Chapter 2

Choosing Theoretical and Conceptual Frameworks for Understanding Black Professionals' and Black Students' Experiences

Introduction

My aim in this chapter is to offer the foundations on which I base my analysis, plans and actions. The discussion of theory is not a theoretical exercise in itself but rather a means of clarifying theoretical issues with a view to guiding and informing practice. I outline a framework that highlights the interconnectedness of the macro and micro in explicating the racialised experiences of black social work professionals and students. In this regard, the chapter covers a range of important issues and introduces a number of theoretical concepts relating to human service work from which I actively chose. I use existing and emerging theoretical and conceptual frameworks which provided me with a more appropriate base for my analysis and sensemaking. Before outlining the ideas I have chosen to present fully below, I want to give the reader a flavour of the number of other influences that may be traced in the work in this thesis such as a gestalt perspective, hermeneutics perspective a feminist perspective and structuration theory.

Gestalt perspective

The reader will note traces of gestalt theory and its influences of field theory and phenomenological method of investigation in my work. One of the most important themes of gestalt theory is that the whole is greater than, and different from, the sum of the component parts. A Gestalt wholistic approach affirms the complexity of persons and events within a 'whole making' universe. Therefore, the insistence in gestalt theory, upon the fact that the individual cannot be understood in isolation, but only as part of a whole, means that in theory we have the capacity to take into account and attend to black professionals and black students historical - historical background and social context and social perspectives and cultural differences.

The gestalt approach is a form of phenomenological field theory in that gestalt shares the concerns of phenomenology, which are to study the multiple possibilities of a given field or situation as it is experienced subjectively by the people co-creating it at any moment in time. It shares the phenomenological promise that it is not possible to establish a single objective or absolute truth but only to be open to a multiplicity of subjective interpretations of reality, for each of us experiences a uniquely interpreted reality, because people form highly individual impressions of situations and endow events with subjective meaning.

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This gestalt approach stresses that we try to avoid unwarily projecting our perspectives on to others and instead hold an exploratory dialogue in which we investigate or enter into their world, in order to uncover their unique sense of the meaning of the events in their life. That idea influenced my way of working with the participants in this research. The phenomenological method offered me a practical way of setting aside my own inevitably limited perspectives and opened me up to a wide range of alternative perspectives of the research field. To use the phenomenological method, we bracket previous assumptions, track and describe immediate experience, equalise or treat all aspects of the field as initially equally significant and we inquire. With such an influence I adopted an attitude of sustained inquiry throughout the whole of my research and the writing of the thesis. I was able to allow myself to explore all aspects of the research field, paying as much attention to what is in the background of the field as to what is currently in focus of figure – to what is missing as well as to what is present. It also helped me to assist participants to also explore all aspects of their functions and interactions, including the ways in which they interpret their life circumstances, as our experiences are grounded in our history, which is influenced by our culture and our place in it. These factors need to be considered in our interpretations, as is also suggested modern hermeneutics.

Hermeneutics perspective

The standpoint of modern hermeneutics is that all understanding is hermeneutical, taking place in time, history and culture. Therefore, our understanding is a historical process which is influenced by our culture and our place in it. So, as black professionals and black students, we cannot just transcend the experiences, viewpoints and prejudgments that we bring to our understanding, as these are grounded and determined by culture. Therefore, if we cannot transcend our historical position or get rid of our prejudgments then the problem for our understanding is how we distinguish between 'legitimate' prejudgments, and those which get in the way of our understanding (Rowan, 1991).

Access to our past offers opportunities for opening up to new possibilities and for interpreting our positions in the light of present understanding of our positions as black students and professionals. By re-interpreting these positions it offers possibilities for different relationships. This might mean a shift from an 'objective' understanding of interpretation, which is unattainable and meaningless, to an interpretation that is intersubjectively valid for all who share the same world.

Feminists, for example, are reinterpreting the position of women in history and culture in the light of their present understanding of the position of women to gain new possibilities. Black feminists, such as bell hooks who have been influenced by the work of Paulo Freire, have suggested ways in which black people could re-interpret history and gain new meanings.

Feminist perspective

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The development of my thinking has been greatly influenced by the work of bell hooks and Paulo Freire. I was particularly influenced by their ways of thinking about social justice, liberation and the role of education in the struggle for liberation. I have been interested in their ideas about oppressed/marginalised groups, the way they question deeply and profoundly the politics of domination, the impact of white, male supremacy, class exploitation and domestic colonialisation that hooks so often challenge.

Other feminists, like hooks, have attempted to develop feminist thinking by building on Freire's work. Both Freirean and Feminist pedagogy rest on visions of transformation; they share common assumptions concerning oppression, consciousness and historical change. Both "assert the existence of oppression in people's material conditions of existence and as a part of consciousness…(which contains within it a critical capacity)….and both see human beings as subjects and actors in history" (Weiler 1991, p.450).

Feminists have been critical of the abstract quality of Freire's use of terms such as 'humanisation', ignoring particular meanings imbued by women and men, and black and white people, for example. He leaves unaddressed the forms of oppression experienced by different actors, by his use of universal categories, without considering the varying experiences and definitions of different groups. Also the tensions and complexities of oppression across and within race, gender, sexuality, are not taken into account.

Nevertheless, both the works of Freire's and of feminists' offered me a way of thinking and a political language to articulate the experiences of black professionals and, black students. Particularly black feminists such as Lorde (1984) Hill Collins (1990) and already mentioned, hooks (1984, 1989) who have insisted on the interconnectednes of gender, race, class and sexuality for understanding and researching women's oppression. Hill Collins has attempted to describe Afrocentric feminist epistemology, emphasising the "ongoing interplay between black women's oppression and black women's activism (p.237). Although she is critical of standpoint feminism, she nevertheless emphasises black women's experience as central to an understanding of women's oppression. hooks offers a global vision connecting feminist struggle with struggle against all domination. A unique contribution of feminist thinking has been the exposing of the power and centrality of masculinity in the social construction of legitimated knowledge. I have used this thought to challenge the assumption of the 'male' and 'white' as norm in research language for example, and raise questions about the use of language in the subordination of black professionals and black students.

Freirean and black feminist work have also offered me a way of articulating my own experience and life process as an educator and social activist. I have been challenged to think deeply about the construction of identity in resistance, for example. Working with the concept of identity I have been influenced by the work of post modernists and, in particular, the work of a black post modernist, Stuart Hall, whose work I shall later mention. Identity is a social construct, owing much to the interaction between structure and agency according to structuration theorists.

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Structuration Theory

Giddens (1991) suggests that identity is continually forged in and by social interactions rather than predetermined by biological or other factors. In this respect, the micro-level process of identity formation and maintenance closely parallels the macro-level processes involved in the reproduction of social structures and relations. In this way, structuration theory is an attempt to bring the two sets of factors - individual and social – together, to understand individual and social factors in relation to each other. Giddens (1984) argues that:

"The basic domain of study of the social sciences, according to the theory of structuration, is neither the experience of the individual actor, nor the existence of any form of societal totality, but social practices ordered across space and time" (p. 2).

Social practices ordered across space and time refer to the actions of individuals and groups understood in their social, cultural and historical context. A key element of this theory, therefore, is the attempt to understand reality in terms of *structure* -–the significance of social divisions and other aspects of social organisation – and *agency* – the exercise of choice. While many forms of social theory address either structure or agency, structuration theory is characterised by a focus on structure and agency and the ways in which they are intertwined.

In understanding the experiences of black professionals and black students what is needed then is an appreciation of both structure and agency. It is not a matter of *either or*, nor is it an *underemphasising* of the role of agency by concentrating on the social structures to the almost total exclusion of issues of choices, intentions, wishes, fears and aspirations, or an *overemphasising* of the role of agency, failing to recognise the power role of social structure in shaping, enabling and constraining the actions of individuals and groups. Our agency is rooted in the complexities of social systems but is not determined by them. Racism, discrimination and oppression are also imbedded in those social systems.

Therefore, I have also used emerging theories of racism, discrimination and oppression, theories relating to a black perspective, which are still at a relatively early stage in their development, particularly as they apply to the human services. A consideration of critical social theory and narrative theory also helped me to develop an understanding of my research. These are important areas of study as they relate to personal issues and broader socio-political issues. These theories provide a broad conceptual foundation for selecting specific explanations and concepts and I will examine how these theories can be used to guide our understanding of the complexities of black professionals and students experiences.

Critical social Theory

One of the important contributions of critical social theory is that it contextualises the meaning of our lived experience, by locating that

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experience within a specific historical, economic, and political context. Critical social theory assumes that oppressive social structures are maintained through the influence of political and economic power and legitimated through ideology. These structures have their relevance in historically specific processes, which provide a context for an examination of race or gender or class exploitation. Through a systematic questioning of how ideology or history conceals processes of control, critical social research aims to reveal the nature of exploitative relationships and as a result of this process knowledge is produced which gives insight into structures of oppression. Such knowledge facilitates strategic planning towards emancipation of oppressed groups. Fundamental to the epistemological basis of this approach is the belief that knowledge has no (literal) objective status, but attention must be paid to the production of knowledge – the *processural* nature of knowledge.

An important concept in this regard is that of the dialectic of subjectivity and objectivity. This refers to the interaction of the internal world of subjective experience with the external world of nature, social structure and other people. The point to emphasise is that the social reality of black professionals and black students needs to be understood not in abstract terms, as either subjective or objective, but rather in concrete terms, as a perpetual interaction of subjective and objective factors, each influencing the other. At the same time, however, critical approaches claim that critically informed knowledge is more 'true' or more objective than prevailing knowledge systems because it uncovers the hidden aspects of reality around which other kinds of knowledge collude in order to conceal it.

To say that the "personal experience" is the "political experience" underscores one of the basic assumptions of critical theory. Any understanding of our personal narratives would need to include an inquiry into our socio-political and economic position within the social order. Our narratives would need to be viewed with a critical eye to uncover the extent to which the unique reality of our lived experience is shaped by the dominant social and political ideology. So, as well as being interested in the particular narratives and stories of black professionals and black students, the sociocultural and socio-political narratives that construct the contextual realm of possibility from which black professionals and students can select the material and focus for their own narratives is also important.

In critical theory, to understand the meaning of personal narratives is to analyse how the dominant social, political and economic structure facilitates, constrains or oppresses ones sense of identity. Identities are the names we give to the different ways we are positioned by, and position ourselves within the past. Our Identities, therefore, are constructed through the relationship of political, social, cultural and historical contingency (Hall 1992). Cultural identities come from somewhere, and have histories. Woodward (1997) states:

"Identity offers much more than an obvious, commonsense way of talking about individuality and community. Principally it provides a way of understanding the interplay between our subjective experience of the world and the cultural and historical settings in which that fragile setting is formed" (p.301).

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Some 'post modernists' have been concerned with challenging the objectification of identities by revealing the social forces that attribute fixed identities to others, and by exposing the fragility and complexity of identity. Post modernists argue that identity is not an already accomplished fact, neither is it fixed and unchanging. It should be thought of as a 'production', which is never complete and always in process of being formed (Hall, 1990). Hall further argues that the interactive nature of racial or gender categories should be recognised as a complex process and a set of factors through which identity is formulated and contested. Constructions of 'race' as of class, gender, sexuality, ethnicity interact, fuse with or displace each other in an ongoing process of confrontation and negotiation (Hall, 1992).

hooks (1991) supports the critique of essentialism by postmodernists, which challenges the notions of universality and static over-determined identity within mass consciousness, because she argues that it can open up new possibilities for the construction of self and the assertion of agency. hooks strongly urges that in the struggle of oppressed and exploited people we make ourselves subjects and assert agency.

In such struggle liberation is attained by first developing a state of "critical consciousness", that is, achieving an awareness of how the social, political and economic ideology constrain our sense of agency and identity (Friere, 1972). Freire stresses the importance of education and social action as two important pillars. Freire's notion of critical pedagogy identifies ways in which traditional education has been 'domesticated' by the dominant order and does not address inequalities. It asserts that marginalised and oppressed groups need 'education for liberation', that is, an opportunity to develop a dynamic understanding informed by critical thought and action, towards the goal of 'critical consciousness', where the person is empowered to "think and act on the conditions around her or him, and relate these conditions to the larger contexts of power in society (Shor 1993, p.32).

How does the social, political and economic ideology constrain black professionals and black students' sense of agency and identity and constrain them from being empowered? In part answer to this question we need to consider: a) the Position and location of black people in British society and their social representation. We would need to consider to what extent and in what ways these social representations construct the experiences of black people and might serve to structure the position of black professionals; and b) the nature of race and racism, its impact and struggles to resist, so we would need to consider concepts such as power and oppression, anti-racism, anti-oppression, adaptation, stress and coping, and empowerment.

Position and Location

Black people in Britain have been consistently portrayed as outside the realm of national culture and outside the national community, moreover, incompatible with it. In Britain's history, the positioning of black communities is one of exclusion, migrant, 'otherness', not belonging. The implication of this is the exclusion of those who do not belong defines those who do. Amongst

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those who do are white, male eurocentric subjects who occupies the centres of power. The casting of people different from oneself in a subordinate status is central to the process of 'othering' them (de Beauvoir, 1974, Rutherford, 1992). The 'othering' of individuals or groups withdraws them from the circle of humanity and facilitates the denial of their human, social and political rights (Dominelli, 1998).

The 'Other' is shown to lack any redeeming community traditions or collective voice of historical weight and is reduced to the imagery of the coloniser. Consequently, a politics of difference has emerged which is founded on the exclusion of black communities in Britain from citizenship status and the attribution of fixed identities. This difference marks off the identities of those who are included within a particular belief system from the 'outsiders'. Social control is exercised through producing categories whereby individuals who transgress are relegated to 'outsider' status according to the social system in operation. The identity of the 'outsider' is produced in relation to the 'insider'. One identity is created in relation to another. So, the marking out of this and other differences produces and maintains social order (Woodward, 1997).

Social order is maintained through binary oppositions in the creation of 'insiders' and 'outsiders' as well as through the construction of different categories within the social structure where it is symbolic systems and culture which mediate this classification (Hall, 1997). Therefore, the marking of difference is crucial to the construction of identity positions. Identity, then, is not the opposite of, but depends on, difference (Woodward, 1997).

Hall (1997) argues for a politics of difference which is about an uprooting of traditional approaches to identity formation and allows for freedom and control within communities and social structures. He calls for recognition of difference, but not one which is fixed in the rigidity of binary opposition. Hall suggest that difference can be construed negatively as the exclusion and marginalisation of those who are defined as 'other' or as outsiders. On the other hand difference can be celebrated as a source of diversity, heterogeneity and hybridity, where the recognition of change and difference is seen as enriching. However, we should take heed that in celebrating difference we might be in danger of obscuring the shared economic oppression in which groups are deeply imbedded. That celebration of difference has to take place in a nurturing and enabling environment.

A person's social position, class location and economic status within the overall social structure further determine the sustaining and nurturing resources within ones environment. An enabling environment is one that offers a person the rights of equal opportunity to economic and educational resources (Kilpatrick and Holland, 1995, Taylor, 1997). There are, however, black individuals who are entrapped by power and oppression in environments which are not congruent with fulfilling their human needs and their well being (Kilpatrick and Holland, 1995, Taylor, 1997).

Within an enabling environment are supports that affirm a person's sense of personal power, competence, and self-esteem. Furthermore, an enabling

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environment can represent a position from which a person can express and affirm social power. An oppressive environment, however, contains elements that rob a person of that self-affirming power. An oppressive environment further blocks a person from those resources needed to acquire that power. Thus people in oppressive environments are people with a vulnerable status – a status of powerlessness. In order to understand such a status of powerlessness, the pervasive nature of power and oppression has to be considered.

Power Discrimination and Oppression

Power is a central feature of the struggle to promote social justice and equality. The very term 'struggle' is a significant one, as it indicates that there are established structures and vested interests that are likely to stand in the way of progress. Power, according to Foucault (1980), is not an absolute entity that people have or do not have. Rather it is the property of the interactions between individuals, groups and institutions. It, therefore, needs to be understood as a relatively fluid entity that is open to constant change and influence.

Promoting equality inevitably involves entering into conflict with the 'powers that be', the dominant social arrangements that help to maintain existing power relations. Foucault (1980) states:

"…there are no relations of power without resistances; the latter are all the more real and effective because they are formed right at the point where relations of power are exercised; resistance to power does not have to come from elsewhere to be real, nor is it inexorably frustrated through being the compatriot of power; hence, like power, resistance is multiple and can be integrated in global strategies (p.142).

Power withheld and abused by dominant groups becomes oppressive power. Therefore, we need to recognise that an understanding of the workings of power is an essential part of challenging injustices, inequality discrimination and oppression.

The concepts of discrimination and oppression denote relationships that are negative and that create a differential power imbalance. Taylor and Baldwin (1991) have conceptualised discrimination in terms of the systematic use of power by some groups, which devalue other less powerful groups on the basis of perceived difference. Such differences can be conceptualised in terms of 'race', ethnic or national origin, religion, age, gender, class, sexuality, or disability. One of the main outcomes of discrimination is oppression. Richie (1996) defines oppression as follows:

"Oppression results from domination and marginalisation, and is both a process and an outcome. Oppression is also discrimination systematically enforced through use of social/economic/political power in such a way that the status quo is maintained and inequality is legitimised in domination". (P.20).

The relationship between discrimination and oppression can, therefore, be seen as largely a causal one: discrimination gives rise to oppression.

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Consequently, in order to challenge oppression, it is necessary to tackle discrimination. Some of the processes via which discrimination and oppression manifest themselves are through: a) stereotyping, which is not simply a personal prejudice but part of the culture which is 'transmitted' from one generation to the next, thereby proving instrumental in maintaining existing power relations; b) marginalisation, which refers to the ways in which certain groups of people are pushed to the margins of society, and thus excluded from mainstream; c) invisiblisation, which is a process that has much in common with marginalisation but refers specifically to how groups are represented, for example, in language and imagery. The basic idea is that dominant groups are presented to us as being strongly associated with positions of power, status, prestige, and influence, while other groups as rarely, if ever, seen in this light – it is as if they have been rendered invisible; d) infantalisation- that is, ascribing child-like status to an adult, which can be seen as a form of disempowerment, a denial of rights and citizenship; e) dehumanisation – that is, treating people as things. In this way it reinforces power relations by undermining self-esteem and discouraging acts of personal initiatives. The act of dehumanisation reflects and constructs powerlessness. This is by no means an exhaustive list, not that these acts are mutually exclusive; indeed; there is a strong tendency for these processes to interact, combine and reinforce one another.

Black people in British society experience discrimination and oppression in these ways because of their race, which manifests itself in acts of racism. Race, racism, internalised racism and internalised oppression are issues that are central to contemporary discussions of oppression and equality and in this thesis they are central to the discussions, arguments, experiences and body of knowledge presented. These issues are core to some of the reasons for this research and therefore warrant a presentation of the ideas and debates surrounding them. Some of these debates have been amply explored elsewhere (for example, Miles 1989, Mason, 1992). Here, I merely indicate how I have used these concepts in this thesis. I have drawn particularly on the usage proposed by Floya Anthias and Nina Yuval-Davis, whose approach seems to me analytically coherent and practically useful.

Race:

It is impossible to embark on any discussion of 'race' without first drawing attention to the problematic nature of the term, along with others associated with it. Disputes on the topic are legion.

Some commentators, such as Miles, have suggested that 'race' should be dispensed with as an analytic category (Miles, 1982). This is partly because the very use of the term reproduces and gives legitimacy to a distinction that has no status or validity. Thus, an analytic category helps to perpetuate the notion that 'race' is not a meaningful term. Although this may be the case at one level, to deny the significance of 'race' like this also obscures the ways in which it has 'real' effects both in material and representational terms (Anthias, 1990).

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'Race' has specific origins and a specific trajectory depending on its geographical and historical meanings. 'Race' does not have a biological validity, for all human beings are members of the same race, *Homosapiens.* However, it is clear that 'race' does have a social power, for it is on the basis of assumed racial differences that human beings are categorised as being of colour or white in Britain.

'Race', as a commonsense usage and understanding, has concentrated on such variables as skin colour, country of origin, religion, nationality and language. It also refers to the idea that human beings can be divided into subgroups which have different origins and are distinguished by biological differences. Such differences can be seen as 'phenotypical' (relating to physical appearances such as skin colour or hair type) or 'genotypical' (relating to underlying genetic differences). So 'race' is a way of constructing differences

"….on the basis of an immutable biological or physiogramic difference which may or may not be seen to be expressed mainly in culture and lifestyle but is always grounded on the separation of human populations by some notion of stock or collective heredity of traits" (Anthias and Yuval-Davis, 1993, p.2).

Within sociology, 'race' is considered a non-scientific category and, for this reason, Miles has consistently argued (1982, 1989) that we should reject the concept altogether. He states that it is an ideological construct; its use only serves to give respectability to discredited racist ideas. But other sociologists have pointed out that all forms of social category (such as class and gender) are constructs; since such constructs inform the way people think and act in relation to others, the effects of 'race' are very real (Cashmore and Troyna 1983, Gilroy, 1987). 'Race' can be viewed as a form of social relationship to which racial meanings are attached by the participants (Mason, 1992). 'Race' is a social category used in reference to divisions within a particular society. Cashmore and Troyna, suggest that 'race' should be seen as a stigmatized identity forced on other people. Similarly, Modood (1988) proposes that 'race' relates to 'mode of oppression', how a group is categorised and subordinated. Omi and Winant (1986) see 'race' as an "unstable and "decentered" complex of social meanings constantly being transformed by political struggle" (p.68).

Bhavnani (1997) argues that the development of 'race' as a spurious 'scientific' category is a consequence of imperialism and colonization. It is this 'scientificism' which informed, (and still informs), prevailing ideologies of biological superiority and inferiority among human beings on the basis of 'race', meaning that there are power inequalities embedded within these categories which thus become historically specific systems of domination. In Bhavnani's words:

"Human beings are located within relationships of subordination and domination and these relationships simultaneously shape, and are shaped by racialised, economic and gendered inequalities. That is …capitalism is not only a form of class based inequality, but is also patriarchal, sexualised and racially structured"(p31).

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She also argues that racialised structuring of capitalism along with analyses of imperialism and colonialism is central to discussions of black people's exploitation and oppression.

Racism

Racism and other discriminatory systems are popularly understood as an individual attitude or belief in the superiority of one class over another. The problem with this definition is that it seats 'racism' in the individual's psychology. The definition becomes problematic in attempts to change 'racists' because the obvious is that "you can't change peoples' attitudes". This way of defining racism stalls debate because of disagreements on how to legislate or punish an "attitude". Psychological definitions and attitudinal descriptions of racism have failed to yield much in the way of 'eliminating' racism. Racism, as individual psychology, fails to achieve resolutions and becomes more puzzling and frustrating for the people trying.

In order to overcome this psychological definition of racism, the classic marxist approach is to see it as an ideology; that is, as a set of ideas which is slanted by the interest of particular groups in society. Dominant forms of ideology are used to justify the status quo and legitimate the power of socially dominant groups. Crucial in this approach is a conception of racism as a form of group dominance. According to Van Dijke (1993), ethnic dominance is understood as power abuse by white groups, that is, as self-interested control over black groups and as a limitation of access to socially valued resources (residence, citizenship, housing, jobs, wealth, education, respect etc.). Such dominance may be defined and described at the macro level of groups and institutions, where it contributes to social inequality, as well as the micro level of everyday (inter) actions, where it manifests itself as "everyday racism" (Essed, 1991). At both levels such relations of dominance also involve socio-cognitive dimensions such as ethnic ideologies and attitudes shared by a group at the macro level, and specific ethnic beliefs of social group members at the micro level. Miles (1989), for example, views racism as a set of ideas, which helps to obscure the reality of class relations. This usage follows one of the key principles of marxian analysis, which is to make a sharp distinction between material reality and ideas.

Using this ideological approach to racism Porter and Catt (1993) defined it and other forms of discrimination as: "ideological systems sustaining communicative acts that intentionally or unintentionally derogate a class of people because of their shared convictions, ancestry, ethnicity, race, origin, gender, and the like". Ideology, for example, builds racial and sexual differences into language and thus influences how our society organises itself to account for such differences. Racism, then, is not an individual logic; rather, it is a socially shared logic that works to promote one group above another.

Racism as ideology calls one to recognise that racism is socially bound in the fabric of a culture's grammar (Porter and Catt 1993). It becomes, as Habermas (1970, 1984) suggests, a "systematic distortion" in communicative acts. The problem with identifying racism as ideology is that some believe it to

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be an "excuse" for an individual's discriminatory acts. Certainly, psychological definitions are appealing because they ascribe far more individual free will, that is, one can choose to be or not be a racist, according to the dominant narrative.

Writers such as Anthias and Yuval-Davis (1993) use racism in a wider sense to refer not just to ideas or ideologies but also to behaviour and practices. This is in line with the post-structuralist position which refuses such a sharp distinction between 'words' and things. Miles, however, describes this broader usage of racism as 'conceptual inflation' (1989, p.41). He contends that this usage of the term becomes so comprehensive as to lose its analytic utility and clarity. Almost anything can be described as 'racism'. Perhaps one way to get around this difficulty is simply to specify in each case whether racist ideas, attitudes, or practices are under consideration.

Another debate concerns historical change in the operation of racism. Martin Barker (1981) offered an influential account, which suggested that older forms of scientific racism were being replaced by what he terms 'the new racism'. Scientific racism is the view described earlier that distinct races could be isolated on the basis of biological and genetic differences. However, since the scientific backing for this has been questioned, a new sort of racism has emerged which focuses not on innate differences but on the notion of culture.

The new cultural racism points to the urgency of comprehending racism and notions of race as changing and historically situated. As David Goldberg has pointed out, it is necessary to define race conceptually by looking at what this term signifies at different times (Goldberg, 1992). From this perspective the question of whether 'race' is an ontologically valid concept or otherwise is sidestepped in favour of an interrogation of the ideological quality of racialised subjectivities. The writing on new racism shows how contemporary manifestations of race are coded in a language that aims to circumvent accusations of racism. In the case of new racism race is coded as culture. However, the central feature of these processes is that the qualities of social groups are fixed, made natural, confined within psuedo-biologically defined culturalism (Barker, 1981). What is clear from these writings is that there is a metonymic relationship to racism.

The notion of power is useful to help with the understanding of the integration of the macro and micro dimensions of racism. Power helps to understand racism in terms of the relations between white and black individuals and between some white groups with relatively more and some black groups with relatively less power. From the macro point of view racism only exists as a variant of group power. From the micro point of view racism as group power only exists because it was created and maintained through individuals.

Racism can be an economic, a political, an ideological and a social expression; in other words, 'race' is not a social category, which is empirically defined; rather it is created, reproduced and challenged through economic, political and ideological institutions. So, rather than talking of a shift from one

type of racism to another, we need to grasp that many forms of racism coexist; we should be speaking of racisms, rather than racism.

Institutional Racism

Racism is a complex system of power, which shapes the ways in which social relations and practices are actually experienced by black people; institutional racism describes a web of discriminatory policies, practices and procedures which are used systematically to discriminate against black people. Institutional racism is experienced in the routine practices, customs and procedures of British society's institutions with the consequence that black people have poorer jobs, health, housing, education and life-chances than do the white majority, and less influence on the political and economic decisions which affect their lives. Relations and structures of power from which black people have been 'excluded' maintain these practices and customs and black people's interests are not dealt with or acted on with equity. Institutional racism, therefore, is evident when white values and norms are combined with racist procedures, regulations, policies and habits that deny and exclude black people from positions of power and influence in the major institutions of British society. Those beliefs and practices impact on the lives of black professionals and black students.

The impact on black professionals and black students:

The societal and organisational realities of racism and oppression pervade the life experiences of black professionals and black students in social work. For example, in relation to black social work students, structural inequalities in the wider society are maintained and reproduced through the dominant professional discourse in education. Power is inextricably bound up with the relations between skills, knowledge and education which, in turn, is part of and influenced by the wider ideological and political context of society (Foucault, 1977, 1988). Both structural and historical forces influence the distribution of power in social work education, and the inequalities of the power relationships in the wider world is likely to be reproduced within social work education (Humphries, 1988). Therefore, these structural issues inevitably disadvantage some black students. They have to survive both personal and institutional racism, which also permeates social work courses (Pink, 1991' de Gale, 1991; de Souza, 1991).

For these reasons, strategies for adapting and coping in organisations and in society which black professionals and black students employ are an appropriate concern from an ecological perspective and needs commentary. For many black people the experience of powerlessness becomes a primary theme in their transactions with the environment and it is therefore safe to assume that for some black professionals and some black students the experiences are similar.

Adaptation Stress and Coping

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How do black professionals and black students adapt to and cope with life issues and environmental demands? In responding to that question there has to be a recognition that both the self and the environment, are constantly changing at every level (biological, psychological, social, and cultural) and that some people cope by adapting. Adaptation is defined as the capacity to adjust to change. Adaptation is not a static or a reactive state. It is a dynamic process that calls for an ongoing effort to fit the ever-changing condition of environmental demands with a person's needs and aspirations.

Although stress may be debilitating, stressors may call forth hidden capabilities that can be mobilised to ameliorate their impact, that is, the capacity to cope with stress. Coping responses can reduce, eliminate or accelerate stress and successful coping draws on particular personality attributes and untapped resources within the environment. Furthermore, successful coping can enhance self-esteem, competence, autonomy, and problem-solving capacities.

A key to understanding the experiences of black professional and black student is recognising how community, organisations, the interplay of various systems within organisations and the prevailing sociopolitical and economic structures are intricately linked to black professionals' and black students' sense of self, their life opportunities and their overall functioning. How black professionals and black students adapt to complex networks of these multiple systems is crucial.

Black professionals and black students can be perceived as living in a bicultural world (one culture black, the other white) and as a result, they may feel a constant 'push and pull' between the different cultural contexts in which they function. This leads to high stress levels particularly linked to role conflict stressors. Denton's (1990) review also emphasises the importance of these bicultural role stressors and the combined effects of racism and sexism which enhance the "stresses endemic to today's cadre of black professional women" (p447).

The bicultural model (Bell 1990) can be used to explain the pressures and stresses on black professionals and black students generally, as we participate in minority and majority group culture. As black workers, for example, we live in a bicultural world that requires us to pursue and develop our careers in the white world and maintain our personal life within the black community. We are sometimes forced to make choices both by the black community and by white organisations about how we organise our lives culturally. For example, organisations may want us to be integrated or assimilated into the dominant white, male culture in which we are sometimes forced to suppress our racial and ethnic identity so that our positions are very often on the margins.

On the margins we experience isolation, feelings of invisibility and some of us feel we have to deny or abandon our racial identity. The black community on the other hand asks us to stay rooted to its norms, traditions and values and to stay committed to our culture. We are faced, as a result of having to remain emotionally committed to different components of our lives which are

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sometimes incompatible, with having to manage tensions and possible identity conflicts between these two worlds which is very stressful (Baumeister 1986).

I remain curious as to the range of factors that make black students, who feel oppressed by certain teaching and learning practices, accommodate to and remain subject to such oppression? Perhaps profound anxiety, created by threats from the environment such as are experienced in oppressive relationships and structures, and the impact of felt powerlessness may create resignation, acceptance of the unacceptable and a belief in the futility of action. The more powerlessness is reinforced by teaching, which denies felt experience and choice, and the more teachers expect co-operation or partnership, without addressing the impact of powerlessness, the less students will be empowered. A necessary preliminary process should be engaged in to recognise internalised racism and internalised oppression and address the attributional belief system which supports it.

Internalised Racism/Internalised Oppression:

People who have been oppressed might, consciously or unconsciously, absorb the values and beliefs of their oppressors. This may lead to internalised oppression, whereby members of oppressed groups may come to believe that the stereotypes and misinformation being spread about their group are true (or partly true), so that they may develop low self-esteem or behave in ways that are essentially consistent with their social stereotypes.

Lipsky (1987) argues that "Internalised racism has been the primary means by which we have been forced to perpetuate and "agree" to our own oppression. It has been a major factor preventing us, as black people, from realising and putting into action the tremendous intelligence and powers which in reality we possess". (p.1). She further argues that the distress patterns that are created by oppression and racism from the outside have been played out in two places in which it has seemed "safe" to do so; firstly upon those over whom we have some degree of power or control and secondly upon ourselves through all manner of self invalidation, self-doubt, isolation, fear, feelings of powerlessness and despair. So we turn upon ourselves, upon our families, and upon our own people the distress patterns that result from the racism and oppression of the majority society. Consequently, each of us is potentially both oppressor and oppressed, in that we may have both attributes that carry power and privilege as well as attributes which render us oppressed. A concept of the oppressor within ourselves ("internalised oppressor", as distinct from "internalised oppression" relates closely to Lorde's ideas:

"…we have, built into all of us, old blue prints of expectation and response, old structures of oppression, and these must be altered at the same time as we alter the living conditions which are a result of those structures. For the master's tools will never dismantle the master's house" (Lorde, 1984, p.115).

I agree with Lorde that the living conditions resulting from oppressive and racist structures, as well as our responses, have to be altered. Therefore, the need for anti-racist/anti-oppressive practice and empowerment has to be

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considered within an oppressive structural and practice context. The practice context in this thesis is social work and is my particular focus here.

Anti-racist/Anti-oppressive Practice

During the 1980's the need to challenge institutional racism in for example, the personal social services and social work education was to some extent recognised by social work employing authorities and The Central Council for Education and Training in Social Work (CCETSW). In its policy paper 30, CCETSW required that all qualifying social workers should demonstrate 'An awareness of the interrelationship of the processes of structural oppression, race, class and gender' (CCETSW 1991, p.16). Although this statement referred to 'awareness' rather than any particular form of action, it acknowledged the structural and oppressive base of racism. In 1991, CCETSW also set out the *Rules and Requirements for the Diploma in Social Work* which appeared to herald an emphasis on anti-racism and anti-discriminatory practice issues and social workers were expected to demonstrate an awareness of both individual and institutional racism in all aspects of qualifying training.

Anti-racism rests upon a critique of the liberal, pluralist assumption which developed in the 1960's and 1970's and which located racism as the underlying cause of discrimination. Anti-racism invoked a form of social work practice which marked a break from the liberal notion of equal opportunities, and developed an agenda for change which challenged dominant power relations (Denney, 1998). Those who advocate an anti-racist position emphasise black persons' lack of access to powerful white-dominated institutions.

However, some theorists have argued that anti-racism, based as it is in the notion of structural oppressions, presents the 'victims' of exclusion as lacking the capacity to change their own destiny. Ballard (1992) calls for a more relativistic position in order that the nature of racial and ethnic diversity can be best understood. Differing cultures can be effective in the resistance to oppression. Thus, hegemonic ideologies which oppress can be challenged through establishing alternative conceptualisations of reality based on what Ballard refers to as 'mental, 'spiritual', and 'cultural' resistance.

The forces which constrain it do not wholly determine behaviour, according to Ballard. The anti-racist preoccupation with urban proletarianisation does not take sufficient cognisance of the part that differing cultures have played in the 'extraordinary effectiveness' of the resistance to hegemony demonstrated by the 'migrant minorities'. Creative human energy can be effectively utilised to circumvent or resist oppression, thus allowing for emphasis to be placed on anti-oppressive practices.

Anti-oppressive practice is strongly influenced by Marxist sociology and political theory, and by feminist and black social and artistic perspectives (Payne, 1998). Anti-oppressive practice has been debated by a number of writers whose works are informed by differing perspectives (Thompson, 1993; Clifford, 1994; Braye and Preston-Shoot, 1995; Dalrymple and Burke, 1995;

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Featherstone and Fawcett, 1995; Dominelli, 1996). Anti-oppressive practice is a dynamic process based on the changing complex patterns of social relations. It is a radical notion in the sense that it seeks a fundamental change in power structures and exploitative relationships which maintain inequality and oppression (Philipson, 1992). Clifford, (1995) informed by the writings of black feminist and other 'non-dominant perspectives', has formulated the following anti-oppressive principles that are empowering:

Social *difference* – social differences arise because of disparities of power between the dominant and dominated groups. *Linking personal and political* – personal biographies are placed within a wider social context and the individual's life situation is viewed in relation to social systems, such as the family, community and organisations. *Power* – power should be taken into account in any analysis of how individuals or groups gain differential access to resources and positions. *Historical and geographical location* – individual life experiences and events are placed within a specific time and place, so that these experiences are given meaning within the context of prevailing ideas, social facts and cultural differences. Reflexivity/mutual involvement – reflexivity is the continual consideration of how values, social difference and power affect the interactions between individuals. These principles relate to each other, interconnecting and overlapping at all times. Working from a perspective which is informed by anti-oppressive principles provides an approach, on a practice level, that will enable the identification of how power is exercised and experienced. Such an approach would address exclusion and powerlessness; address the personal and interpersonal impact of structural inequalities and social constructions that determine the lives of black professionals and black students, for example.

Other writers mirror the concern that anti-racism has become an absolutist form of discourse. Gilroy, in a withering attack on anti-racism, has argued that it fails to locate racism as being at the core of British politics. The 'coat of paint approach' to anti-racism essentially sees racism as being outside social and political life and has dominated local government policies. Gilroy acknowledges that anti-racism is to some extent, intrinsic in the equal opportunity approach. He comments that the anti-racist, 'coat of paint approach' is doubly mistaken in that it fails to recognise, as equal opportunities policies do, that issues relating to social justice and democracy are important weapons in the battle against racism. Anti-racism as currently expressed also reduces and trivialises the rich experience of black life to 'nothing more than a response to racism'. This then leads towards a reductionist conception of black people as victims. Like Ballard, Gilroy argues that anti-racism mistakenly conflates racial divisions with class divisions. Anti-racism is not redundant but needs to be reconstituted in order to take account of both the criticisms and the complexities of defining racism itself.

Black writers who have emerged during the 1980's have, according to Williams, "a common intellectual concern, which may be summarised as an attempt to give full recognition to the material and ideological ways in which 'race' and racism are experienced and struggled over by people both black and white and as members of a particular class and gender"(Williams 1989, p.100). These writers do not fall into a reductionist trap, in

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which all inequalities are based upon ramifications of capitalism which ultimately leads to the conflating of race with class. A number of black writers have warned against the dangers of anti-racism becoming such monolithic concept (Singh1992). Black identities are dynamic and constantly changing. 'Solutions' to the problem of racism in social work have been criticised from a black perspective.

Articulating a Black Perspective

Articulating a black perspective presents me with dilemmas, as I do not want to suggest an essentialist or homogeneous notion in terms of a unified perspective or only one perspective. Indeed, the debate on such a perspective is current among black academics and practitioners and the jury is still out on whether there are one or more perspective, whether there is 'a' perspective or 'the' perspective. I have chosen to use 'a' black perspective in this thesis as a strategic essentialism, as emerging sets of ideas, and I have referred to other black writers to help with a definition.

Bandana (1990) made an interesting response to a request to define a black perspective which is relevant to the start of this section. She argues that the same question is rarely directed to white academics; there is no expectation of them to define a white perspective; yet they must have a perspective which relates to them being white. She stated:

"White writers have not had to define a White perspective, as 'White' is accepted as the 'norm'. Definition of Black perspective needs to address this anomaly first…The factors that prescribe a Black perspective have a long history of subjugation and subordination. The circumstances that shape a Black perspective stem from the experience of racism and powerlessness, both past and present. The motivation that energises a Black perspective is rooted to the principle of racial equality and justice (p3).

Other black writers such as Sinclair (1991) in a course/conference paper entitled 'Facilitating Black Self-Development' describes what he refers to as 'the' black perspective as:

The black perspective is an attempt to develop in a collaborative manner, using participative processes to a philosophical base for the black communities, groups and individuals to take action. The black perspective is a shared approach in that its foundation can only exist and be meaningful if it is rooted in the concrete experiences (historical, cultural, political and social) of the people comprising black communities…The black perspective is the collective capacity for black people to define, develop, defend and advance their own political, economic, social education and cultural interests" (p.10, 12).

In both sets of descriptions this perspective represents a set of beliefs, and assumptions and a philosophical orientation, that reflect basic values of black communities as expressed within a British sociocultural and political context. The first premise of this perspective is that a black person's life experiences provide the starting point for building an analytical framework to view, understand, analyse and take action in the real world. An individual's perspective is formulated from the totality of her/his life experiences, informed by history, (personal and societal), culture, politics, sexuality and gender. It is the means through which individuals make sense of their experience, formulate opinions and the base which helps to determine their reactions and

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behaviour. A black perspective in this context means that the types of issue raised, the priorities selected, the emphasis given, the action taken, the questions asked and the specific angle from which they all arise are determined by a black experience.

A black perspective consists of two inter-related concepts – black and perspective. 'Black' is a term in common usage and I shall present my meaning within this context and within the context of the thesis as a whole. In Britain, Afro-Caribbean and Asian activists adapted the term 'black' as a chosen political identity. The term 'of colour' was used in the same way in America. It has recently been claimed that such umbrella terms conceal the distinct situations of the different groups involved (Modood, 1992). The specific experience of British Asian groups is subsumed into 'black' writings which chiefly express the viewpoint of those of African origin. The usage of the term 'black' has been criticised for its denial of the existence and needs of other cultural groups, and for assigning the label to those who do not necessarily define themselves in this way (Brah, 1992). Although some members of the Afro-Caribbean community, for example, are beginning to acknowledge these difficulties, there is still a tendency to use the term in an homogenising way.

In the context of a black perspective and in this thesis I am using the term 'black' to mean people from the Caribbean, Africa and Asia (Indian sub-continent) who are subjected to and experience racism in Britain. I am using it as a term that embraces people from diverse cultures and geographical locations who have a shared history of colonialism, imperialism and racism. Black is also used as a concept that encompasses the unity of people who have survived a history of exploitation, racist discrimination and are politically committed towards the common goal of struggling against white, supremacist power.

The challenge for any theorist from a black perspective is to correct the (mis) application of theories of human behaviour which are based on a positivistic and eurocentric world view and which are inappropriate for explaining the behaviour of black people in Britain. As a perspective for theory, practice and research, Schiele (1996) views the black perspective as making the following contributions:- a) It promotes an alternative social science paradigm that is reflective of the cultural and political reality of black people; b) it dispels the negative distortions about black people by legitimising and disseminating a historical worldview that resides in the collective memories of black people; and c) it seeks to promote a worldview that facilitates human and societal transformation toward spiritual and humanistic ends.

Schiele, (1994, 1996) Swigonski, (1996) offer these assumptions that underpin a worldview and value system which is believed to reflect, in an archetypal manner, black people's existential mode of "being in the world". These are a few of the assumptions suggested: Human identity is a collective identity rather than an individual identity (i.e., "I am because we are"); the spiritual or nonmaterial component of human beings is just as important and the material components; the "affective" approach to knowledge is

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epistemologically valid; there is an interconnection of mind, body and spirit; there is a pervasive, experiential and participatory spirituality; there is a phenomenological time (i.e., present oriented) tied to events.

A black perspective and the black professionals/ black students:

A black perspective provides an interpretive frame for understanding the experiences of black professionals and black students'. It provides a cultural space for black professionals and students to speak their voice, to create their own text, and to "make" their own events and history. This effort, on the part of black professionals and students, becomes political when they challenge the dominant *metanarratives* that valorize the experiences of white professionals and white students' experiences whilst marginalising black professionals' and students' voices.

A black perspective serves a dual purpose in that it provides a template for understanding the unique cultural frame of reference of black professional and black students. This perspective can address the psychological, attitudinal, and expressive patterns unique to black professionals and students that represent their adaptive bahaviour. Of equal importance, a black perspective articulates a value system which should inform theory, practice and research with black people. It is possible for a black perspective to provide a cultural holding environment to protect black professionals and black students from a further deterioration of self-esteem and from a further psychocultural onslaught on the black psyche.

Integration of critical social theory and a black perspective for understanding black professionals and black students

Although there is no singular set of conceptual constructs that can render, in a meaningful manner, the experiences of black professionals and black students, it is possible to say that black professionals and students as a group encounter common social and cultural representations of black people in British society. These frequently negative representations or images give shape and contour to the lived experiences of the black professionals and students. A critical perspective acknowledges that reality is constructed; socially constructed representations of black people can define and constrain them in problematic ways. This perspective therefore, enables us to understand the significance and complexities of the socially constructed identities of black professionals. Together with a black perspective, a critical perspective can also offer a framework for developing intervention strategies that can empower and transform black professionals and students.

Empowerment

Thomas and Pierson (1995) describe empowerment as:

"being concerned with how people may gain collective control over their lives so as to achieve their interests as a group and a method by which to enhance the power of people who lack it" (p.134).

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Robert Adams defines empowerment similarly as:

"The process by which individuals, groups and/or communities become able to take control of their circumstances and achieve their goals, thereby being able to work towards maximising the quality of their lives"(Adams, 1990, p.43).

Central to the notion of empowerment is the potential for social amelioration, a belief in the possibility and value of people working towards a more just and equal society. Fiske (1996) captures this in the following comment, where he identifies a core element of empowerment:

"The people are neither cultural dupes nor silenced victims, but are vital, resilient, varied, contradictory, and, as a constant source of contestation of dominance, are a vital social resource, the only one that can fuel social change" (p.220)

My empowerment approach like Lee (1994) makes connections between social and economic injustice and individual pain and suffering. Using empowerment theory as a unifying framework it presents an integrative, holistic approach to meeting the needs of members of oppressed groups. I believe that people/ clients/students themselves actively work to change the oppressive environment and mitigate the effects of internalised oppression. A side by side stance of teacher and student, worker and client, researcher and participants is needed to release potentialities. Potentialities are the power bases that are developed in all of us when there is 'goodness of fit' between people and environments. By definition, oppressed groups seldom have this 'fit' as injustice stifles human potential.

To change this unfavourable equation, people should examine the forces of oppression, name them, confront them and join together to challenge them as they have been internalised and encountered in external power structures. The greatest potentiality to tap is the power of collectivity, people joining together to act, reflect and act again in the process of praxis fuelled by mutual caring and support.

The assumption about people in this approach is that they are fully capable of solving immediate problems and moving beyond them to analyse institutionalised oppression and the structures that maintain it as well as its effects upon themselves. They are able to strengthen internal resources, work collaboratively in their families, groups and communities to change and empower themselves in order to challenge the very conditions that oppress.

However the concept of empowerment in the context of professional education (and practice), for example, needs to be regarded as problematic. The relation between teacher and student is problematic and warrants attention in the context of empowerment. Empowerment is blunted when it is viewed by professionals as merely another form of enabling (Adams 1990), when it is used on students' behalf effectively overlooking professionals' own power struggles. Professional colonisation acts as though empowerment was solely a good professional idea, and denies and discounts students' part in any empowerment process. Anger at such exploitation has been expressed by black writers (REU 1990), exposing how white, social care professionals'

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draw on the knowledge and experience of black people, which is then presented as 'radical and progressive white thinking'.

Therefore, it is important to be aware of some of the issues involved and that it might be difficult to 'empower' black professionals and students without closely examining the diversity of meaning the term may have and a few points are worth noting here. The first is that black professionals' and black students' own needs to be empowered may not be as strong as the other's need to empower them. Secondly, there is diversity within any professional or student group, which can lead to conflicting needs, to different views of empowerment strategies and solutions. Thirdly, the experience of being empowered and its effects may not be felt until sometime after the actual 'empowering intervention' has taken place.

The ultimate aim of empowerment work goes beyond meeting individual needs for growth and power to empowering communities and developing a strong people. The basic principle of this approach is that 'people empower themselves' through individual empowerment work, group work, research, community action and political knowledge and skills. This approach sees people as capable of praxis: action-reflection-and action, action-in-reflection and dialogue.

Agency

We should not ignore the role of agency in reproducing social structure. Bailey and Hall (1992) recognising the importance of this suggest that black peoples should "…struggle not simply to recover ourselves in past histories but to produce ourselves as new subjects…(black people) are just as much the agents and subjects of (post) modernity as those in the West who try and colonise the modern for themselves" (p.7).

It is through our attempts to empower ourselves that real change will come not in an attempt to soften the power of the oppressor. So, assisting black people to take greater control over their lives can have a significant positive impact on the personal level, thereby making a contribution on the cultural level and can in turn play at least a small part in undermining discrimination on a structural level.

Our concern as black professionals and black students should be to learn to conceive ourselves as active agents who can make choices so that we can take action to ensure that we have control over what happens to us even within the context of a racist society. We are not objects which are simply acted upon, but subjects who are engaged in an interactive process. So, for example, when we take on the telling of only the negative stories we are perpetuating the mythology of black people as passive objects with no success stories to tell.

Recognising voices

A critical perspective offers us the opportunity to recognise black professionals and black students' voices. Informed by new awareness, black

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professionals and students can take action against those oppressive structures and articulate in their own "voice" a narrative of self that represents their unique lived experience. hooks (1989) stresses that we should not deny the importance of naming and giving voice to our experience; this is part of the process of politicisation which, she suggests, should be linked to education for critical consciousness and learning about structures that dominate.

Black professionals' and students' voices could be liberated to speak their own reality and need not be constrained to the *metanarrative* for the entire black professionals' and students' group. This perspective also gives clear recognition of how the social realities of racism and oppression can influence the language of black professionals' and students' narratives.

Conclusion

The theoretical perspectives outlined and discussed in this chapter share important points of integration and convergence. Theories of racism, power, discrimination and oppression sets the stage for addressing how the multiple environments, in which black professionals and black students interact and transact, can be supportive or debilitative to their well-being. The black perspective gives attention to an articulation of a culturally sensitive narrative which supports an ethnic and communaly based identity, value and worldview. Finally, the critical constructivist perspective instructs us how to challenge those dominant narratives that impact on black professionals and black students' well-being.

This chapter has considered some of the broader issues, which have emerged, and have affected black professionals and black students including problems of definition, developments of and challenges to anti-oppressive practices. The impact of these developments has been influential in shaping my research from the standpoint of understanding the context in which black social work professionals and students were operating and what was shaping our experiences.

Some of these theoretical ideas and issues also informed the methodological approach chosen for the research and the range of methods I used, which I shall discuss in the next chapter.

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