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The Faithful Few? *What can social work learn from the stories of African Caribbean Christian elders*?

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SUMMARY

This thesis considers how Christianity shapes the lives, beliefs and identities of African-Caribbean elders. The topic has been selected because the relevance of the Christian faith to black elders has been under theorised in U.K. anti-racist social work literature.

The study is located within a qualitative research tradition and draws upon narrative, ethnographic and life story influences. The research is primarily based on semi-structured interviews with fourteen participants aged seventy one – ninety years. The elders were born and raised in the Caribbean and now live and attend Pentecostal and Baptist churches in London having migrated to the U.K during the 1950's and '60's.

The interview data is analysed using the voice centred relational method (Gilligan 1982). This method gives primacy to the words of the people being interviewed and the meaning ascribed to their experiences. A number of core themes or 'stories' emerge from the elders' accounts of their lives and religion. These include *the story of growing and belonging, the story of rejection and pain, the story of resistance and faithful compliance and the story of love, care and eternal hope.* The stories reveal a complex picture where racism and rejection has been part of the tapestry of black elders' adult experiences in the U.K. Equally, their religious upbringing in the Caribbean and their enduring Christian belief has nurtured the elders' sense of identity and self worth and provided a buttress against their more negative experiences.

The study draws upon black theology which aids understanding of how Christianity has influenced the history and religious experiences of black Christians. Black theological literature, along with transactional analysis, also

provides the theoretical framework through which the elders' stories are discussed. This approach provides originality as such analysis does not appear to have been undertaken previously.

From the elders' stories five key themes have emerged which provide insights in to the research question. These are:
- the importance of the elders' Christian belief;
- narratives as an integral part of black history and knowledge;
- dealing with racism and its intersections;
- reconciling differing religious and social values- the challenge for social work;
- the care needs of African-Caribbean elders – church, family and / or state?

Through these themes the study outlines the necessity of social work embracing a more holistic approach to the meeting of African – Caribbean elders' spiritual and religious needs and beliefs. The elders recognise that they may require practical help as they get older but do not feel that social care services will necessarily be responsive to their religious and cultural experiences or provide for the pray life, bible reading and church attendance that form part of their needs. The concept of heaven and an afterlife is very important to the elders and poses a challenge in how social work might work in partnership with church communities to ensure that elders have the 'good life/ good death' they seek.

The study makes a number of recommendations whilst questioning whether a largely secular profession will be equipped to provide or commission appropriate, faith based care to African-Caribbean elders. This is because of the largely hostile / indifferent approach towards religion which the study identifies.

The final chapter evaluates the strengths and weaknesses of the study and its methodological approach before concluding with a number of personal reflections.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Chapter One

This chapter describes how I decided on the study's research question, and is divided in to two parts. Part One identifies some of the professional influences on my social work career and how these shaped the assignment choices in the earlier stages of the doctorate. I then discuss how my experience of teaching social work to undergraduate students contributed to the Critical Analytical study (CAS) that preceded this work.

The learning from the CAS and its relationship to my chosen research area is explored in Part Two of the chapter. This explains why I decided to undertake this particular study and the professional and theoretical rationale for it.

Part One: The personal and the professional - the background to the research

The following introductory section sketches aspects of a story that began many years before I entered Sussex University, and is part of a longer and more complex story involving social work and its engagement with people from black and minority ethnic group communities.

I entered U.K. social work as part of the first wave of black practitioners who were either British-born or part educated in the U.K. Ours was the generation that pushed against the door tentatively held open by Local Authorities in the wake of the Brixton uprisings of April 1981 and the Scarman Report on these (Scarman 1981). This was also the generation that in 1983 established the Association of Black Social Workers and Allied Professionals (ABSWAP) which helped to create the momentum for change in social work education and practice (Walker 2002).

In 1989 (amended 1991) the Central Council for Education and Training of Social Work (CCETSW) introduced regulatory requirements, Paper 30. This set the framework for a new diploma in social work and required trainees to demonstrate competence in recognising and addressing racism and other inequalities. This included understanding the structural causes of racism and its individual and collective consequences. "Racism is the use of personal,

political, social and economic power to oppress people because of their colour. It is rooted in an ideology of the superiority of whiteness. The ideology was developed to justify the economic exploitation (particularly of Africa, the Caribbean and Asia) through slavery and colonisation" Davies and Ohri (1996).

Whilst Mullard (1991) rightly challenges CCCETSW for its lack of specificity regarding the term and the need to conceptualise anti-racism within a broader gender, class and political context, the term did allow for a specific focus on 'black' people (i.e. those visibly not white), and on the need to address the specific structural disadvantages they experienced.

Whilst the impact of Paper 30 arguably helped to shape social work's engagement with inequality and raised awareness and understanding, the belief I held at the time that its publication might challenge and change dominant white and male interests and norms now seems woefully naive. Over the years I came to understand the complexity of racism and other structural inequalities and the manner in which social and global power is created and sustained. I saw that, despite the rhetoric of anti-racism, it was black and visible minority people who remained disproportionately poor, sectioned in mental health institutions, living in inner cities and denied the educational and social opportunities their white middle class counterparts took for granted (Scarman 1981,Rex 1986, Solomos 1989).

As I continued with my management career in inner city and multi-racial environments I retained a desire to undertake doctoral study having completed an MPhil in social work. It was only after leaving senior operational management in 2005 and entering social work education that this desire became a reality. In applying to Sussex for the professional doctorate, I was already certain that I wanted to explore something to do with 'race', but had little idea as to the specific research question on which I might focus.

This clarification subsequently evolved through my interaction with the social work students at the University where I worked as a senior lecturer between 2005 and 2011. Students of African and African-Caribbean origin constituted

approximately 40% of the intake, comprising a total of approximately 125 students across the three years.

The following section explores how this teaching experience facilitated an interest in the place of religion in black discourse and Christianity's importance to the black students.

Race and Christianity: the two begin to come together

My decision to focus the CAS on the intersections between anti-racism and Christianity gradually emerged from my teaching of the Values, Ethics and Equality (VEE) module. The module allowed for in-depth discussion of personal, professional and social values. Taking place in the first term of Year 1, the module provided the initial prism through which more specific social work practice and theoretical issues were subsequently explored.

In designing the module I re-visited the anti-discriminatory social work literature. I was struck by the terminological shift from the 'anti-racism' of the 1980s and early 90s to 'anti-discrimination' and 'inclusivity'. Mullard (1991:15) suggests that such terms 'tend to reflect equal opportunity policies' rather than issues of social justice. This point accords with the contemporary social work literature on values and equality (Banks 2006; Bagihole 2009; Gaine 2010; Parrott 2010) which addresses 'race' alongside a range of other equality groupings such as age, disability, sexuality, etc. Little distinction is made between the differential impact of such inequalities on white people and black, leaving the interconnections between race, class and gender under-theorised, despite finding clear expression in the voiced experiences of the black undergraduate students I taught.

These students constituted two main groups, those born and raised in West African countries and British-born students of African-Caribbean heritage. The African students (approximately 16 per academic year) had grown up following their countries' independence from British colonial rule. They had come as students to the U.K. from socially mobile families. The first assessed doctorate assignment (JK1 2007) explored through a one-to-one interview why such

students undertook social work training as mature adults when some had degrees or qualifications in areas unrelated to social welfare. The male student interviewed suggested that he and his contemporaries were not always able to get work in their selected employment areas; being aware of the shortage of qualified social workers in the U.K., they felt that a social work degree would secure them employment opportunities. He considered social work to be a profession in which equal opportunity was more likely to be promoted and compared this to his previous employment area (marketing) in which he felt it was harder for black people in the U.K. to succeed. Hence, this student suggested that the choice of social work was primarily pragmatic rather than it being a profession he had always wished to enter.

There were in contrast fewer Caribbean students (approximately 4 per year), and these were British-born and educated. They mainly lived in inner-London boroughs, were raised within families that had limited economic resources and attended schools that did not feature highly in GCSE pass league tables. They talked of social work as a profession in which they could make a direct contribution to poor and disadvantaged people living in social circumstances similar to those in which they had been raised.

When discussing their values and personal beliefs, religion and church attendance featured strongly for the black students, but there were differences between the two groups. The African-Caribbean students spoke more about social justice, and saw their faith as intrinsically linked to the need to challenge inequality in a manner that resonated with the black social gospel tradition and of Jesus' concern for the poor and oppressed (Cone 1970,1975; Reddie 2003).

Conversely, many of the students from Africa initially struggled with issues of social justice in respect of poverty, gender and sexuality. They tended to view discrimination as being related to the personal choices people made about their life styles and work ethic and therefore as something that could be avoided. They considered their faith to be a more 'inward' expression of their personal walk with God and the moral framework for their lives. This approach more closely resembled the 'moral gospel' whereby Christians live by what they

believe to be God's ordained 'rules' governing marriage, the role of women and sexual relationships (Byrne 1998).

As part of the VEE course students completed a questionnaire about their religious beliefs. In the two years the exercise was conducted only five white students (out of 80+) described themselves as religious. Many felt that they had 'spirituality' and over half identified themselves as Christians, but they did not attend church and were largely hostile to what they saw as the socially conservative nature of Christian teaching. Many were surprised at the strength of Christian belief amongst the African and African-Caribbean students.

The experiences with the students and my own subsequent reflections on the role of Christianity in the narratives of black people stimulated my interest in exploring the links between social work and black people's religious beliefs. However, it was a trip outside of the U.K. that gave this emerging interest a specific focus for my Critical Analytical Study (CAS), which I discuss below.

Towards a rationale for the CAS

Prior to drafting the CAS proposal in August 2007 I undertook a month's voluntary work in Brazil based with a small Baptist church in an area of acute poverty and social need. People came together in the church not simply to worship and pray but to eat, work and socialise. From the church a wide variety of assistance was taken in to the community. This included house visits, pre-school education, youth activities and the care of vulnerable people. It was a community who cared for each other, and one that preached and lived a message of love made visible by action.

The experience in Brazil caused me to reflect further on Christianity and its role in a largely secular Britain. I therefore came back to the U.K. having decided to theoretically explore through the CAS the interrelationship between black theology and anti-racist social work writings. Black theology was a new field of enquiry for me, so, as well as being interested in what the literature had to say, I wanted to see if it 'spoke' to wider black issues as part of a broader anti-racist theoretical discourse that contributed insights for U.K. social work practice.

I will not enter into a detailed discussion of black theology, as Chapter Two comprehensively covers this topic with subsequent chapters of the study being theoretically influenced by black theological discourse. It is however important at this early stage to explain its specific epistemological, theoretical and political meaning and how it differs from theology more generally.

The National Committee of Black Churchmen in Atlanta, Georgia, June 13, 1969 defined black theology as:

> "a theology of black liberation. It seeks to plumb the black condition in the light of God's revelation in Jesus Christ, so that the black community can see that the gospel is commensurate with the achievement of black humanity. Black theology is a theology of 'blackness'" (Wilmore & Cone 1976:102).

Cone, the American theologian subsequently defined black theology as "Christian theological reflection upon the black struggle for justice and liberation" (1984:7).

Erskine (1998) draws a connection between black theology and other liberation theologies that evolved in Latin America. He suggests that the Civil Rights Movement in America stimulated the impetus for black theology, which thus shifted from a 'movement' to a distinct academic discipline with the formation of the Society for the Study of Black Religion in the 1970s.

In1998 black theology emerged as an academic discipline in the U.K. (Beckford 1998). As Chapter Two will demonstrate, it draws on the American tradition but seeks to develop and relate such theology to a U.K. – and initially a British African-Caribbean – context.

The CAS stands alone as a distinct piece of previously assessed work, and a summary and critique of it is outlined in Chapter Two. Through that study my interest in race and religion was strengthened as it became evident that Christianity was interwoven into the history, identity and experiences of African-American and African-Caribbean people. As such, social work practice in the U.K. did not stand apart from such history and insights. My learning and

reflections contributed to the formulation of this work and provided the bridge between the CAS and my DSW research question, *What can social work learn from the stories of African-Caribbean Christian elders?*

Having described how my research interest evolved, I will now outline the broad rationale for this study and my decision to concentrate on African-Caribbean elders rather than another group who might come under the generic term of 'black Christians'. This general rationale needs to be read in conjunction with Chapter Three, where I discuss a number of the methodological challenges posed by the study.

Part Two: The rationale for the study

What can social work learn from the stories of African-Caribbean Christian elders?

The principle rationale for the study of this question is to make an original contribution to the profession's understanding of African-Caribbean Christians in the U.K. The study contributes to social work theory and practice by theoretically exploring how anti-racism and African-Caribbean people's Christian beliefs might be integrated into a more holistic analysis of their experiences and needs. At present, their separation arguably contributes to a poor professional awareness of the lives and beliefs of black elders, a theme returned to later in the study.

The study focuses on black Christian elders who were born in one of the English-speaking Caribbean countries, i.e. African Caribbean (Census 2001). This is for a number of reasons, as identified below.

Caribbean migrants were the major group of black post-war settlers to the U.K., and their struggles and achievements provided the bedrock of experience on which subsequent anti-racist initiatives were based (Sewell 1998). African-Caribbean's were specifically recruited in the post-World War II period to help in the reconstruction of the British economy, and between 1955 and 1962 approximately a quarter of a million people left their homelands for Britain (Fryer

1984). This study therefore seeks to give voice to the experiences of a long established minority ethnic group community.

The post war African-Caribbean migrants are now ageing.The Office for National Statistics data (2005) reveals that eleven percent of African-Caribbean people are of pensionable age, the highest for any 'visible' minority group. They are at or approaching a stage in life where social care support may be required. This makes the study relevant to contemporary practice and the development of policy in respect of how services might be delivered.

This issue of a growing elderly population is of particular importance given current political initiatives to reduce welfare provision and to encourage a 'Big Society' in which individuals, voluntary sector organisations and faith groups (including churches) provide services currently offered by the state (Cameron 2010). As will be seen in Chapter Two, the CAS provides evidence that black led churches may already act as a major and self-funded social care resource for their congregations.

In selecting English-speaking African-Caribbean people, issues of language are less likely to affect understanding between myself as the interviewer and the research informants than would be the case with older people of African birth, who may have a number of first language traditions. As identified in Chapter Three, interpreting the 'meaning' of the lived experiences of others involves complex methodological issues, without the additional factor of not sharing the same spoken language.

The study is relatively small and as such it cannot claim to 'speak across' the diversity of languages, ethnicities, cultures and religious practices embraced under the generic heading of 'black'. People of African and African-Caribbean origin constitute just over 2% of England and Wales' population, with a majority living in London (www.statsistics.gov.uk/census 2001). Given the relatively small numbers of black people in the U.K., there is a danger that the experiences of African-Caribbean Christian elders will be submerged within the anti-racist literature and in writings dealing with social work, faith and older people more

generally. Given their longevity within the U.K., I wished to capture some of their experiences before death, illness and migration renders this impossible.

As discussed in Chapter Two, Black Theology in the U.K has largely evolved through the theoretical and theological insights of writers of Caribbean birth or origin (Aldred 2000; Aldred and Ogbo 2010;Beckford 1998,2000,2004; Reddie 2001, 2005). The underpinnings of social work's early engagement with 'race' also primarily emerged as a consequence of post-war Caribbean settlers' experience of racism and the identified needs of that community (Soul Kids Campaign 1981; New Black Families 1983). It therefore seems appropriate to link this theoretical discourse with a practical focus on African-Caribbean Christians.

Finally, and importantly, there has been no similar work undertaken within U.K. social work as far as I am aware. The study therefore brings together two main areas of scholarly enquiry, anti-racist and anti-discriminatory social work literature and black theology, and in doing so provides additional insights into social work and Christianity.

Having explained the study's rationale and the reasons for the selection of African-Caribbean Christian elders, I will now outline the research question and how it developed.

The research question and its development.

I undertook the CAS hoping to establish whether anti-racist social work literature might aid understanding of black Christians and whether black theology might in turn illuminate anti-racist social work thinking. This was not the case. As will be seen in Chapter Two, the CAS work essentially emerged as two distinct genres – U.K. anti-racist and anti-discriminatory social work literature and American and U.K. black theology. It did however provide me with a new theoretical understanding of how religion has sustained black people during times of extreme hardship and provided the momentum for active resistance. It also revealed the potential for continued racism through black U.K. churchgoers' acquiescence to "culturally sanctioned beliefs, which,

regardless of intentions involved, defend the advantages whites have because of the subordinated position of racial minorities" (Wellman 1993: xi)

The duality of the U.K. church's role as a place where racism might potentially be challenged whilst conversely projecting a cultural context based on and enshrining white patriarchal theology was evident in British black theological literature (Reddie 2003) and seemed to provide an avenue through which enhanced understanding of black Christian elders' faith position might be achieved. As with much doctoral research, however, the final question evolved from a lengthy process of reading, reflection, discussion, supervisory comments and 'trial and error'.

The question I initially thought I might address was, *How might we better understand social work practice with black Christian elders.*
This wording did not however illuminate the key challenge of capturing African-Caribbean people's church experiences or adequately explain who the 'we' were who required such understanding. In order to make explicit the precise ethnic group on whom the study was focused and to provide a clearer social work context, the question quickly evolved within the research proposal into, *What can social work practice learn from African-Caribbean Christian elders?*

The primary question led to a number of sub questions . These included:

- *Why do black elders go to church and believe in God?*

- *Does Church provide a social / friendship and support role in the lives of African-Caribbean elders or is it somewhere they attend only for Sunday service and related activities? If the former, what implications might this have for social work practice with this user group?*

- *How do African-Caribbean Christian elders describe their racial experiences in the U.K., both within church and more generally? Has Christianity helped to sustain them during those experiences, and if so how?*

- *How does religious belief shape African-Caribbean elders' view of ageing and death and how they would like to be cared for as they become more frail?*

As my thinking advanced and I reflected further on the question, it was then refined to, *What do the stories of African-Caribbean Christian elders contribute to our understanding of anti-racist social work practice?* In the previous question there was a degree of vagueness in relating the potential learning to the narratives that form the research element of the study. I considered it important to centralise 'the stories' of the elders and to centralise 'anti-racism' as part of the discourse.

For some time I felt settled with this question. However, during the later stages of the study I reflected on the interview material, the learning that had emerged from it and the literature that underpinned my understandings. There was little to suggest that social work had ever been 'anti-racist' in systematically addressing the racism that CCETSW in 1991 claimed to be endemic within the profession and society more generally. As Chapter Two indicates, there was a brief period when a number of initiatives and debates took place that profiled race and racism and allowed for the inclusion of some black voices. Those voices were subsequently submerged within a more generic and largely white-led analysis of inclusivity and equality. To therefore ask what anti-racist social work might learn whilst also concluding that anti-racist social work does not exist seemed contradictory. Those with little interest in anti-racism might also have viewed the study as irrelevant to mainstream practice. I therefore settled on, *What can social work learn from the stories of African-Caribbean Christian elders?* In Chapter Six I seek to answer this with reference to both theory and practice.

I will of course be returning to the research question in Chapter Three's more detailed discussion of *methodology and methods*. I now conclude this chapter before providing a brief synopsis of those that follow.

Conclusion

This chapter has outlined aspects of my professional journey and its relationship to this study. It makes reference to the CAS work and the learning and reflections that emerged from it. I explain the rationale for focusing on the experiences of African-Caribbean Christian elders and explore how the research questions evolved and were refined.

I will now explain the structure of the thesis and the chapter content:

Thesis Structure

Chapter Two, 'Revisiting the literature', provides a summary of the CAS. It addresses the main learning from the literature review by firstly considering black theology and how it aids understanding of black Christians' struggles, beliefs and identity and then by considering anti-racist social work and its contribution to practice with black people. The CAS revealed gaps between the two bodies of literature and indeed in my engagement with them. The chapter therefore includes subsequent reflections that have helped to inform my approach to this study.

Chapter Three, 'Methodology and Methods', discusses in greater detail the research question and the various methodological issues that frame its illumination. It discusses how the research design was approached, the participants identified, the research undertaken and the rationale for the data collection methods adopted. The emphasis of the study is enabling the voices and narratives of the participants to be heard and emerges from a particular qualitative research position. The broader ethical and political issues of giving voice to previously unheard groups of people are explored.

The narratives are theorised by drawing on transactional analysis and black theological literature, and the rationale for this is discussed. The method of data analysis adopted is voice-centred relational analysis, and the strengths and limitations of this method are outlined.

Chapters Four and Five 'tell the stories' that emerge from the research interviews and my analysis of them. Chapter Four covers the early lives of the elders in the Caribbean and their subsequent migration as young adults to the U.K. These are called *The story of growing and belonging and the story of rejection and pain.* Chapter Five explores the elders' exposure to and management of racism particularly in the context of their experiences within the U.K. churches many initially attended. This is described as *the story of resistance and faithful compliance.* The chapter concludes with an exploration of how the elders' Christian faith has shaped their lives and beliefs and what they continue to draw from it. The chapter also includes reflections of their potential care needs as they age and how these might be met. This is called *the story of love, care and eternal hope.*

Chapter Six returns to the research question *What can social work learn from the stories of African-Caribbean Christian elders?* It seeks to answer it by drawing on the main learning points that emerge from the study. The final **Chapter Seven**, evaluates the strengths and weaknesses of the study, considers issues of validity and quality and the methods and analysis adopted. In this chapter I also discuss my own reflections and how I might theoretically build on my learning in my academic career.

Chapter Two: Review of the literature: revisiting the CAS.

This chapter provides a brief overview of the CAS and draws out the learning on black theology and anti-racist social work that contributed to the reflections that underpin this current work. The CAS reviewed the work of James Cone and other leading African-American theologians who followed on from Cone's initial work (1969) and traced the emergence of black theology as a distinct discipline in the U.K. from 1998 onwards (Beckford 1998).

The CAS also analysed a number of writings on race and immigration leading up to the mid-1980s when U.K. social work education and policy began to direct especial attention to anti-racism and anti-sexism. It identified some of the discussions, policies and thinking that informed anti-racist social work and the subsequent incremental shift to anti-discriminatory and anti-oppressive practice. The CAS was written between October 2007 and September 2008, which is reflected in some of the data/ dates in this chapter.

Social work and black theological developments have occurred differently between the U.K. and U.S.A. and where applicable American sources will be specified.

The CAS revisited

Church attendance

According to Bruce (2002), *God is dead*. He substantiates this statement by outlining the declining number of people in the U.K. who attend church. Dawkins (2006) also formulates a sophisticated argument showing the irrationality of the belief in God's existence and the delusion of believers, whilst Crabtree (2007) also charts the decline of Christianity and religious observance. At its simplest, these authors have a valid point. Church attendance is in decline, with the English Church Census (2005) estimating that only 6.3% of people in the U.K. regularly attend church on a Sunday. The number of people having church weddings, baptisms and confirmations is also declining in what Crabtree (2000) claims will be an unyielding shift to a secular society unless churches become more relevant to their communities.

Research from Tearfund (2007) forecasts a 55% fall in church attendance from 1980-2020 with churches having particular difficulty attracting poor people, men and young people. Their study revealed that whilst only 15% of people attend church at least once a month, there is a large group of people who have a personal relationship with God but who do not attend church because of past negative experiences. Tearfund suggests that 33% of people are 'de-churched' – the same percentage of the population as hold no religious belief.

The British Social Attitudes Survey (Park, Curtis et al 2010), published after submission of the CAS, provided further evidence of this ongoing decline. Twenty percent of the population describe themselves as belonging to the Church of England, yet only 8% of this group attend church weekly. Of the people considered in the study, 51% claimed not to be religious at all.

The CAS (Kwhali 2008) did however reveal a more complex picture when considering church going amongst black people. Approximately 40% of black people of all ages are likely to attend church on an average Sunday, with black led churches showing the greatest increase in attendees. Christian Research suggests that in London black churchgoers outnumber white churchgoers, with the former's membership growing by 18% over the last five years in contrast to a 5% decline nationally (Brierley 2005).

UK CHURCH MEMBERSHIP
% change

SOURCE: UK Christian Handbook, Religious Trends 4 (2003/2004)
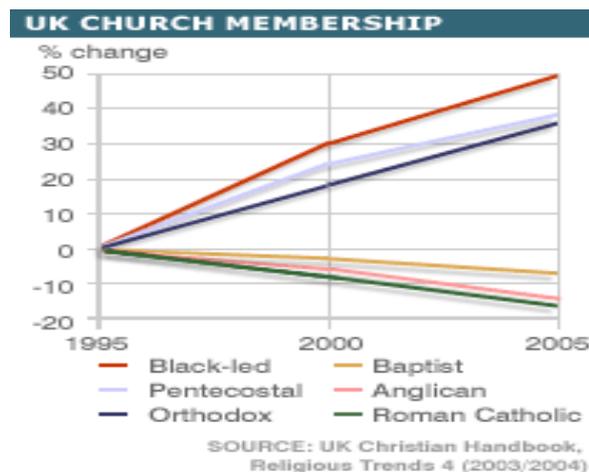
Black worshipers can be found throughout Christian denominations, but especially amongst Pentecostal, Baptist and Methodist congregations. Additionally, black people may attend independent or house-based church

gatherings that are not recorded in the formal survey returns, which gather data from the established denominations, and their attendance may hence be underestimated. It therefore appears as if the overall decline in church attendance across the country is being reversed in urban areas where significant numbers of people of Caribbean and African origin live.

Whilst the studies quantify black church attendance, they do not explain the reasons for its growth. Black theology and its contribution to an understanding of black people's faith position is therefore relevant at this stage.

Black theology

The American writer Cone (1969, 1970) linked theoretical understandings of racism and structural oppression with the practice of religion and Christian teaching in order to provide new insights into what it means to be a black Christian and to challenge dominant interpretations of the bible. Cone developed an analysis of black religiosity as rooted in black people's experiences of slavery, resistance, struggle and liberation. He charted the manner in which many of the black churches have acted as places of resistance against racial injustice, with their leaders using elements of the bible to evidence the intrinsic equality of all peoples in the eyes of God. Churches were also places where black people could come together to share experiences, sustain each other and express elements of their African heritage through the models of preaching and styles of worship that evolved (Erskine 1983; Cone 1986,1997, 2004, 2006; Wright Jr. 2004).

Cone argues that

"white theology has not been involved in the struggle for black liberation. It has been basically a theology of the white oppressor, giving religious sanctions to the genocide of Amerindians and the enslavement of Africans". (1990:4):

He suggests that many black theologians simply accepted white theology and its silence on the historical and contemporary injustices experienced by black

people. Cone therefore developed a theological approach that connected biblical teaching with black people's overall racial and social experiences.

The white American theologian Perkinson (2004) makes the theoretical link between white racial advantage and black theology. He does so by 'making visible' white racial privilege and explores the manner in which the assumed normality of such privilege ensures a primary focus on black disadvantage without the necessity of white people engaging with their own racial advantages. He supports Cone's desire for a theology that centralises the social gospel and agrees that this cannot be achieved without an active engagement by white people with their cultural and historical privilege and the processes through which it arose and is sustained.

The earlier work of Cone (1969, 1970, 1975) was subsequently challenged by African-American women for its lack of attention to gender (Cannon 1988; Grant 1989; Williams 1993). Grant (1989) suggests that the religious and social experiences of black women and other women of colour cannot be understood within a theological framework that simply centralises the experiences of black men given that the bible has been used (by black men also) as a further tool of women's subordination. She argues that poor black women are subject to racism, sexism and class oppression and their relationship with religion has to be understood in this context. Grant (1989) indicates that concepts of liberation are more pertinent to black women as they are potentially oppressed by the patriarchy of black and white men and the racism of white women.

Through such discourse the intersections between race, class and gender became more effectively theorised, giving rise to womanist theology. The term 'womanist' was first coined by the African-American author Alice Walker (1983) and then became applied to a particular form of theological discourse.

Williams defines womanist theology as:

> "a prophetic voice concerned about the well-being of the entire African American community, male and female, adults and children. Womanist theology attempts to help black women see, affirm, and have confidence

in the importance of their experience and faith for determining the character of the Christian religion in the African American community. Womanist theology challenges all oppressive forces impeding black women's struggle for survival and for the development of a positive, productive quality of life conducive to women's and the family's freedom and well-being. Womanist theology opposes all oppression based on race, sex, class, sexual preference, physical ability, and caste". (1993: 67)

Black theology in the U.K. began in 1998 with the launch in Birmingham of the journal *Black Theology in Britain (*now *Black Theology: An International Journal*) and the subsequent publication of Beckford's work *Jesus is Dread* (1998). Black British women have contributed towards locating womanist thinking within Black U.K. theology (cited in Aldred 2000). Reddie, whose own work has been influenced by such insights, suggests that womanist theology is

a related branch of Black theology. It is an approach that begins with the experiences of Black women and women of colour. Womanist theology utilises the experiences of Black women to challenge the tripartite ills of racism, sexism and classism. This discipline is influenced by (Black) feminist thought. On occasions Womanist theology has been inaccurately characterised as black feminism. (2003: 178)

Whilst the cultural contexts of African-American, African-Caribbean and Black British peoples differ, the CAS demonstrated how black theology embraces black people's collective history of slavery, colonialism, migration and racism; a history in which the actualisation of economic and social equality is still to be achieved and in which issues of race and faith interweave with class and gender oppression. Such issues are not in isolation from black people's church attendance, and it is this theme that I next consider.

The untapped potential of black led and majority churches in the U.K.?

Coleman (1968) argues that, in the U.K., "the black church represents the most holistic expression of black people themselves. It is the first and the most successful model in collective strength and corporate identity" (cited in Reddie 2003:44).This comment is not to suggest that there is one 'black church ' or that all U.K. black Christians worship in black led churches. Coleman (1984) points

out that the term black church" was not proposed by black people but by white people. He suggests that black Christians were initially concerned that such a term implied separateness (from white Christians) and a blurring of the varied denominational and worship traditions present amongst churches so labelled. Beckford also makes evident the diversity of black Christians, the denominations to which they subscribe and the churches in which they worship. He suggests that, whilst there is "continuity and commonality within Black experience it is also important to acknowledge difference" (Beckford 1998: 3).

Equally, the concept of 'black church' has historical and epistemological meaning. What Reddie (2008) describes as black people's "non being" as subjugated objects of white European and Euro-American racism led to the creation of theological space where issues of political and social meaning could be advanced and issues of black personhood addressed. As previously explained, African-American theology emerged within a different racial context to that of the U.K. Segregation in the U.S.A ensured the separation of black and white people in all spheres of public and private life, including church. In contrast, black people in Britain are migrants and the descendents of migrants, from a range of ethnic and cultural groups that potentially span the varied denominations of Christianity.

Despite these important differences, the CAS identified a sizeable presence of black led churches (i.e. with a black Minister and leaders) especially in London. This included black led Pentecostal and independent churches with Sunday congregations in excess of 2,000 people (English Church Census 2005).The CAS commented on the considerable financial and human 'capital' present in both black led and black majority churches and their wide ranging social care provision. Much of this activity appeared to be funded through the tithing contributions of the congregation rather than through formal commissioning or Local Authority grants. For older people the church afforded space that embraced black elders' desire for clubs and organisations in which both faith and cultural needs were met (Aldred 2000; Reddie 2001).

Whilst the concept of 'black church' is therefore contestable given that there is no singular theological or physical entity to which all black U.K. Christians subscribe, this does not diminish either the growth or seeming importance of black led churches, especially in urban areas (CAS 2008).

Nevertheless, black theologians raise criticisms. Beckford comments on what he sees as their "set views on human sexuality" (1998:29) and resultant attitudes towards gay people, as well as their relative silence and lack of political engagement in the face of racial injustices experienced by their congregation and the black community more generally. He argues that white supremacy, including within churches and mainstream theology, is deeply entrenched and that black led churches need to re-discover and assert their original prophetic role and learn from the black gospel and liberation theology. Aldred (1999) also notes black church leaders' seeming unwillingness to challenge the causes of racial and social injustice that contribute to the needs to which the church attempts to minister.

Black people also attend U.K. churches that have white ministerial leadership or where they may be in a minority. Little is known about if, and how, racism operates in such churches. Beckford (2002) for instance recognises the potential of genuine black/ white partnerships within mixed churches without seeing much evidence of them, whilst Reddie (2003) discusses how his attempt to introduce a more racially appropriate youth programme for young people in a white led but black majority church led to confusion amongst the young people who had internalised church as being 'white', with racial issues being discussed at home.

In exploring black theology, it was evident that black people's engagement with organised Christianity and individual churches in the U.K. was part not only of an interesting history but also of an existing reality through which the lives of many black people need to be understood. If black theology was involved in developing new understandings of the black experience, questions were raised within the CAS as to how social work engaged with similar issues, and it is this link that I next wish to explore.

From theology to social work

The importance of religion as part of anti-racist discourse is highlighted by Reddie (2001:12) who suggests that, "in order to understand Black people best, particularly black elders, one needs to have some sense of the importance of matters of faith in the ongoing existence of people of African descent" (cited in Kwhali 2008: 7).

At a superficial level there may appear to be some synergy between the concerns of black theologians and those of social work. Writings on social work and race extend back fifty years, with competing discourses relating to the validity of a specific 'black perspective' through which we might understand and respond to the collective racial experiences of black people.

Ely and Denney (1987) challenged the "cultural deficit" model of earlier social work writings on race (Cheetham, Tresiliotis 1972, Rowe and Lambert 1973), which primarily locates problems of race with minority ethnic groups and their perceived cultural differences. They instead argued for greater understanding of social issues which was beginning to evolve as social work emerged as a distinct profession (Seebohlm 1969). A group of social workers established 'Case Con' (1971) and produced a magazine of the same name. This argued for an awareness of the social conditions and inequalities within which social need was cited and an active challenging of the economic and capitalist system, which, in these theorists' view, created the conditions that oppressed service users (http://www.radical.org.uk/barefoot/ casecon. htm).
Bailey and Brake (1975:9) stated that,

> "radical social work, we feel, is essential for understanding the position of the oppressed in the context of the social and economic structure they live in. A socialist perspective, is for us, the most humane approach for social workers".

Social work's interest in structural inequalities and the potential of social work to be a transforming agent of change formed part of the liberalising thrust challenging traditional beliefs about previously marginalised groups and

enhancing understanding of social inequality (Brake and Bailey 1980).This included the Women's Liberation Movement (1968), Gay Liberation Front (1970) and The Campaign Against Racial Discrimination (CARD). CARD was established in 1964 after black U.K. activists were inspired by a visit from the Baptist Minister Dr. Martin Luther King Jnr. The organisation lobbied for improved Race Relations Legislation (partially achieved through the RRA 1968), and subsequently disbanded in 1967 (Shukra 1998).

Throughout the 1980s publications also sought to theorise race and racism within a U.K. context (Rex 1983, Sivanandan1985;Dominelli 1988; Solomos 1989) and to provide practical guidance for social workers (Coombe & Little 1986, Ahmed et al 1986). As noted in Chapter One, social work was the first profession within the U.K. to develop an explicit articulation of anti-racism and anti-sexism by requiring social work students and educators to demonstrate competencies in these areas (CCETSW Paper 30 1991). According to Penketh (1998:31):

> "It was a combination of struggle by black social workers and students, in an atmosphere of both a growing awareness and critique of institutional racism within welfare agencies, and the rise of a counter-Thatcherite political opposition within the Labour party, local government and the equal opportunities community which created the 'space' for CCETSW's anti-racist initiatives to develop".

Included in the regulatory framework was the comment,

> "racism is endemic in the values, attitudes and structures of British society including that of social services and social work education. CCETSW recognises that the effects of racism on black people are incompatible with the values of social work and therefore seeks to combat racist practices in all areas of its responsibilities". (CCETSW 1991: 6)

Whilst CCETSW gave some attention to the needs of minority ethnic groups from minority faith traditions and addressing religious conflict in Northern Ireland

(CCETSW 2000), there was no consideration of Christianity as a potential part of anti-racist discourse. Christianity appeared to be discounted as a contributor to change. Tocqueville (1968, cited in Aldred and Agbo 2010:11) suggested that "religious zeal ... was bound to die down as enlightenment and freedom spread". Indeed, it could be claimed that religion's potential for social transformation as expressed in philanthropic endeavours (Payne 2005) was partly replaced by the young profession of state social work, which saw itself as a potential instrument of social change and as an advocate for justice.

Social work's focus on structural inequalities was not without its critics. Pinker (1993) publically challenged CCETSW's emphasis on racism and sexism and argued that the imposition of a regulatory framework was undermining the university's traditional academic freedoms – including, it seemed, the freedom for the white academy to ignore its own racial privilege, if racism was indeed "endemic", as CCETSW had suggested. The Times 1992 criticised CCETSW's alleged "obsession" with "ologies" and "isms", to which Tim Yeo, then junior Conservative Health Minister, responded by reminding CCETSW of its need to "deliver value for money ... and real and measurable achievement". (Yeo 1992:2)

At a time when the commissioning and privatisation of social care was being encouraged through the 1991 NHS and Community Care Act, Yeo was particularly concerned to ensure "that training fully prepares social workers for their new roles within the mixed economy of care" which required "management skills and a clear understanding of budgetary issues" (Yeo 1992:2). Government and professional disengagement from racism also took place in the context of what Harris (2003) describes as the "onslaughts" of Thatcherism that eroded social work's transformational potential and its elevation under the last Labour Government to a business model.

In the face of such criticism CCETSW swiftly retreated through the replacement of Paper 30 into one that recast racism and sexism in the softer language of "discrimination" that was arguably more in tune with the New Right social policies it spawned (Williams and Johnson 2010). CCETSW was abolished in

2001 and replaced by the General Social Care Council with a different and broader remit that included the registration and regulation of social workers. The GSCC code of practice (2002: 2010) makes no reference to racism and contains no specific requirements for social work students to understand or challenge structural inequality.The British Association of Social Workers (BASW) is a non-government member organisation of The International Federation for Social Work (IFFSW), whose initial statement of social work's purpose was formulated in Brighton in 1982. The current statement claims:

> "Social workers have a responsibility to challenge negative discrimination on the basis of characteristics such as ability, age, culture, gender or sex, marital status, socio-economic status, political opinions, skin colour, racial or other physical characteristics, sexual orientation, or spiritual beliefs. ... Social workers should recognise and respect the ethnic and cultural diversity of the societies in which they practise, taking account of individual, family, group and community differences". (2004)

The IFFSW does not specifically refer to religion, instead using the term "spiritual beliefs". Apropos of this, Wong and Vinsky draw on Henery's work, where he argues:

> "Ethnic minorities are generally characterised as first religious and then spiritual. They are, therefore, placed en masse in the disfavoured half of the sirituality-religion binary. Overall, despite its claims to the contrary, the literature on spirituality seems to complement rather than counteract dominant social arrangements". (Henery 2003: 1111-12 cited in Wong and Vinsky 2008: 9)

Holloway (2006) suggests that social workers are more hostile to organised religion than nurses and others in the caring profession, whilst Furnham and Benson's work (2005) found that social work training programmes were ambivalent about religion and largely secular in approach. This is despite social work's origins being firmly rooted in Christian values and the work of Christian philanthropists (Payne 2005).

It therefore seems regrettable that the 'radical edge' that shaped social work's original engagement with anti-racism has seemingly failed to recognise the potentially radical and sustaining role of religion for many black people, or

indeed sought to challenge those elements of Christianity which Beckford (1998) previously suggested encouraged a negation of injustice.

Despite the original social work anti-racist initiatives being primarily located in the experiences and uprisings of the then Caribbean community, their voices are now virtually silent and non-black social work academics have been largely instrumental in theorising and contextualising black people's racialised oppression and reshaping it in to anti-discriminatory and anti-oppressive discourse (Dominelli 2002; Dalrymple & Burke 2006; Thompson 2003, 2006). It would be hard to imagine 'anti-sexism ' mutating into a theoretical form in which white women's voices were largely absent, and this change raises interesting pedagogical questions as to who defines and validates the experiences and struggles of black people. This theme is further explored in Chapter Three where I examine Erskine's work (2010) on the challenge of 'writing black' within white academic tradition.

U.K anti-racist social work therefore contrasts with black U.K. theology which has emerged and primarily developed through the insights of those of Caribbean origin – including some black women. It has drawn on the experiences of African-American writers but located learning in a racial and social framework of black British experience. The very term 'black theology' positions it within black ownership in a manner that anti-racism never achieved. Hence, as black U.K. writers have largely withdrawn from the anti-racist social work literature, their voices and analysis are emerging within black theology and creating new discourses, pedagogies and understandings. My reading and reflections therefore led me to the realisation that the experiences of black Christian elders had been inadequately explored within U.K. social work and thus provided the initial rationale for this study.

Post CAS: additional insights.

As is inevitable, I am no longer theoretically located where I was in the autumn of 2008 when the CAS was submitted. The limitations of the CAS have assisted my subsequent thinking in respect of the research question introduced in Chapter One and my reflections and analysis in Chapters Six and Seven. A

number of the limitations arose from my own approach to the literature, some from the nature of the questions I sought to address, and some from the incompleteness of both black theology and anti-racist social work literature itself.

Reflections on the CAS: the social work literature

My own long engagement with social work and anti-racism meant that I had existing insider knowledge of some of the issues and the theoretical discussion. In revisiting the texts it appeared that not only did much contemporary social work literature have little to say about black religiosity, but it also had relatively little to say about racism. For example, two oft used and cited books on values and ethics for trainee social workers (Banks 2006; Parrott 2006) make no mention of racism nor suggest that personal and cultural socialisation and attitudes to race form part of our own and the profession's value base and underpin the ethical issues which social workers are in practice challenged to address. Similarly, a considerable amount of the current anti-discriminatory literature fails to demonstrate why racism that affects black people at the personal, cultural and structural levels (Thompson 2003) is then simply grouped with inequalities that affect white people with little consideration as to the racial, social and economic advantages of some such groups. I therefore took a more critical approach to the social work material than might have been the case were I coming to the topic entirely anew.

Equally, the relative lack of recognition now given to the structural causes and consequences of racism negates not only black experience rooted in theoretical discourses extending back to classics such as *The Mis-Education of the Negro* (Carter G. Woodson 1933) but also denies social workers the theoretical and racial insights that might assist understanding of the historical context of black subjugation and struggle and its contemporary effects. Fanon's work, for instance, provides powerful and arguably still relevant insights into how black identity is constructed and de-constructed through the prism and reality of white dominance (Fanon 1952). Du Bois's work(1903) explores the political and

psychological impact on black people living according to white definitions of meaning – including what it 'means' to be black.

Such writings offer important pedagogical insights from a black perspective, yet within U.K. social work they tend to be ignored or considered irrelevant in comparison to the more contemporary insights of mainly white writers. However inadvertently, this reinforces the very cultural (white) dominance of black experience that such literature should arguably challenge. There are hence legitimate criticisms to be made of a literature that frequently speaks of the need for "anti-discriminatory practice" without explicitly identifying what lies at the root of such a need.

A crude 'pre-postmodernism' is not being suggested, whereby race is understood through a narrow one dimensional framework of meaning. Bloch & Solomos 2010 explore new manifestations of racial discourse and the multi-layered nature of racial disadvantage as ethnic groups in the U.K become more diffuse. It is however to suggest that the absence of theoretical links between social work and black religiosity is almost inevitable if racism is removed from its historical context.

More recent social work texts are however beginning to promote the importance of social workers addressing spirituality. Mathews (2009) for instance specifically cites Reddie as an author who has written about the importance of religion to older Caribbean people. Gray (2008) and Crisp (2008) both discuss the difficulties social workers appear to encounter in identifying and responding to the spiritual needs of service users and how practice is undermined as a result. Furness and Gilligan (2010: 2010) highlight the continuing importance of gaining cultural knowledge and sensitivity and incorporating spirituality into formal assessment processes.

Social work's understanding of religion's role in believer's lives is perhaps evolving, and this study is intended to make a contribution to this evolution. I will be returning to social work's approach to racial equality in Chapter Six. At this stage I go on to consider what I learned from black theology.

Reflections on the CAS: the black theological literature

It was the critique of social work literature that opened up the space in which this study is located. Whereas that critique took place against 'old knowledge', black theology afforded me new insights. It provided a different prism through which I came to understand black struggle and spoke in to the theoretical gap that social work literature revealed. As it was a new and emerging area of study, I may have been less analytical and reflective about the literature. Additional reading continues to shape my analysis and understanding, and the following comments are therefore offered in this context.

Black theologians argue strongly for the empowering nature of faith in sustaining and supporting black people at times of struggle.This was undoubtedly true in the U.S.A., where the black churches were intrinsically linked with campaigns against slavery, segregation, etc., and provided a distinct space in which black people developed not only their theological skills but also their oratorical and political ones. Key black leaders such as Rev. Martin Luther King Jr., Rev. Jessie Jackson, Rev. Al Sharpton and, more recently, Rev. Jeremiah Wright and President Barack Obama, were either ordained ministers or influenced by African-American ministers and their articulation of the social gospel (Obama 2007). The majority of the Negro spirituals emerged from the African-American history of suffering, resistance and hope. In respect of older black people, it is indeed difficult to see how U.S. social work can even begin to separate the social needs of African-American elders from the spiritual, and from a history in which memories of state-legitimised segregation remain vivid.

Whilst black U.K. theology may draw from the American tradition, it cannot simply replicate it. As will be seen in Chapter Three, the social backgrounds of the African-Caribbean elders considered in this study are very different from those of their African-American counterparts. In America, the condition of being 'black' – and its earlier synonyms such as 'coloured' and 'Negro' – was socially and legally defined under the Racial Integrity Act of 1924 as anybody with a 'drop' of black blood stretching back to a solitary great-grandparent. No matter how fair or Europeanised in features, all people of colour were officially

designated as 'black'. This definition evolved from European Americans' obsession with ensuring that their ancestry was not contaminated by 'black blood' and by their legalised ability to economically and socially segregate black people (Polednak 1997).

In comparison, my research subjects grew up on islands under white colonial rule. Unlike the States, white people were not in a majority on the Caribbean islands and could not rule by excluding all people of colour from positions of leadership. Blackness was a term of derision and negativity with education and employment opportunities operating along colour lines linked to shades of blackness and hair texture. Hence, divide and rule tactics and internalised self hate were features of the Caribbean elders' history, and through which minority white colonial dominance was maintained (Cain & Hopkins 1983; Lloyd 2001).

As will be seen in Chapter Four, elders attended mission schools delivering a British colonial curriculum, and no connection to their African heritage was provided. Most attended churches with white ministers or which were modelled on white theology and styles of worship. None of the elders spoke of being inspired in Caribbean churches by sermons of resistance and struggle.

Earlier sections have shown the challenge for U.K. black theologians in encouraging black majority churches to engage with political and social issues and to be more vocal in challenging issues of racism. Given the very different cultural context in which they operate and the more ethnically varied populations of black people that they serve, such U.K. churches may not see themselves as providing a platform whereby racial injustice is profiled and campaigns taken from the church into the community. Those churches with white leadership and a black majority congregation may subconsciously reinforce dominant models of racialised power overlain with a theological call for Christian love and forgiveness undermining any attempt to challenge the unloving nature of racism.

It may be true that churches represent the largest weekly gathering of black people in the U.K. (Coleman cited in Reddie 2003), but this does not necessarily mean that such gatherings liberate the consciousness of black

people, create an environment that generates black leadership, or provide biblical teaching markedly different from white theology. Here we can draw on the experience of gender. More women attend church than men (Tearfund 2007). There is nothing to suggest that thousands of women gathering in church each Sunday has mobilised the social, political and economic advancement of women; indeed, one of the earlier American feminist theologians Daly (1985) has argued that religion has legitimated the subjugation of women through its language, emphasis on male headship and the relative invisibility of women within Christian scripture.

 It is therefore difficult to see how the power relationships between white authority and black acquiescence will be challenged simply because black people worship in a building. This is not of course to suggest that such gatherings do not provide considerable spiritual sustenance, support and encouragement. The African-American religious experience that intertwines faith with social action does not however easily translate to the U.K. and it is not possible to recall any recent occasion on which the U.K. churches have been in the forefront of campaigns leading to a greater measure of equality for black people.

 America also affords black theologians an academic environment in which black religious pedagogy can be advanced. Howard University, for instance, was originally established as a theological seminary for African-Americans and continues to actively promote black scholarship (http://www.howard.edu/explore/history.htm.).

In a largely secular nation such as the U.K. Christian theology may struggle as a distinct academic discipline. Given the paucity of black academic U.K. theologians and the relative absence of African-British scholarship it is hard to conceive of black theology evolving from a minority interest in to a mainstream academic discipline. Such an approach in U.K. churches could also be reconceptualised as anti-white and anti-Christian rhetoric. Reddie (2003) recognises this tension in his own attempts to bring black informed theology into the mainstream. He speaks of how an ethnically mixed conference meeting to

address issues of black religiosity "was inhibited and restrained by colour blind theology" (69) and the lack of credence

> "given to the significant and historical and socio-political differences between people of African descent and people of White European origins. It has been the failure to acknowledge these different experiences and realities which has led to the continuing failure of existing, White dominated, curricula to engage meaningfully with Black people in Britain". (Reddie 2003: 68)

Burrell, an American writer, goes further, viewing Christianity as one of the negative processes that contributed to "the myth of Black inferiority" (2010: 188). He is critical of what he considers black people's "Christian indoctrination beneath the yoke of enslavement" (188) and Christianity's alleged role in encouraging dependency and passivity amongst black people by encouraging them to wait for heavenly salvation rather than addressing their oppression on earth. Burrell(2010:188) further challenges the "concept of God standing with the oppressed against the scourge of dehumanizing racism" and suggests that

> "These experts of theological propaganda have an inside track with blacks whose identity is tightly wound around perceptions of inferiority, poverty and helplessness. The subtle but inescapable conclusion; should we no longer qualify as oppressed and downtrodden, we would no longer be part of the Christian community". (2010: 188)

Whilst the scenario Burrell sketches is not necessarily "inescapable" given that black theology emerged in counter resistance to white "experts of theological propaganda", his exposition of how religion has been used against black people to legitimate their oppression and suffering appears valid. The existence of black theology does not of itself mean that Christianity's negative impact is entirely mitigated.

Conclusion

This chapter has explored learning from the CAS and its subsequent influence on my research. Social work has attempted in the past to address issues of racism and to remain attuned to the' story' of black people's experiences. Black theology has identified Christianity as a crucial element of that story – part of black history and, since slavery, inseparable from it, seen by some as a force

for good, by others as part of the problem in encouraging black people to acquiesce to a white male world view.

This study to some extent brings together what I previously saw in the CAS as somewhat disparate theories of anti-racism and black theology. In identifying the significance of black elder's Christian faith, I potentially open up space for them to talk and for me to listen. I will now go on to discuss issues of how this will be advanced through the methodology and the methods used within the study.

Chapter Three: Methodology and Methods

This research is primarily exploratory. It seeks to ask questions and generate insights about black Christian elders in order to better understand their experiences and needs. I intend to establish 'meanings' through an analysis of people's subjective perceptions of their religious / racial experiences and how these might contribute to social work in general and social work practice with black Christians more specifically. In this sense, the enquiry has an emancipatory element as it has the potential to bring about change (Robson 2002).

The chapter commences with a discussion on racial location and subjectivity. This includes consideration of the ethical issues involved in undertaking research with black people within a white academic institution. I have started with such a focus because there was little in my reading of mainstream research literature (Shaw and Gould 2001;Silverman 2004;Robson 2002; Bryman 2004; Wills 2007) to guide my understanding of how the narratives of black people might be considered or how the learning that emerges from them might challenge and shape the white academy.

My role as a researcher forms part of the research context that requires ethical consideration alongside other elements of the research activity. The chapter then defines methodology before moving on to consider social constructivism and critical realism. Both of these discourses are pertinent to the study and in locating my research position. I discuss qualitative research which then leads on to a consideration of research methods and the narrative approach used.

The second part of the chapter focuses on the selection of participants and the research activity itself. I then return to a more practical examination of ethical issues by discussing the standards that inform social work research and how I addressed them. The chapter concludes by outlining the method of data analysis I undertook and the theoretical perspectives used.

Issues of racial location and subjectivity

I begin with a consideration of the subjective issues involved in undertaking research with black elders and the broader ethical issues this poses. This is because I consider the question *Is the research ethical?* to be the primary consideration within which discussions of methodology should be grounded. As a researcher I am clearly not unconnected to the ethical and moral considerations of how knowledge is formulated and transmitted.

A number of writers (Denzin & Lincoln 2000; Mason 2002; Robson 2002; Silverman 2004; O'Leary 2005) explore how the researcher's epistemological and theoretically constructed social location affects the interest and assumptions that are brought to research and how the researcher is viewed by participants. They speak of the need to locate oneself within the research process and the potential tensions this can create as the researcher's presence is not neutral. This gives rise to power differentials between the researcher and research subjects that need to be properly understood if the emancipatory potential of the research is to be realised. They conclude that, whilst bias and interpretation can be moderated by the rigour of the research and the scrutiny applied to its analysis, it can never be entirely removed. This reinforces Shaw's point that in encouraging people to tell their stories, "we become characters in those stories" (2008: 408).

Fine and Weis indicate that it is important to be mindful of one's own values and social location so as to reflect on "*how to enable participant's voices to be heard in ways that are not too strongly filtered through the researcher's lenses*" (Fine and Weis 1998:17). Within such a complex reality I need to explore and articulate space for black elders' stories and related black pedagogy whilst building those stories on the foundations of white dominated research methods.

Erskine (2010) claims that black pedagogy and, by extension, liberation pedagogy has always been mediated by the dominance of white authority and intellectual thought. He argues that black people have lacked the economic and social capital to be autonomous and have been admitted to white institutions with little power to effect more than token change. He further suggests that,

once in white controlled educational institutions, black students have to operate according to these norms and – at best – claim or be afforded space to create black caucuses, courses or groups in which to create "Black sacred space for being and knowing" (Erskine 2010: 31).He argues that black people come to depend on white people for their validation and have learnt through the history of their subjugation and oppression "that they could not be their best selves without white people. The truth is that many Black people still believe that with disastrous consequences for liberation pedagogy" (2010: 31).

Reddie (2003) explores a similar theme. He argues that white theology has rendered black people "nobodies" through its inability to ensure that biblical teaching resonates with black people's history and experience, which, according to Shockley "has been forged and developed in the furnace of oppression and marginalisation" (1995: 315 cited in Reddie 2003: 47).

Mohanty (1991 cited in Ribbens and Edwards 1998) questions whether researchers from minority ethnic group backgrounds unintentionally become part of the colonisation processes by formulating research on minority group subjects in ways that accord with white academic tradition, acceptability, and assumptions. She queries whether allowing white people to access previously concealed knowledge enables them to gain insights that become reframed in ways that are not in the interests of the minority group subjects. Cain (1993) poses a similar question in respect of white feminist literature, where related discussions take place. Ribbens and Edwards (1998) ask, "Are we contributing to the blocking and politically neutralising discourse of public power. ..?" (13). Such authors equally recognise that if previously excluded groups do not define their own stories, identities and experiences, then dominant voices and interpretation retain ascendency whilst the identities of subjugated groups continue to have no alternative discourse.

The complex issues of research subjectivity and researcher location are of central interest. They have required that I consider whether it is ethically correct and acceptable to expose black stories – and with them black suffering – for white scrutiny and discussion within the white systems of knowledge against

which I and other black people have struggled. I have not easily answered the question, as it affords no easy answer.

What I can hope is that my awareness of the multi-dimensional nature of the dilemma has informed my approach to the research and, more importantly, my analysis and interpretation of the stories I have been privileged to be given. The reflections also underpin, permeate and influence my understanding of the more general ethical requirements that govern research and particularly research carried out in a social work tradition, the professional values of which are embedded in complex moral and political issues, and which are discussed more fully from page 55.

I have been asked by one supervisor to consider how the experience might have differed had one or both of my supervisors been black. There is no black academy within the U.K. and an individual black academic would arguably operate within the context of the white academy Erskine discusses (2010). A black supervisor may have afforded opportunities to engage more directly in black academic discourse and been personally supportive but such reflections can only be speculative and the straight forward answer is 'I cannot know'. The need for such a question to be answered is of itself an ethical issue as it potentially minimises the white academy's responsibility to consider how it supports black academic enquiry and challenges its own dominance.

Having acknowledged some of the tensions inherent in the research, I will now go on to discuss my research methodology before focusing on qualitative research within which this study is conducted.

Research methodology: what is it?

Somekh and Lewin (2005:346) explain that methodology,

> "in its narrowest sense is the collection of methods and rules by which a particular piece of research is undertaken. However it is generally used in a broader sense to mean the whole system of principles, theories and values that underpin the research".

Bryman (2004) discusses the range of methodological influences on the research and the researcher. These vary from practical considerations of research design and strategy to the researcher's own values, the reason why the research is undertaken, the methods used to extract the information and the framework within which it is analysed. Whittaker (2009:3) indicates that methodology embraces the six stages of the research from planning to write up and includes the "totality of how you are going to undertake your research". This suggests that methodology is a 'pathway' rather than an approach, one that commences as the research question is being formulated through to completion and the insights, or 'answers', the research has afforded. Methodology therefore extends beyond the mere research process to embrace issues of epistemology and broader philosophical and ethical considerations and dilemmas.

Methodology includes both the evidenced and the more intangible. By this I mean consideration and justification of the methods used in the research (Willis 2007; Cresswell 2008; Dawson 2009) alongside an understanding that methodology is shaped and influenced by the social and political context in which it takes place. Bryman (2004) for instance discusses how no research is value free with the research approach and the ontological and epistemological orientations that inform differing according to the nature of the research and the context in which it is undertaken. Methodology is therefore also concerned with the reasoning behind the research question and the methods through which it is explored.

Methodology does not appear to lend itself to a clear and unambiguous definition but clearly embraces the multiplicity of tensions, considerations and reflexivity inherent within research itself. The researcher needs to bring to the fore both the 'visible' parts of the research that can be evidenced through descriptions of methods and theory along with the assumptions, values and ethical dilemmas that may initially be hidden – what Bryman (2004:27) describes as "'conscious partiality".

Such reflection has aided my own understanding of the importance of not severing methodology from the differing elements of my study. Methodology is as relevant to the earlier chapters where I make explicit some of the personal and professional influences and assumptions that I bring to the research as it is to the discussion on research paradigms and methods that follow. As such, methodology embraces subjectivity (as discussed in the previous section) as well as the theories influencing my research position which I now discuss.

Social constructivism

This study is concerned with how a group of African-Caribbean Christian elders subjectively construct meaning. Social constructivism is a methodological approach that views the learner as an integral part of how knowledge is constructed. Bryman (2004: 538) describes constructivism as "an ontological position that asserts that social phenomena and their meaning are continually being accomplished by social actors".

In developing the theory, Vygotsky (1962) observed children and their classroom teachers and how the former learnt more effectively when there was interaction over how the task might best be performed. This led him to conclude that children were part of the process by which knowledge was acquired and transmitted and not merely passive recipients of pre-determined facts (Daniels 1996).

Social constructivists do not negate the importance of the physical world; they do however reject what Willis (2007: 257) describes as "a grand narrative of science that is universal", and instead "emphasise research about specific contexts". They do not consider knowledge to be immutable but constructed through people's understanding of and engagement with the social world. Gall argues that the social environment has no objective reality and that "social reality is constructed by individuals who participate in it" (Gall 1996 cited in Willis 2007: 96).

Scott (1999 extends this theme by suggesting that:

"It is not individuals who have experience but subjects who are constituted through experience. Experience in this definition then becomes not the origin of our explanation, not the authoritative (because seen or felt) evidence that grounds what is known, but what we seek to explain, that about which knowledge is produced". (cited in Hessey, Biber and Leavy 2007: 96)

Constructivists argue that the social world does not exist in isolation from people. Things that may be viewed as natural are instead a consequence of social processes constructed through the experiences, ideas, thoughts and behaviour of human beings rather than simply by the laws of natural science.

The relevance of social constructivism can be seen within social work. Definitions of social work (IFSW) and its codes of practice and ethics (GSCC 2010; BASW 2002) identify users as active participants in the social work process. The Social Care Institute for Excellence (SCIE 2010, 2012) produces good practice examples in which service users' "knowledge" is key. The involvement of services users in the design and delivery of social work training courses (SWRB 2011) also implies that they have a knowledge base of equal validity to that of formal educators and practitioners and that meaning is constructed accordingly through their experiences, language and insights.

Social constructivism therefore entwines the perceptions, experiences and values of all those involved in the research process.

In addition to social constructivism, my research position was influenced by critical realism.

Critical Realism

Critical realists believe that an analysis of certain events and social concepts and the power relations on which they are based (oppression, racism, slavery etc.) can establish "broad truths" with regards to people's current social position. In order to do so it is necessary to critique currently prevailing power relationships, the particular ideology that underpins them and the interests they serve (Morrow & Brown1994; Willis 2007).

Critical realism is the term used by Roy Bhaskar "in the sense that it provides a rationale for a critical social science; one that criticises the social practices it studies"(Robson 2002:40).Bhaskar adopts both a realist ontology and social constructivist epistemology by outlining that social structures exist regardless of our awareness of them (Mingers 2004). As Bhaskar puts it, "we will only be able to understand- and so change- the social world if we identify the structures at work that generate those events and discourses" (Bhaskar 1989: 2 cited in Bryman 2004:12).

Robson (2002:14) suggests that this stance provides "a third way between positivism and relativism" and in so doing might "help fulfil the emancipatory potential of social research" (2002:41).This is because critical realism challenges normalised truths around, for instance, gender (Sayer 2000; Hesse-Biber & Leavy 2007) and race (Erskine 2010) in order to underpin the impetus for change and the increased liberation of marginalised groups. This accords with Canella and Lincoln's view (2004:302) that "research as a construct was/ is conceived as a political act that generates power for particular groups" (cited in Willis 2007:85).

Robson (2002) outlines an example drawn from Sayer's work (2000). He suggests that gender differences may be seen as 'natural' rather than a product of learnt behaviour and socialisation. Social scientists who subscribe to such a view "would fail to understand gender. To explain social phenomena one has to acknowledge this dependency of actions on shared meanings whilst showing in what respects they are false, if they are" (Sayer 2000: 18-19 cited in Robson 2000: 43).

Archer & Collier et al (2004) consider critical realism as applicable to religious experience as to any other belief system. They stress that the need to question established truths regarding religion and God's existence applies equally to non belief. This is a relevant point. Black theology accepts God as a given but challenges how religious truth has been interpreted and applied to the seeming detriment of black men and women. Christian elders 'know' there to be a God and the study is interested in the process and meaning of that knowing.

Having identified my research position, I will now go on to discuss qualitative research, as this is the approach that underpins my work.

Qualitative Research

Qualitative research focuses on investigative methodologies. It is underpinned by interpretative, social constructionist and phenomenological approaches through which people's experiences are captured and their written and / or spoken words analysed. With such a focus the research provides insights that cannot be sourced by quantitative methods alone. Indeed, its emergence and the varying stages of its continued development have evolved in part to counteract positivism's emphasis on the directly quantifiable (Mason 2002; Creswell 2007; Wills 2007).

McLaughlin (2007) rightly points out that quantitative and qualitative research approach the world differently and thus provide different answers that arguably inform social work practice and / or theories. Like McLaughlin, a number of authors agree that quantitative and qualitative methodologies are not in competition with each other, as each bring new and additional insights to a range of issues (Bryman 1989; Flick 2002; Somekh and Lewin 2005; Willis 2007).

Theorists variably describe qualitative research as the means by which people's individual and / or group experiences are identified, explored and analysed.

> "Qualitative research is multi-method in focus, involving an interpretive, naturalistic approach to its subject matter … qualitative researchers study things in their natural settings, attempting to make sense of, or interpret, phenomena in terms of the meanings that people bring to them". (Denzin & Lincoln 1988: 3)

Shank (2002: 5) defines qualitative research as "a form of systematic empirical inquiry into meaning". He goes on to explain that empirical meaning is grounded in actual experience through research that is planned and well organised. Silverman (2001) also explains qualitative research's exploration of experience by suggesting that such research is interested in ordinary people

and how they discuss their lives or aspects of them. Willis (2007: 181) offers a similar theme, describing qualitative research as "an approach to understanding human and social behaviour".

Payne and Payne (2004: 175) identify the usefulness of qualitative research by indicating that it produces:

> "detailed and non-quantitative accounts of small groups, seeking to interpret the   meaning people make of their lives in natural settings, on the assumption that social interactions form an integrated set off relationships best understood by inductive processes".

Gubrium and Holsten (1997) outline the four traditions of qualitative research: naturalism, emotionalism, ethnomethodology, and postmodernism (cited in Bryman 2004: 267). Whilst each tradition lends itself to slightly different interests and methods, they are variably concerned with understanding the social world and people's experiences and perceptions of it. This understanding usually "emphasises words rather than quantification in the collection and analysis of data" (Bryman 2004: 266).

In emphasising words, qualitative research affords opportunity for previously marginalised voices to be heard and their experiences theorised. The work of Oakley (1974) was one of the first U.K. attempts to use qualitative research to make public women's previously private role as housewives. According to Ribbens and Edwards (1998) research has traditionally been constructed by (white) men to address what they describe as "public knowledge". This they define as activity made visible for academic and professional audiences and in the public domain. They suggest that the lives of women are marginalised in this process as much of their daily activity and concerns takes place in the private setting of home and family even when they undertake outside work. As such women's concerns and the transitions they make between the private and the public sphere are seldom theorised in mainstream literature.

Denzin and Lincoln (2005) suggest that qualitative research has often been seen as 'soft' in comparison with quantitative research, which can more easily address issues of validity and replication.

Sikes and Gale (2006:14) counteract some of these criticisms by arguing that:

> "Ironically, when advocates of positivism criticise narrative research and researchers by telling or rather "making up" stories and, therefore, not meeting criteria of "objectivity", "validity" and "reliability", they often seem to have conveniently forgotten that all approaches to and understandings of, research are "made up" social constructions. As Patricia Clough has stated, "all factual representations of reality, even statistical representations, are narratively constructed"(1992:2): because there is no other way of doing it".

This indicates that issues of validity are considerations in all research. I return to these themes in Chapter Seven, where I reflect on the limitations and strengths of my research approach.

Qualitative research and social work

Shaw and Gould (2001) recognise the rich terrain social work affords qualitative researchers but caution against generalising its context. This is because contemporary social work mediates between various dichotomies such as the profession's statutory vs. enabling functions, its supportive and caring role vs. the highly structured forums in which key protection decisions are made, and the resultant 'control vs. care' dilemma that underpin social work responsibilities. Whilst it is commonly used within social work (Whittaker 2009) qualitative research is not without its critics.

Sheldon (1978) largely dismisses qualitative social work research as "a collection of idiographic studies that do not build towards an edifice of knowledge" (Shaw and Gould 2001: 137). Shaw states that "when it comes to matters of research and evaluation, social workers are vulnerable to sentimentality, marked by a nurturing of myths and a tendency to superstitious practices" (Shaw 1999: 109 cited in Butler 2003: 21).

Shaw however is equally critical of the quantitative research legacy he feels social work has inherited from social scientists such as Sheldon. In discussing evidence based practice and its tendency to quantify and 'prove' tangible outcomes, Shaw (2003:21) comments that it is "heir to this nomothetic, utilitarian and pragmatic tendency in the social sciences more generally".

Butler (2003) believes that the emancipatory and distinctive nature of U.K. social work research and its quality is in danger of being eroded by the increased emphasis on managerialism and government driven research agendas. He questions the shift towards "evidence based practice" and accommodation of Research Assessment Exercise (RAE) and argues against a reliance on tangible outcomes and the subsequent negation of service user's experiences more readily captured through qualitative research methods.

Butler feels that research must be undertaken and disseminated in a manner that engages with social works' moral purpose of promoting change with and for those whose needs and views are often marginalised rather than "attempting to engineer a solution to a problem", which Williams (2000 cited in Butler 2003) suggests is the focus of much social work research activity.

Strier (2007) suggests that social work research has not been subject to the same anti-oppressive focus as social work education and practice. He cites the work of Humphries and Truman (1994) in arguing that anti-oppressive research is rooted in "the participatory, action orientated and emancipatory approaches of social science research" (Strier 2007:3) and should be underpinned by certain ethical principles that empower oppressed people. The CAS study suggested that black Christians' sense of empowerment is rooted in their faith and in God as a higher power than humans; what Fowler (1981) describes as black people's "ultimate reality". None the less, Strier's central message is that research that seeks to better understand and give voice to those who are often marginalised must of itself ensure that oppressive practice is not part of its methodology.

Whittaker (2009) does not view quantitative and qualitative research as necessarily in conflict. He outlines the varied ways in which quantitative

research might be useful within social work with testable hypotheses to explore the inter-relationship between variables (i.e. mental health and social exclusion) and to provide quantitative information about need. He acknowledges the limitations of quantitative research whilst citing the contribution that it has historically made (and continues to make).

Qualitative research embraces a number of methods and this discussion brings me to a consideration of the narrative approach that I adopted .

Towards a method: Narrative approach

As indicated in the previous sections, qualitative research is influenced by a number of traditions and methods. I decided on narrative research as my primary research method because from the outset my intention was to give voice to peoples' stories based on a rationale fully discussed in Chapter One. I considered it the means by which I could most effectively sit down with each elder and hear, record and subsequently analyse their stories. The selected method does not sit in isolation from such subsequent analysis, as is discussed on page 58.

Sarbin (1986 cited in Whiitaker 2009: 15) suggests that narrative approaches are "interested in the storied nature of human conduct". Narrative research seeks to understand the content or structure or purpose of a person's story and is therefore a family of related methods (Riessman and Quinny 2005). Shaw and Gould (2001: 75) advise that "narrative analysis takes as its object of investigation the story itself" and the meaning the story teller gives to it.

Other theorists (Sarbin 1986; Reisman 1993, 1994; Plummer 1995; Hinchman and Hinchman 1997; Clandinin and Connelly 2000; Webster & Mertova 2007) emphasise that people develop accounts of themselves and their experiences that are 'storied' in ways that enable people to make sense of their world – in other words, to interpret their experiences. They describe how through the articulation, reaffirmation and modification of experiences people apply meaning to events that are otherwise hidden.

These insights indicate that narrative research is not undertaken simply to chart people's individual experiences. According to Reissman (1994), experience is formulated within a historical, cultural, social and structural framework that increases knowledge and constructs explanations of a particular issue. This suggests that people's stories have a context that needs to be understood within often shifting paradigms. Narrative draws from the past, goes through an internalised process of reflection and then becomes 'storied' through its articulation.

> "As Mills said long ago, what we call 'personal troubles' are located in particular times and places, and individual narratives about their troubles are works of history, as much as they are about individuals, the social spaces they inhabit, and the societies they live in" (Shaw and Gould 2001: 74-5).

Social work is concerned with 'personal troubles and the experiences and insights of the people with whom it works (Gibbs 2001; Shaw and Gould 2001; Whittaker 2009) so it perhaps unsurprising that narrative research is commonly used within U.K and international social work and related social care settings, (Borden 1992; Riesman 1994 Plummer 1995; Shaw & Gould 2001;LeCroy 2002; Reisman and Quinney 2005;Lehman 2006).

Unlike the functionalist approach, which explores what a person's story might mean and how it operates in people's lives, social work narratives tend to be more concerned with the sociological context (Plummer 1995). They explore the social, cultural, historical and political context of the story and why it is being told. Whilst each narrative is subjective, the approach provides a means by which social work's understanding of diverse groups might be enhanced. It is intended to ultimately improve practice for the benefit of those whose narratives have been interpreted and which underpin the researcher's enhanced knowledge and subsequent theorisation.

Criticisms of the approach

 Most narrative research relies on individual or small group interviews, including my own, focusing as it does on 14 individual elders. This makes it very time consuming and labour intensive and means that relatively small samples of people are used. Atkinson (1908) and Gubrium & Holstein (2001) caution against an overreliance on extended interviews and of the potential of the researcher to influence accounts.

Atkinson (1998) argues that narrative research is also highly dependent on the method of analysis and the externalisation of what is said by the subject. Indeed Elliot (2005: 6) indicates that the researcher is "also a narrator" of the story, suggesting that the researcher's own interpretation and bias may shape the analysis as much as the stories themselves. As such, the research may not meet criterion of validity, trustworthiness and objectivity. The narrative analysis is not then necessarily transferable, which can minimise its usefulness in terms of generalisability. Hammerley (2000) also suggests that whilst narrative research can assist in the discovery and articulation of the problem, this does not of itself illuminate understanding of how it might be resolved.

Whilst these objections must be taken seriously, they do not invalidate the approach. If narrative research was not undertaken, it is difficult to see how the experiences and view points of the marginalised and excluded would be articulated within the academy and used as an informing influence of change. As O'Leary points out, it is usually dominant social groups with power and privilege who contribute to the "scientific production of knowledge" (O'Leary 2005:66). It is perhaps not insignificant that the narrative approach is well rooted in feminist research (Hessey, Biber & Leavy 2007). "At the core of feminist research, therefore, is the commitment to give voice to previously marginalized and silenced people" (Davis & Srinivisan 1994: 348).

Having outlined some of the methodological discussion and the selected method within which the research is framed, I will now go on to explain what the research consisted of, how the research subjects were selected and the tools I adopted in order to undertake the research.

Part Two: The research: the what, how and why.

As identified in Chapters One and Two, the research question emerged incrementally. I wanted to explore an area of black people's lives that seemed to be under-theorised within social work and within anti-racist literature more generally. The secularism within the profession of which Holloway (2006) and Furnham and Benson et al (2005) speak was masking a potentially important area of African-Caribbean people's history, identity and beliefs. Equally, the theorisation of race within social work negated the cultural and historical significance of the Christian faith. It has been left to Black British theology – and particularly the works of Anthony Reddie (2003, 2006, 2009) to apply theory to specific cultural practices with black elders. I wanted to help social work 'catch up' a little.

The precise focus of the question was not however straightforward. As discussed in Chapter One, initial attempts to formulate it for the research proposal seemed incomplete and unsatisfactory, and it was not until the latter stages of the research that I settled on the final question of: *What can social work practice learn from the stories African-Caribbean Christian elders?* I consider the process of reflection and adaptation to be important so as to ask a question that speaks to mainstream social work whilst clearly identifying that potential learning emerges from the narratives of a distinct group of black people.

Data Collection: Selection of interview sites and interviewees

In Chapter One I identified the rationale for the study and the reasons why I selected African-Caribbean elders. The interviews took place between November 2009 and May 2010. They were undertaken with twelve individual African-Caribbean Christians aged between 70 and 90, and one married couple who were in their early 80s. The elders attended two different black majority churches in South London. I opted for two interview sites rather than one to gain a broader range of perspectives than would be possible if it were a single church and denomination.

In considering possible interview sites I attended as a congregational member seven churches in a geographical area of South London with a large black population. One of these churches was Catholic, one Church of England, two Pentecostal, one Methodist, one Baptist and one United Reformed / Baptist combined. This enabled me to identify those which appeared to have Caribbean attendees in the relevant age profile and who would hence be a useful source to subsequently approach.

Three churches emerged as possibilities – the Methodist and Baptist churches had white ministers but an overwhelming black congregation of mixed ages. The third, a Pentecostal churches had a black minister and an all black congregation. The colour and ethnic background of the minister/ pastor was less important than the number of potential participants, as they were effectively gate keepers to the elders rather than participants in the research itself. Three churches had to be excluded because they either had predominately white congregations (C. of E. and Baptist/ United Reformed) or, if ethnically diverse, (Catholic) the black attendees were not of Caribbean descent. The second Pentecostal church had an all black congregation of both Caribbean and African descent, but had a young profile with nobody appearing to be over retirement age.

I then approached the pastor/ minister of the three churches after one of the services and briefly explained what I was planning to do and asking whether s/he was willing for this to be considered. The Methodist minister advised that they would need to speak with the church elders about the request but was unable to tell me when this would be. The minister did not get back to me despite having my details, and after one reminder telephone call I did not pursue this church.

The white (English) Baptist minister whom I had known through previously attending the church agreed that I could put a short note in the church newsletter and also speak to members of the congregation. Following this agreement I spoke directly to as many of the Caribbean elders as I could identify, explaining what I hoped to do and asking if they were willing to let me

have their contact details so that I could phone and explain more. If they expressed an interest I also gave them a short information sheet with my contact details (Appendix 1).I then rang each of the eleven potential respondents and if they were in agreement we arranged an interview time. One woman decided that she did not wish to participate and I subsequently interviewed ten people from Barley House Church. The minister had no involvement in the selection and asked me nothing further about the research.

The Pentecostal church followed a similar pattern, with five people who initially agreed to participate from a smaller target group. However as the interview schedule was being arranged a member of the church community died and the elders did not feel able to proceed. I initially considered only using the one interview site but, as this had a white minister, I wanted to complement this with hearing from at least a small number of elders attending a black led church. Eventually a friend who attended a Pentecostal church with a Jamaican born Pastor directly approached a number of elders on my behalf. I then went to the church to speak with them and with their agreement took their contact details. I subsequently interviewed four people from the Grace and Glory Church.

Once the churches were identified I attended four additional services in each church specifically to listen to the sermon content and to see who led the services and what took place within them. My attendance also enabled me to 'be seen' in the church whilst identifying and approaching potential interviewees.

The elders had the option of my visiting their home or arranging to do the interview at the church. Only one person from Barley House Church who lived with her daughter and grandchildren selected the second option. My initial concerns were about how private the sessions might be in someone's home if telephones rang or people visited did not materialise. The elders were either home on their own or took me into a separate room away from other family members.

Research Tools

My choice of research tools was inevitably shaped by the research method I adopted. As discussed in the earlier section, narrative research seeks to make visible previously hidden stories. As the purpose of the study is to give voice to and learn from the lives and experiences of black Christian elders, the main research tool used was semi structured interviews.

Robson suggests that qualitative research interviews are a valid technique "where a study focuses on the meaning of a particular phenomena to the participants" (Robson 2002: 271). He cites Powney and Watts' work (1987) in distinguishing between *respondent interviews* based on pre-structured questions and *informant interviews* which adopt a semi- or unstructured approach that enables the respondent to be less directed in expressing the things that are important to them. Interviews are not however the exclusive domain of qualitative research and because they can be formulated and conducted in such a variety of ways are a research method extensively used within both quantitative and qualitative traditions (Barbour and Schostak cited in Somekh and Lewin 2005).

I selected a semi-structured *informant interview* approach as the most appropriate research tool. Whittaker (2009) discusses the difficulties of completely unstructured interviews, as the material may be so far ranging and diffuse as to make subsequent analysis problematic. Equally, a fully structured interview schedule or questionnaire pre-assumes the areas that the respondents might wish to discuss and possibly restricts other lines of enquiry being explored. This then limits the interviewees' voice and gives primacy to the researcher.

Semi-structured interviews potentially allow for an interview schedule to be adopted and broad questions to be formulated whilst enabling flexibility in how they are answered. Whittaker (2009) also suggests that subsequent data analysis is more effectively facilitated given that the main issue for researchers is using interviews to "generate data which give an authentic insight into people's experiences" (Silverman 2001: 87).

I considered one to one interviews to be more appropriate than small group interviews for the generation of such data. The small scale nature of the research and physical frailty of some of the elders would have made it difficult to resolve issues of transportation and venues. Organising people into groups and moderating the inter group dynamics would potentially mean that some people's voices might dominate and that my attention on managing the group process might detract from attention to the person speaking and their non-verbal responses (Mason 2002). Ethical issues of confidentiality would also have been more complex as interviewees would have been known to others in the group. This may well have prevented the disclosure of more personal information and / or limited the amount of time each person had to tell their own story. I did interview one married couple together having given them the choice of being seen separately. It required me to be more conscious of ensuring that both partners had the opportunity to speak and that I did not assume that what one said was also the view of the other.

In the same way that there are a range of interview types there is also a multiplicity of ways in which they might be carried out. Within the research literature for instance Wengraf (2001) discusses the more prescriptive approaches that are useful when there is a need to evidence tight consistency between what one person is asked and another (i.e. in some recruitment interviews) to the looser interview style more consistent with the semi-structured interview approach I adopted (Appendix 2). This enabled me to have a structure within which the interview was conducted whilst reducing my input (and potential bias) by enabling interviewees the maximum opportunity to talk and construct their own meaning. My objective was to explore people's opinions and seek clarifications and explanation through a process of active listening in which my input / interruptions were relatively limited and non-directional.

The discussion on narratives is not therefore dislocated from research tools that explore how those narratives might be accessed and the speaker's voice given primacy. On reflection, I initially underestimated the complexity of drawing out people's stories in ways that illuminated the research question whilst being mindful of the memories that story telling might generate. Elders commented

that they enjoyed having the time and space just to talk about a personal story which they had long submerged or simply not had opportunity to speak of before. In some cases this meant that people talked of things that were important to them but which drifted away from the focus of the questions. In my pilot interview the elder went in to minute and very lengthy detail about an operation that she had undergone. This experience enabled me to slightly tighten the subsequent interview structure but did not entirely resolve the issue; as one of my main goals was to allow people to speak. Ethically I did not feel that I could necessarily cut people off because to do so would make the research about me and also close down the space for a group of people who are too often in the shadows.

People do not communicate in interviews through the spoken word alone. Mehrabian's study (1971) also reminds us that the tone of voice and visual / non-verbal clues contribute more information and meaning than words. Hence the interviewer is consciously or otherwise responding to such ' cues' and also applying analysis to what a person's expressions and intonations might mean. The use of a Dictaphone enabled me to focus on both the interviewees' verbal and non verbal communication rather than my trying to take notes during the interview.

Having discussed the research tools and general approach, it is necessary to return to the discussion of ethical issues begun on page 34. This is because Truman et al. (2000) comment on the distinctive elements of emancipatory research by suggesting that such work should link to wider questions of justice and social inequality and recognise the ethical tensions inherent in such activity (cited in Shaw and Gould 2001). I will therefore be exploring the ethical codes and professional considerations that frame social work research and how I ensured that they were adhered too.

Social work research and ethics

A number of writers (Robson 2002; Long and Johnson 2007; Whittaker 2009) outline the general ethical framework within which qualitative research should be located. These include the researcher obtaining participant's informed

consent, ensuring the confidentiality of people's identity and of the data and avoiding discrimination or bias in the selection of participants.

The British Association of Social Work (BASW 2002) places research ethics within its broader code whereby issues of integrity, informed consent and cultural sensitivity are profiled. It requires researchers to adhere to the same ethical principles as social work managers and practitioners in centralising concern for the rights, dignity and self-determination of users. In addition, the code requires researchers to work to the highest possible standards in all aspects of the research proposal, design, analysis and dissemination. In this way research does not become a separate part of social work activity, governed by fundamentally different ethics and principles but an activity that has to balance user's rights and their protection with the pursuit of knowledge and the research aims (Flick 2002).

Ethical approval for the research was obtained through discussion with the research supervisor and initial completion of the USS (Sussex Institute) ethical considerations checklist 2008 (Appendix 4). The guidance underpinning the checklist is broken down in to a number of ethical standards. These are consistent with the general principles outlined by BASW and the writers referred to above. Ethical processes within the University's School of Education and Social Work have since been updated with the introduction of more rigorous policies and procedures that involve more than the research supervisor (www.sussexdirect). This suggests that concern for potentially vulnerable people who might be the subject of research needs to be kept under constant scrutiny.

Specific ethical standards needed to be applied to the research, which I did in the following ways:

(i)   Informed consent

The research literature reveals that obtaining consent is invariably more complex than simply asking a person's permission to interview them. Finch (1986), Eisner (1991),Thompson (2002) and Schutt (2006) all speak of the somewhat hazardous process of obtaining participant's informed consent when

it may not be precisely clear as to what they are consenting to. Shaw (2008) explores the various complications and ethical issues of seeking consent whilst engaging people in a process in which the information emerging from people's narratives can neither be presumed nor other people's response to it known.

In ethical terms I was mindful of the need for careful discussion / information in respect of the research in which the elders were being asked to participate. This was especially the case if any elder had hearing or sight difficulties that necessitated documentation being produced in larger type or if hearing loops and / or disability access was needed at interview sites.

I therefore ensured that I spoke directly to potential participants in church about the research and what it would involve. I made clear that there was no pressure or expectation on them to be involved. I explained that if they eventually decided to participate information about them, their churches and the stories they provided would not be individually identified within the study and the documentation would remain confidential to me. Where people expressed an interest I provided a short information sheet in larger type print (Appendix 1) which I read through with them. I agreed to make contact a few days later once they had had a chance to re-read and consider the contents. I contacted each potential participant by telephone. I again reaffirmed that the decision on whether to take part was for them and if they did go ahead they were free to change their mind at a later date.

On arriving for the interview and before it commenced I went through a consent form (Appendix 4) which I asked participants to sign. I explained that they could stop the interview at any time or subsequently decide that they did not want their material used. I also left a copy of the form with my contact details.

In following the ethical guidance concerning informed consent I might have conveyed the impression that elders were incapable of giving their consent without repeated reiteration on my part. Indeed, there were elders who did not feel a need to sign the form because they had already told me that they wanted to take part or who stated that sitting down talking with me was evidence of their agreement.

On reflection, elders saw 'consent' as being about their agreeing to let me into their home to interview them and for my using the resultant interview material anonymously in my studies. Once they had said yes they did not see why they needed to keep repeating themselves. It is therefore important to properly balance the provision of information to potential participants and the ability of people to make choices without the researcher needing the security of having shown that they have sought such agreement on repeated occasions.

(ii) Confidentiality

Participants were assured that no identifying factors would be used within the study or their personal or church details made known. I explained that the interview data would be used by me for academic purposes with the emphasis being on the learning that emerged from the interviewees' stories collectively. Within the study pseudonyms are used for each participant with consideration given to names commonly found in the Caribbean within their age group. The two churches are also given alternative names and no identifiable characteristics are provided.

The interviews were held in private, primarily within people's own homes. Each interview was taped and the tapes and transcribed papers kept at home in a locked cupboard.

(iii)   Avoidance of harm

The issue of informed consent cannot be separated from the need to avoid harm as it is important that people are as informed as possible about what their participation might involve. The use of semi-structured interviews also enabled participants to discuss (or not discuss) issues that were important to them. They were also aware that whilst the church minister had no involvement in selecting the participants or knowledge of who they were, s/he knew that the research was taking place and hence a resource for prayer or support should they wish to use it. A number of people asked me to pray with them at the end of the session although their subsequent prayers did not necessarily link with the material they had earlier discussed. In general, a number of people

expressed enjoyment at taking part in the interviews and the opportunity afforded them to talk about their earlier life and their faith.

The notion of 'no harm' does not seem ethically sufficient. Byrne et al. (2004) suggest that we might instead focus on doing some good. Certainly in my desire to contribute to social work practice I am hopeful that I will indeed "do some good" by building upon earlier work in the field and through the articulation of experiences that might otherwise remain hidden.

(iv) Verification of data

The timing of the interviews was not entirely in my control as they had to be completed in the study weeks I had been given from work and therefore took place at an earlier stage than I might have wanted. I was therefore mindful that there was a significant gap between the first interviews and when I was ready to share and verify the selected quotes. A number of elders were very elderly and I did not feel I could simply ring people up a couple of years later and find that they were perhaps ill, coping with the bereavement of a spouse or even deceased. The research is also unfunded and undertaken whilst in full time employment. This limited the scope for repeat visits and the frailty of a number of the elders would not have easily facilitated a group gathering unless it was undertaken after a church service when participants would then have been identifiable to others. I also discovered that one of the two churches had disbanded following the departure of the pastor and the discontinuation of the rental agreement of the building where services had previously taken place. The University of Sussex ethical checklist emphasises the right of people to validate their contributions so that they can withdraw them if they wish. This does not necessarily mean that it is of itself unethical for them not to do so, if this consideration intermeshes with other ethical issues which may be just as, or more, important. Whilst the reasons for non-validation are legitimate, I also recognise it to be a potential weakness of the study, and this is discussed more fully in Chapter Seven.

Analysis: the framework used for scripting the stories

Holland and Ramazanoglu (1994) suggest that "Interpretation is as much a social exercise as a methodological undertaking" (cited in Maynard & Purvis 1994:128).This is because research takes place in a social context and is influenced by the social location of the researcher. Atkinon (1998) also argues that the personal biography of the researcher is influential in determining the methodological and ontological frameworks through which people's stories are scripted and understood. Holland and Ramazanoglu's (1994) work on young women's sexuality (cited in Maynard and Purvis 1994) also highlights the power of the researcher's interpretation of the material.

As identified on page 34, no research can claim to be value free. Silverman (2001) and others (Robson 2002; Bryman 2004) talk of the need to moderate possible bias in the interpretation of the data in order to ensure authenticity. Phillips (1971) indicates that two researchers will attach two different sets of meaning to interviewees' self defined reality and this will be partly influenced by their own personal story and characteristics.

Given that bias appears unavoidable, careful consideration is needed of the methods through which the research material is analysed and the researcher's own voice minimised. After discussion with the research supervisor, a former student who had used the method and through my own reading I decided upon voice centred relational analysis (VCR) as the most appropriate method.

VCR is a method by which data is analysed. It relies on interview tapes, transcripts and the use of markers with which to underline or highlight specific parts of the text. It requires four to five distinct reading of the transcripts. The first reading focuses on the overall story, key images, contradictions and metaphors (Gilligan et al., 2003). Mauthner and Doucet (1998) also remind of the need at this early stage for reflexivity as the researcher charts their own emotional response to the stories.

The second reading considers how the participants talk about themselves and those parts of the text where personal pronouns are used. It is concerned to

allow the participants own 'I' account to be articulated before being filtered through the prism of the researcher (Byrne et al. 2004). The third reading explores the participants' relationship with others and how these are expressed before placing those relationships within their social and cultural contexts during the fourth reading. The fifth reading is concerned with the researcher's own response to the material.

This method was initially developed by Carol Gilligan (1982) who questioned the manner in which women's voices were often hidden or their stories recast within the dominant and largely male research and analytical frameworks of that time. Gilligan's initial work (1982) created space for feminist paradigms. These challenged established analytical methods and helped to develop women led epistemology. In so doing Gilligan focused on the importance of relationships, how they are constructed and transmitted and the ascribed meaning women give to them. The voice of the research participants is given primacy rather than being overridden by the researcher's. The method assumes not merely that people will have different stories but that different researchers will interpret them differently according to their own social location and relationships. What Gilligan et al. (1995) describe as the *interpretive community* embraces the diversity of class, race and gender present within the participant group with the different research interpretations shaping the analysis accordingly.

Gilligan, along with others has continued to develop this analytical method (Mikel Brown & Gilligan 1992; Mauthner 1994; McLean Taylor, Gilligan & Sullivan 1997). VCR has increasingly been used within a number of international studies covering nursing (Levtak 2003), education (Raider-Roth & Gilligan 2005), youth justice (Siddle Walker, Snarey & Gilligan 2004) and in gender studies (Gilligan, Lyons & Hanmer 1992; Gilligan, Sullivan & McLean Taylor 1997; Levine & Gilligan 2004; Bryne, Canavan & Millar 2004).

Within social work and social care VCR is a more recently emerging genre. Fairtlough (2007) adapted the method in her work with trainees' learning on a pilot programme for working with parents. University of Sussex social work

doctorate students have also used it in their studies (Macewan 2006; Hyder-Wilson & Finch 2009) adapting the method to the context of their research.

This adaptation was also true when applied to this study. Instead of undertaking five specific readings of the written text I listened to each tape twice before transcribing elements of it and made notes on the emerging themes and the consistency or otherwise of these. This allowed me to reflect on pauses in the narrative, where participants' voices were animated or more quiet, and also to consider my own involvement in the interview in terms of prompts and interventions. The process of simultaneously hearing whilst typing the words was quite powerful and enabled me to pause the tape at certain points and to note my own reactions. From the duality of listening and reading the 'stories' described in the following two chapters began to take shape. All of the elders for instance talked about the importance of the church during their childhood and the way in which their exposure to Christianity was formed. From this I was able to select a variety of quotes through which to profile the story, identifying the relational issues and the sections where participants discussed their faith and their own racial and churched experiences

The disadvantage of the method was that the stories were not read / listened to by an interpretive community allowing for the differences of insight between narrators on which VCR is partially premised (Byrne et al. 2004). The analysis is still constructed and shaped by my own biography and interpretation alone. The process also involved a considerable amount of time and the different 'readings' were not as distinct as the method might imply.

The focus of VCR on the transcribed word alone would also have limited the analysis given that the way words are expressed and emphasised is also important. Conversely, the process of active listening / reading allowed me to immerse myself in the material, to cross reference the different accounts and to reflect on the actual stories. It also enabled me to be mindful of my own emotional response and to consider how these might potentially influence my analysis and what I did or did not include. For instance, when one woman spoke in very derogatory terms about other black people, I found it painful to

hear. When I heard the words at the initial interview my reaction was to intellectualise the reasons why black people express such racialised negativity. On re-listening to the woman's actual words in the context of the whole story, however, I was able to more dispassionately absorb the emotion and to recognise the central importance of the woman's own narrative.

The primacy VCR gives to the storied accounts of participants' partially addresses the concerns expressed by Lynch (in Byrne & Lentin (2000)) who believes qualitative research itself has become privileged, and potentially unethical, by taking the experiential knowledge of participants and placing it in the hands of 'expert' researchers in ways that are then inaccessible to others. This remains a fair criticism as it is unlikely that any of the elders will read this thesis. I have however addressed in Chapter Seven how I might disseminate the work and its learning beyond the while academy and in order to enable greater accessibility.

Having outlined the research process I will complete this chapter by considering the theories I used to conceptualise the elders' stories. The use of theorisation is important in facilitating a more informed and reflective approach to the narratives than would be achieved through their mere articulation.

Application of theory.

    (i)   Black theology

Black theology and the theoretical analysis it has provided forms part of my application. This is because of the different way in which I have come to understand black religiosity and also because it poses challenges to dominant white theoretical discourses through which black people's experiences are frequently analysed. Throughout the dissertation I have drawn from and discussed black theology so there is little need to repeat it here except perhaps to recognise that it is an evolving and partial theory that both responds to and helps shape shifting racial paradigms.

    (ii)   Transactional analysis

In reading some of the literature and reflecting on how racism is enacted, the phrase the 'games people play' came to mind. This led me to consider the theory related to the book title (Berne 1964) – transactional analysis (T.A.).

T.A. is essentially a theory of human relationships. It focuses on how people verbally transact those relationships and how they are interpreted. Berne, who originally trained as a psychotherapist draws from Freud's psychodynamic model and suggests that there are three roles or 'ego states' that characterise human interactions. These are *parent, adult* and *child*. Berne suggests that when we communicate with another person we are enacting one (or more) of these three ego states. In some cases this might be straightforward as the role transaction is complementary – i.e. a parent telling a child to go to bed and the child either doing so (compliant child) or refusing (rebellious child). Amongst adults, however, the transacted role may elicit a response that is not 'adult to adult'. This might include for instance a partner trying to get their own way through child-like pleading, or a manager shouting at a worker in a manner that triggers a child-like (compliant, fearful or rebellious) response.

Berne identifies the way in which people may use 'games' to achieve their outcomes and how others sub-consciously respond to the game playing. He describes the person sending the stimulus (i.e. initiating the conversation) as the agent and the person who responds to what is said as the respondent. The parent voice is particularly powerful as Berne suggests that it represents the ingrained voice of authority nurtured through our childhood experiences of parents, teachers and those with control over us. That authoritarian voice continues to be present for adults in the work place, in church and through the ascribed authority of the police, politicians, etc. Hence the respondent may immediately feel a range of emotions evoked from childhood powerlessness and be transformed to a child-like ego state where they either conform without question, rebel or 'play games' in order to give the impression of compliance whilst doing something different.

Berne suggests that adult to adult communication is the most effective but that all transactions should at least be complementary. Subsequent writers (Harris

1985; Stewart & Jones 1987; Harris & Harris 1985: Steiner 1990; Widdowson 2009) have refined the model by expanding the ego states and recognising that non verbal behaviour also forms part of the transaction. They all however retain Berne's basic premise of communication transactions.

I have drawn upon this theory to aid understanding of how the elders 'transact' with those in church leadership roles. It could be assumed that because God represents 'divine authority' that all believers respond to ministers / pastors with childlike compliance. Black theology teaches us something different, that faith can also sow the seeds for rebellion and liberation or nurture a relationship of equals between people similarly shaped in God's image. Transactional Analysis provides a means of understanding the responses of elders to those who assumed authority in the church and those with whom they interacted upon their migration to Britain.

These theoretical insights will be further discussed within the context of the stories and in Chapter Six where I return to the question, *What can social work learn from the stories of African-Caribbean Christian elders?*

Conclusion

This chapter has outlined my research position, explored methodology, what it is and the qualitative tradition underpinning this study. Recognition is given to narrative research as a distinct research method and the epistemological potential of its approach in unlocking and making visible storied accounts of people's lives.

Research is governed by certain ethical rules and principles and these are discussed both in terms of how they apply to the social work and academic context and how they were practically addressed within the study. The primary research tool is semi-structured interviews with a group of African-Caribbean Christian elders. The chapter has explained how interviewees were selected, data collected and subsequently analysed through an adaptation of voice centred relational analysis.

In order to now address the question *What can social work learn from the stories of African-Caribbean Christian elders?* the next two chapters detail the stories that emerged from the research and my analysis of them. I have previously discussed the process by which these stories were identified and the black theological and transactional analysis frameworks through which they will be theorised. I have previously acknowledged my own role in jointly constructing the interviews with the participants and my attempts to minimise my direct influence by introducing themes rather than a series of specific questions (Appendix 2).

Chapters Four and Five: The research findings- unlocking the stories.

Chapter Four tells of the respondent's formative years in the Caribbean, beginning with narratives of their upbringing and the strong sense of belonging their childhood engendered. I have called this *The story of growing and belonging.* Christianity and church attendance formed an important part of the elders' childhood reflections and the stories describe how this was manifested in their daily lives.

The second part of the chapter focuses on the elders' migration to the U.K as young adults. It provides account of the hardships and racism most endured in those early years, their rejection within some churches and the hurt feelings this generated. I call this *The story of rejection and pain.* The chapter then ends with some concluding commentsthat provide the bridge between this chapter and Chapter Five, which follows.

Chapter Five continues the stories. It profiles how the elders managed their experiences within church and more broadly, and the influence of their Christian faith in this process. This I call *The story of resistance and faithful compliance* because the elders remained true to their Christian faith whilst finding varying ways of resisting the racism to which they were exposed. The final story focuses on the future, both in respect of elders' comments on their possible health and social care needs and their views on death and resurrection. This I call *The story of love and care and eternal hope.* I use this heading because, in spite of life's hardships, the elders expressed hope for this life and the eternal life they believe will follow.

Whilst recognising that I was an integral part of the interview process, I am intentionally absent from the dialogue except where it formed part of a narrative or clarification was needed. This is because of my stated intention of facilitating the elders' stories and because little intervention was required of me once the elders began to talk about the various themes introduced in Appendix 2.

Chapter Four

2. The story of growing and belonging

All of the elders grew up in the Caribbean, thirteen in Jamaica and one in Grenada. This story explores the elders' early life experiences and their exposure to Christianity and church activity. It reveals the important role of religion during the elders' formative years and aids understanding as to how Christianity has shaped the elders' values and beliefs.

I started by asking the elders to tell me something about their early childhood. Only two of the fourteen participants were raised solely by two birth parents, with grandparents and extended family members playing an important childrearing role. This was either because parents needed to work or were not available.

Cleveland for instance spent his early years with his mother:

"I leave and go to town with my mum and I was in town with her:.

Me: *Kingston Town?*

"Yeah, Kingston. Yeah, then I leave again and go back to the country and I was there with my aunt and I was there for another year."

Cleveland described how he variably moved between his mother and his aunt according to where his mother found employment.

Cultural tradition appeared to normalise particularly the upbringing of children raised by their grandparents. Hyacinth states, "I born in my grandparent's home and when they would let me come out they brought me up themselves as their own child."

Me: "*Why was that?*"

Hyacinth: "In Jamaica when a daughter or son have a child, in the house where they brought up they never let them take them – they brought the child up as their own. ... my mum – she was in the house, but then they

marry and leave home and they wouldn't let me go with them as that child belong to the grandparent."

During adolescence Hyacinth was told by her neighbour that the people she thought of as 'mum and dad' were in fact her grandparents:

"When he (grandfather) came back he took me and he said 'Sit down' and he explained to me – 'you were born in to the house so we won't let you go to your mother when she get married as we don't want a step father to bring you up so we take responsibility for you'. He said, 'I would tell you when the time is right and it never make any difference'. It never make any difference because they show me love. I brought up with love. .... I brought up with love you know. My uncles they love me and my aunties. I grow up, they were my parents because they who I know and I show them respect."

There was nothing in the tone or expressions of Hyacinth or the other elders to suggest that they found their upbringings in any way unusual. Parental absence was not articulated as rejection or as problematic and it appeared as if elders were cared for as part of a loving extended family rather than being the responsibility of their parents alone. John, in describing how he was looked after by his grandmother, said: "I went to live with her when my grandfather die as her pickneys (children) had left home and she need company; it's just the way it was back home so she not be on her own."

The elders spoke of materially poor but happy childhoods. Dorothy, for example, said:

"we children didn't have much but we were happy. What we had we shared. If we had one mango then we pass the mango around on the way to school and everybody take a little bite. ..... Breakfast we just have a cup of tea and two Jamaican crackers but my memories are happy" (Dorothy).

The importance of Church attendance

The elders appeared secure within their family and village settings, with Christianity forming an integral part of their early experiences. From the

narratives it appeared that church was central to the elders' sense of childhood belonging and also provided the setting for community events. When I asked the elders if they had attended church as children, its enshrined normality was evident , with every interviewee having grown up in a Christian home:

"I was born in a Christian home – Baptist, always Baptist" (Hyacinth).

"Everybody went to church in our house, everybody in the district go to the church" (Joylyn).

Elders spoke in an animated way of the enjoyment they had derived from church.

" OH THAT CHURCH. I loved that church! I loved that Church of God church and we go to Sunday school in the morning and then we stay to big church – we call it big church. ... we had to go back to night service and I always like singing so in the evening we always call it 'pleasant evening' so in the evening when we go back to church we have a little programme and my friend and I always sing"   (Winnie).

As Winnie spoke her tone of voice changed and conveyed the joy that was evident in the actual words.The same 'happy remembering' was also expressed by others.

June described: "Oh yes, I love the Sunday school and the church. Every Sunday my grandma would big us up in our best dresses and press our hair and put in the ribbons. ... Sunday school was fun. All the children went so we get a chance to see each other and to play. We did games and put on plays."

Dorothy, clapping her hands, said, "Oh my goodness, I loved the church!"

Hyacinth said simply, "It was lovely", whilst also explaining how church helped her to reflect on the values being instilled at home. On being taught about Jesus' crucifixion she explained: "I asked the question, 'Why did God die for us?' They tell us, 'Because he love us first before we love him so that's why he died for us'." She then went on to say, "So you know, those little things you register in your head then when grandma always said, 'Kindness, you are not to

close your hand like this' (*closing her hand into a fist*). She always showed the fist – not like this. It was always open".

The elders spoke of church providing opportunity for picnics, open air services, singing and socialisation - activities that were really enjoyed in environments where families were poor and opportunity for relaxation limited. Equally, it appeared as if church was such an entrenched part of the children's lives that they had little option but to attend: "When I was small I loved it. Loved going to church. I'd go to Sunday school and I was happy but you had to go. You don't have no choice. Go to church and Boy's Brigade" (Cleveland).

Even in adolescence, when one or two drifted away from church, the drift was more about other distractions than a rejection of their faith. Lillian, for instance, commented with much laughter and a warm smile: "When I turn a teenager now, it wasn't church anymore (*laughter*)! It was the picnics and the young people – we don't go back to church no more, we go to picnic and dance where all the young people go" (*laughter).*

Through the regularity of attendance a sense of belonging and identity appeared to develop, and the word 'belong' was used by a number of the elders when discussing their early church experiences:

> *"*Church was good to us children. We belong … not just to our family, but to each other. We knew God loved us. … we knew we should be kind to each other and obey our parents. We had other adults to talk too. … I think we feel secure and cared about"   (John).

Carmen returned to the importance of belonging later in the interview when speaking of her church choice in the U.K.: "As a child back home I always feel that in church I belong. … when I found Grace and Glory Church I feel I belong again – it was good feeling; a good feeling."

Others related 'belonging' to God's enduring love and presence: "wherever I been gone, whatever bad thing people say to me, I know where I belong, I belong in God. I belong and God, he know, he love and want me" (Desiree).

"He fit in before I was even born. He fit in from when I come in to this world and he is with me until this moment and until I pass out of this world in to the other, he is there, always there, always there with me"   (Cleveland).

Lack of choice also seemed true of the theology and worship styles to which the elders were exposed as children. They all grew up under British colonialism prior to their countries securing independence, Jamaica in 1962 and in Grenada in 1974 (Higman 2010) and Fitzroy suggested that in his early childhood it was rare to see a black Jamaican ordained Minister: "you would only find a white minister in those days and a minister had four parishes and that mean he can only preach at each church each month and the elders and deacons have to take the church the other Sundays."

He explained that the Jamaican church leaders (and Sunday school teachers) operated under the theological authority of the white ministry with black led Pentecostal churches seemingly discouraged. Desiree explained that Jamaicans were taught that Pentecostal churches that adopted more Afro-centric modes of worship "*were primitive*" with people actively encouraged to attend 'proper' churches established by the British and led by white Missionaries. According to Desiree: "we look down on those who did the shouting and wailing in church; we were taught to do things nicely, the English way." Desiree's comment suggests that, from an early age, she equated 'nice ways' with white English ways.

None of the elders spoke of questioning white ministerial authority or of their families discussing British colonialism with the children. Cleveland did however comment (after the tape had been turned off) that as an adult he came to recognise how Sunday school

> "was teaching me to accept everything the white preacher man taught. When I little, you know, you never really question why the white folk were in our country, we just thought that they knew best – they were from England. At church, they make sure we learn their ways, even when the black folk they teaching us."

The church's role extended to the limited education which the elders had received, and it is this aspect of their story that I move on to next.

Church and its role in the elders' education

All but one of the elders described growing up in poor rural areas where formal education was limited and primarily established by British missionaries (Rogonzinski 2000).

> "I learnt to read from the bible" (Joylyn).

> *"*I learnt to read the bible at Sunday school. I don't remember reading story books at school but at Sunday school, the bible. ... that's how I was taught to read" (Gwyneth).

> "I never owned a bible until I came to England but I knew things about the bible, a lot from the bible. I didn't understand the bible, I just knew it" (June).

> "I learnt to read at Sunday school. ... little stories and then bits from the bible... I didn't do much school. I was a girl and anyway there weren't much school for the poor children" (Classie).

The elders' modest educational exposure through Sunday school appeared to instil a 'learning by rote' understanding of the bible. As Classie indicates, "they used to give me a text like a book mark and you would go home and learn it like a parrot and then you go back but we were taught no meaning, just to parrot" (Classie).

As the children got older, those attending Moravian churches were encouraged to undergo confirmation. This is a practice adopted from the Church of England tradition where young people of the age of thirteen or a little older 'confirm' their commitment to the Christian faith, having been christened as infants. For those young people from a Baptist and Pentecostal tradition, adolescence was a time when baptism was encouraged. Cleveland explains:

> "We go to bible study on Wednesday. I never knew anything about baptism and all those things, not till I was growing up. When I was

> fourteen they said 'You're at church, you have to be baptised now'. I was about fourteen. So I gone and got baptised and still go to Sunday school, and church every Sunday. Still, I didn't quite know what Christianity was all about!"

Cleveland went on to say that he thought, "I might as well" get baptised because most of his friends were so "what's the use of not". He still struggled for understanding and reflected on an occasion when: "I listen to the pastor preaching and I keep looking and I keep having those feelings and I said 'I wonder if I keep looking up there God will come down there through the ceiling?".

The elders' religious education did not facilitate a critical engagement with their faith or the dominant theology on which it was based. Indeed, religion was taught through imposition: "I had to take a bible course. I was made to do it. Everybody had to do a bible course" (Fitzroy). This suggests that religion was used to instil unthinking acceptance of biblical script and religious norms. Cassie also said that her mother "sent me to be confirmed" rather than her having any choice in the matter or necessarily understanding what confirmation entailed.

In terms of black theology, the narratives of the elders appear to reinforce Cone's (2004) and Erkskine's (2010) criticism that white-normed Christianity was imposed on enslaved and colonised subjects in a manner that taught compliance and unquestioning acceptance of religious teaching and European values. Caribbean ministers who were trained and validated under British rule then arguably became instruments of their own and others' oppression, transmitting their master's supposedly God ordained message and learning to reject their own African heritage. As such, black Christians were not encouraged to consider the dual role of religion in both oppressing black people whilst also underpinning their African-American counterparts' struggle out of slavery (Cone 1975,1997).The elders' experience of coming to faith because they were told too rather than through personal conviction is equivalent to the process Burrell (2010:199) describes as *bred to be led*, with religion allegedly

nurturing black dependency on a white God and an acceptance of earthly suffering and inequality as something God ordained.

For the elders, however, their belief in God appeared life affirming. In transactional terms, the 'loving parent' which the Church and Sunday school teachers seemed to model arguably contributed to the development of secure and well attached children with a strong sense of self worth, identity and ego formulation. Conversely, 'the authorative parent' of which Berne (1964) speaks appears to be writ large in the formative experiences of the elders and resonates with Burrell's critique (2010).

Equally, the elders' narratives suggest that even 65 years or more later, religion and church attendance were a part of extremely happy childhood memories; they were loved and cared for, gathered together with others in the community, felt affirmed in their identity and sense of belonging and acquired values that appear to have been of positive worth in their lives. There was nothing atypical in the generality of the elders' narratives or the positive way in which they narrated experiences of childhood church. Elders spoke freely and there was little need for me to prompt or interrupt. Had the elders' life journey therefore continued within the Caribbean, the positive aspects of their early exposure to Christianity might have outweighed its potential limitations. This was not however the case. The elders in the study have now spent more of their lives in the U.K. than in Jamaica and Grenada as all but one person left the Caribbean in young adulthood. The *story of belonging* reveals that elders migrated not simply as 'immigrants' wanting to find work or adventure but as English speaking Christian citizens of the 'mother country' that had governed their islands and shaped their early formative experiences.

The next chapter therefore begins by exploring why elders migrated to the U.K. and some of the early hardships they experienced as they sought accommodation and employment. Elders' stories of going to church are then profiled, including the rejection which so many encountered. It is in the telling of those experiences and the expressions and body language that accompanied them that the 'story' of the elders' rejection and pain is evidenced.

3. The story of rejection and pain

Migrating to Britain

All but two of the elders migrated to Britain between 1953 and the implementation of the 1962 Commonwealth Immigration Act, which ended the right to unrestricted entry of New Commonwealth citizens. The elders were part of what become known as the 'Windrush Generation'. Empire Windrush docked in Kingston, Jamaica en route from Australia to collect 492 people, most of who were ex-servicemen. It arrived in Britain on the 22nd June 1948, heralding the first of thousands of Caribbean migrants who assisted Britain with its post-war re-construction; attracted to the UK by subsidised fares and plentiful work opportunities (Fryer 1984).

It appears as if a combination of poverty, youthful adventure and opportunity underpinned the elders' decision to leave the Caribbean for the 'mother country'. In some cases, such a profound and life changing decision was made on the basis of little information or much considered thought. On being asked when and why they had left Jamaica and come to the U.K., elders variably commented:

> "I was 19. My bigger brother was supposed to come but he didn't want to go so my mum said 'Do you want to go the England then?' and I said 'Okay' because I didn't know much (*laughter*)" (Cleveland).

> "Most of my friends were coming so I thought I might as well give it a go" (Norman).

> "We were always being told about England, it felt like home, so I thought 'Why not?'" (Joylin).

> "Life was hard in Jamaica. Life was hard; there was no work and no money. We all wanted to go to England, it was the mother country so I thought 'Why not?'" (June).

Three of the women migrants were young mothers (Gwyneth, Lillian and Desiree) and had to make difficult decisions about the care of their own

children. Gwyneth for instance initially left her three children in Jamaica and joined Norman, her husband, who had migrated the previous year (in 1955): "we came and then the three girls came and then I had two boys."

Unlike Gwyneth, Lillian's two children remained long term in Jamaica:

> "they came on holiday. They were living with my mother. She wouldn't have them leaving her. I didn't go back for a long time – a really long time. ... I kept writing to say that I would like to have them, but she said 'What would I do if you took them away?'"

Lillian explained that she left her two daughters in their grandmother's care because, when she and her husband came to England, "in them times there was just one room. ... I came in April 1961. He was here and he sent for me. We married over there."

Eventually one of the girls joined her parents and four British born siblings whilst the other one stayed in Jamaica with her grandmother to "keep her company", as Lillian explained.

Lillian's description of there being "just one room" also affords a hint as to the economic pressures that Caribbean migrants – and women especially – faced. Even if they had wanted to bring their small children from the Caribbean, no specific provision appears to have been made for them. Desiree commented: "I left my three-year-old son with his grandmother. What choice I have? He knew and loved his grandma and she did love him, so it be the best."

As identified in the previous story, child rearing was often shared or assumed by grandparents. Lillian and Desiree were merely repeating the seemingly successful care pattern of their childhoods whilst also ensuring that their own mothers (often in female headed households) had company and were practically and economically cared for in a poor, newly independent country with no state welfare provision.

Fitzroy was the one man who spoke of leaving a child in Jamaica: "I did leave a girl in Jamaica with two children. Just as I leave she get pregnant and didn't want to come with me. ... already the boy die and I have to get the other boy away from her so I had to get a quick marriage."

Fitzroy explained how, despite initially being a single man, he had been able to get his son to the U.K. by securing a wife. I asked Fitzroy how he went about this and he explained that he got talking to a woman at a Christmas Eve party. She had a young daughter in Jamaica whom she wanted to bring to the U.K. Fitzroy asked the woman "Are you married?" and when she replied that she wasn't Fitzroy suggested that "They went down to the registry office the next morning and got married": "We didn't arrange any wedding, just get it done and get it out of the way. So eventually we sent for the two kids!"

Despite this less than auspicious start to married life, Fitzroy, like most of the other elders, then went on to have U.K. born children and to build a life for himself and his family.

The elders' accounts of their early years in the U.K were however set against a background of hard, largely manual and / or low paid work with long hours and poor working conditions. When I asked her to tell me something about their early life in the U.K., Gwyneth explained:

> "When I had children I was then doing night work. I work all over. I used to go up London Bridge in the 60s and do night cleaning from ten at night until six in the morning and then come home to the little ones. Then I work in a biscuit factory – it has closed down now - and I went there for night work .... I was doing night work until I retired. ... My husband worked on the buildings – that is how he got the asbestos – from the building."
>
> Me: *When you say 'he got the asbestos', what do you mean?*
>
> Gwyneth: The asbestos it gave him the cancer that kill him".

Elders felt that, despite coming to the U.K. to fill a labour need, their presence was often resented and job opportunities limited by racial discrimination.

> "They told me to my face – we aren't having you blackies here." Jolyn.

> "I took any job I get. We weren't welcome here so we do the jobs the white folk no want. I worked on building sites, cleaning, gardening, anything. Me and my wife, we work so hard" (Norman).

The elders narrated their experiences with no obvious rancour and indeed with considerable laughter as they reflected on all they had endured. As Joylin explained, "You just got on with it".

Through sheer hard work and in low status jobs, the elders did indeed 'get on with it' as they laboured to contribute to the economic growth of the U.K. and to the next chapter of their family and community history. Marcia's comment that the hardships of her generation had "opened doors" for their children was typical. As if to affirm this point, during the interviews elders showed me with great pride pictures of children and grand-children's graduation and wedding pictures; such pride was also reflected in their voices as they spoke of qualifications achieved and jobs secured by the younger generations.

Elders' early experiences of church in the U.K.

It was not only work and community life that shaped the elder's early years in the U.K. As the preceding story identified, the elders' came to the U.K. primarily churched in the British colonial religious tradition and as committed churchgoing Christians. The story therefore continues with the elders' accounts of their experience and feelings as they sought to continue their Christian journey in churches in London and the South East.

On my asking "*Tell me something of your experience of church in England*", two elders spoke of the church and its minister being like a 'benevolent parent' intrigued by their background and 'difference' and welcoming of them.

"The first time I went to this church – congregational church. It was like they see something different and everybody welcome me. 'Oh, where you from?'; they make a fuss of me!".

Me: *Did you like that?*

"Oh yes, I was overwhelmed. I liked them making a fuss of me (*laughter*). It was good" (Fitzroy).

Later in his account Fitzroy talks of initially being the only black person in the church and the regular visits made by the minister to his home and the endless questions he asked Fitzroy about his background and culture. The good feeling of 'being fussed over' gave way to a different feeling: "But I was very sensitive and I'm not stupid. I know when someone is trying to pick my brain and find out something I don't want".

Fitzroy's response suggests that, whilst he was initially willing to be 'petted' like a favoured child, he still retained his adult persona as he gradually tired of the attention he was shown and resisted the minister's attempt to gain information that he was not willing to share.

Classie also recalls her and a friend attending a Church of England church: "I had no problem there. If I did it was very few. ... We got settled in the church and I have never had any problem about the colour of my skin."

Classie's is an interesting comment because the question '*Tell me something of your experiences of church in England*' does not refer to colour or infer a 'problem'. Classie's mention of both suggests an awareness of race which she is then keen to explain: "Some black people have a problem with white people, they are anti-white."

Fitzroy commented "They weren't always accepted in the mainstream churches – well, not so much being accepted in white people's churches but mainly they never go. I say 'You have chips on your shoulders.'"

Their view contrasts with those of the other twelve respondents who recounted stories of pain and rejection which, in word and tone, they directly, and powerfully, attribute to discrimination and racism:

"Oh my Lord! ... It was they look at us as if we shouldn't be there. We shouldn't be in church. It was a Baptist church. ... When we went back the next Sunday, the Pastor ask if we could sit down at the back. ... they don't want us to come to the front" (Hyacinth).

"… we weren't comfortable ...." (*Why was that?)* "...We weren't made comfortable. We weren't made welcome. You had to be careful. They said you were sitting in my seat or they wouldn't sit next to you" (Gwyneth).

"When I went in and sat down, the woman sitting next to me, she get up and said 'Why you people have to come in here' and then she move to another pew" (Joylin).

In explaining this behaviour, Joylin asserted, "they just prejudiced, call themselves Christians and they racially prejudiced".

Comments about being asked to sit at the back of the church, of being stared at and not being made welcome were frequently repeated. The words were said in tones that conveyed a mixture of sadness, hurt and anger. Desiree specifically used the word "angry" in her comment: "they looked at me as if I was nothing. I was so angry when they said I could not sit in the seat and if I wanted to still stay I should then go at the back."

Others spoke of people leaving the church when they entered or being asked to do so themselves. June for instance described her early experiences:

"Well, four of us went to the local church – Church of England it was. When we walk in there everyone looked round at us and no say a word. When we go to sit down in one of the pews there was three other people in the same pew. They get up and walk straight out of that church. Can you believe that? I was shocked and so hurt."

Dorothy recounted a similar experience: "When we go in the second week, the Pastor man he came over and said that he think it better that we go to another church as some of the people were not so happy about us being there. I was so hurt".

As the elders told this aspect of their story, the smiling faces and animated voices which had typically characterised the discussion of childhood church experience gave way to unsmiling facial expressions and more closed body language. This did not suggest that the elders were as rooted in childlike compliance as Burrell's critique (2010) of Christianity and black people's subjugation might imply. Fitzroy commented that a number of Caribbean people tried to set up their own 'home churches', but did not have the financial resources to "put in the foundations or do anything much".

Dorothy's view was different. She explained that in the face of white resentment Caribbean people got together in groups to form their own churches in London, initially meeting in each other's houses. For her there was an expression of pride as she related how existing black led churches had evolved from those early 'house churches'.

Moravian and Baptist elders sought similar churches once in England and these churches had white ministers and predominately white congregations. It of course raises the question as to why black people would continue to voluntarily go to a place where they were regularly made to feel unwelcome or openly rejected. Gwyneth summed it up by saying: "for a while we forced ourselves. We were used to going to a church on a Sunday. We said 'We must go to church', so we forced ourselves to go there, even though it wasn't comfortable."

For this group of elders church was such an entrenched part of their personal identity and beliefs that the feelings evoked by not going to church were usually more powerful than the hurt of rejection and racism to which the majority were subjected. The elders' experience provides a practical manifestation of Du Bois' (1903) notion of "double consciousness". Black elders' were forced to see themselves through the prism of white people's generalised contempt of them whilst attending church and subscribing to a religious value system supposedly

shared by white people and where all are created equal in the image of God (Genesis 1 27: NRSV 1995).

In transactional terms, organised church had been part of the elders 'life script' and their means of making sense of the world and conducting their daily lives (Steiner 1990). The elders initially arrived in the 'mother country' with a well developed belief in 'God the Father'. Concepts of 'mother' and 'father' evoke images of love, nurturing, protection, acceptance and care – things that the elders were taught were available to the 'children of God' coming to a country in whose religious norms they had been socialised since childhood. When the elders initially went into U.K. churches that were less than welcoming and at times overtly racist, they were arguably seeking to maintain an essential part of that script at a time when it was being re-cast by the experiences of migration. The majority were confronted with hostile minsters or congregational members behaving as angry and rejecting parents and arguably seeking to maintain their own life script which presumably intermeshed with the internalised and learnt truth of black peoples' inferiority and which therefore justified their exclusion.

Fitzroy received positive 'strokes' as the 'curious other' who initially enjoyed the attention lavished upon him, much as a youngster might cherish being the favoured child. For the majority, however, power was negatively exercised by ministers and congregational members both non-verbally and through spoken transactions. As a consequence, the relatively secure identity state that characterised the elders' childhood memories gave way to a consciousness of many white Christian's negative perceptions of them and of racism mediating their own sense of self worth as children of God.

Conclusion: drawing together some themes

This chapter has outlined the elders' churched experience in the Caribbean and the manner in which Christianity was unquestionably normalised as a core part of child hood experiences and in the formulation of their identity. From a strong sense of belonging and security characterising the elders' early years the chapter then tells the story of their early experiences in the U.K. All the elders spoke of hardship as they sought to build their lives in this country and the

majority spoke of the hurt and rejection that accompanied their exclusion from churches or marginalisation within them.

One important theme that begins to emerge from these narratives is the centrality of Christianity to the elders' identity and childhood experiences, and the consequent need to recognise its influence on the way African-Caribbean elders perceive and relate to organised church and those white Christians whose faith they share. The early rejection that the majority of elders experienced within white led churches was more powerfully and painfully expressed in the interviews than the racism they experienced at work from by housing officers/landlords. The elders did not seem to expect such attitudes and behaviour from fellow Christians because their faith teaches that God loves all equally and commands Christians to "love your neighbour as yourself" (Mark 12:31:NRSV1995). As such, there may be no singular approach to how elders 'manage' racism because their faith and the principles of love, oneness and forgiveness on which it is based may have a mediating influence on their response. This point is an important link to the next chapter, which begins with the elders' stories of how they managed and subsequently resisted the rejection they encountered.

Chapter Five: The Stories Continue

The previous chapter told the stories of the elders' upbringing in Jamaica, the sense of belonging church provided and of their experiences when they first migrated to the U.K. This chapter continues their story. It initially focuses on elders' accounts of their responses to racism within the church. I have chosen the heading *The story of resistance and faithful compliance* because elders spoke not only of how they counteracted and / or coped with their experiences but of religious belief being an integral part of that response.

The chapter then moves on to the elders' final story. Elders provide examples of their faith sustaining them and speak with reflection about their Christian beliefs and how these have interwoven with decisions affecting their lives. Elders also share their hopes for the future as they come towards their life end. This includes their reflections on how they wish be cared for and by whom. The title *The story of love, care and eternal hope* seemed appropriate as I was struck not only by the elder's evident love of Christ but by the love they had given and received within their families and wider church community. That love gives them hope that their church and family might continue to sustain them and that God will protect them in their old age. Most of all, the elders had hope for the eternal life they believed awaited them beyond death.

3. The story of resistance and faithful compliance

The previous story of rejection charted some of the negative experiences African-Caribbean migrants experienced in U.K. churches. Those in the study dealt with it in a number of ways.

Avoiding white led churches and white Christians

Five elders in the sample avoided or subsequently moved from white majority/ led churches when they first came to the U.K. This was either because of direct or related experiences of racism or because they had been raised in the Pentecostal tradition in the Caribbean and sought a similar worship style. Desiree for instance initially attended a black house group in South London before moving on to a black led Pentecostal church:

"Me always been Pentecostal, oh yes, always the Pentecostal" (Desiree).

Me: *Why is that?*

"Me love to feel the Spirit pour out and flow, to see people filled with the Holy Spirit. ... I love to clap and shout and be so happy in the Lord."

As Desiree spoke, her voice took on a lilting tone and she began to sway her body as if there and then connecting with the Holy Spirit. She concluded that aspect of her story with a smile.

Dorothy was also used to Pentecostal churches and explained:

"When I first come I didn't go to any white people's church as you hear the stories that go round but if one of your people, invite you to a Pentecostal church then they start to grow – one church and then another – there is loads of church now .... The Pastor was Pastor D – wonderful man. He got a tenacity. I don't know if he get help from the Council but he make a beautiful, beautiful church. I was down there Sunday because I love the clapping and the clapping."

Dorothy was also the only elder who had experience of African-American churches as after leaving Jamaica she spent some years between the U.S.A and the U.K. Cone (1997) suggests that one reason for the politicisation of black people in African-American churches was their need to confront state condoned racism and segregation. Dorothy's story appears to confirm this:

"We get into the civil rights business because there is so much unjust happening to black people in America. Rev. Jessie Jackson and Rev. Al Sharpton stood up against the injustices being done to the black youth in America by the police. We cry to see the black youth being treated so badly. Sometime the Mayor of New York and the governor stick with the police – no justice and no peace. ... Some of the churches spoke up and do a lot of marches and they boycott places as well."

Dorothy was also the only elder who spoke directly about the achievements made by black people to their own liberation; later in the interview she openly linked her abhorrence with injustice to a religious figure:

> "If I see a black person who is being treated unjust anywhere I am always ready to speak up because I don't like unjust. That's why I admire Martin Luther King. Although it cost him his life, he left a path, a footbridge that we can follow to know that – he know he was going to die but he didn't know which day. Because they hated him so much – as he took a stand."

> Me: *And Rosa Parkes?*

> "Oh yes! (*claps*) Miss Rosa Parkes! It she started the Civil Rights you know. Martin Luther King didn't start it – she started it and I can tell you she was a brave lady, very very brave. Oh yeah and she was getting up that bus. I tell you, one person can make a difference, one person make a difference because she did make a difference and I really admire her."

Winnie was the third elder who attended a black led Pentecostal church on arrival in the U.K. Like Dorothy, she initially avoided mainstream white churches because of 'stories' she had heard about white people:

> "My friend told me when I did come that the white folk do not like us blacks. I not want no problem. When I came here I was living on *** Road where my daughter was living. We have a little church up the top. Church of God in Christ which was the first church I went to when I came to England. Everybody liked me.... Everybody loved me. When they had Lady's Sunday I preached as well."

Winnie explained her enjoyment of the small Pentecostal community with whom she retained contact after moving house, saying "and even since I leave some of the church people from the same church I still visit them sometime you know."

The need to feel "safe" was also expressed by Carmen who had direct experience of church based racism and changed denominations as a consequence:

> "I was used to the English type church from back home you know. When I come to this country I think that I go to the English church.... I was used to it like. Oh my dear! (*laughs*) Me went once you know. ... me see all those stiff faces (*laughs*). ... such stiff faces (*pulling her face down and puckering her lips*) and that was it for me. The Lord want us to be happy (*laughing aloud*). ... not with miserable, stiff faces like them folk. I go in the Pentecostal church and I like it. Me like being comfortable with my people, you know what I mean. .... and not, you know, to have the hassle with no white folk."

Lillian was the one elder in the study who elected not to go to church when she first came to the U.K. in 1961 despite attending the Moravian church in Jamaica. When asked "*Why was that*?" Lillian replied:

> "I don't know. When we come here in the 60s I don't think the churches were like they have advanced now. You understand what I am saying? You understand?"

> Me: *I think so, but could you explain?*

> "We were here living in England, just trying to make ends meet. Your children all back home. God gave me strength so you could do a little work to help them out there. You know what I mean? I just took them [the children] to church to be christened, but I couldn't go".

> Me: *Did you feel the church wouldn't be accepting?*

> "Half the time I think that. That's what I mean".

Later in her account Lillian explains that she was uneasy at missing church as her faith was strong:

> "I would get up and say 'Thank you Lord' because you know there is a God and whatever you go through you never stop believing even

though you don't go [to church] but you repeat the things you know and
what the bible says and what you experience from it even if you
weren't following it up."

A number of years later Lillian was introduced to a church in South East London
by an African-Caribbean friend and then felt it was safe to go: "God gave me
the strength to say, 'Oh well, I have to start to go to church'."

Avoidance of black churches and other black Christians

Whilst five of the elders appeared to have initially minimised their contact with
white majority churches, three others (Classie, Fitzroy and Cleveland) took the
opposite approach and for differing reasons avoided black majority churches.

Cleveland linked his attendance at a white majority church to his quiet
personality. His wife attended a black Pentecostal church but Cleveland
explained:

"...but I was never keen on going to the Pentecostal because sometime
when I visit there and I listen and watch them they are always calling up
people and I'm very – not that brave heart. Even down at church
sometime, things I would like to do I'm not brave enough. Even say read
the bible and so on you know I'm nervous, not so confident. The sweat
start to pour."

Me: *You like to be a bit more quiet?*

"Yeah."

Fitzroy also struggled with black Pentecostal worship. He was used to a
Moravian church and also felt that the Pentecostal services went on for too
long.

"I went to some black churches in people's houses but I couldn't take
the way they worship as I wasn't used to that kind of worship in Jamaica.
And the service was from 10am – 3pm in the evening and I couldn't take

it. And even now they do the same thing. Well, I couldn't stand that so I said, 'Well, I go for shorter worship,' so I went to *** church until I come to London."

Cleveland and Fitzroy's comments suggest that cultural norms or worship styles cannot be assumed because of a person's skin colour or country of origin. In preferring a Baptist church (which was white led), neither Cleveland nor Fitzroy appeared to negate racism. Indeed, as seen later in this section, Cleveland was very attuned to its presence. Whilst Fitzroy enjoyed his initial 'novelty status' as a solitary black attendee, as mentioned before, he also had certain specific views about white churchgoer's racial attitudes. When talking later in the interview about the changes in his current church, he said with a smile:

"…now it's nearly all black people ' cause the white people all move away when too many of us come; that's what they're like."

Me: *What are they like?*

"…prejudiced when too many of us come and then they don't like it."

This suggests that Fitzroy initially adapted to the attitudes and expectations of the church and through the attention he attracted enjoyed his 'positive strokes' (Berne 1985) whilst still being aware of himself as a black person differently positioned to his white Christian counterparts. This links with Reddie's discussion (cited in Jagessar and Reddie 2007) of the need for transformational theological education that is relevant to black people and that allows for more open articulation of their needs and experiences. Reddie recognises the complex process of achieving this, because of, in his view, "the inherently conservative nature of many of the older African-Caribbean worshippers" (2007: 208) who had been exposed to "the full force of colonial education" and were subsequently frightened of anything perceived as "very radical and overtly political" (2007: 208).

Classie was the one elder who earlier placed responsibility for black people's problems on the presence of black people themselves. It seemed as if Classie

initially preferred being amongst white people, as she was not happy when asked by her church whether she would like to bring a friend:

> "…meaning for one of me to be there because there wasn't any other black people. That didn't go down well for me. I said, (name), I haven't got any problem with this you know. I walk places where I am the only black person and I am happy there. ... I'm not prejudiced. I can't hide myself, I'm black – although you are not allowed to say black now. ... I said to her (my daughter), and my friend's daughter, anywhere you go to work and there are too many black people there, try and make your stay as short as possible as no good will come. ... some black people have a problem with white people, they are anti-white."

Berne's (1964) speaks of an adult's need for "positive strokes" of approval and affirmation. These are obtained by adapting to the behaviours of those in authority from whom the stroke is desired, much in the way that a child receives intimacy and positive approval by being compliant. Classie appeared to equate her acquisition of 'positive strokes' in the all white church as conditional upon her projecting behaviours that disassociated herself from other black people. This takes her out of an adult ego state as there is no objective appraisal of the racial reality to which she and other black people are exposed. It suggests that Classie became the 'adapted child', modifying her behaviour in accordance with the internalised views and expectations of the powerful white parent as represented to her by church, school, history books, etc.

Mellor and Shiff (1975) discuss the T.A. concept of 'discounting'. This is an internal mechanism whereby a person believes that a part of themselves, other people or a social reality is less significant than it actually is and acts accordingly. They suggest that it is a form of "game playing" that may secure approval from the 'parent'. It is also potentially damaging as the person effectively denies any information or experience that detracts from the discounting activity, and, as in Classie's case, they may have been both internalised and transmit (to her daughter, for example) extremely negative beliefs about her own black self.

Dealing with racism in white led churches

Throughout the interviews all but one elder (Classie) spoke of racism in the 'white' church, yet nine regularly attended these post-migration. Hyacinth's story is cited at some length. This is because it is representative of other elders in the study whose stories of rejection are told in the previous chapter. It demonstrates not only Hyacinth's challenge of racism but how she used her faith to expose to the minister his ungodly response to black Christians.

Hyacinth initially spoke of being asked by the pastor to sit at the back of the church. She then said:

"- yes, I remember that, every day, that's why some people don't go to church – to sit at the back. But I was bright. I didn't, although I just come to this country. When you get to find out about the white people and their behaviour towards us I asked why I had to sit at the back. They said because we are not members only visitors, they don't want us to come to the front. My husband got up and I hold his hand to quiet him as it is a church and we don't want to lose respect for the church. We sit down and listen to the service and when we get outside he say 'I am not coming back to this church'. He said, 'We go to the next church.'"

Hyacinth told this part of her story in a quiet and straightforward tone. Her response to the church's rejection suggested that she and her husband were determined to maintain an adult persona, refusing to accept the behaviour but not being overtly confrontational or disruptive. Hyacinth spoke of there being only four black people in the church and the "four of us at the back". She went on to talk of how inconvenient it was to change churches as the original one was near their home and how she and her husband were again confronted with racism when they found an alternative place of worship:

"After three weeks when we go to this different church, the pastor come and when he saw us, a few blacks were in there but not much, and when we were in there the pastor said the whites complain. He come and talk to us and say that they don't want blacks to come to church. He's a pastor, he know it wrong, but he want to please his members. So I said,

'Rubbish.' I said, 'Rubbish, you are not praying to man, you are praying to God and I come in here to pray too and we are all one, just because the skin is different, we are all one.' My husband was determined. He said, 'We are not coming back. We are not going back to that Church.' When we go to that church you could see they look at us as if we coming out of Noah's Ark! We were really strong. In this world you can't let them beat you over God's work. We are all as one. God made all of us, right. Every time I go to church and some of them they walk out and blank you and we just look at them we never fight them back over."

Me: *Did you sit where you wanted?*

"Yes, yes! This lady Mrs C – she was a bigger woman, an older woman from St Elizabeth and she come and she said, 'I come in this church and I go through hell but I never let them push me out. You sit beside me.' I sit beside her and every Sunday she always wait for me and both of us go to church. And my husband say he not going back, he not going because of the experience that he had was so bad."

Even though the incident happened forty years ago Hyacinth spoke about it with clarity and in a strong voice. It is interesting how Hyacinth's quiet and dignified approach to the church's rejection effectively changed the relational transaction. In dealing with a racially changing church demography, the pastor adopted the persona of authorative parent by asking Hyacinth and her husband to leave (Berne1964). The pastor's 'adult state' is however contaminated by his own actions and that of the white congregation he wished to appease. Whilst he made the request he placed responsibility on to the white congregational members rather than making his own adult decision and possibly going against their wishes. Hyacinth however maintained her adult state, which included her inherited beliefs about her own equality in the eyes of God, God as the 'ultimate parent' and the unacceptability of the pastor's approach. He in turn, along with white members of the congregation, is then forced into an acceptance of her and other black attendee's presence when they simply refused to accede.

Different responses to racism by women and men.

This non-confrontational yet determined approach to racism is also reflected in other accounts, most especially those of the women. They exhibited determination to maintain their church attendance, drew strength from their faith and effectively ignored racist churchgoers with a quiet and resilient dignity. This was the only area of discussion where the approach adopted by the men differed from that of the women. The men either stopped going to church (as with Hyacinth's husband and Cleveland initially) and / or were more directly challenging in their approach. John for instance commented: "When that man asked me to move my seat I eyeballed him right out and said, 'If you want me to move then you come and move me'". The man apparently did not take up John's offer.

Cleveland talked about how "it was all white ministers" and how "sometimes there was prejudice" which he tried to ignore but "after a while I did stop going for a while as it wasn't nice and I don't go back until long after and I thought sitting here is boring so I might as well go."

Gwyneth explained her husband's response:

> "The vicar came up to us and said that some of the congregation were going if darkie people – that's what they called us in those days – darkie people started to come, and he thought it better we leave. My husband was very angry – he started to argue but we were in church and I didn't want no trouble so I said that we should just leave".

> Me: *Can you remember how you felt?*

> "Oh yes, I remember it, I remember it well. I was so hurt. How could a man of God say such a thing, Josephine? I was shocked. God loves all people, that's what the bible teach us. ... a man of God should know that. God doesn't worry about colour. ... I was so hurt and upset but I was also angry. We had come to England to work hard. It wasn't easy.... We didn't stop white people coming to church in Jamaica. I was so upset and also angry. My husband he was just angry. He was a peaceful man my

> Donovan, never like trouble, but when we got out that church he was shouting and cussing that man. He no go back to a white man's church ever again."

The incident happened almost half a century ago, yet Gwyneth "remembered it well", with the hurt expressed in her words also reflected in her tone and facial expression. As discussed in Chapter Two, both womanist and feminist theologians attest to the patriarchy of Christianity and the manner in which men have been elevated (or elevated themselves) to a dominant position within churches. Whilst speculation can only be tentative because of the small numbers involved, it may be that the women accepted religious patriarchy whilst reacting to the church's racism whereas the men were affronted by what was effectively an attack on their male status as well as their colour. As they were prevented (often by their wives) from confronting racism directly, some simply stopped attending until the racial climate of churches began to change.

Elders recognise change within the churches.

It would be wrong to suggest that the elders' experience has remained only negative. Over the years various elders have moved between churches and denominations. Those now attending the Pentecostal church were entirely positive:

> "I do look forward to the Sunday. It uplift me. It's a good church for me" (Joylin).

> "Everything about it I love; the praise and worship, the word, the people. I feel that the Lord is with me in that place" (John).

The Baptists also enjoyed church, while nevertheless commenting on the attitudes of some of the other church goers. Dorothy for instance explained:

> "…there are some nice ones who come to church but they have some stuck up people come to the church (*laughs*) but still you have some nice ones. Know what I mean? Some people come to church and step past you and they don't say hallo but I don't care about them but I love to go

to church because you go to church and you meet other people and they come and say hallo and they come and hug and kiss you and when you are sick those people in the church, two or three would come and visit you in the hospital you know – it's like that" .

Elders spoke of churches having changed and black people now being largely accepted. They appear to attribute this to an increasing black presence, their own perseverance, and, in the case of one church, the approach of the minister rather than changes in attitudes on the part of some white congregational members. Indeed, racism still appears to feature in the white led church, although in more muted ways:

"...when we start to go there it was just the white people church. It's true I'm telling you. ... nobody said hallo – they didn't bother me – not at all friendly. It's friendly now, more young people. A lot of them [white people] died or moved on. You can't just stick to a few older ones but to me the majority are now black. ...

Me: *It's more racially mixed*?

"Ah, yes, yes, you understand" (*laughs/smiles*).

Later Lillian comments:

"One week he [the minister] was talking about the prejudice in church and said we had to be stamping it out and encouraging black history. A woman asked me how I felt about the talk and I say to this white lady, 'Listen, there should be no prejudice God made us all. Look at my arm, this is my pigment, but if I cut myself and you cut yourself what would happen, where would be the prejudice? If you have prejudice against me, I don't have it against you. If you want to have that sin then you carry on with that.' I see her so many times in church since and now she don't speak to me but it don't bother me! A lot of black people support [the minister] but the white folk --- oooh no" (*shaking head*).

Cleveland commented:

"It used to be a lot of white. Now it is so changed, there is so many blacks. (*Laughs*) Cause I'm counting it sometimes – how many white people's there, there's not many."

Me: *Why do you think it is?*

"As far as I can think of – many of the white people leave because there is too many black people coming in and black people they are taking part".

Me: *Taking part ...?*

"Yes, especially with the whites, they used to do it all. They had their own way and now black people they have their own things and they don't like that much. They don't like that much, the black people coming in. So that's it really."

Hyacinth had a direct message for those who had left the congregation:

"When we went there was a lot of white people there and now you hardly see any. That is the way I look at it."

Me: *Why do you think that is?*

"Because we blacks."

Me: *You think black people have come and they have gone?*

"Yes, that is what I notice. [The minister] is strong, they can't pull him down you see, he is strong. You sit and you listen to (the minister) he is a God blessed man so who so ever go away then good luck to them - it's their life, ain't it?! (*loud laughter*)".

It is of course not possible to know whether white people did leave the church because of an increased black presence, but that is these elders' perception. If the perception is correct then no doubt those white Christians also have a story to tell, which may provide insights (including for social work) as to how white people cope with the erosion of their 'sacred space' and retain a sense of their

own identity within settings where black and other minority ethnic groups are claiming theirs.

What I found personally humbling was that the elders were noticeably understated about their role in bringing about change. Many appeared to have suffered terrible degradation, and yet the women especially refused to be cowed or to turn away from the church or their religion. The memories of hurt and rejection were evident in the elders' stories, yet this did not mean that their faith was diminished or that they were without hope.

This then brings me on to the elders' final story, *The story of love, care and eternal hope.* It is through this story that understanding emerges as to the power of their faith and the importance of social workers engaging with it as the elders become increasingly frail.

The story of love, care and eternal hope
The story commences by the elders expressing in their own words the love they feel God has for them and how that love has manifested itself in their lives. Elders then reflect on the care elders would like to receive when (and if) they are unable to look after themselves. The story ends with elders speaking of their belief in heaven and of their hope for eternal life.

In addition to recording the importance of their Christian belief, elders spoke with a quiet reverence about their faith. Dorothy softly stated:

> "I been reading the bible since I was 5. I know the bible very well. I love the lord. I love Jesus Christ of Nazareth and I love his father and I couldn't reach so far here at 78 without that man from Galilee in my life, you know, and even some time when I turn away from him he never turn away from me. There's a lot of people in this world who don't believe in God or don't believe that there was a Jesus Christ who was conceived, born, buried and raised again but if you read the bible it's there. I'm glad I got Christ in my life."

Cleveland talked movingly of what he considered to be the wonder of God's creation and the physical beauty of countryside and sea before saying:

"Oh yeah, every morning I read my bible and I put my faith in his hands and I feel happy; quite comfortable. If I'm going out the road or driving, I say 'Lord, please take me in the car, take me there and bring me up safely'. Put my trust in God."

The theme of trust and placing their lives and concerns in God's hands was commented on by other elders:

"You always have to put your faith in God. If you don't believe you have to believe without doubt whatever you ask for. Well, God knows everything about me. He knows me better than I know myself. He knows my past, my present, the things that I am capable of doing. God doesn't always answer what you ask for because you could be asking for something and God knows that thing that you are asking for is not good for you and he wouldn't allow you to have it. You are asking but you are never going to get it because he knows better than me that what I am asking for wouldn't do me any good. I believe, I know that God is good. ... God is in my corner" (Classie).

Classie was not alone in speaking of God's goodness or doing so in a way that suggested a deep awe and reverence. Joylyn, Carmen and John endorsed their belief in the Lord's protection:

"The Lord does guide me every step of the way. He is always there with me, protecting me and giving me the strength to see all things through. He is my light and my first love" (Joylyn).

"Always with me my dear, whatever the situation is – always there. Always at my side" (Carmen).

"He has never left me. Wherever I have wandered and in all the times when I haven't been deserving of him, God never leave me and for that my dear I give him honour and praise" (John).

The elders felt that their lives had been directed by God and that he stood alongside them and supported them in times of trouble and hardship. Their faith was effectively an 'anchor' on the pathway of life. This was clearly expressed in the words of Gwyneth:

"He has been my rock in the difficult times, the times that were hard. The Lord has seen me through. He has been my shield and my comforter. You know. … I don't know what I done, what I be without my God. My faith means so much, it means everything. Without faith you are nothing."

Me: *In what way nothing?*

"With faith you can do anything you know. ... because, how do I say it, you know God will always be standing alongside you, just there --- by you. It makes you a better person. You know Jesus loves you. … whatever anyone says, God knows you. … God loves you whatever go happen and that you must also try hard to love every other person."

An absolute certainty in God's presence and ability to protect and guide them was consistently expressed by all of the elders. Given that they are Christian, this is not perhaps of itself surprising, although in listening to the stories I was still deeply moved by the expressions and words that demonstrated such a strong, affirming and unswerving faith. This group of elders essentially placed their lives in God's hands and truly believed that whatever happened to them was in accordance to his will and purpose. Lillian explained:

"I used to have a temper; it was really strong. And the old man he drink, drink, drink and when he came in, violence --- you know what I mean? I used to sit there scared. But I ask God, 'Please just take it away for me,' and he gave me peace. He doesn't go to church but he doesn't drink anymore".

Gwyneth also gave testimony of God working in her life and to the power of prayer:

"I believe that there is a God up there and there is a Jesus Christ 'cause

I've proved it. Things happened and I prayed and prayed."

Me: *Can you give me an example?*

"Yes, my faith. I had a major operation, I came home from work one eve with a pain in my tummy and the pain wouldn't go. I drank hot drinks and it still wouldn't go and I had to call the ambulance and they rushed me to Lewisham Hospital and I had a burst appendix burst open and my whole system was poisoned. I was on death's door. I closed my eyes and prayed to God to help me. I got the four girls and they were only little and I prayed to God to help me to see these girls grow up, to help themselves and not to suffer. God helped me. I tell you, that was my belief and faith and I hold that until now. I went on to have two boys. That's my faith. Never give up, that's my faith. The pain was so powerful that I make up my mind to go but God brought me up – the girls needed me. Now all four of them are married and have their kids and their own lives."

Norman, her husband, also commented: "I'll always say, 'Always pray and ask God to keep me and guide me and ask him that I live to see them grow up and take care of themselves before I passed away.' He went on to comment," You should always be peaceful. You don't let people take advantage of you, but at the same time you must not take advantage of anyone or be evil towards anyone either…."

Elders spoke also of the importance of Christianity in providing the moral and ethical framework for their lives. The desire to do good and be caring of other people was evident. Desiree, explained, in sentiments echoed by Hyacinth and Fitzroy: "Jesus calls us to be disciples. We need to do good – to care about each other more. I try to be good to people; if I can help a little then I need to do that, it is very important" .

"You know sometime, something come across you and you would get cross and you just ask the Lord 'Give me faith' so I know that I don't let anything upset me, nothing upset me because I said to myself if you and

I are vexed, not talking I'm not going to pass you on the street and not say good morning or good evening. If I pass I will say good morning and if you want to answer, you answer, it's up to you but I'll do the right thing. I won't get close to you, but I will still say good morning and go my way because that is Christianity" (Hyacinth).

"I try to be more generous to people, understand people, help people as much as I can, which I do. I am doing the things which make me, within myself, feel happy and make God happy too. I have a good sense of direction. Being a Christian I can judge people when they are talking stupidness. I can listen to lots of things but I'm not quick to say anything, I can hear what they say and know, 'This is no good, this is the way.' Sometimes things happen in my life where I could go to the length of revenge. But to me it doesn't make any sense as it is not doing unto others as you would like done unto you" (Fitzroy).

There was certainly nothing ambiguous in the elders' discussion, and several attributed the "deep roots" of black people's faith to their experience of poverty. Lillian and Winnie summed it up by saying:

"In the Caribbean Josephine you know that we don't have wealth. We are poor. We ask the Father for everything. And every day we get up and whatever we have we give thanks. You eat and you say, 'Thank you Lord'" (Lillian).

"If my grandmother light the fire she always say, 'Lord, I'm lighting this fire and I am going to cook, and bless it.' And some time by when she finished cooking all the children come round and eat up and share as well as everyone had to get a little taste of it. People who had more still prayed but, you know, the poorer class of people prayed more and depend upon him more. Because when I went home this Sunday when they had that on the television with the people carrying the children with the water, when I reached home and took my bed and said 'God control that.' I have been there. In those days I didn't have no shoes to wear and we had to carry water on our heads, but God has been so good.... So

she (grandmother) always depend on the Lord and say, 'He will provide and will make a way somehow'. So we always had the prayer" (Winnie).

Fitzroy also noted that "the West Indians, the Caribbean's, they take Christianity as a way of survival, as a practical thing they can't do without now."

Fitzroy spoke with resignation and sadness and his concluding reflections gave expression to a profound sense of loss:

"If I was to go back I'd really go in to my history as lots of people tell me they are Jamaican but we are a lost race. We have no culture of our own, we have no language, so how you say they are Jamaicans – we are Africans with European names, not our names. You say you go by Jamaican laws but they are laws that Europeans gave, so what we got? We ain't got nothing. It's sad, we haven't got nothing so we got God."

As this study has shown, Black theology evolved from black suffering and as a means of identifying God and Jesus' discipleship with the experience of the poor and oppressed (Cone 1975). Fitzroy is not likely to have read Cone's work, or indeed that of subsequent black theologians, yet in his poignant comment Fitzroy perhaps expresses the essence of what it means to be a black person displaced through slavery and colonialism, stripped of name and identity and, for Fitzroy, left with little but a loving God to uphold and protect him. God may, in the eyes of some critiques, require "childlike compliance" (Burrell 2010) or in transactional terms be viewed as an omnipotent "authorative figure", but for the elders their faith enabled them to function as adults, confident in their self worth because they believe God created them and loved them equally.

Social care provision: who will care for the elders?

Given the importance elders attach to both their faith and their family it is perhaps not surprising that these were the two sources elders' primarily viewed as important if they were in need of care in the future. Elders spoke of how they would first turn to God:

"My first love is God, so he be the first person I call to in times of need" (John).

"God is the one I go to – he is always there as my protector" (Norman).

"The first person I would cry to is God for his help" (Desiree).

Fitzroy would also turn to God but he was the only elder who was estranged from his children (following his divorce), and his motives for prayer were a little different:

"Well, the first person I would call upon is God and pray and ask for guidance, because Josephine as far as I am concerned with my family, I don't trust them 'cause the only time they come and see me is when they want money."

A majority of the elders however also rely or expect to rely upon their families with over half expecting help from what they termed their 'church family'.

"My family, they would always be there for me. My family – both my families would be there. My daughters and son and also my church sisters, they would be there for me" (Joylin).

"My daughter she look out for me, help with the shopping and little bits and pieces. Also the church elders (leaders), they call me up if they not see me in the church some weeks. Once, when I was too poorly, they call round. They talk and pray with me, bring me some food. I like that; they won't forget me" (Carmen).

None of the elders indicated that they would turn to social care provision. When specifically asked if they would consider getting help from adult social care, the question prompted a range of negative responses:

"If I need it, but if I don't need it – it's something I try to avoid."

Me: *Why is that?*

"Well, I've been reading a lot about it and it's not really running properly and people not being properly looked after. I'd rather pay somebody to

look after me. I can't rule me destiny but I would pray that I may not live as far ahead health wise that I need that type of service because, in other words I've read a case of a carer and the Social Services – and she don't get a good.... I don't think you get good care. I read about it, what I have read, it is not very tempting to embark on it. If there's no alternative, so be it, but it's better to look at the other alternatives" (Fitzroy).

Gwyneth expressed similar opinions:

"No, I hear from the television what go in with those people and the poor care. My friend try it once and it not there for us people, they don't understand us folks."

Me: *In what ways don't they understand?*

"The food, it's for the white people and the care is not good. They don't wash the people like we as black people like to wash."

Gwyneth was not alone in her concerns about hygiene. Hyacinth on the same theme explained: "you have your hygiene and you don't want to go less than now so if they are coming in I would expect them – I like my hygiene, I like my bath every day. ... how I want things to go."

The direct question also elicited a number of reluctant "Well, possibly" and "Yes dear, perhaps" type responses, with my feeling that they simply said this to satisfy me as they knew of my involvement in social work. Lillian spoke of how she wouldn't know how to contact them and said "I would approach my G.P. or somewhere. If we need it, they would recommend somebody."

The elders were of differing views as to the importance of any potential carer being Christian. Lillian stated directly, "No, it wouldn't matter", as she believed getting the right help was more important.

Cleveland felt that "it's up to them, their faith, that's up to them. I'm the one putting my trust in God. The person helping me, I would pray for them and ask God to guide them."

Norman also said that it wouldn't matter, but qualified this with "If they don't smoke, no, it wouldn't matter if they weren't a Christian but if they came and I was with it I would try and talk them round and let them read the bible for me."

Norman's comment raises issues regarding social care's accommodation of religious belief within the 'personalised care' philosophy of care management. Whilst these issues are explored further in the following chapter, the visibility or otherwise of a carer's Christian belief is reinforced by the larger number of elders who felt the religious background of the carer to be important:

> "I would prefer them to be a Christian. If it's a Christian then we have a lot of things to talk about even if they don't have much time" (Classie).

> "If I need looking after by a stranger then it would be better, yes, better you know, if they be Christian, 'cause then we share together God's love and can pray" (Desiree).

Other elders expressed doubts as to whether their preferences would be accommodated:

> "Well, it does matter, but I can't say as you don't know who they would send" (Hyacinth).

> "I'd want them to be Christian, but what can I say: not so many are Christian these days and they not anyway allowed to say" (John).

Overall, social care was not viewed as an attractive option by the elders. It is perhaps difficult for those who are reasonably independent to consider a time of increased frailty and it is possible that publically provided social care might be an unattractive option for many regardless of ethnicity or religious belief. None the less, the elders' views do reflect a perspective contextualised by their faith, church attendance and culture, and there is little evidence that this group views adult social care in quite the same 'equality focused' way that codes of practice (GSCC 2002 / 2010) and ethics (BASW 2002) suggest.

Onwards to heaven? Eternal life

Finally, elders spoke with me about eternal life as the concluding aspect of *The love, care and eternal hope* story. The tone of the elders softened as they spoke, their faces took on a reflective and happy expression and their bodies visibly relaxed. In their differing ways the elders expressed the view that this life was only temporary and / or a preparation for better things to come.

> "The most important thing for me is I believe in God and I know that one day we will overcome and reach in the place God has made for us. 'Cause it says in the bible they who believe will never die and have eternal life – will live an eternal life. I believe that one day when the time comes when I pass away I will have an eternal life. That is my belief" (Norman).

> "I dreamt a dream one time I went to hell and when I went down I see all the people and everybody was crying and when I go round that place this person said, 'What you doing here? Turn back and go around' and when I turned back and go around and then I see like a spring, like the water coming like a fountain, like the angels going around it and like a voice said to me, 'This is where you belong'".

> Me: *You believe there's a heaven?*

> "I believe there is a heaven. I don't know about the hell but I believe there's a heaven! (*laughter*)" (Winnie).

Elders were consistent in their belief in heaven and that the concluding of their earthly existence did not represent the end of life. The tone of the elders' voice suggested that they considered the afterlife to be something positive to embrace and certainly not something to fear.

> "There is a life after death, there's a life after death. There's a happy life. It's a happy life better than we got in our life here. The better life is to come and that's how I look at it so all that we have around us is nothing. It's just material things because we can't take it with us when we are

going and all the money that we have is nothing so the best we do the good on earth that's when we pass on you know we go to the happier land where he will provide for us so any one want to take the step, yes, it's a good step and a better step because man is as he is" (Hyacinth).

"There is a heaven because there is a God, that I do know. It be a peaceful place where we need struggle and suffer no more. I hope I done good in God's eyes so when I cross over he take me home" (John).

"I look forward to the day when the Lord he take me home. I hope I make it in this life that I do good, so he will take me home to him" (Carmen).

"Listen. Our life is not yours. This life isn't yours right. It is the father's life. He is the one and when he is ready he takes you" (Lillian).

Winnie and Norman reflected:

"I hope I meet my maker yonder. When I'm walking up to him he will hold my hand and I will walk straight through."

Me: *Straight through*?

"... Yes, straight through that gate of heaven. I'm looking forward to that" (Winnie).

"When your time comes and you have to go you must go. You must go – make your pathway prepared – prepare. You have your house and your flat, you clean it and have a smooth path to walk with God. I believe in that."

Me: *What helps to make your path clear?*

"If you have a clean heart. Believe and have a clear heart" (Norman).

It almost feels disrespectful to analyse an aspect of a story that is so rooted in a fundamental and unshakable belief in God and heaven. If, as Dawkins (2006) argues, there is little rationale for believing in heaven, a creator or afterlife, then

such religious 'delusion' cannot be intellectually explained or theorised. The elders however 'knew' with unswerving conviction there to be a God, spoke of God's presence in their lives and placed such knowledge centrally in their narratives.

Black theology also takes as a truth Jesus Christ as the Son of God, who lived amongst humans in order to show them a different and more just way of being towards each other. It challenges traditional white theology by locating God as '*God of the Oppressed*' (Cone 1975) and argues that Jesus was eventually crucified as he was a threat to the political and religious leaders of his day. Black theologians would see Christ as being close to black elders because of the suffering and privations they had endured. Transactional analysis would potentially be interested in the elders' psychological need for a 'Father' who directs their lives and choices and prevents them from taking adult-like actions to address the issues and challenges of contemporary life.

I would argue that both discourses may well have validity. The elders have been affirmed by their belief in God's love of them and of their equality in his eyes. Equally, they have experienced racism as black post-war migrants and carried in to those experiences the colonial teaching of their childhoods. The elders drew on the internal coping mechanisms available to them in the context of their time and in so doing have survived with impressive dignity and awareness. This suggests a very adult persona given that the elders formed alliances and remained in the church when many white people appear to have left. Hence, theories will always have limited value in explaining stories of the black oppressed unless such theories evolve from and speak in to those experiences.

Conclusion

The previous two chapters have told the elders' stories, beginning with their childhood in the Caribbean through to their adult years in the U.K. Elders have spoken about their church experiences, how they addressed the racism with which they were confronted and the changes they have seen in church life over the last forty to sixty years. I ended the interviews stirred and moved by the

elders, and especially the warmth, love, kindness and tenacity which exuded from them. Permeating the chapters is the African-Caribbean elders' expression of Christian faith which they believe has upheld, comforted and validated them throughout their life journey – and which will continue to do so in their twilight years. What then might social work learn from their stories?

Chapter Six: What can social work learn from the stories of African-Caribbean Christian elders?

This chapter draws together the five main themes arising from the interviews. These are:

- the importance of the elders' Christian belief
- narratives as part of black history and knowledge
- dealing with racism and its intersections
- reconciling differing religious and social values-the challenge for social work
- the care needs of African-Caribbean elders – church, family and / or state?

The themes indicate links between the elders' stories and some of the literature and theory discussed in Chapters One and Two. This enables new knowledge to be presented that has applicability for social work practice with African-Caribbean Christian elders.

i)   The importance of Christian belief

The elders consistently spoke of the fundamental importance of their faith. Being 'Christian' is a deeply internalised part of the African-Caribbean elders' personal life script and identity. This is reflected through the words they use to describe their Christian beliefs and when discussing how their faith and love of God helped them to retain hope and dignity when exposed to racism and hardship.

 Gravesande (in Aldred and Ogbo 2010: 116) talks of how Caribbean immigrants' "solidarity of experience, culture and faith created deep roots and a life time of fellowship" that helped them to cope with the challenges and privations of migration and racism, and how "That generation learnt to serve God on their knees, they prayed and cried out to God" (2010:117). The elders' stories demonstrate those 'deep roots' and some of the strength, hope and humanity that has grown from them.

In writing on anti-discriminatory social work, Okitikipi & Aymer (2010: 94) suggest that there is a "general acceptance that religion is a private matter and

should therefore not play any dominant role in social work". If this is so, then the needs of religious service users may not be properly identified or even actively tolerated. This has particular implications for black people given their minority status and greater preponderance for church attendance. As such, it is difficult to see how social work can even begin to credit itself with an interest in equality and person-centred care if it marginalises Christianity or, even more problematically, adopts a hostile stance towards organised religion, as identified by Holloway (2006). Reddie's (2005) assertion that U.K. Caribbean elders cannot be properly understood in isolation from their Christian faith finds strong resonance in this study

The learning that emerges appears relevant not only to an understanding of African-Caribbean elders as a specific generational grouping. The elders stand at the head of subsequent generations of British born and raised families. They nurtured their own children in the Christian faith – and often in black led churches that their generation had been instrumental in establishing (Aldred & Ogbo 2010). Whilst it is beyond the remit of this study to consider the implications of African-Caribbean elders' faith on younger generations, statistics continue to suggest that black led and black majority churches are growing and that they are attended by people of all ages (Brierley 2006).

ii) The elders' narratives as part of black history and knowledge

The period covered by the narratives is an important element of both British and Caribbean historical knowledge. The elders' stories chart aspects of the post-war migration of poor African-Caribbean people to the U.K. in the 1950s and 60s and their experiences and survival in the intervening fifty years. Those experiences laid the foundations on which subsequent generations of British Caribbean people built their lives in this country. The elders' stories therefore provide an important historical bridge between the experiences and challenges of the past and the contemporary experiences of British born African-Caribbean's.

The period following the elders' migration was also that of social work's initial engagement with black service users (Cheetham 1972) and contributed to the profession's resultant focus on anti-racist practice in the 1980s (CAS: JK 2008). The elders' stories therefore form part of U.K. social work's history – and especially the period when the profession recognised and sought to address the racism to which black people were exposed (CCETSW 1989).This makes it especially important for social work to both understand and acknowledge the manner in which Christianity sustained so many of the early generation of poor Caribbean migrants. Such acknowledgement does not detract from the criticisms that might be made of organised religion in suppressing black dissent (Beckford 2000; Burrell 2010), but requires understanding of the elders' strong Christian allegiance in the context of their British colonial history and the values and theology to which they were exposed.

Cone (1970, 1986,) suggests that God cannot be isolated from black people's history and that the bible has to be understood and interpreted in the context of their historical subjugation. Similarly, perhaps social work should not isolate God from anti-racist social work, given how central a role religion plays in the lives and understandings of African-Caribbean Christian elders. This could subsequently enhance sensitivity to the experiences and needs of black elders who may be potential service users. Indeed, in the time I spent with each elder, I reflected on how much I had learnt about them and how such knowledge could assist in identifying their social care needs more effectively than standard assessment forms that list a series of pre-determined questions to be answered. Religion is not therefore 'private' and disconnected from the public sphere, as Okitikipi and Aymer (2010) suggest, but an essential part of contemporary black history, publically 'played out' through European colonialism, migration, racism and African-Caribbean belief systems.

The elders' narratives also provide an understanding of how racism and its impact on their lives differs from inequalities experienced by white people. This is because the elders' stories are located in a colonial context of which white people were major contributing and benefiting agents. From their stories of

mission school through to their arrival in the U.K. and their early experiences in church, the elders recounted a history in which their lives, identities and experiences were interwoven with the dominant 'mother country'. Hence a true understanding of African-Caribbean Christian elders means not only engaging with their faith (Reddie 2005) but with an understanding of how they process their wider experiences and relationships with white people and each other in the context of their history and religious belief. This leads me to consider what social work might learn from the elders' stories about racism and its various intersections.

iii Dealing with racism and its intersections

As previously indicated, all the elders grew up in poor and largely rural communities and were schooled under British colonial rule. Professional qualifications were limited to a small number of trades such as dressmaking and car mechanics, and when they first migrated to the U.K. the elders had no legal protection from racism or equal opportunity initiatives to ease their way into employment or further / higher education. Despite these inauspicious beginnings, the elders were part of a generation that formed black churches, set up black hair dressers and food outlets and established social institutions. By creating their own worship space, maintaining 'separateness' within a multi-racial congregation, supporting each other and / or developing friendships with fellow Christians regardless of their colour or heritage elders appear to have evoked a 'black perspective' long before the phrase was coined in social work (Ahmad 1990).

The elders in this study were not 'activists' in the manner more commonly expressed in the social work literature that focuses on challenging racism or understanding its causes (Thompson 2006). They were placed, unprepared, in a position in which they had little choice but to deal with the racism they encountered within U.K. churches and society more generally. Their responses seldom involved simply direct challenge, but included strategies of quiet resistance whereby elders refused to move or continued to go back into church and to sit in seats they had previously been asked to vacate. Through their

experiences and dignified response the elders affirmed their equality, using biblical teaching as evidence and reflecting back to some of the white churchgoers their understanding of Christian love. Those elders still continue to go to church and feel themselves to have been a part of the change process that has afforded greater inclusivity for themselves and younger black people. This suggests that social work could learn from the elders' multi-dimensional strategy given that there cannot be a single approach to how racial resistance is identified and enacted.

Racism is clearly not disconnected from other facets of black people's social location and personhood (Mullard 1991), but interconnected with class and gender. The concept of 'intersectionality' was initially developed by the African-American academic and activist Kimberlie Crenshaw (1989) to assist understanding of the complex ways in which socially and culturally constructed categories (class, gender, ethnicity, disability etc.) interweave to create multiple, differential and, in some cases, systematic experiences of inequality. Davis (1981) and Chancer and Watkins (2006) have argued that race, class and gender are the three 'core' oppressions from which other inequalities stem. This is because oppression of women, black people and the working class is historically and structurally imbedded in paternalistic capitalism with labour exploitation of the poor, females and 'third world' peoples being necessary for its maintenance. Hence, Christians who are black, poor and female experience institutional and structural exclusion across these three domains, including within some of the churches and the white male normative theology that largely underpins them.

Recognition of the intersections between different forms of oppression does not necessarily mean that black people will articulate issues of gender, class and race as 'equal' in their daily lives or recognise the historical and contemporary issues underpinning them. In being asked to describe their early experiences in the U.K. and in U.K. churches, both male and female elders spoke directly and consistently about their racial experiences. They described shared experiences of racism and prejudicial behaviour shown towards them and afforded different

explanations as to its causes. Elders also spoke of being poor and of the low status jobs they had undertaken, suggesting some experiential understanding of the link between race and class made by the African-American scholar Du Bois (1910). The elders made no direct reference to sexism. Issues of gender emerged primarily in the context of Lillian and Gwyneth's narratives about leaving their children behind in the Caribbean, in John and Cleveland's more assertive approach to racism and Gwyneth's attempts to placate her husband when he was racially insulted in church.

The lack of any direct reference to gender inequality is not intended to suggest that sexism can be ignored. Frances- Wright (2001) powerfully describes how white middle class feminists and black male activists initially colonised the debate and theoretical conceptualisation of race and gender and in so doing not only rendered black women and their lives invisible but undermined the potential for social transformation through a failure to recognise the specific position of black women.

American and British womanist and feminist theologists (D.S. Williams 1987; Cannon 1988; Hill-Collins 1989; Loades & Armstrong 1990) further argue that Christian women have been so indoctrinated into an acceptance of (white) male theological paternalism that it has become normalised and legitimised through religious teaching, and as a result women's gender consciousness is submerged and the interwoven nuances of their race, class and gender experiences negated. In addressing black women's' experiences Hill Collins (2000) states (2000: 28) that, "it is important to stress that no homogeneous Black woman's standpoint exists." Rather, there are common threads and themes that link those different experiences, which enables her to conclude "that a Black *women's* collective standpoint does exist, one characterized by the tensions that accrue to different responses to common challenges". She goes on to explain that this understanding of intersectionality potentially creates new and more insightful ways of seeing, theorising and challenging oppression and more actively engaging with other intersections of inequality.

Bagilhole (2010), whilst recognising the negation of black women's experiences within Christianity, additionally argues that they have been 'put off' by white feminists and gay rights activists' perceived attack on the traditional nuclear family unit, which was allegedly portrayed as the environment in which gender inequality and roles and norms were learnt and negatively entrenched. Black British people in contrast considered the family unit to be an important source of support, continuity and cultural transmission in a country in which they were migrants subjected to racism and exclusion. The traditional family of married parents and children caring for and supported by extended family members is also reinforced through much religious teaching, with the woman's role as helpmate, nurturer and carer actively promoted in biblical text. Whilst the elders initial story of 'belonging' suggests a more fluid concept of 'family' than the tight nuclear model, its importance in providing a sense of security and identity was also reinforced.

The role of the family and how gender roles are transacted within ethnic minority communities therefore need to be understood by social workers. This is because there may be a tendency in social work to equate equality to uniformity and women having access to the educational, employment and social opportunities mainly afforded to (white middle class) men. Social workers are however required to respect diversity (BASW 2002; GSCC 2010) and to recognise and validate belief systems different from their own. This may require more active recognition that there are different ways of being 'woman', differing understandings as to the value or negativity of 'traditional' gender roles, and different ideas across generations, ethnicities, faith traditions and class as to what is meant by gender equality.

It is not only differing family and related values that pose potential learning for social work. I will now consider how the elders' stories regarding their faith may provide a different prism through which to consider social work values of self determination, choice, freedom, empowerment, etc (BASW 2002; GSCC 2010).

iv **Reconciling different values and religious and social attitudes**

The elders did not appear to ascribe to the spirit of individualism and self determination that the social work code of practice (GSCC 2010) indicates as desirable, because they considered God to be a higher power under whose love, protection and guidance they lived. This does not mean that the elders did not make personal choices but they considered events in their lives to be God's will or directed by him. Good things were seen to have occurred through God's grace and the challenging events of their lives made bearable by God's guidance and protection. They largely considered this life to be transitory with God preparing for them a place where there would be no more pain and suffering. Pray was also very important to the elders, especially when they or their loved ones were facing difficulties.

The elders' belief in an all powerful God means that social work cannot assume that professional values are universally agreed or accepted by those with whom they practice. This poses a potential dilemma as to how differing, and potentially conflicting, religious and secular values might be reconciled. Davie (1994) outlines society's increased emphasis on social rights that afforded greater sexual and relational choices for women especially. According to Davie these included the advent of the contraceptive pill, the 1967 Abortion Act, the Robbin's Report leading to the expansion of university education and the 1969 Divorce Reform Act; developments apparently at variance with more traditional church teaching. He suggests that the Catholic and evangelical churches not only resisted many of the social changes but entrenched theological instruction regarding the sanctity of marriage, men and women's role in family and church life and conservative moral codes more generally.

None of the elders' expressed negative views regarding such social advances and, whilst all of them had married, their personal stories indicated a range of life styles, family arrangements and social views. This suggests that there is not a single way to be Christian (Beckford 1998), and that different denominations and church traditions may have widely varying interpretations of biblical teaching. Catholicism, for instance, excludes women from ministry and has set

views on the undesirability of abortion and divorce. Pentecostal and Baptist Union churches embrace women's ministry and the ministerial potential of non-ordained congregational members. Monitoring data that simply records a service user's faith as 'Christian' will provide no more insight to a person's theological, social or political beliefs or values than if the question had not been included at all.

Social workers should not therefore make assumptions about people's needs or beliefs just because they are Christian. Professional codes of practice require sensitive engagement with different belief systems rather than privileging one over another. This is especially important for African-Caribbean elders. As seen in Chapter Four, they were taught a 'simple faith' rooted in certain non-negotiable truths. Many had received little formal education and none were encouraged to question religious teaching. The 2011 Evangelical Alliance / Christian Research study into the background and beliefs of 178,000 respondents indicates that attendees of black majority churches were more likely to "strongly agree that the Bible has the supreme authority in guiding their beliefs, views and behaviour, and are also more likely to consider it to be without error, in its original manuscript" (2011:17) and less likely to feel that Christianity and evolution are compatible. The study makes no distinction between African-born, Caribbean-born and British-born black people, and the findings thus have to be viewed with some caution, but do suggest a greater acceptance of orthodox Christian teaching.

This of course also raises complex challenges to the liberal nature of the profession and its codes and how social workers assess and relate to those who do not share them. If, for instance, a Catholic family subscribe to traditional gender roles and do not accept a woman's theological leadership, does this mean that they are 'sexist' and the woman in need of empowerment? If an African-Caribbean evangelical Christian believes marriage to be a union between a consenting male and female, does this make them homophobic and more unsuitable to foster African-Caribbean children from Christian families than a secular white couple supportive of such unions? Clearly, assessment must be capable of a more nuanced approach than simply reaching conclusions

based on partial and potentially rigid assumptions as to what it means to be Christian (or secular).For that to occur the profession perhaps needs greater confidence in positively engaging with those Christians who do not subscribe to its values, or who interpret them differently.

Hodge (2002), an American writer, goes further, arguing that social work effectively oppresses evangelical Christians through what he describes as 'a new class' of secular educators and professionals who in his view subscribe to a liberal, relativist world view that is largely indifferent of and even hostile to organised religion and 'Christian values'. Whilst Hodge is drawing from a U.S. context, his discussion of how social workers mediate between different people's sincerely held value systems and make assumptions about the ones that should be legitimised has relevance for this discussion. As indicated earlier, social work operates within codes of practice that seek to respect individual views and beliefs. Challenges on how certain values become 'normalised' within social work whilst others are rejected are therefore valid. Similarly, whilst Hodge appears to ascribe conservative social views to all Christians rather than recognising Christians' diffuse opinions (Drane 2000, 2002; McClaren 2004; Boswell 2005;Wallis 2005), he is arguably right in warning of the danger in social workers' potentially assuming that Christians have prejudices on which they will act, simply because they are Christians, whilst assuming that the 'new class' of educators and policy makers are inherently liberal and prejudice-free simply because they are not religious. The British Social Attitudes Survey (2009) revealed often quite small differences between the religious and non-religious on matters such as euthanasia, homosexuality and women's equality, with religion being a weak indicator of political affiliation.

In listening to the elders' stories, their struggles and deprivations and their evident love of God, it was hard to see them as anything other than 'good people' who had tried to live their lives according to the Christian values with which they had been raised. This included a commandment to 'love your neighbour' and to show forgiveness and mercy to those who had done wrong to them. The interesting question might be whether social work is able to show the same kind of openness and acceptance of those whose values and religious

beliefs they may not share or accept, as a group of African-Caribbean elders articulated towards non-believers and those Christians who had rejected them.

v) **The care needs of African-Caribbean elders – church, family, state?**

Social work and care management are not necessarily familiar concepts to African-Caribbean elders and it is perhaps not surprising that adult social care was seldom cited as a potential source of help. None of the elders I interviewed were receiving help from adult care services, although three elders were physically frail and dependent on their partners / family for assistance with some of the daily care tasks.

Elders primarily look to families, friends and church if they are in need. If they had a view at all, they saw social workers (and other care/ health professionals) as operating primarily from a secular set of assumptions, disinterested in religion and ignorant of black people's spiritual, cultural and church-based life. Whilst this is not necessarily based on the elders' direct experience of care services, its potential accuracy is not invalidated given the secular nature of social work values and its apparent hostility towards organised religion identified in Chapter Two.

If the elders were to be in need of social care support, their stories indicate the importance of practical steps being taken to help maintain links with their church and faith community. For many, an active prayer life is important, as is regular reading of the bible. This poses a challenge for a profession where the religious beliefs of staff are considered a private concern (Okitikipi & Aymer 2010). Elders were adamant that they would go to heaven (immediately or eventually) when they died and as such death was not something they actively feared. As seen in Chapter Five, elders were certainly not reluctant to talk about their passing and social workers hence need to be sensitive to the terms that African-Caribbean elders commonly use to describe death (passing, crossing over the other side, home going etc.) and their hopes and fears associated with it.

There are complex issues for social work and other social care workers in how the emotional and social needs of African-Caribbean elders are sustained if they are placed in day centres and care homes (Christian or otherwise) where they may be the only black person or one of a small minority. Such services will not necessarily meet the needs of African-Caribbean Christian elders if they are shaped by white British secular culture and are primarily established to address such needs and preferences. This raises questions as to where the needs of African-Caribbean elders might best be met, both within their own homes and potentially in residential care settings. The Department of Health (DH) makes it clear that: 'Importantly, the ability to make choices about how people live their lives should not be restricted to those who live in their own homes. It is about better support, more tailored to individual choices and preferences in all care settings' (DH 2008, p 5).

SCIE (2010) outlines the way in which the personalisation of adult care services affords more choice to users and more direct control over the money and services received. It suggests that,

> "Clearly the third sector has a key part to play in the personalisation of social care services having the potential to offer a wider choice of specific or specialist services, particularly for people from minority groups who have been historically underserved by generic statutory agencies" (Carr: SCIE 2010: 43).

Assuming that African-Caribbean elders form part of the minority groups that SCIE has in mind, there is potential benefit for this group in the personalisation agenda. The elders in this study spoke of the church as an important source of support and companionship, and the CAS (jk2008) similarly identified the range of services offered by the large black led churches in London especially. Churches (or other faith sectors) are not however included in the third sector of community groups, co-operatives and mutual's or social enterprises SCIE lists, and there is nothing in the document that specifically discusses the way in which the personalisation agenda might be used for the benefit of black elders.

Even if churches were willing to take on more of a direct care provision role, there is insufficient knowledge as to its practicality. Providing for the complex care needs of the most vulnerable and for which the church is formally contracted and paid is very different to voluntarily providing lunch clubs, visits and social events for the reasonably active elderly. The two churches identified in this study appeared to provide services as part of their discipleship to the congregation and wider community and as such they presumably determined when and what might be offered. There would also be a number of ethical issues in statutory agencies entrenching their mainstream provision through churches, especially for those black elders who were not religious, did not want care support provided through their church or who did not live in an area where such provision had developed.

The learning point that emerges from the elders' stories and their evident lack of interest in publically provided social care is to recognise that policies and guides that are written in inclusive ways will, by extension, ignore those who are not included. Social work needs to once more nurture an active engagement with black people, to open up space for dialogue and to facilitate black users, carers, professionals and others to collectively comment on policies and initiatives from which they might benefit. Black led and black majority churches do not provide the 'answer' behind which policy makers and providers can retreat, but do represent an important resource. At the very least there is potential for partnership working and for greater recognition of the vital contribution that many black led / majority churches make to the social and spiritual welfare of their congregations and wider communities (CAS 2008) .

SCIE outlines the valuable role that social work has for the most needy and vulnerable – its concern for the individual, its advocacy role, its promotion of justice and equality. It suggests that social work's distinct contribution is to make sure that services 'are personalised and that people's human rights are safeguarded' (Carr 2010: 24). African-Caribbean people have the human right to be Christian, to believe in God, to go to church, to read the bible and to pray. They have the right to have respected stories that affirm the life sustaining presence of their faith. They have the same right as others to publically funded

and personalised service and as such they have the right to a social work profession that seeks to learn how it might better engage with and provide for Christian African-Caribbean elders.

Conclusion

Potential learning appears to emerge at a number of levels. This firstly includes the challenge for social work and social care practice to implement a 'person centred approach' by engaging with the narratives of the elders and recognising the relevance and importance of Christianity and church attendance to them.. This includes not merely a 'head knowing ' but an ability to ensure through policy and practice that the prayer, church and spiritual life of African-Caribbean elders is valued and retained. Whilst the elders' stories are rooted in a particular discourse, stories of racism and racial disadvantage are now 'new'. Social work therefore needs to more actively re-engage with black pedagogy in order to better understand the direct and causal influence of racism in the history and narratives of Black Britons and which renders the presence of black people within social work virtually invisible.

The elders appeared to have low expectations of social care provision. Their stories are a reminder that the struggle against injustice is multi-faceted and that elders who have strived for the gains others now enjoy might expect their dignity and the provision of culturally appropriate social care services to be promoted for them in their old age.

Finally, social work can learn from the African-Caribbean elders' genuine humanity.Their stories chart a life-time journey of childhood poverty from countries of birth to migration in a country that economically exploited their homelands and then largely rejected them from the mother country and from its churches. The elders' stories show the indomitable strength of the human spirit, the capacity of poor and largely uneducated people to live their lives with dignity and love, to exercise forgiveness towards those who wronged them and to work hard in the most challenging of circumstances.

The elders exhibit the joy that they gain from their faith and in the keeping alive of the gospel songs and spirituals that are a part of black people's history of suffering and partial liberation. They teach us that faith is not necessarily an oppressive instrument believed in only by those who are 'unenlightened' or who 'need' religion but is something that is expressed across the world in the lives and cultures of millions of people. It is a facet of black people's lives that needs to be engaged with by U.K. social workers if they are to have any chance of properly serving increasingly diverse communities.

Chapter Seven: Reviewing the study.

Little can be learnt from this study if the wider social work community is unaware of its existence. I therefore need to consider the study's validity and give consideration to other areas of research or academic enquiry that might emerge. This section of the chapter therefore deals with such issues. It will begin by considering whether the study and its analysis has validity and the meaning of such terms within research discourse. I then move on to discuss the importance of reflexivity and how I applied this to both my own role and feelings as a researcher and to elements of the study itself. This includes considering the strengths and weaknesses of the study including the research question, ethical issues, theoretical influences and the study's methods and design. Before summarising the chapter I reflect on what I might have done differently and what I have learnt from undertaking the work.

Issues of validity, quality and reflexivity

Issues of validity pose specific challenges for social scientists. Kerlinger (1973: 457) writes that "The commonest definition of validity is epitomized by the question: are we measuring what we think we are measuring?" Such a positivist definition accords with modernist notions of 'pure knowledge' and with scientific research where facts can more easily be quantified and evidenced. The definition therefore assumes that 'validity' lies in the consistency of its results and their generability beyond the study (Gibbs 2007).

As explored in Chapter Three, qualitative research is arguably less concerned with provable facts and singular truths than with the multiple meanings through which people make sense of their social world. Bryman (2004) suggests that, whilst some qualitative researchers such as Mason (1996) 'stick close' to the inherited definitions of quantitative research, Guba and Lincoln (1994) question the notion of a single account of social reality and therefore the means by which such research is evaluated. Qualitative researchers have therefore used:

" trustworthiness and authenticity' (Guba and Lincoln 1994), 'adequacy and
  credibility' (Olesen 1994) or 'credibility and fittingness' (Beck,1993) as more
  befitting questions of the extent to which qualitative findings can be

used to represent the experiencers' views of the phenomenon being researched" (Shaw and Gould 2001:126).

Bryman (2004: 275) lists the four criteria according to which the trustworthiness of qualitative research might be assessed:

- *Credibility*, in that the research is carried out "according to the canons of good practice" and confirmation from those studied that the researcher has correctly understood and interpreted their social world.
- *Transferability* is less concerned with the 'findings' holding true if the research were to be repeated with a different cohort of subjects than what Geertz (1995) calls *thick description* – that is, rich accounts of the details of a culture.
- *Dependability*, which is concerned with the researcher recording the different stages of the research process and findings*.
- *Confirmability*, which recognises that, whilst complete objectivity is not achievable in social research, personal values and 'theoretical inclinations' have not unduly influenced the research or its findings.

Black theologians and feminist and womanist writers have differently challenged what they consider these traditional notions of 'validity' and the manner in which it accords to white male academic traditions. Standing (1998 in Ribbens and Edwards) for instance explores how the normative language of the academy is excluding of non-academics, even when it is their stories and experiences being profiled. In her view researchers principally have to evidence 'how clever they are' in ways that accord to academic tradition even where this means alienating those the research allegedly seeks to empower. Erskine (2010) goes further and views the white academy as destructive of black intellectual discourse and a place in which black academics are forced to embrace white ways of knowing and being.

Hesse-Biber (2007) argues that feminist and related research is concerned with the promotion of social justice through understanding women's (and other

marginalised group's) lives and bringing these differing and often submerged insights to the fore as a potential instrument of social change. She does not suggest that such research stands outside of academic tradition but that established criteria for evaluating its validity are insufficient.

If the challenge to established epistemology is therefore to be taken seriously, then so must Hill-Collins' argument (1990) regarding the importance of dialogue (as against debate) between different racial/ gender traditions and of recognising that research and its evaluation is privileged on the knowledge and values of dominant groups. According to Hill-Collins, such privileged knowledge contributes to the subordination of black women and requires black/ female researchers to dispense with the compassion and empathy, which is in her view, must characterise any research that seeks to establish new epistemology based on the experiences of the marginalised. This discussion is of particular importance within social work where those who are researched are usually from marginalised groups, and on whom there may be no existing knowledge base on which to draw.

Shaw and Gould (2001) and Shaw and Norton (2007) largely locate the social work academy's view on research quality and validity within the same paradigms as social science more generally. This includes rigour in respect of methodology, justification of research methods, a well argued theoretical position and drawing on established knowledge. Such agreement may of course largely be achieved because the social work academy primarily operates within the same white middle class normative assumptions from which black, womanist and white working class insights are largely excluded and which Hill-Collins (1990) and Erskine (2010) challenge.

The discussion links with some of my own research dilemmas: how far must a doctoral study merely accord with set 'tradition' regarding its methods, analysis and articulation and to what extent are the inherent dilemmas that emerge in research an important part of the process? This question leads me on to the importance of reflection – or reflexivity.

Reflexivity and its application to the study

Reflexivity urges us "to explore the ways in which a researcher's involvement with a particular study influences, acts upon and informs such research" (Nightingale & Cromby1999: 228).The authors define reflexivity as:

> "an awareness of the researcher's contribution to the construction of meanings throughout the research process, and an acknowledgment of the impossibility of remaining 'outside of' one's subject matter while conducting research." (Nightingale & Cromby 1999: 228).

Reflexivity is a key element of social work research (Stepney & Ford 2000; Shaw & Gould 2001; Whittaker 2009) and is explained by Payne and Payne (2004: 191) as "the practice of researchers being self aware of their own beliefs, values and attitudes, and their personal effects on the setting they have studied and self critical about their research methods and how they have been applied" (cited in Whittaker 2009:9).

Reflexivity therefore requires constant engagement with the research process and the emotional and theoretical impact on the researcher and those studied. This includes the assumptions that are being made and the epistemological position the researcher adopts as well as reflection on the design of the research, its methods, questions and analysis (Denzin & Lincoln 1998; Willig 2001; Robson 2002; Bryman 2004). Such reflection does not merely occur as an afterthought but at all stages of the process, potentially leading to changes in research design and an awareness of the researcher's influence on the study.

In Chapter One I reflected on the personal and professional reasons for my interest in the research and in Chapter Two identified some of the theoretical influences upon the work and my responses to them. In Chapter Three I reflected on the complex ethical and researcher issues involved in researching black subjects within the white academy. I now want to further use the idea of reflexivity to evaluate my own research study.

In undertaking research in the field of race and black theology, reflexivity is an inherent part of the process. This is because I have been required to evaluate and challenge understandings primarily normed by white pedagogy whilst also reading a considerable amount of material written by black men and black and white women. I have needed to engage with their differing ways of seeing and explaining practice, theory and theology and to emotionally absorb the challenges they make to the white academy and the issues of racism, sexism and marginalisation that have largely given rise to such challenges.

Additionally, the reading of white academic material alongside black theological text arguing against the very nature of academic legitimacy has meant a reflective engagement that is arguably greater than that which would be required if I were doing research that largely accepted the normative assumptions of the white academy. This is not to suggest that all doctoral study does not require assumptions to be challenged, but it is to argue that such challenge can be done solely within the context of white legitimated knowledge (Erskine 2010).

Equally, I have needed to reflect on the words expressed by the African-Caribbean elders, their ways of being and seeing and the various influences that have shaped their lives and their experiences. I have been especially conscious of the need to exercise the empathy and compassion of which Hill-Collins speaks (1990) and to be respectful of the lives and stories with which I have been privileged. These stories included reminders of racism and hurt, which triggered hurt in and for me as a black woman.

I have reflected constantly on the ethical issues of those with education and status researching those without, and how I eventually ensure that research that is primarily 'for me' (in terms of the doctorate) might subsequently be used to speak to the experiences and knowledge's of black people beyond academia. I have felt myself to be an 'insider' in the sense that I too am part of a black sisterhood and brotherhood that shares a common global history. This has afforded me sensitivity to the elders and a respect for the heritage and faith

that we partly share. Equally, there have been sufficient differences in terms of education, age, theology and upbringing for my not to feel that I over-identified with the elders or have been unable to reflect on my approach and / or what I was being told. I see my internal reflexivity and the manner in which it is conveyed in the study as a strength.

Ethical issues and my position as a researcher

In Chapter Three I explored the ethical issues associated with qualitative research more generally and some of the particular dilemmas and ethical issues of undertaking research into the lives of black people within a white academic tradition. I feel that I fully considered these issues both prior to and during the interview process whilst never completely resolving them. Whilst for instance I reflected on and followed the University and social work professional frameworks governing 'people focused' research, I remain aware that I largely undertook the study for my own interest and that there is no immediate transformational benefit for the African-Caribbean Christian elders I studied. I am mindful that the study has generated new knowledge that will be available in the public domain but that of itself will not have a transformational effect for African-Caribbean elders. There were times when I felt quite isolated with the ethical dilemmas of both being black and 'using' other black people for my benefit regardless of the academic rationale I can bring for so doing and despite the elders' seeming enjoyment of being interviewed.

In discussing this with two different black academic theologians I was effectively encouraged to 'play the game' by following the rules of white academia as I would subsequently have the freedom to disseminate my findings and write for different audiences – including black people in non-academic settings. This of course merely raised more ethical issues as to whether the purpose of black doctoral scholarship is to effectively replicate white scholarship in order to be accepted by it. I do not therefore see the ethical issues as being solely located into how well 'I followed the rules' or reflected upon them during the study – important as these are. If the white academy recruits students from black and minority ethnic group backgrounds with a specific research interest in race and

who locate themselves as researchers within womanist and black theological/ anti-racist discourses, then there are ethical issues as to how they are nurtured and supported.

Research question

Whilst I 'got there in the end', I struggled with the specificity of the research question as outlined in Chapter Three. I feel that the evolving nature of the question was partly inevitable given that qualitative research is not necessarily 'fixed' but can be flexible in its design (Robson 2002).

Having previously defined the question to include 'anti-racism', my subsequent reflections and study enabled me to recognise that such a concept was largely meaningless except possibly to those social workers and academics who had been part of its discourse in an earlier era. Hence, whilst the core purpose and focus of the research was established relatively early, the challenge was in finding a set of words that might allow the stories to say something to social work beyond those with a specific interest in race issues. I feel that I was largely successful in achieving this whilst also recognising that those who do not serve communities of African-Caribbean elders may see the work as irrelevant to them and not necessarily applicable to other age or ethnic groups. This raises issues of generalisability.

Generalisability of the study

 'Generalisability' addresses the extent to which the findings or conclusion of a study might be consistent if the research were to be repeated (Silverman 2004). As narrative research seeks to 'give voice' to previously excluded individuals, it may be neither feasible nor necessary to establish generalisability, as this could imply that the views of one set of people are only valid if they accord with the views of another set of people with similar experiences or characteristics.

The potential strength of the study is that it focuses the research on a specific age and ethnic group who share a common faith. I do not group people from very different cultural traditions, ethnicities, origins, languages and faiths into a

generic discussion of 'black people'. My position as a researcher is that whilst the study is small scale it has generalisability within the age, ethnic and faith boundaries I establish. The overriding 'message' from the elders' stories is that their belief in God and their Christian faith is central to their lives and to their identity as black people. They have been sustained by God, see the bible as an important guide for their lives and enjoy going to church where they can meet and be with other black Christian elders. This accords with Reddie's view about the centrality of faith to Caribbean elders based on his experiential knowledge of them (2001).

The potential disadvantage of my focus is that the stories of one age / ethnic group of Christians cannot simply be applied to another. Further research would be needed to understand, for instance, the stories of U.K. Christians born in the African sub-continent or to analyse why so many younger African and African-Caribbean people appear to attend church. My study was also undertaken in an urban context where people attended black majority or black led free churches. The stories may differ for those African-Caribbean's attending Catholic or Church of England churches or worshipping in white majority settings.

Methodology and research design

The methodological section was written some time after the study's initial chapters were drafted and two years after the CAS. This meant that I was able to establish my general methodological position relatively early on, although the specifics of it emerged and developed in the process of completing the chapter. At times I struggled to articulate the discrete methodological influences alongside undertaking the actual study and initially wondered if I was wrong not to have settled on these at the pre-interview stage so as to get them 'out of the way'. However, as my reading developed and I thought about the research experience, I recognised that to have done so would have detracted from the reflective process that is not uncommon in qualitative research.

Once I was clear about my broad area of research interest and the methodological influences on it, the overall research design evolved relatively

early on, although it was of course adapted and improved during completion of the research proposal. Robson (2002) suggests that qualitative research can have both fixed and flexible elements at different stages in the process and he suggests that the practicalities and 'real life' difficulties involved in qualitative research are themselves part of the process.

The first stage of the research design involved finding churches and securing interviews. This process entailed a considerable amount of 'wasted' time as I visited churches (and sat through sermons!) in settings that were not appropriate. I could possibly have circumvented this by using established contacts (i.e. black people I knew who went to church) or my insider knowledge as a practicing Christian to short list those who fitted the criterion of having in their congregation a cohort of older African-Caribbean people.

The challenge of having to find a second Pentecostal church after I had started with the first was something I had not anticipated. It meant that I did not spend as long attending and observing services and church life as was the case with the Baptist church. I also feel that I may have been overly concerned about the potential limitation of interviewing people from only one church (and hence feeling the need to identify a second replacement) although I was not undertaking a comparative study of different denominations but trying to immerse myself in the stories of African-Caribbean Christian elders to identify what social work might learn. I could hence have adopted a more flexible approach rather than assuming that, having settled on the research design, I then had to stick rigidly to it.

Methods

I felt more secure with the specific research methods I selected for the study and feel these to have been appropriate. Whilst time consuming, the decision to undertake one to one interviews enabled individual narratives to be captured. I did however learn that the research cycle of interviews, transcribing and analysing is enormously time consuming and especially when that time is not within one's own control but determined by work and related factors. Hence, it

was not practical to undertake a larger number of interviews. Indeed, I might have benefitted from actually interviewing fewer elders so as to interrogate their stories in greater depth.

The interviews were sufficiently flexible to enable the elders to freely discuss issues, but I now wish that I had been much more specific in asking about their direct experiences of racism. Initially I accepted the view expressed by one of the supervisors that to do so might be 'leading', but I now recognise that not to do so is also 'leading', just in a different direction. Whilst people did talk in the interview about racism, and in particular their experiences of white churchgoers, a small number of elders spoke more openly on the topic once the tape was turned off. It is possible that the absence of a direct question failed to give them the permission they needed to speak openly whilst the tape was on. This omission was also due to my own lack of confidence and inexperience, coupled with the desire to do 'everything by the book' rather than recognising that I was engaged with a discourse that questioned 'the book'. Erskine's work (2010) and his direct critique of the white academy subsequently challenged my own thinking, but by the time I read it the interviews were complete.

Data Analysis

Within any research, and particularly narrative research, the researcher has to make decisions as to how the information will be analysed and presented (Robson 2002; Bryman 2000). As such, the researcher is 'in' the process and part of its subjective analysis. In deciding on what quotes to use and how they will be utilised and understood, I am engaged both with the words of the material and with my own internal process of applying understanding and meaning to the stories in a context shaped by my own professional and racial history and values. The VCR method has a number of advantages in that it allows for multiple readings, and I felt this assisted with reflexivity and in making connections between and within the different stories. I was also assisted by having the chance to discuss VCR's limitations and strengths with someone who had previously used it in her professional social work doctorate study. This gave me the confidence to adapt it to the context of my study – giving for

instance importance to listening to the stories rather than relying on readings of the written word alone. I was also encouraged away from making too many copious notes based on individual readings and to look rather for interconnections. I was able to 'cut and paste' different aspects of the elders' stories on to one document rather than doing it all on flip paper, as the method seems to imply. I found the process time consuming and occasionally confusing as I sought to think about the individual stories, the collective story and how I would group and present them. Equally, VCR was a very good method of really reconnecting with the stories and my own emotional and intellectual response to them, and especially when the analysis took place some time after the interviews were completed.

Gilligan and Spencer et al. (cited in Hesse Biber and Leavy 2006) suggest that ideally several people should be involved in reading the narratives in order to share, moderate and agree on their analysis. With the inference that a group of people reading the same material allows for multiple social construction and less analytical bias, I initially felt this to be a potential limitation of my own study. I am now less sure, however as such an approach could simply end up being an uneasy compromise between the different readers with an outcome that does not 'speak' directly to any. This is especially likely to be the case if potentially moderating variables of culture, age, gender etc. amongst the readers are introduced. Hence, I felt more comfortable at the end of the process than at the beginning as, regardless of the limitations, I 'understood' the stories and their various sub-plots through my engagement with them and can defend that understanding through the particular perspective, construction and value-base that I personally bring to the material.

 It was also affirming to use the work of a female academic making successful attempts at engaging with women's voices and their often hidden stories. I am not sure that it is entirely practical in terms of time to use a VCR as initially conceived, given the multiple readings suggested, and neither is the lack of specificity in how the readings then link together particularly useful. I do however see it as a valuable method of analysis that is evolving, and especially

so given its use within social work related research (Fairtlough 2007; Hyder-Wilson & Finch 2009). Overall I am glad to have used VCR and see it as appropriate for the research design and methods I adopted.

Theoretical framework

In many ways my theoretical framework was partially established through my earlier engagement with black theology as this was one perspective that was rooted in the religious and racial context of the study. I found that I was able to understand the choices that some of the elders made and the views expressed through such theological discourse, and to be more insightful as to the dominance and effect of white theology in their religious and personal value system.

I feel that transactional analysis (TA) was an appropriate way of considering behaviour and the interactions between people with differing levels of influence and power. TA is a theoretical model that can be applied across and within different social groupings. It affords insights as to how 'resistance' may not translate in to arguments or physical confrontation but can manifest itself in a person's quiet refusal to move seats in a church or through non-verbal behaviour that makes it clear that the African-Caribbean adult worshipper is not going to be reduced to a 'compliant child'. TA provided understanding as to how some groups assume influence and authority even when it is not an ascribed part of their role and how easy it may be for social workers to act as the authoritative or indulgent parent towards those in need of social care provision.

I could of course have used other theories and did initially consider drawing on micro-politics (Benjamin 2002; Mann 1994). After further reflection, however, this theory seemed more applicable to how power works in organisations and how different individuals and groups obtain what they want or form coalitions of resistance. While churches might reasonably be described as 'organisations' in respect of the micro-politics that take place within them, the focus of my study was on the individual and collective stories rather than the internal 'politics' of the churches per se. I would have needed to have made a number of (possibly

incorrect) assumptions about this and hence decided to remain with theory that assisted with the analysis of the individual accounts that were my focus.

The nature of the study also lends itself to sociological analysis. My decision to exclude this was primarily pragmatic given that the word count for doctoral study is relatively limited. The CAS also had a sociological orientation as it explores social rather than psychological explanations for the 'condition' of black people and how anti-racism and black theological discourse emerged. This inevitably weaves its way into the study in respect of black theology especially, and I hence felt that the specific theorising of the elders' stories was better located in the theoretical model I adopted.

Is there anything I would have changed or done differently ?

Whilst it is essential to reflect on the various components of the research process, it is also important to consider the study in its entirety and what, if anything, I might have done differently.

I would have ideally undertaken the interviews concurrent with their analysis and write up rather than having to fit them into the study leave time available to me. Owing to the time gap between the two activities, the conducting of the interviews felt somewhat disconnected with the write up of the elders' stories and the theoretical discussion of methods. I also wrote each chapter of the study sequentially, in the order they appear in this thesis. This created an even longer 'time gap' between meeting the elders and drafting the chapters that tell their stories, as much of the intervening time was taken up with reading around and writing the earlier chapters. This compounded the problem of feedback to the participants, which I discuss in Chapter Three and on reflection I should have given more consideration as to how I would re-engage with the elders in the collective identifying of their stories and individual quotes.

As previously mentioned, I would not in hindsight have sought a third church after people in the second one withdrew. This is not because their stories were not equally valid but because my assumption that contrasting experiences

might have emerged from the two differing denominational settings was not borne out and the church setting made no appreciable difference .

I underestimated the challenge of intellectual racial isolation; of not having regular sacred space in which I could openly reflect on my own feelings and learning as a black person. I felt reluctant at times to expose the stories and vulnerabilities of black elders and the complex racial histories in which they are rooted to white university audiences. It felt – and still feels – as if I am offering up insights to those who have not shared the racial pain and who enjoy considerable racial advantage. The very nature of doctoral study also meant that my appetite for such an important topic diminished in the at times mundane process of completion, although this will no doubt be reinvigorated as I consider how the work might be taken forward.

Taking the study forward

This of course poses the challenge of how I can apply what has emerged from the study to social work more generally. The elders' stories suggest that there are a number of practice issues for those working in care management and residential / day care with African-Caribbean older people.

The critical core of the study really centres on what it means to be black, Christian and British and how these identities are mediated within a society where black people are frequently perceived as the 'other' and where formal religion is largely rejected. My overall critique has suggested that social work has submerged the specificity of racism within more generalised equality considerations and largely withdrawn any focus upon the uniquely disadvantaged position of poor black and visible minority people. The reading undertaken and the stories that I have heard have reinvigorated me to reconnect much more directly with racism within social work and to reflect on the various forces and pressures which facilitated my withdrawal. That reconnection will include attention to black people's faith position as the study clearly shows that for good or ill, it is an inherent part of black and minority ethnic groups' collective history.

The study has engaged with some important issues about the nature of truth – whether theological truth or the validity of knowledge held by those who have little formal power. In undertaking the study I was enormously assisted by the writings of black academics who challenged – or at least actively questioned – white pedagogy and institutionalised white power. None of these however were written from within social work . I recognise that I am uniquely privileged: I have a long and credible history within social work, I hold part of black history regarding the profession's engagement and disengagement with racism and I am in a position to write in ways that might 'speak' to the understandings of those who follow me. This specifically means writing primarily for a black readership rather than a white academic audience. This is not to suggest a polarised position, given that published work is available for all to read, but it is to imply an approach that consciously engages with black pedagogy.

On a practical level, I have established contact with the Black Theological Forum and attended their 2011 annual conference. The connection will also afford me an opportunity to write a paper for the International Black Theology Journal and to explore the links between black religiosity and social work practice and policy.

None of the above detracts from the potential to further develop this study. Not only does it seem important to write it up in a format that is accessible to a black readership especially, but I would want to develop its potential links with social work. This includes undertaking research with African and African-Caribbean Christian social work students and practitioners, the values they hold, and the aspects of their faith that are central to their lives. I no longer accept that a person's religious beliefs are something 'private', to be kept away from the heart of social work practice, when no such assumption is made about the 'religion' of secularism that seems to be very much at its heart.

Given their growth, it would also be interesting to research black led and black majority churches and what pastors see as the church's purpose, the activities

with which they are involved and their relationship to the wider communities they serve. The emotional, spiritual and practical support provided to black attendees is potentially something on which social work can draw.

During the doctoral study I reflected on how restrained I felt by the isolation of being a solitary black female in the university team. Hence, at the end of 2010 I left full-time employment at the university. I thought carefully about my next career move and the personal desire to 'give something back' in an academic setting that serves a working class / poorer urban community. As I draw to the end of this doctoral study, I take what I learn and all that previously shaped me back in to such a university where I am now employed.

It is not possible to know what real value a thesis such as this might have or what it will contribute to current or future social workers and service users. Through reading and hearing the voices of African-Caribbean Christian elders who have struggled with the pain, isolation and reality of racism, I too have found my own voice, and that, if nothing else, makes the years of study worthwhile.

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Appendix 1 : Letter of Introduction

Dear Sister / Brother

I am very pleased that you might be interested in taking part in the research. The following provides information on what I plan to do and what will be involved.

I am a social work manager by profession and I currently teach people who are training to be social workers. As I explained I am undertaking some research studies at University. I have been studying how social work books and articles help people to better understand the needs of black Christians and the role of Christianity in their lives.

I would now like to interview a number of Caribbean elders who are over the age of 70 years . I want to talk with you about your faith, your experiences in this country – including church experiences – and how your religion has affected your life. I am hoping to see what social work practice might learn from your experiences in order that it can be more sensitive to the needs of African Caribbean elders when they require social care support.

The interviews will last approximately one and a quarter hours. They Will be taped so that I have a record of what each person says. You can stop the interview at any time – either for a break or because you no longer wish to take part.

There are a number of topics that I will be asking of each participant and I will show you these before we start. I hope that you will feel able to speak freely during the interview as I am really Interested in your experiences as a black Christian and in what you have to say.

Before I start the interview I will answer any questions or concerns that you might have and also make sure that you are happy to go ahead. I will ask you to sign a form to say that you agree to take part and that

nobody has persuaded you to do so against your will. The form is for my use only. Your name and details will be deleted if I need to show somebody at University that I have signed consents.

I can come and do the interview at your home or at another mutually agreed venue if you prefer. If you need a hearing loop or other aids in order to take part these will be provided. I will discuss any particular needs you might have when I call to arrange the interview date and venue.

The information you give to me is confidential and only I will have access to it. I will explain this further when I meet with you. I also hope that at a later date I will be able to arrange to come and share with you what I might be writing about.

The church Minister does not know that you are being interviewed and your name will not be shared with her/ him. It is for you to decide whether you want to share any information with others in the church community or to speak with your Pastor/ Minister on a confidential basis.

I will telephone you in the next week or so to see if you are still willing to be interviewed, and if so, to arrange a time and place where we might meet.

Best wishes and all blessings to you.

Josephine Kwhali
Tel: 020 8*** ****

Appendix 2

Draft interview schedule

Check :
Access
Seating
Hearing loop if needed
Tape recorder
Water
Access to loo

Prior to starting formal interview
That the interviewee is comfortable and has what s/he needs for the interview to go ahead.
Ensure the interviewee has given signed consent and is happy to proceed
Check that they are in agreement to the interview being taped
Explain what will be happening during the interview and re cover issues of confidentiality, being able to stop at any point or asking for the tape to be turned off.

Tell them a little bit about myself in terms of work/ research but also in terms of 'where I am coming from' in respect of faith/ denomination. Answer any questions.

Part 1 : Background information : introduce in conversational manner
Before we get to the main questions I would just like to start off asking a little about you and your background. If anything is not clear or feels uncomfortable to
answer please do say. You can stop at any time.

Name:
Age:
Country of birth
Date of migration to the UK
Family set up (widowed, single, children etc.)

Theme one: Early childhood and church experiences, migration and faith
Thanks for that. I'd now like to talk with you about your childhood in the Caribbean and to understand what life was like. I hope that you will feel able to speak freely as I am really interested in listening to what you have to say.

Allow elders to lead the conversation. Use opened ended questions – *tell me something about ...: I'm interested in what you just said, could you say a little more* etc.) . Check they cover:

Childhood memories of growing up in the Caribbean, family life and friendships
Early memories and experiences of church and exposure to Christianity
When and why they migrated to the U.K.
Their general experiences as migrants
Their experiences of church when they first arrived and their Christian and churched journey subsequently – what type of church / theology etc is important to them and why

Theme Two - meaning of faith
Explore their Christian beliefs, why they are Christians and go to church and how they describe their faith and relationship to God. Express interest in finding out how their faith has influenced their lives and life choices. If not covered earlier – have they been baptised, what role does church have in their daily lives and relationships

Check whether a comfort break is needed

Theme Three – social care
Discuss what provisions their churches have beyond Sunday services and what things they take part in / support received. With sensitivity ask about their current care needs and / or who they would call upon if they needed help and support. If not covered explore awareness (or otherwise) of social care provision. Explore aspects of care that might be important to them

Theme Four - faith and future
If not already spoken of explore elders' beliefs when faced with serious troubles and / or life ending. What do they believe about life beyond earthly existence about the end of life, what do they hope for in terms of care and ministry

Keep interview fluid – it's their stories.

At end of interview thank elder for taking part and giving up their time. Before finishing check whether there is any aspect of their lives or Christian experience that has not been covered in the interview a d which they would like to talk about.

Informed consent form

(to be read out to interviewee at beginning of the interview with follow up discussion if needed).

My name is Josephine Kwhali. I am undertaking some study at Sussex University. As part of these studies I am doing research in to the experiences of African-Caribbean Christian elders.

I am responsible for the research project and should you have any questions or concerns my contact details are as follows :

Josephine Kwhali : Email : a*******hotmail.com
Tel: 020 8*** ****

It is important to stress
- **taking part in the interview is entirely voluntary**
- **you are free to refuse to answer any questions I will ask**
- **you are free to stop the interview at any time**
- **you can withdraw from the project and decide that you so not want you interview to be used in the research**

The interview will be kept entirely confidential and will only be available to me. If I use quotes of information from the interview in the research report there are no circumstances in which you will be individually identified. Your name , the name of the church and all other identifying characteristics will not be included in the report.

Please sign this form to show that I have read the contents to you and that you are agreeing to be interviewed. Thank you.

Name:.. Signature

Name: .... Printed

Date : 2010

Appendix 4

University of Sussex
Sussex Institute
Standards and Guidelines on Research Ethics Annex:
Checklist for proposed research

Standards 1 & 3: Safeguard the interests and rights of those involved or affected by the research. Establish informed consent.		

1.1 Have you considered the well-being of those involved or affected? Have measures been taken to protect their interests (e.g. by clarifying use to be made of outcomes)	**Yes**	
1.2 Has written and signed consent been obtained without coercion?	**Yes**	
Have participants been informed of their right to refuse or to withdraw at any time?	**Yes**	
1.3 Have the purposes and processes of the research been fully explained, using alternative forms of communication where necessary and making reference to any implications for participants of time, cost and the possible influence of the outcomes?	**Yes**	
1.4 Where covert research is proposed, has a case been made and brought to the attention of the School committee and approval sought from the relevant external professional ethical committee?	**N/A**	
1.5 Does the proposal include procedures to verify data with respondents and offer feedback on findings?	**Yes**	
1.6 Will the participants be involved in the design, data collection or reporting where feasible?	**Yes**	
1.7 Has conditional anonymity and confidentiality been offered?	**Yes**	
1.8 Has the appropriate person (e.g. headteacher, manager of residential home, head of service) been identified to whom disclosures that involve danger to the participant or others, must be reported?	**Yes**	
Standard 2: Ensure legislative requirements on human rights and data protection have been met.		
2.1 Have the implications of at least, the four pieces of legislation listed in this document been considered?	**Yes**	
2.2 Where any particular implications arise from legislation or uncertainties exist, has contact been made with the named university person?	**N/A**	
Standard 4: Develop the highest possible standards of research practices including in research design, data collection, storage, analysis, interpretation and reporting		
3.1 Has existing literature and ongoing research been identified and considered?	**Yes**	
3.2 Have methods been selected to be fit for purpose?	**Yes**	

3.3 Where appropriate to the research design, will all data collection proposed be used to address the question?	**Yes**	
3.4 Have methods for verifying data (e.g. audit trails, triangulation, etc.) been built into the research design?	**Yes**	
3.5 Where research is externally funded, has agreement with sponsors been reached on reporting and intellectual property rights?	**N/A**	
3.6 Have plans been made that will enable the archiving of data (e.g. through consulting the guidance available from the UK Data Archive)?		**No**
Standard 5: Consider the consequences of your work or its misuse for those you study and other interested parties		
4.1 Have the short and long term consequences of the research been considered from the different perspectives of participants, researchers, policy-makers and where relevant, funders?	**Yes**	
4.2 Have the costs of the research to participants or their institutions/services and any possible compensation been considered?	**N/A**	
4.3 Has information about support services (e.g. mentoring, counselling) that might be needed as a consequence of any possible unsettling effects of the research itself been identified?	**Yes**	
4.4 Are the plans flexible enough to ensure that time can be spent discussing any issues that arise from the effects of the research on the individuals or institutions/services?	**Yes**	
Standard 6: Ensure appropriate external professional ethical committee approval is granted where relevant		
5.1 Have colleagues/supervisors been invited to comment on your research proposal?	**Yes**	
5.2 Have any sensitive ethical issues been raised with the School Committee and comments sought?	**N/A**	
5.3 If relevant, which includes all health and social care research, has the external professional ethical committee been identified?	**Yes**	
5.4 Have the guidelines from that professional committee been used to check the proposed research?	**Yes**	
5.5 Do plans include seeking clearance from this committee (e.g. time to obtain approval may need building into the proposal)?		**No**

1.1 Have you considered the well-being of those involved or affected?
1.2 Have measures been taken to protect their interests (e.g. by clarifying use to be made of outcomes)

Yes. The potential participants will be provided with full and accurate information about the research and the interviews in which they are required to participate. The initial approach is through the Church Ministers ; firstly   through personal contact and followed up by written letter . This is not to enable Ministers to select the participants but to provide access to them   by way of a Members list and to ensure that the

Ministers are supportive of the research and can provide Ministry to participants should the latter choose to identify themselves and want to talk to her / him. . A church will not be selected unless the Minister is agreeable to anonymised selection (subject to any decision by the participants to make known to the Minister their involvement) .

1.2 Has written and signed consent been obtained without coercion?
Have participants been informed of their right to refuse or to withdraw at any time?
1.7 Has conditional anonymity and confidentiality been offered?
Yes. No person will be interviewed without signed consent and the introductory discussion and written information will make clear that involvement is entirely voluntary and that participants can withdraw their consent and involvement at any time. This will be reinforced in the information provided to the Church Ministers. No individual will be personally identified in the research or subsequently and the name of the churches from which participants are drawn will also not be identified in the dissertation. Any other potentially identifying information will also be anonymised.

1.3 Have the purposes and processes of the research been fully explained, using alternative forms of communication where necessary and making reference to any implications for participants of time, cost and the possible influence of the outcomes?
Yes. Information will be provided in large print for elders who have difficulties with close reading. Bullet points will be used alongside fuller text and one to one discussion will take place with interested participants to go through the information and to ensure that there consent is both informed and voluntary. The amount of time involved in the interviews will be carefully explained. The interviews will likely take place within the church if a private room is available or at the participant's home is preferred in order to ensure there are no additional costs incurred by participants.

1.5 Does the proposal include procedures to verify data with respondents and offer feedback on findings?
1.6 Will the participants be involved in the design, data collection or reporting where feasible ?
The interview schedule will be piloted and amended in the light of feedback. Once the interview notes have been transcribed, the contents will be shared and verified with participants before any analysis is made. A meeting will also be offered at the conclusion of the process to discuss the overall findings. This will however be a separate meeting to that of the participants in order to maintain anonymity and to retain the Minister's core role as gate keeper rather than active research participant.

Has the appropriate person (e.g. head teacher, manager of residential home, head of service) been identified to whom disclosures that involve danger to the participant or others, must be reported?
The research involves adults giving their free consent to participation. Access to potential participants will be with the consent of the church Ministers and agreement will be reached with them concerning support / intervention should such issues emerge.

Information on the remaining standards is covered within the research proposal.