above, the first sub-theme relates to the participants' accounts of their family members who influenced the participants going into higher education. For two of the participants, they were the second generation who had the opportunity to study in academia. For example, Lester recalls his mother's experience of how she was asked to choose between grammar school or learning something practical.

Lester says: "Um, well, in my immediate family I'm the 1st to go to university. My father was, um, an artist, so he went to art school where he was. 14, I think 14 or 15. And then had a career as a commercial artist and a cartoonist. My mum was um. Um. Well have her mother offered her. A choice, she said. You could either go to the grammar school. Or you could learn something really useful. You know what a quite a question to put to

an 11 year old and um. And so my mum was trained as a as a cook. And was a cook in domestic service. [Interview 2]

First of all, this is back in the 19.30s. Um, but after um. She and my dad got together. On his return from the war, um, she didn't work again. So she. Cooked for us. I'm an only child. My dad was an only child, so um and and his family were. Um. Typically. Woodworkers of some kind or or another, although in that his dad was a newsagent, but that's. A bit of an exception on my mum's side, she was one of. Five siblings, four of whom survived into adulthood. Uh, none of them? Had any higher education, but um. My uncle's. That two boys. No one one of my uncles sons. Um. Took a degree in chemistry. In London”.

Lester, then goes on to talk about his grandmother's profession and says:

Lester: *“So um. Oh and my grandmother. My mother's mother was. In her. Young days, she was a teacher and she was very keen on education, yeah. So the ethos of the family was very strongly. Focused on the importance of education. Um, but as I say, I was the 1st in my line to go to university”.* [Interview 2]

Lester's recollection of his mother choosing a domestic service career can be seen as his perception that she had a heavy burden placed on her at the age of 11. It can also be perceived that he did not have to make this choice, and so the decision to go to a public school that had academic status was made for him. After talking about his mother's experience, he then reverts (back) to his grandmother by talking about how she had a strong influence on the family being educated.

Lester's recollection about his grandmother was similar for Crystal. The expectation was for her to go to university because her grandmother had set the foundations for family members to go to university. It was expected of her; she says: *“My grandmother ensured that everyone had the opportunity to go to university”*. Crystal also recalls her father going to university too as she states:

Crystal: *“my dad was the first generation to go to University of his family. So my grandma had eight kids here and she had this thing that every one of her kids was going to go to university and then in that real kind of 1960s. There she sort of drove them all through university and then I'm next generation down”.* [Interview 2]

Crystal has a brother and about him she comments:

“And it was a massive thing, like when my my brother went to my brother went to Cambridge because he's really boy. And he went to Cambridge, did his first degree and he was at university with ... who was the grandson of ... Sheffield, the country people who my granddad had worked. With”.

On the other hand, Charley discusses in a more relaxed way about her family's view on going to university and about her brother:

Charley: *"My brother, my brother did go to university but I don't know. For that, but he's currently he's dropped out and he's hoping to go back. But other than that, none of my parents or anyone like that did any sort of higher education really? It was all straight into work, so. You ask me, my brother was the 1st. [Interview 2]*

And he actually asked me lots of like questions about uni and stuff because. I guess because I've been through it for years before him, but so hopefully. He will finish Uni and then he's had a bit of a weird route into university in the sense that. I mean, I I personally think he might be neurodivergent and it's not quite had the support that he's needed.

In his kind of. Academic career as it was, but he eventually found his way back through A levels and then eventually found his way to university, so hopefully he does manage to finish".

Sub-Theme 2: different types of schools

The rationale behind sub-theme two is because each participant, me included, attended school at different times. As such, each decade we were at school, there were different government policies that affected how children were educated. As illustrated in Diagram one, the policies overlapped during our school years. This was explained in Chapter two and will be discussed in the findings chapter.

Sub-theme two created from key theme one describes how each participant attended different types of schools in different eras. Each participant describes what type of school they went to and, for two of them, the requirements for being accepted into their school. All the participants described their schools in different ways and sub-theme two captures these reactions when they were asked the question *'What type of school did you go to'?*

Charley: *"Just a normal I just don't know what they called comprehensive". I mean, so I thought it was really good school and I know I'm a massive problem was in special Mansfield, which was ironic given that. School was, school itself wasn't, but the maths department and the IT department. By the time I left for special measures, because that's why I went to, I went to like the local college from my A levels because I need a math department. Wasn't doing so well and I want to be my son. Further maths? Yeah. So I thought maybe I should so either that's why I went off to college. But after school I thought it was quite good. [Interview 2]*

When Charley was asked about why her school was in special measures, she replied:

"We weren't performing that well. I remember because they put us all in for GCSE and only like 34 - 35 and the whole year got their target grade. So most of the year ended up spending the year after resitting and those of us that didn't just got chucked into like an extra GCSEs. But again, we were put in for GCSEs that the teacher never taught and had no idea what was how to teach it. So I don't think anybody did that well on that extra GCSE either.

So yeah, I think it was because the lower student who performing so badly, the really strong student support with them and then the really strong teachers, I work with them and then the weakest, weakest teachers were kind of. Put with us, but then it meant that the ones that passed. That has these extra module but weren't taught it properly. It was also a bit".

For Lester, he describes his school in the following way:

Lester: *"Um, so so the school labs I I was sent to was. A small. Independent. Boy school. A public day school. In Harrow on the Hill, and it was linked to Harrow School. It was the same, right? Yeah, same foundation".*

... so it was a quite an academic school;" ...Um, grammar school or a free place? Yeah, did well in the 11 plus, yeah. And if you fail the 11 plus, it would be secondary modern; It was a boy's school, so there were no girls...". [Interview 2]

Whereas Crystal states:

Crystal: *"I went to a just a local authority funded ordinary primary school... but my second so do you live in Sheffield? (Yeah, yeah), you know, Sheffield high. (I've heard) ... So, I went to the equivalent of that where I grew up in Portsmouth, Portsmouth High School, which was. So yeah, a fee paying school. Yeah, it was a fee paying school and then sixth form was just ... So for the school that I went to it was key thing. it was all girls...; I went to a high performance school..."*.

[Interview 2]

In addition, Crystal recalls how her mother helped her prepare for the grammar - secondary school as she recalls:

"I can remember my mum wanting me to remember having been given an interview as well as the test, and my mum trying to get me to read talking to The Hobbit". [Interview 2]

Charley describes her school as - 'a normal school'. Whereas Crystal and Lester described their schools as being an 'academic' school and 'a high performance', respectively. In addition, Crystal and Lester described their family backgrounds as being middle class; they both went to a fee-paying, single-sex school. Reviewing what Charley says, the question is:

what is normal?

Unlike Crystal, Charley adds to her response about the type of school she went to and talks about the encouragement she received from her teachers to do better. She also talks about the support she had during her first year at university from lecturers, but she believes that this is partly because she comes from a working-class background, for example, she adds:

Charley: *"I went to an even like a normal. Like a normal. School and like kind of posh area or you know, a more kind of private school or whatever. I would have been completely averaged. Like when I came to uni I was kind of, you know, not average, but definitely at the top end of average, unless it was top of the class and yeah, and I think had I not had. That encouragement and not set out and how people encouraging me like that come from the background that I did. I don't think I would have pushed myself to. Go where I have". [Interview 2]*

Sub-theme 3: identity challenges

The third sub-theme, *'identity challenges'*, encapsulates the notion of the challenges that two of the participants encountered, and/or felt, for example, not being the same as others at school or university. For instance, Charley reflects on her first year at university:

Charley: *"my accent's change, which is my accent fluctuates and it's weird and I don't realise I'm doing it until. Some. like I have somebody points out or I'll say a word in a weird way or someone will say don't say it like that. And nothing like it. Only say it like that. So that definitely. I don't know though, because I was always so, like, studious. As a kid".*

I feel like I haven't changed in that sense. If anything, I'm quite worn out now. I'm less studious than I was. I don't know. It's hard. I don't. I don't really keep in contact with anyone I went to school with. Yeah. Just drifted apart and yeah. But like when I go back to my family, I don't feel like. I've changed so much.

I I guess I feel a bit. I'm very conscious of making sure that they don't think I'm better than that. That's something that I'm like definitely really sure like, sure that I do feel like. But none of them have ever been like, funny with me about it". [Interview 2]

In addition, Charley talks about her personality, her characteristics:

Charley: *"Because I'm quite like chatty and friendly, and I do worry that sometimes people won't take me seriously. I won't think I'm intelligent, and I know that I actually had that in school once where I heard. My my maths teacher said to my art teacher, she's a really smart you don't think so when you like talk to her. I was like OK.*

That was almost a compliment. But and yeah, and I think maybe that stuck with me a

little bit there. OK, people not taking me seriously then. I don't want to pretend that I'm all posh and serious. You know, cultures and all that. Because I'm just not. It's not who I am". [Interview 2]

Crystal, on the other hand, talked about a feeling of being stupid because she was in the bottom set of classes in her school years. She described her school as "*a high-performance school*". *She comments:*

Crystal: "*... so, um, as a result of that, always, you know, at school saw myself as a bit stupid because I was kind of, you know, in the lower group for things. Um, but actually of course I was in the lower groups of very high perform ... school*". [Interview 1]

For these two participants, the feeling of being judged by others because of their accent or feeling 'stupid' seemed to be an important factor in their responses. It is also reflected when Charley talks about her supervisor, who told her own story to Charley of similar experiences of trying to fit in with her peers. For example, Charley says about her supervisor:

Charley: "*So she's always, I think, felt like a bit of an outsider in the sense that a lot of. People in our department, are all male, you know, Cambridge Oxbridge educated, always starts and so I think maybe she's very aware of how people fit in into certain situations, which is a bit more hyper aware of that maybe*". [Interview 2]

Sub-theme 4 - paying school fees

This theme overlaps with the previous sub-theme of *different types of schools*. For instance, during Lester's school days, local authorities were not funded by the central government to provide free school places for all children. For Lester, it was important for him to have 'free pay schemes' because he recalls his parents would not have been able to afford to send him to school even though he classed himself as being from a lower-middle-class family. There was no set school curriculum, so parents would look around at what each school was offering in terms of subjects. This is encapsulated in his comments as he says "*free place boys like ... me...*":

Lester: "*It was up to the school to invent the curriculum, yeah, and they could shop around. They could choose which examination board. The O levels and A levels would be produced by, but I can't. It really is very important that the the free play scheme. My parents could not have afforded to ... pay the fees at my school. And um, that was true of. My friends who? All of my friends were, I would say lower middle class. I mean one of them, his dad was an accountant, so it probably a bit better off, yeah. It was. Through the free pay scheme, it was not, um, a school exclusively for. Middle class and upper-class people*". [Interview 2]

Crystal had a different viewpoint about fee-paying schools - she viewed them as taking money and seemed to have a lack of respect for the teachers when she recalls how they explained the errors that she made in her school work. She comments that the teacher would just use a red pen to highlight what she did wrong but without an explanation:

Crystal: *"Whereas in my kind of fee-paying school, I suspect the teachers would probably just put red circle around it, yeah, and then not tell me what I was doing..."*. [Interview 2]

Lester and Crystal went to a same sex school, whereas Charley went to a mixed-sex school, where her parents did not have to pay any fees. Comprehensive schools were made available for all children, no matter what background they came from and were run by the local councils. This is encapsulated when Crystal says:

Crystal: *"... So it's a, it was a similar to a grammar school except it was fee paying grammar schools. In this country you don't have people have to pay for their children to go to grammar schools"*. [Interview 2]

Sub-theme 5: lack of diversity

Diversity was a theme that developed from the data. This is partly because I am Black and I wanted to investigate if there were other ethnic minorities at their schools, especially when two of the participants stated that their backgrounds were middle class. They are both from the southern part of the United Kingdom (UK), Portsmouth and London whereas the third participant is from the northern part of the UK. Their responses highlighted that there was a lack of children attending schools from other ethnic backgrounds. This was noted when all the participants made similar comments about the lack of diversity in their schools. For example, Charley's comments invigorate their answers quite well as she says:

Charley: *"So, yeah, not a lot of diversity at all in that sense. And actually there wasn't that much diversity really in terms of the kind of economic background it was mostly. You know, really working class"*. [Interview 2]

Charley emphasises that her school was mainly for the working-class and this background had an effect on those who attended her school. It portrays that there were possibly a lot of unemployed families in her area and families who were just making ends meet as she states that:

Charley: *"I mean the people I thought were really well off and really posh now having kind of left Mansfield realising that actually they weren't. As posh as I thought"*.

Already like below (mortgage) that basically everybody rents. So yeah, I don't know. I feel like it is that lots of white working class, you know, students basically was the general background". [Interview 2]

Whereas for Crystal there seemed to be an unsurprising fact that there were no other children from a different ethnic background as she says:

***Crystal:** “My class was completely white...”; I can't think of anybody with English as a second language in my year. And I can think of 1 girl who would have been from Indian heritage. Yeah, in the whole year. And, you know, yeah, yeah. But that would also reflect, to a degree, the City of Portsmouth in the 1980s. You know, Naval city, you know, it's not like that now. It's now, you know, a much more diverse place, but I think in 70s and 80s. No, still very, yeah. So that would have been reflective as much of the area of the time, I think. Yeah, it was just, yeah, very white British it was. It wasn't an immigrant city in a sense, you know? Yeah”. [Interview 2]*

For Lester he recalls:

“... I grew up in a part of London where there were a lot of Jewish families, right? Though I think about 1/3 of the boys in the school were Jewish”. [Interview 2]

Lester would have gone to school at a time when not many children from ethnic backgrounds attended UK schools in some parts of London. However, some schools were slowly adapting to becoming comprehensives, which saw more children from working class backgrounds and ethnic minorities attending these types of schools. At his school, there was some diversity as Lester recalls seeing a few Jewish children.

To summarise, key theme one and the sub-themes have brought to the foreground the participants' background, social class, together with the type of school they attended. The themes have also highlighted how diversity in their schools was minimalistic.

The following research question explores academic literacies and its importance to their development in academia.

RQ 2: How have students incorporated academic literacies into their studies? What support, if any, did they receive to achieve academic success?

6.3.3: Key theme 2: academic literacies

Sub-Theme 6: developing academic skills (in reading, writing and speaking)

During the first set of interviews with each participant, I wanted to find out their perception of what academic literacies meant to them. For instance, under the interview question guide, the theme of 'Academic Support', my question '*Can you tell me what academic literacies are – what does this mean to you?*' Was put to each participant. All participants had slightly different views on what academic literacies is. As illustrated below, Lester was not quite sure what 'academic literacies' meant but he linked references and bibliographies to academic development. He seemed quite confident that he did not need to know what academic literacies is or that he needed it during his working career as he comments:

Lester: “...the academic consistence on references and bibliographies, which we didn't use in my career, but, um, that's so straightforward and so easy. That's not a problem for me”. [Interview 1]

But then he talks about a book that was recommended to him to learn how to write reports as he says:

Lester: “When I started work as a government auditor. (Yeah) Um, I thought I knew how to write. I'd been up quite a senior civil servant”; Opened it, when I got back to my office and did not put it down that day, it was, it was a very short book and it was uh, wholly about, uh, how to structure a report so that the reader is carried through it....”; “...It was all the English, native speakers they couldn't writer either”. [Interview 1]

A couple of the participants think academic literacies is about learning grammatical rules and how to speak in English particularly if you are an international student. As illustrated below, the participants do not realise that academic literacies is a developing set of skills needed to achieve academically and is not just for international students. Lester's anecdote above sums this up quite well but then he realises L1 (first language) speakers of English do not know how to write reports.

Crystal also thought that academic literacies were more for international students as she comments:

Crystal: “And it was, I first I'd sort of read that it was focused on, you know, it was designed primarily for students, for English as a second language and then, but then said, but also, um, for those, um, particularly mature students who might be having problems with, from the academic language”. [Interview 1]

In addition, Crystal's perception of academic literacies is that it is for mature students who might be having trouble with writing skills as she talks about her own experiences of accessing academic support:

Crystal: “Um, so I think, um, in, I guess, so in two ways, so the first thing was when we first started, um, we had to do that math. We had to do a math test to just this kind of, um, yeah. To see where we were at really a sort of diagnostic test, which I did. And. So despite me saying, actually I think I'm quite I'm okay at maths. Um, I did very badly in that diagnostic test and got 30 something. But even when I was doing it, I wasn't bothered by that remotely. And I wasn't bothered by that grade because when I was doing it on everything, I went, I was always like, oh, oh, it's back here. How you do this? I, this rings a bell. But it was, you know, it's 20 years ago since I've done it. So it, I knew that it wasn't a skills problem. It was a me, you know what I mean? It was just a knowledge gap that I hadn't done it for 20 years. So I didn't know how to do it as

opposed to thinking that once I knew how I wouldn't be able to like it didn't look, does that make sense? I wasn't scared. So the first thing I did was after that was book a session on with the math. Um, person and what we did was it was really helpful. Actually. She, she just, um, I think we had two sessions and we just went through the questions, everyone, and she just taught me through. And, um, and as soon as she taught me through the house, oh, yes, I know I can remember. This is how you, yes. That made, you know, and it was quite a fun session actually, because it did it just sort of brought. Back again. Yeah. And, and also, yeah, reinforce that confidence. So actually this isn't that the math element, isn't gonna be a problem. Yeah. For me, um, I mean, I'm really glad I did that then ahead of the statistical assignment. Cause it did give me that I think confidence boost on that the, um, the literacy support". [Interview 1]

As highlighted previously, in Lester's response, he links his work with academic literacies. This was also for Crystal who like Lester linked her job to academic literacies. In addition, Crystal found developing her academic literacies skills difficult as she classed herself as being a slow reader.

Crystal: *"...it was my first assignment, but, uh, within that, you know, um, I've had 20 years where my job has been about writing and I thought I'd become a good writer"; "...I don't think it's there yet in terms of reading and comprehending. So I. I find reading really. I'm a very slow, I'm very slow at reading academic papers, understanding them". [Interview 1]*

Charley focuses on grammatical rules and sentence structure rather than linking them to her academic studies. However, she links academic literacies to writing for a particular purpose, such as writing essays for GCSE coursework as she states:

Charley: *"So I guess that makes the knowing how to write in an academic setting, rather than just kind of generalising. Umm so kind of writing in a way that be suitable to submit to a journal or to submit as kind of fee doctorate and whatnot. But yeah, I don't know if I've said that correctly". [Interview 1]*

In addition, Charley talks about grammatical rules and about fitting in, which can be linked to how she feels coming from a working-class background into academia. This is illustrated in her comments below. Her comments also indicate the level of insecurity she has about her background and thinks because of this it affects her writing ability. For example, she says:

Charley: *"I didn't remember like, particularly focusing on grammatical rules or sentence structure was more about getting the content, right, and so making sure that you're kind of comparing when you compare and contrasting, or when you're using analytical writing when you need to... with regards to fitting in and regards to writing down your essays, adverse assignments, because I would take that at that point, you didn't really, you didn't realise that you needed to write in a certain way". [Interview 1:]*

Sub-theme 7: speaking v writing in academic development

Sub-theme seven was generated under the key theme 'academic literacies' and was developed from two of the participants' comments about using the 'wrong' word when talking about borrowing and lending, and about spelling words phonetically. One participant was educated in a state school and the other in a private school. The common factor is they were not corrected at school in how they used or spelt certain words, and this carried on into their further and higher education trajectories.

For example, Charley says:

Charley: *"So I kind of write how I speak. But which isn't very grammatically correct. So that was just a lot of grammar rules I worked out really kind of familiar with, I guess I just didn't write very well, especially for a native speaker. Umm and I think a lot of the time in my English classes, the teachers were too busy trying to manage the behaviour of the students. And so we didn't get as much learning done as perhaps we should have done. And I think as well, if you go around, who speak properly, you kind of learn the rules without realising you're learning the rules. Whereas where I'm from everybody speaks a lot of slang and kind of using the wrong words and things and so I never noticed it until I realised I checked them in academic writing that I said a lot of things wrong or use the wrong words and things like that. But the course really helps. That's good. ...Mansfield ... so a lot of a lot of slang.*

... for example, nobody really says the word lend. It's just 'borrow' for everything. But also I would say one more use of the need borrow me something. When I got to uni and everyone was like what are you talking about that's completely wrong. And it's just little things like that, that you know, everyone does speak that way. And so you don't notice it, but it is incorrect. And so you can't be you know, if I submitted something that we talked about borrowed everything in a paper, I don't think but you know, if this isn't submitting these things to a journal, you know, you need to be correct". [Interview 1]

Charley found a way to cope with her writing issues as she comments on the use of Grammarly.

Charley: *"And you know things like **Grammarly** do help. But it was my issue was that the writing process **was taking so long** because not only was I having to correct any issues with content and not explaining things maybe properly, which, that was fairly easy for me to fix by myself. But I was also having to go through all the kind of grammatical and sentence structure and things like that. And so it was taking like four or five drafts to get a piece of work done, whereas now it takes more like two or three. So it's definitely improved". [interview 1]*

Responding to Crystal's comment about how she was not able to express her ideas clearly, the question was put to her about receiving support to do this. She recalls how support was not

offered to her and then tells her experience of how a teacher in her sixth form asked her about spelling the word 'doesn't'.

Crystal: *"No, not at all. Certainly not in school. Um, and, um, it wasn't till I got to. Um, so. No, definitely I didn't get any sort of help and need of help was spelling or grammar particularly. I don't think I really, um, there's real moment when I got to, um, my sixth form college and my, uh, English teacher kind of took me aside and said, um, um, asked me to, um, Asked me how to break down the word doesn't and I can always remember it. And I went well it's does or not. And he, he said, so how do you spell does? And I went D O D O E S. And how do you spell? Not N O T and then he said, so why are you spelling? Doesn't D O S apostrophe E N T. Yeah. And he went through my, and that's how it was felt all the way. And I remember just thinking at the time, uh, uh, um, you know, I'd got to that point in my education. Nobody had ever even stopped to point that out to me, you know, but that word doesn't is, you know, it's actually just a combination of the word doesn't, not, you know, and to me it was a kind of really, it's a really good example of actually how appalling education you get in hard for in schools is actually what they do is just cram lots of bright kids with, and, you know, good backgrounds. [Interview 1]*

Crystal then goes on to say:

"... I think my spelling was always very kind of phonetic spelling in that way, you know? Um, and I, you know, I still what's the classic one that people do that I still do, um, of instead of have isn't it and things like that because you, it sounds like you say it; ... I guess, you know, 20 years of working for the civil servants, civil service. I know all of those things to watch out for it in my own writing. So when I proofread I'll, you know, I'll go back and check for things. Um, yeah, like that. Yeah. I was very much kinda a phonetic...".

In summary, knowing the right way to spell or use words in the correct way has a mental impact for Crystal and Charley. Crystal being told of the mistakes she was making in sixth form has helped to ensure that she proofreads her work, for example, to look for contraction words that she may have spelt incorrectly. Proofreading her work has helped her during her work experience and has helped her during her current studies. In comparison, Charley found using a software tool, i.e. Grammarly has helped her to avoid the mistakes she was making in her writing as she states this has improved.

6.3.4: Key theme 3: returning to studying

Linked to the sub-theme above, this third key theme was generated after one of the participants, Lester, talked about how they missed being intellectual. After retiring they needed to continue to have an intellectual stimulation that they missed after several years of work. For another participant fitting in with their peers on their course seems to be important. This key theme has two sub-themes, *intellectual stimulation, and work experience & studies*.

Sub-theme 8: intellectual stimulation

Charley's comments about whether she has changed since studying at university. This is partly because her supervisor has hinted to Charley about fitting in with different groups of people. This is indicated when Charley says: "*My supervisor always. Likes to say I'm a social chameleon. That's how she describes it*". However, this comment seems to be taken as an acceptance that she is doing well as she comments further by saying:

Charley: "*To see me interact with all different groups of people kind of blend to that social group. And it's not my personality as such. I think it's just the way that I've present what I'm saying. I don't think I've changed what I'm. Saying or... I I don't really focus on it too much until she pointed it out. And then now I'm like, oh, maybe I can kind. Of see that*". [Interview 2]

In her response, you have the words '*different groups of people...*' '*social group*' which gives further indication of wanting to belong confidently to a group but then has misconceptions about how she speaks. The idea of belonging is also noticeable when Charley talks about her supervisor working with a team of men whose educational backgrounds are either Cambridge or Oxford, as she states that:

Charley: "*... said she [Charley's supervisor] grew up fairly working class, but she's very well spoken because her parents, they weren't paid very well. They were trained actors, so they were trained to speak very, you know, speak very proper. Yeah. So she's. ... But she's all, I think, always struggled to be taken a bit more seriously because she came from an archaeological background and then went into statistics*".

So she's always, I think, felt like a bit of an outsider in the sense that a lot of. People in our department, are all male, you know, Cambridge Oxbridge educated, always starts and so I think maybe she's very aware of how people fit in into certain situations, which is a bit more hyper aware of that maybe". [Interview 2]

In summary, Charley compares her own background with that of her supervisor's, i.e. coming from a working-class background and the need to prove herself that she can belong to a group of academic statisticians. Both Charley and her supervisor are working in a male-dominated environment which has different challenges.

Crystal recalls how she joined the civil service and how she took part in selection interviews in which she sometimes failed at the writing aspect but passed on the speaking element of the interview. She recalls:

Crystal: "*so in the civil service, when you go for a promotion, you have to do, um, You have to go through these board boards, promotion boards, which involves normally a group exercise, an interview and a written test. And whenever when I did them, so I did, I did two of them before they eventually scrapped actually. And now it's just*

interviews, but ones that I did, I'd always fail and do a polling on the written test, but my interview and my group activity. Was so good that I would, I'd be like candidate and get and, and pass.

I think, um, it was when I joined the civil service and we're doing those kind of interviews. I started realising. Uh, you know, I struggled more than other people or how I struggled didn't match how good I was at things. If that makes sense. And I started getting much more sort of internal confidence about how was that sounds really arrogant, doesn't it. But, you know, I realise that, but I tried to match. You tried to match, well, how comes I've got these ideas, how comes I speak this way? But then when it comes down to the written. Side the things. Why do I struggle to, yeah, to, yeah, I understand exactly that. And I thought, I think I start to realise that". [Interview 2]

For two of the participants, they each had a different journey to return to academia. Lester is the oldest in this study, and his response is quite different to that of Crystal. His motivation to return to studying in academia was different as he recalls:

Lester: *"Uh, I, I think it was a mixture of things. Um, I had, um, in the last two years of my career, a very, very busy intellectually demanding job, demanding in all sorts of ways. Uh, but, but intellectually, um, pretty much so, and I retired and suddenly that had all gone (Yeah) and, um, I didn't like that much. And so, um, started. Picking up books. I, as I said, I live at Peterborough and, um, which is not very far from Cambridge. Uh, and, um, the Cambridge university offers its graduates, uh, free membership of the university library, which, which is a lending library. And, uh, and so I took myself off to Cambridge, um, once a week or so to, to, uh, and I, I said my subject was risk. I was interested in risk from my professional career, and I read all sorts of books about risk. I then got involved in, um, a number of, uh, discussion groups in the university". [Interview 1]*

As illustrated in his comments, his previous intellectual stimulation was in the workplace. When he retired, this intellectual stimulation was gone so he looked for a way back into an intellectual environment. His topic at university and in the workplace was 'risk' and so this was an opportunity for him to use his knowledge about 'risk' as a way to return to academia. Belonging to a group in a university, with similar interests in 'risks', Lester tells me:

Lester: *"Uh, uh, and so all of that was, um, a sort of substitute for the intellectual stimulation that I previously had in my job", which enabled him to become intellectually active again. [Interview 1]*

Sub-theme 9: Work experience and studies

Sub-theme nine overlaps with that of academic literacies and was generated from two of the participants' comments about their work experience and their studies. Lester's comments demonstrate how working and studying are linked together:

Lester: “Um, my first degree was, um, in mathematics...; about 10 years ago, I went back to Cambridge to receive a master's degree, uh, when I sat in the examination in 1970 - **[studies]** So I, I, I, at that point I was a pure mathematician... **[work]** The only issue was, um, conforming with the academic style of writing, which in my subject statistics is, is no trouble at all. **[Academic literacies]** For me, that's completely consistent with what I've used to from the world of audit”. **[Work experience]**
[Interview 1]

Charley, during the pandemic, worked part-time in a research centre using her skills as a developing mathematician. She has jointly published articles with her colleagues in her department. Connecting her work and studies together she notices that her academic writing is a continual developing process by which she needs to think about the audience for her article, for example, the essence of this is captured in the following excerpt:

Charley: “My audience changes all the time. It might be a statistician or it might be an archaeologists. It might be you know, people, non technical audience. So it's, it's caused me to think who do I need to write for and how do I need to structure my writing in such a way that they can understand it”? **[Interview 1]**

6.3.5: Key Theme 4: a feeling of insecurity and confidence knockback

Key theme five demonstrates how all participants felt insecure in their studies. Whether it was feeling that they did not belong, or they were too old to be studying again or whether they felt they were not clever enough to be studying, it is perceived that all participants had a sense of insecurity. The following three sub-themes were created to encapsulate this more clearly: 1. *Good and Bad Perceptions of teacher feedback on Assignments*; 2. *Supervisor / Teacher – student relationship*; 3. *Ability to do well at school and in higher education*.

Sub-theme 10: A Return to Study: *Good and bad perceptions of first teacher feedback on Assignments*

Lester is the oldest in this study. It was evident that he was concerned about how he fitted into his course of other students who were many years younger than he was.

Lester: “... how will university colleagues react to this old man going back? ..., the university ... personally has been absolutely nothing more than completely welcoming and supportive and really good. But what about the other students? What would they think about this old man? Uh, coming up three times the age of, um, uh there was one little project that, uh, they got four of us to work on jointly. And it was, uh, a bit nervous about that because I was be working with three, uh, young people who were absolutely up to date and up to the minute and up to speed in all aspects of the subject. And then it was me coming back to it after nearly 50 years. **[Interview 1]**

He felt that he did not have to worry because he was able to fit in as he says *"But in fact that that worked quite well, and it turned out that I wasn't noticeably slower than they were. So, I helped to build my confidence."* [Interview 1]

For all students it can be traumatic if you receive negative feedback on your first assignment, whether you are an undergraduate or graduate student. Receiving negative feedback could trigger memories if the student had bad experiences at school. This sub-theme is clearly articulated in Crystal's comments:

Crystal: *"...write, well, I mean, on my, on my first two assessments, I was really, I was quite disappointed, very disappointed with grade for the first one; If to be honest, I was really upset by it and I gave my feedback on it because it's the way it's never, you'd never in the workplace. Get the kind of feedback. Written in that way. So it was a very, um, it was a sort of, it was all done from a very negative perspective..."*. [Interview 1]

Her comments link the world of work with her studies, and her verbal and written responses demonstrate how upset she was about her first feedback on the master's course she was taking.

Charley, on the other hand, articulates her response in a more relaxed way. She talks about her supervisor and states that: *"...She's definitely very straight to the point and honest"*. Charley then reflects in a positive way about her writing because she recalls how her supervisor said her writing had improved: *"So the fact that she said that you think my writing has improved"* which indicates that Charley is feeling better about her academic writing. However, she reverts back to negatively describing her writing by saying: *"So there was some obviously, there were some bits where it was a call from you should be worded like this, or you know, the sentences a bit long..."*; which indicates a sense of justification for her supervisor to make those comments. In describing her supervisor again, Charley says:

Charley: *"... And my supervisor is definitely not one for kind of false platitudes. as it were. She's definitely very straight to the point and honest. "...I think it genuinely must have because, yeah, she's not one to pander to people. She'll tell you, if it's crap"*. [Interview 1]

Lester's response to receiving feedback on assignments was very different to Charley and Crystal. It could be perceived to be an 'age thing' and/or because he has many years of working experience, a long break in studying and is much older to the other participants. However, his comments leave an open question about how much involvement supervisors take in reading and giving constructive feedback on students' work. This is demonstrated in Lester's response as it gives an opposite view to that of the other two participants as he describes what happened:

Lester: *"I gather some universities they expect the students to do the questions and have them in and get them marked, um, uh, ... that isn't what happens. ... Um, send them to us if you'd like, but I didn't actually say this, but it was very clear. We won't*

read them, (laughter) just, just do it and get some benefit out of it did. And that's what we did. And, um, and that was very good. It was very enjoyable". [Interview 1]

Sub-theme 11: Supervisor / Teacher – student relationship

It is understandable that for all students, having a good relationship with a supervisor or a teacher is paramount to achieving academic success. I have divided this last sub-theme into two parts and included excerpts from the transcripts to capture the essence of the relationship between the student-teacher relationship /student-supervisor relationship.

For one of the participants, Charley she describes the relationship between her teachers and peers as:

Charley *"Umm and I think a lot of the time in my English classes, the teachers were too busy trying to manage the behaviour of the students. And so we didn't get as much learning done as perhaps we should have done. And I think as well, if you go around, who speak properly, you kind of learn the rules without realising you're learning the rules". [Interview 1]*

While she was studying for her GCSEs, there was a lack of support for Charley, but this changed for her when she went on to do her 'A' Levels as she recalls *"I was always felt quite supported by my teachers and, you know, I was able to get through"*. This theme indicates that the structure and management of schools in the comprehensive system was a problem. It is important to emphasise the issues surrounding government policies that were administered during all of our school years collectively. Therefore, the issues of the policies that were enacted are discussed in Chapters one and two.

There were positive feelings about the supervisor-student relationship for two of the participants. For example, Charley sounds a little confident but then a little confused when she recalls how her supervisor describes her as *"... a social chameleon"* which can be interpreted to mean that Charley is able to communicate with anyone.

Charley: *"My supervisor always. Likes to say I'm a Social chameleon. That's how she Describes it. To see me interact with all different groups of people kind of blend to that social group. And it's not my personality as such. I think it's just the way that I've present what I'm saying. I don't think I've changed what I'm. Saying or..." "Yeah. I I don't really focus on it too much until she pointed it out. And then now I'm like, oh, maybe I can kind. Of see that". [Interview 2]*

Lester demonstrates confidence in working with younger students. He was put into a group of three younger students to work on a group task, without the observation or facilitation from his supervisor. His comments encapsulate this as he says:

Lester: “...but the supervisors of the four of us said, why don't you four get together and work out the answers to these questions...” . [Interview 1]

During his interview, he commented on how his relationship might have developed in a positive way because his initial contact with his supervisor started off well as he says:

Lester: “... And I went to see, uh, well had a conversation on the phone ... and, uh, we hit it off and he's my supervisor and I've been working away at it ever since.

Most postgraduate students are required to take a diagnostic test to check their level of literacy and numeracy skills. When Crystal began her postgraduate studies, she did not do well in her diagnostic tests. So, she sought academic support which helped her to revisit and revise mathematical terms. Crystal then seemed more confident in her studies as she able to apply her knowledge of mathematical and writing skills to improve her grades and drew on her work experience to help her as she states:

Crystal: “Um, I definitely, as I say that the math session that I went to was really invaluable, you know, for, for showing me what I knew. You know, and, um, and give some confidence in that. And actually I think the session that I went to with you for that as well, that actually I came out of that feeling a lot more confident than I went into it. You know, I came out thinking, actually, I don't, I'm not as, I don't think I need to worry about this as much as I was worried about it, you know? So I think, yeah, I definitely recommend it to anybody for showing them what they already know”. [Interview 1]

I think that's, I think that's exactly it. I think it was, it was a kind of, okay. I know what I need to do. I need, so I need, you know, now I can go on and get, and do it as opposed to thinking beforehand. I dunno whether I can do this or not. Will I be able to do it or I don't know. It was, you know, of course you can, this is what you need to do to be able to do it. So, yeah, definitely”.

Lester, on the other hand, was very confident that he had a good relationship with his supervisor and so did not need any help from another department such as academic support provided by the university.

6.4: Chapter Summary

In this chapter I have described and presented four main themes with 11 sub-themes that were developed from the transcripts with the aim to answer the following research questions:

- 1: How do postgraduate students view their educational journey in relation to their social background and become a part of the academic community?
- 2: How have students incorporated academic literacies into their studies? What support, if any, did they receive to achieve academic success?

The analysis of interview data revealed several key themes related to the participants' educational journeys. These themes included: the influence of early experiences on the decision to pursue higher education, which was observed in two participants; the significant impact of identity and background on personal well-being; a noticeable lack of diversity within the participants' school environments. Furthermore, one participant's background continues to pose challenges as they navigate a male-dominated profession.

As mentioned at the beginning of this chapter, I have created two chapters for data analysis. This is because this study comprises two research methods, autoethnography and semi-structured interviews with three participants. Hence, in the following chapter, part-two, I present extracts from my own data incorporating the key and sub-themes created in Chapter six, using the Reflexive Thematic Analysis (RTA) process.

CHAPTER SEVEN

Autoethnography - Data Analysis

7.1: Introduction: Overview of the chapter

This chapter will analyse my own data using three themes identified through the Reflexive Thematic Analysis (RTA) process discussed in the previous chapter. These themes will be used to explore the following research question:

3: How did I transition from school pupil to a student and become a teacher at a university? What challenges did I encounter along the way?

As well as extracts from my own narrative and self-written interview, I also refer to artefacts that I discuss in my narrative, i.e., my secondary school reports, college work and personal emails to further support my analysis. In addition to using RTA, I incorporate nine of Chang's (2008) ten suggestions of analysing my autoethnography, which is explained below. Furthermore, I include excerpts from the semi-structured interviews that have prompted me to reminisce about my past educational experiences. By engaging with this multifaceted data, I have gained a deeper understanding of how my past has shaped the present (Chang, 2008). Lastly, I include scholars that support my experiences of what I encountered during my school days in the 1970s leading up to my current studies for a doctoral qualification.

In Chapter five, I gave a detailed analysis of how I created the key and sub-themes for this study using the data from the semi-structured interviews. As mentioned above, I used Braun and Clarke's (2022) RTA process to analyse the participants' data. In order to keep conformity, I used the same process for my own data. The themes discussed in Chapter six relate to the participants' data. However, for my own data, in Chapter seven, not all themes are included. This is because I did not encounter the same experiences as the participants. Each sub-theme in this chapter is titled and not numbered.

7.2: Chang's (2008) Suggestions for analysing autoethnographic data

As mentioned above, Chang (2008) suggests ten different strategies for an autoethnographer to analyse autoethnographic data. In no particular order, I have used nine of the suggestions. The tenth strategy suggests that data should be compared with "*social science constructs*" (p. 131). Because the process of analysing the data was by RTA, using an inductive approach, theories/concepts related to this study were developed after analyses and are part of the ninth suggested strategy; the last strategy was omitted. Below I give details of the suggestions I have used to help analyse my own data.

7.2.1: Identify Recurring Themes, Topics and Patterns and Cultural Differences

The first suggestion states that a researcher should look at the data holistically for topics that recur; **Second:** to look for cultural differences. For example, in this study, my ethnicity is

different to that of the participants - we have different cultural values. This is mentioned throughout this thesis and in the themes discussed below.

7.2.2: Recognising Exceptional Occurrences

Third: the researcher should look for exceptional occurrences; In my narrative, events and encounters have changed my life and made a huge impact on my educational trajectory. My educational trajectory did not follow a set pattern or routine. For example, as discussed below and in Chapter two, policies and Acts made a difference in my education. In addition, the event of me leaving school to study on an office course was a major event in my life.

7.2.3: Connecting the Past with the Present

Fourth: an autoethnographer should connect the past to the present; History has helped me to make sense of how I was educated in a northern British school during the 1970s and how the path that I took then has impacted the present. This is discussed in Chapters one and two as well as in my narrative and in this chapter.

7.2.4: Connectivity Between Self and Others

Fifth: *"to search for the connectivity between the self and others" [as this] is fundamental to autoethnographic interpretation"* (Chang, 2008, pp. 133-134). This suggestion opens the challenge to identify what similarities I have with the participants in this study. Our similarities are that we have been educated under the same British school system but there are differences in relation to our ethnicity and class status.

7.2.5: Inclusions and Omissions in Data

Sixth: Another suggestion by Chang (2008) is for the researcher to think about what is included or omitted in the data. For instance, as the researcher, it is helpful to ask yourself questions such as "what kinds of others are included in your data"? Which types of others are left out of the data?" And why? "Who are my others of similarity?" (Chang, 2008, pp. 133-134). This research includes three White participants, and a Black researcher and so, I resonate with Chang (2008) as she states that asking these questions about others and what is omitted from the data helps me to see myself more clearly in contrast.

7.2.6: Comparing Cases

Seventh: In relation to identifying similarities with the participants in a study, an autoethnographer should also compare cases. For example, although I was born in the United Kingdom (UK) my cultural background is different to the three participants in this study. Chang (2008) says that "In an autoethnographic study, different people, events, or contexts can be drawn from the data " (p. 135) for example, I compare myself with the participants in this study who all have a White British background. I am also British, but my culture is Caribbean. Two of the participants give their status as middle-class but we all share a common ground of being part of an academic community. Chang (2008) quotes Foster et al. (2005) "who argue that what matters is that differences and commonality are consciously addressed, rather than dismissed or minimised throughout the meaning-making process" (Foster et al., 2005, p. 9, 2005, p. 136).

Therefore, throughout my analysis of my own and others' data I constantly look for the above traits and interpret the data accordingly.

7.2.7: Contextualisation of the Data

Eighth: Contextualisation of the data: This strategy enables the researcher to zoom in and zoom out of looking at the data. By zooming in on your data you are allowing yourself to look at the data in a microscopic way to enable you to pay attention to specific and interesting details; and how these details can connect with the broader context. Zooming in relates to analytical categorising and fracturing of the data. While looking at the data in a microscopic way, interpreting the data lets you look at the data holistically and in context. Thus, *"to explain, interpret certain behaviours and events"* that are connected to, for example, *"sociocultural, economical, political, historical, [or] geographical environment in which these events took place and in which data were recorded"* helps a researcher to have an in-depth understanding of the data (Chang, 2008, p. 136). On the other hand, the approach of zooming out gives you a *"birds eye view of the data and enables you to see how your own case is related to others, related to its context and how the past has left traces in the present"* (Chang, 2008, p. 129). These two processes have been incorporated into my analysis of my data.

7.2.8: Using Theory as a Framework

Ninth: This last suggestion discusses the use of using theory as a framework. This will be addressed in the following chapter as I merge both data sets with critical race theory, intersectionality, and the theory of Bourdieu et al. (1977).

In this study, the above features are of sociocultural, economical, historical, and geographical features because of the place, period, in which we were educated, and the social class that we were (are) a part of. Therefore, having an in-depth understanding of my educational trajectory does not only include focusing on my own data to interpret, I also include references to literature to the context of my narrative as well as the context of the interviews.

Unlike the participants where I have used pseudonyms, for my own data analysis, I will use *'researcher'* to indicate my responses to the questions I presented to the participants. In addition, and to aid understanding, I will indicate which data I have used to respond to those questions. For example, from my self-written interview I will use [**Researcher: self-written interview**] and where I have extracted data from my own narrative, I will indicate this by writing [**Researcher: narrative**].

7.3: Key Theme 1: Social class and family background

Key theme one was created after writing my own narrative and thinking about my family background, i.e. my Caribbean culture. My mother, aunts and uncles were classed as middle-class in Jamaica because of their parents having their own businesses, which helped to pay for their education. In 1960, my mother followed two brothers and a sister to England, leaving Jamaica for a better life (Giles, 1977; Tomlinson, 2008a):

“My mother and those of her generation, who came to England in the late 1950s and 1960s and who had left the West Indies to look for work in the UK were part of the Windrush Generation”. My mother was a qualified secretary but was not allowed to work at her profession hence:

“West Indians who came to the UK were qualified, skilled professionals, but they were not given the opportunity to work in their professions because of the colour of their skin. So, when members of the West Indian communities came to the UK as qualified people, they could not choose where they wanted to live, their occupation or education, they took on menial jobs to survive. My mother was no exception to this. Her first job was at the Bachelors Food Factory where they made different types of food including soups”. [Researcher: Narrative]



Figure 6: Former Bachelors Food Factory
<https://www.geograph.org.uk/photo/1661509>

Although my mother came from a middle-class background in Jamaica, in the UK we as a family were part of the Black working-class society. Being part of British society presented itself with numerous challenges such as finding the right employment, housing and education and being ‘assimilated’ into White British culture. My mother, employed by a food factory, was to help provide basic living necessities for her family but at the same time was providing cheap labour to the British government who needed people from the British colonies to help rebuild the country after WWII (Dumangane, 2017; Giles, 1977).

7.3.1: Sub-theme: family influence of going to university

From key theme one above, this sub-theme extends from the social-class and family background perspective. I was not aware growing up that I had family members who went to university and who could have influenced me to help make my educational choices even though:

“My mother went to a private school in Jamaica, so I could say she was well educated but didn’t take her studies any further unlike my aunt who was a professor in a

university in New York and my other auntie, who was a teacher in Jamaica".
[Researcher: Self-written interview]

Looking after my own family was my priority from the age of 18. My mother did not talk about her experiences of going to school in Jamaica. I am not sure why but living in the UK her priority was to work to support her family (Giles, 1977). This was typical of most Black-Caribbean families; Black parents were always at work so that they could provide for their families. However, considering the type of employment that was offered to her, it is not surprising that she was always at work like a lot of other Black parents.

As stated above, although I have family members who are educated at university level, they were educated in international institutions whereas I was educated in the (UK). I say in my self-written interview that: *"In my immediate family, I am the only one that has been educated at university level"* **[Researcher: Self-written interview]** this means that I am the first one in my family of two brothers; second born generation from the Windrush era (Hall, 2021) (as my mother is the first-generation) that has been educated at university level. In relation to my aunts and uncles who were educated in Jamaica and the US, there is a difference of how I was educated here in the UK, which will be explained and analysed in the following chapter.

By the time I was in my late twenties, in the early 1990s, I applied to do a Business and Technology Education Course (BTEC) in Public Administration at a local college in the Northern part of the UK. This qualification is the equivalent to two A' Levels and it was a way to improve on my secondary school qualifications. I was given the opportunity through my job as a supervisor at a local sports centre to study while working full-time so, as I recall:

"I ... enrolled on a two-year Business and Technology Education Course (BTEC) in Public Administration. The course included subjects such as: Finance, Office Management, Information Technology. At the end of this two-year programme, I achieved my first real qualification, the equivalent of two A Levels at merit level. I was so happy that I had finally achieved something I thought I could never do. I finally received a good qualification which made me feel proud. Reflecting on this experience, I now know that I had achieved something that would have been considered an academic qualification and achievement. Looking back at this, I also question whether I would have achieved some academic qualifications if I had stayed on at school, at least for another year". **[Researcher: Narrative].**

Unfortunately, I did not have a role model that I could seek guidance from. Thus, I took this opportunity to independently develop my qualifications. Merriam and Caffarella (1991) informs me that my independence is a form of self-directed learning or in my case, self-directedness. I was primarily responsible for planning, carrying out and evaluating my own learning experiences. I decided on my own which path to take to develop my qualifications and saw the two-year BTEC program as a great opportunity. This self-determination to learn is a

part of adult life and this can happen whether or not it is in a formal institution (Merriam & Caffarella, 1991).

7.3.2: Sub-Theme: schools for *All* children

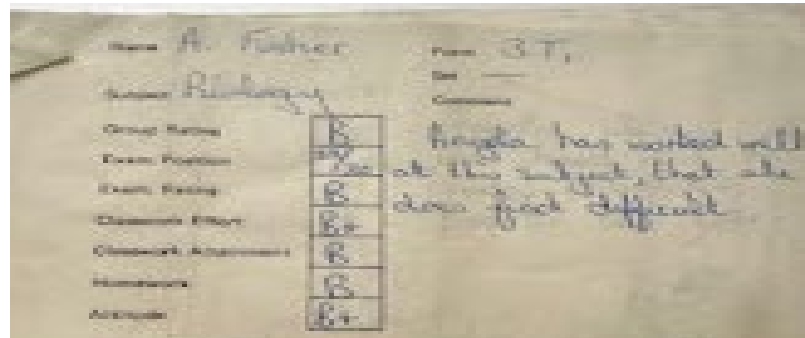
Theme two developed after responses to questions about the type of school that participants in this study attended. Two types of schools emerged, grammar and comprehensive. Over a span of fifty years or more the participants attended schools at different periods in time. As illustrated in Diagram one, during our years there were different policies and published reports that had an impact on British society as a whole. Some of these policies were put in place by central and local governments to improve children's education, mainly for the working-class as well as children of ethnic minorities to have a better education.

During my time at school these policies included Circular 10/65, which was issued to encourage local authorities to change secondary schools into comprehensive ones. This policy was reissued in 1974 (Circular 4/74) again asking for local authorities to change the schooling system to enable all children from all backgrounds to have a comprehensive education and to end the selective system. In 1976 the government issued the Education Act (1976) forcing local education authorities (LEAs) to end the school selective 'tripartite' system (Benn & Chitty, 1996; Tomlinson, 2008a). In addition, and to include children of ethnic minorities, there was a third Race Relations Act (1976). Under this Act, under sections 17-20, 36 and 71 the discussion focused on education. In 1977 the "*Select Committee on Race Relations and Immigration reported on The West Indian Community [by making] eight recommendations on education and a call for an inquiry into the education of West Indian children*" (Tomlinson, 2008a, pp. 44-45). Moreover, "*The Inner London Education Authority produces the first LEA policy on multicultural education*" (Tomlinson, 2008a, pp. 44-45). This meant that during my years at a comprehensive school, politics played an important role in how I was educated. It tells me that subconsciously racism was taking place during my years as the above policies makes it clear to a reader that there were issues regarding how Black children were educated and the underachievement of Black children, hence the need for an investigation into how 'West Indian' children were educated.

As stated in my narrative, I started secondary school in 1973, so by then more schools for children over 11 years were becoming comprehensive schools. The way in which children were placed in classes in comprehensive schools depended on the score of the IQ test you did at primary school. At the same time, the 11-Plus test that many children took, was being phased out and in 1976, the government at the time, brought in the Education Act (1976) for a non-selective system. As my memory recalls:

"At the age of 11 or 12, I went to secondary school - which was a comprehensive school. Children were placed into classes based on the child's academic ability. It was known as the 'banding system' and was based on a test given to children before they left

infant/primary school. You were put into a class based on the test results. This test was called an IQ Test". [Researcher narrative].



I remember being in the middle set of classes. The class was coded 'T1'. Each year I was in secondary school, the letter 'T' and the number 1' followed me; for example, 1 T1 was for the first year, 2 T1 for the second year, and 3 T1 for the third year until the fifth year. Looking back at my school reports, I was always graded at a 'B' level for all subjects except for 'housekeeping', where I received an 'A' in some aspects of the subject, such as attitude and classwork effort. Looking back now at these reports, I think I was viewed as an average student". [Researcher narrative].

It is interesting to think about how all children were placed in classes according to their IQ test. The majority of West Indian children were placed below the middle set of classes (Ball, 1981; Francis et al., 2017). While attending a comprehensive school, a school that was supposed to educate all children, I was already put at a disadvantage because of my cultural background. The IQ test was very controversial in that the instigator for the IQ test in schools, Arthur Jensen, who published an article in 1969 in the Harvard Educational Review journal - entitled 'How much can we boost IQ and scholastic ability', discussed children's ability to achieve a good IQ score was merely down to genetics - it was hereditary rather than the environment or social class that children belonged to. If the child scored a good IQ score, they seemed as not needing special attention to succeed academically, whereas children who scored a lower grade on the IQ test were given special attention to bring them up to an average level. When I think back to my childhood memory of me reading to a teacher alone, I recall:

"She was listening to me reading a book; I must have been around seven or eight years old because this was at infant school where the playground was a large grey open space, with boys playing football in one corner, and the girls would play hopscotch at another end of the playground where there were also skipping ropes". [Researcher: Narrative]

Jensen (1969) viewed Black children as having a lower mental ability and were not capable of academic success. So, I now wonder if I was given that special treatment to bring me up to an

average level as Jensen (1969) advocated that all children should be. *“At the end of the reading session, she told me; “you do not have to return to read to me because you will be with other children in the main class”* **[Researcher: Narrative]** which meant that I must have brought my reading skills up to the required level for my age. It is alarming to know that during the 1960s and 1970s debates were taking place about how intelligent Black children were. The fact that a child's cultural background and social environment did not contribute to a child's academic achievement or failure is also quite alarming. It seemed that my path to academic success was already mapped out for me (Jensen, 1969; Tomlinson, 2008a).

However, to counteract Jensen's (1969) ideas that Black children underachieve because of their genetics was disputed by Bagley (1979). In a study specifically targeting Black children as well as white children from stable homes conducted a test called the Stanford-Binet test. The results highlighted that these children had above average intelligence, which refutes Jensen's (1969) claims. The study highlighted that a child's environment played a major part in how children achieved. I did not have a stable home environment, and therefore this could have been one of the reasons why I was always judged as an average child.

7.3.3: Sub-theme: identity challenges

I was in my early 30s when I studied for my first degree. By this time, I was a wife, mother, and a full-time employee. Sub-theme three 'identity challenges' was created after reading through the participants' transcripts and reviewing my own narrative of how I played three different roles during my educational trajectory. One of my first challenges was conforming to the academic community during my first year at university and so:

“I remember feeling a little out of place because I was part of a larger group of full-time (younger) students who had gone through the ‘traditional’ educational system. It would have felt out of place letting others know that I was a married mum. Although it was daunting at first, I was part of a different community that I now know as the academic community. This meant I had to act differently. By acting differently meant that I changed my identity, for example, speaking more clearly, [which in turn - changed my] ... my Yorkshire accent, ... I was mixing with students who seemed to be wealthier than me and had the freedom to study. For example, they were living away from home, learning how to be independent, and learning about the world. They were students studying Business Studies full-time and from the middle-classes. During discussions with the full-time students in class times, I did not hint that I had other roles such as being a mother”. **[Researcher: Narrative]**

Knowles (1971) and Horn and Carroll (1996) state that adult learners are different from traditional learners. He equates four characteristics to this of which I fit: independence, financially independent, having dependants and in full-time employment. These characteristics

fit the 'non-traditional' learner. My situation as an undergraduate within these characteristics were:

1. *Financial independence. I was not dependent financially because I was in employment.*
2. *In full-time employment. "As the Senior Clerk - supervisor in a sports centre, I worked full-time and temporarily managed others".*
3. *Having dependents - I had two children.*
4. *Studying part-time, which is what I was doing when I studied for my first degree.*

[Researcher: Narrative]

These four characteristics complement my status for that time. On describing a 'non-traditional' learner Kenner and Weinerman (2011) quote Knowles (1984) by stating that a 'non-traditional' learner is:

self-directed; takes responsibility for their own actions and resists from having information arbitrarily imposed on them"; adult learners have a depth of experience, which serves as a critical component in the foundation of their self-identity; are ready to learn, as most learners return to study voluntarily, they are likely to actively engage in the learning process (Knowles 1984 as cited in Kenner & Weinerman, 2011, pp. 88-89).

These characteristic descriptions resonate with my identity of who I became as a learner. I was no longer being told what to do as in my teenage years at secondary school, I was an adult learner with responsibilities. Hence, *"at every opportunity that I had or challenge I faced, I would take the initiative to pursue what I thought was right and best for me"*. I see Knowles' (1971) explanation of a 'non-traditional' learner as the most comprehensible *"for my past educational experiences to my studies now as a doctoral student"*. **[Researcher: Narrative]**

My second challenge of identity under this sub-theme was noticed when I became an English language teacher in a college and university. From my own narrative, I remember a moment when teaching in Turkey that *"... I was the **only Black teacher** at the school in Istanbul (a town called) Kadikoy [And] working and socialising with other teachers [had] opened [up] a new challenge for me because it was the first time I had been openly challenged about ... how I spoke"*. **[Researcher: Narrative]**

There are two observations that I make from my narrative, the first is being an ethnic minority as at times I have been the only Black woman in a working environment. This has happened throughout my working career from having a position as a receptionist in a sports centre up to

my present role as an English Language teacher in a university. As a Black woman, I am under-represented in academia. For example, I and a colleague, in the same department, are the only ones of Caribbean descent and this seems to be a 'normal' situated occurrence within my generation (Hylton, 2021; Wright et al., 2007). The second observation I made from the above excerpt was while working in Turkey "*Some teachers [my colleagues] would mimic me because I said things in certain ways. I cannot recall exactly how I said things, but I knew that my northern accent and perhaps my grammar skills had an impact...*". **[Researcher: Narrative]** These teachers were mainly from the southern part of the UK whereby it was noticeable that our accents differed.

I see my educational trajectories as being complicated because of how I was educated, for example, a '*non-traditional*' learner studying later in life. I tried to fit in with others and at times I felt as if I was an imposter working with others even though we all had the same teaching positions. I thought other teachers were of a higher level than myself, for example, from the middle-class of society. Hence my perception of my identity seemed to be lower than what others might think. I think this perception is one that was instilled in me from my childhood days being a Black working-class child.

In relation to my family, there are also other challenges that I try to avoid or manage. For example:

"I think becoming a part of the academic community can be challenging because if I think about my family, for example, my aunts in the US or in Jamaica I can have a constructive conversation about different issues and speak as if I was at university but if I was to have the same conversation with friends or even my mother, I have to be careful of not sounding too clever – or patronising – and sometimes I have to remember to take my 'teacher's hat' off. I sometimes have to watch what I say and how I say it when I'm around others that have not gone to university. When it comes to my kids – I have no problem because they each have been fortunate to have gone and studied at university. In fact, they view themselves as being middle-class citizens". **[Researcher: Self-Written Interview]**

As mentioned above, coming from a working-class background and one who failed her secondary school exams, I have developed my intellectual skills which are notable when I speak to others not in my inner circle and family members. I have been accused of thinking that I am speaking to one of my students when talking to family members, which makes me stop to think and readjust what I say to them. Therefore, when I say that I do not encounter this problem with my own children, this is because they have gone through the traditional route of being educated. As cited in Archer (2003) this projection of my identity can be related to how Ball et al.'s (2000, p. 24) notion of identity in higher education as they state:

Identity is socially and culturally 'located in time and space and inflected by rejection, displacement and desire... post-16 choices are bound up with the expression and

suppression of identities (Ball et al. 2000, p. 24 as quoted in Archer 2003, p. 176).

In relation to myself this quote resonates with my personal experience of having different identities, whether it is trying to fit in with other work colleagues or going back to my class routes. It seems that I reject who I have become i.e. the intellectual Black woman to fit in with some of my family members, while on the other hand, to change into a middle-class Black woman as I have become more educated and skilled (Archer, 2003).

7.3.4: Sub-theme: diversity and intellectuality in schools - 1970s

I describe in my narrative that I went to a school where there was a good majority of other ethnicities, for example, a lot of my generation were from the Caribbean or were the second generation who were born in Britain (Warmington, 2014). However, although there were a lot of ethnic minorities, in contrast, there were few who were in the top set classes. When writing my narrative and thinking back to my secondary school days I remember that:

“there were very few ethnic minorities in the top-set classes. If you were lucky enough to be in the top-set, you were branded as being very clever – ‘a swot’. That was a term that we would use as children. However, at the other end of the spectrum, i.e. in the bottom sets, there were more ethnic minority pupils from the West Indies - Caribbean and Asian backgrounds. if you were unlucky enough to be in those bottom sets of classes, not only were you classed as being ‘dumb’, you were perceived to be a problem for the school. Children in those classes were seen as unruly. I never understood why this was until I became an adult, that is, I always wondered why there were so many black and Asian children in the bottom set of classes”. **[Researcher: Narrative]**

I link the above excerpt to sub-theme five - diversity - because at the time I went to secondary school during the 1970s, there were many students from Black backgrounds. While writing about my past experiences my memory took me back to how I would talk. Hence, the vocabulary that I used above was the language I used as a teenager. As Gillborn (1990) states, the “words that were once quite proper are now scorned as insulting” (p. 2). I therefore stress that I would not use this type of language today.

At school we would use the word ‘lucky’ because that is how we saw those in top set classes. It was as if they did not have any problems in terms of doing well in their coursework or exams. At that time, I was oblivious to the importance of being in the top set of classes. The word ‘swot’ was also associated with those who we saw as ‘clever’. This meant that those we labelled a ‘swot’ would always be working hard and it seemed that they had no time to play. Again, it is not a word that I would call anyone who was doing well in their academic studies. Some of my friends aspired to be where they wanted to be, for example, to be nurses or midwives but I was not sure what I wanted to do when I left school, this could be another reason why I did not understand the full meaning of working towards high grades.

The word 'dumb' is another word that was used during my time at school, and it is a word that I would not use today. There was a stigma attached to a child if they were in the bottom set classes. While conducting this study I have come to realise that my educational journey was full of inequalities and is seen today as part of a racist educational system that kept a lot of Black children from achieving academically. Some of the inequalities in educational achievement eventually resulted in political discussions (Gillborn et al., 2017) and the creation of new policies linked to educational needs and achievement of Black children (Tomlinson, 2008a). In addition to my use of language as a teenager, I would also advocate that my working-class background as well as my Caribbean culture, for example, during my school years, we would speak in 'patwah', which is a dialect, and a form of my Caribbean identification (Gillborn, 1990) played a part.

Looking back, my generation did badly in terms of achievement and in particular Black boys (Gillborn et al., 2017). As I stated above, my recollection at school about the bottom set classes was largely made up of boys from Asian and Black backgrounds. I never understood this until I was conducting this study. Coard (1971) wrote about how Black children were educated in British schools. In his writings he argued and made known about the inequalities that were taking place in the British school system. For example, Black children being placed in schools for the educationally subnormal (ESN).

7.4: Key Theme Two: Academic Literacies

7.4.1: Sub-Theme: developing my academic skills

One of my main aims at the start of this study was to explore how I was educated in the British educational system and how I transitioned from a school pupil to become a university teacher. So, sub-theme six developed from my own narrative, self-written interview, and transcript data of the participants as I think back in time to my academic skills. In my self-written interview, I made the comment that academic literacies "... means being able to read, write and speak at an academic level, and using IT to present written and spoken work at university and in addition, being part of the academic community. [*Researcher: Self-Written Interview*]

As an undergraduate student, I was not offered academic support to help me with my studies. I was not aware at that time of the difference between academic writing, and writing for different genres, such as reflective writing or writing reports nor that I was part of an academic community. I believe this lack of awareness, combined with my working-class background, my social life, and the ten-year gap in formal education, hindered my academic skills at first. Gimenez and Thomas (2015) as cited in Lillis, et al., (2015) sum this up when they state that:

[the] student profile is varied in terms of, inter alia, relationship with English, previous educational experiences, and length of time away from formal education. These elements of the student profile have a direct bearing on academic achievement (p. 29).

This summarises part of my educational journey of transitioning into higher education during my first degree.

In another attempt to discuss my academic literacies abilities, I state that:

“... my academic literacy is not as academic as I thought it was. Mainly because I have to remember to use certain tenses for example if I was writing a report. I need to remember not to write as I speak – it’s different. I can only say this because I teach academic writing to students – it’s part of my job. Irony isn’t it!” **[Researcher: Self-Written Interview]**

It was not until studying for my master’s degree that I would think about the structure of my writing. For example, when I first begin to write an academic paper, e.g. an essay/assignment I would make a first draft. I would also ask a colleague to check what I have written to see if it made sense and was not too informal. This is why I made my comment about remembering how to write as I think my working-class background interferes with my academic writing. In addition, writing my thesis is no exception to this thought. I constantly look back at my methodology chapter to see if I have used the correct tense when describing the methods I used for this study.

In my narrative, I also refer to teaching. It is easy to teach the basic structure and steps for writing reports, like those needed by engineering students to document their experiments. However, when it comes to my own writing, I need to think about how to make my writing academic. Recollecting how I wrote my assignments for my first degree, I stated that:

“Back in 1994/5, we did not have the internet to search for information, and assignments were handwritten. My PGCE course 2000 differed in that the expectations of writing in an academic style differed from that of the Master course. There seemed to be no strict rules, for example, in doing a lot of reading, or it was not instilled in us to ensure we avoided plagiarism”. **[Researcher: Narrative]**

Therefore, recollecting how I wrote my assignments reminded me that I did not have access to any nor was I told to seek academic support. I am also reminded that I am a ‘non-traditional’ student and I believe that my transition to higher education and academic life is a continual process (Tett et al., 2017).

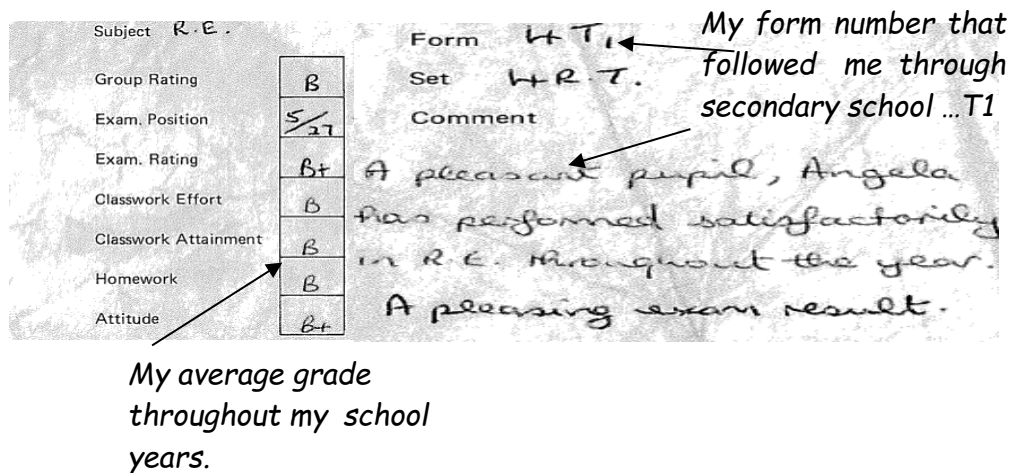
7.5: Key Theme Three: A feeling of Insecurity and Confidence Knockback

7.5.1: Sub-theme: good and bad perceptions of teacher feedback on assignments

Above, I discussed my family background, identity challenges and developing my academic skills. Under key theme three, this sub-theme discusses my perception of feedback received from my teachers at school to my university tutors and supervisors. I first start with my school

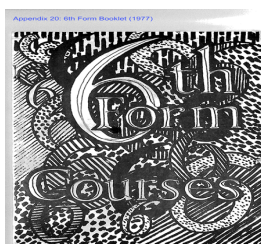
reports giving examples of comments made by my secondary school teachers. I do not recall any discussions about my academic ability at school. For example, as discussed in Appendix 18 and in Figure 6, this is an extract taken from some of my school reports as reported in my narrative.

Figure 6



As stated above, there was no communication between me and the teachers, only by receiving reports like the one illustrated above. However, the communication would have been through my mother on parents' evening. My reports throughout my secondary school days were similar, so the above comments reflect the first to my last year at a comprehensive school.

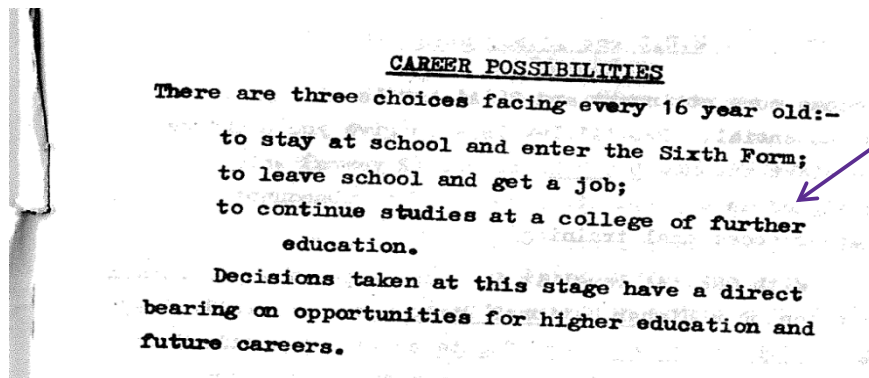
I was sixteen when I returned to school in September 1977. I wanted to improve my grades and retake the ones I failed. For example, English and Maths. However, after visiting a career officer I remember:



"My return to school was short-lived as during the month of September in 1977, as part of the process of helping students to look for work; I had an interview with a careers officer who told me that I should leave school by Christmas (1977) to look for a job as it was a waste of time staying on. At the time, I was unsure what I felt or why the officer told me to leave school". [Researcher: Narrative; See Appendix 18]

My recollection of this moment was filled with sadness.

An extract - 6th Form
Booklet (Appendix 20)



Artefacts that I have kept from my school days demonstrate that I had every right to return to school to improve my grades. As shown above, (excerpt taken from Appendix 20) the information given to students states that returning to sixth form will help children to decide if they want to work on their qualifications for work or to improve their academic performance. This opportunity was taken away from me. This is reflected in a self-profile that I wrote for one of my teachers at a northern college in January 1978 (Appendix 21). I was labelled as a 'failure' and therefore told to leave school because I was wasting the school's time (Coard, 1971; Gillborn, 1990). Being told to leave school could have been part of the process of preparing children over 16 years for the world of work. For example, this is reflected in Deem (1981) who conducted research on women being discriminated against during the 1970s in relation to education and employment. Deem (1981) highlighted how women were schooled "for their work" and exposed the disadvantaged position that school had placed them in comparison to their male counterparts (Deem, 1981, p. 182). She argued that the prospect during this period was bleak as women were not given the same equal opportunities as men in the workforce and added to this was my ethnicity.

Society during the 1970s saw Black children as underachievers, failures and therefore this had other impacts such as going into higher education or finding the right employment. Although published after I left school, the Rampton report argued that West Indian children were failing in the British education system. He called for action as he associated failures with racism. He also attributed the failure of West Indian children in schools with the negative perceptions that school teachers had about West Indian children (Rampton, 1981 as cited in Gillborn et al., 2017). There is no doubt, therefore, that I fit into this category and the advice given to me by the careers officer also confirms to me that racism was taking place.

My school reports always inferred that I was an average student, and it seemed to have carried on during my first degree as an undergraduate student as recalling the feedback I received, I comment that:

"...I was always the average student, and throughout my degree course, this was the same. I would always manage to scrape through by achieving a pass or a grade

equivalent to a 2:2. For example, on one of my assignments, for Management of Information, I received a grade of 58%; the lecturer states:

"Some very good points made in this essay with some thoughtful comments regarding the management of information. At times the conclusions are not absolutely clear - in all a good piece of work".

"At the time of studying for my first degree, I never really understood what it meant to achieve a higher grade than this. I was content with passing. In my later years as a student, I was grateful that I was on a course that would help me develop academically". [Researcher: Narrative].

For my master's degree studies I was concerned about not being able to complete the course because of the feedback I initially received and of which I thought was negative about my academic ability. Upon reading the feedback I responded by thinking:

"... what have I got myself into? Am I going to cope with the course? Was I going to be able to do the reading she suggested and write in the style she was expecting? Looking back, I did not know how to write or research academically". [Researcher: Narrative]

Whilst conducting the research for this study, there have been no exceptions in encountering mixed feelings about feedback. Due to unforeseen circumstances, I have had four supervisors. My last supervisor is my fifth one. I recall during the writing of my narrative that:

"At the beginning of 2022, another challenge presented itself to me. Due to other unforeseen circumstances, I was given a fourth supervisor. This was another heart-breaking moment because I felt that I had to start all over again trying to explain what it was I wanted to research and how far I had reached with my writing. After meeting the fourth supervisor I realised that they had a different opinion to that of the other supervisors that I previously worked with. My perception of this fourth supervisor was that they seem to think that having a mixed method, quantitative approach to my study would solve everything. In so many words I was told that I did not have enough data. It could have been that I did not convey clearly what my research was about, but I felt that I was not being listened to. I was told to move on from the challenges of having a fourth supervisor and to move on from the challenges of the pandemic. I was even told that I was not ready to achieve a doctorate qualification, I was not at a doctoral level". [Researcher: Narrative]

This sub-theme developed from looking back at my school reports and feedback received from my degree courses. Relationships between a student and their teacher or supervisor is very important to enable achievement and success. So, whilst studying for my master's degree qualification, I had mixed experiences of how to cope with constructive criticism. For example, I remember the stressful time I had as I remembered how:

"In addition to stress and marriage breakdown, I had to learn the conventions of being in an academic environment & community. I also had to learn how to accept constructive criticism about my work. The feedback I received about my first assignment from my tutor clearly stated that my assignment did not reflect the reading I had done for the MA, in fact, I needed to do more reading. In addition to not doing enough reading, I should not use internet sites as a form of an academic source. Furthermore, I was told to revisit the modules we had worked on prior to receiving assignment one in order to help me shape my assignment..." [Researcher: Narrative]

"After resubmitting my assignment, I received feedback from my tutor telling me that I had done much better, with further suggestions such as ensuring that I use up to date sources of information. I felt much better reading this and thought great 'I'm going to be ok'. I can do this! By the time I did module four, I had developed my academic skills and received better feedback about my assignments telling me that I was doing well, but to add more reflection about my studies and how to include those reflections in my work". [Researcher: Narrative]

I accepted this critical comment from my first supervisor on my master's degree course as it has helped me with my doctoral studies. For example, applying the skills to research for academic articles; reading and making notes and using these notes to write assignments for the first two years of this doctoral course, as well as writing this thesis. Thus, the feedback I received prompted me to think critically about how to structure my future academic work.

However, there were times during this doctoral journey when receiving feedback about my work had a negative and emotional effect. As mentioned above, this was because there was a change of supervisors. The process of trying to get to know each other as supervisor / student can be a difficult process partly because each of us need to understand the other and to come to a sort of consensus with ideas. This proved difficult as my supervisor had different ideas about my research, and I found it difficult to convey what I wanted. The result of this relationship - clash - ended when I was told that I would not make it as a doctoral student. I had so far had a good relationship with my previous supervisors both on my master's and the Doctor of Education (EdD) course. For example, my supervisor on my master's degree course encouraged me to continue studying, but when I was told that I would not make it as a doctoral student, my memory took me back through to my school days:

"Looking back at my history of education, for instance, how I have managed to beat all the challenges that have come my way, ... [a] fourth supervisor was not going to stop me. I found the challenge of speaking with them racist, prejudicial. This is because I felt that what they saw was the colour of my skin, and my gender as a woman; that they thought I would not be able to achieve the doctoral qualification – "I'm telling you for your own good" is what I was told and is the phrase that will always stay with me". [Researcher: Narrative]

This experience brought back memories of being told at school at the start of the sixth form to leave. I saw this episode as another challenge that I needed to overcome.

7.6: Chapter Summary

In this chapter I set out to analyse my own data and refer to artefacts mentioned in my narrative (Appendix 18). I also refer to my self-written interview notes connecting these to the themes discussed in Chapter six. Chapter seven helped me to answer my research questions of *How did I transition from school pupil to a student and become a teacher at a university? What challenges did I encounter along the way?*

I incorporated Chang's (2008) suggested analysis strategies, excluding 'social science' constructs, to examine my data. This approach revealed the challenges and barriers encountered during my journey to becoming a university practitioner. For instance, the perception of Black students as academically disadvantaged impacted my early educational experiences. Despite academic achievements in my first university studies, these perceptions persisted. I have learned to accept this and hence moved onto my next endeavour to pursue a Doctor of Education qualification.

In the following chapter I analyse the findings of both semi-structured interviews and my own narrative. I critically discuss the findings by giving an analytical description of the data linking it with critical lens and theories of Bourdieu, CRT and Intersectionality.

CHAPTER EIGHT

A Comparative Analysis: Bringing All Participants Together Final Themes & Findings

8.1: Introduction

This chapter builds upon the themes discussed in Chapters six and seven, presenting the final four key themes identified through the reflexive thematic analysis process (RTA). Through a bottom-up approach, I refer to literature that evolved through the RTA process. To give the reader an analytical view of my educational experiences and the challenges I encountered, I include extracts **highlighted in bold** from the participants' responses to support my autoethnographic data. This includes my narrative and self-written interview notes. Combining both sets of data helps to encapsulate how we connect in our educational trajectories over a fifty-year period.

As mentioned above, the findings are presented under the themes developed through analysis from the participants and my own data. I have continued to use the same key themes and sub-theme names for this analysis. However, there are a few exceptions where the data was lacking so, I omitted some of the sub-themes from this final comparative analysis. Therefore, the themes in this chapter are the final ones that helped to inductively answer my research questions.

8.2: Social class and family influencers

8.2.1: The importance of education

When I set out to write my own narrative, I first began to think about my family background and my culture. Although I was aware that I was brought up in a working-class environment before I carried out this study, whilst conducting my analysis and reading literature, I then realised strongly that the feeling about being from a working-class background and being Black had a different meaning. For example, not only was I disadvantaged because of my working-class background, I also had to add to this being Black.

Delving into my educational past helped to put things into perspective. Hence, when this theme was developed it highlighted how society, family backgrounds and members have an influence on each of us going into higher education. For two of the participants, Lester and Crystal, their grandparents had set the pathway for them to follow their advice and/or to follow in their footsteps. However, for Charley and me, the same level of influence or a role-model was not present in which to follow, so going to university was a decision made independently.

8.2.2: Family influencers

The influence of family members on education is encapsulated when Lester talks about his grandmother being a teacher before WWII. He states how she “*focused the importance of education*” on her five children. This is echoed when Crystal talks about her grandmother, who had eight children, also focused on the importance of education, and ensured that all her children had the opportunity to go to university during the 1960s (Devine, 2004). As Crystal states: “*...she had this thing that every one of her kids was going to go to university and then in that real kind of 1960s. There she sort of drove them all through university and then I'm next generation down*”. Crystal is the third generation who went to school in the UK during the 1980s/1990s and then onto university. Both these participants went to private schools. From a Bourdieusian perspective, this is an example of reproduction in education (Bourdieu & Passeron, 1977) because for these two participants, it could be argued that their habitus, cultural capital and social status played a huge role in their access to higher education. My belief is supported by Devine (2004) as he states, “... it [is] argued that class stability is the outcome of advantaged individuals and groups protecting their privilege and power” (p. 6). Therefore, coming from privileged backgrounds their grandparents and parents helped to ensure that their status was kept in position and continuity was maintained for their learning trajectories (Hutchings & Archer, 2001). Giles’ (1977) perception of a white middle-class family discussing educational opportunities is what both Lester and Crystal experienced, unlike Charley.

For Charley there was no influencer or role-model as such. When her brother started university, for personal reasons he dropped out, but she did not let this stop her from going to university herself. In fact, the tables were turned as she states: “*...he actually asked me lots of like questions about uni and stuff because. I guess because I've been through it for years before him, but so hopefully. He will finish Uni*”. Except for Charley, Lester and Crystal’s family influence on education is how Giles (1977) informs us that “*it was mainly a white, middle-class trait for parents to consult their children about what they wanted to do...*” in terms of education. Whereas for working-class children, “*the parents are the one who make the rules*” and the children are expected to follow those rules (p. 106). This could have been what Charley may have experienced although she did go to university, she emphasised that her family mainly went to work. Her family commitment to work can be seen as a characteristic of the working-class expecting to go into employment rather than to higher education (Hutchings & Archer, 2001).

8.2.3: Social Class

Both Lester and Crystal went to private schools. They both class themselves as being part of the middle/lower middle class of society. Lester, viewed his class status as lower middle-class - who was able to pass the 11-plus exam which helped him to go to “*... a public [boys] day school... [which was] an academic school, ...Um, grammar school or a free place*” Because he achieved a high score for his 11-plus exam, he was offered a free place but commented that his parents would not have been able to afford the school fees if they had to pay. Crystal, who states that she was from a middle-class background, does not comment on paying school fees but made it clear that she went to a secondary, high performance, all girls - private school.

Charley and I both went to comprehensive schools where the gender was mixed, and we were both part of the working-class society.

In comparison to the participants in this study, it was different for me. My race had a negative impact. As I state in my narrative, ***“Although my mother came from a middle-class background in Jamaica, in the UK we as a family were part of the black working-class society”***. In other words, those coming from the Caribbean experienced what is termed as *“class downsizing”* (Rollock et al., 2014, p. 256). I did not have the role-model to influence me to go to university, I made this decision to improve my education independently. So, Charley's experience of deciding to go to university resonated with my own experience. I decided to educate myself at a higher level after secondary school whilst working full-time. My grandparents were both deceased and had lived in another country. My mother had a full-time job, so she was not around when decisions needed to be made about what I did after finishing school. This also resonates with Charley as she says that ***“... none of my parents or anyone like that did any sort of higher education really... It was all straight into work”***. By the time I went to university, I was working full-time and had a young family, therefore, I had to discuss the idea of studying at university with my spouse.

Even though my mother was well educated, she did not take her studies further unlike my aunts. I did not have the pressure of going to university from family members like Lester and Crystal. Hence the subject of going to university was never talked about at home. This seems to be common amongst West Indian families during the 1960s/1970s, for example, my mother would put the trust of my education with the school and teachers, she was also working long hours and did not have the time to talk to teachers about my education (Giles, 1977; Vincent et al., 2013; Wallace & Joseph-Salisbury, 2022).

As mentioned above, while there are similarities between myself and Charley in terms of our class in society and the education system, one thing that is not similar is our ethnicity as I am the only one that is from an ethnic background in this study (Chang, 2008). Lester and Crystal's parents were able to choose the schools they went to but for Charley and me we were told which school to attend. In addition, because of the environment that I grew up in, i.e. Black working-class, there was no choice of schools. Overall, taking Charley's experience and my own experiences of the choice of school we went to, we were both at a disadvantage from those who were privileged to have a choice. For example, Tomlinson (2008a) states that *“urban location and social class of most ethnic minorities dramatically affected their choice of schooling, ... were most likely to attend schools that had previously been under-resourced ...”* (p. 139). Where there were many ethnic minorities attending schools, the White population would seek schools where there was a minority of ethnic minorities, this then created social segregation (Tomlinson, 2008a).

The theme of *social class and family influences* summarises what it was like for me and the participants. However, unlike Lester and Crystal, the difference for me was that even though my mother was a qualified secretary from Jamaica, she was not allowed to work at this profession because ***“... [as a] West Indian who came to the UK were qualified, skilled***

professionals, ... they were not given the opportunity to work in their professions because of the colour of their skin ... they took on menial jobs to survive” (Dumangane, 2017; Giles, 1977; Rollock et al., 2014). I now understand through this study that this was the reason why my mother was always at work. There was no equality in the lifestyle that she encountered and so this was passed on to her children, for example, the way myself and my two brothers were educated, employment opportunities when we finished school, albeit with poor qualifications. As a child I had to attend school that had preconceived notions about my cultural background, this was not the same for the participants in this study, therefore, I was unaware that this was a ‘silent’ challenge. In hindsight and in relation to critical race theory, this was seen as the norm. As children we were subjected to symbolic violence via pedagogical actions, contending with what we were told but underneath we were silently being disadvantaged (Bourdieu & Passeron, 1977). In addition, in relation to Bourdieu, this was another way for a Black working-class child to be kept in their working-class habitus and cultural capital.

8.3: Through Political Policies: A comprehensive educational system for ALL children (Misconception)

The findings for the theme ‘different types of schools’ highlighted the differences in which the participants in this study and me as an ethnic minority child were educated. The comprehensive school system was meant to be inclusive of all children, that is, whether you were from a working-class background or of a different ethnicity, comprehensive schools were not just for the middle-classes in society. However, as discussed in Chapters one and two, there were issues of equality, i.e. ethnic minority children were not given the same treatment as their white counterparts in terms of their education and only those who could afford to pay fees like Crystal, did so to enable their children to attend the best schools. Lester was fortunate to pass the 11-plus examination which helped him to attend a private boys’ school. For many ethnic minorities, especially those from the Caribbean, this would not have been possible due to their cultural background and the notion that Black children were less intelligent (Coard, 1971; Tomlinson, 2008a) added to this disadvantage.

To encourage the new system of comprehensive education, the government reintroduced Circular 10/65 in 1974 and Circular 4/74 asking for local authorities to adapt to the new schooling system. Although there were many schools that adapted to the change in previous years, the government was forced to introduce a new Education Act in 1976, which ensured that all local authorities ended the tripartite and selective systems in education, which Lester would have experienced (Benn & Chitty, 1996; Tomlinson, 2008a). For Crystal, it was her parents' choice for her to go to a grammar school and not the state.

In the same year of the new Education Act (1976), the government also introduced a third Race Relations Act, which incorporated sections about education for ethnic minorities. Then, in the following year the “*Select Committee on Race Relations and Immigration*” asked for an inquiry into how West Indian children were being educated (Tomlinson, 2008a). These Acts and inquiries sum up one of the differences that I have between the participants in this study.

Lester, for example, who was educated during the 1960s would not have been subjected to what I say was background discussions about his intelligence taking place about his education. This would also have applied to Crystal.

In Chapter two, I discuss the assimilation and integration policy. In Chapter six, Lester stated that there were very few ethnic minorities at his school although he recalls that he “... ***grew up in a part of London where there were a lot of Jewish families, right? Though I think about 1/3 of the boys in the school were Jewish***”. As mentioned above, Lester went to a private school and being part of the Indigenous population would have been unaware of what an assimilation or integration policy meant. I would have been too young to understand any of these issues and the same for Crystal and Charley, who both would not have been born yet. The above policies would have benefitted Lester because the government sought to protect his class status and culture. This is encapsulated when he says “... ***All of my friends were, I would say lower middle class. I mean one of them, his dad was an accountant, so it's probably a bit better off, yeah. It was. Through the free pay scheme, it was not, um, a school exclusively for. Middle class and upper-class people***”. There was no mention of the working-class attending this school, only his account of the lower middle classes.

The curriculum during Lester's time would have been set by the school he attended as he says, “***It was up to the school to invent the curriculum, yeah, and they [parents] could shop around. They could choose which examination board***”. This is another disadvantage that those of a working-class status would not have been able to do, i.e. to shop around for a school that offered a good selection of subjects. This is also true of ethnic minorities who were seen as a problem by society and so it would have been even more difficult for those of another culture to shop around for the best schools especially being of a lower-class status. However, on a positive note, Tomlinson (2008a) informs us that the 1960s was [also] a period “*when many schools began to give some consideration as to how to educate racial minorities in a system designed to give white elites priority*” (p. 27). This can be viewed as progress, but as discussed in Chapter two there were still inequalities when it came to educating children of different races.

It is important to add also, that during the period when there was a large influx of ethnic minorities, it was an era without race equality legislation, which was only introduced in 1966 (Rollock et al., 2014). Race relations and the integration of ethnic minorities was further discussed when the Race Relation Committee of 1972-1973 stated that their integration of the Black population in Britain would be a slow process as they believed at the time more “*immigrant children will continue*” to arrive in Britain and that a “*large number of them ill-educated - most illiterate ... have language difficulties, family backgrounds and different cultures*” (p. 256). In their report they go on to say that immigrant children posed a challenge to the education system, second-generation children would create the most problems because they would not accept being treated differently to their White counterparts (Grosvenor, 1997, p. 63). Therefore, for me, as a second-generation child, my challenges of being educated equally had begun. I was already at a disadvantage because of my ethnicity and added to this,

society expected me to stand up for equal rights. Therefore, the systems that were put in place expected me to fail, Lester would not have had that problem.

As discussed in Chapter two, the above findings resonate with Bourdieu et al. (1977) notion of 'symbolic violence'. They make it clear that *"all pedagogic action (PA) is, objectively, symbolic violence insofar as it is the imposition of a cultural arbitrary by an arbitrary power"* (p. 5). For instance, the IQ testing, as discussed in Chapter seven, was imposed on children, especially on West Indian children. We were not expected to do well in those tests, which were created and developed by middle-class White teachers. The questions would be around British culture and therefore did not account for the ethnic minority child whose culture was totally different at home, so from the outset, West Indian children failed at the first hurdle as these tests were culturally biased (Coard, 1971).

The IQ tests, for example, stabilised and ensured that the White middle-classes retained their positions as the *"highest-attaining"* students when it came to testing (Archer et al., 2018). While I do not recall doing an IQ test, I do remember discussions around them with my friends during secondary school days as my friends were pleased that they had a score of around 119. I was put into a middle set class and never achieved going up a level. Being placed into a middle set class also connect Bourdieu et al. (1977) when they say that *"the disadvantage attached to social origin is primarily mediated by educational channelling and streaming (orientations) - with the degrees of differential selection they imply for the different categories of students"* (p. 83). Thereby, local authorities conducting in what was called the banding, setting/tracking, streaming selection system and for some schools to track students' progress, the values and positions of the dominant social classes is continually reproduced through pedagogical actions (Archer et al., 2018; Bourdieu & Passeron, 1977).

In summary, not only did I have the challenge of being treated unequally, I also had the challenge of being placed in an educational setting by a selection process and thus kept my place in the working-class population. Crystal talked about taking a test to enter secondary school, which was a private grammar school for girls, but as stated above, this was a choice made by her parents and as an eleven-year-old, was helped by her mother. Crystal states *"I can remember my mum wanting me to remember having been given an interview as well as the test, and my mum trying to get me to read ... The Hobbit"*. From a Bourdieusian perspective, this is another example of comparison in terms of parents helping their children to achieve at school and thus reproduction (Bourdieu, 1986; Bourdieu & Passeron, 1977). I did not have this support.

8.3.1: Comparing student identities

So far, I have discussed two challenges that I faced growing up as a school pupil, for example, the challenge that my culture is different to that of the participants in this study, which had an impact on my education, and being tested on my intellectuality; succeeding this are my identity challenges. As discussed in Chapter seven, I was in my late twenties when I first embarked on studying for my first degree. As a young mother at the time, I had already established my

identity as a wife and mother and so, going to university had its own challenges as I developed another identity of being a Black female student.

8.3.2: Intersectionality and Identity

My findings on identity enabled me to take a critical look at how I fitted into the world of academia. From the analysis in Chapter six, the participants in this study would not have experienced the same level of identity challenges I encountered. First, the colour of my skin is at the forefront of my identity. Therefore, perceptions of who I am are preconceived and judgement already made. This reminds me of Crenshaw's (1989) concept of 'intersectionality' whereby I come to an intersection with my race, gender, and working-class status. As stated, several times in this thesis, I am the only Black participant in this study. However, I would state that the intersectionality sphere could apply to Charley as she grapples with her identity because of her gender (in a male dominated environment of the department of Statistics and Mathematics), and her working-class background. My own belief of intersectionality is like that of Lawrence (2017) who states that the *"position of Black women exists in a space that is double marginalized and cannot be separated [which] puts them in precarious positions to become victimised"* (p. 25). So, as mentioned above, and in Chapter two, I have three identities which I view as 'oppressed identities', which throughout my childhood days and into adulthood has left me open to being victimised by society.

This is not the same for the participants in this study. For example, Charley has the perception that there are always going to be doubts about her identity because she has a strong Yorkshire accent. For example, Charley says: *"my accent's change, which is my accent fluctuates and it's weird and I don't realise I'm doing it until ... somebody points out"*. Hence unlike myself, Charley will not have to endure the preconception of who she is. For Crystal, who described her background as middle class, has a different identity challenge in that she thinks others might see her as 'stupid' as she points out *"... so, um, ... you know, at school saw myself as a bit stupid because I was kind of, you know, in the lower group for things. Um, but actually of course I was in the lower groups of very high perform ... school"*. Again, this is not evidently obvious to others because she is not judged by her colour or how she speaks, so unless she informs others that she was in the bottom set of class at her high-performance school, no one will be the wiser. It can be interpreted that her fear of feeling stupid is short-lived as she finds a coping mechanism to get out of situations such as achieving a higher grade by using her writing skills that she learned at work to help her with her second assignment at university. From the data, neither Crystal nor Lester has the same issue as Charley, that is, judging who they are in a negative way because of their accent. In fact, it would be the opposite as they come across as being well educated. Unfortunately, for Charley, this negative perception has carried on into her PhD studies because the feeling of speaking differently to her academic peers is still present. This is reflected when she talks about her experiences, e.g. her Maths teacher telling her Art teacher that they thought she was smart but because of the way she spoke gave a different impression as she recalls *"... my maths teacher said to my art teacher, she's ... really smart you don't think so when you like talk to her. I was like OK"*. And then goes on to add that she thought *"That was almost a compliment. But and yeah, and I think maybe*

that stuck with me a little bit there. OK, people not taking me seriously then. I don't want to pretend that I'm all posh and serious. You know, cultures and all that. Because I'm just not. It's not who I am". She has a sense that she might be misunderstood as a person because of her working-class background. Although not the same as Charley, but I can resonate with her feeling because sometimes, with my own family, I am careful in how I speak and as I put it in my narrative, *"I try not to sound 'too clever' to come across as intimidating to others especially if they have not gone into higher education. Since my early days as an ESOL teacher, going to university, and my teaching career, I have changed the way I speak; I have lost my regional accent, and this is most noticeable at family gatherings and speaking with friends from my hometown. As I developed from being a part-time student to becoming an English teacher, I view this as a third challenge that I endured.*

My third challenge, i.e. identity, emerged when I started my first degree with a group of seven other females. Once a week we combined with a class of full-time students as stated in my narrative, *"I remember feeling a little out of place because I was part of a larger group of full-time (younger) students who had gone through the 'traditional' educational system. When I look back, I acted differently - trying to change my identity of who I was so that I could fit in. For example, 'speaking more clearly, [which in turn - changed my] ... my Yorkshire accent, ...".* So, I sympathise with Charley's feelings because my first consciousness of how I spoke was highlighted during my first year at university and then my first experience as a teacher of English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL). I was mimicked on the way I spoke and the choice of words I used. For example, I sometimes used the word 'mardy', which to my teaching counterparts was hilarious as they had never heard it before.

8.3.3: Ethnicity within schools

Diversity within the participants' school experiences presented a surprising outcome for me from the youngest participant in this study - Charley. I was not surprised at the response from Lester because he grew up in an affluent area near Cambridge, where there would have been fewer ethnic minorities. For Crystal, this is like Lester as she grew up in Portsmouth as she comments that *"My class was completely white...; I can't think of anybody with English as a second language in my year. And I can think of 1 girl who would have been from Indian heritage".* It highlights the inequality of school provisions for masses of children during their time at school. For example, during Lester's school days, there were several children of ethnic backgrounds coming to the UK during the Windrush era from the 1950s to the 1970s (McKenley, 2001) but with few local authorities adapting to become comprehensive schools, so it is not surprising that no children from the Caribbean attended. During this period local authorities were battling where and how to educate ethnic minority children, which as discussed in Chapter two saw *"an unevenness of the spread of ethnic minority pupils between local education authorities"* (McKenley, 2001). However, Charley comments that *"... not a lot of diversity at all... actually, there wasn't that much diversity really in terms of the kind of economic background it was mostly. You know, really working class".*

Charley's comments were surprising, as I expected her to say that there was a mixture of ethnicities, especially because she was educated during the 1990/2000s. As previously mentioned, Charley described her background as working-class where her family went to work rather than higher education and so it leaves the question of whether ethnic minorities had moved on and had now become a part of the middle-class society "*moving into suburban areas, speaking 'standard' English, and had access to 'good' schools*" (Rollock et al., 2014). It could be argued that ethnic minorities had become well educated and had therefore acquired professional, intermediate, or skilled positions enabling them to be economically viable and thus, shifting their habitus and cultural capitals, unlike the area where Charley came from (Bourdieu & Passeron, 1977; Rollock et al., 2014).

At the time I went to school in the 1960s/1970s, immigration was at the forefront of political debate. For example, you had the Windrush era when more Black children came over to the UK and were being educated in comprehensive schools, which were expanding across the UK. Living in the northern part of the UK, in Yorkshire, I grew up with a good majority of my peers from the same ethnic background. Attending school during the 1970s I was oblivious to what was happening to me as a child or to my ethnic group and this is where I can relate to critical race theory (CRT). Through the lens of CRT these findings inform me that it was accepted of how we were tested and placed into the classes, it was seen as an expected form of an educational process, "*taken for granted [but which helped] shape society in the interests of people identified as White and against the interests of particular minoritised groups*" (Gillborn et al., 2017, p. 848) but these norms had consequences that affected many of our futures for my generation. Through this critical lens, CRT informs me that my future was planned out by those in power of social institutions such as education. Acts and policies were being made by White parliamentary leaders who wanted to keep the 'norm' of a hierarchy of a middle-class society. This also resonates with Bourdieu and Passeron (1977) symbolic violence of pedagogic actions. Hence, during my time at secondary school, until I left at the age of 16, I accepted this because I was none the wiser. I have learned that there were systems in place by those in power to ensure that someone like me, a Black working-class female, was prevented from moving up the class hierarchy.

8.4: Academic Literacies

8.4.1: Choosing of the curriculum

The findings, for all participants in this study, of academic literacies plays a vital role in learning in further and higher education institutions. For two of the participants, Lester, and Crystal, it can be interpreted that they had the opportunity to have been taught in, as Crystal puts it "*high performance school*" and as Lester says, "*an academic*" school. Both participants attended private schools, which likely offered a broad curriculum that aligned with their parents' expectations. For example, Lester mentions attending an academic boys' school after passing the 11-plus exam. However, for Charley and I we did not have that luxury of choosing which school, subjects to learn or the examination board. It was not understood during my time at school what this was. It can be interpreted, however, that Lester and Crystal had a good

level of education as the findings tell me that they did not struggle academically as much as myself or Charley, especially when it came to writing. They went to schools that were preparing them for university education (Kerckhoff, 1986). Therefore, I see 'academic literacies' as an added dimension that Charley and I had to develop during our time of becoming graduates at university.

8.4.2: Developing Academic Language

Charley, for example, learnt the conventions of academic writing when her supervisor highlighted that she needed support to make her writing academic. Charley turned to a new trend of using software as an aid in her academic writing - as she says, "*you know things like Grammarly do help*". I, on the other hand, learnt grammar while training to become an English language teacher after my first degree in the 1990s and my academic writing skills improved during my master's degree course from the middle 2000s. Software such as Grammarly was not available during my studies. In addition, I did not have access to academic support like Lester, Crystal, and Charley. I have learned to develop my academic skills by reading more, studying other people's work and through my teaching of others and understanding feedback given to me by my supervisors to help me improve my academic skills.

The findings of this theme can be related to Bourdieu and Passeron (1990) who believed that academic language is never "*anyone's mother tongue, even for the children of the privileged classes...*" (p. 115). Interpreting this connects with Crystal's perception that she did badly for her first master's degree assignment. She returned to study after a long break from education and so the experience of receiving a low grade for her first assignment seemed to have triggered an identity crisis as she questioned where she went wrong. After attending only one session of academic support she decided that she was able to use the skills she learnt from her previous studies and her job to help her through the remainder of her master's degree. Charley and I continue to learn how to develop our academic writing skills through the feedback we received from our tutors and supervisors.

In summary, these findings have highlighted how Charley and I have similar patterns of struggles in our academic writing. Learning the conventions of academic writing has influenced both our identities. Our writing skills have continued to develop whilst studying for our postgraduate degrees. The only participant in this study who stated they did not need help with their academic literacies was Lester as he confidently said that he did not need the help because of his experience of working for a high-profile institution. In relation to identity, it can be said that for both Lester and Crystal, academic writing did not influence their identity because they were already accustomed to writing at a high level, they both worked for high professional companies and came from middle and lower-middle classes.

Therefore, the 'academic literacies' theme seems to conclude that if you were not part of the higher social classes who either went to a "*selection by ability*" or "*grammar*" school (Tomlinson, 2005, p. 188), you went to a comprehensive school where a vast majority of children were of the same social working classes. It highlights that two of the participants in

this study had the preparation for attending university. In a way their identity did not change. It also highlights the comparison I have with Charley when she talks about her writing skills, i.e. writing how she speaks. During my time at school and at the time Charley was in school during the 2000s, I question if this was part of how inequality in the education system was at play.

Lester and Crystal's educational backgrounds enabled them to have good occupations, ones that involved a lot of writing for the public. It can be said therefore that even though they both had a long gap from formal education, returning to studying enabled them to use their educational skills for academic purposes, for example, writing.

8.5: A feeling of insecurity and confidence knockback

For all participants, there were different levels of feeling insecure. First, as mentioned previously, a return to study after many years of working and away from formal education. Lester, for instance, highlighted how unsure he was working with a group of three students far younger than himself. He felt concerned about the age gap between his peers and that he would not do so well because of technology but this feeling diminished as he comments that ***“But in fact that that worked quite well, and it turned out that I wasn't noticeably slower than they were. So, I helped to build my confidence”***. Therefore, for Lester, this was the most important aspect of returning to academic study.

Second, Crystal felt uncomfortable about her first feedback on her written work. Like Lester, she worked for many years in the Civil Service and had not come across the level of scrutiny about her work that she received from her tutors about her first assignment. When Crystal received her first assignment feedback it knocked her confidence as she received a grade of 58%, which she viewed as a mere pass. While for Charley, she does not make any comments about grades, so for her it was the constant reminder of being told that her writing was not academic, for example, sentence and grammar structures, that left her conscious of her academic writing ability as well as her speaking skills and in addition, whether her social status played a part. Putting these interpretations together resonates with what Ivanič (1998) says about writing and identity. He states that some students may have a “sense of inferiority, ... a lack of confidence [together with] a sense of powerlessness” (p. 88). This could be how Charley felt especially coming from a working-class background as Ivanič continues to say that these senses are sometimes associated with students from working-class backgrounds.

A third point to make under this sub-theme is participants not understanding the rules and tutor feedback. Crystal was unhappy about the feedback she received about her first assignment. She felt that the feedback was not explained to her clearly and thus what she did wrong, and so criticised this; she also thought she could do better. Out of the three participants, Lester was the most content because his fears of being the oldest in his peer group was short lived as he was pleased with being left to work with his peers in a group task.

In comparing myself with the participants in this study, from my secondary school reports to the reports/feedback I receive today, I have always been contenting on passing. My aspirations were always to pass. It is probably because I was programmed to accept a pass mark/grade that I was given to get by. I did not complain. In my narrative, I wrote ***“I would always manage to scrape through by achieving a pass or a grade equivalent to a 2:2”*** As an example, I discuss in my narrative about an assignment for Management of Information, for my first degree, I received a grade of 58% and I was happy, but now I think that I should have done better than this. In a way, like Crystal, I should have been more upset about why this grade was given to me and questioned what I could have done better. The reason why I probably did not question this grade was because I was always viewed as an average student and because of my ethnicity I was not expected to achieve. For example, artefacts of school reports, stated: ***“Grade B for the exam, A- for classwork, homework and attitude (A)... “well done. ...has worked extremely well this year”. (Female Mathematics teacher) Although I received mainly ‘As for this subject, I was still given a group rating of B”***. I do not remember having any support of how to achieve a grade A for an exam. The grade of 58% was the highest I received during my first-degree course. This perception or acceptance of just passing is from my secondary schooling. It is where critical race theory acts as a ‘cushion’ in that my acceptance of this low grade was part of me accepting it because society has programmed me to do so. I was viewed as being an underachiever because of my ethnicity (Bagley, 1979). This could also be viewed as a form of ‘poverty of aspiration’ being that school transferred the responsibility of my achievement down to my family and background rather than the school itself helping me to achieve a better grade than average. Thus, the concept of ‘poverty of aspiration’ falls in line with how during my secondary school days, I, nor my mother were aware of what was possible or how to achieve it (Treanor, 2017).

To reiterate, receiving a low grade and the perception from my schoolteachers as being an underachiever, and lecturers during my first-degree studies can be associated with critically thinking that receiving a low grade from the teachers was a form of *“business as usual ... taken-for-granted processes and assumptions...”* (Delgado & Stefancic, 2000, p. xvi as cited in Gillborn et al., 2017, p. 849). Additionally, as Gillborn et al., (2017) reminds me [that] *“The Black/White gap ... has outstanding significance in its own right [in that] Black Caribbean students have historically fared badly in terms of achievement and exclusion* (Gillborn et al., 2017, p. 851). Therefore, it is no surprise that I was immune to receiving a low grade and accepting these grades unchallenged. I can confidently say that my grades for my master’s degree course were better and as a more experienced teacher and student, I have developed my academic skills to achieve more than a 50% assessment grade.

My choice of using autoethnography with semi-structured interviews is not entirely unique. There have been a few studies that have combined these methods, as mentioned in Chapter three. However, what I find unique is the fact that the participants in my study are Caucasian, while I am Black. There are very few studies that are autoethnographic and from the perspective of a British Black woman in higher education. Therefore, the combination of these two methods

with two different ethnicity groups of participants may contribute to educational research methods. Despite the age differences in this study, the findings of comparing our educational experiences will also contribute to educational research and knowledge. Furthermore, this study will provide readers with insights into how a second-generation British Black woman was educated during the 1970s, amidst the various policies discussed in Chapter two. This study may also encourage others to reflect on their own educational trajectories, regardless of their race or social class. I believe these are some of the strengths of this study. However, it is important to acknowledge the limitations of this study, which should be considered by future researchers who may wish to replicate my work.

8.6: Limitations

In the following section, I aim to discuss the limitations of this study. Throughout the writing process of this EdD thesis, I have emphasised that I have been the primary source of data through autoethnographic means. In doing so, I have tried to be as transparent as possible by providing truthful and honest accounts of my educational journey. Where others have been implicated, I have tried to ensure that I have applied ethical considerations to protect their identity.

This autoethnographic study comprises three postgraduate students who talked about their educational trajectories via semi-structured interviews. It is a small-scale study that does not represent the population of the United Kingdom and therefore the findings cannot be generalised (Creswell & Poth, 2018). The purpose of this study was to explore my own educational trajectories and to compare my journey with that of other students, and by using a reflexive thematic analysis process.

Below, I discuss some of the limitations that I encountered while conducting this research. First, I give brief details of the limitations that autoethnographers may encounter and should avoid. Second, I discuss some of the limitations that occurred while trying to collect data via semi-structured interviews during the COVID-19 pandemic and third, I give an account of the limitations for the study.

8.6.1: Pitfalls to avoid in autoethnography

Chang (2008) gives several potential problems in autoethnography research, she terms them as *pitfalls*. When conducting an autoethnographic study, the researcher should ensure that they do not just focus on the self and personal experiences but pay attention to the wider cultural aspect. In doing so, one should avoid being too “*embossed in telling their story*” [and to include] “*cultural interpretation and analysis*” (p. 54-56). I have tried to incorporate these two areas that Chang (2008) discusses by writing about the British educational system overall and by including others in this study.

It could be argued that because this is an autoethnographic research and I am the main voice in this study, my accounts of past events of how I was educated have not been verified by other sources. This is true as I relied mainly on my memory and from artefacts that I kept from my school days. To help analyse my memories of past events, and artefacts, I have used reflexive

thematic analysis to interpret these events to be my truth and in relation to literature (Connelly, 2013).

In addition, being the only one in this study from a different ethnic background, I have tried to include others, as mentioned above, via semi-structured interviews, thus allowing them to share their own educational experiences. I have used their data to create themes and intertwine my own data with their themes to create a comparative analysis of the findings. I therefore hope that the findings have provided a narrative that has cultural interpretations like Chang (2008) states, as we each talked about our educational experiences over a fifty-year period for example.

8.6.2: Semi-structured interviews - limitations

Covid-19 - 2020/2021 had an impact on recruiting volunteers and collecting data from the participants in this study. First, I would have liked to have had more participants to take part but the lack of take-up, I think, was due to the restrictions of COVID-19 and so, I ended up working with three postgraduate students who responded to an email I sent out to students at the University who opted to take part in research studies but only one student was eligible to take part in the study. The other two students I met in one of my Departmental Language Programme (DLP) classes. All the participants met the criteria I was looking for (Creswell & Poth, 2018) Second, because the participants in this study are of different ages and were educated in different periods, I think this study would have benefitted from working with the postgraduate students in a classroom setting making observations. For example, of how students interacted with other students given the age range in this study and their course groups.

Interviews were conducted through Google Meet which meant that I was not physically present. Our relationship on-line was admirable in that the participants were able to talk at length about their educational experiences. However, for one of the participants, Charley, I met in person for the second interview. When we met face to face, I was surprised at my feelings. Although I met her a few times in one of my Departmental Language Programme (DLP) classes before the pandemic, meeting her again for the second interview, face-to-face, in December 2022 felt unnatural. It could be argued that Charley felt the same way. After we reintroduced ourselves, I think we were at ease, and we were able to continue with the second interview, but I would have preferred to have continued our discussion online to have continuity in the process of how I collected her data.

8.6.3: Overall limitations of the study

There are three main limitations to the study, overall. First, one of the important aspects of this study is my ethnicity. I am the only Black female in this study while the participants all identify themselves as being white, therefore, voices from other ethnicities were absent. After reading literature around the education system in the United Kingdom (UK), I would have liked to have recruited students from other ethnic backgrounds so that this study is not from my perspective alone. Therefore, this study cannot be said to reflect another Black (British) female's educational trajectory.

Second, I found there was a lack of literature discussing positive aspects of how ethnic minority children were educated in Britain during the 1960s - 70s. I specifically wanted to learn about the educational system in the UK, e.g. while I was at secondary school during the late 1960s and 1970s with positive insights. While I was able to find some literature, what came to the surface were studies that centred around Black children underachieving. There was also literature that had, what is considered today to be using derogatory language, on how to educate children of ethnic backgrounds, which to me depicts the level of racism and inequality of education that Black children and in particular, Black boys, encountered during their educational years (Vincent et al., 2013; Wallace & Joseph-Salisbury, 2022). This lack of literature also applies to Black adults who became professionals as an adult, through different struggles. To me these highlighted how educational policies administered by central and local governments negatively affected children of ethnic backgrounds and their academic achievements especially at the time I went to secondary school during the 1970s. I hope one day for future students to be able to access positive literature about Black children's educational trajectories.

In addition to the above two limitations of this study, I found that other areas of research were lacking in literature. For example, literature around different class status for ethnic minorities in Britain. In addition, and this could be because of my age, and time constraints of writing this thesis, there appears to be minimal literature around successful British Black women in education, and girls who were educated in Britain during the 1970s and 1980s. Therefore, this study, as mentioned above, could add to the gap in literature for other researchers in the field of Education.

Last, an overall limitation to this study is research question three which asks the participants about how they incorporated academic literacies into their studies and if they achieved academic success? I find that I could have structured this question differently in order to receive more detailed information about what they felt their academic success would be. At the time of conducting the interviews, the participants were in the middle of their studies and two of them had taken a leave of absence, partly because of COVID-19, therefore, I could have asked them if they thought they would succeed in passing their course because of the academic support they received or because of their past academic and work experiences.

8.7: Chapter Summary

This chapter synthesises the findings from Chapters six, seven, and eight to explore their connection to the themes identified through reflexive thematic analysis (RTA) and how they address each research question. Additionally, the chapter discusses the limitations of the study and explores potential solutions that could have generated different outcomes. Finally, it highlights the study's contribution to a gap in the literature.

In the following chapter, I aim to discuss each research question, and the conclusions identified from the findings.

CHAPTER NINE

Conclusion

9.1: Introduction - Overview of the chapter

The purpose of this study was to explore my educational trajectories and the challenges I encountered before I became a university teacher. The study was conducted through an autoethnographic platform combined with semi-structured interviews with three postgraduate students to answer the following research questions:

1. How do postgraduate students view their educational journey in relation to their social background and become a part of the academic community?
2. How have students incorporated academic literacies into their studies? What support, if any, did they receive to achieve academic success?
3. How did I transition from a school pupil to a university student and become a university teacher? What challenges did I encounter along the way?

To remind the reader, the design of this study included reflexive thematic analysis (RTA) with an inductive approach. This approach enabled me to analyse the data and identify the literature that associated with the themes developed from the RTA process. RTA has helped to intertwine my own experiences with that of the participants in this study as demonstrated in Chapter eight. In the following sections, I discuss the conclusions to each of the research questions as listed above.

9.2: Review of the Research Questions

As stated above, this study has been guided by three research questions in order to explore my own and that of others' educational trajectories. The first RQ was aimed at the participants in this study to find out about their social class background and how this related to their educational journey and the second RQ focused on academic literacies with the aim to find out if they needed support to conform to academic conventions. The third RQ analyses my own educational trajectory in the hope to have a better understanding of how I transitioned from failing my secondary school examinations to become a university teacher and thus studying for a doctoral qualification. My personal experience transitioning from college to university, even as an adult, highlighted the challenges of academic literacies. This experience led me to investigate whether participants in this study (Hallett, 2013) faced similar challenges in terms of academic abilities when they first began their undergraduate studies or returned to university after a long break.

9.2.1: RQ1: How do postgraduate students view their educational journey in relation to their social background and becoming a part of the academic community?

Social backgrounds for all participants mattered. As discussed above and in Chapter eight, and through observing Lester and Crystal's body language during the interview, the participants spoke freely and proudly of being from a family of a middle/lower-class status, which they stated helped them to plan their futures in academia. So, analysing the data in relation to literature and class status I would conclude that being part of a higher-class status had positive effects on their future academic careers. This is in line with Bourdieu and Passeron (1977) concepts about Reproduction of cultural capital in education, society and culture. Lester and Crystal believed that a foundation was set in which they could build on, and in addition use their grandparents' and parents' guidance to study in higher education. As mentioned in Chapters two, six and eight, their parents' influence helped them to attend schools that were classed as 'academic and high-performance' which denotes the foundation set by their parents.

This study involved participants of diverse ages, ranging from 25 to over 70. Supporting RQ2, Lester's experience (comparing himself to colleagues from previous degrees) exemplifies that age is no barrier to higher education - even pursuing a PhD at 70. Yes, there were challenges for him because of his age and the worry about not being able to use technology, but these were short lived as he drew on his work and previous university experiences to enable him to study together with younger students. For Crystal too, she was able to also use her work and previous experiences of being a student to progress in her academic studies. While for these two participants their class status had a positive effect on their academic performance, Charley and I continue to develop our academic skills.

Charley carries the notion that because she is from a working-class background, and having a strong northern accent, the perception that others may think she is not intelligent will not change especially, as she puts it, being in a male dominated world of Statistics and Mathematics. As discussed in Chapter two, she has the feeling of not belonging. My own experience of being a part of the academic community was at first challenging because as an undergraduate, in the early 1990s, and from a working-class background, I had to learn how to be a university student at a mature age - a '*non-traditional*' student. I juggled different roles, which I kept hidden from full-time students I shared a module with. Included with my multiple identities was being a student an added dimension but one I accepted because I wanted to fit-in with others in the academic community. I had many years away from study, and the fact that I am a Black woman had a negative effect during my undergraduate years. In summary, Lester and Crystal are the most confident in being a part of the academic community. For Charley, I think this will be a continued development for her because she always reverts to her working-class roots even though she has successfully published (collaboratively) articles for her department.

9.2.2: RQ2: How have students incorporated academic literacies into their studies? What support, if any, did they receive to achieve academic success?

Although the participants in this study are postgraduates, academic support was also available. Crystal and Charley both accessed the support available to them, but it can be concluded that there are differences in how each used the support provided by their department via the Departmental Language Programme (DLP). First, Crystal attended only one session. As she stated, she was able to draw on her previous academic and work experience when it came to writing and mathematical concepts, and so her skills in writing enabled her to move forward without any further academic support. She drew on her work experience as she compared her work experience of working as a civil servant to that of her writing as a student and concluded that at work she was treated more fairly, therefore, she thought that she was more self-sufficient to know and work out what she needed to do to produce academic work. This worked for her as she was able to achieve a higher grade on her second assignment. As well as her work experience, I also think that her schooling helped her to overcome the first initial disappointment that she felt when she first received her feedback.

Charley was told by her supervisor that she needed to seek academic support as her writing was not up to academic standards. To me this reflects the schooling she had, which was similar to mine because at the time I went to school my comprehensive school did not teach grammar. A lot of my writing skills in terms of grammar structures and names, I learnt extensively through my teaching role as a foreign English teacher. The lack of knowledge about grammar and sentence structure is also reflected in Charley's interview as she talked about using the software Grammarly to help her improve her academic writing skills. Therefore, throughout the process of writing this thesis Charley continued to access academic support.

9.2.3: RQ3: How did I transition from school pupil to a student and become a teacher at a university? What challenges did I encounter along the way?

This third research question focuses on my educational trajectory and helps to compare how I was educated in comparison to the participants. As discussed in Chapters one, and eight, and in my narrative (See Appendix 18) I have always managed to work while bringing up a young family and study (part-time) at the same time. This has continued to the time of me writing this thesis, in that, I have worked full-time while studying. During the last thirty years, I never stopped to think about why I was in that position of being a mum, wife and in full-time employment while being a student working hard to become qualified at a professional level until now.

In Chapter two I gave a description of how I located literature for this study. It is relevant to mention this here because locating literature has been challenging as I came across many articles, journals and books that looked negatively at how Black children were educated in the United Kingdom (UK). So, from reading and trying to understand what educational policies were employed during my school days and how they affected me, I began to make sense of what happened during my school days in order to answer RQ 3.

Two critical theories became apparent from the data through the RTA process. Critical race theory (CRT) and intersectionality, (a tenet from CRT). These critical lenses highlighted how British society viewed me as a person from an ethnic background. First, CRT showed me how Acts and policies administered by governments through the education system were seen as 'normal' practice, even though they had racial and discriminatory connotations behind them. Intersectionality helped to put my three identities together because they intertwine, i.e. my race, gender, and social class (Vincent et al., 2013). With these critical lenses, analysing the participants data and then intertwining my own told me that as a Black child and woman, we were treated differently. In addition, the British class system, Charley and I identified ourselves as being part of the working-class society and this had an effect on how we fitted in – belonging - in the academic community. The findings and answers were evident from the key theme 1 '*social class and family background*', as it helped me to gather answers to this research question. The findings also confirmed Bourdieu's concept of the middle-classes cultural, and social reproduction. In sum, the challenges I encountered include being a Black female from a working-class background and my ethnicity and gender are my permanent features. However, it can be questionable whether the last intersection, i.e. my working-class status can be viewed differently because of my education and profession.

In addition, and as discussed in Chapters six, and eight, social backgrounds had a positive and negative effect at the start of our educational trajectories. For instance, class-status had a positive effect in that family members encouraged two of the participants to go into higher education. This was positive for Lester and Crystal because they had a foundation in which they could use to succeed and continue to be part of the middle class, but for Charley and myself this was different. We both made independent decisions to take our education further as discussed in my own narrative and in Chapters six and eight. But it was a long process for me because I did not go straight to college to do A' Levels and then onto university. I had to divert into other programmes of study before I went to university. I acquired my university education in a '*non-traditional*' manner, whereas for Charley and the other two participants - Lester and Crystal, they were educated in the traditional way. In summary, I see this as another challenge that I experienced, i.e. being educated in a '*non-traditional*' way (Bagley 1979; Knowles 1984 as cited in Kenner & Weinerman, 2011) juggling life events to acquire professional qualifications because of the inequalities of the education system I experienced during the 1970s.

In relation to the theme concerning '*schools for all children*' the findings of this study highlighted that the British education system was not equal for everyone. As discussed in Chapters two, six and seven, for example, the findings concluded that I had challenges that I was not aware of while being at school and which started from infant (primary) school leading to my secondary school days to the age of 16; when I was told to leave rather than to stay on to improve my Certificate of Secondary Education (CSE) grades. This inequality was happening at educational institutions such as comprehensive schools and not just for me, but as the literature has highlighted, this was happening, and continues today, across the UK (Wallace & Joseph-Salisbury, 2022). The comprehensive school system was supposed to be

for 'all children' where schools catered for children of all ethnicities and backgrounds. On the surface this was (and is) true but underneath there were other systems implemented that prevented Black children from achieving in comparison to their White counterparts, and I think I fitted into this category. For example, one such policy that this study highlighted was the controversial IQ tests which were used to test children's intellectuality, especially on Black children. The IQ tests were unfair and discriminatory as argued by many scholars. As mentioned in Chapter two and further discussed in the findings in Chapter seven, the participants in this study would not have experienced the unfairness of these tests because the tests would have catered for their cultural background that many second-generation children from ethnic backgrounds would not have been accustomed to. During the 1960s - 1970s, children of different ethnicities were expected to 'assimilate' into British culture.

From the infant school I attended to my secondary school, teachers had preconceived notions about my ability to succeed academically because of my Caribbean background in comparison to Lester and Crystal. It could be argued that teachers during the 1960s/1970s were ill-equipped to teach children from other ethnicities. However, I view this as a poor excuse for teachers to treat Black children differently and I guess, the onus of how teachers taught children then, and I am including children from the White working-class too as they were also discriminated against.

As highlighted in this study, through various systems such as the IQ test, the placing of children into mixed ability classes known as the banding or streaming system had me placed at secondary school into a middle set class and it was in this middle class set that I remained until leaving school at the age of 16. There was no opportunity to move up into the higher-level classes. Hence, I view this as part of a plan that British society, as a whole, had in place, in order to keep children, like me away, and the white working-class children from moving up to the higher-class status. Although I was a child and not aware of the consequences of these actions of the educational system, this was a challenge that kept me from achieving an equal status of being educated like my White counterparts in this study.

The findings also suggest that teachers' preconceptions of the Black child at school had a negative effect on their ability to teach because the end results were that Black children were underachieving. The idea that Black children were underachieving had the government commissioning a committee to investigate the situation. I left school in 1977, so I would have been included in their statistics as an underachiever.

Comprehensive schools were set up to include all children from different backgrounds and classes, not only the White higher middle-classes could attend but also the White working-classes. Over several years, the ruling government(s) tried to encourage local authorities to adapt to the comprehensive system, but it was not until 1976 that comprehensive school provision was made compulsory.

To summarize research question three, there were three challenges that I encountered. The first is my race. My ethnicity of having a Caribbean background, in particular from Jamaica, had a negative effect on how I was educated in the British system. This is evident from the literature

that I came across as discussed in Chapters one and two. The second being educated in a 'non-traditional' route. I discuss in my narrative and provide artefacts that show the information I was given as a 16-year-old and the task I was asked to do for my first college course. This highlighted the level of discrimination against me, and the feelings I had about leaving school at 16. These memories and artefacts confirmed how I was treated differently, discriminately, and thus received an unequal education. The third challenge I encountered was changing my identity. Because of my working-class background, the way I was educated, had an impact in fitting into the academic community, as a mature student. If I was treated equally, from the start of my educational journey as a school pupil, and not treated as a low-class British citizen, I believe that my educational route would have been very different.

9.2.4: Summary

So far, this chapter has discussed how interpretations of the data have helped to answer each research question. In summary, I have highlighted how the data linked the participants with my own experiences. The findings suggest that we all had different challenges that we encountered and have overcome. While the other participants faced challenges related to the use of technology after a long gap in studies; using academic language in writing and gaining a better assessment grade, the challenges that I experienced could never be equally compared to the three participants in this study.

9.3: Contribution to Knowledge

There is a paucity of research which explicitly explores the lived experiences of educational trajectories from 1960 to the 1980s. As such, I believe this study will add to this lack of literature, making a novel contribution to knowledge in the Social Sciences. Additionally, by examining specific government Acts and policies implemented during the 1960s and 1970s, I aim to uncover the extent to which Black Caribbean and working-class children were discriminated against and racialised within the UK's education system. This study will therefore contribute to knowledge by highlighting how these policies impacted children's learning and shaped the future aspirations of ethnic minority children amidst continual oppression and challenges.

As stated previously, and throughout this study, I have had two roles both as an 'outsider' researcher and an 'insider' participant. While this dual perspective offers unique insights, a limitation is that I am the only Black participant. This can be viewed positively, as discussed in Chapter two, there is a lack of empirical research on Black female professionals in academia. Consequently, this study contributes to filling this gap in the literature.

Another significant contribution to knowledge lies in the application of critical lenses related to Black ethnicity. As outlined in Chapter two, there is a paucity of literature employing critical race theory (CRT), intersectionality and Bourdieu's theories. Firstly, using CRT illuminated how educational policies were specifically designed to highlight the underachievement of Black children, revealing the systematic inequalities for both ethnic minorities and the working-class. My lived experiences normalised these policies. Secondly, through an intersectional lens, this study contributes to the literature by focusing on the experiences of a

Black woman. My lived experiences demonstrate how the interconnectedness of race, gender, and class perpetuated oppressive experiences throughout my educational journey. This constitutes another novel contribution to the field of Social Science. Finally, Bourdieu's theories of class further elucidate how society in the UK hierarchically positions individuals. His concepts of social and cultural capital explain the trajectory from working-class to the middle-class through education. However, the literature in Chapter two indicates that even with advanced degrees, Black and White women from working-class backgrounds often face barriers to full inclusion in the academic community, being perceived as 'Other.' This study aims to contribute to knowledge by exploring the positive aspects of becoming a Black middle-class professional woman, a topic largely underrepresented in empirical research (Mirza, 1992; Pennant, 2020).

Having an insider position, through the qualitative design of this study, has enabled valuable insights into my lived experience of how during the 1970s an unequal education system for Black working-class children was administered. This model of qualitative research design, that is, autoethnography, narrative and artefacts will contribute to knowledge for future researchers.

9.4: Implications, recommendations for transformative change in theory, policy, methods and practice

The findings of this study underscore the complex interplay of race, gender, and class in shaping educational experiences. These intersecting identities have significantly influenced my own educational journey, revealing systemic inequalities within the UK education system. To address these issues, a holistic approach is required. This includes recognising the importance of intersectionality in educational research, challenging stereotypes and biases about Black students, creating inclusive learning environments, and advocating for systemic change (Pennant, 2020).

As discussed in Chapters one and two, past and current research predominantly focuses on the underachievement of Black boys, overshadowing the experiences and accomplishments of Black girls and women. To rectify this imbalance, future research must prioritise identifying and documenting the success stories of Black girls and women in education (Mirza, 1992). This shift in focus is crucial for providing role models, inspiring future generations, and informing the development of effective educational policies.

Through this qualitative study, I have been able to share my experiences and concerns, but many other voices remain unheard due to systemic inequalities rooted in race and class. To address this, policymakers should prioritise the implementation of support programmes in schools designed to empower Black girls. By acknowledging and addressing the challenges they face, these programmes can foster a more equitable educational landscape. Additionally, incorporating positive narratives of Black professional women into the school curriculum can provide essential role models for young Black girls, inspiring them to achieve their full potential. To achieve this, schools must also challenge the pervasive stereotype that Black children are incapable of high achievement by implementing teaching strategies that foster high

expectations for all students, regardless of their background. By investing in the success of Black girls and women, we can create a more just and inclusive society.

At the time of finalising the writing of this thesis, there were new directions in terms of politics. Firstly, the potential election of the first woman of colour as US President and secondly, the notable number of female politicians in the new UK Labour government are significant steps towards greater diversity in leadership. While these developments are encouraging, it is essential to acknowledge that systemic barriers to equality persist. Nonetheless, they signal a promising shift in creating a more inclusive political landscape, in the UK and the US.

9.5: Personal reflection

Before entering academia in 1993, I never anticipated becoming an English Language Teacher at a Russell Group university. My journey has heightened my awareness of institutional inequalities that have impacted my career. Intersectionality has illuminated how race, gender, and class shape experiences within predominantly White spaces. Critical Race Theory has provided a lens to understand the historical roots of racial disparities in education. Moreover, Bourdieu's concepts of habitus and cultural capital explain my upward mobility and how I have transmitted these advantages to my children. I aspire for this research to inspire other Black women seeking similar career paths.

APPENDICES

Appendix 1: Interview Questions

Highlighted in yellow are examples of questions I would ask to enable the participants to speak to at length.

- **Introduce myself – talk about normal things to get a relaxed atmosphere.**
- **As an undergraduate**
 1. What was your experience as an undergraduate student?

Previous Studies

2. What do you see yourself as - an international student or a home student?
3. When I say home student do you know what this means?
4. Please tell me a little about yourself – e.g. your educational background?
5. What previous qualifications do you have that allowed you to enrol for the course you are studying now?
6. Have you had a long break in studying or is this a continuation from your previous course?

Motivation

7. What motivated you to be studying now? / What influenced you to be studying now?

The course

8. How are you finding being part of the academic community?
9. Are you enjoying the course? Why or why not? Can you explain?
10. Can you tell me how it going for you on your course so far? (This question depends on how the former ones are answered)
11. Do you understand the term 'blended learning'? Please explain further/give examples.
12. Due to the pandemic/lockdown/government policies of no face-to-face teaching in Universities, how are you coping with the asynchronous and synchronous learning sessions on your course?
13. Have you submitted any assignments and received feedback? Was this your first or second?
14. What are your thoughts about the feedback you received about your first / second assignment? Did you find the feedback useful?
15. **How did you receive feedback from your tutor?**
16. Do you think the Pandemic has had any influence on the way that you are studying? Can you tell me more/explain further?

Abilities/Strengths and Weaknesses

17. **What do you** consider to be your strength – studying for ...? What do you think about your strengths in academic study?

18. **What do you** think are your weaknesses that you would like to improve on your course?

Academic Support

19. Have you sought any academic support, for example, DLP - departmental language programme provided by the ELTC or any other staff?
20. Have you attended any DLP support sessions/classes?
21. Are you working with a group of home and international for group work? (closed question -go to the next one – depending on the answer)
22. What does academic literacy mean to you?
23. Can you tell me what academic literacies are – what does this mean to you?
24. **How do you** feel about your academic literacy? (*Only ask if student is international.*)
25. Can you give me an example of academic literacy/literacies?



Downloaded: 14/09/2023
Approved: 11/02/2021

Olivene Aldridge-Tucker
Registration number: 160210404
School of Education
Programme: N/A

Dear Olivene

PROJECT TITLE: Academic Literacies: What are they? And do we need them? An exploration of home and international students' use or non-use of Departmental Language Programme (DLP) classes.

APPLICATION: Reference Number 037594

On behalf of the University ethics reviewers who reviewed your project, I am pleased to inform you that on 11/02/2021 the above-named project was **approved** on ethics grounds, on the basis that you will adhere to the following documentation that you submitted for ethics review:

- University research ethics application form 037594 (form submission date: 09/02/2021); (expected project end date: 20/12/2022).
- Participant information sheet 1085283 version 2 (26/01/2021).
- Participant consent form 1085284 version 2 (26/01/2021).

If during the course of the project you need to [deviate significantly from the above-approved documentation](#) please inform me since written approval will be required.

Your responsibilities in delivering this research project are set out at the end of this letter.

Yours sincerely

Anna Weighall
Ethics Administrator
School of Education

Please note the following responsibilities of the researcher in delivering the research project:

- The project must abide by the University's Research Ethics Policy: <https://www.sheffield.ac.uk/research-services/ethics-integrity/policy>
- The project must abide by the University's Good Research & Innovation Practices Policy: https://www.sheffield.ac.uk/polopoly_fs/1.671066/file/GRIPPolicy.pdf
- The researcher must inform their supervisor (in the case of a student) or Ethics Administrator (in the case of a member of staff) of any significant changes to the project or the approved documentation.
- The researcher must comply with the requirements of the law and relevant guidelines relating to security and confidentiality of personal data.
- The researcher is responsible for effectively managing the data collected both during and after the end of the project in line with best practice, and any relevant legislative, regulatory or contractual requirements.

Appendix 3



Participant Information Sheet

Research Project Title: *Academic Literacies: What are they? And do we need them? An Exploration of home and international students' Use or Non-Use of Departmental Language Programme (DLP) Classes*

You are being invited to take part in a research project. Before you decide whether or not to participate, it is important for you to understand why the research is being done and what it will involve. Please take time to read the following information carefully and discuss it with others if you wish. Ask us if there is anything that is not clear or if you would like more information. Take time to decide whether or not you wish to take part. Thank you for reading this.

1. What is the project's purpose?

The aim of the research project is to explore home and international students' perception of a university's Departmental Language Support Programme (DLP) provision.

Background Information

As part of my Doctorate qualification, I hope to look into the arguments about having a subject specialist in a department. A subject specialist helps students with academic English within each department of study in a university. For example, a subject specialist in an Engineering Department in a University would help students to structure reports or essays according to what is required by the department. Having a subject specialist in a department would make it easy for all students to access this type of support and thus help students write in an academic style.

In the second part of the research, I hope to look into students' learning journey during their first year as undergraduate students or if you are returning to study as a postgraduate. For example, to see how a first year student copes with academic life or after a long absence from studying, how as a postgraduate student you have coped with academic life.

The duration of the study will start from the second semester. This will be in February 2021 and will finish at the end of the academic year June 2021.

2. Why have I been chosen?

You have been chosen because you have been selected to attend a Departmental Language Programme (DLP) – academic support class by your department. I hope to recruit 6 students in total.

3. Do I have to take part?

Taking part in this study is entirely voluntary. It is up to you to decide whether or not to take part. If you do decide to take part, you will be given this information sheet to keep (and be asked to sign a consent form) and you can still **withdraw at any time** without any negative consequences. You do not have to give a reason. If you wish to withdraw from the research, please email the lead researcher Angela Aldridge-Tucker edp060aa@sheffield.ac.uk.

4. What will happen to me if I take part? What do I have to do?

If you decide to take part in the research, you will be asked to take part in the following activities. Questionnaire: You may be asked to complete a questionnaire about your views about receiving academic support during the academic year of 2020/2021. The questionnaire should take no more to 15 minutes to complete. Interviews: You will be asked to be interviewed over two occasions to talk about the support you receive during your first year as an undergraduate or a postgraduate student who has returned to study. This will include talking about your last learning experience at school or college. The interviews are intended to take around forty minutes. The time period of these interviews will be during the second semester of your course and the final one at the end of the academic year 2021. *Your interview will be video/audio recorded*, take place online or in person providing restrictions have been eased from the COVID situation. You may request further details of the questions to be asked in advance. If you think the recording is not acceptable, you may request the interviewer to take notes only. If there are any questions that you feel you are unable to answer, you have the option not to do so. Excerpts from your interview may be quoted and only used for this research and your identity will be kept anonymous. The name of your university will also be kept anonymous. Recordings and transcriptions of interviews will be destroyed at the end of the project once results have been published in academic journals. Electronic journal: You may be asked to complete an electronic learning journal. This will enable me to collect data about your feelings about the first time you were given an assessment as an undergraduate or postgraduate student and to record data about the feedback you have received about your assessment(s).

5. What are the possible disadvantages and risks of taking part?

The research is about academic English. You were selected because you were highlighted as needing further support, therefore, by taking part in this study, you may feel a little uncomfortable about talking about your past educational achievements. Please be reassured that any information given to this study will be kept confidential and anonymised. However, you are free to decline to answer any question that you feel uncomfortable with during interview or when you complete the questionnaire or learning journal.

6. What are the possible benefits of taking part?

Whilst there are no immediate benefits for those people participating in the project, it is hoped that this work will help to build participants confidence by talking about their past educational experiences and gaining a better understanding of studying in a higher education institution. It will also help future undergraduate students transitioning from school or college into university

for the first time and help future postgraduate students who have had a long absence from education.

7. Will my taking part in this project be kept confidential?

All the information that I collect about you during the course of the research will be kept strictly confidential and will only be accessible to members of the research team. You will not be able to be identified in any reports or publications unless you have given your explicit consent for this. If you agree to us sharing the information you provide, with other researchers, (e.g. by making it available in a data archive) then your personal details will not be included unless you explicitly request this.

8. What is the legal basis for processing my personal data?

According to data protection legislation, we are required to inform you that the legal basis we are applying in order to process your personal data is that 'processing is necessary for the performance of a task carried out in the public interest' (Article 6(1)(e)). Further information can be found in the University's Privacy Notice <https://www.sheffield.ac.uk/govern/data-protection/privacy/general>.

9. What will happen to the data collected, and the results of the research project?

Due to the nature of this research, it is very likely that other researchers may find the data collected to be useful in answering future research questions. We will ask for your explicit consent for your data to be shared in this way. Other researchers will include my Supervisor and others who will be assessing the research project. Participants' personal information will be anonymised and unidentifiable. Transcripts written from questions answered during interview will be word processed by myself and anonymised. On completion of the study, your contact details will only be kept if you agree to be contacted for further research.

10. Who is the Data Controller?

The University of Sheffield will act as the Data Controller for this study. This means that the University is responsible for looking after your information and using it properly.

11. Who has ethically reviewed the project?

This project has been ethically approved via the University of Sheffield's Ethics Review Procedure, as administered by the School of Education. The research project has also been reviewed via the University of Sheffield's Ethics Review Procedure, as administered by the Professional Services.

12. What if something goes wrong and I wish to complain about the research?

If you have any concerns about the way in which this study is conducted please contact my supervisor Dr Rebecca Parry at r.l.parry@sheffield.ac.uk who will be more than willing to discuss your complaint. If you feel that your complaint has not been handled to your

satisfaction, for example, by the Lead Researcher or Supervisor, you can contact the Head of the Education Department who will take this further on your behalf. If your complaint is about how your data has been collected and / or handled further information about the University's Privacy Notice and about how to raise a complaint can be located on <https://www.sheffield.ac.uk/govern/data-protection/privacy/general>.

13. Contact for further information

O. Angela Aldridge-Tucker
78 Hoyle Street
Shalesmoor
Sheffield
S3 7LG

Email: edp06oaa@sheffield.ac.uk
Tel. [+44 114 222 4930](tel:+441142224930)

Should you agree to this study, you will be given a copy of the information sheet and a copy of a signed consent form to keep.

Thank you for taking the time to read this and for taking part in the study.

Appendix 4

Title of Project: Academic Literacies: What are they? And do we need them? An exploration of home and international students' Use or Non-Use of Departmental Language Programme (DLP) Classes.

<i>Please tick the appropriate boxes</i>	Yes	No
Taking Part in the Project		
I have read and understood the project information sheet dated 06/03/2021 or the project has been fully explained to me. (If you will answer No to this question please do not proceed with this consent form until you are fully aware of what your participation in the project will mean.)	☐	☐
I have been given the opportunity to ask questions about the project.	☐	☐
I agree to take part in the project. I understand that taking part in the project will include taking part in being recorded using a Dictaphone during an interview or recorded online , e.g. Google Meet; questionnaire and completing an electronic journal.	☐	☐
I understand that my taking part is voluntary and that I can withdraw from the study at any time/before 30 th March 2021; I do not have to give any reasons for why I no longer want to take part and there will be no adverse consequences if I choose to withdraw.	☐	☐
How my information will be used during and after the project		
I understand my personal details such as name, phone number, address and email address etc. will not be revealed to people outside the project.	☐	☐
I understand and agree that my words may be quoted in publications, reports, web pages, and other research outputs. I understand that I will not be named in these outputs unless I specifically request this.	☐	☐
I understand and agree that other authorised researchers will have access to this data only if they agree to preserve the confidentiality of the information as requested in this form.	☐	☐
I understand and agree that other authorised researchers may use my data in publications, reports, web pages, and other research outputs, only if they agree to preserve the confidentiality of the information as requested in this form.	☐	☐
I give permission for the interviewing and questionnaire data that I provide to be deposited in [the name of the project or a pseudonym name] so it can be used for future research and learning	☐	☐
So that the information you provide can be used legally by the researchers		
I agree to assign the copyright I hold in any materials generated as part of this project to The University of Sheffield.	☐	☐

Name of participant [printed]

Signature

Date

Name of Researcher [printed]

Signature

Date

Project contact details for further information:

Olivene (Angela) Aldridge-Tucker email: edp060aa@sheffield.ac.uk

Supervisor: Dr Rebecca Parry at r.l.parry@sheffield.ac.uk

Original handout given to students before the COVID-19 pandemic.

Appendix 5: What is Academic Literacy?

Dear students

My name is Angela Aldridge-Tucker, I am an Ed D student in the School of Education and I am looking for volunteers to take part in my research.

My study is about academic literacy'. This is a term commonly used across the academic community in the UK. I would like to know what this term means to you and to hear your views on the subject of Departmental Language Programme (DLP) provision as a home or international student.

If you are an undergraduate home student in your first year of study or a postgraduate home student returning to study, I would like to hear from you.

This research has been approved by The University of Sheffield Ethics Committee in the School of Education and by the English Language Teaching Centre (ELTC). If you are interested please contact me by email for further information and details about the study. My contact details are edp060aa@sheffield.ac.uk.

Thank you

Appendix 6: 6th March 2021

Dear students

I am an EdD student in the School of Education and I am hoping you might be interested in participating in my research.

My study is about exploring home and international students' perception of a university's Departmental Language Programme provision (DLP). To give you a little bit of background to this, *Scholars such as Wingate (2015) and Murray (2016) have argued that English language support should be decentralised and a subject specialist be easily accessible to all students whether they are home or international students. The reason for their argument is they believe all students will have an equal opportunity to ask for guidance and help within their subject area, and not be seen as students needing help with the English language.*

Now, throughout the UK, in higher educational institutions, there are academic language support classes available for all students to help with their academic studies, for example, writing essays, reports, referencing, or to improve academic vocabulary. The term 'academic literacy' is commonly used within the academic community across the UK but I would like to know what this term means to you. I would also like to hear your views about the Departmental Language Programme (DLP) provision as a home or international student. Therefore, for this study, I would like to work with volunteers who are undergraduates in their first year or postgraduate students returning to university after a break in studying.

If you decide to take part, the study will consist of 3 x questionnaires of around 6 – 8 questions and 3 x (40 minutes or less) semi-structured interviews. Under the GDPR guidelines, all participants' personal details will be kept anonymous and destroyed after the study. By taking part, I hope it will be a valuable opportunity for you to share your perspectives and experiences in this context.

My research has been approved by The University of Sheffield Ethics Committee in the School of Education and by the English Language Teaching Centre (ELTC). I am the researcher that you will be in contact with and my contact details are edp06oaa@sheffield.ac.uk. If you would like further information about this study, please do not hesitate to contact me. If you have any concerns about this study, please contact my supervisor Dr Rebecca Parry at r.l.parry@sheffield.ac.uk.

Lastly, should you wish to take part in this research study, please see the attached participant information sheet and consent form for you to sign.

Thank you.

Appendix 7

Academic Literacies: What are they? And do we need them? *An exploration of home and international students' use or non-use of Departmental Language Programme (DLP) Classes.*

Thank you so much for taking part in my study. It was very much appreciated, and it helped me to begin my journey of writing my thesis.

I am going to create case studies/narrative stories/histories of each of my participants but to do this effectively, I need some more details. Each of my participants' names will be kept anonymous and will be given pseudonyms, but it would be great if I could have a few more details to create a better profile.

Could you please fill in the following?

Age:	
Ethnicity:	
Gender (you don't have to disclose this):	
Country:	
City:	
1 st degree: Yes/No - subject	
Post Grad Qualification: Yes/No/ subject	
Work experience (Number of years): Job role/title	
Registered Disable (yes/no):	

Thank you in advance for completing this.

Appendix 8: Interview Questions

- **Introduce myself – talk about normal things to get a relaxed atmosphere.**
- **As an undergraduate**
 1. What was your experience as an undergraduate student?

Previous Studies

2. What do you see yourself as - an international student or a home student?
3. When I say home student do you know what this means?
4. Please tell me a little about yourself – e.g. your educational background?
5. What previous qualifications do you have that allowed you to enrol for the course you are studying now?
6. Have you had a long break in studying or is this a continuation from your previous course?

Motivation

7. What motivated you to be studying now? / What influenced you to be studying now?

The course

8. How are you finding being part of the academic community?
9. Are you enjoying the course? Why or why not? Can you explain?
10. Can you tell me how it going for you on your course so far? (This question depends on how the former ones are answered)
11. Do you understand the term 'blended learning'? Please explain further/give examples.
12. Due to the pandemic/lockdown/government policies of no face to face teaching in Universities, how are you coping with the asynchronous and synchronous learning sessions on your course?
13. Have you submitted any assignments and received feedback? Was this your first or second?
14. What are your thoughts about the feedback you received about your first / second assignment? Did you find the feedback useful?
15. How did you receive feedback from your tutor?
16. Do you think the Pandemic has had any influence on the way that you are studying? Can you tell me more/explain further?

Abilities/Strengths and Weaknesses

17. What do you consider to be your strength – studying for ...? What do you think about your strengths in academic study?
18. What do you think are your weaknesses that you would like to improve on your course?

Academic Support

19. Have you sought any academic support, for example, DLP - departmental language programme provided by the ELTC or any other staff?

20. Have you attended any DLP support sessions/classes?
21. Are you working with a group of home and international for group work? (closed question -go to the next one – depending on the answer)
22. What does academic literacy mean to you?
23. Can you tell me what academic literacies are – what does this mean to you?
24. How do you feel about your academic literacy? (*Only ask if student is international.*)
25. Can you give me an example of academic literacy/literacies?

Appendix 9

New Research Questions:

Semi-structured interview - guideline

Introduction:

- Since we last met, how have you been?
- I asked you in my last email to think of a pseudonym – do you have one for me?
- I explained in my email that I've changed some of my research questions. The questions that I asked before were more related to DLP and while I received answers from you the focus has changed from DLP to more about transitioning to higher education. I have kept a couple of questions and answers that you gave about DLP, so I've not entirely disregarded them. So, is it ok to continue asking you about your transition into higher education from school?

One of my main research questions is:

- **Research Question 3:** How do postgraduate students view their educational journey in relation to their social background and becoming a part of the academic community?

Sub-question to ask:

- a) *What class in society do you see yourself? Think about when you were at school, college, and university. Were you from a working-class background, for example?*
 - *Do you see yourself in that group class now?*
- b) *In your view how do you think you have transitioned from school into higher education?*
 - Think about any challenges that you have encountered at school, college or at home that has had an impact of where you are today.

- **Research Question 4:** Are postgraduate students able to access and receive academic support and to what effect has this had on their studies?

This question has already been answered during our first interview, to date, have you access any support to help you with your academic writing?

Appendix 10: self-written interview

Structured Questions: Researcher's questions, guideline, and own answers

- **Introduce myself – talk about normal things to get a relaxed atmosphere.**

N/A

a) As an undergraduate

1. What was your experience like as an undergraduate student?

Answer: Challenging sometimes a struggle. I remember feeling a little out of place because I was part of a larger group of full-time students who had gone through the 'traditional' educational system. It also felt a little weird because I didn't want anyone to know out of my group that I was a mum. It would have felt out of place letting others know that I was a mum. Although it was daunting at first, and I didn't realise it at the time, I was being a part of a different community through my studies which meant that I had to act differently, and again, although I didn't realise at the time, I began to change for example, I would act differently when at uni and at work.

b) Previous Studies

2. What do you see yourself as - an international student or a home student?

Answer: Home student

3. Please tell me a little about yourself – e.g. your educational background?

Answer: I went to a primary school in the southwest of the city. My first recollection of primary school was sat in front of a teacher reading a book. I can't remember what the book was about, but I do remember the teacher telling me that I didn't have to go back to read to her and that I was to join the rest of the children in another class. I remember feeling sad about it and also a little scared because there were a lot of children in the classroom.

I remember my secondary school days, having to walk for about 10 – 15 minutes if not longer to the bus stop where we would take the bus to the comprehensive school. I remember being in the middle set of classes. So, I wasn't in the top or bottom set but in the middle. My class name would have a T1 with a number before it so for example 2 T1 would be year two etc, until your fifth year. I didn't do well at school. I got CSE's no O' levels and if I think about it now, the 9 CSEs that I got are not worth anything. Today, qualifications are GCSEs, and they are graded with a number, so if understand correctly, the higher the number, the better the grade, right? If I compare this with my CSEs the numbers are the other way round. So, I didn't do very well – some might say I failed them. (lol)

After I finished school – and a number of years later, I had a job, full-time and while working full-time would study. I first studied on a BTEC course which enabled me to do my first degree, part-time but still working full-time in Public Administration.

4. What previous qualifications do you have that allowed you to enrol for the course you are studying now?

Answer: My second degree – a masters in Literacy and Language in Adult Education. So, My last qualification has allowed me to be studying for my Doctorate qualification.

5. Have you had a long break in studying or is this a continuation from your previous course?

Answer: I started studying for my Masters in 2006 and finished in 2009, so studying now for my Doctorate, I would say that I have had a long break between studies.

Why?

Answer: The reason was because I was working in another town and there were challenges that I needed to handle before going back to study and there were financial situations that I didn't think I could cope with. Besides, I don't think I knew what I wanted to study at master's level so that is another reason why there was a gap in studies.

c) Motivation

6. What motivated you to be studying now? / What influenced you to be studying now?

Answer: I have always wanted to study for a Doctorate qualification, but life experiences were always in the way – preventing me from studying. I saw an opportunity in 2016 to apply for the EdD and here I am today. It was also peer pressure from my colleagues at work over a drink.

d) The course

7. How are you finding being part of the academic community?

Answer: To be honest, it can be challenging because you try to understand what is going on. For example, learning new terminologies, being part of another group of students from various backgrounds, i.e., meeting new people, finding out what you have in common and being a minority.

8. Are you enjoying the course? Why or why not? Can you explain?

Answer: Yes, and sometimes no. During the first part of the EdD course there was a member of another strand on the course from South Africa and over dinner one night during a residential weekend, he asked me how I got there – his words were 'how did you get here, how many kids do you have?'. I remember keeping my cool and switched things around onto him

because he was a mature student who was brought up in South Africa. I was angry inside, but I didn't show this to him. The other reason is partly because I am working full-time and would like to finish what I have to do to submit – and again life experiences always slow you down. The last three years have been challenging, partly because of COVID-19 which affected everyone around the world and other issues such as supporting a family member through various court procedures. This has been the downside to studying. I would say yes, because I've enjoyed meeting others on the course and listening to some of their challenges that they were experiencing, and this made me feel that I was not doing so bad. It's also been great to see my peers submit and achieve their Doctorship.

9. Can you tell me how it is going for you on your course so far? (This question depends on how the former ones are answered)

Answer: It's going ok. I've been working on my methodology which has taken me a long time. I didn't realise how much time you had to spend on this chapter, but having said that, I have changed methodology and have to do a lot more – additional reading.

10. Do you understand the term 'blended learning'? Please explain further/give examples.

Answer: This includes self-study as well as attending face-face/online synchronous class sessions.

11. Due to the pandemic/lockdown/government policies of no face-to-face teaching in universities, how are you coping with the asynchronous and synchronous learning sessions on your course?

Answer: This has been ok. Although for a short time I had a leave of absence due to illness. When I returned to study, there was a problem with my registration and so missed out on one of the online weekend workshops, but since then – 2021 everything has got better. Added to this, I was able to interview participants for my research – online.

12. Have you submitted any assignments and received feedback? Was this your first or second?

N/A

13. What are your thoughts about the feedback you received about your first / second assignment? Did you find the feedback useful?

Answer: I haven't done any assignments, but I can relate this to my thesis and supervision. It's been challenging trying to sort out how I am going to analyse my data – that is what method I am going to use. I am still trying to work this out. I have thought about narrative analysis – using case studies – but not yet decided. I think my supervisor is not sure either as she was considering me using discourse analysis. But after another meeting – and a meeting with another lecturer on my EdD course we decided against it.

14. How did you receive feedback from your tutor?

Answer: This is not related to assignments but if I submitted a section of my thesis, I would receive feedback online – via Google Meet.

15. Do you think the Pandemic has had any influence on the way that you are studying?
Can you tell me more/explain further?

Answer: Yes, because I'm studying more online. And it has not been easy trying to obtain data from participants because there has been no face-to face contact and a lot of students have deferred their studies or – because they had no choice stayed at home, so it has not been easy to collate data because you were not meeting anyone.

e) Abilities/Strengths and Weaknesses

16. What do you consider to be your strength? What do you think about your strengths in academic study?

Answer: I think determination. If I receive any negative feedback, I would go away and try again until I get it right. For example, I was not able to attract the right participants, at first for my study, but I tried again and received a few responses – I decided to work with what I received.

17. What do you think are your weaknesses that you would like to improve on your course?

Answer: Not sure – I guess reading and understanding what I've read and applying terminology to my written work. I think that's my weakness. I have to read things over again – maybe about three or four times to ensure that I've understood.

f) Academic Support

18. Have you sought any academic support, for example, departmental language programme provided by the ELTC or any other staff?

Answer: Lol. No. Simply because I teach on the programmes, so it wouldn't feel right for me to do so. But if I wasn't a teacher at university, and studying for the same qualification and support was available I would certainly see what it was all about and if I needed help with my academic work.

19. Have you attended any DLP support sessions/classes?

Answer: N/A - for the reasons stated in the last question.

20. Are you working with a group of home and international students for group work?
(closed question -go to the next one – depending on the answer)

Answer: *N/A – Although for my project I am working with home students.*

g) Academic Literacies

21. What does academic literacy mean to you?

Answer: *Academic literacy is reading, writing, and speaking for university.*

22. Can you tell me what academic literacies are – what does this mean to you?

Answer: *It means being able to read, write and speak at an academic level, and using IT to present written and spoken work at university and in addition, being part of the academic community.*

23. How do you feel about your academic literacy? (Only ask if student is international.)

Answer: *I'll answer this even though it supposed to be a question for international students. So, my academic literacy is not as academic as I thought it was. Mainly because I have to remember to use certain tenses for example if I was writing a report. I need to remember not to write as I speak – it's different. I can only say this because I teach academic writing to students – it's part of my job. Irony isn't it!*

24. Can you give me an example of academic literacy/literacies?

Answer: *A written assignment / a project presentation to lecturers or peers.*

Appendix 11: Structured Questions: Researcher's questions, guideline, and own answers

Second Interview guideline and questions

Introduction – Participants

- Since we last met, how have you been?
- Thank you for sending me a pseudo name.
- I explained in my email that I've changed some of my research questions. The questions that I asked before were more related to DLP and while I received answers from you the focus has changed from DLP to more about transitioning to higher education. I have kept a couple of questions and answers that you gave about DLP, so I've not entirely disregarded them. But is it ok to continue asking you about your transition into higher education from school?

One of my main research questions is:

- **Research Question 3:** How do postgraduate students view their educational journey in relation to their social background and becoming a part of the academic community?

In relation to this question, can you tell me a little about your family?

- For example, are you the only one in your family that has studied at university level? Or are you one of a few in your family who have?

Sub-question to ask:

a) *In your view how do you think you have transitioned from school into higher education?*

- Think about any challenges that you have encountered at school, college or at home that has had an impact of where you are today.

- **Research Question 4:** Are postgraduate students able to access and receive academic support and to what effect has this had on their studies?

This question has already been answered during our first interview, but I'd like to have an update and ask you again – if this is ok with you. Have you access any support to help you with your academic writing?

Researcher: If I was to answer the question for interview 2 (Q1) which is related to research question 3, I would say:

I'm from a working class-background. I was brought up in the steel industry side of the city, I think this is the northern part of the city. I went to one of the three local comprehensive schools that were open for all children from various backgrounds and there were some that were poorer than me as well as those who were seen to be well-off. They were usually in the top set of classes. In my immediate

family, I am the only one that has been educated at university level. My mother went to a private school in Jamaica, so I could say she was well educated but didn't take her studies any further unlike my aunt who was a professor in a university in New York and my other auntie, who was a teacher in Jamaica. The second part of the question – I think becoming a part of the academic community can be challenging because if I think about my family, for example, my aunts in the US or in Jamaica I can have a constructive conversation about different issues and speak as if I was at university but if I was to have the same conversation with friends or even my mother, I have to be careful of not sounding too clever – or patronising – and sometimes I have to remember to take my 'teacher's hat' off. I sometimes have to watch what I say and how I say it when I'm around others that have not gone to university. When it comes to my kids – I have no problem because they each have been fortunate to have gone and studied at university. In fact, they view themselves as being middle class citizens.

Appendix 13: 1st Interview: Main Questions

- **Introduce myself – talk about normal things to get a relaxed atmosphere.**
- **As an undergraduate**
 1. What was your experience as an undergraduate student?

Previous Studies

2. What do you see yourself as - an international student or a home student?
3. When I say home student do you know what this means?
4. Please tell me a little about yourself – e.g. your educational background.
5. What previous qualifications do you have that allowed you to enrol for the course you are studying now?
6. Have you had a long break in studying or is this a continuation from your previous course?

Motivation

7. What motivated you to be studying now? / What influenced you to be studying now?

The course

8. How are you finding being part of the academic community?
9. Are you enjoying the course? Why or why not? Can you explain?
10. Can you tell me how it going for you on your course so far? (This question depends on how the former ones are answered)
11. Do you understand the term 'blended learning'? Please explain further/give examples.
12. Due to the pandemic/lockdown/government policies of no face to face teaching in Universities, how are you coping with the asynchronous and synchronous learning sessions on your course?
13. Have you submitted any assignments and received feedback? Was this your first or second?
14. What are your thoughts about the feedback you received about your first / second assignment? Did you find the feedback useful?
15. How did you receive feedback from your tutor?
16. Do you think the Pandemic has had any influence on the way that you are studying? Can you tell me more/explain further?

Abilities/Strengths and Weaknesses

17. What do you consider to be your strength – studying for ...? What do you think about your strengths in academic study?
18. What do you think are your weaknesses that you would like to improve on your course?

Academic Support

19. Have you sought any academic support, for example, departmental language programme provided by the ELTC or any other staff?
20. Have you attended any DLP support sessions/classes?
21. Are you working with a group of home and international for group work? (closed question -go to the next one – depending on the answer)
22. What does academic literacy mean to you?
23. Can you tell me what academic literacies are – what does this mean to you?
24. How do you feel about your academic literacy? (*Only ask if student is international.*)
25. Can you give me an example of academic literacy/literacies?

Appendix 14: Table 7: Themes and Sub-themes created using RTA

Themes	Sub-themes
1. Social class and Family background	1. Family Influence on Going to University
	2. Identity challenges
	3. Different types of schools
	4. Paying School fees
	5. Diversity
2. Academic Literacies	6. Developing academic skills in reading, writing and speaking
	7. Speaking versus writing
3. Communities of Practice	8. Belonging
	9. Work experience and studies
4. Insecurities	10. Traumatization – recalling bad memories of teacher feedback and receiving feedback from assignments
	11. Supervisor–teacher relationship
	12. Teacher-student relationship

Reviewing the data, these themes later changed.

Appendix 15

This Appendix illustrates themes and sub-themes that were developed to answer my research questions. The themes/sub-themes were created through the Reflexive Thematic Analysis (RTA) process. Each excerpt is presented verbatim from the transcripts.

1. How do students view their learning trajectories and become part of an academic community?
2. How have students incorporated academic literacies into their studies? What support, if any, did they receive to achieve academic success?

Research questions, themes, and sub-themes

How do students view their learning trajectories and become part of an academic community?	How have students incorporated academic literacies into their studies? What support if any, did they receive to achieve academic success?
1. Social Class ● Family background Charley: <i>Yeah. So like from my wider families And then I've got blended families ...But other than that...";</i> Crystal: <i>"you're still from the public sector...; it was just a very middle-class school really...";</i> Lester: <i>"... well, in my immediate family I'm the 1st to go to university ... my father was, um, an artist, so he went to art school where he was 14, I think 14 or 15"; "... so it was a quite an academic school; I think so, yes. Yeah, I would say, I would say lower middle class..."</i> ● Family influence of going to university – Lester: <i>"A choice, she said. You could either go to the grammar school Or you could learn something really useful"; "my grandmother... she was a teacher and she was very keen on education, yeah. So the ethos of the family was very strongly, focused on the importance of education"</i>	3. Academic literacies ● Developing academic skills in reading, writing and speaking Lester: <i>"...the academic consistence on references and bibliographies, which we didn't use in my career, but, um, that's so straightforward and so easy. That's not a problem for me"; "When I started work as a government auditor. (Yeah) Um, I thought I knew how to write. I'd been up quite a senior civil servant"; Opened it, when I got back to my office and did not put it down that day, it was, it was a very short book and it was uh, wholly about, uh, how to structure a report so that the reader is carried through it...."; "...It was all the English, native speakers they couldn't writer either".</i> Crystal: <i>"...it was my first assignment, but, uh, within that, you know, um, I've had 20 years where my job has been about writing and I thought I'd become a good writer"; "...I don't think it's there yet in terms of reading and comprehending. So I. I find reading really. I'm a very slow, I'm very slow at reading academic papers, understanding them".</i>

Crystal: “My grandmother ensured that everyone had the opportunity to go to university” (check Helen) Charley: “... none of my parents or anyone like that did any sort of higher education really? It was all straight into work”; ● Identity challenges – Charley: “I write how I speak”; My accent has changed; people not taking me seriously; <i>“I felt like a bit of an outsider” - this quote relates to her supervisor</i>	Charlie: “I didn't remember like, particularly focusing on grammatical rules or sentence structure was more about getting the content, right, and so making sure that you're kind of comparing when you compare and contrasting, or when you're using analytical writing when you need to...”; “...with regards to fitting in and regards to writing down your essays, adverse assignments, because I would take that at that point, you didn't really, you didn't realise that you needed to write in a certain way”. ● Speaking versus writing Charlie: “...for example, nobody really says the word lend. It's just borrow for everything. But also I would say one more use of the need borrow me something”; Crystal: . “... I think my spelling was always very kind of phonetic spelling in that way, you know? Um, and I, you know, I still what's the classic one that people do that I still do, um, of instead of haves isn't it and things like that because you, it sounds like you say it; ... I guess, you know, 20 years of working for the civil servants, civil service. I know all of those things to watch out for it in my own writing. So when I proofread I'll, you know, I'll go back and check for things. Um, yeah, like that. Yeah. I was very much kinda a phonetic...” Lester:
2. School selection process ● Government policies ● Different types of schools Charley: “... I went to a normal school; Lester: “... so it was a quite an academic school”; “...Um, grammar school or a free place? Yeah, did well in the 11 plus, yeah. And if you fail the 11 plus, it would be secondary	4. Communities of Practice ● Belonging Charlie: “My supervisor always. Likes to say I'm a Social chameleon. That's how she Describes it. To see me interact with all different groups of people kind of blend to that social group. And it's not my personality as such. I think it's just

<i>modern; It was a boys school, so there were no girls... ”</i> Crystal: <i>“So for the school that I went to it was key thing.. it was all girls...;I went to a high performance school...”</i> ● School fees Lester: <i>“Free place boys like me...”</i> Crystal: <i>“Whereas in my kind of fee paying school, I suspect the teachers would probably just put red circle around it, yeah, and then not tell me what I was doing...”</i> ● Diversity Crystal: <i>“My class was completely white... ”; I can't think of anybody with English as a second language in my year. And I can think of 1 girl who would have been from Indian heritage”.</i> Charlie: <i>“So, yeah, not a lot of diversity at all in that sense. And actually there wasn't that much diversity really in terms of the kind of economic background it was mostly. You know, really working class”.</i> Lester: <i>“I grew up in a part of London where there were a lot of Jewish families, right? Though I think about 1/3 of the boys in the school were Jewish”.</i>	<i>the way that I've present what I'm saying. I don't think I've changed what I'm. Saying or...”</i> Lester: <i>“I was interested in risk from my professional career and I read all sorts of books about risk. I then got involved in, um, a number of, uh, discussion groups in the university. Uh, uh, and so all of that was, um, a sort of substitute for the intellectual stimulation that I previously had in my job”.</i> Crystal: <i>“So I had that weird thing where I kind of, um, always thought I was a bit stupid, but actually I got my eight, nine GCSEs, you know, um, you know, far fine, you know, um, Um, yeah, I was in the bottom math group, so I always thought I wasn't very good at maths”.</i> Need to check recording again ● Work experience and studies Lester: <i>“Um, my first degree was, um, in mathematics...; about 10 years ago, I went back to Cambridge to receive a master's degree, uh, when I sat in the examination in 1970. (Wow) So I, I, I, at that point I was a pure mathematician...The only issue was, um, conforming with the academic style of writing, which in my subject statistics is, is no trouble at all. For me, that's completely consistent with what I've used to from the world of audit”.</i> Charlie: <i>“My audience changes all the time. It might be a statistician or it might be an archaeologists. It might be you know, people, non technical audience. So it's, it's caused me to think who do I need to write for and how do I need to structure my writing in such a way that they can understand it”?</i> Crystal:
	5. Insecurities

	● Traumatization – recalling bad memories of teacher feedback/ Receiving feedback on assignments Crystal: “...write, well, I mean, on my, on my first two assessments, I was really, I was quite disappointed, very disappointed with grade for the first one; If to be honest, I was really upset by it and I gave my feedback on it because it's the way it's never, you'd never in the workplace. Get the kind of feedback. Written in that way. So it was a very, um, it was a sort of, it was all done from a very negative perspective...”. Charlie: “...She's definitely very straight to the point and honest. So the fact that she said that you think my writing has improved”; So there was some obviously, there were some bits where it was a call from you should be worded like this, or you know, the sentences a bit long...; And my supervisor is definitely not one for kind of false platitudes. as it were. She's definitely very straight to the point and honest. “...I think it genuinely must have because, yeah, she's not one to pander to people. She'll tell you, if it's crap”. Lester: “I gather some universities they expect the students to do the questions and have them in and get them marked, um, uh, Sheffield that isn't what happens. Uh, but the supervisors of the four of us said, why don't you four get together and work out the answers to these questions...Um, send them to us if you'd like, but I didn't actually say this, but it was very clear. We won't read them, (laughter) just, just do it and get some benefit out of it did. And that's what we did. And, um, and that was very good. It was very enjoyable”. ● Supervisor / Teacher – student relationship:
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	Charlie: <i>“my supervisor says I’m a social chameleon”</i>; Lester: <i>“...but the supervisors of the four of us said, why don't you four get together and work out the answers to these questions...”</i> ● Ability to do well at school and in higher education
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Appendix 16

Braun and Clarke 15 Point Checklist			EVIDENCE
Transcribing	1	There is sufficient level of detail in the transcriptions of the data, which have been tested for accuracy against the recordings.	Use of software to transcribe data – Coding by using excel / different font colours/Use of software such as 'wordle or word cloud' to identify initial candidate codes.
Coding	2	Equal attention is paid to every data item throughout coding.	Use of themes generated from the data/as a whole/use of literature to link/synthesise themes.
	3	Coding must be thorough and include all data items, to avoid anecdotal evidence of just one or two data items.	Using the data – holistically – to ensure all data items were included to create codes and themes.
	4	Extracts for each theme must be gathered and allocated to the right theme.	Manually using codes/themes on A3 paper to move around so that codes/themes were grouped in the right order.
	5	The original data set is used to check themes back and forth, whilst also checking between themes.	This is reflexively discussed in the analysis chapter with illustrations of how the researcher manually coded.
	6	There must be internal homogeneity amongst the themes - consistency, distinctive and coherent.	After creating initial codes and then developing themes, I reiteratively checked for consistency and coherence and ensured that they were distinctive, (e.g. they only applied to the participants in this study), throughout the RTA process.
Analysis	7	Paraphrasing and mere description must be avoided – the data must be analysed and interpreted.	I read the transcripts several times while creating codes/themes, semantically. After finalising the themes, I selected excerpts under each theme that best fit the RQ using an inductive semantic process. I ensured at this stage that I did not analyse the data too latently.

	8	Corresponding data matches the analytic claims made.	I manually coded the data using Microsoft Word and Excel to help sort and group the codes & themes. Each group of codes were highlighted in different colours.
	9	A convincing story about the data and the phenomena is told through well-structured analysis.	Each theme was analysed in sequential order of the questions asked during interview. In further analysis, literature was then applied to support the topic. Analysis of the data is in Chapters six, seven and eight.
	10	There is a healthy balance between illustrative and analytical extracts and narrative.	Each theme was supported by the researcher giving an analytical narrative about each theme and then adding participants' extracts from transcriptions to support the narrative.
Overall	11	Sufficient time has been allowed for immersion and in-depth analysis of the data.	The first set of interviews were transcribed within a week. After the last interview, analysis began within a month. A year later for the second set of interviews, transcribing took place within a week and analysis began after a two-week break. Overall, the analysis of the data, via RTA, took over three months to complete.
Report	12	The type(s) of TA and underlying philosophical/paradigmatic approach are clearly articulated.	My philosophical approach, interpretivism/ constructivism is explained in Chapter three.
	13	There is consistency between method and analysis	A detailed account of the process of RTA is given Chapters three (theory) and four (with images).
	14	There is epistemological consistency in the language used throughout the report.	A visual of my position is shown in Chapter three. This highlights my knowledge/understanding of my epistemological position which is

			carried out through my analysis of the data.
	15	The researcher is actively developing and generating the themes; the themes are not simply emerging.	After each process of transcribing the data, coding, and creating themes, I made notes and took images of the process. I also reiteratively looked back at the data to ensure that themes were appropriately developed and meaningful.

Adapted from Braun and Clarke (2022)

Appendix 17: Follow-up Email

Academic Literacies Study



Sat, 14
May 2022,
12:13

Hi Charley (Pseudonym)

I hope you are well and doing ok in your research.

I was wondering if you were still available at university. I would like to do a follow up interview for my research project in addition to the one we did last year and wondered if you were able to do this?

We could meet online next month (June) or if you are not available in June by the end of May.

Could you let me know if this is possible and if you are willing to meet with me?

Thank you

APPENDIX 18

MY EDUCATIONAL TRAJECTORY

Introduction

I first had the idea for this study based on my professional experience as an English Language Tutor and my professional observation about students not accessing academic support. Observing the low numbers of students in my classes made me reminisce to when I was an undergraduate student and the lack of academic support I had. As this study has developed, drawing on my memories has been a valuable source of data because I have been able to draw on my memories to give the reader an insight into my educational trajectory. In addition to recalling my memories of my past educational experiences, I refer to artefacts, such as school reports, written college work from the age of 16 and a 6th-form pamphlet from my secondary school, which has been a great support in recalling specific events in my educational journey.

Utilising my memories for this study and observing students' access to academic support, I developed the following research question to examine my own educational trajectory:

RQ3: How did I transition from a school pupil to a student and become a teacher at a university? What challenges did I encounter along the way?

To give the reader an understanding of my educational history, culture and work experiences, in the following sections, I give a narrative of my lived experiences in the hope to answer my research question. My first recollections of my experiences at school begin at infant school, then at secondary school, followed by my experiences at university. Lastly, I give an account of my teaching experiences at a Northern local college.

Who am I? Ethnicity (1961)

I am a Black woman who was born in South Yorkshire in 1961. My parents were from Jamaica, St Elizabeth and St Catherine. I was born and grew up in Sheffield, a steel industry city comprising the Indigenous white population, West Indian families from the Caribbean Islands as well as the Asian countries such as India and Pakistan.

My Parents - Cultural Background

My mother came from Jamaica to the United Kingdom (UK) for a better life. Her generation saw the UK as the 'motherland' of opportunities because in Jamaica, there was a lack of employment. In the UK, there was a shortage of labour and there was a need to rebuild the country after the Second World War. The Caribbean Islands were part of the British Commonwealth and were therefore asked to help rebuild the country.

Late 1950s - 1960s

My mother and those of her generation, who came to England in the late 1950s and 1960s, and who had left the West Indies to look for work in the UK were part of the Windrush Generation.

Many who came were skilled people but had to contend with what they were offered by the British government regarding employment, housing and education. For example, I recall my first home being in a shared house with other tenants at the age of four or five. It was common for immigrants who came to the UK during the 1950s and 1960s to have shared “dwellings,” i.e. cooking facilities, baths, or sinks (Giles, 1977, p. 67). So, it was no exception for my mother to be in the same situation as other families.

In Jamaica, my grandfather was an engineer, and my grandmother was a housewife. They had ten children. Five boys and five girls. My mother was the seventh child of my grandparents. My grandparents had a modest income because my grandfather was the main Engineer at the local Appleton Estate Rum Company, and they had a business selling coffee and other staples. They also had a stone crushing business. In Jamaica, my aunts and uncles had a good level of education that classed them as middle class.

During the late 1950s, my mother and three of her siblings came to the UK at separate times - two brothers and one sister. My mother was the last one to come over in 1960. One of my uncles returned to Jamaica and I was told by family members that he had a nervous breakdown and returned to St Elizabeth in Jamaica where he lived until the late eighties. He was part of a group of the Windrush population that took advantage of the payment given to West Indians to return home.

As mentioned above, West Indians who came to the UK were qualified, skilled professionals, but they were not given the opportunity to work in their professions because of the colour of their skin. This meant that when members of the Caribbean Islands (West Indians) came to the UK as qualified people, they could not choose where they wanted to live or choose the jobs they wanted - qualified for and so took on menial jobs to survive (Giles, 1977). My mother was no exception to this. Her first job was at the Bachelors Food Factory where they made different types of food including soups. I remember as a child my step-dad bought a few boxes of chicken soups home. At every meal time opportunity, we had chicken soup. Needless to say, today, I cringe at the thought of having tinned chicken soup. My mother's jobs included being an ‘auxiliary’ (unqualified) nurse which meant she carried out jobs such as making patient beds, feeding patients. Her longest position was as caring assistant for the disabled in a caring home. My mother was always at work, so it was not surprising that she did not have time to understand the educational system in the UK.



Former Bachelors Food Factory <https://www.geograph.org.uk/photo/1661509>

Peter Street - 1960s

When I was around five or six, we moved to a council house with two rooms upstairs and two rooms downstairs with an extension at the back of the house for the kitchen. The kitchen door led to an outside yard with six toilets; six toilets were at the top of a grey gravel-paved yard. We had no bathroom. Instead, you had a tin bath to bathe in, and this was usually in front of an open fire in the living room. The living room was very warm and cosy with a three-piece settee, table and chairs in the middle. The tin bath was kept in the kitchen hung against a wall. The living room with its open fire, led onto another room that was at the front of the house. This was the front room, leading onto the main street, and was classed as the best room where visitors would come and sit. This house was the best place I lived as I enjoyed the neighbourhood and the next-door neighbour, a World War Two veteran. I am not sure how long we lived in the council house, but it did not seem long before we moved to a new home that my mother bought with my stepfather. Our council home was demolished by the city council as they were seen as unfit to live in. If I go past this road today, I can visualise where our backyard and the toilets used to be. The image below best represents Peter Street. Our house was directly opposite the post office/post box. Today, the post box is still present.



Ref: Sheffield History - History Chat

[Peter Street during the 1960s - 1970s before it was demolished](#)

Infant School

My earliest recollection of school was sitting on a brown wooden floor in a big classroom. My legs were crossed, and I was reading a book placed on my lap. One of my favourite books, at that time, was *Up the Faraway Tree* by Enid Blyton. The teacher was sitting on a chair, diagonally - not straight - and there was a collection of books behind her. It could have been in a library setting but I remember the room being very big. She had dark hair, and she was older than the other teachers. I vividly remember that she wore a cream - heavy knitted patterned cardigan over a brown dress. She was listening to me reading a book; I must have been around seven or eight years old because this was at infant school where the playground was a large grey open space, with boys playing football in one corner, and the girls would play hopscotch at another end of the playground where there were also skipping ropes.

At the end of the reading session, she told me; *"you do not have to return to read to me because you will be with other children in the main class"*. She then took me to the main classroom, where I sat quietly at a table feeling sad. As a child at *'infant'* school, I did not understand what it meant to be reading alone in front of a teacher, but I do remember feeling sad that I was not going to be reading alone again to her.

1970s Comprehensive School

At the age of 11 or 12, I went to secondary school - which was a comprehensive school. As I explained in Chapter one, children were placed into classes based on the child's academic ability. It was known as the 'banding system' and was based on a test given to children before they left infant/primary school. You were put into a class based on the test results. This test was called an IQ Test.

At secondary school, I was an average pupil who maintained a 'B' grade level, but towards becoming 16, I struggled with schoolwork. According to my school reports, which I will present below, I needed to put more effort into my homework. If I recall what happened at home, it brings back bad memories, and it is not easy to describe. At home, I was often alone. Sometimes I went to friends' houses, they lived five minutes away, and as children, we would play outside in a small yard or walk through the nearby woods. Like most West Indian families, my mother was very often at work, so I had no supervision, and when I was with my friends, we were left to roam around.

At my secondary (comprehensive school), at the age of 11, I wore a navy blue uniform which consisted of a skirt, jumper or cardigan; black shoes, white socks and a navy blue and yellow tie. My hair would be tied back in a ponytail or styled into an afro. During my time at school all the Black girls would try and wear the latest hairstyle, and this was the Afro. We would also try to make our uniform as fashionable as possible, by making our tie knots as big as we could get away with - i.e.. without being told off by a teacher to make it thin. I remember being in the middle set of classes. The class was coded 'T1'. Each year I was in secondary school, the letter 'T' and the number 1' followed me; for example, 1 T1 was for the first year, 2 T1 for the second year, and 3 T1 for the third year until the fifth year. Looking back at my school reports, I was always graded at a 'B' level for all subjects except for 'housekeeping', where I

received an 'A' in some aspects of the subject, such as attitude and classwork effort. Looking back now at these reports, I think I was viewed as an average student. Below is an example of one of my best school reports which does not read bad. To save space in this thesis, I outline some of my other school reports from the third year at school below.

Subject	R.E.	Form	H.T.1	My form number that followed me through secondary school ...T1
Group Rating	B	Set	H.R.T.	
Exam. Position	5/27	Comment	A pleasant pupil, Angela has performed satisfactorily in R.E. throughout the year. A pleasing exam result.	
Exam. Rating	B+			
Classwork Effort	B			
Classwork Attainment	B			
Homework	B			
Attitude	B+			

My average grade throughout my school years.

(Below are comments from some of the subjects I had at the end of year three.) The comments included:

"Grade B, B+ ... has worked well at this subject, that she does find difficult" (Female Biology teacher)

"Grade B, B+, A ...always works very hard and made satisfactory progress this year" (Female Housecraft teacher)

"Grade B for the exam, A- for classwork, homework and attitude (A).. "well done. ...has worked extremely well this year". (Female Mathematics teacher) Although I received mainly As for this subject, I was still given a group rating of B.

"Grade B, homework C. ...usually works hard, but her work does vary a little in quality. She is making reasonable progress in this subject". (Female English teacher)

"Grade B and B- for the exam. A rather disappointing result" (Male Music teacher) Although this teacher graded me as a B student, his language tells otherwise.

"Grade B, A good year's work but poor exam result. Has ability to do well." (Male History teacher)

Taken from my personal school reports: 1970s

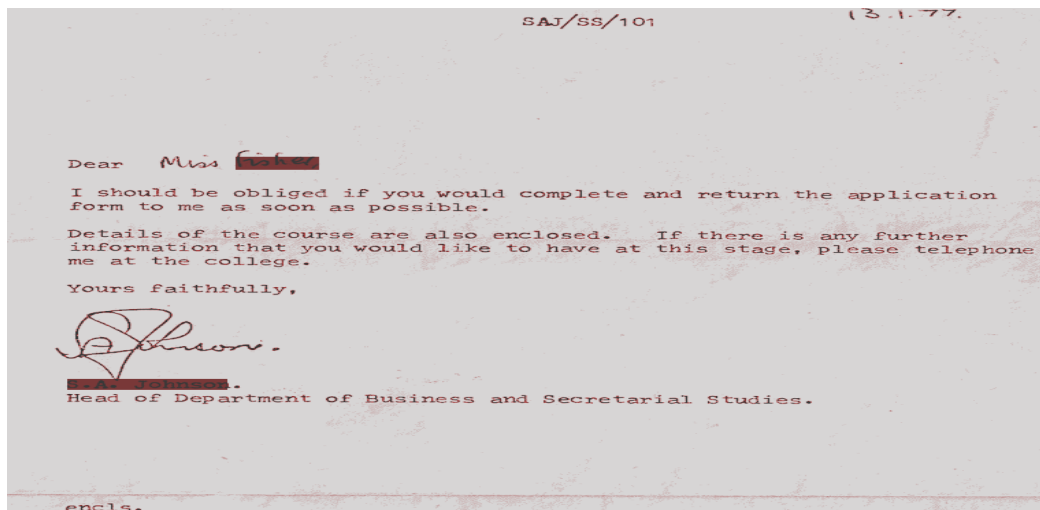
No other comments were made or why the results were disappointing. Needless to say, I must have felt bad when reading them. I must have also felt disappointed that I could not achieve an A in any other subjects that mattered, such as English or Maths. Where I did receive an A it

was for a practical subject such as Housecraft, Art, Typewriting and, usually for classwork effort.

From my personal experience and memory of my secondary school days, there were very few ethnic minorities in the top-set classes. If you were lucky enough to be in the top-set, you were branded as being very clever – ‘*a swot*’. That was a term that we would use as children. However, at the other end of the spectrum, i.e., in the bottom sets, there were more ethnic minority pupils from the West Indies - Caribbean and Asian backgrounds. If you were unlucky enough to be in those bottom sets of classes, not only were you classed as being ‘*dumb*’, but you were also perceived to be a problem for the school. Children in those classes were seen as unruly. I never understood why this was until I became an adult, that is, I always wondered why there were so many black and Asian children in the bottom set of classes. I will discuss the challenges that ethnic minorities faced in the discussion/findings chapter.

January 1977

Prior to receiving my CSE results, In January 1977, I tried to enrol on a secretarial course at one of the local colleges. The College was based on the north-west of the city and it was far from where I lived. To gain a place on a secretarial course would have been part of my mother's dream because this was her profession in Jamaica, but I failed to get onto this course because of my low grades in CSEs. I thought of joining the army, but I remember standing in the living room at home, being told by my mother and uncle that I could not but was not given any reason why. I do not remember any other options for me at the time other than working in a factory.



Personal letter dated 1977

May - June 1977

In late spring of 1977, I received our final grades at school. I do not recall exactly when and how, but I do remember that I finished with nine CSEs, all at a low grade. Unlike my peers, I failed my exams and achieved no O' levels. Needless to say, I was embarrassed and scared and did not understand what this all meant or what I would do. My peers receive excellent

grades; for example, three girls I grew up with in the same year at school received two or three O'Levels. They were all pleased and could not wait to discuss their grades with their parents. They wanted to be nurses and midwives. Their grades enabled them to do this and hence go on to further study for their professions.

Throughout secondary school, I was not good at science subjects. I often heard my friends talk about what they wanted to do when they left school, this was to be nurses/midwives. They were great in biology classes. I was adamant that nursing was not for me. Biology was not for me nor other science subjects. My favourite lesson was typewriting but due to difficulties at home, and on the day of the final exam, I was not feeling well, and I failed this. In hindsight, if I had the confidence to talk to someone, the outcome could have been different.

The end of the fifth year - returning to school in September 1977

In September of 1977, when the new school year started, my friends returned to the sixth form. They were all going to study for their A 'Levels. I also went back to school, to the sixth form, because I thought I could retake my examinations to get better CSE grades. This was in accordance with the booklet given to all students, leaving the 5th form called *'The 6th Form Courses'* (1977). It focused on informing 16-year-old pupils of three choices. The school stated:

1. *"to stay at school and enter the Sixth Form*
2. *to leave school and get a job*
3. *to continue studies at a college of further education*

Decisions taken at this stage have a direct bearing on opportunities for higher education and future careers" (1977 p., 1) - See Appendix 21.

In addition to the above choices, the school also informs a 16 year old that returning to school in the 6th form would open up more opportunities for their last job search. And as they put it, *"it enables you to postpone the final decision for a time"*. Returning to school and studying for another year would help you decide what to do after that year.

At the time I was given this booklet, I believed that I had an opportunity to better my grades so that I would have better job prospects; this was based on the information I read in the booklet which stated:

"English

There is a specially designed one-year course for non 'A' level students in English. This is tailored to the individual needs of those requiring an 'O' level pass, a better C.S.E grade, or those wishing to continue their English studies beyond 'O' level, but in a less academic form than that followed in the 'A' level English course", (1977, p., 20).
(See Appendix 21

For Mathematics, the booklet stated:

“Mathematics

This course is suitable for those wishing to continue their study of mathematics in the Sixth form and can lead to either C.S.E. or ‘O’ level examinations in Modern Mathematics (J.M.B. Syllabus C).

They go on to say that: “... the courses for ‘O’ level and C.S.E. will run as separate classes but occasionally a combined class may be in operation (p. 23-24).

If pupils had a grade three or lower in C.S.E., this would also suit them. They even highlight that previous study of Modern Maths was not essential. So, what changed for me? I chose to return to improve on the disastrous examination results I received. I was ready to put the problems I had at home to focus on my schoolwork. I felt embarrassed that my friends I went to school with were moving on to do what they always wanted to do, i.e. nursing/midwifery. I was ready to leave the embarrassment aside and move on too. However, my choice and decision did not count for anything, as it was taken out of my hands.

My return to school was short-lived as during the month of September in 1977, as part of the process of helping students to look for work; I had an interview with a careers officer who told me that I should leave school by Christmas (1977) to look for a job as it was a waste of time staying on. At the time, I was unsure what I felt or why the officer told me to leave school. When I was leaving the interview, the careers officer gave me a number for a company looking for employees. I took his advice and rang the number. I had an interview with the company the following day but was unsuccessful at getting the job. That was my first job interview, and I was very nervous, so it is unsurprising to think about why I did not get the job. Looking back at this situation, I can understand that they probably thought I was not good enough to do the job they were offering. In addition, the colour of my skin, and my background could have had an influence on their decision.

January 1978 - The careers officer and office practice course

Not long after the careers and job interview, the Careers Officer contacted my school and informed them of a course I could take at a local college. So, I had another interview at the careers office and enrolled on a short programme. This course was called **Office Practice**, and it would help me gain better grades in English and Maths and other subjects such as ‘office skills’ that were supposed to equip you for the world of work. Enrolling on this course was evident that I had to leave school. So, I left school in December 1977. My first college work on the course is dated January 1978. Some of the exercises were repetitive. For example, we would practise handwriting letters to companies asking for information, for instance, to a fictitious company asking for further details regarding a job opportunity advertised in the local paper. Other exercises included writing letters asking for a quotation for furniture. When I

look back at these artefacts that I have kept, I am reminded that this course was preparing me for work.

Ironically, the course included learning about English grammar: adjectives, nouns, etc. but I do not recall being told how important learning English grammar would be for me. I question whether grammar should have been taught to us in school. The answer is yes. I do not have the exact grade or level that I obtained, but I was successful at passing the course.

Following this course, I received a letter from the Education Department giving me the opportunity to attend a Work Experience Programme, in July 1978. The letter from Education Department dated 21 July 1978, stated that:

On the one hand, receiving this letter made me feel as if I had accomplished something. Something good had come out of me leaving school. On the other hand, no choice was given,

Telephone enquiries to 73-5463
Your reference Our reference CA/O/WEPP Date 21 - 7 - 78

Dear Angela

Work Experience Programme

If you are prepared to consider temporary work, please read on:-

The Government runs a training scheme called Work Experience which is to help young people find out about work and to gain experience. The scheme lasts 26 weeks and each week you would be paid £19.50 allowance tax free. During the scheme you would be trained to do the work involved. At the end of the scheme there is a possibility of a permanent job - depending on how well you have worked and whether or not permanent vacancies exist.

Your Careers Officer thinks that you may be interested in one of these schemes at Victoria Hall Methodist Mission

Please phone me on 735463/735475 as soon as possible for further details.

Yours sincerely,
[Redacted Signature]
Employment Assistant.

P.S. If you are not interested, please let me know so that the opportunity may be given to someone else.

Thank you.

especially when it is stated that 'my' careers officer thinks I might be interested. I remember completing this course for 26 weeks and shortly after that I had an opportunity to work in an office for a well-known steel company.

Qualifying for Office Skills enabled me to work for an engineering company. I was placed in a large open-planned office with numerous staff members of both genders. I remember making tea and coffee at the back of the room. I was not confident and reticent, but the staff welcomed me and explained what I needed to do. When I left each day, I felt guilty because the job was permanent, and they would usually talk about the future, but I knew I would not be there. My experience at this company was short-lived because I had to let them know I was pregnant a few weeks after I started. It was about a week or two after that that I left.

1980s - Young adulthood with responsibilities

All through my teenage years, I struggled to know who I was, partly because I did not know my biological father. Not knowing influenced me because I was trying to find a happy path in life. For example, I was unsure what I wanted to do professionally. I did not have many friends

or anyone I could trust, so I spent most of my time with my boyfriend, who later became my husband at 19. Spending a lot of time with my boyfriend, I view this as an escape from how I was treated and felt at home with unsupportive parent(s). At 17, I was told to leave home because I was pregnant. This led to an even lonelier journey because I did not have the skills or knowledge to look after myself. I remember living in a rented room in the northern part of the city. The opposite side of the city from where I lived. The northern part of the city housed lower and middle-class families. I say this because of the type of houses and employment that was around then. The southern part of the city had steel factories. Thinking back to being a teenager and a young mother, it could not have been easy for me.

After leaving my first job at the steel company, I was allowed to work for City Council in a youth centre. This job enabled me to take my son to the *crèche* at the youth centre while I worked. This was great! I did administrative work and worked with people from diverse backgrounds. I helped to organise cultural festivities in the city, such as '*Caribbean Fortnight*', which saw the city embrace different events such as plays, fashion shows, food and music in a park. After three or four years, I began to feel that I wanted a better career path, but married with two children, I was not sure what I wanted or what I would be allowed to do because I had two children and was married. Having these thoughts proved me wrong.

Taking a different route

I was 25 years old when I applied for part-time work at a local sports centre, and to my amazement, I was offered the post as a receptionist. My hours were from 8:45 am until 1:15 pm. At this age I had two sons and working part-time meant that I could take my sons to school and collect them. I was the only Black woman working at this sports centre, which was a little strange at first because I was used to working with others from diverse backgrounds in my previous job. Being the only Black woman at this sports centre did not hinder me from trying to progress and look for promotion. Thinking back to working at the sports centre, my time there enabled me to develop the confidence and communication skills I lacked during my teenage years.

After working at the sports centre for four years, the city as a whole, was developing into a major sporting city and was building different sports centres to accommodate a worldwide sporting event - *The World Student Games* - this is also known as the *1991 Summer Universiade*. The city council needed to staff these centres, so when an opportunity came up to be a Senior Clerk - (Supervisor), I took that chance and was promoted to Senior Clerk at a large sports centre. At this new sports centre, I had an opportunity to advance my educational skills through an initiative by the local council, called '*Investors in People*'.

1990s - My First Real Qualifications



Figure 5: Image: www.investorsinpeople.com

Investors in People began in 1991. It was created by the central Government and administered by local governments to improve the performance of businesses through staff development programmes.

The sports centre was managed by the city council, and they offered staff personal and professional development opportunities. This reminds me of Knowles (1984) and Horn and Carroll (1996), who says that adult learners are different from traditional learners. By this time, I was in my late twenties. There are four characteristics of the adult learner which I fit. The first is financial independence, which is what I had. I was not dependent financially. However, I was fortunate enough to have been funded by my employers. The second characteristic states that adult learners are usually in full-time employment. As the Senior Clerk - supervisor in a sports centre, I worked full-time and temporarily managed others. Having dependents is the third characteristic, and I had two children and, lastly, studying part-time. These four characteristics complement my status at that time. While Horn and Carroll (1996) gives these four characteristics, I see Knowles as more comprehensive to my situation then and now as I study for my doctorate. He states that the '*non-traditional*' adult learner is:

self-directed; takes responsibility for their own actions and resists from having information arbitrarily imposed on them"; adult learners have a depth of experience, which serves as a critical component in the foundation of their self-identity; are ready to learn, as most learners return to study voluntarily, they are likely to actively engage in the learning process (Knowles, 1984 as cited in Kenner & Weinerman, p. 88-89).

The above characteristics and principles by Knowles (1984) and Horn and Carroll (1996) fit well with how I am as an adult. From a teenager, being told what to do no longer resonated with my personality. Hence, at every opportunity that I had or challenge I faced, I would take the initiative to pursue a choice that I thought was right and best for me.

I accepted this offer and enrolled on a two-year Business and Technology Education Course (BTEC) in Public Administration. The course included subjects such as: Finance, Office Management, Information Technology. At the end of this two-year programme, I achieved my first real qualification, the equivalent of two A Levels at merit level. I was so happy that I had finally achieved something I thought I could never do. I finally received a good qualification which made me feel proud. Reflecting on this experience, I now know that I had achieved

something that would have been considered an academic qualification and achievement. Looking back at this, I also question whether I would have achieved some academic qualifications if I had stayed on at school, at least for another year.

During the early 1990s, the government launched another new initiative to enable adults to gain work-related qualifications. It was called the National Vocational Qualification (NVQ). The idea was you could work while at the same time developing your skills and gaining a qualification. There were five levels, so working your way up to level five would enable you to gain an NVQ qualification at a degree level. This scheme was relatively new, and it was unknown how successful these qualifications were or how employers would view them.

After finishing the BTEC course in 1991, I wanted to further develop my educational and professional skills, and an opportunity presented itself where I could take on another qualification at a higher level. I was working full-time as a Senior Clerk (supervisor) in a new sports centre, and lucky enough to have completed a BTEC course. So, shortly after this, in October 1991, I started a degree course. This was a part-time degree course that I could do while I was working full-time. I applied to do the course but needed permission and financial support from my line manager. One afternoon, he came down to see me at the sports centre, and while we were discussing the course, he asked me to consider doing the NVQ instead of the part-time degree course. I refused partly because I did not know much about the qualification/course, and secondly, I saw this as depriving me of studying for my first 'proper' degree at university. I also saw this as another way for someone to decide what is best for me - it would not have been my decision. The other reason for not wanting to do the NVQ course was that employers did not recognise these qualifications then, and I did not want to risk not knowing the unknown. In hindsight, I saw this as another great opportunity to achieve something I missed out on at school because teachers thought I was not clever enough and was wasting their time.

Undergraduate student - my first degree

Gaining a place on a part-time degree course in Public Administration meant I could fit this in by taking an afternoon from work as study leave. The (BA) Public Administration course started at 6 - 9 pm on Tuesday and Wednesday evenings. Tuesdays included attending evening classes where we would join full-time students.

I remember feeling a little out of place because I was part of a larger group of full-time (younger) students who had gone through the 'traditional' education system. It would have felt out of place letting others know that I was a married mum. Although it was daunting at first, I was part of a different community that I now know as the academic community. This meant I had to act differently. By acting differently meant that I had to change my identity, for instance, speaking more clearly, losing my Yorkshire accent, to look more studious, for example, pretending that I knew what I was talking about when I had to present in a seminar session. In addition, I was mixing with students who seemed to be wealthier than me and had the freedom to study. For example, they were living away from home, learning how to be independent, and learning about the world. They were students studying Business Studies full-time and from the

middle-classes. During discussions with the full-time students in class time, I did not hint that I had other roles such as being a mother.

My part-time degree course included six other female students who worked full-time, had young families or were mature students. The one thing we had in common was that we were diverse and had not gone through the 'traditional' educational system. How the course was designed was unusual because I was studying for a degree on a part-time basis. Usually, degrees are studied full-time. I question what was or is normal in terms of a traditional education. After we graduated, we were told by the lead lecturer this was the last course to be designed that way. They were no longer going to take on students on a part-time basis to do degrees, partly because the uptake of such courses was low.

I recall that the lecturers on this course were male. One lecturer in particular, who specialised in Law, was insistent on calling me by my first name *Olivene*. When we introduced ourselves in the first class, I remember telling the group who I was and my name. To my surprise, the lecturer did not like that I wanted to be called by my middle name - Angela, and stated it was the law that I should be called by my first name. He did not give me the choice. So, throughout the programme he would call me *Olivene* which was weird because no one else did, not even my family members.

As mentioned previously, at school, I was always the average student, and throughout my degree course, this was the same. I would always manage to scrape through by achieving a pass or a grade equivalent to a 2:2. For example, on one of my assignments, for Management of Information, I received a grade of 58%; the lecturer states:

"Some very good points made in this essay with some thoughtful comments regarding the management of information. At times the conclusions are not absolutely clear - in all a good piece of work".

I never really understood what it meant to achieve a higher grade than this. I was content with passing. In my later years as a student, I was grateful that I was on a course that would help me develop academically. At this time, I did not really think about job prospects.

In 1995, I successfully received my first-degree qualification with honours. I was proud that I achieved this while working full-time and experiencing family issues as I was on the verge of getting a divorce. In November of 1995, I had my first graduation; my sons, mother and husband attended. Even though there was tension between myself and my husband, he attended because I was trying to keep our family together. However, by this time, I, as a person, had changed. I was in contact with my biological father, who lived in the United States, and I think this also influenced who I wanted to be. I was still struggling to comprehend who I was or what I wanted. I remember thinking I wanted to do something different with my new qualification, but I was not sure what. A degree gave me the impression that I had more opportunities to look forward to. I remember that I wanted to become a police officer, but I was told by my husband that I did not have the characteristics to become one. I recollect that he thought I was not strong enough to apprehend anyone committing a crime. It could also be that he felt insecure that I would leave the family by becoming a policewoman. This left me confused and

deeply upset because I did not have the opportunity to see if I could join or be trusted to keep the family together. I also saw this as being 'kept down', preventing me from doing something I believed I could do.

After I completed my degree course in 1995, I enrolled on a master's course in Communication Studies in the School of Cultural Studies at a university. However, due to the pressures of an unstable home, I left at the end of the first year, gaining a certificate for the modules I completed. The pressure of home life, i.e. looking after two boys and being divorced, greatly impacted my children and my studies. Unlike my part-time degree course, I was not coping with multiple roles: full-time worker, mother/wife and student. It had become impossible, so for the following years, I continued to work full-time as a Senior Clerk- Supervisor at the local sports centre while trying to sort things out at home.

Taking another route, this time into teaching

After four years in my role as supervisor, I began to feel that I needed to move on to something new. At my workplace - the sports centre - every year there were school-children working with us for their two-week work placement and from the Tourist department at the local college. I found teaching children how we operated as a centre, and using technology when serving customers, enjoyable. We also had temporary members of staff who came to work with my team over the summer months, and it was one of those temporary members of staff who suggested that I take up teaching full-time. In the previous year, he left and completed a teaching qualification. So, when he returned for the summer, and after working with the school children on placement, he encouraged me to go into teaching. He taught in a secondary school in the southern part of the city and invited me to visit him. When I visited him in his classroom, I was surprised at how difficult teaching secondary school children was. It was very different when I was at school as the children were not listening, misbehaving, and throwing things at each other, and they lacked respect for the teacher. I decided that teaching in a secondary school was not for me.

In 1997 I would often read newspapers and look at advertisements for other positions. The ones that always stood out were the ones looking to recruit students to do a TESOL course and TESOL teachers. Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages (TESOL) seemed appealing because I thought as a native speaker of English, it would be easy for me to teach others the language, so I inquired about it. At one of the universities in my city, I applied and joined the course for six months. It allowed me to study long distance for five months while working full-time, but the last month of the course required me to be present in person full-time. The city council offered voluntary redundancies while I was studying, so with this in mind and the fact that I had to complete the course full-time for four weeks, I saw this as an opportunity to get into teaching.

One of the things I learned on this teaching course was how much I did not understand the grammar element of the English language. Even though it was included in the Office Practice course, I thought not understanding it was this because I was not clever enough to have picked it up at school, or was it because I was not taught this at school? This goes back to how

infant/primary and secondary schools were organised and how the curriculum was formulated. If you were old enough to have gone to a grammar school, you would have learned the rules of grammar, but if you were not and perhaps from a 'working-class background', you did not. Working class children were being prepared for the world of work, rather than for academia. In addition, I was not a 'traditional student', so marrying and having a young family and missing out on being educated traditionally may have had an impact and was expected of me as a Black female.

When I finished the course in TESOL, I applied for various teaching jobs in another country to gain experience of teaching others and to find out who I was (as a person) and whether I could do something out of my comfort zone. I was looking for a short-term contract so that I could return home. I was offered two positions, one in Indonesia and the other in Turkey. Because Turkey was the closest to home, I took the opportunity to teach at a private school in Istanbul. My sons were 17 and 14 at the time and were partly living with their father. Their father and I had divorced, and we were living in separate houses. My sons were partly with me and their father. I discussed the opportunity I was given with them and had their blessings to go to Turkey.

My new position as an English Language Tutor

My teaching role as an English as a Foreign Language teacher enabled me to teach children from 9 to 11, and adults from various backgrounds. Students were given coursebooks called 'Headway' published by Oxford University Press. They are course books, which help students, ranging from beginners, elementary to advanced level, to learn English and for new teachers to teach from them as they were accompanied by a teacher's book. This course book helped me with my teaching because I was still developing my skills as a new teacher to teach and understand English grammar.

I met other English teachers from various parts of the UK at the school, for example, from the south, cities nearby London and other countries, such as New Zealand and Australia. I was the only Black teacher at the school in Istanbul (a town called) Kadikoy and at the school. Working and socialising with other teachers opened a new challenge for me because it was the first time I had been openly challenged about being Black and how I spoke. Some teachers would mimic me because I said things in certain ways. I cannot recall exactly how I said things, but I knew that my northern accent and perhaps my grammar skills had an impact. On the streets, at the local shops, the local people would be amazed to see a Black woman and very often would give me food for free as if I was some sort of good luck charm for them.

After approximately six months, I began to feel homesick and wanted to return home. I eventually returned home in February 1998. When I did, I took various jobs to get back into employment. These jobs entailed working as an administrator for several companies, but I knew this was not what I wanted to do. So, after a year of working on a temporary contract for a university as an administrator, I returned to basics and retook my English and Maths qualifications to have the GCSEs (former O' Levels/CSE) qualifications.

The qualifications enabled me to take a one-year Post Graduate Certificate in Teaching Adults (PGCE) in 1999. I thoroughly enjoyed the course partly because I felt more confident as a person and a teacher. I was no longer new to the profession. The experience I gained in Turkey equipped me to understand my position better as a teacher. During the course, when students were required to practise in front of the class, the experience in Turkey and what I learned from my TESOL course enabled me to achieve a high pass grade for my teaching practice task.

The Millennium - early years of 2000s

Being on placement was part of the remit to complete the PGCE course. Some students had more than one choice of placement, but I was the only one in my class from South Yorkshire, and the closest place for me was 20 miles away in another South Yorkshire town. My home city was not part of the teaching practice scheme, so my options were limited. In addition, I was not financially prepared to move to another city; I also had my third son who would need childcare, and because my mother lived in the same town as the placement, it was logical for me to do my placement and have the support from her to look after my son in her town.

My experience as a Senior Clerk (Supervisor) and my teaching experience in Turkey enabled me to teach as an English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) Tutor at a local college in South Yorkshire. When I decided to do my placement in the town, I thought it would only be for four months, but my position there lasted for thirteen years.

The right place at the right time

In 2006, I was in the right place at the right time. My role as Course Leader at the college, meant that I was responsible for placing students in classes for their language ability, e.g. beginner, elementary or advanced; designing interview questionnaires; administering course examinations; and leading other staff members/teachers through the external moderation process. This also meant that I was the contact person when external examiners came to the college to check the administration of our exams. There was a staff room for managers on the same floor as the teachers' staffroom, so if I needed to speak to my line manager, I would go across the hallway to the office she shared with others. One day, walking into the managers' staffroom, a leaflet was left on a table in the middle of the room. This leaflet promoted a master's (part-time) degree course embedded within it the Certificate for Adult Literacy Subject Specialist Qualifications at level 4 that the government, at the time, was asking for as additional qualifications for teachers in Further Education. I took the leaflet and returned to my desk to read in detail what it was about. After reading it, I thought this was an opportunity to return to studying for the master's degree that I missed out on because of family issues in 1995/6. So, it seemed a perfect choice for me to take because it was combining two courses together, one that I had to do and the other - my choice. Under the staff development scheme at the college, I was allowed to apply for funding. Once I received confirmation that I could have the funding, I applied for a place at the University. I completed my application, sent it in and waited for a response. After a few weeks, I was informed by the university that I was successful and that I would be able to do the course whilst working full-time.

The course was for two years. At first, I struggled to do the coursework partly because my contact hours with students at the college were twenty hours per week. Secondly, I had difficulties at home because I found out from my second husband that he was a gambler. He admitted to gambling and losing around £30K when he told me. This put an enormous strain on our family and our marriage did not last. Our marriage breakdown happened within the first few months of starting my master's degree course, and it seemed as if history was repeating itself from the first time, I attempted to do a master's degree. This time I was determined to make a good start on my assignments and get through my course to gain that master's degree qualification. I did have a sense of embarrassment because I was depressed and did not want to admit it. Still, I knew that asking for funding from the college and applying for the course seemed far worse to lose, so I plucked up the courage to email my tutor as follows:

"I'm really sorry for not contacting you before now. I've been off ill from work for the last two months suffering from stress/depression and I was hoping to be back at work before then to make a start on the assignments for the course, but unfortunately, I haven't been able to do so. I'm not sure of the procedure of what I should do to get an extension on my work. Is it possible for you to tell me or do I need to contact the admin office to let them know.

The other thing is, do you remember when I was telling you that my teaching hours is 20 hours a week and that it is quite a lot especially studying for the level four qualification, is it possible for you to do me a letter outlining what I have to do for the level four so that I can get some remission off my hours? It would be greatly appreciated if you could". (Personal email dated 8th December 2006)

I was granted the extension as my tutor responded by saying that they would write a letter to my employers, i.e. the college, to let them know how much workload I had to do for the course.

In addition to stress and marriage breakdown, I had to learn the conventions of being in an academic environment & community. I also had to learn how to accept constructive criticism about my work. The feedback I received about my first assignment from my tutor clearly stated that my assignment did not reflect the reading I had done for the MA, in fact, I needed to do more reading. In addition to not doing enough reading, I should not use internet sites as a form of an academic source. Furthermore, I was told to revisit the modules we had worked on prior to receiving assignment one in order to help me shape my assignment that asked me to:

Critically analyse the impact that up to three individual learner differences have on the process of second language acquisition in your analysis, draw on theories of language learning, the research literature and your own experiences as a learner and or a teacher.

I remember reading the feedback and thinking what have I got myself into? Am I going to cope with the course? Was I going to be able to do the reading she suggested and write in the style she was expecting? Looking back, I did not know how to write or research academically. Back in 1994/5, we did not have the internet to search for information, and assignments were handwritten. My PGCE course 2000 differed in that the expectations of writing in an academic

style was different from that of the master's course. There seemed to be no strict rules, for example, in doing a lot of reading, or it was not instilled in us to ensure we avoided plagiarism. The other difference was that the PGCE was a practical course and not as theoretical as the Master, so I reflected that my academic journey began there on the master's degree course. The other thing I learnt from this email was that if I wanted to collate data from the students I taught, I needed to have sought ethical approval, which was also new to me. It seemed like there was a lot for me to learn and understand.

After resubmitting my assignment, I received feedback from my tutor telling me that I had done much better, with further suggestions such as ensuring that I use up to date sources of information. I felt much better reading this and thought great 'I'm going to be ok'. I can do this! By the time I did module four, I had developed my academic skills and received better feedback about my assignments telling me that I was doing well, but to add more reflection about my studies and how to include those reflections in my work.

My assignment grades started off with 65 and maintained a grade of 70 and 75. For my dissertation, I was also graded at 75. My Dissertation was about Turkish students, and I received a grade of 75, which equates to receiving a distinction - First. So, in the end, I did not have to worry about not achieving on the course as it turned out, I did quite well.

I finished my master's degree course and graduated in January 2009. From the moment I graduated, I began to feel that I needed to look for a new challenge, for example, a new place to work. Personally, working in the same place for a long period of time makes me feel uncertain about the future, and everything becomes mundane. This was how I felt because by the time I completed my master's degree, I had worked at the college for over eight years.

Changes at the College

At the college, there were numerous changes such as restructuring departments, staff taking early retirement, being made redundant or leaving for new ventures. As mentioned above, when I first started at the college as a trainee teacher, I was put in charge of assessing and recruiting students for ESOL classes. At the time, in 2001, numerous students were applying for asylum status, and some were refugees. These students were allowed free English lessons at the local college. As I had experience teaching abroad in Turkey, I was asked to set up and create a system to interview and assess students and thus place them at the level I thought they were to learn English. My system worked out well and on one occasion, I interviewed over 50 students over a three day period.

The following few years, I enjoyed my work as an ESOL teacher. In 2004/5, a position came up for a Course Leader, I applied and was given the position. As mentioned above, my responsibilities included supervising staff when it came to organising documents for external examiners in relation to students' exam work and recruiting students for classes. I worked well with the teachers. I did not see this as a challenge. However, at the time and over a period of five years before my leaving, I did not know that there were one or two members of staff who tended to make criticisms. These criticisms included making comments that they could do a better job than what I was doing, and they were making their complaints to management. Part

of their reason for doing this was because they wanted my job. All my colleagues were Caucasian. At college, I was the only Black - Afro-Caribbean woman. I was a better qualified teacher with a master's degree.

In 2011, one of my colleagues was made redundant from the college, and she was able to find temporary work at a university teaching international students. She was pleased that she found work so quickly after leaving the college. When she told me her good news, she said that the university was looking for more staff and that I would be interested. I took up the offer and made an appointment to speak to the school's managers to offer my services to teach while I was taking annual leave from work at the college. So, in the summer of 2011, I took four weeks of annual leave from the college and taught at one of the summer schools for international students. I saw the experience of teaching international students during the summer of 2011 as the beginning of a new chapter and a new career for me. I was respected for the qualifications that I had, and therefore in my struggle to be able to teach without feeling oppressed by others, such as colleagues or managers at the college, it felt great.

My final degree destination in the year 2016 and beyond

This is my final educational destination. From postsecondary education, e.g. the office skills programme, BTEC course, first degree to retaking English and Mathematics that enabled me to do a postgraduate certificate in teaching and a master's degree, the doctoral course has been the most challenging.

I applied in 2016 to gain a place on the Doctorate in Education course (EdD). During an interview with my first supervisor, I was told that I would be able to finish the EdD in four years. She had a lot of confidence in me which I really appreciated. Her belief in me has always stayed with me. For two years I was able to write and submit assignments on time, even though along the way there were many personal tragedies that happened. For example, I lost three people within a couple of months of each other from different illnesses. The first was someone I travelled with to my former place of work. He died suddenly. The second was someone I shared a staffroom with who died of cancer. He also died suddenly, within four weeks of being told that he was seriously ill. I was the last person to speak to him from our staffroom. The third and most painful was the father of my third son who died of cancer in Turkey. He left our city to go back to his hometown in Turkey to seek treatment in the hope to be cured from cancer but unfortunately this did not work out for him. Throughout the summer of 2017, a year into my EdD programme, I continued to work on my EdD course whilst at the same time working full-time. It was a heart-breaking summer.

My determination to finish my EdD course has met with other challenges such as collecting data, e.g. recruiting participants for my research and the pandemic – COVID-19. In addition, because I did not have the data that I originally set out to obtain, I had to change methods and adapt the focus of my research. Hence, I adapted to writing this narrative as primary data.

At the beginning of 2022, another challenge presented itself to me. Due to other unforeseen circumstances, I was given a fourth supervisor. This was another heart-breaking moment because I felt that I had to start all over again trying to explain what it was I wanted to research

and how far I had reached with my writing. After meeting the fourth supervisor I realised that they had a different opinion to that of the other supervisors that I previously worked with. My perception of this fourth supervisor was that they seem to think that having a mixed method, quantitative approach to my study would solve everything. In so many words I was told that I did not have enough data. It could have been that I did not convey clearly what my research was about, but I felt that I was not being listened to. I was told to move on from the challenges of having a fourth supervisor and to move on from the challenges of the pandemic. I was even told that I was not ready to achieve a doctorate qualification, that I was not at a doctoral level.

The end of my journey

Looking back at my educational history, for instance, how I have managed to achieve what I have today, for example, my first BA degree and then my master's through the challenges that were presented, the breakdown in relationship between a fourth supervisor and myself was not going to stop me. I found the challenge of speaking with them racist and prejudicial. This is because I felt that what they saw was the colour of my skin, and my gender as a woman; that they thought I would not be able to achieve the doctoral qualification – *"I'm telling you for your own good"* is what I was told and is the phrase that will always stay with me.

Achieving post-secondary qualifications has been a great achievement for me but no more than my master's degree in Literacy and Language in Adult Education. This is because I overcame the obstacles, I had with my second marriage and suffered from stress/depression. Achieving the qualification has allowed me to teach graduates and postgraduate students skills in academic literacy and be a specialist in my field, something that I would never have dreamt of in secondary school, i.e. to teach others. It puts to an end the comment about me *'being a waste of time'*, a comment made by a careers officer in 1977.

My reason for doing this autoethnography is to have an in-depth understanding of how I endured the challenges put before me of becoming a university teacher and a student in an EdD programme. I want to have a deeper understanding of how I was educated in the UK and what has shaped me into the person I am today. OK, maybe I should know this answer by now as I am in my sixties, but sometimes life gets in the way, and you do not have the time to stop and think about it. There has been another one while completing the write-up of this thesis, but again I have found the strength and courage to continue.

I have given the reader an extract of my life from when I was a child at school up to being an adult teaching in a college. I have described some challenges I faced during my educational trajectory and so I hope the reader will understand how I have come a long way from being a waste of time at secondary school to being a university teacher of English for Academic Purposes. (NB: I use the word trajectory to describe both experiences of education and work.)

Appendix 19

SHEFFIELD HALLAM UNIVERSITY

SHEFFIELD BUSINESS SCHOOL

Part-time B.A. (Public Administration)

Timetable, 1992 - 93

Intermediate Level

Management of Information: Tuesday evenings, 6-7 & 8-9; Room D312

Law in the Public Sector: Wednesday evenings, 6-7.30; Room D414

Anatomy of the Public Sector: Wednesday evenings, 7.30-9.00; Room D414

NOTE: Classes commence week beginning October 5th.

Final Level (I)

Issues in Public Administration: Tuesday evenings, 6.30-8.00; Rooms D516/607

Policy Analysis: Wednesday evenings, 6-7.30; Room D406

Ethics Wednesday evenings, 7.30-9.00; Room D406

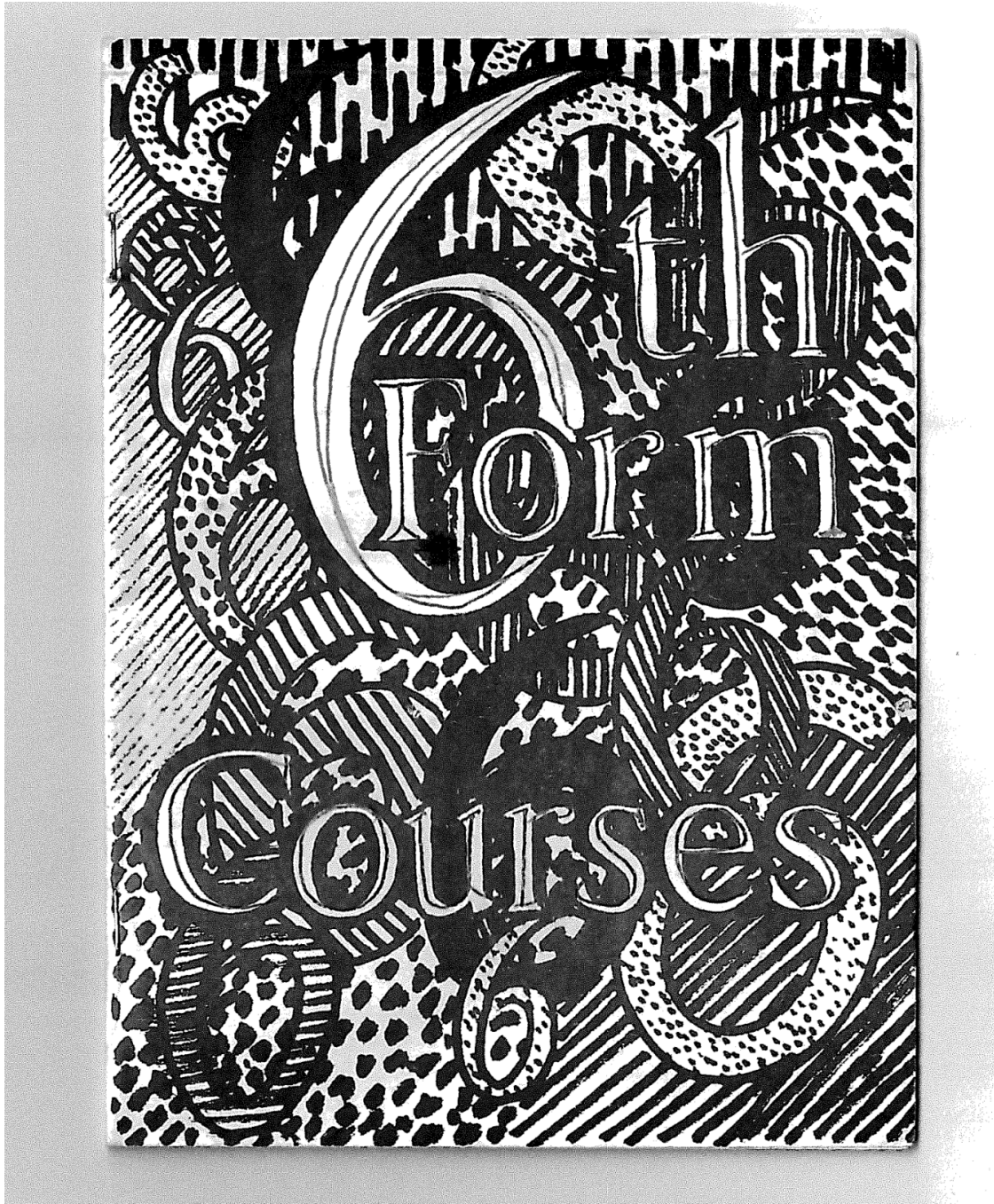
NOTE: Classes commence week beginning September 28th.

Final Level (II)

Public Finance: Tuesday evenings, 6.30-8.00; Room D406

NOTE: Classes commence week beginning October 5th.

Appendix 20: 6th Form Booklet 1977



CAREER POSSIBILITIES

There are three choices facing every 16 year old:-

- to stay at school and enter the Sixth Form;
- to leave school and get a job;
- to continue studies at a college of further education.

Decisions taken at this stage have a direct bearing on opportunities for higher education and future careers.

WHY COME INTO THE SIXTH FORM ?

A Sixth Form course can open up more avenues for your final job search. Also, it enables you to postpone the final decision for a time.

(i) Higher Education

For most people the best preparation for university etc. is a sixth form course, though some students may do better in the more liberal atmosphere of a Further Education College. The minimum requirement for entry to a university is two passes at 'A' level. In fact you will almost certainly need higher grades depending upon what subject you wish to study. The same is true of polytechnics. Some people feel that these are second-best to universities but industry now often prefers the more practical approach associated with many polytechnic-trained students. Teacher training is entering a difficult phase because fewer teachers are required and colleges are being closed. Therefore entry requirements will

become more stringent and 2 'A' levels will probably be essential. Two 'A' levels also give you a chance to start the new Dip H.E. course (2 years) which is designed as a preparatory course for subsequent career/vocational training.

With ONE 'A' level it is usually possible to obtain a place on a Higher National Diploma course (full time) or a Higher National Certificate course (part time) at a polytechnic or a College of Further Education.

(ii) 'A' Levels then Work

With 2 'A' level passes, you can put yourself into a much better position for a job. You have now reached a higher level on the ladder, that called the executive level in the civil service or local government. It is impossible to give a list of jobs here, but refer to Section 4 in "Your Choice at 17+", a book which your careers teacher will have.

Remember that the last decades of the 20th century are bringing with them a great expansion of science and technology. 'A' levels provide an approach road for students to prepare themselves for careers in these fields. If you look at entry qualifications over the past ten years or so, you will discover that entry qualifications to firms and professional bodies are rising steadily. Bodies that used to ask for 5 'O' levels (C.S.E. 1) are now asking for 1 or 2 'A' levels.

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(iii) 'O' Levels (also C.E.E. and C.S.E.), then Further Education

Many different colleges offer courses at 16+, e.g. Colleges of Technology, Technical Colleges, Colleges of Further Education, Colleges of Art and Colleges of Agriculture.

If you want to prepare for a Technical/Professional course, you will need at least 4 'O' levels/C.S.E. 1. This would enable you to start an Ordinary National Diploma course (full time) or an Ordinary National Certificate course (part time). These two examinations are very near 'A' level in standard and are taken in scientifically based subjects.

It is important to look carefully at your position after you have your 'O' level/C.S.E. results. If you want an F.E. course and you wish to reach the Technician level, you need good hopes of achieving the required passes in one year's study in the Sixth. Otherwise you are becoming older without achieving qualifications that can be expected for your age. In other words, if you feel you cannot reach the level in one year, it might be better to aim at the Craft courses in F.E. which need much lower qualifications.

(iv) More 'O' Levels, then Work

If you want to start work directly after school, the Technician/Professional level can be just as important to you. If your fifth year results are reasonably good, it may be worth an extra year's study

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to bring your qualifications up to the 4 to 5 'O' level mark. This will give you a chance of much better jobs and put off your final choice for another year (in fact you may be able to start an 'A' level or you may decide to try Further Education after all, i.e. your options remain open).

With 5 'O' levels/C.S.E. 1, you can enter the clerical officer grade of the civil service and local government; you can take up nursing (S.R.N.), banking, insurance etc. It is a well-worthwhile level but again it is necessary to warn the student that a year in the Sixth without reaching these objectives can be a year wasted. It is no use growing older without achieving the qualifications mentioned above - in fact it would almost certainly be better to go into employment after the fifth form.

GENERAL EDUCATIONAL AND SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT

Our Sixth Form is a sort of half way house between compulsory education and 18+ education or work. Ask almost any sixth former how life differs from that previously and you are likely to get the answer: "It's harder because you've got to use your own initiative more and you can't get through exams by learning parrot fashion as for much of the lower school work."

If a student wants complete personal freedom or, at the other extreme, direction down to the finest detail, Firth Park Sixth Form is not the place: we try to provide a balance between these extremes. Our sixth

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formers must be willing to comply with certain community needs and be ready to take responsibility for organising much private study, both at home and in school. We feel that there would be little sense in spoon-feeding in the Sixth when in a year or so the student would be standing almost alone.

In addition to providing courses which meet specific career needs, we give teacher contact time in General Studies and recreational activities. It is hoped that these will feed and broaden minds and bodies over a wider field.

The Sixth Form organises its social life through the Sixth Form Committee which is elected annually. Its main officers are Chairman, Secretary and Treasurer. The Committee's Standing Orders are posted in every Sixth Form Room and give details of functions and procedures.

After the Spring Bank Holiday of their lower sixth, members of the Sixth Form have the use of the Common Room. It is available before school, lunchtimes and at breaks for relaxation, and during Prep time for more studious pursuits. Though the room is unsupervised, it is expected that sixth formers will conduct themselves there, as elsewhere, in a manner befitting their age and status.

COURSES

(i) Building a Personal Time-table

The career possibilities which open up on successful

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Appendix 21

~~Angela Aldridge-Tucker~~ A Self Portrait January 10th 1978

My name is Angela ~~Tucker~~ and I live in the Pitmoor area of Sheffield. I have two brothers who are both younger than me and of course my mom and dad. My parents are from Jamaica and my two brothers and I were born in Sheffield. ~~Michael~~ my oldest brother goes to Firth Park School the school I used to go to. I left Firth Park School in May 1977 but I later returned in June. The school wasn't bad, but they had a few strict orders that I didn't really like. For instance, keep your top button fasten and tie, your tie in a small knot. Some teachers, you could get on with and learn from them as they taught you. Others you couldn't get on with so well and anything you learned would go straight through your ears. After the summer holidays we went back to school in September. I was hoping to stay on another year and retake some of my exams again that I missed the year before. I had an interview with a careers officer, Mr. ~~Barker~~ and he suggested that I should leave school at Christmas and try and get a job, because it would be a waste of time stopping on. He gave me a name of an office that I could go to for an interview about a job. I was nervous, all the way through the interview and I knew I wouldn't get it. The man at the interview phoned me and told me that I hadn't got the job. Two weeks later I went back down to the careers office and he gave me another address of a firm. The next day I phoned and it was already filled. The same afternoon Mr. ~~Barker~~ phoned school and said that there was a course going on at Richmond College for ten weeks for people who wanted office work. The next day I went down to the careers office for an interview, I talked

to three people about the course and what would happen. I had a test that they gave me. After they told me that I had got in. A few days after they told me wrote and told me how to get to Richmond college.

I started Richmond College on 9th January 1918. The lessons start at 9.20 am until 4.30pm. I have not knew few friends and I find them all nice to talk with and have a few laughs. I am hoping to get a job from here. Doing this course it will help me to get a job, and not be nervous at a interview.

We finish at 4.30pm and it takes me (to get home) just less than an hour. When I get home I like to listen to Reggae music if I am not doing anything. I belong to a youth club in Abbeydale which is call the HUB (Mount Pleasant).

7

ABBREVIATIONS

BA:	Bachelor of Arts
BTEC:	Business and Technology Education Course
CSE:	Certificate Secondary Education
DLP:	Departmental Language Programme
ESN:	Educationally Subnormal
ESOL:	English for Speakers of Other Languages
GCSE:	General Certificate of Education
HE:	Higher Education
IELTS:	International English Language Testing System
IQ:	Intelligent Quotient
LEA:	Local Education Authority
MA:	Master of Art
NVQ:	National Vocational Qualification
PGCE:	Post Graduate Certificate in Education
RQ:	Research Questions
RTA:	Reflexive Thematic Analysis
TESOL:	Teaching English for Speakers of Other Languages

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