"We rehearsed…we was serious…they're my *girls*": Developing an embodied pedagogy of hope with young black women 'at risk' of exclusion in an inner-London college

Camilla Stanger
Goldsmiths
Submitted for the award of PhD

I certify that all work presented in the thesis is my own.

Camilla Stanger

April 2018

Acknowledgements

Abstract

In this thesis I critically explore processes of educational exclusion experienced by black working class young women in an inner-London 16-19 college. I also present and evaluate a pedagogical response that I hoped might disrupt such processes. These discussions emerge from a year of qualitative research praxis I conducted with a small group of students and staff within my own workplace in 2014-15, and throughout I consider the compromised and complicated possibilities of doing such research as a white middle class woman, and in the context of a contemporary neoliberal institution.

Drawing on black feminist thought and its aligned research, I argue that the exclusions my research participants faced often emerged in relation to their own deeply embodied forms of social and educational striving within systems shaped by intersecting racist, heterosexist and classist discourses. One system I discuss in this respect is the media and image saturated discursive terrain the young women navigated in constructing their social identities and peer relationships. A second is an increasingly neoliberal education system that sidelines attention to embodiment, cultural difference and structural inequality, places acute pressures on students and staff, and works to covertly reinforce white middle class patriarchal norms against which my research participants were judged.

I also, however, explore spaces and practices for resistance: those mobilized by the young women and their teachers in their daily lives at college, and also my attempts to develop an embodied, critical and emotionally engaged pedagogy of hope with this group of people. This pedagogical approach centered around the liberatory potential of young black women's dance practices and critical voices, and the coming together of women across difference. I critically evaluate this pedagogical project, its 'successes' and 'failures', with the intention of developing future practice.

Table of Contents

List of Figures

Guide to transcripts

I have transcribed interviews to read as spoken rather than written language, using a combination of written punctuation and the following spoken language codes:

(.) = where the speaker takes a short pause or breath

(1) = a longer pause with rough number of seconds indicated in the bracket

// = where one speaker interrupts another or where speech overlaps

[…] = where the transcript has been edited

… = where speech trails off

italics = where a word is emphasised

bold or <u>underlined</u> = where a word is especially emphasised

Within the main body of the thesis itself, singular quotation marks are used to mark citations from written texts and documents, and double quotation marks are used to mark citations from speech.

Introduction: seeking a 'path to liberation'[1] with black, working class girls in a 21st century, inner-London college

Why is it that those who are the most committed to education often struggle the most to succeed?

Heidi Mirza, from 'Race, gender and educational desire' (2006, 137)

More than an after-school program focused on Black girls, SOLHOT encourages us to create a space that is our own […] we talk about what it's like to be us (strong, confident, sassy, young, hopeful, Black, proud), we do the things that help us (talking, dancing, being ourselves, depending on our sisters) […] [it] is free, [it] is freeing, [it] is SOOO HOT.

Participant in SOLHOT, a North American 'Black girl-centered experience' (Brown, 2009, 6)

In this thesis I explore how black working class young women navigate different ideas of success within their target-driven inner-London college, and how they encounter educational exclusion in doing so. My ultimate focus, however, is the forms of resistance and becoming that might take place in such a context: a contemporary, neoliberal 'program of hopelessness' (Freire, 2003, 1) within which there is always, necessarily, space for hope. These areas of inquiry played out over a year of research I conducted in my own workplace with a small group of young women who were acutely invested in their education yet encountered persistent forms of exclusion. During this time I sought to understand these young women's experiences through their eyes, as well as exploring the institutional perspectives, mine included, that formed a backdrop to their educational trajectories. Together with these students and some of their teachers, I developed a pedagogical project rooted in dialogic practices of dance and group talk: one that might, I hoped, become its own 'Black girl-centered experience' (Brown, 2009, 6) within the research site. In all this I sought to better understand but also, crucially, to trouble the educational marginalization the young women were encountering. In this thesis I tell the

---

[1] From Jackson's (1997) discussion regarding the aims of critical pedagogy (464).

story of these attempts to understand and to trouble. I share findings and moments of 'success' and 'failure' in my always compromised endeavours, as a white middle class teacher-researcher, to forge a 'path to liberation' (Jackson, 1997, 464) with some of those who are 'the most committed to education' yet who still 'struggle the most to succeed' (Mirza, 2006, 137).

The research problem, questions and framework:

In order to introduce my research questions, I turn to the work of Heidi Mirza, a scholar whose research around the educational experiences of Black British girls and women is foundational to this study. In introducing her edited collection of writings within black and postcolonial feminist research, Mirza (2010) discusses a venture of sorts that 'unites' (3) the multiplicity of perspectives therein: 'to excavate the silences and pathological appearances of a collectivity of women assigned as 'other' ' (3). As a white woman, this 'political project' (Mirza, 2010, 3), as it emerges from and continues to evolve within the field of black feminist research, is not mine to join. However, this 'project' certainly inspires and guides my research approach, especially in respect to 'excavat[ing]…silences': those of the young women I worked with, but also those of whiteness, which I understand as an often invisible system of embodied relations, gazes and interpretations that operates within my workplace, and shapes the experiences of young people who study there.

I locate another guiding principle for this research in words of Apple (2009), who suggests that critical researchers should seek 'real answers to real practical problems' (277). A 'real practical problem' to which I respond here, one that resonates with Mirza's discussion of black feminist research, became apparent to me while working as an English and dance teacher in two different inner-London 16-19 colleges over several years. While teaching in these institutions, I perceived what seemed to be a pattern: that particular young women more than others came be positioned as 'problem girls' (Lloyd, 2005), experiencing forms of educational exclusion ranging from the temporary (being sent out of

lessons) to the permanent (being formally excluded from the institution). These were young British women of African Caribbean and/or sub-Saharan African heritage who studied on vocational courses, who demonstrated strong educational investments and aspirations, but who were at times described by staff (myself included) through terms such as "challenging", "needy", "vulnerable" and "crazy". I was increasingly struck by the injustice in this, given the young women's clear dedication to their education, the myriad individual identities they mobilized outside that of the 'problem girl', and also the wider social inequalities this pattern of exclusion reflected. From my vantage point as a dance and English teacher, it also seemed that some of these young women thrived in particular kinds of dance and discussion work, achieving both formal and informal markers of success in such contexts. In this, I found myself reminded of feelings of freedom, pleasure and power I myself had experienced in dance class - albeit as a white middle class girl learning ballet in private dance schools. I was also reminded of similar feelings when I could talk freely – storytelling, joking, putting the world to rights – with my female friends.

In light of this apparent 'practical problem' (Apple, 2009, 277), namely the 'pathological appearances' of a group of young women 'assigned as 'other' ' (Mirza, 2010, 3), and in respect to the seed of a potential 'real answer' (Apple, 2009) within my own experiences and observations, two specific research questions emerged:

(1) What are the processes of educational exclusion experienced by some young black women in an inner-London college?

(2) Can a dance and discussion based pedagogical approach disrupt these processes of exclusion?

I acknowledge from the outset here that research questions are never neutral: they reveal attitudes and have power to (re)produce discourses in their very asking and answering (Gutnaratnam, 2003). Morris (1995) discusses this in relation to the risks inherent in those in positions of privilege developing

research with marginalized groups. In such cases Morris suggests a measure of transparency in articulating the emergence of the inquiry (as I have aimed to achieve here), but also that the researcher develop and critically evaluate their approach with reference to the ideas and perspectives of the communities they are researching with. Before turning to the voices of the young women themselves, I begin such a process now by situating these questions with reference to a particular framework: that offered by black feminist thought.

Within her discussion of black feminism(s) and its aligned research, Mirza (2010) highlights certain themes that might characterise an endeavour to 'quilt a genealogical narrative of 'other ways of knowing'' (Mirza, 2010, 2). These themes are helpful for framing, and grounding, my own research. An approach informed by black feminist perspectives would mean in the first instance recognising how my research participants encounter 'patterns of gendered and racialised inequality' (Mirza, 2010, 2) in the institution and beyond: patterns that become nuanced and further entrenched when social class is also understood as a 'system of oppression' (Mirza, 2010, 3). It would also mean foregrounding the ways young women assert and construct their subjectivities as part of a 'black female struggle for life chances and educational opportunities' and with the potential for 'imagining the self outside of oppressive discourse' (Mirza, 2010, 5). Indeed, in developing research around the experiences of particular young black women, I do not mean to rarify or essentialise the being, or becoming, of a black girl. Instead, I understand this (and any) identity as a socially constructed yet lived reality, as something multi-faceted that is partially directed by and can thus be re-imagined by the subject themselves (Weekes, 2002; Alcoff, 2006). Such an approach would also 'focus on women's embodied lived experiences' (Mirza, 2010, 4) as a strategy for understanding how inequalities and resistances manifest. This all gives root and direction to the research questions, which might be rearticulated as the following aims: to analyse how embodied and institutional processes of racism, sexism and classism shape educational exclusions, and to foreground black female embodied agency in working together towards change.

In addition to this framework, I am also indebted to legacies of existing education research, which I introduce now in order to identify the scope and contributions of this research.

The scope of the research and its contributions:

The 'practical problem' (Apple, 2009, 277) I observed in the workplace reflects a body of education research demonstrating that young people of Black African Caribbean and Black African heritage (hereafter, young black people) experience disproportionate levels of formal exclusion in the UK education system (Pomeroy, 2000; Osler and Vincent, 2003; Richards, 2008; Parsons, 2008; Wright et al., 2009). The research also argues that young black people have historically been, and continue to be, 'labelled and stigmatized' (Christian, 2005, 138) within UK schools as, variously, low in educational ability, disruptive and hard to reach (Osler and Vincent, 2003; Izekor, 2007; Carlile, 2013; Wright, 2013). My research explores the often quite subtle ways in which this plays out for black, working class young women, and in a particular time and place.

That black, working class girls face largely unacknowledged and unaddressed barriers to success within the British education system is a key premise of this study, and speaks to research that has traced this social group's educational marginalisation within British society from the late 20th century to the present decade (Mac an Ghaill, 1988; Mirza, 1992, 2009, 2014; Weekes, 1997; Ball et al., 2000; Wright, 2005; Archer and Francis, 2006; Archer et al., 2007c; Youdell, 2003, 2006a; Phoenix, 2010). The more recent of this research tends to understand this marginalisation as nuanced for and exacerbated by an increasingly target-driven, individualised and meritocratic British education system. I seek to contribute to such discussions with reference to the particular experiences of black, working class young women who study vocational courses in a 21st century, 16-19, ethnically diverse, inner-London college, and by utilising a framework that foregrounds embodied lived experience (Butler, 1990;

Ahmed, 2004; Alcoff, 2006). Existing research establishes important modes of understanding in all of these respects (Ball et al. 2000; Youdell, 2006a; Archer et al. 2007a, 2010; Mirza, 2006, 2009; Wright, 2013). I hope that my findings might contribute to this legacy of work in ways that reflect a context that is now even more media and image saturated (Coleman, 2009; Ringrose, 2013), and that is shaped by even more acute and entrenched neoliberal discourses of educational success and social mobility (Kelly, 2001; Davies, 2014). Indeed, Mirza anticipated in her own earlier publications (2006, 2009) that such a context would have new effects on the experiences of Black British girls.

In regards to the scope of this study, research into Black British girls' educational marginalisation explores, to draw on the work of Fraser (1997), both economic injustice (a 'politics of redistribution') and cultural injustice (a 'politics of recognition'). Although Fraser's work has been critiqued for drawing too strong an analytical distinction between these two interwoven forms of marginalisation (Alcoff, 2007), the research cited above does highlight two broad themes along the lines that Fraser draws. First, are the ways in which black, working class young women face material barriers to educational engagement within an unequal economic system, such as time spent on part-time employment and domestic responsibilities while engaged in full-time study (Mirza, 1992; Ball et al., 2000). Second, are covert forms of racism, sexism and classism that operate within media platforms and educational institutions themselves. These processes shape how black working class girls are (mis)understood and (under)valued by others, and even at times by each other and themselves. It is this 'politics of recognition' (Fraser, 1997), namely how black, working class young women are represented and positioned, and how this plays out in their lives at college, that is the focus for this study and the pedagogical work that emerges through it.

While I acknowledge that my research participants' lives outside of college - their families, finances, leisure pursuits - play an influential role in their educational trajectories, I will not 'go there' in this study. The scope of this

research will extend only to a context that is practical for me to engage with as a teacher seeking implications for practice within my own workplace. It will also extend to a context that is the most ethical for me to explore and participate in. Indeed, Mirza (1992) discusses the complexities of white, middle class professionals intervening into the 'home lives' of young black people, referring to a legacy of research that (even inadvertently so) places the blame for educational failure at the doorstep of ethnic minority families. So while I strive to remain faithful to the multi-faceted ways in my research participants explain their lives and experiences, I retain a focus on relationships that form and discourses that operate within the four walls of the college. In doing so I ultimately turn the lens back towards the institution itself: what happens in this place, and how the institution (myself included) can better understand and support these young women towards educational success.

In my focus on marginalisation, resistance and change within the institution itself, the second contribution I hope to make is to discussions around educational practice and pedagogy. I explore, in both theory and practice, pedagogies that speak back to intersecting processes of social oppression, as it is experienced by black, working class girls in particular, and with dance and voice based, critical and emotionally engaged pedagogies as particularly fruitful approaches, especially when working across difference (hooks, 1994, 2003; Atencio, 2008; Brown, 2009; Mirza and Reay, 2000; Sears, 2010; Youdell, 2006a, 2012; George and Clay, 2013; Hickey-Moody, 2013; Stanger, 2013, 2016; McArthur, 2016; Edwards et al., 2016; Showunmi, 2017). In developing this change-seeking research in practice however, I became increasingly engaged by another set of voices: those of the young women themselves. My research participants' perspectives around their education and their identities, and their own practices of resistance and agency within their college, claim a central focus within the research and have continually shaped my own understanding and practice of it. Indeed, there is a particular sensitivity and reflexivity required for this study, given that I am a white, middle class, adult researcher seeking a

'path to liberation' with black, working class, teenage girls - a matter that deserves some attention now.

Researching across difference: my positionality and approach to it within this study

Brown (2009), an African American 'artist-scholar' and 'former Black girl' (xiv) who developed a 'Black girl centered experience' (1) with young women in the US, suggests the following:

> 'we lack a language that accurately describes what it means to work with Black girls in a way that is not about controlling their bodies and/or producing White, middle-class girl subjectivities […] the problem is that Black girls are not typically included in the conversations that shape our lives and destiny […] Black women and girls are [often] called out of their name' (Brown, 2009, 2).

In response to Brown's observations: I am not a black woman; I have never been a black girl; yet I am striving to work with and write about black girls in a manner that resists their marginalization, and that, in honour of rhetoric employed by black feminist pedagogues (hooks, 1994; Sears, 2010), is loving and celebratory of the perspectives and 'the power and genius' of black girls (Brown, 2009, 3). As reflected in the discussions of fellow white practitioner-researchers working with young people of colour (Pearce, 2004; Fitzpatrick, 2013; Milligan, 2016), there is a clear challenge in doing so as a white, middle class, adult, teacher-researcher. Indeed, there are a number of ways in which my life's experience, and the deeply embodied ways in which it shapes my understanding of the world, are poles apart from that of my students and, significantly, in ways that afford me particular forms of privilege. So in homage to Brown's words but with a particular and additional urgency given my social and institutional position, I must ensure that this study becomes one in which black girls are not 'called out of their name', nor filtered and controlled through 'white, middle-class girl subjectivities' (Brown, 2009, 2). I make no claims to perfectly achieving this goal, and indeed there will no doubt be areas of this research in which I am still naiive to the ways in which I have not achieved it. I do not say this as a simple caveat or way of absolving myself of critical

responsibility, but rather as a commitment to seeing this study as a starting point for a continual work in progress. With this said, I now name three key strategies I employ to address the challenges and also to embrace the possibilities of my positionality in this research.

First are my efforts to prioritise my young research participants' perspectives and understandings of their lives. This approach responds to avocations from within black feminist epistemologies (Crenshaw, 1995; Hill Collins, 2000), but also to my experiences of researching with my students, whose voices, desires and aspirations I found to be compelling and urgent. In being the sole researcher and author of this work, however, it would be disingenuous to claim that I wholly centre these young women's perspectives. Therefore, and secondly, I hope to offer a particular way of describing 'what it means to work *with* Black girls' (Brown, 2009, 2, emphasis mine), specifically as a white, middle class, female teacher-researcher. This would be 'a language' that attempts to avoid controlling black girls' 'bodies and subjectivities' (Brown, 2009, 2), specifically by naming the adult subjectivities, complete with their own prejudices, desires and anxieties, that shape the practice(s) explored in this research. Despite attempting to retain this focus however, my positionality at times receded from the frame during the research process, often through losing myself in the deeply embodied learning involved in dancing with, hanging out with and intimately speaking with my young research participants. However, my positionality would always and sometimes quite abruptly slide back into frame, often during moments of conflict, disappointment and, ultimately, realization. In this, there are also particular times within the writing where I move 'outside' of its analytical trajectory to name my own, sometimes quite emotive, processes of learning and realization. Where this occurs, I understand it as part of de-centering my classed and raced privilege in the research process (Pearce, 2003), and as a commitment to learning through reflexivity.

A final reflexive strategy I employ is in regards to referencing practices and the theoretical frameworks I draw upon. As discussed already, I have developed

15

this research with reference to black feminist perspectives. I do so for epistemological, political and ethical reasons (Ahmed, 2013). However, I do not abandon white feminist theoretical perspectives, nor did I abandon my own deeply embedded/embodied dance practices in the studio. Instead, I foreground the importance of finding ways for these perspectives to work in tandem, in dialogue, and sometimes in enrichment of each other: in aim of locating spaces for mutual understanding and for hope. In all this, I am indebted not only to the young women, but also to the diverse group of feminist thinkers and practitioners I developed these dialogues with: friends, former and current students, family members, colleagues, academics and supervisors, all of whom I acknowledge here in recognition of this research as impossible without collaboration.

Thesis structure and overview

In order to answer the two research questions I weave together reviews of literature and elements of data analysis throughout each chapter. Each chapter thus takes its own discrete approach to building an answer to either one or both of the research questions, and is also rooted within and responsive to the particular research context itself.

In Chapter One, I introduce the research site, explaining how at the time it was an institution in crisis. I describe my work as a teacher there and how the research emerged out of a project I had already set up with a particular cohort: the Health and Social Care students and their teachers. I introduce the research participants, focusing on the four young women whose educational trajectories form the key material for this study and who have their own introductory words for the reader. In Chapter Two, I establish my methodological framework, which I define as critical, caring and collaborative research praxis for social change, rooted in an intersectional feminist epistemology. I detail the research methods themselves, and explore the ways in which this framework was imperfectly implemented in practice through them. In Chapter Three I introduce

16

another theoretical framework: a particular understanding of embodiment, with a focus on the lived experience of being (differently) raced, classed and gendered bodies within the research site, and with reference to legacies of feminist Foucauldian and black feminist, intersectional theory (Butler,1990; Bordo, 1999; Ahmed, 2002, 2004; Alcoff, 2006).

In Chapters Four and Five, I articulate the different discourses of success my research participants navigate within their college: the educational and the social. In Chapter Four, I introduce my research participants as a group of young people who occupy a marginalized societal and institutional position, and explore a therefore quite compelling discourse of social success that operates within their peer group. This discourse of social success is that of "prestigious" black femininity, with its requirement for a particular and perfectly balanced performance of sexy, classy and strong. I situate these findings in relation to literature around black girlhood (Weekes, 1997, 2002, 2004; Richardson, 2013), but also in relation to theories of gender identity (Connell, 1987; Butler, 1990; Ahmed, 2004), its operation in schools (Robinson, 2005; Pomerantz, 2008) and its development in relation to media images (Nayak and Kehily, 2008, Coleman, 2009; Allen, 2011). In Chapter Five, I explore two contrasting yet overlapping discourses of educational success that operate in deeply embodied ways for my research participants: a neoliberal discourse of educational success, and education as black female empowerment. I contextualize these discourses by introducing theories of neoliberalism (Kelly, 2001; Davies, 2014) and black feminist ideas around education (Mirz and Reay, 2000; Mirza, 2006, 2009). I also draw on research around student identities and teacher identities, articulating a key idea for the thesis: that certain bodies come to be positioned as 'impossible' (Youdell, 2006a) and '[un]educable' (Leathwood and Hey, 2009) in neoliberal institutions, which I understand as systems of whiteness. In both chapters, I demonstrate the ways in which these discourses of educational and social success operate as forms of subjection *and* agency for my research participants.

Over Chapters Six and Seven, I answer the first research question directly. I explore how the discourses of social and educational success I discuss in the previous chapters intersect to produce educational exclusion for my research participants, and in ways that are often unnoticed, misread and/or unaddressed by the institution. I structure the chapters with reference to two key elements of "prestigious" black femininity required in order to embody success: the need for a young woman to be "buff" and the need for her to be "bold". In Chapter Six I explore how my research participants engage with their bodies through an image of the buff (sexy/beautiful and classy) black girl, who is both socially and educationally empowered, but who comes to be understood as uneducable and even abject within the neoliberal (white) institution. In Chapter Seven, I explore how the requirement for a prestigious black girl to always be strong, or as one young woman puts it, to be bold, operates as another source of empowerment: manifesting in a deeply embodied and urgent imperative to fight for one's education and social reputation. However, I again show how such striving leads to educational exclusion in producing tangible barriers to learning and in (co)producing uneducable bodies within the neoliberal institution. I also, however, identify a key space for hope across both of these chapters: the young women's relationships with each other. I suggest that that while these relationships are often a site for conflict and an instigator for educational exclusion, they also operate as sites for collective resistance.

With these discussions concluded, in the final two chapters I address my second research question. I describe and critically analyse the dance and discussion based pedagogical project I developed in response to these processes of exclusion, drawing upon the processes of resistance my research participants already engage in, building upon the findings of the previous chapters. I develop a particular focus on the liberatory potential of emotion, the (de)constructive potential of young black women's embodied cultural and artistic practices and critical voices, the power mobilized within young black women's relationships with each other and spaces for dialogue across difference. I define this approach as an embodied pedagogy of hope with reference to existing Freirean

(1996) and hooksian (1994) pedagogical theory and practice, and critically evaluate my attempts to develop it with my research participants in our neoliberal institution.

To take the first step on this journey of sorts, I turn again to the words of Brown (2009), who suggests of her own work that 'this is my attempt not to create [a] language but to start a dialogue of a way to be new about Black girlhood' (2). In a similar way, I hope to draw upon existing languages (verbal and embodied) to contribute to conversations around ways to 'be new' about black girl education in a particular setting. In ways I highlight throughout, putting such an aim into practice was not without complications, nor without problems. However, in caring deeply about my research participants, I strive to respect their identities, their perspectives and their capacities for becoming, and already being, so much more than the world perceives them to be.

Chapter One

The research context: a peer group, a dance project and an institution in crisis

In this chapter I tell the story behind this study, detailing the setting in which it took place, the people who participated in it and how it came to be. In doing so, I introduce one curriculum programme in particular, the BTEC in Health and Social Care. Four young women from within this cohort and their form tutor emerged as central research participants, and so I conclude this chapter by introducing them along with the other students and staff who played a part in this research. Overall in this chapter I aim to evoke the living, breathing and dynamic context for this research, one in which the educational aspirations and social ventures of a group of young people operate alongside the professional responsibilities and personal investments of staff, all within an increasingly target-driven and crisis-marked institution.

The institution

The research site is a mixed 16-19 college, located in an economically deprived and ethnically diverse borough of inner-London[2]. The particular area in which the college is located also has a widely reported history of unrest and protest in relation to the local police's treatment of and relationship with residents, particularly those from the Black British communities that make up a relatively high percentage of the local population[3]. This context shapes and reflects the landscape of the college itself, especially with regards to its student demographic, its informal aims as an institution, and young people's choices (or not) to enrol there.

---

[2]According to the college Oftsed Report, at the time of research this borough contained wards in the top 10% most deprived in the country.

[3] According to the borough council's Joint Strategic Needs Assessment in the year before the research period, the largest ethnic groups for school pupils in the borough were White Other (29.2%), White British (18.7%), Black African (16.6%) and Black Caribbean (9.5%).

At the time of research (September 2014 – July 2015), the student demographic was evenly mixed in terms of gender, relatively diverse in terms of ethnicity (but with ethnic minority groups and Black British students in particular forming the majority), but rather more homogenous in regards to various markers of class and economic disadvantage. At the start of the academic year, 780 students were enrolled, 51% of whom were listed as female, and 49% male. In regards to ethnic background, 33% of students were listed as Black African in heritage, 24% Black Caribbean, 19% White Other, 9% White British, 5% Asian and 10% either of mixed race or 'other' ethnic background. 33% of students in the college had applied for and were receiving a regular financial hardship bursary, assessed on the basis of their familial income. These students and an additional 24% who didn't quite qualify for the bursary were also receiving free school meals, meaning that a total of 57% of students in the college had applied for and received financial support (with it being understood among staff that more students would also have been eligible had they applied). Each year the college would also enrol a relatively high proportion of students who lived independently, with some being care-leavers, and again a relatively high proportion of students being young carers themselves. That a significant number of students within the college experienced such markers of economic and social disadvantage is reflective not only of its location, but also of its particular history and status as an institution.

The college was initially set up in September 2006 to serve as a key post-16 provider for secondary schools within the borough, providing a number of BTEC programmes and a wider range of A Level courses[4], and with capacity to enrol 1,200 students. However, the college's own local research showed that the majority of these school leavers, specifically those who had achieved above national average results in their Level 2 qualifications, regularly chose to enrol

---

[4] In the research site, BTEC vocational qualifications tend to be taken by students who achieved below the national average in their Level 2 school leaver qualifications, in contrast to the Advanced Level academic qualifications offered to students with five GCSE grades at C grade or above.

at different post-16 providers in the borough (which is also home to some very affluent wards and institutions with A Level results well above the national average). What also emerged through my own informal conversations with students, including those from two local schools where I taught dance, was a reluctance to study in this particular part of the borough due to fear of violent crime. This fear was exacerbated by two successive knife-crime and (supposedly) gang-related incidents involving students from the college that became high profile in local news in the years leading up to the fieldwork period. This all went towards a view supposedly held among young people in the borough that the research site was, in the words of one of the research participants, a "ghetto college"[5]. Students have explained such a perception to me in three key ways: firstly, the college's location; secondly, the proportionally high number of black students enrolled at the college; and thirdly, the idea that the college "lets in" students who "aren't serious [about their education]". This discursive positioning of the college and young people within it can also be considered in relation to an announcement in a September staff meeting that a significant number of young people enrolling at the college had been refused places at other post-16 providers or had enrolled after having had unsuccessful first years elsewhere. The college had also broadened its curriculum offer to include more BTEC programmes at Levels 1 and 2 in response to applicant demand, had entrance criteria for its A Level courses that sat below those set by other colleges in the borough, and welcomed students who had had disruptions to their secondary education, for example in attending Pupil Referral Units.

These features also came to contribute to a more positive discourse used among staff and students: that of the college as an "inclusive", "supportive", "fresh start" or "second chance" institution. This discourse more officially emerged in the key strengths identified within the Ofsted inspection that had taken place just before the research period began, articulated in terms of the college 'raising aspirations', 'widening participation in education', providing

---

[5] From fieldnotes, November 2014, after a discussion with Winter.

'good support and guidance for students', and students making 'very good progress relative to their prior attainment' in BTEC courses. This rhetoric surrounding the college's work to improve opportunities for educationally marginalised young people correlated with some of its achievement outcomes that year, with the percentage of students achieving 'three substantial passes' on vocational Level 3 courses (64%) far outweighing the national average (47.5%). This Ofsted report also highlighted what it observed as 'a safe and harmonious' atmosphere, an opinion reflected by senior members of staff: "student behaviour and the atmosphere in this college is excellent – especially in comparison to other places that I've worked"[6]. Despite the way in which the college had adopted a positive identity in this particular respect however, there were also many ways in which it had reached a crisis point by the time of research.

An institution in crisis

At time, the college was undergoing a period of intense scrutiny and uncertainty. It had received a Grade 3, a 'Notice to Improve', in two consecutive Ofsted inspections, with a third pending. Its most recent 'Notice to Improve' report highlighted that retention of student numbers was too low, that achievement outcomes for A Level students were well under the national average, and that too many students left the college without having achieved a Level 2 qualification in English and Maths. I remember as a teacher during this time that the college entered a state of seemingly continual preparation for inspection, characterised by an intense bout of CPD sessions, internal reviews and mock inspections, with a senior staff member remembering this period as "overwhelming and exhausting" for staff[7], reflecting a growing body of research around the impact of inspection culture on school culture and teachers (Perryman, 2009; Perryman et al. 2011).

---

[6] Interview with Paul, Vice Principal, September 2016.
[7] Interview with Paul Vice Principal, September 2016

The impact of this climate was exacerbated by what was widely perceived to be ineffective leadership and there was a palpable sense of staff dissatisfaction at this time, which also saw two periods of redundancies and a conversion to academy status that took place against the majority of staff's wishes. This all took place against a backdrop of falling student numbers, with the college intake being around 500 under capacity during the fieldwork period. This continuing challenge put strain on the college's financial resources, which not only led to the two periods of redundancies, but also meant that staff had to take increasing responsibility for financial spending within their work. Halfway through the fieldwork period the current principal retired, a Black British woman in her 60s, and a new principal was employed: a white, middle class man in his 50s who specialised in educational consultancy and who, it was widely discussed among staff, was employed by the board of governors to "save a sinking ship". However, one programme within the college that continued to grow in student numbers and well outperformed the college's overall 2014-15 achievement rate despite this sense of crisis, was the BTEC programme in Health and Social Care.

The Health and Social Care cohort

The college's Health and Social Care (hereafter HSC) BTEC programme was introduced in September 2011, and by the time of research consisted of two Level 3 tutor groups and also a new Level 2 cohort. The steady growth of this programme was in response to local demand, and it was one of the only programmes that were expanding. The HSC student cohorts comprised almost exclusively female students from ethnic minority communities, most of whom had achieved below the national average in their L2 qualifications, and many of whom had strong aspirations to work in the health and social care sector, commonly as early years educators, youth workers or midwives. The college's Vice Principals, two white middle class men, explain their aspirations in this respect in a particular way:

> Mark: this is impressionistic (.) but from the kind of referrals you get
> from pastoral issues, you can see some of the things that have driven

them to the caring side of things, are issues they've had with their own being cared for

Interview with Mark, 28th January 2015

Paul: there's this idea that (.) maybe the HSC students are doing the course to give back (.) because of some of the support they have had from that sector

Interview with Paul, 28th September, 2016

Although tentative, Mark's and Paul's words here certainly suggest an impression among senior staff that a high proportion of HSC students have had a history of 'need' and intervention of the social services, and that this forms the basis of their aspirations within this sector. It was also the case that certain members of this cohort had acquired a particular reputation in the college among both staff and students. Phrases and words I had heard staff use to describe this group of young women range from "vulnerable" and "needy", to "hard work", "loud" and "crazy". Some students on this course had also acquired a reputation for being involved in altercations around the college, with one HSC student herself saying to me after a very public fight at the front of the college, "Miss, it's always the HSC girls", and with one Vice Principal saying, in an informal conversation about a fight between a group students, "Camilla, I hate to say it, but it's usually the black girls in the cohort".

The teachers who worked with this cohort tended to be women, some of whom also from ethnic minority backgrounds and some of whom had worked in health and social care settings before becoming teachers. These teachers tended to take a heavily pastoral approach to their teaching, which one teacher explains with reference to, as she puts it, "the complex nature of the groups we tutor"[8]. In terms of college achievement rates, the HSC cohorts (especially the Level 2 groups) performed comparatively highly each year and indeed their teachers discuss the particular challenges of teaching this cohort not in relation to the quality of the students' work, but in relation to their "behaviour" around the college (with a significant minority of HSC students coming to the attention of

---

[8] Interview with Sophie, 16th June, 2015.

the college's disciplinary procedures each year), and also in relation to the impact of their lives outside of college upon their attendance and college work. In these respects, the college's pastoral system becomes of particular relevance when considering the experiences of these students.

The primary way in which all students received pastoral support at the college was through its tutorial system. During the research period, students would meet once a week with their tutor group for an hour's tutorial, comprising a group session and one-to-one meetings. These sessions followed a Personal Social and Heath Education programme designed for the whole college cohort by one of the Vice Principals, and a team of six Senior Tutors (lead pastoral staff). This programme comprised a fairly generalised and scattered list of topics such as 'employability', 'sexual health' and 'British Values', and seemed to be largely constructed on a basis of individual risk management, with an emphasis on preventing, for example, STIs, unemployment and 'radicalisation'. If a student was identified as needing pastoral support or disciplinary 'intervention'[9], they would be referred and subsequently supported by one of the Senior Tutors in the college and where necessary, a Vice Principal or the Principal. Parents/carers would be invited to be involved at this stage along with, possibly, support staff, for example, the student welfare officer, or one of two student counsellors.

While this system worked to support a large number of students, it also treated problems when they arose on a purely individual basis and in a reactive way that, to my view, did not seem to address or take into account the social inequalities that shaped these young people's lives. Indeed, as I critically discuss across later chapters, many students in this college came to be positioned through discourses of 'risk' (Kelly, 2001), 'problem' (Lloyd, 2005) and even pathology, with the HSC "black girls" being a particular example. It is in

---

[9] These terms are taken from the college's tutorial Scheme of Work and disciplinary policy.

response to this that I started developing my work as a researcher in the college.

My role a teacher-researcher

I had first taken up employment in the college as an English teacher in September 2010, during which time I was studying for an MA in education. In September 2011, I started teaching GCSE English to a number of HSC students, and was struck by an apparent contrast between these young women's reputations around the college as 'problems girls' (Lloyd, 2005) and the high levels of engagement and skill they showed in their academic work. In January 2012, drawing on my own experiences of and research into dance class as a ready space for female bonding and identity work (Stanger, 2013, 2016), I developed a girls' dance and discussion group with a small group of HSC students. This became the research site for my MA dissertation, exploring the young women's perspectives on their identities within the college, and also their construction as 'problem girls' in the eyes of staff. I continued this group during the following academic year, but this time offered it as an extra-curricular club to all female students in the college. In its new guise, I framed the discussion part of the session as a space for young women to talk about topics such as body image, sexual relationships and friendships, topics that had emerged as key areas of interest for the young women during my MA research. This club attracted a particular demographic of female student: young black women studying on vocational courses. A number of the HSC teachers were supportive of this group, and readily recommended participants for it from their tutor groups.

One teacher who showed particular interest was Anala[10], a British Indian middle class woman in her 40s with a professional background in nursing and academic

---

[10]All names that appear in this research are pseudonyms. Most are of the participant's choosing, but where the participant did not state a preference, I have selected for them, based on the ethnic and linguistic origin of their actual name.

research into the sociology of health[11]. Anala was tutor for the Level 2 HSC group, and she invited me to work with her to develop a tutorial programme for her group, with the aim of, as we called it at the time, "empowerment". This scheme of work was to be based around the dance and discussion practice I was developing, but would also involve classroom work exploring the class's national/cultural identities, with a heavy literacy focus. We pitched this idea of an alternative tutorial programme to one of the Vice Principals who agreed that we could pilot it. During this year (2013-14) we found that there seemed to be high levels of engagement with and enjoyment of this programme from Anala's students. However, we also did not have any formal mechanisms in place for evaluating it.

At the time I had also embarked on a formalised pilot study for this thesis. I explored some preliminary versions of the research questions regarding young black women's educational exclusions within the college, and the role that a dance and discussion based pedagogy might play in disrupting these processes of exclusion. I conducted this research within the extra-curricular girls dance and discussion club, which was by now a more established club in the college. However, because of the informal and fluid nature of this group, because of its separateness from the rest of the institution, and also because of the arguably quite therapeutic practices and relationships that were being developed through it, I decided that this format was not conducive to answering the research questions[12].

So, with a need for me and Anala to develop a more defined and documented approach to our tutorial project, and with need for me to find a more institutionally embedded context for my own research, a solution seemed quite

---

[11] Biographical details, including gender, ethnicity, nationality, age and social class have been given by the research participants. Where participants have not provided particular details, I have omitted the information. This is with the exception of my descriptions of the young women's class positions, which I discuss in more detail in Chapter Four.

[12] See Stanger (2017) for more details on this.

clear: that for 2014-15, I would develop my research with Anala and her new Level 2 tutor group within their timetabled tutorial sessions.

A new tutor group, and a tutorial dance project

In September 2014, I joined Anala and her new Level 2 tutor group as their "co-tutor", who would be delivering their tutorial sessions, but also supporting them with literacy in some of their curriculum lessons. Anala and I explained to the whole group at the start of the year that I was also a university student researching girls' education, and that I would be doing some of my research with the group. The Level 2 cohort for this year were a group of seventeen young women, aged between 16-19, some of whom had enrolled after graduating from secondary school, some of whom had spent time in other institutions. In respect to ethnic heritage, seven students identified as Black West African, one student identified as Black East African, four students identified as Black African Caribbean, four students identified as Turkish and one identified as Iranian. There was a similar degree of diversity in respect to which students identified as 'British' (with the four main research participants doing so, see below). None of these students had achieved the requisite Level 2 qualifications in order to be enrolled onto a Level 3 course, and all were studying for an English and/or Maths qualification alongside their main course.

Anala and I now had a firmer tutorial plan with more defined aims, which I discuss in detail in Chapters Eight and Nine. We had planned to do some classroom work around identity, the value of education and female "role models" we hoped would be of relevance to this diverse group. We also, in accordance with the college's wider tutorial programme and a more practical notion of "empowerment", included aims and activities towards developing the students' knowledge of career and progression routes and their numeracy and literacy skills. And as a final but core part of the programme, we planned to spend a major part of the tutorial sessions in the dance studio, exploring the students' dance practices and encouraging discussion around "body image",

relationships, and cultural identity, with the option for creating performance if the group so desired. Although we designed this programme with the whole tutor group in mind, I also wanted to select a smaller number of research participants with whom I would conduct more specific research around the experiences, and educational exclusions, of young black women in particular. Within the first three weeks of the year, it was clear to me and to Anala which students I should invite to be my research participants.

The research participants

Four young women within this Level 2 tutor group came to be my main research participants for this study: Cairo, Felicia, Kayla and Winter. Within the first three weeks of the year these students had been identified by Anala and myself in two particular ways: firstly, they were ostensibly "bright" (Anala), or working beyond the academic standards of Level 2, with various stories of educational exclusion to explain their underachievement in this sense; secondly, they were already subject to the college's disciplinary procedures in regards to punctuality, attendance and disputes with other girls, including each other. Cairo, Felicia, Kayla and Winter's educational experiences therefore seemed already to cohere with my areas of inquiry and research aims**.** In introducing these young women now, I include biographical and educational details, and also words from the young women themselves in response to the question "what should the reader know about you as a person and as a student". Prior to discussing this question, I had given the girls some of my fieldnotes from early in the year, inviting them to "fill the gaps" or correct "misconceptions" in my first impressions of them as students.

Cairo:

During the fieldwork year Cairo was 17 – 18 years of age, and is Black British of West African heritage (Nigeria and Sierra Leone). She had attended another sixth form college in the local area for 2013-14 where she had also studied L2 Health and Social Care, but had not completed the course. She had a collection

of GCSE results from school that were relatively high in comparison to the usual profile of a Level 2 student, including a B in GCSE Sociology and a C in GCSE English Literature.

Cairo describes herself for the reader thus:

> Cairo: About myself (2) I'm independent, I would say. I over-think things (2) I think about things a lot more deeply than I think people my age would do (1) I can judge a book by its cover. I know it's not good to, but every time I do I'm never wrong (2)
> CS: and what about yourself as a student? What should the reader know?
> Cairo: that I love learning. You know (1) I love knowledge (1) but I hate education
> CS: what do you mean by that?
> Cairo: I love knowledge and stuff like that but I hate the fact that I've got to be here at 9am, stay here until 4pm (1) and just listen to teachers talk. It's tiring (1) but I still love learning new things
> **Interview with Cairo, 13th April, 2015**

By the end of the fieldwork year, Cairo had graduated with a C grade in her GCSE English Language re-sit and a Merit in her L2 HSC BTEC. During the year she experienced one period of temporary formal exclusion (see Chapter Seven). She was permitted to progress onto a L3 course the subsequent year, on the proviso of being on a contract for attendance, punctuality and conduct. She was formally excluded half way into this year for not meeting the terms of this contract, and with specific relation to an altercation with a male student (see Chapter Seven), and her alleged bullying of another female student.

Felicia:

During the fieldwork year Felicia was 16 – 17 years of age and is of Black British of Caribbean heritage (Jamaican). She had spent the last two years of her secondary education at two pupil referral units, after being excluded from mainstream school in Year 9. She arrived at the college with very few school leaver qualifications.

Felicia describes herself for the reader as follows:

> F: I'm always happy but when I'm sad I can get really sad and I will just block anyone out (.) and get really angry (.) I get angry a lot (1) it's bad

[because] I like to make people happy (.) I don't like being in arguments with people and stuff like that (.) I wasn't really in arguments with anyone until I came to this college (1) it's a bit weird for me (.) I *like* people to like me (.) I like being the centre of attention (.) I love it

CS: and what about you as a student?

F: I'm immature […] I can be mature but at this time I feel like everything is going to get serious in my life so I might as well enjoy now (1) my mum is always telling me "enjoy your childhood because it's going to get harder"(.) so I enjoy it while I'm young (.) but I'm hardworking (.) *that's* me as a student

CS: so what does your education mean to you?

F: everything

Interview with Felicia, 13th April, 2015

Felicia graduated at the end of the research period with a C grade in her GCSE English re-sit, and was one of only two students who achieved a Distinction*, the highest possible grade, in her L2 HSC BTEC. During this time she experienced two periods of temporary formal exclusion, and was not invited to return to the college for L3 on the basis of her involvement in various altercations within the college that year.

Kayla:

During the fieldwork year Kayla was 18 – 19 years of age and is Black British of Caribbean heritage (Jamaican). Kayla had initially enrolled at the college in 2012 to study a Level 1 ICT BTEC, after having had a number of breaks in her formal education during secondary school. In the January of her first year at the college, she was permanently excluded after an altercation with another female student. Kayla went on soon after this to have her daughter who was a year and half at the start of the research period, and she re-enrolled at the college to study L2 HSC in September 2014.

For reasons I discuss in Chapter Three, I did not directly consult Kayla as I did the others on how she would like to be introduced to the reader. However, some of the ways she refers to herself in response to other interview questions are as follows:

K: my daughter's my motivation [for being at college]… but I always feel like I'm older than most people [here] cos I'm a mother and I do feel like I think differently to most of them…they just seem like all immature and loud (.) and like looking for boys and that (.) whereas I haven't got time for that

Interview with Kayla and Winter, 2nd December 2014

…

CS: what qualities would make a girl the most popular girl or high status girl?

K: I feel like me and [friend] are quite popular (.) I think that people just have this thing that we can fight (.) we know how to defend ourselves (.) how to stick up for ourselves (.) we do socialise we do talk to people and we're not horrible people (.) but we won't take any shit from anyone

Interview with Kayla 4th June 2015

…

CS: how do you view yourself as a student, as a young person in education?

K: someone that just wants to learn (.) I like approach my work with (2) er um a ready to learn (.) like (.) mindset and just trying to concentrate…[but] sometimes I feel like I might let off (2) like (3) I just feel like some teachers might perceive me in the wrong way (.) by (.) maybe by like my tone of voice or my attitude (.) which is something that's already in me so (.) maybe cos they don't know me they'll say I'm giving attitude when I just think "I'm not giving you an attitude"

Interview with Kayla 8th June 2015

At the time of research, Kayla lived independently with her daughter, financially supported by social welfare, but encountered persistent problems with her housing throughout the year (including impending relocations) that adversely affected her attendance to college. By the end of the fieldwork year, Kayla had been removed from her GCSE English course due to low attendance, and graduated with a Merit in her L2 HSC BTEC. She was formally and permanently excluded from the college in June, and was also not permitted back onto the college grounds to take her exams (see Chapter Seven).

Winter:

During the fieldwork year Winter was 17 – 18 years of age, and is Black British of Caribbean heritage (Jamaican). She had attended another college the previous year, during which she had also studied L2 HSC, but had not completed the course. Winter had also been temporarily excluded from secondary school in Year 8 and like Cairo, went on to achieve a collection of GCSE grades that exceeded that of the usual L2 entrance criteria, including a B in GCSE Drama and a C in GCSE English Language.

Winter describes herself for the reader as follows:

> W: Well I think I'm self-educated (.) I'm outgoing (.) I'm funny (.) I'm loud (.) I can be rude but for me it's only if I feel like I'm being threatened (1) if someone is a threat to me then that defence comes up (1) I live at home with my mum and my brother who is 21 and annoying (1) I've got a godson who is two (.) he's basically terrible twos (.) he's so naughty (1) I wasn't born here (1) I was born in Jamaica and came here when I was four turning five (1) and something you don't know about me is I've actually been performing since I came to England (.) plays and dance routines
> CS: […] and what about as a student?
> W: I think I like to challenge myself (2) I like to learn new things (1) I think I'm one of those students that with every subject I want to know about it (.) I noticed it when I started history [at school] (.) I <u>love</u> history [and she finishes by telling me in great length about her favourite history topic at school: the Spanish Armada]
> **Interview with Winter, 13th April 2015**

Winter was the only other student from her tutor group other than Felicia who graduated with a Distinction*. She experienced one period of temporary formal exclusion during the research period related to a physical altercation with another student, and was offered a place on the college's L3 course on the proviso that she start on a strict contract for both attendance and conduct. She declined this place and attended a different college, along with Felicia and their friend Tinuke.

Cairo, Felicia, Kayla and Winter became my main research participants, however a wider group of research participants came to form throughout the year,

including Melody, Rebecca, Shanice, Tinuke, Lara and Rose, young black women who studied on BTEC courses within the college (mainly HSC), and shared (in shifting ways), friendships with Cairo, Felicia and Winter. I also had a separate relationship with Melody, Rebecca and Shanice who attended the extra-curricular dance club. I would talk with them informally about my research questions during lunch breaks and after dance classes, after which I came to conduct recorded interviews with them. I do not refer to any of these students as my main research participants, as I did not trace their educational journeys closely through the college as I did for Kayla, Winter, Cairo and Felicia. However, their participation in the research process came to be important in how they offered both confirmation of, and further nuance to, the perspectives of Kayla, Winter, Cairo and Felicia.

I also worked closely with my main research participants' teachers and other staff members during the fieldwork year. The key staff member who I developed this research with, and regularly interviewed for this study, was the girls' form tutor Anala. I also conducted interviews with the group's second HSC teacher, Sophie, and with Cosima and Ana who taught GCSE English to Cairo and Kayla, and Felicia (respectively). I count all of these people friends as well as colleagues, the implications of which I discuss in the next Chapter. I also conducted one-off interviews with a number of senior staff members: three of the college's Vice Principals - Christine, Paul and Mark - and the college's new principal, Tom, who took role in the summer term of the fieldwork year. And lastly, during the 'writing up' period of this research, I interviewed two further staff members, Rita and Diana, around specific aspects of young black women's education (see Chapter Two,). I give further biographical and professional details of all these staff members throughout later chapters, but now explore in more detail how I conducted the research, and the rationale for my research approach.

Chapter 2

Methodology: developing critical, caring and collaborative research for social change

Sitting high up in a sold-out auditorium at London's Southbank Centre in the spring of 2017, listening to scholar-activist Angela Davis speak about the meaning of global feminist thought and action in the 21st century, a particular statement of Davis' resonated: "I see feminism as a methodology – as an approach...with intersectionality at the centre"[13]. The task for this chapter is to articulate and reflect upon my research methodology, namely, and in simple terms, my approach to this particular inquiry and the methods through which it was done. However, as Davis' statement captures, one's approach to doing and acting within the world is where one's politics and worldview exists. For the purposes of this discussion then, 'methodology' itself signifies a space of intersection: namely the way that politics, epistemology, lived experience and ethics interconnect to produce action(s) and modes of inquiry (Stanley, 1990; Gunaratnam, 2003). As I elucidate in this chapter, my methodology not only reflects my politics, that of a white, middle class teacher-researcher striving for an intersectional approach to her feminism, but is fully implied by and (I hope) becomes manifest in it.

The research that took place during the fieldwork year was as an evolving form of small-scale, qualitative, practice-oriented study in which I worked closely with the research participants to explore the following questions:

(1) What are the processes of educational exclusion experienced by some young black women in an inner-London college?

(2) Can a dance and discussion based pedagogical approach disrupt these processes of exclusion?

As the questions convey, this research is specific to a particular time, place and group of people. It is also deeply personal: to me and, in different ways, to

---

[13]Angela Davis, speaking at the Women of the World Festival on 11th March 2017, at London's Southbank Centre.

those I developed it with. I therefore make no claims to generalizability, but instead hope, as Connolly (1998) puts it, to contribute to the 'ever increasing catalogue of social processes and practices researchers can draw upon to help sensitise them to, identify [and perhaps shape] the complex range of processes that could be occurring in their school' (135). I felt (and feel) there is urgency in such a task here, with the legacy of research cited in the Introduction and Cairo, Felicia, Kayla and Winter's experiences as briefly introduced so far as grounds for such a feeling. In this chapter, I articulate and reflect upon my approach to this urgent task, discussing research methods developed during one year of fieldwork.

Before providing detail on these methods however, I turn to Kelly et al. (1995), who suggest that methodological thinking should 'begin from [the] position' of establishing epistemology, in that 'it is epistemology which defines what counts as valid knowledge and why' (246). Indeed, as Stanley and Wise (1983) put it, 'methods in themselves aren't innately anything' (159), rather it is how and why they are used that matters: what vision, and version, of 'truth' they are serving, for what purpose and to what effect. I therefore begin by articulating my epistemological approach, situating it with reference to evolving traditions of black feminist epistemology (Hill Collins, 2000; Mirza, 2010) and feminist, emancipatory research (Lather, 1991, 1995; Acker et al., 1991). The points of connection between these frameworks offer principles that underpin my approach to developing a critical, caring and collaborative research for social change – one conducted across both difference and sameness, with students and staff members within my own workplace. With my epistemological approach or 'vision' defined, I then go on to introduce and discuss the research methods, highlighting tensions between the vision and the realities of doing this kind of critical, caring and collaborative research in practice.

Epistemology and principles for research

(i) an intersectional feminist epistemology

For decades feminist critiques have been levelled at positivist research
paradigms in the social sciences and the understanding of 'truth' that underpins
them (Stanley and Wise, 1983; Lather, 1995; Ahmed, 2006). This body of
thought challenges the notion that 'truth' is fixed, universal and accessible
through scientific methods that remove the supposedly corrupting influence of
subjectivity. As Lather (1995) puts it, 'we live in a postpositivist/postmodern era
[…] [in which] foundational views of knowledge are increasingly under attack.
[…] It is the end of the quest for a 'God's Eye' perspective […] for certainty in
our ways of knowing' (293). Furthermore, as this body of thought explores, any
quest for 'certainty in our ways of knowing' (Lather, 1995, 293) will inevitably
lead to the unacknowledged privileging of some ways of knowing, and versions
of knowledge, over others. In short then, a feminist epistemology is one that,
without wanting to form its own 'totalising discourse' (Lather, 1991, 82),
proposes an always partial, always situated and thus always perspectival
understanding of 'truth', and therefore knowledge(s) (Harding, 1986; Hesse-
Biber, 2012). While there are no givens and absolutes under this framework,
there are questions around who can know, what can be known, and, implicitly
then, which versions of knowledge take hold. In this, the notion of power
becomes integral to an understanding of knowledge and research.

To conceive of the particular relationship between knowledge and power in
research, I turn to Lather (1991, 1995) who draws on a Foucauldian framework
to propose that any inquiry should be a matter of 'demystification, of
[advancing] discourse which disrupts 'the smooth passage of regimes of truth' '
(1995, 293). Within this epistemological approach, there is a fundamental
relationship between knowledge and power: what counts as knowledge is
determined through relations of power, and particular accounts of reality carry
with them and afford particular forms of domination. As Foucault (1994) puts

it, 'each society has its regime of truth, its 'general politics' of truth – that is, the types of discourse it accepts and makes function as true' (131). This understanding of knowledge and knowing leaves feminist and other critical researchers with a clear direction in their research: one oriented towards identifying dominant regimes of truth, and unpicking how multiple discourses, as situated versions of truth, interact and to what effects, especially for those disadvantaged by the 'general politics of truth' for their context.

This epistemological position certainly resonates with the inquiry I seek to undertake with my research participants: young people who face processes of institutional and wider social marginalisation (Mirza, 1994, 2009) and staff members (myself included) who are employed to support these students towards educational success in an increasingly target-driven institution. This is a group of people who experience their college/workplace in different and unequal ways within broader socio-economic systems of control. A research approach oriented towards exploring how different versions of 'truth' operate within relations of power therefore seems fitting. Such an epistemological position is not without its methodological challenges, however. Holland and Ramazanoglu (1995) refer to feminist researchers having been divided over 'whether there is some essential or material reality in people's lives, or whether the only level of reality accessible is multiple accounts of plural realities […] all of which may be true in their own terms' (274). To address these challenges and offer an enrichment of the position articulated thus far, I turn to black feminist epistemologies. A view of knowledge and 'truth' as perspectival and positioned through relations of power is woven through much black feminist thought (Crenshaw, 1995; Hill Collins, 2000; Mirza, 2010). However, important conceptualisations that also emerge in this work, conceptualisations that serve as spaces for resolving the 'divide' Holland and Ramazanoglu refer to, are intersectionality and embodied lived experience. These conceptualisations are central to my methodology and, crucially, imply a case for 'thinking and organising around' (Crenshaw, 1995, 275) the accounts

and experiences of the black, working class young women I developed this research with.

Black feminist epistemologies posit embodied lived experience as the basis of knowledge formation in a way that produces not accurate or inaccurate accounts of reality, but instead 'interpretation[s] of the social world that need explaining' (Mirza, 2010, 5) in relation to the systems of power in which they emerge. These 'interpretations' are formed through our embodied encounters with our surroundings: in other words, we know through and as a result of our living, breathing, feeling and inter-relating experiences as raced, classed, gendered (etc) bodies in the world (Hill Collins, 2000; Ahmed, 2004). This should also be understood against a context in which the experiences and thus interpretations of some, namely white, wealthy/middle class, heterosexual men (Hill Collins, 2000; Ahmed, 2006), are privileged as the basis for 'truth' over others, and in ways that are paradoxically unacknowledged yet sometimes insidiously, sometimes violently enforced, on both interpersonal and systemic levels. In this respect, dominant knowledges exist in oppressive relation to subjugated knowledges, with the goal of black and postcolonial feminisms being to weave a 'new' body of hitherto marginalised knowledges (Mirza, 2010). These would be the knowledges/interpretations of women of colour, with attention to how subjugation operates through 'interlocking systems of oppression' (Hill Collins, 1990, 221) related to gender, 'race', class, sexuality (and more), and in a way that 'refuse[s] the construction of black female other as inferior [but] imagine[s] the 'self' differently, that is, beyond oppressive discourse' (Mirza, 2010, 8). Given the ways that my young research participants' perspectives are marginalised and even pathologised within their institution and more widely in UK society (Mirza, 1992, 2009), this seems a fitting epistemological approach to take.

Taking experience as the basis of knowledge, even for politically and ethically sound reasons, presents its own difficulties however. As Holland and Ramazanoglu (1995) discuss, researchers should aim for a balance between

'privileging the validity of women's accounts of their experience […] allowing the experience of the silenced to be heard and shared' (288) and holding these accounts up to a critical analysis as their *own* power-shaped configurations as discourse. What a black feminist epistemological framework can helpfully bring into focus here however is another epistemological principle: the privileging of knowledge that works towards radical social change. Under this framework, knowledge is important not because it is universal, nor because it somehow stands up under critical discourse analysis: knowledge is important in its power to de-stabilise dominant and oppressive 'regimes of truth' (Foucault, 1994, 131) and 'interrogate the way in which power, ideology and identity intersect to […] maintain universal patterns of gendered and racialised inequality' (Mirza, 2010, 2-3). In light of all this, I must critically address yet still privilege my young research participants' knowledges, their interpretations of the social world, as forms of insight into their subordinated experiences, and as powerful sources of learning towards social change. The power of these accounts mobilises in their capacity to de-stabilise dominant 'regimes of truth' that operate within the institution, especially those that have exclusionary outcomes. An understanding of knowledge as multiple, situated and produced through intersecting processes of power also, however, implies an understanding of knowledge as shifting and co-created through relationships (Gutnaratnam, 2003; Hesse Biber, 2012). In this I also propose that it is not only the perspectives of the young women that are important within this study.

(ii) collaborative research across difference: dialogue and (ex)change

An understanding of knowledge as perspectival implies that understanding for social change might effectively emerge through processes of dialogue and exchange (Friere, 1996), especially when researching across difference (Gutnaratnam, 2003; Ramji, 2009). Indeed, it is not my role as a (white middle class adult) teacher-researcher to uncover or become some kind of vessel for, or translator of the truths of my (black working class teenage) students/research participants. As I experience the world through my own lived

experiences, such a task would be impossible as well as problematic, in imagining a stance of epistemic objectivity in relation to subjugated and embodied knowledges of my young research participants: an approach that would serve to reinforce an invisible system of whiteness as the basis for interpretation and knowledge (see Chapter Three for further discussion). Rather, change-oriented knowledge will be co-constructed through the research process itself, through the 'spaces in between' various accounts and understandings of experience (Gutnaratnam, 2003). In this respect, my white, middle class, adult, ballet-trained, professional (etc) perspective need not be a hindrance to the research process, with its aim of understanding and acting upon the educational marginalisation of black, working class girls. The difference of perspective and lived experience within the research relationship here actually leaves a potentially fruitful space for exchange and therefore radical change within an institution in which different lived experiences and worldviews collide and sometimes (on an uneven playing field) compete. It is for this reason also that I seek the perspectives of staff members, myself included, in relation to the research questions. This would be with the purpose of identifying and critiquing dominant, institutional 'regimes of truth' that shape my research participants' exclusions, but also identifying spaces for learning and (ex)change. Central to this, however, is a particular practice of reflexivity.

Feminist and anti-racist researchers have discussed the complications of researching across difference, and thus across unequal relations of power, with Ramji (2009) discussing the potential for the research process itself reinforcing oppressive processes, even while its goal is emancipatory. The methodological discussions of George (2007), Pearce (2004) and Fitzpatrick (2013), regarding their work as white, adult researchers in inner-city schools, reveal the complexities of navigating all this in practice. And as Reynolds (2010) argues in her critical analysis of 'the triumph of experience' in traditional black feminist thought, 'tension and discontinuity [have] emerge[d] between academic definitions of experience and the way that black women define experience within their everyday social worlds' (591). In the context of this particular

inquiry, these complications require that I adopt a continually reflexive approach, as helpfully articulated through the words of Skeggs (2002) as the 'ongoing practice' of 'always trying to be responsible, accountable and ethical with an awareness of our positioning and partialities' (368). In addition to the strategies for achieving this kind of reflexivity discussed in the Introduction, a key space for hope here is in the research process shaping to some degree my social positioning and understanding of reality. As Gunaratnam (2003) proposes, within anti-racist research the researcher should also undergo processes of transformation and becoming. This in turn highlights a final key aspect of this research process: its fundamentally praxical nature.

(iii) an emancipatory, embodied and caring research praxis

As a consequence of understanding knowledge as perspectival and produced through power, Lather (1995) advocates an emancipatory feminist research, namely 'the development of research approaches which both empower the researched and contribute to the generation of change enhancing social theory' (293). In light of this, the goal of my research would not only be to produce knowledge that serves to de-stabilise dominant 'regimes of truth', but also that the young women, their teachers and myself as researcher should actively experience change through the very generation of this knowledge. In short, research can produce critical knowledge *for* social change, but can also *enact* change in its very methods and doing. It can become, to employ a term Lather uses in her own work, praxis. While acknowledging that 'praxis is a term with history' (258), Lather (1986) defines it for her work thus: 'the interactive, reciprocal shaping of theory and practice which I see at the center of an emancipatory social science' (258). This again speaks to a black feminist epistemology that calls for both material change in black women's lives as an outcome of research, and for a research approach that serves this change (Hill Collins, 2000; Mirza, 2010).

The work of bell hooks is particularly helpful in enriching an understanding of praxis for this research, and for locating it in the specific context of an educational institution. hooks (1994) develops an understanding of praxis in relation to her anti-racist and feminist teaching practice in the university literature classroom, defining it as 'a lived experience of theorizing' where 'no gap exists between theory and practice' as 'one enables the other' (61). Indeed, hooks discusses the space of her classroom as one in which (teaching) practice and (academic) theorizing took place in and through each other. This conceptualization is helpful for my own research context, one in which a pedagogical space, namely our dance and discussion sessions and the teaching (and learning) that took place within them, was a main site of the research. I discuss the specifics of this in the next section, but suggest now a multi-layered definition of the term 'praxis' for this study: firstly, a research process that not only generates knowledge for social change, but serves to enact this change in its very doing; secondly, a research process that produces critically informed practice; thirdly, a research process that generates knowledge and theorises in and through practice, namely in and through embodied, collaborative acts.

A crucial aspect of this notion of praxis, especially if taking lived experience as the basis for knowing, is its enactment only in and through bodies and their (inter)actions. As I discuss in more detail in the next chapter, bodies are the seat of lived experience and situated knowledge (Butler, 2010; Hill Collins, 2000; Ahmed, 2004), thus bodies also 'know'. Mirza (2010) and Simmonds (1997) indeed discuss how, in the context of histories of racism and sexism enacted on and through black women's bodies, embodiment is a central feature of black feminist research, and is a space through which dominant narratives can be de-stabilised in material form. All this can be elucidated further with reference to the work of Ahmed (2004, 2006). For Ahmed, thinking, knowing but also transformation happens through bodies, specifically, 'through the skin' (2006) and through emotions (2004), but in ways that are acutely racialised, gendered, sexualized. It is though our bodies, our emotions, our states of being 'moved' that we know and learn and change, and

the acutely embodied character of this provides another dimension to how radical research is a relational and co-creative process. It is in this respect that I come to discuss dance as not only an object, but as a key method of theorizing (Brown, 2009), and also focus on the operation of emotion (which I define in the next chapter) as a key factor that shapes research and knowledge-production.

As embodied relationships and collaboration across difference are at the centre of this research inquiry, the need to consider practices of care becomes particularly acute. Following discussions of feminist and anti-racist research practice (Riddell, 1989; Hill Collins, 2000; Fitzpatrick, 2013), I define a practice of care as, firstly, an approach that acknowledges and is sensitive to the personal relationships that developed with people I did this research with. This would be an approach that avoids reproducing oppressive relations and does not cause harm; it would also be an approach that respects people as 'integral human beings' (Darder, 2015, 83) with much to contribute to and gain from the research process, a process within which I aim to give as well as take as a researcher. Integral to a notion of a critical and caring research praxis is also that it has practical emancipatory outcomes for the research participants in their own lives (Acker at al., 1991) and can contribute towards developing future educational practice (Paechter, 2003). Indeed, Oakley (2005) articulates a major task for feminist research: that it have the potential to be disseminated, and therefore not only be emancipatory in its processes and epistemology, but in its potential to 'stand up' to dominant worldviews and in hegemonic spaces. It would indeed be a disservice to those who participated in this research inquiry, especially the young women, for the understanding we produced together to travel no further than "our own little world"[14].

With the epistemological goals and principles of this research established, I now detail and critically evaluate what actually happened during the fieldwork

---

[14]How an earlier pilot study participant referred to our dance and discussion sessions: see Stanger (2017).

year itself: the methods, and why and how they were used. As Rogers and Ludhra (2012) assert however, there are always 'opportunities' but also 'challenges and constraints' (43) in developing ethical practitioner-research with and about young people in practice, particularly those positioned as 'at risk' (Kelly, 2000, 2001). I now explore both the opportunities *and* the challenges in enacting this vision in practice, particularly in relation to my attempts to practise collaboration as an insider-outsider, or something in-between, across all the research relationships.

The research in-practice: methods and a key challenge

(i) overview of research methods

Four main settings emerged for conducting collaborative research praxis for social change. The first is the dance and discussion project I developed with Anala's tutor group. I participated in this project as a teacher, facilitator, researcher, dancer and at times as a student of sorts (Freire, 1996), conducting particular sorts of embodied participant observation, and taking detailed fieldnotes. This became the key site for the second research question ('can a pedagogical approach disrupt processes of exclusion?'), but also generated useful understanding for the first research question ('what are the processes of educational exclusion…?'). In this, I understand the dance and discussion project as a particular kind of praxis: both an object and a method of research for social change.

The second main research setting is the relationships developed with the four main research participants, Cairo, Felicia, Kayla and Winter, whose institutional journeys I followed and participated in. In addition to the dance and discussion project, research with these young women took place through particular forms of interview throughout the year, sometimes involving their friends who I had existing relationships with as their dance teacher and "co-tutor". A third related research context is the relationships I developed with staff members, primarily

the girls' tutor Anala. Here, research took place again mainly through forms of interview but also through planning and working with these staff members in the classroom, the dance studio and in other spaces of their/our work. These relationship and interview-based settings came to generate understanding and forms of practice to answer both research questions.

The final setting is that of my own more independent and less participatory forms of observation that took place in various spaces around the college 'outside' of our pedagogical project: the HSC lessons, the corridors, the staffroom, the girls' toilets. I also analysed particular institutional documents, such as the girls' marked coursework, policy documents, the college website, and email exchanges between staff. This final setting served to illuminate the understandings generated through the other contexts.

While each of these settings presented opportunities for answering the research questions while achieving the epistemological and ethical values discussed above, they also presented complications - often related to my own place and positioning within the research process. This matter deserves some attention now as a main challenge to putting the research vision articulated earlier into practice.

(ii) my researcher position: insider, outsider or something in-between?

I define my researcher position as one that was (and is) constantly shifting across different relations of closeness to the research process and participants. As Aull Davies (2008) puts it:

> 'all researchers are to some degree connected to, or part of, the object of their research […] the relationship between researcher and researched is […] intimate, multi-stranded, and the complexities introduced by the self-consciousness of the objects of research have […] great scope' (Aull Davies, 2008, 3-4).

These words certainly resonate. In one sense, Aull Davies' description is consistent with the emancipatory aims of this research, in which 'the object of

research [would] enter into the process as an active subject' (Acker et al. 1991, 135-137), something that researchers working within the field of Education Action Research even advocate in terms of young people becoming 'co-researchers' (Groundwater-Smith and Mockler, 2015). However, my experience of the research process indeed entailed a rather more messy 'multi-stranded' (Aull Davies, 2008, 4) set of positionings. First, it is undeniable that I had/have ultimate practical and analytical control, thus troubling any notion of fixed and equal co-researchers (as Cullen et al., 2012 also discuss). I also experience/d my own position as a shifting, overlapping and sometimes contradictory set of roles: that of researcher, researched, writer, dancer, teacher, student, "mentor", "big sister"[15], colleague, friend, employee, confidante, ally, oppressor and agitator. Indeed, I was researching within but researching *about* my own workplace, working with but also critically observing my colleagues and friends, and was also at times the very object of my research, critically analysing my practice as a teacher and researcher. This blurring and proliferation of categories speaks to contemporary discussion of doing critical research in-practice: in how processes of becoming and shifting relations of power are inevitable, even necessary where social change is the goal. Researchers indeed discuss such complications and shifts within their experiences of researching with marginalised student groups in schools (Blair, 1995; George, 2007; Fitzpatrick, 2013), and especially in regards to critically researching in their own workplaces (Pearce, 2005; Perryman, 2002).

A key theme that emerges in the literature here is the complex navigations of 'insider-outsider' status, a dichotomy that itself is not quite sufficient for articulating the positionings such contexts produce (Sikes, 2008). Thomas and Gunter (2011), for example, discuss how a dichotomy of 'insider-outsider' glosses over the complexities of researching with 'pupil researchers'. They explain how their 'identities [as researchers] multiplied and shifted…[so while]

---

[15]'mentor' and 'big sister' are terms that Winter and Felicia used to describe my role throughout the year.

the inside/outside binary may be politically helpful… [it] also limits understandings of the realpolitic and experience of messy research practice in and with schools' (17). I too simultaneously inhabited insider, outsider and at times what felt like in-between roles within the research process, and in ways that also had 'political' implications – especially in relation to the young women. I was on the one hand a teacher who, as part of her own university studies, was constantly inquiring about the young women and their lives, and facilitating an (at times uneasy) dance project with them and their peers. On the other hand, I was a not-quite-teacher, a "big sister" and "mentor", who fought their corner in disciplinary matters, wanted to hear their "side of the story" in friendship disputes, hung around and danced with them during lunchbreaks - but also asked them to put their phones away in classroom lessons. In these respects, my in-between positioning had scope for being simultaneously productive *and* problematic in respect to the research aims, something that Milligan (2016) discusses in relation to her critical research as a white, European researcher with young people of colour in a rural Kenyan school. Milligan articulates the 'realpolitic' (Thomas and Gunter, 2011, 17) of an in-between space here in its potential to open up new forms of relating, to produce co-constructed knowledge and to illuminate power relations – but sometimes in the very reproduction of them. I discuss similar possibilities and problems for my own research now, in respect to the different research settings and their attendant methods.

The dance project

This project took place once a week with Anala's tutor group, as an alternative to their timetabled tutorial session (see Chapter One). Within this project, and as a sometimes quite fractured 'learning community' (hooks, 1994), we danced together, we talked together, we played games, we created dance pieces and put on a performance for International Women's Day - and all not without laughter, argument and, as Felicia put it, "awkwardness" along the way. In

Chapter Nine I describe critically discuss this project as a particular form of feminist and anti-racist pedagogy. In this chapter, however, I discuss how it served as research praxis. Indeed, this project was not only an object of inquiry, the focus of my second research question ('can a pedagogical approach disrupt...?'), but was also its own 'lived experience of theorizing' (hooks, 1994, 61): a methodological practice through which knowledge was generated for *both* research questions. I developed a greater insight into both my own and the young women's embodied experiences and institutional positionings through our experiences in the studio together – I venture more so than I would have done through lesson observations and 1-1 interviews alone. And within all this, dance and dancing played a key role as both an object and a method of inquiry.

Within this research dance operated for the dancing participant and should be understood by the non-dancing reader as something at once entirely mundane and entirely unique. On the one hand, dance is nothing more than 'an essential human practice' (Thomas, 1997, 7), a moving manifestation of 'the social, historical, and political contexts in which it is embedded' (Sears, 2010, 123), no different to any other cultural practice. On the other hand, dance is nothing less than a material 'cultural and political expression' (Sears, 2010, 123) that paradoxically *eludes* meaning, or at least 'means' in ways that go beyond the verbal. Thomas (1997) even suggests that 'dance accesses a different plane of meaning' (18) and refers to the work of other dancer-theorists who argue that this meaning can only be grasped through dance itself. Indeed, Sparshott (1995) suggests that some meanings in dance 'cannot be articulated in words at all [and] we have no way of identifying them otherwise than by dancing them for each other' (80). I would add to this that there are some meanings in dance that can only be identified by dancing *with* each other, in view of meaning-making as a process that is fundamentally relational and that happens, is felt, through the very material of bodies. Indeed, this study is not concerned so much with dance as an individualised performing art form (although this features), but as a social, meaning-sharing and meaning-making practice. In

this, I turn again to a suggestion by Thomas (1997): 'we have to move away from reading dance as it was an assembly of hidden messages' but that instead 'in social dance meaning resides…in dancing *per se*' (19). For this research then dance is but is also more than a form of rich cultural communication that might be read and analysed as 'data': it is also an acutely embodied, feeling and non-verbal method of knowing and a practice that can do things, such as re-draw social relationships and, in doing so, shake institutional structures. In these ways, dance is a fruitful practice for the emancipatory research praxis discussed thus far.

This understanding of dance, however, leaves the researcher with the rather difficult task of how to inquire into, and also how to write about dance. While there might be an (agreed) language to describe particular codified dance techniques and culturally recognisable movements, and while there might be linguistic possibilities for evoking the sensations of dancing, the experience of one's own dancing body can still remain beyond words, and that of another's dancing body even more elusive. Another challenge arises here in that, like any form of communication or human practice, dance practices emerge (sometimes dialogically) from particular cultural and historical standpoints (Perpener, 1999; Frosch, 1999). For example, the way I find most comfortable to dance, a style that has emerged through my training in classical ballet, can be understood as its own (gendered, classed and raced) 'cultural and political expression of the…contexts in which it is embedded' (Sears, 2010, 123). How might I interpret my research participants' dance practices from this power-imbued standpoint, and, crucially, avoid 'perpetuating relations of domination' (Ellsworth, 1989, 298), especially given the pathologising ways particular black feminine dance styles are frequently (mis)understood (Gottschild, 2003)? For an answer, I turn to the earlier epistemological discussions of this chapter: namely, that any interpretation of dancing within this study should contain a commitment to reflexivity and a focus on spaces of radical (ex)change. Indeed, in this study, rather seeking the 'true' meaning of a dance/dancer, I seek those experiential narratives that serve the empowerment of my research

participants. Two particular writing strategies I employ in these respects are, firstly, using where possible the language and terms the young women use to describe their dance forms, and secondly, rather than trying to somehow objectively describe the dancing of others, focusing as much as possible on the feeling of dancing as I experienced it in the research space, using evocative language that does not try to mask its own subjectivity. This all translated into particular research methods.

Firstly I would observe, or more accurately, experience the young women, Anala and myself dancing (and otherwise interacting) in the studio, also extending these 'observations' to performances in the college theatre. In this process, I primarily paid close attention to my own embodied experiences and emotive responses, which I foreground in my fieldnotes. I discuss this process as pedagogy in more detail in later chapters, but raise here how writing the fieldnotes became very personal, emotional, and indeed quite difficult in that I was often trying to recall an embodied and communal experience. To aid my writing about dance in my fieldnotes, data analysis and even the theoretical writing in this chapter, I experimented with watching videos. These were videos I had taken within a rehearsal for our IWD performance, and within a dance freestyle circle session, and whenever I watched them to aid the writing process, I did so with the volume turned up to maximum, as the young women also did in the studio. I found this process extremely helpful: not only in reminding me of the material details of a session (who stood where, who called out what), but in (r)evoking the *feeling* of being in this communal dance space, of what the dancing meant, and thus in accessing what indeed at times felt like 'a different plane of meaning' (Thomas, 1997).

In order to draw on and represent the insight and perspectives of others in exploring and writing about dance within this research, I also consulted my research participants along the way, asking for their thoughts on the progress and outcomes of this project, and for their own verbal articulations of their feelings within its space. In hindsight, this is something I wish I had taken

different approaches to, such as inviting participants to respond to my fieldnotes, and to write and draw/sketch their ideas. Such visual methods have proven to be fruitful in research with young people (Dean, 2007; Renolds, 2018), including with young black women around topics related to embodiment (Wright et al., 2010), and indeed my research participants seemed to struggle at times to verbally articulate their thoughts about our dance sessions in interview. For this reason I do in later chapters rely on my own observations and interpretations rather more than I would have liked.

In addition to these particular complications around researching (with) dance, there were also challenges around matters of collaboration and the reproduction of oppressive power relations within the dance and discussion project. I reserve these discussions for Chapters Eight and Nine, where I explore the dance project in terms of its critical pedagogical value, but now explore how these matters played out within the research relationships more generally.

The research relationships: consent, reciprocity and care

(i) relationship-building as method

In discussing her work with Maori youth as a 'Pakeha/European' researcher, Fitzpatrick (2013) suggests that 'relationship-building' is a key method of ethical research, arguing that 'Eurocentric researchers too often ignore the importance of reciprocal relationships' (54) as the seat of (ethical) inquiry, and that critical ethnography should begin with compassion for others within the context of a shared lived domain. In similar ways, I position the 'human relationships' (Fine, 2003) I developed with my research participants as fundamental to the knowledge produced within this study, and as such, give these relationships some attention now. Despite each of the research relationships being its own 'unique interaction' (Rogers and Ludhra, 2012, 46), there were certainly particular patterns that emerged across them. I will

explore these patterns with reference consent and reciprocity - as key practices within feminist and anti-racist research – and specifically with reference to notions of 'process consent' (Smythe and Murray, 2000) and 'negotiated consent' (Miller and Bell, 2002). These terms capture how the research practice was initiated and ultimately directed by me, yet emerged and changed in-process *with* the research participants, involving (both overt and indirect) negotiations and particular complications throughout. I elucidate this further now in respect to the young women and the staff members I researched with.

(ii) the young women

While Anala had introduced me to the tutor group as their "co-tutor" who was also doing university research into girls' education, neither of us initially explained the details of my research aims. I venture that it was unspoken between us that it may have caused more harm than good for me to come in announcing questions around "black girls" and "educational exclusion" before having built relationships with the young women. This resonates with Rogers and Ludhra's (2012) discussion of how 'telling research participants the objectives of the research and all the associated 'facts' about the process' does not necessarily equate to 'doing ethical research' (48). However, I was keen to eventually share, in caring ways, my precise research aims and objectives – especially with the four young women who Anala and I had already identified as participants (see previous chapter). Indeed there was a real risk of (re)producing an institutional discourse of 'intervention' into 'problem girls' (Lloyd, 2005) in the ways my research participants were selected and invited to participate.

It was after my second ever classroom meeting with the group that Winter and Kayla became participants in the research. During this session we had made posters around our personal and social identities, an activity I participated in as a way of establishing trust, reciprocity and of naming and beginning to decentre my privileged position (Pearce, 2003). I recall Winter and Kayla showing a

particular interest in discussing the racism and sexism "us black girls" (Winter) face, and they both stayed behind at the end of the class to continue this discussion with me. I experienced this as the beginnings of collaboration and exchange, and thus took it as an opportunity to share my precise research goals with Kayla and Winter. I recall them both immediately asking if they could be involved, with Winter excitedly suggesting some ideas for how this new partnership might play out: "we could do a lesson for the class!" We discussed their roles initially as of being "consultants", as well as us tracing and exploring their educational journeys throughout the year. I remember feeling excited and reassured by their enthusiasm to participate: perhaps my hopes of collaborative research could be realised? However, there were already complications at play here. I did not, for example, inform Kayla and Winter that they had already been identified as potential participants, troubling the notion that they willing "consultants" rather subjects of (and to) a research project. This was the kind of complication I found myself navigating throughout the research process, but a way 'through' (rather than out of) it was illuminated in setting up research relationships with Cairo and Felicia.

Initially, establishing consent and a sense of 'insider-ness' with Cairo and Felicia proved even more complicated. They had not been present in the identity poster session, and I'd had some earlier encounters with these young women in which I read potential for feelings of mistrust of an unknown (white) teacher. In this, I felt more time was needed to build relationships. I decided the right moment to share my research with Cairo and Felicia had come after a classroom session a few weeks into the year, in which I consulted the class on being asked by the college's basketball coach to set up a cheerleading squad. We had a lively discussion around this topic, with Cairo and Felicia offering quite vocal critiques of the role girls were expected to play in male-dominated sporting settings. Later in the corridor I approached them both, thanked them for their contributions, and went on to explain that I was in fact conducting research around girls' experiences in the college, including processes of sexism. I then

asked Cairo and Felicia if they would be interested in "helping me" with the research, as I thought they would have interesting things to say.

This invitation was honest but incomplete: indeed, I did not mention 'race' or exclusion, two key elements of my research aims that informed why Cairo and Felicia had been identified as potential participants. In this, it is interesting that their initial 'consent' at this time seemed quite non-committal, or perhaps untrusting, with "yeahs", "oks", shrugs and quiet nods. This resistant kind of engagement seemed to continue while they signed a consent form later that day in my office, a task they approached with an apparent lack of interest, and while joking around with each other during this rather formal and not yet collaborative process. An early example of the young women exercising an agency of engagement as well as one of resistance however - with both playing an important role in truly collaborative research - was in Cairo firmly articulating a preference to have one to one rather than paired interviews. And I soon perceived that Cairo's and Felicia's engagement seemed to pick up after we had started discussing matters of 'race' and educational exclusion more directly in our one to one interviews. An important space of learning arose in all this, and informed a particular approach throughout the year: one of openness and directness carefully managed within non-exposing spaces, and in which there is genuine room for productive resistance (Wright et al. 2010).

Another way in which I aimed to mitigate, or at least put to good use, my privileged position within these research relationships was through processes of reciprocity. These young women were giving a lot, sometimes in ways that they did not fully consent to, and so it was important for me to give back (Wright et al., 2010; Fitzpatrick, 2013). One strategy was ensuring it wasn't just the young women who were offering thoughts and sometimes acutely embodied narratives of their lives (see later for discussion of my own contributions in the interviews and in the dancing). Another strategy was in the more practical, tangible things I could offer through my privileged position. For example, in my new role as HSC classroom literacy assistant, I prioritised (in as subtle a way as

possible) Cairo, Felicia, Kayla and Winter's requests for my help with their work. I also ensured that, where I could, I would support them in disciplinary matters within the institution: a practice that had some positive outcomes for the young women, but also brought trouble of its own (see Chapters Seven, Nine and Conclusion). Another key example of a complicated reciprocity is the research relationship I developed with Kayla, which deserves some attention now.

After our initial interview, Kayla came to take a more peripheral role in the research process, firstly because of her college absences (see Chapter One) but also because of her increasingly strained relationships with the other girls in the group, and with the institution itself. I take the parallels between Kayla's exclusion within the college and her exclusion within the research process as further evidence of the educational marginalisation black working class young women face (particularly those with parenting responsibilities), but also as a failing on the part of the research praxis to develop a space for girls in Kayla's position. Indeed, it was only in interviews after Kayla had been permanently banned from the college premises (see Chapter Seven), that I was able to experience some more, it felt, comfortable and emancipatory dialogue with her. After this formal and final exclusion, I had volunteered to supervise Kayla take her GCSE Maths exam in her own home, and then invited her to go to a coffee shop for an interview after her exam was over. It was in this context, out of the institution, that Kayla and I conducted our first interview in months. The following week I invited Kayla to another 'coffee shop interview', where we spent a few hours on our own private study (me transcribing, Kayla finishing off her coursework) before we had a recorded conversation. I felt more comfortable interviewing Kayla in these contexts, ones in which my identities as 'researcher', '[fellow] student' and, I hoped, 'ally', moved into the frame more than that of 'teacher', and in which I was able to give as well as take. There was also an exploitative potential here however: would it have been easy for Kayla to refuse an interview with the person who was ensuring she could take her GCSE Maths exam and offering to buy her hot chocolate and cake afterwards? I wonder if she was also weighing up her options of what she might gain from

this exchange, and thus exercising her own (compromised) agency within the process.

It is not within the scope of this chapter to detail exactly how each of the other research relationships progressed, however I can say that they were also characterised by shifting power dynamics within a journey towards increasing closeness and collaboration, often punctuated by moments of distance and conflict, in which our institutional and social positionings slid back into the frame. Indeed, with each young woman I experienced a constantly shifting research relationship depending on the context (Arthur, 2006) and on the 'social, political and cultural values of [any] given context or moment' (Milligan, 2016, 235). Within such shifts, some collaboration was achieved and power relations were at times shaken, but not in ways that fully or permanently shifted our institutional and societal positions/relationships, as my discussions in later chapters detail.

(iii) the staff members

There were again varying levels of consent achieved and also this time *sought* from staff members within the college. For senior staff members, I chose not to share in detail the more critical aims of my research, leaving them with an institution-friendly understanding that I was developing dance, "fitness" and "empowerment" work with HSC students, while researching the reasons behind their exclusions. These staff members were accommodating of my research as I presented it to them, and in this respect I certainly capitalised on my trusted 'insider' position, as a former English teacher in the college whose work had been valued, and whose new work around dance and girls' empowerment was also valued (especially during Ofsted visits). I also had open, easy access to institutional documents as a staff member. I acknowledge there is a question of ethics in this more covert approach (Mercer, 2007). However, I believe this ethical problem was appropriately mitigated in three ways. Firstly, the aim of this research is to work towards the empowerment of a group of marginalised

young people, and this may well necessitate working against the institution and thus the people who represent and enact it. Secondly, I do not always position myself as outside institutional processes, and try to acknowledge times where I acted as another member and enactor of the neoliberal institution. Thirdly, I was open to critical dialogue with senior staff members, with Christine's interview in particular turning into much more of a critical and emotionally engaged exchange, in which I came to 'reveal' my own position more as a researcher (see Chapter Four).

I took a different approach with the teachers who I engaged in this study, namely the girls' regular classroom teachers and, especially, their tutor Anala. I understand these women as not only research participants, but also (to a certain degree) as research partners, who, along with the young women, contributed to and gained from the research praxis as a collaborative inquiry. I also knew through previous professional and personal conversations with these women that we shared (to varying degrees and in varying ways) a feminist, anti-racist politics and a desire to develop more radical pedagogies with our students – especially within what sometimes felt like an oppressively target-driven institution. I tried as much as possible to be direct and open around my research aims and approaches, being clear that I would be taking a critical approach to analysing our teacher-discourses and hoped to develop these critiques together. I was also confident that Anala and Sophie in particular, with their own postgraduate degrees in the sociology of education, were sufficiently aware of the complexities around the kind of research I was seeking their participation in. As I had hoped, all of these teachers expressed enthusiasm in participating in the research, and were also very accommodating in giving time and sharing quite personal matters in our interviews. There were ethical challenges in setting up what I hoped would be a joint quest of sorts however. Firstly, and again, I did have ultimate analytical control of the process, especially in directing any critique of "our", but sometimes only *their* teacher discourses. Secondly, and as I discuss in more detail in Chapter Nine, there were also ways

in which my research came to create more rather than less work for these teachers in respect to their classroom practice and their relationships with the young women.

I also came to interview two additional staff members after the fieldwork period had come to an end. Diana is a Black British woman who had been a Social Sciences teacher at the college during her teacher-training year, and with whom I had remained close friends after she left. We often discuss my research, and after a particularly illuminating conversation about young black women's beauty practices, I asked Diana if I could include some of her words as part of my 'data' (see Chapter Six). Rita is a Black British woman who joined the college as a HSC teacher the year after the research period. Rita and I had shared a mutually supportive but not always easy relationship as colleagues, in regards to members of her tutor group attending the extra-curricular dance programme I continue to facilitate at the college. While supportive of her tutees' engagement in the programme, Rita had also articulated concerns around it becoming a distraction from their studies, and its potential for perpetuating particular stereotypes around black women. I invited Rita to take part in an interview around these matters towards the very end of my 'writing-up' period, and I include aspects of this interview in the Conclusion. I understand my invitations to dialogue with these staff members along the lines of gaining their insight - not as teachers of my particular research participants, but as professionals and black women who have experience of learning and teaching within the (changing) British education system I seek to critically engage with here. Indeed, Davis (2017) discusses the importance of researchers engaging with the perspectives of black women in a way that goes beyond data collection, but rather as part of a commitment to reflexivity and radical learning that de-centres privilege. In this respect, I view Diana's and Rita's contributions, while emerging from standpoints that are differently aged and classed to those of my young research participants, as important and guiding forms of insight within this study. In a similar way, I consulted two dance teachers who work with me on the current version of the dance and discussion project developed

in this research (see Conclusion). These women, professional dancers with Black African Caribbean heritage, provided illuminating definitions and context to some of the terminology the young women used in their dance practices.

Interviews: dialogue, care and control

I understand the practice of interviews in two main ways within this research, both of which resist positivist paradigms, in which 'a one-way [question and answer] pipeline for transporting knowledge' (Ramji, 2009, 56) is carefully managed to avoid 'spoiling, contaminating or otherwise biasing the data' (Holstein and Gubrium, 1998, 115). The interviews that took place through this study were indeed of a more interactive and explicitly subjective kind, in a way that mirrors other critical and feminist research (Oakley, 1993; Ali, 2006; Fitzpatrick, 2013). On the one hand, I experienced the interviews as inquiring and listening practices (Back, 2007; Edwards et al., 2016) through which I sought and gained insight into 'authentic accounts of subjective experience' (Silverman, 2001) – specifically those surrounding the sometimes invisible, and also at times unspeakable, processes behind young black women's educational exclusion. These listening practices were particularly oriented towards the marginalised perspectives of the young women themselves, in seeking a 'girls' eye view', as Osler and Vincent (2003, ix) put it, that might trouble the dominant regimes of truth within which the young women's educational exclusion operated. I also, however, experienced the interviews as a space for dialogue and exchange, as 'meaning-making conversations' (Ramji, 2009, 56), in a similar way to the understanding of dancing articulated earlier. In this respect, interviews became a form of praxis, overlapping with the pedagogical praxis we were developing together.

The interview sessions with the young women began either as one to ones or within pairs, depending on the their wishes, and I asked questions that meant they did not have to refer directly to themselves ("how does this college

61

compare to your secondary school/last college?" "do you think boys and girls have different experiences and challenges at this college?"). This was all in order to allow trust to build at the pace appropriate to each research relationship as its own 'unique interaction' (Rogers and Ludhra, 2012, 46), but also to build a practice of these young women indeed being consultants of sorts: namely, participants whose views would direct my own analyses and future lines of inquiry and praxis, rather than solely offering data around their personal experiences for analysis. There were varied rhythms within these early conversations, with the first interview with Kayla and Winter turning into a lively conversation around black women's relationships with education, while my initial one to one interviews with Felicia and Cairo remained in the domain of a (quite tentative) question and answer format.

Later on in the year, when I had developed closer relationships with the girls (especially through our dance studio practice together) the interviews became more fluid and responsive to the particular experiences they were having in the college at the time. I started to ask more reaching, critical and personal questions: ones related to their friendships, their educational histories and their understandings of what it means to be a "black girl". We also had conversations around seemingly 'off-topic' matters, for example a film about Nazi Germany (Winter) and our boyfriends and star-sign profiles (Cairo). These conversations were important in terms of forging trusting relationships across difference, but also in giving me a sense of the complex, varied lived experience of being a young black woman studying HSC in this college. Our one-to-one interviews also now expanded to include some of their friends, sometimes at the young women's invitation, sometimes at mine. In these later sessions, which often came to adopt the rhythms of spontaneous and organic conversations and debates, I also shared my own views, opening them up for critique where I suspected they emerged from my privileged position ("I'm not sure if I'm seeing this in the right way, but I've always felt that…" // "yeah Miss,

that's not how it is"[16]). I recorded and transcribed all the interviews, making notes on what I remembered of body language, tone of voice and my own emotional reactions within the space, again taking this as material for analysis in conducting feminist and always embodied research across difference (Walkerdine et al., 2001).

The setting and spatial elements of these interviews also played a key role in setting up a context for knowing, in alignment with a view of research as a discursive practice (Gutnaratnam, 2003). The vast majority of interviews with the young women took place in a small, relatively private room on the college's Performing Arts corridor. This room was used for storage of old text-books and was home to an old, slightly misshapen but extremely comfortable orange arm chair. It was also possible, given the placement of the door and the lack of windows, to sit in this room without being seen. In all this, it became a cosy and private feeling space that, in its slightly unclear institutional use, felt somewhere we could make our own. At times, especially given the topics of our conversations, this room also felt like a secret or subversive space within the institution. There were other times that it felt like a caring space, especially during our more emotionally engaged conversations, for example, when Winter spoke about a painful incident from her early teens, during which we stopped recording and spent time talking 'off record'. Indeed, it was increasingly the case that our one-to-one interview sessions were characterised by a mode of personal storytelling, including narratives of frustration at one's perceived maltreatment ("Miss, let me tell you what she did…"), confessional moments ("you should have seen how I was at secondary school…"), and identity-affirming narratives ("people think I'm one of them trouble-makers but what they don't know is…")[17]. In these respects, the interviews were also a discursive praxis, in being a space for meaning and identity making for the young women, and for me (Ramji, 2009; Edwards et al., 2016).

---

[16] From a conversation with Melody, Cairo and Lara around particular practices within bashment dance.
[17] From interviews with Felicia, Winter, and Cairo respectively.

Over the year, the young women also came to seek me out for interviews, sometimes in a sense of urgency to share something that had happened. In such times we would still follow the 'rules' of our now established interview practice, such as waiting for the recorder to be turned on and for me to start the conversation, and avoiding using people's names. In this I gained a sense both of us having established a practice together, but also of the weight of academic research practice as its own institution. A significant moment in this respect was when Felicia and Winter, seeking me out for an interview, 'caught' me *already* interviewing their teachers. There was a moment of comedic 'meta'-acknowledgement of the research process here, as Felicia and Winter laughingly performed (and maybe felt?) indignance through the window of the office door, with cries like "oh OK, it's like that is it – we see you Miss [interviewing our teachers, probably about us]…this is meant to be *our* thing!" I suggest this moment reveals on the one hand the young women's investment in and partial ownership of the research process. Indeed, researchers discuss how young people, especially those from marginalised groups, come to invest in research as a rare institutional process in which their perspectives matter (Wright et al., 2010; Fitzpatrick, 2013). On the other hand, this moment reveals the young women's ultimate lack of control over the research process, and how they are both subjects of and subject to it. On reflection, and for future practice, this particular moment raises a question about the potentially emancipatory potential of interviews with staff and students *together*, in which the young women are not merely spoken 'about', but have a legitimate space within the research process to 'talk back' (hooks, 1989).

The interviews I conducted with staff members were similarly diverse and evolving. I interviewed almost every senior staff member in their office, with them sat behind their desks. This served to reflect/produce the formality of the institutional discourse I hoped to gain an insight into through these interviews. Christine, however, came to my office to be interviewed, a far less formal space, with us sitting close together next to my messy desk. I suggest this helped to

facilitate the more critical and emotionally-engaged conversation we came to have (see Chapter Four). I interviewed Anala, Sophie, Cosima and Ana in a variety of spaces, one being the college staffroom. Holding recorded conversations in this space was useful in capturing and eliciting the bustle and pressures of the institution, with talk of targets and difficulties of teaching the girls tending to emerge. We also conducted interviews in more informal spaces outside of the institution, for example the hotel room Anala and I shared during a college trip and Cosima's front room, after eating dinner together. These settings seemed to produce a different kind of teacher discourse that I was also hoping to gain an insight into, namely these teachers' more personal and political attachments to their work. We also had some more collaborative discussions in which we shared our frustrations and hopes, and in which there was an acute blurring of a boundary of researcher/researched. I later discuss such interviews as a form of critical pedagogical praxis, however, for now I highlight some of the complications with the interview approaches I adopted, for both staff and students.

Feminist and anti-racist scholars discuss various ways in which the process of interviewing, even when directed through intentions of reflexivity and care, can reinforce and even create new oppressive power relations (Riddell, 1989; Oakely, 1993). Indeed, Fitzpatrick (2013) acknowledges that even more dialogic exchanges 'have their own internal hierarchies and are subject to hegemonic relationships and cultural normativities' (58), warning that 'power relations between researcher and participant should not be ignored or hidden behind a veneer of caring' (58). For this research context, there is the potentially exploitative potential of the interview as a space for sharing and confessing. Indeed, while there might be pedagogical value in such practices, especially in relation to the interview becoming a space for care and exercising analytical agency, Riddell (1989) highlights the problems inherent in a member of a marginalised group being invited to articulate their position for the purposes of a more privileged other's research. There were indeed times that it did not feel as if critical exchanges were taking place in interview sessions with the young

women, but rather that I had opened up a space for them to confess in the Foucauldian sense (1978), and so in a way that did little to shake hierarchies and 'invite other ways of knowing' (Mirza, 2010, 2). Interestingly, the young women came to reflect on our interviews, especially their more emotive elements, as a helpful part of our project together, as the following discussions with Winter and Felicia suggest:

> Winter: I feel like we need an emotional… sometimes to vent (.) someone you trust (2) like this basically
>
> CS: so for you these interviews (.) even though you're helping me with my research (.) you feel like it's been a //
>
> W: // I always think "when is Camilla going to come and get me?" […] it's been beneficial for me
>
> **Interview with Winter, 16th July, 2015**
>
> …
>
> CS: are there any other approaches that teachers can take to understand black girls better and generally to deal with things better?
>
> Felicia: a mentor […] they should have a mentor that people can go to (.) well you are a kind of mentor (.) like even with the interviews we do (1) if we have problems now we don't think of anyone else to go to but Camilla (.) for our chats
>
> **Interview with Felicia, 16th July, 2015**

Here Winter and Felicia articulate the need for a "trusted" "mentor" with whom to "vent" and share "problems" - perhaps the kind of venting and problems that would otherwise be trivialised or met with judgement within the institution, as I discuss in later chapters. However, these conversations can also be understood with reference to Brown's (2009) discussion of the well-meaning white liberal female professional who engages black girls in processes of 'mentoring' that serve to reproduce discourses of vulnerability and 'risk'. An imperfect strategy for mitigating this was in finding, where possible, spaces for consultation of and critical discussion with the young women, developing my research and teaching praxis in response to this, so that I too became 'subject of and subject to'. A similar concern around care within emotionally engaged interviews operates in

relation to the colleagues and friends who I interviewed. Indeed, after what felt like quite cathartic discussions around the neoliberal institution, I had time and space to reflect and escape (namely within the academy) that these full-time teachers who had to return immediately to 'the field' did not, a privilege of the researcher that Back (2007) discusses.

It is in regards to these complications that I most starkly experienced my identity as 'outsider' and 'researcher': someone investigating a setting and a community they are in some ways part of, but are also in other ways directing and looking upon from afar. I explore this tension further now, in respect to a final research method: my observations within and around the college.

Observations: vantage points and moving forward

Given my epistemological stance, the term 'observation', or even 'participant-observation' does not quite resonate with the aims or indeed the experience of doing this research. Terms that resonate better are 'perceive' and 'experience', in that they foreground the subjectivity inherent in any act of observation, the embodied place of the researcher within the process, and also do better to capture my emotional engagement with the research process. A key method I employed in these respects were fieldnotes that detail my own embodied experiences and emotional reactions within particular spaces, making room for what Clandinin and Connelly (2000) refer to as duality of experience where the researcher is aware of 'themselves as part of the field experience being studied and…themselves experiencing that experience' (88). However, there were also observation experiences within the research process that felt more distant and more directed away from myself: namely, my perceptions in spaces that were not explicitly drawn as part of a collaborative research project. These were 'pre-existing' spaces within the college (such as classroom lessons, the canteen, the girls' toilets, the staffroom) in which I hoped to gain an insight into the day-to-day workings of the institution 'outside' of the pedagogical/research project I was setting up.

Despite the truism that 'my presence in the classroom, of course, changed things' (Fitzpatrick, 2003, 65), I wrote detailed fieldnotes on these 'outside' spaces, focusing on the exchanges of power I felt myself to perceive from a distance. This practice raises problems around interpretation and power, as it implicitly places my vantage point as the one that carries epistemological weight within the thesis. I mitigate this through discussing my observations with explicit reflexive criticality at times and, where possible, providing examples of my fieldnotes so they too can be held up to discourse analysis. In other places, however, I weave my perceptions and therefore my vantage point throughout the writing without signposting it as such. I do so with underlying awareness that my hopes, fears and desires within the research process may shape my observations in ways that I may not always be attendant to (Walkerdine et al., 2001). However, I also avoid continual processes of (explicit) analytical reflexivity to prevent the discussion becoming a purely deconstructive and potentially never-ending task of discourse analysis and 'chasing shadows' (Holland and Razamanoglu, 1995, 289). In this respect, I strive to mobilise perceptions that I feel serve the emancipatory research aims, but also ones that resonate with the 'authentic accounts of subjectivity' (Silverman, 2001) and 'girls' eye view' (Osler and Vincent, 2003, xi) of my young research participants.

One strategy I employed in respect to honouring my research participants' perspectives was in inviting them to read and respond to my fieldnotes and subsequent analyses. One example was the notes I had written after first meeting the tutor group, in response to which I invited Cairo, Felicia and Winter to provide their own narratives of themselves, to "fill in the gaps" or "correct misconceptions" (see Chapter One). Another was in relation to my notes around how female students style their appearance in the college. I asked Melody and Shanice to read and respond to these notes, and indeed some acutely racialised, classed and altogether presumptuous aspects of my account came to be altered as a result (see Chapter Six). Both occasions were helpful in addressing my misunderstandings and alerting me to my own viewpoints, and so I also developed this practice within our interviews ("so I've been writing

about…what do you think?"[18]). I had a similar experience in sharing some of my writing on teachers' experiences of the institution with Cosima and Sophie (see Chapter Four), and found aspects of my 'observations' and analyses to be both approved and revised within these discussions. And finally, I have shared many of my interpretations and conclusions during the writing process with Anala, my core 'partner' within this research. This has overall helped me be more attentive to the experience of teaching within this context, and to understand educational exclusion with reference to a variety of lived experiences and investments within an institution.

I did not build up a regular practice of sharing my work with my research participants, however. This was partly because I did not wish to ask for even more of their time, partly because I did not want to be naïve to the emotional vulnerability involved in reading another person's account of you and your experiences, and partly, and regrettably, because I found it difficult to build in the time for this within my own experience of balancing research, work and my personal life. In hindsight, I believe that finding time and sensitive ways to build in this process more regularly would have enhanced the research process and its knowledge-production. In the absence of a more consistent practice in this respect, and in a spirit of moving forward, I rely on both reflexive thinking and references to the findings and scholarship of others, to help develop analytical accounts that both resonate with the lived experience of my research participants, and serve an emancipatory purpose.

Conclusion: a critical, caring, collaborative (and evolving) praxis for social change

Overall then, I aim to engage both 'a language [and practice] of critique' and 'a language [and practice] of possibility' (Gitlin et al., 1993, 191) in seeking a critical, caring and collaborative research praxis for social change. This means understanding the experiences of educational exclusion that some black

---

[18] From an interview discussion with Cairo about institutional racism in schools.

working class young women experience in their college with central reference their own perspectives. This 'girl's eye view' (Osler and Vincent, 2003, xi) might serve to de-stabilise dominant versions of knowledge around and (racialised, gendered and classed) processes of subordination that underpin the exclusions they encounter. I also, however, seek to work *with* young women and staff members, myself included, in processes of embodied dialogue, to generate new and (at least partially) transformative understandings, and also spaces and practices for possibility. This is necessarily through research methods that foreground the generative potential of relationships, and the role that moving, feeling bodies can play in generating understanding. It also means researching in ways that can enact change within the institution, in ways that are caring, and in ways that are attendant to how (racialised, gendered, classed, institutional) power moves unequally through research relationships. Key challenges arose in putting such an aim into practice, mainly operating around my position as a researcher and the power relations that shape this. I aim to remain attendant to these challenges and the spaces for analytical possibility within them throughout the writing. A core aspect of my methodology that still and now needs elucidation, however, is that of embodiment, a key analytical tool within this research.

Chapter Three

Theorising embodiment in the inner-London college: an ensemble of conceptual tools

In this chapter I articulate an understanding of embodiment that highlights the discursive, material and emotional intersections of lived experience within the strictly coded yet dynamic space of a 21st century inner-London college. I frame this articulation with reference to black feminist thought on lived experience in dialogue with, and in enrichment of, feminist Foucauldian concepts of subjectivity in disciplinary space. I discuss the concepts these bodies of thought offer in turn, arriving at an 'ensemble of conceptual tools' (Youdell and Armstrong, 2011, 144) that can serve as a critical yet hopeful theoretical framework for exploring and acting on processes of exclusion my young research participants face.

My somewhat sequential approach to arriving at a definition of embodiment here is developed in the spirit of a particular epistemological approach, as articulated by Hill-Collins (2000):

> 'not only must individuals develop their knowledge claims through dialogue and present them in a style proving their concern for their ideas, but people are expected to be accountable for their knowledge claims…invoking lived experience as a criterion of meaning' (284-285).

It is with my own 'lived experience' of an epistemological journey as a white feminist researcher engaging in dialogue with black feminist thought, that the following articulation of embodiment takes shape: one that draws on different bodies of theory in dialogue with each other, and one 'presented in a style' that highlights the gradual development of a theoretical approach through this dialogue. Before elucidating any of the 'conceptual tools' within this 'ensemble' however, a particular question needs to be asked.

Why embodiment?

That the research site is populated by moving, feeling, looked-at and interacting bodies is palpably clear on spending any time within its walls. Some general patterns also emerge when considering how bodies live together in this space: patterns that provide a compelling case for bodies being a focal point when exploring relations of power in the college. The first is the processes of control that occur across the institutional and social domains of the college, and that are directed at and through bodies. These processes are visible in the various, and never completely successful, technologies for controlling student movement such as the ID-card operated gates and temporal-spatial structures of the timetabled day. They are also present in the social sphere of the college, such as the seemingly playful but ubiquitous comments directed by (often male) students at walking female bodies, comments that in turn can elicit their own lively and combative responses. Embedded here are also processes of bodies being watched, for example, the quiet, still kind of watching enacted by the students who populate walkways and the canteen in between lessons, itself framed through the ever-present, background eyes of CCTV cameras and security guards on 'patrol'.

Bodies in this space do not only exist as visually framed, individualised units however: these bodies interact and respond in ways that are noisy and tactile, in a space that is rarely short of exchanges, and even outbursts, of emotion between any combination of student/teenaged and staff/adult bodies. And it is impossible to ignore the meanings and labels attached to and generated by bodies in this space, a co-educational, multi-ethnic 16-19 college, offering a range of academic and vocational courses. From the very start of a young person's journey through this institution, the enrolment form, they are bureaucratically demarcated in various ways: age, gender, ethnicity, first language, level of prior educational attainment, chosen course of study. These 'categories' of student identity mobilise in spatial and corporeal ways, for example, in which student images are selected to represent the college in its marketing materials, and in the socially demarcated territories of the college,

for instance the college canteen, in which tacit rules for 'popular boy' and 'popular girl' play out (the clothes, the hair) in young people's efforts to secure social belonging and status.

Within this study then, a focus on embodiment means attending to the ways that people live *as* bodies in social space, and what this living-as-bodies can reveal about social relationships and processes of power; how students, staff and researchers within the research site look (or are looked at), move (or are moved) and feel (or are felt) within this space, and how all this emerges from and contributes to unequal yet shifting relations of power. As Sheldon (2002) points out, 'embodiment becomes noteworthy when it impinges on us in some way […] when particularities in one's form of embodiment – such as race, gender […] are experienced as a disability in the context of particular social settings' (15). In this chapter I take embodiment as a way in to understanding the types of 'disability' (or disablement) that my research participants face in the college as black working class girls, specifically in relation to the processes of educational exclusion they experience. I also take embodiment as a way in to seeing and developing spaces for hope in the face of processes of institutional and interpersonal sexism, racism and classism (hooks, 1990; Mirza, 2010; Ali, 2010). So, what might a theoretical framework for such a task require?

To theorise embodiment for this task I draw on an 'ensemble of conceptual tools' (Youdell and Armstrong, 2011, 144): specifically, one that will join analyses of the discursive nature of embodied experience with analyses that foreground the visceral, material and emotional experience of living as a raced, gendered and classed body in social space. I draw firstly on Foucauldian understandings of power/knowledge and its material operation through discourse in the construction of the embodied subject within disciplinary space (Foucault, 1978, 1979, 1995). I also engage with these concepts as developed for feminist concerns by Bordo (1993, 1997) and primarily Butler (1990, 2010), and thus articulate the mundane yet heavy ways that bodies in this college are subjected and performed through gender and a discourse of hetero-

normativity. I finally, and ultimately, nuance and enrich these conceptualisations with reference to black feminist work on embodiment that provides crucial tools with which to engage with the *lived* reality of being these discursively constituted subjects (Ahmed, 2002, 2004, 2012; Alcoff, 2006; hooks, 1990, 1992; Brah and Phoenix, 2004).

Through this final body of work I first highlight the uniqueness and violence of 'race', and an intricately connected idea of class, as embodied discourses in what are necessarily intersectional performances of social identity. It is not only in relation to conceptualising 'race' that I draw on this work however. Indeed, hooks (1990) points out that white feminists' work has often cited the work of 'women of color...solely in relation to discussions of race' (21) and in doing so 'subordinates and uses' this work 'to reinforce [white feminist] assertions about race and Otherness' (1990, 21). I hope to avoid such a reductive practice here. Instead, I present the theorisations and vocabularies offered by these black feminist writers to also, vitally, provide the conceptual tools for seeing the deeply embodied, non-verbal ways that power operates in the constitution of subjects within the research site. Through this blended theoretical approach, I ultimately hope to present a framework for understanding and critiquing processes of exclusion for particular young black women in this space, but also for imagining a pedagogical practice/space for hope.

The Foucauldian subject as discursively constructed in a field of visibility

Foucault's early work (1978, 1979) develops an understanding of the human subject rooted in how processes of power construct bodies in social space. Under this Foucauldian framework the human mind is not analytically distinct from the human body, but rather human subjects manifest corporeally in and through (power-imbued) culture. To elucidate this, in his discussion of sexuality as an historical phenomenon Foucault (1978) directly refutes a notion of a natural body somehow pre-existing culture's effects. He asks, 'is *sex* really the anchorage point that supports the manifestations of sexuality, or is it not rather

a complex idea that was formed inside the deployment of sexuality?' (152).

Throughout these early works Foucault shows how what might be described as a collection of 'organs, functions…sensations' (1978, 152) literally manifests and lives in specific ways only through this 'deployment' of particular historical understandings of, and so rules for, the body. In this respect, a body can only live and be understood in relation to socially and culturally agreed, tacit or otherwise, rules for how it should appear and behave. There are thus no inevitable, natural bodies but only subjects, lived and known through the rules that are available for (even if contested within) a specific social and historical context.

Under this framework then, ideas about what makes a body/subject 'normal' or 'abnormal', 'good' or 'bad', 'male' or 'female', 'student' and 'teacher' operate as given 'truths' only in that they have taken precedence over other ideas within a particular time and place. As reflected in the previous chapter's epistemological discussions, this suggests a particular way in which knowledge and power are inextricably linked, but also acutely material. Indeed, for Foucault, knowledge only exists through 'regime[s] of truth' (Foucault, 1994, 132) that have formed and come to dominate within particular relations of power, and that are played out in and through bodies. This in turn frames Foucault's very material understanding of discourse as an 'ensemble of rules' (Foucalt, 1994, 131), an historically, geographically and culturally specific story of truth, that is formed through power relations and lives through the very matter of bodies. This all calls for sociological analyses 'in which the biological and the historical are not consecutive to one another…but are bound together in an increasingly complex fashion in accordance with…modern technologies of power' (Foucault, 1978, 151-2).

For Foucault, 'modern technologies of power', those which produce and sustain discourses, can be identified through the concepts of 'discipline', 'the gaze' and the metaphor of 'the panopticon' in the production of 'docile bodies' (1979). Through these concepts, Foucault describes a material and spatial process

through which a body becomes an object of knowledge, something wholly discursive, through existing in a 'field of visibility' (1979, 202). Within this 'field of visibility', a body is subject to, and formed via, particular 'regimes of truth' (1994, 132). This means that bodies become materially inscribed, for example in how they look or move, with discursive truths, or norms, that are read, policed, and enforced via a 'normalizing judgement' (1979, 177). Foucault presents the precise and material ways these bodies/subjects are shaped are through the metaphor of 'discipline' as an 'anatomy of power' (Foucault, 1979, 215). Because the body has been produced in this manner, it becomes a 'docile body': one that, through being 'analysable' can be 'subjected, used, transformed and improved' (1979, 136) against those norms that construct it. Foucault emphasises here how such processes take place within a 'network of gazes' (1979, 171), therefore rooting an understanding of the production (and control) of bodies in a visual sphere. This is where Foucault draws on Bentham's model for a prison, the panopticon: through a process of known yet anonymous surveillance the individual understands that they exist within this field of visibility where their bodies can constantly be viewed and thus punished against the normalizing judgement specific to that context. In this, the need for externally enforced discipline actually diminishes as the individual 'assumes responsibility for the constraints of power…[and] inscribes in himself the power relation in which he simultaneously plays both roles' (1979, 202).

Under this Foucauldian framework, 'power' is not something in itself, something that subjects simply possess. Rather it makes sense to talk of power relations, exchanges and processes, as Foucault explains thus:

> 'power must be understood in the first instance as the multiplicity of force relations immanent in the sphere in which they operate…[a] moving substrate of force relations which, by virtue of their inequality, constantly engender states of power, but the latter are always local and unstable' (1978, 293).

A concept that is intrinsic to Foucault's understanding of power here is therefore is resistance, namely the (necessary) opposing force to a dominant force within a power relation. As Foucault puts it, 'where there is power, there

is resistance [as power's] existence depends on a multiplicity of points of resistance [which] play the role of adversary, target, support or handle in power relations' (Foucault, 1978, 95). This idea of resistance as the *necessity* of a dominant force being opposed within a power relation, and in (as ever) embodied ways, is key to understanding a subject's agency within the 'regimes of truth' that shape their lives.

This Foucauldian idea of the subject as formed and ever forming through the biological and the historical as 'bound together' by 'technologies of power' resonates with my experience of the construction, control and significance of bodies (and their appearance) within the research site, as described above. Indeed, a number of education researchers have employed a Foucauldian understanding of 'technologies of control' to analyse the spatialised and material ways that student and also staff bodies are rendered 'docile' in schools (Paechter, 2000), and how this takes shape in particular and acute ways within increasingly neoliberal educational contexts (Perryman, 2009; Watkins, 2012; Ball, 2013). A Foucauldian understanding of power as manifesting in space through unequal force relations that render seemingly dominant states of power unstable, also resonates with my experience of the dynamic and sometimes unpredictable atmosphere of the research site, also as described above. To develop a more specific understanding of how embodiment operates within the college however, I now discuss how these Foucauldian concepts have proven pivotal to both Bordo's (1993, 1997) and Butler's (1990, 2010) accounts of sexual difference and gender.

A feminist Foucauldian understanding of the gendered subject in social space: uses and limitations

Butler (1990, 2010) proposes a concept of gender that sits in comfortable alignment with Foucault's positioning of sex and sexuality. Rather than the recognisable cultural codes of gender emerging from, or being written on top of a 'naturally' sexed body, the fact of the sexed male/female body is produced

through the apparatus, the discourse, of gender.   In fact, Butler (1990) directly critiques Foucault for not taking his repudiation of the natural body far enough, arguing that we must see the body as more than something 'bound up with history' (Foucault, 1978), but as something absolutely synonymous with it: as 'always already a cultural sign' (Butler, 1990, 71), existing materially as sexed only through the discourse of gender. For Butler, the cultural signification of bodies as sexed/gendered takes place within a 'heterosexual matrix' (1990, 208), referring to the set of fixed gender conditions, or norms, against which bodies are rendered 'intelligible': 'for bodies to cohere and make sense there must be a stable sex expressed through a stable gender' (208). For Butler, in order for a body to 'make sense' as something that is properly 'humanized' (i.e. socialised) (2010, 484), it needs to map onto the culturally intelligible norms prescribed by the heterosexual matrix, which insist that it is either recognisably female (through a perceivable and socially sanctioned femininity) or male (through a perceivable and socially sanctioned masculinity). Butler emphasises that the consequences for an unintelligible body that presents itself outside of this matrix are 'punitive' (484); this in turn implies and reinforces a system of ' 'compulsory heterosexuality' ' (Butler citing Rich, 2010, 483), a system of patriarchal control that I elucidate in more detail in Chapter Four.

Bordo (1993, 1997, 1999) offers a similar understanding of the body as materialising through gender, this time with an important emphasis on women's corporeal and seemingly mundane experiences of everyday living. In her vivid discussions of women's daily activities, such as beauty practices, Bordo demonstrates the ways that 'culture enjoins the aid of our bodies in the reproduction of gender' (1997, 106) through 'the practices and bodily habits of everyday life' (1993, 16). Bordo takes as a central tenet that 'our bodies are constituted by culture' (1997, 90), and often employs Foucault's phraseology of culture's 'grip' on the body to explore how gender is written onto and through women's bodies in ways that are particularly 'heavy' (Bordo, 1993, 1997). It is in this respect that Bordo takes up the Foucauldian images of 'the docile body' and

'the panopticon' to argue for 'the social construction of an oppressive feminine norm' (1999, 249) and the central role women themselves play in this construction and its enactment. Indeed, Bordo describes in vivid detail some of the 'most mundane, 'trivial' aspects of women's bodily existence' (1999, 249), such as the minutiae of beauty regimes and the (tacit) rules of feminine comportment, arguing that through these controlled and controlling corporeal practices, enacted by women themselves, a 'docile body of femininity' is produced (1997, 103).

Butler's ideas of gender performativity (2010) and subjectivation (1995, 2004) serve to elucidate this paradox of a woman actively producing her own docility, and will prove pivotal to this study, especially in a notion of agency that they offer. Butler (2004) clarifies her theory of gender performativity thus:

> "the view that gender is performative sought to show that what we take to be an internal essence of gender is manufactured through a sustained set of acts, posited through the gendered stylization of the body" (94).

While similar to Bordo's conception of 'the docile body of femininity' forming through mundane yet constraining everyday acts, this particular understanding of how gender manifests leaves important room for human agency. Indeed, a notion of gender as deeply and unconsciously performed/enacted by the subject at a basic bodily level implies not simply subjection, but instead what Butler refers to as subjectivation (1995, 2004), a term that foregrounds a dual process of domination and agency. This embodied agency manifests in the subject's own enactment and deployment of the recognizable codes of their particular 'discursive terrain' (Youdell and Armstrong, 2011, 145), specifically through this 'sustained set of acts' and (gendered) 'stylisation of the body' (Butler, 2004, 94). As Butler puts it, 'submission and mastery take place simultaneously' (1995, 45) in living as an embodied and therefore visible subject, who masterfully enacts their own subjection within a field of visibility and its underpinning knowledge regime. However, in this enactment, Butler argues, there is necessarily the possibility for a *different* enactment - for the subject to perform their embodied identity in a way that defies or at least in some way re-writes the script. Butler

refers to such processes as 'discursive agency' (cited in Youdell 2006b, 519), a particular and helpful way of understanding the 'resistance' Foucault foregrounds in his work.

It is indeed in respect to an understanding of 'discursive agency' that Foucauldian understandings of power have been adopted for feminist concerns. Deveaux (2010) proposes that Foucault's model of power is 'useful to feminists to the extent that it disengages us from simplistic, dualistic accounts of power' (222), allowing movement away from a 'sovereign' notion of power as something stable and all-encompassing, imposed top-down by the (male) oppressor onto the (female) oppressed. Bordo elucidates this idea and its implications, by explaining that for Foucault, 'power relations [are] always forming new forms of culture and subjectivity, new openings for the potential for resistance to emerge' (Bordo, 1999, 254).   The instability of a power relation then, its potential for being turned upside down, inside out and even mobilised in a creative, transformative ways, is particularly appealing to feminist thinkers, as Deveaux (2010) explains thus: 'Foucault helps us move from a 'state of subordination' explanation of gender relations, which emphasises domination and victimisation, to a more textured understanding of the role of power in women's lives' (220).

The feminist Foucauldian concepts detailed here prove useful when it comes to engaging in both critical and hopeful analyses of my young research participants' experiences in the college. In regards to the institutional domain of the college, a feminist Foucauldian framework can be employed to expose how particular student bodies are viewed, judged, disciplined and (sometimes) punished through an acutely heteronormative 'normalising judgement' (Foucault, 1979, 177), with, for example, young women being more subject to rules and regulations around student dress than young men in the college (see also the work of Epstein 1996 and Epstein and Johnson,1998, for similar analyses). A feminist Foucauldian approach to understanding spatialised,

embodied and visual operations of power can also be applied to analyses of the social sphere of the college, for example the processes of (peer-on-peer) watching that frame young women's physical journeys around the (social) space of the college, and the embodied behaviours these processes of watching invite. Indeed, young feminine bodies have been explored as constructed, controlled and also as resistant within school spaces with particular reference to the operation of a male, or at least hetero-sexualised, 'gaze' and its panoptic effects (Paechter, 1997, 2000; Youdell, 2005). I utilise these feminist Foucauldian conceptions in a similar way to analyse my research participants' complex experiences as both 'created' and 'creative' subjects, and find the work helpful in understanding the young women's (re)actions, institutional readings of them, and in developing resistant pedagogical practices with the young women.

As alluded to at the start of this chapter, however, a feminist Foucauldian framework alone will not be sufficient for the task of enacting a critical and hopeful reading of my research participants' embodied experiences. To ground and (literally) flesh out the reasons for this, I introduce some pertinent features of embodied experience that emerge through the research process: ones that are specific to my research participants' lived experiences at college. These features find articulation in my research participants' identification of "black girls" as a recognisable social group in the college, often within discussions around how others perceive "black girls": "black girls fight [each other]" (Cairo); "black girls are bear emotional" (Melody); "people think that black girls only care about the weave and make up and pushing prams" (Winter); "black girls will put boys before their education" (Melody); "black girls always bring trouble" (Rebecca). These are powerful and troubling statements, and I suggest there are two key ways in which a feminist Foucauldian framework is insufficient to the task of unpacking them and the embodied experiences they speak to.

The first is the absence of direct considerations of 'race' or class in any of this feminist Foucauldian work. A critique levelled at Bordo's, and to a lesser degree Butler's, work is that the discourses of gender and compulsory heterosexuality they discuss are specific to the experiences of white middle class women and in a way that is largely unspoken, an absence that both theorists acknowledge and discuss in relation to their own work (Butler, 2004; Bordo, 1999). This is a problematic blindspot, and even more so for Foucault with a conception of 'the body' throughout his work seemingly predicated on 'a desexualised and general 'human' subject' (Braidotti, cited in McNay, 1992, 36). Within this work then, there is little scope for addressing the five statements listed above – statements that are specifically, and insistently, about (particular) "black girls". These statements should be taken seriously in their application and interrogation throughout this research, in any attempt to understand how these *particular* feminine bodies are working in and against culture's grip in this space. An account needs to be given that can articulate precisely how material and symbolic processes of racial and class, as well as gender and sexual, oppression might shape a young black woman's experiences, and others' perceptions of her. And an account that seriously takes account of how discourses of 'race' and class (as they intersect with age and profession) shape embodied experience, will also allow for more nuanced analyses of interactions between students and staff, including my own experiences and interactions as a teacher-researcher in this process.

A second aspect of embodied experience that is not sufficiently explained by a feminist Foucauldian lens is how visceral and seemingly emotionally charged embodied manifestations and exchanges of power can be. Indeed, Barad (2008) evokes a critique of Foucault's work in this respect: how exactly, and how *materially*, do power relations operate through bodies? To ignore this would leave the following significant experiences, and ones like them, unaddressed: tears falling after an argument with a boyfriend; the thudding sound of a fist hitting a wall during a fight; a sudden, cheering, jump to one's feet in response to a peer's speech about the importance of education; the smiling, jubilant

winding of one's hips in response to a piece of Afrobeats music. These are all examples of embodied behaviour that, as I show in later chapters, serve to position some young black women as 'uneducable bodies' (Leathwood and Hey, 2009, 240) within the particular discursive terrain of the college, while also serving as powerful practices of black female agency and resistance. A framework that elucidates the material operation of discourse would also allow greater insight into how teachers' (and a researcher's) embodied experiences and emotions contribute to the processes of exclusion and the pedagogies of hope the young women encounter. So, a language is now required that can render the deeply embodied and seemingly non-conscious aspects of discourse, of social interaction and also of identity performance as Butler defines it.

In order to develop an enriched theoretical framework in these respects, I turn to black feminist work on embodiment, specifically, that of Sara Ahmed, Louise Alcoff, and bell hooks who offer rich, vivid and precise accounts of the lived experience of bodies in social space, with Ahmed (2002) calling for 'a phenomenological emphasis on the lived experience of embodiment' (48). While the phenomenological tradition of philosophy will not be explored in detail here beyond its use within the work of Ahmed and Alcoff (and to some extent, Butler), the premise that 'one needs to account for the ways in which the body is lived, perceived in the world, presented and experienced' (Alcoff, 2006, 175) will become key in interpreting my research participants' experiences of exclusion. I build towards this enriched framework by articulating further conceptual offerings to support and enhance the feminist Foucauldian framework discussed thus far: racialization and whiteness; embodied intersectionality and a culturalist account of 'class'; identity performances as synoptic; and the embodied operation of power through emotion. I propose that together with the feminist Foucauldian ideas discussed thus far, these conceptualisations provide a comprehensive framework, a helpful 'ensemble of conceptual tools' for this research.

Racialisation and whiteness

Within this research I understand 'race', like gender, as a deep materialisation of cultural norms, emerging via repeated enactments of corporeal practices within power-imbued fields of visibility. The black feminist work cited above indeed supports a notion that racial identity is an embodied way of being in the world rather than an essential quality: Ahmed (2002) draws on the work of Foucault and Butler to elucidate the enacted nature of racial identity in a visual field, and Alcoff helpfully cites the work of Omi and Winant to discuss 'race' in terms of 'the presentation of the self' (cited in Alcoff, 2006, 183-184). However, to place 'race' and gender as ontologically aligned is not enough: it is important that the uniqueness of 'race' as a performative discourse is explicated, in relation to the lived, heavy reality and emergence of it, specifically for people and communities of colour.

Ahmed (2002) helpfully builds on *and* departs from the work of Foucault and Butler to provide a historically rooted account of 'race' as a process of 'racialization': namely, a material, acutely visual and violent process that is done *to* a subject, as well as by them performatively, all within and in service of sustaining particular relations of power. Specifically, Ahmed (2002) accounts for how colonial discourses produced (and continue to produce) bodies as 'raced', namely, as placed into distinct hierarchies via 'a history of appropriation and violence' (2002, 47). This is a similar account of 'race' to that provided by Alcoff (2006), and both writers discuss this violence in visual and symbolic terms. It is in this respect that I employ the term 'race' rather than ethnicity throughout this research, so as not to 'conceal the '*trouble*' of race' '(Ahmed, 2012, 191, emphasis mine). This would be the 'trouble' that the 'intense present reality' (Alcoff, 2006, 179) of racism (as the foundation of 'race') causes.

To elucidate the violence of racialization, it is significant that both Ahmed (2002) and Alcoff (2006) explore how it has been enacted in the construction of black, specifically feminine bodies, with particular reference to the case of Sarah Baartman. Ahmed (2002) gives vivid analysis of the violence enacted on

Baartman[19] as a largely visual process through which her body became 'the object of a [white male] gaze…' (51), and through which 'she became seen *as body*, and as a body that [was] excessive, sexualised and primitive' (53). Within her own discussions of the dehumanisation of Baartman, Alcoff (2006) discusses how 'the ideology of racism naturalizes racial designation' (180) in 'the realm of the visible' which is in fact only 'the product of a specific form of perceptual practice, rather than the natural result of human sight' (2006, 180). This idea of racialisation as a form of violent and dehumanising perceptual practice is an important point of departure, or at least development, from the feminist Foucauldian work on performativity and subjectivation discussed so far. Indeed, an understanding of racialization as a perceptual practice as well as an embodied performance or 'mode of conduct' (Omi and Winant cited in Alcoff, 2006, 184) suggests how central other bodies and their acts of perception, interpretation and judgement are to the process of becoming raced. This is not to deny the agency of the subject in directing the 'presentation of [their] self' (Omi and Winant cited in Alcoff, 2006, 183), but to emphasise the central role of the dehumanizing interpretations of others in the racialization of the person of colour in social space.

Crucially, this understanding of the racialization hinges on a particular understanding of whiteness. Under this framework, whiteness is not an essentialised quality of a natural body, but rather a system of privilege and power through which one's embodied style of being in the world serves as an unspoken norm and thus escapes racialization entirely, defining itself against (and above) racialised 'others' (Dyer, 1997), and as a universal vantage point from which to identify and categorise. As Frankenberg (1993) puts it: 'whiteness is a location of structural advantage…a place from which white people look at ourselves, at others, at society…[and] a set of cultural practices

---

[19]Sarah Baartman was a black woman from the Eastern Cape of South Africa who was 'exhibited' around Europe in the 1800s and was famed for her what were perceived to be unusually large buttocks and genitalia. She was nicknamed 'The Hottentot Venus' and Ahmed (2002), amongst others, discusses the ways she was objectified and de-humanized by the white patriarchal society that 'displayed' her.

that are usually unmarked and unnamed' (1). It is crucial therefore to mark and name whiteness, in that one of its more insidious ways of operating as a system of oppression is in how it mobilises invisibility. As Ahmed (2012) puts it, 'whiteness tends to be visible to those who do not inhabit it' (Ahmed, 2012, 3). Indeed, within Ahmed's (2002) discussion of Sarah Baartman, the white male eyes, 'the only real eyes' (Fanon, 1986, cited in Ahmed, 2002), have the power and privilege to look (with looking understood here as an dehumanising act of designification) but not be looked at in turn.

This understanding of whiteness and how it functions is crucial for understanding not only my role (and power) as white teacher-researcher and the role of other white staff members in the college (Pearce, 2003, 2004), but also to understanding the institution itself as a system of whiteness (Ahmed, 2012; Gillborn, 2005). An understanding of racialization as a dehumanising perceptual practice operating within/from a system of whiteness is also crucial for understanding the statements around "black girls" listed earlier. In order to elucidate this further however, the precise ways that 'race' might intersect with gender in this context need defining.

Embodied intersectionality

The development of a conceptual lens of intersectionality can be traced throughout black feminist thinking and writing, from the work of Soujourner Truth (1851) and the Combahee River Collective (1977), to Crenshawe's coining of the term itself (1989), to the contemporary discussions of Hill Collins and Bilge (2016). Despite evolving ideas about how to define and apply an intersectional approach, discussions around intersectionality retain a central commitment to recognising the multiple relations of power that shape and produce embodied lived experience. As Ahmed puts it: 'feminism of color provides us with ways of thinking through power in terms of 'intersectionality' […] to think about and through the points at which power relations meet. A body can be a meeting point" (2012, 14). Through this lens, the body becomes a

site where myriad discourses and power relations meet and make their unique, combined mark in the very production and treatment of that body, and subject. hooks (1990) also takes up this notion of bodies being 'meeting points', but specifically within a discussion of a black feminine experience of embodiment, giving the example of black women's bodies during times of (specifically North American) enslavement as being a 'discursive terrain, the playing fields where racism and sexuality converged' (1990, 57). Indeed, hooks asserts that 'race and sex have always been overlapping discourses' (hooks, 1990, 57), again highlighting a need to articulate an 'ensemble of rules' (Foucault, 1994, 131) of femininity that address those five quite damning statements listed earlier about "black girls" in this space.

As Ahmed (2012) makes clear however, the way that 'overlapping discourses' shape bodies should not be understood via an 'additive model' (195), but rather, these material discourses intermingle and shape one another in unique ways dependent on the context: 'a concern with meeting points requires that we attend to the experiential: how we experience one category depends on how we inhabit others' (Ahmed, 2012, 14). In this, 'race', gender and sexuality should be understood as interdependent and mutually productive positionings that are shaped by other aspects of context and experience. In this, the arguably more slippery concept of class as its own 'system of oppression' (Mirza, 2010, 3) also needs to be taken into account in understanding the identity of the "black girl" as my research participants mobilise it. As Baca Zinn and Thornton Dill (1996) suggest, an intersectional perspective is 'an attempt to go beyond a mere recognition of diversity and difference among women, to examine structures of domination' (321). Within the field of education research, Archer and Francis (2007) helpfully suggest then that 'we might talk of 'classed, raced masculinities', 'gendered, class ethnicities' or 'racialised, gendered class identities' '(38). Indeed, attending to class difference will reveal further processes of domination and injustice that act upon a young person's

educational experiences, nuancing those revealed through a focus on processes of racism and sexism alone.

Class: another deeply embodied discourse

'Class' is an increasingly contested concept within both contemporary sociology and policy discourse, particularly in light of postmodern and neoliberal discourses that emphasise notions of, respectively, a fluidity of identity and the potential for an individual's social mobility (Anthias, 2001; Brah and Phoenix, 2004; Archer and Francis, 2007). Brah and Phoenix (2004) also argue that 'if we consider the intersections of 'race' and gender with social class…the picture [of identity] becomes even more complex and dynamic' (80), while Archer and Francis (2007) warn against extending traditional class categories to analyses of ethnic minority communities, given that 'theories of social class [in the UK] have been primarily formulated with reference to White communities' (34). Indeed, it is difficult to apply traditional class analysis, based on questions of income and occupation, to the experiences of ethnic minority and immigrant communities in the UK, given the symbolic and material barriers these communities have faced in these particular respects. So instead I turn to more recent culturalist analyses of class (Savage, 2000; Skeggs, 1997, 2004) that understand 'social class as produced through a combination of social, cultural and economic practices and relations of power' (Archer and Francis, 2007, 35).

Many theorists writing within this tradition draw on Bourdeiu's (1984) concepts of capital, habitus and field to explore how social class is produced through differing levels of access to forms of wealth and power, both material and symbolic, within particular social spaces and in ways that mark bodies and embodied styles of being (Skeggs, 2004, 2006; Reay, 2004). I propose a related understanding of class that sits comfortably alongside an intersectional and Foucauldian feminist understanding of embodied subjectivity as formed within multiple power relations in social space. Through this lens, one's classed position is an embodied style of inhabiting social space formed through

normative practices acutely shaped by one's access to forms of status and capital. These normative class practices (which are also raced, gendered and sexualised, such as what kind of jewellery, if any, to wear to college each day), form within particular discursive terrains: namely, what styles of inhabiting social space are both discursively and materially possible within the power relations that structure that space. Indeed, I suggest that when it comes to defining class positions within the research site and beyond, material and symbolic possibilities - such as access to money, living space, academic qualifications, particular career routes and institutional position - take on special significance in producing practices of the taste, style and even educational engagement. This understanding of class, as it intersects with other markers of identity, can be elucidated with reference to Brah and Phoenix's (2004) suggestion that 'social class (and its intersections with gender and 'race' or sexuality) are simultaneously subjective, structural and about social positioning and everyday practices' (75). And in Chapter Four, I discuss in detail how my young research participants might be understood as participating in a specifically working class identity in respect to their 'social positioning and everyday practices' within the college space.

A feminist Foucauldian framework imbued with an understanding of intersectionality and class in these ways will be helpful in identifying an 'ensemble of [corporeal] rules' (Foucault, 1994, 131) for constructing an intelligible black, feminine, working class body in the research site. It will provide a non-essentialising, non-pathologising lens through which to understand how the five statements listed about "black girls" earlier emerge within multiple, mutually shaping relations of power, as well as an opportunity for developing practices to shake these statements. However, this enriched framework needs enriching still, in respect to one other key aspect of my research participants' discussions around their identities as "black girls": namely, ideas of being looked at, judged for one's "image", and a heavily felt pressure to "perform" as a result. Their ways of discussing this are urgent and compelling, and invite another important conceptualisation to this growing

'ensemble of conceptual tools': that of a synoptic identity performance within a disciplinary and image-saturated social space.

Identity as a synoptic performance in a media-framed climate

Talk of judgement and the fear of being judged runs through the young women's statements about their lives in the college. Indeed, it became increasingly clear how the research participants experienced their (racialised, gendered and classed) identities as a process that operates through the body's visibility, and attendant acts of judgement by others in that shared space. A conversation with Cairo about how both teachers and other students in the college view her was quite revealing in this respect:

> I know it's gonna happen. Everywhere I go I'm gonna get judged.
> And I'm gonna get judged a lot more for the bad things cos (1) I look
> like one of them bad black girls. I look like one of them rude girls. I
> look like one of them trouble-makers.
> **Interview with Cairo, 2nd June 2015**

It seems Cairo fears that a perception of her, formed in accordance with racist and sexist 'knowledges' (in a Foucauldian sense) about black girls, will inevitably come to fix a judgement of who she actually is - or who she can be in this space. The notion that these dehumanising 'perceptual practices' (Alcoff, 2006, 180) can materially shape that subject and the possibilities for their identity (as Ahmed demonstrates with her discussion of Sarah Baartman), is further elucidated by Melody in a separate interview:

> you know how (1) like people portray us black girls as rude and
> feisty [...] and that's like on everything [every media platform]. So
> it's kinda like black girls now are just thinking, 'people think I'm
> feisty, so I might as well be the feisty person that they think I am'
> or 'people think I'm rude so I might as well be the rude...[she trails
> off]
> **Interview with Melody and Shanice, 12th February 2015**

This notion of the power of the gaze to invite and even fix a particular racialised and gendered identity leads to another, related understanding of how identity is felt to operate in this space: that of performance for an audience. Indeed,

there is recurrent language of performance in the way my research participants describe altercations in the college: "he's usually quiet, but when he's in front of people, he acts up" (Lara); "they were laughing at her cos boys know when girls are acting - are like trying to act up to please the crowd" (Cairo); "I'm telling you Miss, black girls [fight] for the image" (Cairo). During these conversations I gained a sense of embodied identity as at times being a really quite knowing performance: an "act…to please the crowd". This is where it is important to propose a new concept of identity performance in addition to Butler's account of (a now racialised and classed) gender performance.

A more 'everyday' (Ahmed, 2004), non-Butlerian use of the term performance as a deliberate, somewhat theatrical presentation of the self for an audience emerges from young black women's acute awareness of how 'perceptual practices' (Alcoff, 2006, 180) operate in this research site. As Melody's words convey, the inescapability of particular knowledges that circulate about young black women opens up a (theatrically) performative space in which girls can, or must, "act up" to these (racist and sexist) codes. Indeed, hooks (1992), Hill Collins (2000) and Cox (2012) discuss how black women's and girls' 'self image' (Hill Collins, 2000) and self-presentation materialise through hetero-sexist and racist populist images of black femininity they are surrounded with, and are required to live up to in the public sphere. The hitherto helpful image of anonymised surveillance within the model of the panopticon does not easily apply here then, and for a model of this more audience-like surveillance, I turn to Jagodogzinski's (2010) discussion of the 'synopticon'.

For Jagodzinski, in this contemporary age of consumerism and the mass (and now increasingly social) media, 'the gaze' manifests itself in a particular way, as the inversion of the framework of Foucault's panopticon: '[the panopticon] is being replaced by the postmodernist de-signing visual regime of the oral [i.e. consuming] eye as its *inversion*' (2010, 75). Jagodzinski conceptualises this inverted framework in terms of Mathiesen's (1997) *synopticon* where, instead of the many being watched by the anonymous few (as in a prison), the few are

watched by the visible many (as on a stage). The impact of this for the individual is that, rather than being fixed and shaped from within by the anonymous gaze, they perform for their audience, consciously 'de-signing' an image of themself in response to the 'visual discourse' they perceive (76). This conceptualisation is crucial for understanding my research participants' experiences within the social, and also increasingly the digitalised spaces of the college, with constant posting on snapchat being a daily embodied practice for many of them. I understand this in terms of young black women navigating and responding to the racist and sexist perceptual practices that operate both in the research site, and in the forms of mainstream and social media they engage with, as Melody's words above suggest. These perceptual practices leave my research participants exposed to the constant possibility for judgement and "scandal" (as Lara puts it in an interview) in ways that are reminiscent of judgement and scandalisation that shape the public presence of the famous black women they admire (such as Nicki Minaj, Rihanna and, to a lesser degree, Beyonce, who I later discuss with reference to notions of class and respectability).

This idea of my young research participants constructing their bodies, and being constructed, in relation to images of other bodies in synoptic spaces is key within this research, and to conceptualise this process of identity formation further, I also introduce Coleman's (2009) work on the relationship between girls' bodies and images (such as photographs, mirror images and media images). Central to Coleman's findings is that '...bodies are becomings' (2009, 48): namely, bodies are always in a process of development, through their relation to other bodies and images they are confronted with daily. Coleman (2009) argues that young women experience *particularly* acute processes of bodily desire and construction in relation to the images of femininity they are confronted with, in ways that entail both subjection and agency. I will draw on these ideas to explore what my research participants discuss as a constant need to watch and check oneself, and sometimes to carefully present oneself, but to different audiences simultaneously: black boys, other black girls, and teachers. An understanding of this will allow analysis of the difficult balancing acts my

research participants perform in the college: 'acts' which in turn elucidate conflicts of interest and processes of exclusion they come to experience. However, there is an area still left unaddressed within this now more synoptic notion of identity performance and bodily construction. Indeed, central to Coleman's (2009) work is the acutely material and emotional, non-conscious, aspects of identity formation. As Allen et al. (2005) put it, '[images of] celebrity provides a set of discursive-*affective* practices through which young people engage in 'identity work' ' (3.2, emphasis mine). Indeed, a final idea that is key to understanding the lived experience of embodiment, is that it does not only operate in a visual sphere. It is here that I turn to the final set of concepts offered within a black feminist appeal to the lived experience, specifically in Ahmed's (2004) explication of 'the cultural politics of emotion'.

The material operation of power through emotion

Alaimo and Hekman (2008) assert that attendance to the 'lived experience' (4) of female bodies implies the need to address the 'volatile materiality' (4) of women's experiences. I now enrich the framework offered so far in order to understand the visceral, sensory and deeply moving ways that power relations operate through bodies. Like Ahmed (2004), and a number of education researchers (Watkins, 2005, 2011; Youdell and Armstrong, 2011; Youdell, 2012; Hickey-Moody, 2013), I employ the term 'affective' in this study to denote the 'non-verbal, non-conscious dimensions of [embodied] experience' (Blackman and Venn, 2010, 8), and in order to 'infuse social analysis with what could be called psychosocial texture' (Wetherell, 2012, 2). However, I more often employ, and now more fully theorise the term 'emotion'. I have heard this term, a word from 'everyday life' (Ahmed, 2004), used by the young women I work with to describe the black female experience in the research site: as cited earlier, Melody suggests that "black girls in this college are bear emotional Miss!" I hope to address the derogatory, gendered and racialised, use of the term "emotional" here, as if out-of-control emotion is an inherent property of a young, black female body in this space. I instead I offer a less pathologising

account of the way emotion always and constantly operates for *all* bodies: teachers as well as students. Infusing an intersectional, feminist Foucauldian account with such 'conceptual tools' will ultimately help explain the deeply material and unconscious processes through which people in the research site construct their bodies in response to perceptual practices within various fields of visibility.

In her account of 'the cultural politics of emotion' Ahmed (2004) works from the etymology of the word 'emotion' in order to locate the domain of emotion as that dictating 'how we are moved' (209) in social relationships: 'emotions involve different movements towards and away from others, such that they shape the contours of social as well as bodily space' (209). Ultimately, Ahmed shows how our orientations towards others, and thus the ways we inhabit social space, are shaped in deeply embodied ways through emotion: namely, through the complex intertwining of 'intense bodily responses' and 'judgements' as one and the same process (209). In order to clarify this symbiotic process, Ahmed (2004) suggests that any process of perception and so judgement-making involves 'the very affect of one surface upon an other, an affect that leaves its mark and trace' (2004, 4). In this respect, emotions are not qualities or phenomena residing in individual bodies, but instead are nothing less than interactive processes and exchanges of sorts between bodies. These exchanges involve simultaneously the corporeal effects of bodies upon each other and how those effects are read and mobilised into judgements and actions towards others: judgments and actions that linger as 'orientations' (2004, 209).

It is in this respect that the operation of emotion can be said to materially form individual human subjects. Ahmed explains this through suggesting that 'it is through [the 'sociality of emotion'] that surfaces or boundaries are made: the 'I' and the 'we' are shaped by, and even take the shape of, contact with others' (2004, 10). This view of emotion aligns with Butler's notion of the gendered subject performatively taking shape through 'a set of sustained acts' (2004, 94), thus providing a framework for understanding how embodied identities are

formed in relation to other bodies in both affective and discursive ways. This highly repetitive process of formation is an intensely *felt* one, not only at the level of sensation and surface corporeal im*press*ion, but also at a 'deeper' level in the meanings we attribute to these encounters. Indeed, Ahmed suggests that these impressions serve to shape bodies, and so relations, primarily through repetition, and cites the work of Butler to elucidate this: 'it is through the repetition of norms that worlds materialise, and that 'boundary, fixity and surface are produced'' (Ahmed, 2004, 12).

To elucidate this further, it is important to emphasise the role of history within Ahmed's account. This would be to acknowledge a person's *embodied* history with a legacy of encounters, and the role this plays in forming identities and relationships through social norms. For Ahmed (2004), a seemingly immediate feeling as a sense-response to the world is always an act of reading, predicated on previous encounters and their readings: 'how feelings feel in the first place may be tied to a past history of readings, in the sense that this process of *recognition* (of this feeling, or that feeling) is bound up with what we *already know'* (25). Ahmed (2004) also explains just how deeply embodied this process is: '[it] is felt on the surface of the skin, [the] knowledge is bodily, certainly […] who could even think of a feeling without also recalling physical impressions […] the sweatiness of skin, the hair raising […] or the sound of one's heartbeat getting louder?' (209). For Ahmed, the interactions between corporeal sensations and social norms serve to shape and indeed explain social relationships and seemingly automatic reactions to and between bodies. For example, Ahmed (2002) cites the work of Lorde (1984) to explore the intensely visceral experience of racism, through an anecdote in which a white woman spontaneously tightened and shrunk her body away from the young Lorde on the train, as if she were a 'cockroach', an emotive reaction learned over time in accordance with prevailing racist discourses about black bodies. Indeed, according to Ahmed's model, we become so 'invested' (Ahmed, 2004, 12) in social norms because they are felt as impressions both on and through our bodies, as well as taking meaningful linguistic shape through language: 'words

are not simply cut off from bodies […] the work of emotion involves the 'sticking' of signs to bodies' (Ahmed, 2004, 13).

In all this there is now therefore a way to quite literally flesh out Foucauldian and intersectional feminist understandings of embodiment discussed so far. More specifically there is a way, as Youdell (2012) puts it in discussing her use of psychoanalytic theory alongside Butler, to 'understand the unconscious investments and desires of subjects in ways that are neither a return to the interior world of individual psychology or the free will of the rational subject [and to] consider the partially self-knowing […] practices of subjects as well as their […] affective experiences and the ways that these might exceed their subjectivation' (144). Indeed, this more enriched and blended account, one which understands embodied emotion as bound up with (produced by and productive of) social relations and identities, can shed light on, for example, those highly charged encounters in which some young women are positioned as "bear emotional" (Melody). Visceral responses within social relations, such as punching a wall during an altercation with another girl or kissing one's teeth in response to a security guard's request to "move"[20], can now be better understood by enriching a black feminist Foucauldian account of gendered and racialised bodies deliberating in synoptic space, with an understanding of the deeply corporeal operation of emotion in 'unconscious' identity performances. And in a similar and deeply important way, whiteness as a 'standpoint' (Frankenberg, 1993, 1), and therefore processes of racism, can be understood as operating through identity-marking orientations of disgust and fear that nonetheless have space for transformation: in that 'materialization stabilizes over time to produce the *effect* of…fixity' (Butler cited in Hekman, 1998, 67, emphasis mine). This framework also, therefore, enables a set of ideas and languages for imagining an embodied pedagogy of hope: specifically, one in which embodied practices and relationships can work towards *new* processes of materialisation, and towards producing new, more hopeful orientations within

---

[20] Two (re)actions from Kayla during the fieldwork year that brought her to the attention of the college's disciplinary processes.

the college space. It is in this respect that a developed and more deeply embodied understanding of resistance and 'discursive agency' (Butler cited in Youdell 2006b, 519), one that might 'exceed subjectivation' (Youdell, 2012, 144) can also be articulated.

In light of her discussions around the sociality of emotion, Ahmed (2004) indeed proposes a theoretical 'shift' in which agency is relocated 'from the individual to the interface between individuals and worlds' (190). In this respect, agency becomes 'a matter of what actions are possible given how we are shaped by our contact with others, and invites a model in which 'I would not be an agent insofar as I am not acted upon...I would be an agent insofar as that which affects me does not [necessarily] determine my actions' (Ahmed, 2004, 190). In all this, an understanding of 'agency', or discursive agency does not reside in the individual, nor is it removable, or indeed grantable, by others. It instead manifests in how we respond to and work with the fact that our bodies are, often very deeply and historically, shaped and constituted by our relations to other bodies, as coded through social norms. Under this framework, agency manifests in how we permit or resist dominant norms taking hold, through in turn shaping our reactions as 'creative action' (Ahmed citing McNay, 2004, 190). This creative action can take place in wholly deliberate ways, such as a way of styling one's appearance, or striving to "prove my teachers wrong" in the production of one's school work[21]. It can also take place in deeply corporeal and unconscious ways, at the level of re-forming our 'orientations' towards others: for example, through debating, laughing or dancing with them. In this there is also an important capacity for quite acutely embodied experiences of pleasure and pain to mobilise power, an idea I will develop throughout later chapters.

---

[21] See Chapter Five for discussion of this in relation to Felicia's educational engagements.

Conclusion: an ensemble of conceptual tools

In this chapter I have articulated a growing ensemble of conceptual tools that can be put to use, in both critical and hopeful ways, to understand how bodies (co)exist and (inter)act in the research site. These tools are a Foucauldian feminist understanding of how gendered bodies are constructed through multi-directional relations of power within a disciplinary visual field, and black feminist understandings of racialization, intersectionality and the sociality of emotion, as it manifests within and emerges from panoptic and synoptic terrains. These conceptual tools work together to produce a particular understanding of embodiment: namely, the subject's material construction in social space, through its positioning within and performing of a relative position of power across overlapping visual, linguistic and deeply 'felt' discursive terrains. Absolutely central to this account of embodiment is the human subject's inherent potential for resistance and agency: namely, ways of directing one's own identity in alignment with but always potentially *out* of alignment with the dominant 'ensemble of rules' for that context, leaving room for change and becoming in sometimes very deeply embodied ways. Such an account is critical *and* hopeful in that it recognises global and localised histories of racism, sexism and classism as utterly entangled systems of oppression that live viscerally through and are also resisted by bodies in social space. With this framework introduced, over the next two chapters I explore the embodied processes of subjection, agency and resistance that constitute my research participants' identities within the research site. I frame these discussions in relation to the different discourses of social and educational success the young women traversed in their journeys and striving for success through the fieldwork year.

Chapter Four

Sexy, classy and strong: a discourse of social success for black working class young women in the 21ˢᵗ century inner-London college

In this chapter I explore what it means, and what it takes, to be a socially successful black girl who studies HSC within the research site. I show how this identity position, that of "prestigious" black femininity, is an intricately coded and deeply embodied performance (Butler, 2010; Jagodinski, 2010) in which the young woman needs to embody perfectly balanced forms of sexy, classy and strong in order to secure prime social position - and avoid damning judgement. I argue that this performance operates quite emotively (Ahmed, 2004) as a compulsory yet precarious tightrope act across a racist, sexist and classist institutional terrain, framed by ideas around the status of HSC BTEC as a course, and also by media images that shape my research participants' identities and aspirations in material ways. I show how this tightrope act affords pleasure, pride and power for the young women, as well as being a mode of marking out their own territory within the college. However, I also suggest this tightrope act involves inevitable falls into judgement, and in this respect holds my research participants in a bind that ultimately provides material for their educational exclusions.

I begin by elucidating the importance of achieving social success, or "prestige", for a group of young women who face social and economic marginalisation, and in doing so define a particularised black, feminine, working class identity within the research site. I then trace the emergence of this "prestigious" identity performance through three 'stories of raced and gendered domination' (Mirza, 2010, 2) that operate in the social sphere of the college. The first is a teenaged, raced and classed compulsory heterosexuality (Butler, 1990; Ahmed, 2006), and its production of a 'sexy' black femininity. The second is a hegemonic black masculinity and its production of a 'classy' emphasised black femininity (Connell, 1987, 2005). The third is a teenaged discourse of the 'strong black woman' (Wallace, 1979; Wyatt, 2008). I position these 'stories' as the backdrop

to, the discursive scenery for, a sometimes impossible tightrope act of "prestigious" black femininity, one that ultimately entangles with the young women's educational exclusions. I also, however, maintain that what is never lost here is the young women's agency (Ahmed, 2004) and '[re]creative action' (McNay cited in Ahmed, 2004, 190) both within and against the balancing act that is expected of them.

A "top group" of students: a youth subculture and a need for social "prestige"

During the research period a small number of students came to occupy something of a highly visible social position within the college, drawing the (often disciplinary) attention of both students and staff. This "top group" comprised around fifteen young men and women - including my four main research participants - who would spend time together socially around various spaces of the college, often engaged in highly visible and audible acts of friendship, flirtation and, sometimes, conflict. I understand this group(ing) as a youth subculture (Shildrick and MacDonald, 2006), namely a group of young people with shared social practices and identifications, formed in complex relationship to the adult culture of the institution and beyond. Within this, I draw on the work of Bakare-Yusuf (1997) to propose an equally important understanding that 'class, gender, sexual and racial meanings affect and inform the performance of youth cultures' (84). The shared meanings of this subcultural group are those of a black, working class, heterosexual, teen subculture that is responsive to the socio-economic terrain of the institution and the adult society its members will soon enter. But what might the particulars of these 'class, gender, sexual and racial meanings' be?

As noted earlier, over 50% of students enrolled at the college during the research period are black in ethnic heritage and identifiable as working class in terms of family income. In addition, a very small minority of students in the college openly identify as anything other than heterosexual in sexual

orientation. So what is it about this particular group of black, working class, (apparently) heterosexual young people that mark them out as a their own subcultural group within the college? Indeed, there are a number of subcultural student groups and identity positions within this college, with a correspondingly wide variety of ways in which blackness manifests, from the Afrocentric hair and clothing styles adopted by some female Humanities and Art A Level students, with Lauryn Hill and Erykah Badu[22] cited as inspirations, to the white collar professional clothing styles adopted by some aspiring male medical students. This is important to acknowledge, with Bakare-Yusuf (1997) arguing that 'over-emphasis on black commonalities…neglects intra-racial differences which constitute the complex nature of post-colonial Black British experience' (82). Aziz (1997) also calls for recognition of the 'heterogeneity of black women as a group' (72), but with particular reference to the shaping influence of one's class position. Given the economic similarities among students in the college, a culturalist (Savage, 2000) marker of class needs articulating in order to understand the 'intra-racial differences' within this space.

A useful marker of class difference in this respect is the courses young people study. To return to the words of Brah and Phoenix (2004), 'social class (and its intersections with gender and 'race' or sexuality) are simultaneously subjective, structural and about social positioning and everyday practices' (75). A young person's 'choice' of course indeed has economic implications and symbolic attachments, affording differing kinds of status and recognition (both in the here and now, and in the future) and also facilitating, or requiring, specific kinds of social practice within the college space – all nuanced by intersections of gender, sexuality and 'race'. And the young people who participated in this "top group" of "not famous but well known"[23] students did indeed all study for a

---

[22]Erykah Badu and Lauryn Hill are African American singer-songwriters associated with the arguably feminist neo-soul R&B genre (Rabaka, 2011). See Sears (2010) for further discussion of how these artists feature in young African American women's imaginaries of an empowering, feminine Afrocentric culture.

[23] Interview with Rebecca 2nd June 2015.

very specific set of courses: BTEC Sports, BTEC Business and BTEC Media for the boys, and (largely) BTEC Health and Social Care for the girls. A discussion with Kayla is revealing of how this kind of course 'choice' might inform a young person's 'social positioning' and 'everyday practices' (Brah and Phoenix, 2004, 75), extending to their very visibility in the college space:

> K: ….I don't really see any like (2) A Level students - like people who are like (2) you don't really <u>see</u> the smart, smart people [trails off]
>
> CS: so in terms of a whole, like, social status thing, and being the 'high-profile' student - do you think the A Level students keep out of that a bit more?
>
> K: yeah I think so
>
> CS: why do you think that is?
>
> K: because I feel like - because they have to take an exam, whereas BTEC [she trails off]
>
> CS: so you feel like the A Level students have more to do - more to focus on than BTEC students?
>
> K: well, that's not really true actually 'cos [we talk for a while about the amount of work BTEC students need to do]
>
> CS: but you <u>do</u> think there's this sense of BTEC students getting more involved in the social life of the college, or at least doing it in a way that's more noticeable?
>
> K: yeah.
> **(Interview with Kayla, 4th June 2015)**

Kayla does not conclusively explain why the A Level students might be perceived as less visible within the college's lively social life, however she does introduce a notion of these students having a more serious form of study to focus on: an exam. While she ultimately moves to resists this idea, it is clear that ideas of success and status are attached differently to vocational or A level students in this space.

A specific institutional backdrop for Kayla's analysis here is a rhetoric of "top universities" and "good universities" that dominates talk within the college, especially during the university application period. This rhetoric foregrounds

Redbrick and Russell Group universities as aspirational destinations, while covertly excluding the destinations that vocational students would generally progress to, very often local and former polytechnic universities. It thus seems that if status cannot be won as one of the "smart people" en route to a "good university", it might instead be won (for BTEC students in particular) through social visibility – the capacity to be "seen" within the college space. There is, I suggest, an implicit discourse of social mobility in all this, with a student's academic ability to progress beyond the local space (in both a literal and symbolic sense) seeming to excuse them from having to be "seen" making their social mark upon it. In alignment with an intersectional lens, this particular understanding of a young person's 'social positioning' (Brah and Phoenix, 2004, 75) is also covertly raced, with the A Level students being able to somehow reach beyond an implicitly racialised 'urban' identity, one covertly associated with underachievement, as discussions regarding certain universities and the college's own apparently "ghetto" (Winter) identity suggest. Indeed, in discussing their own university choices, both Cairo and Winter make it clear that they would rather not attend particular local universities: ones that they describe as being too close to where they currently study, but also as attracting "too many black students" (Cairo) who (it is assumed) "aren't serious" (Winter) about their education and who will instead engage in "drama, probably over boys" (Cairo).

This all speaks to the complex relationship between 'race' and class in the UK, as discussed in Chapter Three. Indeed, it appears as if a discourse that associates middle class practices and aspirations with white or non-black identities is taken up but complicated within this seemingly meritocratic institution, with its majority black cohort and diverse course offer. Indeed, in contrast to the earlier work of Fordham (1996) in the US and Mac an Ghaill (1998) in the UK, it is not striving for educational success in itself that is associated with a middle class, or white, identity in this college. An educationally striving identity is very *much* synonymous with how my research participants understand themselves as black, working class young women, as I

explore in the next chapter. It is more in relation to a student's social life and extracurricular engagements that restrictive associations between class and 'race' emerge, with some student groups appearing more subject to these restrictions than others. Indeed, I have observed that some black students can and do perform (what are understood as) middle classed social identities outside of the classroom, for example in attending debate club or quietly chatting with a multi-ethnic group of friends in the Study Centre, 'everyday practices' (Brah and Phoenix, 2004, 75) that reflect discussions of (what are understood as) middle classed engagements in UK schools (Archer et al., 2007a, 2007b; Hollingsworth, 2015). However, these practices - this class identity - seem to be more permitted for black A Level students: the "smart ones" whose study and career trajectories will supposedly take them out of the urban space and who, as Kayla implies, can thus rise above the "drama" of the college social sphere, and past the "drama" of the local universities with their imagined black student intake. For a black *BTEC* student however, a student with less (imagined) access to a "good" university/future, to adopt such practices is understood as stepping out of place and directly into a territory of 'acting white' (Fordham, 1996). That such positioning occurs and comes to act as its own rather self-regulating glass ceiling for my research participants in particular, emerges in my discussions with and about Rebecca.

During the research period, Rebecca, a black female Level 3 BTEC student, occupied an insider and outsider position in relation to this subcultural group of "top" students. She danced alongside Anala's tutor group for our IWD performance, but also socialised with a smaller multi-ethnic, all-female friendship group and attended extra-curricular dance classes and Police Cadets – a 'mix and match' approach that Hollingsworth (2015) finds as more prevalent and permissible in the white middle class students of her research in inner-city colleges. Significantly, Rebecca had acquired a label of "acting white" among some of her peer group. The discussions we had around this are revealing, not only of the complex relationship between 'race', class and course choice in this

college, but also of the role gender plays in dictating the possibilities for a young person's routes to recognition and belonging:

> CS: and you say you've been accused of "acting white" or "being white"?
>
> Rebecca: mmm
>
> CS: why do you think that is?
>
> Rebecca: I think it's 'cos I'm not one of them ones on my course that associate with the ones that are loud or with other black girls […] so basically "being white" is them ones that do their own thing (.) like the [extracurricular] clubs (.) that go in their own corner and talk to their friends (.) the one not to be involved in any type of trouble with boys and stuff
> **Interview with Rebecca, 10th June 2015**
> …
>
> CS: so I've heard this phrase 'coconut'
>
> Winter: yeah Miss (.) it means when someone black acts white (1) like [looks unsure about continuing] Rebecca (1) I know we're not using names but it's not a <u>bad</u> thing to be a coconut, but at the end of the day it's (2) like this <u>other</u> coconut girl [I know] yeah she's always like (1) she <u>doubts</u> every black girl like, "ah they care more about their weave and make-up or just wanna push prams" …like most coconuts act like they're better than black girls anyway - and everyone says that, it's not just me
> **Interview with Winter and Tinuke, 8th June 2015**

Through these conversations a view emerges that there is a narrow set of social rules that an 'authentic' black girl enrolled onto a HSC course should follow, including membership to a lively black female friendship group, a glamorous physical appearance and highly public interactions, or "trouble", with boys. As both Rebecca and Winter suggest, choices to the contrary might be perceived as attempts to act out of one's place, to become better than one's peers and one's attributed identity as a black (working class) girl: in other words, to "act white", with whiteness manifesting here not only as a social identity, but as a stance/system of judgement against black identities (Frankenberg, 1993). Within all this, there is a covert repositioning of the black working class girl

within an essentialised and heterosexualised identity associated with "weave, make-up and pushing prams", a symbolically violent 'perceptual practice' (Alcoff, 2006, 180) that produces a stereotypically anti-education, anti-mobility identity – one that Winter is clearly keen to resist.

It is also interesting to note here that black female A Level students, "the smart ones", did not come up in conversations around "acting white". Indeed, from my research participants' perspectives these (also majority working class) young women – on their own educational trajectories to be lawyers, journalists, doctors - seem more permitted to move around such restrictive identity codes, 'proclaiming 'free floating' influences' (Hollingsworth, 2015, 1243) without compromising their racial identity to the same degree. I read all this again in terms of a social mobility discourse, but one that is insidiously gendered, as well as raced and classed. Indeed, in this context, it seems that the level of freedom in one's social life is dictated by one's potential to achieve a more valued form of academic success: one that is covertly classed, raced but also gendered. The A Level students' doctor to my research participants' nurse, for example. In this, it is important to elucidate why and how a particular form of social success is required not just for black, female BTEC students, but for *HSC* students in particular.

My research participants enact a complicated relationship with their choice of course, related to particular perceptions around HSC as a raciliased, feminised career sector:

> Winter: first I wanted to be a lawyer so I was gonna do (.) A Levels
> but then I got (.) a U in maths [small laugh] so I couldn't (.) so
> then I had to go and do like BTEC…but now I know what I want to
> do
>
> CS: and what is that?
>
> W: midwife
>
> CS: I can imagine you being an excellent midwife becau // se

W: // but I think a lot of people stereotype

CS: go on

W: like when I say I want to be a midwife everyone says "ahh every black girl wants to be a midwife" […] it's annoying (.) especially when guys ask me "oh what do you wanna do in future?" (1) I kind of hold back […] there's nothing <u>wrong</u> with it […] but a lot of people start to stereotype like "<u>every</u> black girl wants to be a midwife" or like "every black girl does HSC"

Kayla: yeah

CS: how do you think your course is viewed in the college then? Do you feel there's a particular view of this choice of course?

K: yeah (1) well (.) not just HSC but also Level 2 courses (.) everyone looks at you like "oh you're dumb"
Interview with Winter and Kayla, 2ⁿᵈ December 2014

Here the young women address stereotyping around black girls' career routes, their own not quite 'choices' to pursue these routes, and the associations made with these routes. Complicated acts of resistance are also mobilised sometimes in response to being (re)positioned in such roles, by male peers ("when boys ask...I hold back") but also by a well-meaning white interviewer ("I think you'd make a good midwife // I think a lot of people stereotype").

This all reflects Mirza's (1992, 2009) research with black working class young women. Mirza's participants discuss their own 'choices' to study HSC, a sector they respect yet understand as being undervalued, and explain these choices as part of their 'dynamic rationalisation' (2009, 26) of the education system they find themselves in, with its limited options for girls like them. Indeed, options for future economic success and social status seem even more limited when understood in relation to the imagined futures of the young black men within their peer group of "top" vocational students. My research participants do not share access to the sporting accolades available to their male counterparts: accolades that are highly celebrated within and by the institution (see Chapters One, Seven and later in this chapter). These young women also do not share some of the (imagined) routes to "making money" that the male Business and

Media BTEC students "are always talking about" (as Melody explains to me in an interview), such as becoming music producers in the male dominated London urban music scene.

Ultimately then it does seem as if routes to public success, both within the college and in an imagined future, are relatively limited for my research participants. There is one obvious remaining space for status however, a complicated one that serves to explain any indignance at Rebecca's quiet, club-attending, boy-avoiding identity: namely, the young women's social lives, especially in relation to, as Cairo puts it, "drama – probably around boys". It is indeed significant that the young women within this subcultural peer group were often positioned as the ones who ultimately drive the heterosexualised flirting that often characterised this group's social visibility. For example, early on in the research period, my research participants came to be "banned" from spending time outside the college's sports hall, with the institutional perception being that they were just "hanging around and waiting for the boys" (sports teacher), and ultimately "distracting" (Vice Principal) themselves and their male peers from study. It is not only "drama…around boys", that operates as a route to status, or visibility within the college space for my research participants however. Another route emerges in the young women's discussions of their otherwise loud and visible social identities, specifically in their use of the term "ratchet". This term has been popularised in the UK through media representations of a particularised African American culture, and is mainly levelled at young black women, denoting a loud, rude and "ghetto" black femininity. To be ratchet, however, is also quite inevitably to be well-known, and so has a complicated appeal for young women in the college, as the following conversation with Winter and Tinuke suggests.

In an interview towards the end of the research period, Winter discusses her ambivalent feelings around her own transition from being, as she puts it, an "unknown" to taking a more prominent role in the college's social scene:

Winter: I was an unknown - cos I remember I was talking to [high profile male sports student in the college] and he was like "I swear you just started college 2 months ago" and I was like [whispers in embarrassment] "oh my god" […] But I think even though now - even though I've become friends with these two famous ratchets [pointing at Tinuke who gives her a hurt look] and I've started to know more people (2) but I wanna be unknown

Tinuke: but it's good to know people - it's fun

Winter: no I'm not gonna lie - it's fun but I just like (1) it's not me. Obviously I'm a friendly person but (1) I'm very reserved, especially when I'm at home

CS: so do you know more people in the college and have more fun if you're a bit more ratchet //or whatever

Tinuke: // [looking at Winter] I'm not ratchet

Winter: [quickly] you're not ratchet. But yeah, you do.
(Interview with Winter and Tinuke, 8th June 2015)

The attraction to being "well-known" clearly emerges here: it is "fun", and also saves the embarrassment of, for example, a high status boy finding you invisible, especially in a context where the arena and possibilities for a young woman's value are so limited – where it feels embarrassing to say you aspire to be a midwife. However, as discussions around girls' striving for popularity in schools also suggest (Paechter and Clark, 2010), there is a sense that being "well-known" produces complications, and potentially shame: especially when a shameful identity, that of the "ratchet" girl, is given to you by your friend, and then again by a white, middle class teacher-interviewer in a recorded discussion. Indeed it seems as if a desire for social success within the college is compelling for my young research participants, but plays out in ways that are complicated and not always empowering.

In all this then, it is clear that winning a particular form of social success is acutely important for my research participants as young black women studying HSC in this "ghetto" college. Such a desire emerges within an implicitly sexist,

racist, classist institutional and wider societal context, in which young black women who study HSC need additional ways to mobilise power and status for themselves. Researchers have indeed explored how young, black and/or working class women enrolled onto vocational courses, a group who are often positioned as 'at risk' within British society (Ball et al., 2000; Harris, 2004), have found (complicated) ways of mobilising power and success through aspects of their social lives: friendships, relationships with boys, and their appearance and social image (Ball et al. 2000, Archer et al., 2010; Davies, 2013). What emerges as acutely for these young women however, is how these alternative routes to mobilising status are compelling in deeply emotive ways in an Ahmedia sense (2004), namely through orientations of shame ("there's nothing wrong with being a midwife, but…"/ "I'm not ratchet") that serve to materialise and reinforce identities ("coconuts act like they're better than black girls anyway"). And in relation to this, it is clear that winning a visible social identity in itself is not enough: doing so in a way that does not bring shame – for example in being ratchet or a coconut - is also vital. It is in this respect that the identity of the not just well-known, but the "prestigious" black girl emerges.

The first student to introduce this idea to me, for it then to be confirmed by my other research participants, was Rebecca:

> R: yeah the level 2 girls - they just came maybe like a year ago and […] they're trying to put a name out there so (2) so when the new kids come they'll see that they're actually that group in the college.
>
> CS: what do you mean "that group"?
>
> R: like the prestigeness group […] the top group. So new students will be aware of who they are basically (1) I just think they're like - not famous but…

Interview with Rebecca, 10th June 2015

A discourse of "fame" coheres with my research participants' acute engagements with celebrity culture, in a cultural terrain increasingly saturated by mainstream and social media images of aspirational (black female) celebrity. Indeed, my research participants seem to draw on the practices within and rhetoric around celebrity culture as material for mobilising their own quests for

social success within the college. For the rest of this chapter, I explore in detail how the identity performance of the "prestigious black girl" emerges and manifests for my research participants, with specific reference to the media forms that they engage with. I also, and ultimately, elucidate how this identity comes to be something of an empowering yet also precarious balancing act, through the need to balance a set of pleasurable yet sometimes conflicting codes: that of sexiness, classiness and strength. I introduce these codes now, and trace their emergence through three 'stories of raced and gendered domination' (Mirza, 2010, 2) that dictate both the limits and the possibilities for my research participants' quests for (social) success within their college.

The production of prestigious black femininity

(i) compulsory heterosexuality and the sexy black girl: *"can we be like those black cheerleaders?"*

A view of heterosexuality as a system of control of gendered bodies in space originates in the work of Rich (1981) who argues that 'the enforcement of heterosexuality for women [is] a means of assuring male right of physical, economical and emotional access' (19). This view of heterosexuality as a controlling system through which 'male right' to forms of 'access' is ensured is certainly visible in the research site, however, later conceptualisations of heterosexuality offered in the work of Butler (1990, 2010) and Ahmed (2004, 2006) are also particularly useful here. The combined insights of this work allows an understanding of heterosexuality as shaping identities deeply through the very matter of bodies, in ways that are affective, spatialised and (crucially) intersectional, and in ways that also become compulsory through the threat of 'punitive effects' (Butler, 2010, 242). Education researchers indeed explore school identities as gendered and (hetero)sexualised in ways that enact relations of power (Epstein and Johnson, 1998; Nayak and Kehily, 2008), with Kehily (2001) referring to schools as nothing less than a 'terrain for the production of gendered and sexualised identities' where 'learning extends the boundaries of the official curriculum…[and] can be seen in terms of the

regulation of sex-gender categories' (118). Research also explores how these gendered systems of control operate deeply and affectively through young people's bodies (Ringrose, 2013; Alldred and Fox, 2015), in ways that are always raced and classed (Youdell, 2006a; Archer et al., 2010), and as connected with wider processes of gender control as disseminated through various forms of media representation and interaction (Coleman, 2009; Nayak and Kehily, 2008). This all resonates for the research site, especially in relation to understanding performances of 'the sexy black girl', a key component of socially successful, prestigious black femininity.

In response to questions about what it would take to be "popular" or have "social status" in the college, my research participants engage an acutely hetero-sexualised discourse, a comprehensively gendered 'ensemble of rules' (Foucault, 1994, 131) through which to become socially successful teenage boy and girl in this subcultural space. They describe separate yet mutually defining masculine and feminine codes for social success, many of which focus explicitly on the body, in alignment with Butler's (2010) understanding of compulsory heterosexuality as a system that is 'reproduced and concealed through the cultivation of bodies into discrete sexes with 'natural' appearances and 'natural' heterosexual dispositions' (486). For the details of this, I turn to the words of Winter, who across two interviews succinctly and comprehensively sums up these codes:

> "for a boy it's like the course he does (.) for example sports or
> business (.) like the jocks...they're big and manly...and obviously the
> way he dresses...and if he gets girls...and for a girl it's like (1) no one
> really cares about the course they (.) but hair make-up (.) the way
> they dress...andif they're like a really nice girl...it's always the pretty
> girls (.) the cheerleaders."

Winter's reference to the "jocks" and "cheerleader" types (echoed in interviews with other students) is acutely hetero-sexualised, with boys playing the public role of hero, winning accolades for the school and also winning girls as trophies/sexual partners. In contrast, a girl's course, her educational identity and future career, fades to invisibility (or already was invisible), meaning she

should play the role of attractive counterpart who is to support/cheer for the boy, decorate his arm and, implicitly, fulfil his sexual needs. The naturalised and thus compulsory nature of heterosexuality here is also reflected in the widespread yet insidious homophobia that operates within the college: both in the absence of students who publically identify as queer, and also in the common use of homophobic language among, particularly, young men in this subcultural space (Mac an Ghaill, 1994; Epstein, 1997; Robinson, 2005; Youdell, 2005). An intersectional understanding of how this discourse is particularised for this context is especially revealing however, and can be elucidated with reference to its deeply embodied formation through sets of media images.

Nayak and Kehily (2008) propose that 'school arenas are…spaces in which young people produce their own gender identities which are negotiated not least through…popular culture' (97). This is supported in my research participants' references to what is the actually Americanised subculture (Eckert, 1989) of "cheerleaders" and "jocks" in explaining their ideas about success: a subculture that they have access to largely via media texts. Indeed, Shanice locates one key source of influence on young women's identities within the college: "Miss, [girls' ideas about how to be popular] come from the media". Allen (2011), later with Mendick (2013) discusses how young people construct gendered, raced and classed success identities for themselves through their engagements with representations of success they see in the mainstream and social media. This was all becoming particularly acute at the time of research in which there was an increasing surge of access to and especially youth engagement with various media and social media forms (Ringrose and Harvey, 2015). Indeed, there is much evidence for this in the research site, with my research participants referring to the following forms of media when explaining their ideas about their social identities and aspirations: a British TV soap opera (Eastenders); a North American reality TV show (Basketball Wives); a number of social media platforms and tools (Instagram, Tumblr, Twitter, Snapchat); a North American film (Bring it On); and individual, mainly North American, celebrities (primarily Nicki Minaj, Rihanna, Beyonce and Kim Kardashian). It is

here that I pinpoint the ways in which these young women's ideas about "prestigious" femininity are acutely raced and classed.

The media texts and figures my research participants use to explain their ideas about social success often feature representations of a particular, classed form of (largely African Americanised) blackness. Detectable within such representations is the mobilising of a glamorous physical appearance as feminine capital, alongside the emphasising of a naturalised heterosexuality. This reflects discussions earlier in the chapter around available routes to mobilising power for black working class women, and it did indeed seem that this particular (mediated) idea of blackness is key to the emotionally charged processes of identity formation some young women in the college experience. An example is the day news broke of a potential new cheerleading troupe in the college. As soon as I arrived in the college this day, a group of students (all young black women who studied BTEC courses) excitedly approached to ask me, with a sense of apparent urgency, about auditions, uniforms and whether they could be like "those black cheerleaders in 'Bring it On'!'' (Rebecca). The charged nature of young women's engagement with this hetero-sexualised subculture points towards the acutely visible (Foucault, 1979) but also affective ways (Ahmed, 2004) that compulsory heterosexuality takes hold, operating through young women's deeply felt desires for (images of) black feminine working class success.

As discussed in Chapter Three, young women's engagement with images of success can materially shape their identities (Coleman, 2009). This process, through which idealised gender norms are experienced as ''natural'…dispositions' (Butler, 2010, 486), is also elucidated in Ahmed's (2006) description of the controlling nature of compulsory heterosexuality: '[it] shapes one's own body as a congealed history of past approaches…' (97). Indeed, for Ahmed (2004), compulsory heterosexuality takes hold in bodies through a lifetime of culturally coded encounters with other bodies (and now images), and the 'orientations' this sets up, orientations that materialise in young women's

breathless, desiring reactions to the (potential) image of themselves as a "black cheerleader". To place this within a 'story of raced and gendered domination' (Mirza, 2010, 2) I turn to Ahmed's suggestion that '...how feelings feel in the first place may be [...] bound up with what we *already know'* (2004, 25). I propose that what these young women 'already know' is a particular 'regime of truth' (Foucualt, 1994, 132) within this subcultural space through which teenage, female, black (and, specifically, non-academic/non-middle class) bodies are primarily valued in hetero-sexualised relation to teenage, male, black (and, specifically, sporting) bodies. This idea of the black female body being valued primarily for its imagined (hetero)sexualit, has been explored by a number of black feminist researchers (hooks, 1994, 1997, 2001; Hill Collins, 2004; Brooks and Herbert, 2006; Cox, 2012). These writers discuss a prominently visual media discourse of the (too) sexy, black, female body as a system of control within in a white patriarchal capitalist context. I suggest that a discourse of black, working class femininity as inevitably and necessarily sexy is one that my young research participants 'know', in a discursive (Foucauldian) and deeply embodied (Ahmedian) sense, and through this bodily knowledge have formed acute orientations, for example towards images of the black cheerleader.

These deeply felt processes serve to (re)bind these young women to the notion that 'sexiness' is one of their key routes to social success, and thus to public success full stop: a notion that is confirmed by the institutional and wider societal attitudes they encounter to their value as HSC students. In Chapter Six, I go on to explore, crucially, how a young black woman's 'sexiness' can *also* mean much more liberating things to and for her than "the make-up, weaves and pushing prams" (Winter), especially when entangled with notions of career success, encapsulated in images of the black singers-models-wives-businesswomen they admire. However, I now explore how a compulsory discourse of the 'sexy black girl' is nuanced through a particular discourse of hegemonic black masculinity: one that dictates a prestigious black girl's need to

be both 'sexy' *and* 'classy', with shame again operating as a key emotion of control here.

(ii) hegemonic black masculinity and the classy black girl: *"sometimes they just want to look like Beyonce and Jay-Z"*

Researchers draw on the work of Connell (1987) to discuss how systems of compulsory heterosexuality in schools hinge upon the dominance of particular forms of 'hegemonic masculinity' against which corresponding forms of 'emphasized femininity' are defined (Robinson 2005, Paechter, 2007). Connell and Messerschmidt (2005) rearticulate these concepts, as they were formulated in Connell's earlier work, in a way that is useful for this research. They discuss how hegemonic masculinity was initially 'understood as the pattern of practice…that allowed men's dominance over women' (832) but that it should also imply a 'plurality…and hierarchy of masculinities' (846), an emergence through 'particular ways of representing and using men's bodies' (851), as well as acknowledging 'the practices of women' (848) in its construction. These authors also discuss the ways in which hegemonic masculinity operates for marginalised social groups. In this context, black working class young men, as a marginalised group within British society (Mac an Ghaill, 1988; Sewell, 1997), can take up dominant versions of masculinity specific to their subcultural group as a way of mobilising power. Indeed, Connell and Messerschmidt (2005) argue that 'locally hegemonic version[s] of masculinity can be used to promote self-respect in the face of discredit, for instance, from racist denigration' (842), a process which Poynting, Noble and Tabar (2003) refer to as 'protest masculinity'. Education researchers have explored this in relation to social hierarchies within schools, suggesting that young black men are positioned as (socially rather than academically) powerful in relation to other student groups (Sewell, 1997; Mac an Ghaill, 1994; Archer, 2003). I now propose that the operation of (a localised) 'protest' masculinity operates in similar ways for the research site, and calls for its own particularised and constraining form of

'classy' sexiness for young black women: encapsulated in the aspirational image of 'Beyonce and Jay Z'.

My research participants' discussions of 'popular boy' operate around young black men's (imagined) bodily capacity and access to material gain: their physical strength, achievements in sport and/or music, their future economic capital and their entitlement to various sexual partners. These forms of capital are compromised in that they operate within a system offering limited opportunities for black working class men, as Whannel (2002) suggests: 'sport and show business stand alone as public arenas in which black excellence is celebrated' (181), also proposing that 'representation of black male athleticism in the mainstream [British] media draws on established stereotypes…the powerful and threatening black body, the cool, the streetwise and the sexy' (2002, 174). I read this in terms of Alcoff's (2006) understanding of racialization as a dehumanising perceptual practice, dictated here by a particular 'regime of truth' (Foucault, 1994, 131) about black, male bodies as they exist in particular, and limited, 'fields of visibility' (Foucault, 1979, 202). However, in alignment with Butler's notion of 'subjectivation' (2004) as always a partially creative process, and Ahmed's (2004) understanding of agency as space for self-direction within processes of subjection, I propose that the young black men who socialise with my research participants mobilise power within such processes: power that has implications for young women's own gender performances.

Majors (1998) discusses, for a US context, how a certain 'cool pose' is often developed and used by black men 'as a response to the limits that institutionalised racism places on their other opportunities for self expression' (1998, 15). He goes on to explore how, amongst other things, black men's relationships with women can go towards establishing this 'cool pose' as a resistance strategy, enacted with 'a potent personal style [and] a verve that borders on the spectacular' (18). Majors' discussion resonates with my observations about the particular group of high profile black boys with whom

my research participants socialised with throughout the year: "the sports boys".

The college had recently established two vocational football and basketball 'Academies', through which young (mainly black) men receive intensive sports training, delivered by visiting, high profile professional sports teams. These academies are highly celebrated by the institution, with a prominent and consistent presence in the college's marketing materials, well-attended sports matches and regular 'photo-shoots' involving this student group. A number of students enrolled onto this programme came to attract attention from my research participants for adopting the kind of 'cool pose' Majors describes, as Rebecca indicates:

> CS: are the basketball boys significant in the college at all?
>
> R: I think some people find them like success…no not successful but really popular (.) cos all them boys are like good looking but then I haven't seen white (.) have I seen white boys? No (.) I think it's cos there's black boys in the basketball team so it's like (2) I think (.) I just don't know…those boys think because they're popular it looks as if they're really tough and big
> **Interview with Rebecca, 10th June 2015**

Rebecca's words suggest that these particular young men embody their black, sporting masculinity as a 'potent personal style' (Majors, 1998, 17). Indeed, it seemed to me that many of these young men would occupy certain spaces with what Winter later refers to as "swagger", itself reminiscent of Youdell's (2003) discussions of young black men's 'cool pose' as a form of 'protest masculinity' within British schools. Some of these young men would, it seemed, employ their "swagger" as a 'corporeal style' (Butler, 2010, 484) that conveys a sense of un-missable bodily presence and dominance in social space, especially in relation to young black women they socialise with. For example, while I was interviewing a small group of my research participants in a classroom, one of the basketball students walked slowly in through the door without knocking or invitation. Directing a broad smile to the girls, he politely greeted me, placed his hand on the back of my chair and proceeded to pick up the worksheet on the desk we were sat around. The students had been learning about the female reproductive system that day, and this young man proceeded to inform the girls

that he understood all of this already, and then, again with a broad, commanding and not un-flirtatious smile, tell them what he knew.

I suggest that such "swagger", the kind that claims (in this case quite literal) ownership of women's bodies, is not produced from within these young men, as if they somehow emanate 'cool' and confidence; rather it is co-constructed and invited by other bodies. These other bodies include media representations of male sporting and 'show business' bodies, but also those of young black women, in their embodied reactions to the presence of these young men, 'practices of women' (Connell and Messerschmidt, 2005, 848) that also affirm and produce hegemonic masculinity. For this particular example, the deeply embodied reactions and 'orientations' (Ahmed, 2004, 209) of the young women towards a high status boy's quite dominating presence in the classroom seemed to be a combination of invitation (all eyes on the entering boy, followed by laughter, smiles and the shifting and rearranging of bodies) and a flirtatious resistance (playfully telling the boy to go away, while laughingly challenging his 'knowledge' of the female reproductive system). The young women's reactions here reflect the work of education researchers who have made similar observations about young women's strategies of simultaneous invitation and resistance to male advances within a heterosexualised school space (Youdell, 2005; Ringrose, 2013). They discuss how these responses are carefully managed within a gendered system in which young women need to establish feminine identities that entail sexual attractiveness, while maintaining a (desirable) sense of sexual chastity. Indeed, the young women's embodied reactions to these young men also serve to construct their *own* bodies, through a 'congealed history of approaches' (Ahmed, 2006, 97), into an embodied discourse of 'emphasized femininity' (Connell, 1987, 2005) for this context: one through which a young woman is required to be 'sexy' *and* 'classy' counterpart to the sports-playing and socially playful young black man.

A need to 'balance out' one's sexiness is present in my research participants' discussions about the ways a prestigious black girl will look and conduct herself.

In such discussions, the word "class" or "classy" is commonly used to denote aspirational behaviour, with the words "slag" and "ho" used as the undesirable counterpart to the image of the sexy-yet-classy girl. As Winter puts it: "what makes you a slag is no self-respect, no dignity, no pride, just uggh – just - at least do it [have lots of sex] with class, not a slag". To elucidate this further, it is important to maintain an intersectional understanding of gender, in relation to a *particular* need for a balance between sexiness and classiness for young black women. Indeed, these young women are acting within a 'power-knowledge' (Foucault, 1978) system in which women's bodies exist within 'regimes of truth' (Foucault, 1994, 132) that commonly represent black female bodies as readily available, and even hypersexual, objects of (both a black and white) a male gaze, and for hetero-sexualised male possession/consumption (hooks, 1994, 1997, 2001; Hill Collins, 2004; Brooks and Herbert, 2006). Such a context necessitates the performance of a 'classy' and respectable, yet still 'sexy', black femininity for my research participants. Indeed, researchers discuss a 'normative sexuality and gendered respectability' (Cox, 2012, 85) that operates for black girls as a strategic response to prevalent discourses that position black women as sexually deviant and ever available (Weekes, 2002; Cox, 2012). This can again be elucidated with reference to 'race' as a dehumanising perceptual practice (Alcoff, 2006), one which invites young black women to engage in more deliberate, 'synoptic' (Jagodzinski, 2010) identity performances in order to circumvent some of the real and troublesome judgement that racialization brings them (Ahmed, 2012).

The need to carefully perform and maintain a black feminine identity that is not "scandalous"[24] can also be traced in media images that my research participants refer to as aspirational. A primary media identification that the young women refer to in their articulation of this, the right kind of sexiness, is the public figure of Beyonce. A discussion with Rebecca reveals a particular way in which Beyonce is aspirational in constructing prestigious black femininity:

---

[24]A term a research participant used during the pilot study to refer to the kind of reputation black girls should try to avoid.

CS: do you think [the basketball boys'] presence has had an impact on the way girls are in the // college?

R: // mm hm cos some girls will always chase after the boys in the basketball team (.) or they're boyfriend and girlfriend so I think it's changed the way girls act here (.) I think sometimes they just want to show off or come in the basketball events to just look at the boys

CS: is having a boyfriend important then?

R: it is for the girls cos (2) sometimes they just want to look like Beyonce and Jay-Z!

Interview with Rebecca, June 10th 2015

In Rebecca's explanation, young women's positive 'orientation' (Ahmed, 2004, 209) towards (the image of) Beyonce is entangled with their heterosexualised aspirations to have a high status boyfriend, the "Jay-Z" for their localised context. Rebecca's reference to an internationally known black 'power couple' here is also suggestive of the complicated ways young women exercise agency within processes of subjection (Butler, 2004, Ahmed, 2004). On the one hand, Rebecca's choice of this particular heterosexual couple, rather than the more prevalent images of white 'power couples' in the mainstream media, acts as a form of creative agency and resistance to 'white supremacy' (Gillborn, 2005) in the mainstream media. On the other hand, the public figure of Beyonce can be understood as a symbol of a patriarchal, capitalist system working to co-opt 'blackness' for financial gain[25], especially in the commodification of an acceptable black female body: sexy, glossy yet still demure and classy, and positioned firmly within a highly visible, and carefully managed, heterosexual relationship. Indeed, Rebecca's words point towards a tacit understanding that possessing the right kind of (sporting or showbiz) black boyfriend is a key route

---

[25]There is much debate, within both formal academia and intellectual circles on social media, regarding the public image of Beyonce, and whether she represents resistance to or collusion with a racist, patriarchal, capitalist system (hooks, 2016; Kumari, 2016). It is not within the scope of this study to fully engage with these debates. However, I acknowledge them here to emphasise how young women's own processes of subjectivation, evident in their engagement with celebrity figures such as Beyonce, entail processes of both agency and subjection.

social status for this group of young women. This balancing act of sexiness and classiness is not only maintained via 'orientations' (Ahmed, 2004, 209) towards other bodies and images then, but also operates as a more synoptic identity performance within a highly judgemental arena in which one step out of line takes you from 'Beyonce' to "ho".

It is also important to highlight here young black women's pride in their identities, and that various strategies of resistance both through and against this discursive context. I now explore how this sense of pride and resistance is mobilised in often lively ways in the research site, especially within a final identity, or identification for the prestigious black girl: namely, her 'strength'. I also suggest, however, that this localised and teenaged discourse of the 'strong black woman' operates as its own 'story of raced and gendered domination' (Mirza, 2010, 2) in the production of the already precarious balancing act of prestigious black femininity.

(iii) the black superwoman and the strong black girl: *"a straight bad bitch"*

Many of the young women I work with in the college convey intense pride in identifying as black and female, both in their deep engagement with images of black feminine success discussed in this chapter, but also in their friendship formations and their aesthetic and stylistic attachments (all to be discussed in later chapters). This reflects existing research conducted with young Black British women (Mac an Ghaill, 1988; Mirza, 1992, 2012; Weekes, 1997, 2002; Youdell, 2006), and is also suggested by how keen my research participants are to locate a singular, positive identity position of "black girl", while simultaneously defending it from racist stereotypes and seeking spaces for becoming within it. This complex form of identity work mirrors the ways in which the young Asian women within Shain's (2003) research 'play an active role in [both] confirming and transforming the cultural spaces they inhabit' (129). Shain (2003) discusses this in terms of young women's 'strategies' within racist and sexist terrains, something that resonates for my research context.

A key example of such a 'strategy' emerged within one of our group interviews, in which Melody came to fervently defend a group of young women she refers to as "the Jamaican girls". These young women were a small friendship group of black, female BTEC students who are Jamaican nationals, each of whom very recently moved to the UK from Jamaica. The "Jamaican girls" had performed a dance piece in a college talent show, and their (according to Lara) "explicit" performance had been stopped after a group of male students had jumped up onstage and started dancing with and filming them. The teacher who had stopped the show, a Black British woman in her early 30s, had apparently taken the microphone and announced that the students should stop as this was not "a strip club" (quoted by Lara). In this group interview with Melody, Lara and Cairo after this event, Melody expresses anger at how a group of young black women, even those with a different ethnic and national heritage to herself (Melody identifies as Black British African), were "kicked off" stage when they were actually "just doing their thing" and when it was "their <u>culture</u> though Miss". Weekes (1997), in her own study with young black women, discusses this kind of essentialism as nothing less than strategic: 'young black women's talking about black identity as one-dimensional and based on specific…signifiers may serve a certain purpose for marginalised groups – that of relative empowerment' (113). Indeed, Rebecca firmly and concisely describes a singular, positive identity position for black women, one that is echoed in many discussions with my research participants:

CS: so what does being a black woman mean to you?

R: umm being strong (.) independent

Interview with Rebecca, 10th June 2015

In both Rebecca's and Melody's words I locate an image, and discourse, of a "strong, independent" black girl "doing her thing". This discourse operates as a key form resistance and 'creative action' (McNay, cited in Ahmed, 2004, 190) in the face of (constant) potential pathologisation they face in the research site. I now introduce two broad features of this discourse that come to dictate a final

requirement for the prestigious black girl: that she stand up to oppression with "my girls" (Lara), but that she also become the "bad bitch" who nobody, even another black girl, will mess with.

Researchers have explored how young black women, in schools and other spaces, come together in enacting collective practices of resistance against the racist and sexist oppression they face (Mac an Ghaill, 1988; Weekes, 1997; Youdell, 2006a). A common example in the research site is the various forms of verbal critique my research participants collectively enact towards the ways in which they are labelled. One such moment is Lara, Melody and Cairo locating a double standard in the institutional response to the "Jamaican girls" being "kicked off' stage in the talent show:

> Melody: yeah obviously cos like the Jamaican girls found [being 'kicked off' stage] offensive cos it was their culture Miss
>
> CS: so they felt they were kind of shamed
>
> Melody: yeah [kisses her teeth]
>
> Lara: we didn't take it the wrong way (.) but like the boys
>
> Cairo: it was because of what the boys did that made it look like 'come on just get off stage'
>
> Lara: yeah
>
> Cairo: if the boys didn't get off their seats and come and dance with them
>
> Melody: it all would have been fine
> **Interview with Melody, Cairo and Lara, 19th May 2015**

The dynamics of this conversation, the ways the young women weave their responses together to build a collective critique peppered by various non-verbal forms of expression, reveal the affective ways in which these processes of resistance occur. I read these processes as enactments of deeply embodied 'orientations' (Ahmed, 2004, 209) of anger towards practices of control they are subject to. These orientations also seem to be experienced, mobilised and affirmed collectively, as I witnessed in the young women's final, and ultimate,

response to the basketball student's invasion of their classroom in the example given earlier. Indeed, after (partially) accommodating and even inviting his presence, my research participants ultimately drove this young man out of the room by erupting into a collective chorus: shouting the word 'vagina' at him, repeatedly, until he (quite quickly) left. As well as such practices of collective resistance however, in this instance reclaiming ownership of the "vagina", I also perceived a more individualised way in which my research participants embodied a 'strong black girl' discourse.

In a discussion about Nicki Minaj as "the ideal black woman", Winter refers, with a little sigh of appreciation, to her "bad bitch attitude":

> I just love her - I just really love her. Ah [exhales] - she's just <u>bae</u>[26]
> (3)…[a] straight bad bitch. Her bad bitch attitude.

As Winter explains to me, being a "bad bitch" refers to a "don't mess with me" attitude, and in discussing the 'codes' for high status (black) girl, Cairo identifies a form of embodiment in addition to a sexy and classy heterosexual allure: "do you know for a girl I feel like it's who has more people scared of them (.) like other girls in the college." As implied here, the "don't mess with me" attitude of "the bad bitch" is not necessarily directed towards the oppressive actions of a white institution or black boys, but also towards other black girls (as I explore in Chapter Seven). It is here that I locate a more individualised discourse of 'strong black girl' in the research site: this young woman not only fights against systemic oppression with the support of her fellow black girls, but will also stand up against anyone who dares "disrespect" (Winter) her, even if this someone is a member of her own black, female peer group.   She will also do so in ways that dramatically resist a 'docile body of femininity' (Bordo, 1997, 103), as my research participants suggest in their quite scathing discussions of black girls who embody an apparently quiet and submissive femininity.

The term the young women use for what they perceive as a passive and weak performance of black femininity is "moist", and they describe this identity

---

[26]A North American slang word, meaning one's romantic partner, but also more generally a loved one, or someone who is held in admiration and with affection.

position in ways that reveal a deeply embodied 'orientation' (Ahmed, 2004,) of distaste towards its features:

> Kayla: ugh (.) like (.) I hate that word (.) cos to me moist is when someone's a little bit wet um (2) say like someone doesn't do anything (.) like retaliate
> **Interview with Kayla, 4th June, 2015**

What ultimately emerges here is another rhetoric of judgement that serves to bind the performance of successful black femininity into a narrow set of identity features, in which young black women need not only to be sexy and classy, but also tough. However, in avoiding a 'moist' label, and mobilising a sense of autonomy and agency in doing so, the young black women is open to judgement in a different way: in becoming 'aggressive'. As Weekes (2002) explains:

> 'the young Black women represented in [Griffiths 1985 study] were perceived...to be 'loud' and almost aggressive in the way they would argue or fight with boys and other female peers if they felt they were being taken advantage of...their abilities to take various degrees of control over certain aspects of their identities has led to their labelling as 'superstrong', but [this label] is one that quickly translates into aggression' (253).

Indeed, in both the literature and in my research participants' discussions surrounding the 'strong black girl' discourse, the need to "stay classy", and thus avoid judgement, again rears its head. This manifests in the recurrence of the terms "dignity" and "class" in young black women's articulations of the desirable form of strength, both in the literature and my research. And for my research participants in particular, this emerges in a pressing need not to be seen as "ratchet", as discussed earlier. In this respect there is now another discourse of acceptable, and potentially powerful, black femininity that is qualified, and toned down, by a need to be classy in order to avoid racist and sexist judgement. The message seems to be: be sexy but not slutty, be strong but not aggressive - or else.

To contextualise all this within a wider 'story of gendered and raced oppression' (Mirza, 2010, 2), I turn to a body of black feminist literature that explores a

shifting discourse of 'the strong black woman', identifying its emergence in the racist and sexist positioning of black women during times of enslavement and emancipation, resiliently carrying the weight not only of their own oppression and abuse, but that also of the black men and children they are expected to nurture (Wallace, 1978; Thornton Dill 1979). Wyatt (2008) explores changing manifestations of this discourse in what she refers to as 'a genealogy of the Strong Black Woman stereotype' (54), a stereotype that serves to erase/excuse structural oppression, and 'becomes the fulcrum for changing race, gender, class, and generational power relations' (54). Indeed, a number of black feminists writing in the late 20th and early 21st centuries explore how this oppressive image of the individual, strong black woman shapes the experiences of young black women in both contemporary North America (Morgan, 1999; Jones, 1994) and Britain (Mirza, 1990; Weekes, 2002). These writers discuss imperatives for black girls to have 'dignity…the lip and the nerve to raise up herself' (Jones, 1994, 3), a 'no-nonsense' attitude to any disrespect shown by peers (Weekes, 2002) and 'no matter how bad shit gets, [the ability to] handle it alone…and with dignity' (Morgan, 1999, 72). As Thornton Dill (1979) points out, this discursive imperative to be 'superstrong' (Griffiths, cited in Weekes, 2002, 253) 'represents both…oppressive experiences…and the liberating attitudes of personal autonomy and sexual equality' (Thorton Dill, 1979). It is this notion of a dual process of 'mastery and submission' (Butler, 1995, 45) in my research participants' mobilisation of the 'strong black girl'/'bad bitch' discourse that I take up for the rest of this study.

Conclusion: navigating the balancing act of prestigious black femininity

For young black women who participate in the subcultural group discussed in this chapter, it seems there is a narrow route to public, social success – so narrow in fact, that it becomes a tightrope-like balancing act, with the threat of a downfall into judgement with one step out of line. This balancing act entails maintaining a simultaneous (hetero)sexual allure and strength, both mediated through an idea of 'classiness'. It is only through this balancing act that young

black women can maintain the identity of respectable and desired black girl within a coded, and loaded, field of racialised and classed compulsory heterosexuality and its legacy within 'stories of raced and gendered domination' (Mirza, 2010, 2). Within the (subcultural) research space, dominated as it is by a form of hegemonic black masculinity, young black women should be attractive to young black men in a way that does not make them "slags"; they should also proudly and assertively embody their black (feminine) culture in a way that does not make them "ratchet", but prevents them from turning "moist" within a context, a historical legacy, that positions the terms "strong" "black" "woman" as almost interdependent terms (Jones, 1994; Morgan, 1999). This balancing act, while difficult and precarious, has deep appeal however: not least due to the limited options a black, female HSC BTEC student has for status, both within the college and beyond.

A conversation with Winter and Tinuke further reveals the complex and quite exhilarating ways this balancing act operates in my research participants' imaginations, and this conversation, again, centres around the figure of Nicki Minaj:

> CS: Can you find a picture on your phone of someone who embodies the ideal image of a black woman?
>
> W: oooh I know who I'm gonna find (4) wait I'll show you [while looking in her phone] I cant believe I'm about to tell you this - but I had a dream I was her (1) I feel like a weirdo!
>
> T: who is it?
>
> W: Nicki Minaj
>
> T: I knew it. I knew it. That's exactly who I was gonna say!
>
> W: the perfect woman innit?
>
> T: yup
>
> W: I just love her - I just really love her. Ah [little exhale] - she's just bae (3) There's quite a few black women I'd like to be like though (1) I'd like to be like Rihanna - like her "I don't give a fuck attitude" and

then I'd like to be like Beyonce - like her <u>classy</u> thing and her like high status (1)and then there's Nicki Minaj. The straight bad bitch. Her bad bitch attitude.

CS: so is that like the perfect combination of qualities? If you were to take those ingredients then that would be the //

Winter: // perfect girl
Interview with Winter and Tinuke 3rd June, 2015

This image of an ideal, "perfect girl" as a blend of a number of high profile, non-white American celebrities who each embody a form of 'sexiness, 'classiness' and 'strength', can again be elucidated with reference to Coleman's (2009) work on the relationship between media images and bodies: 'with popular media images there is a 'destination' for a body's becoming' (101). Indeed, Winter's engagement with this particular image, and her focus on one day reaching it as a destination, can be seen to operate affectively through her exhale of breath in response to her musings on Minaj, and her literal dream of actually being Minaj herself. However, as Coleman (2009) suggests, 'it is through popular media images that girls experience their 'own' body as limited or fixed in particular ways' (100). In this it is fitting that Winter can only dream of being the version of Nicki Minaj she idealises. Indeed, Tinuke soon suggests to Winter just how difficult, if not actually impossible, it is to be this hybrid "perfect" black girl:

T: when you think about it. Like (1) you can't be Beyonce and Nicki Minaj at the same time - you can't be classy and like a bad bitch at the same time

W: but you <u>can</u>. Do you know what I'm trying to say? You <u>can</u>. Nicki Minaj is classy <u>and</u> a bad bitch.
Interview with Winter and Tinuke 3rd June, 2015

Winter's quite fervent insistence on the possibility of combining these qualities reveals how deeply important it is to young women's dreams of social success be able to master this difficult balancing act. This, I suggest, is in no small part due to the ever-present potential for downfall into judgement if the balance is not upheld, all framed by a deep and shame-imbued understanding of the limited routes to other forms of success.

Cairo indeed makes it painfully clear what consequences can befall the young black woman who does not get the balance right. The following interview extract is from a conversation that took place the day after Cairo had been physically injured in a fight at the college gates involving Kayla, Felicia and Felicia's mother (see Chapter Seven). Cairo did not seem not to be in the most positive frame of mind regarding "black girls" and her own 'identity options' when she offered this theory; however, it is one that (with varying levels of resistance) was also affirmed by Felicia, Kayla, Melody, Rebecca and Winter. Here is how Cairo explained it to me:

> Cairo: That's how black girls are - I just feel like you're either
> ratchet – like you'll fight - or we're quiet (2) we're just moist [...]
> or they're just, like, slags
> **Interview with Cairo, 2nd June, 2015**

This quite damning explication of the three available identity positions for black girls within this subcultural and institutional space reveals how, even though the prestigious, hybrid "perfect girl" is a difficult act to achieve, the consequences for not achieving it can be disastrous.

However, within all this there are clear spaces for hope. Processes of agency and resistance, even small, have been shown in the 'creative action' (McNay cited in Ahmed, 2004, 190) my research participants employ both through and against the discourses of social success that shape their lives. I now explore similar processes of both subjection and agency in relation to the discourses of educational success my research participants navigate within the college, before going on to answer my first research question directly: how might these quite compelling and compulsory discourses of success explain the educational exclusions my research participants encounter?

Chapter Five
Targets, desires and (un)educable bodies: discourses of educational success in a 21st century inner-London college

In this chapter I explore two discourses of educational success that my research participants navigate in their college. The first is a dominant 'neoliberal' (Kelly, 2001; Davies, 2014) discourse that positions education as an individualized route to social security and 'upward' mobility, fundamentally shaping the institutional space of the research site and the identities and emotional engagements of people within it. While facilitating opportunities for young people's educational achievement and motivation towards their desired futures, I suggest this discourse also marginalizes considerations of cultural difference, community and structural inequality, and serves to construct some students as 'uneducable' within the college space (Leathwood and Hey, 2009). While my research participants, both staff and students, engage in this neoliberal discourse they also complicate it through their varying investments in another goal for education: the more collective empowerment of young people in an economically deprived area of inner-London. It is in this respect that I introduce a second discourse of educational success: that of education as integral to both individual and collective black female 'empowerment' (Mirza, 2009; Sears, 2010), in a society marked by an inequality of both 'distribution' and 'recognition' (Fraser, 1997).

Different groups of people in the college mobilise these discourses of educational success in shifting, politically invested and deeply embodied ways. I discuss how the young women describe and otherwise demonstrate their educational identities and relationships to education, and also explore how their teachers navigate the educational climate and view the purpose of education for their students. First, however, I define a target-driven, individualised and future-oriented 'neoliberal' discourse of educational success and its implications for young people, and explore how it manifests through both internal policy and the engagements of senior members of staff.

A neoliberal discourse of educational success and the production of 'uneducable' and 'impossible' bodies[27]

'Success, Ambition, Resilience'

'[We aim] to raise the aspirations and attainment of all students by being a College of academic and vocational excellence.'

Two key themes emerge through the above statements, the strapline and vision statement of the research site at the time of research. First is a notion of 'success' rooted in academic attainment and future prosperity, and second is a focus on the individual, here positioned as the 'resilient' and 'ambitious' driving force behind any such success. I understand these themes with reference to discussions of a late 20th and 21st century period of reflexive modernization in which 'material and discursive processes […] are transforming […] lifeworlds' (Kelly, 2001, 27). According to Beck et al. (1994) and Davies (2014), any such transformative processes are driven by an economic imperative for individual freedom within a society automatically governed by the principles of the free market, rather than by a political or moral imperative for a particular type of social organization. Indeed, these transformations are framed in terms of movement away from the social welfare system as the logic of 'market relations […] compels the individual to choose' and become 'self-produced' (Kelly, 2001, 26) within what is understood to be an economically precarious time: a 'risk society' (Kelly, 2001, 27). The outcome, according to Beck, is a 'surge of individualization' (1992, 87), and, accordingly responsibilisation (Kelly, 2001) of the self *for* the self (and implicitly for the nation).

Kelly (2001) ultimately names these societal transformations in terms of a '(Neo)Liberal governmentality' which functions to 'reconfigure the practices of government by conceiving the subject as […] choice-making and responsible' (2001, 29). As Davies (2014) discusses, neoliberalism is 'not a unified doctrine' (3). However a common characterization of a neoliberal political framework

---

[27] Terms drawn from the work of Leathwood and Hey (2009) and Youdell (2006a) respectively.

across the literature cited in this chapter is one through which value is understood in measurable, ultimately economic terms and through which individuals are required to be resilient, responsible and self-producing in a context of both (assumed) individual freedom and acute (economic) uncertainty.

Discussions of a '(Neo)Liberal governmentality' echo a growing body of discussion of a 21st century British education system (Shain, 2003; Ball, 2003, 2008; Francis, 2006; Youdell, 2006a; Mirza, 2009; Archer et al., 2010; Shain and Bhopal, 2015). In exploring the implications of this framework for British schools and schooling, Ringrose (2013, 3) defines neoliberalism as a discourse in which 'subjectivity is re-constituted in economic terms'; in this, students become positioned as 'machines' of productivity whose goal it is to 'self-perfect' for the future, within a wider system of competition between schools, regions and nation states. Under this framework, the purpose of formal education ultimately becomes to facilitate, even to monitor, individual students' production of themselves into successful and resilient (namely economically productive and viable) subjects. A key outcome of this is an acute and narrow focus on academic achievement (Archer and Francis, 2007), with achievement itself being, as Francis and Skelton (2005) put it, 'extraordinarily narrowly conceived…as exclusively reflected by credentials from performance in examinations' (2). The impetus of this 'obsession with academic attainment' (Mohanty, 1998), is a drive to (economically) sustain not only the individual and the nation state in a time of precarious reflexive modernisation, but also to sustain the individual educational institution that must itself be a (marketable) success within an increasingly privatized public education system (Ball et al., 2000; Hatcher, 2011).

Davies (2014) discusses how sociologists have interpreted this neoliberal governance not in terms of striving for prosperity in the face of seemingly automatic modernization processes, but through 'the language of exploitation, dominance and unhappiness' (9). The literature cited thus far on the British

education system engages this language in raising the same central problem with this contemporary approach to schooling: that concerns around social justice recede from the frame. As Archer and Francis (2007) put it, 'mainstream educational debates have become dominated by the neo-liberal language of 'quality' – in which concerns with '*e*quality' have become evacuated and consigned to the margins' (ii). Indeed, under a neoliberal framework, 'class, gender and family coordinates recede' (Kelly, 2001, 26), to leave only the individual, as a fully responsibilised subject, accountable for their educational success and indeed failure. Archer et al. (2010) critique this process in their suggestion that 'young people come to see themselves as individuals in a meritocratic society, not as classed, gendered [or raced] members of an unequal society' (9). Naming a myth of meritocracy in this way problematizes the notion of individual(ised) freedom for young people in the British education system. Indeed, researchers suggest that a rhetoric of the 'DIY self' (Kelly 2001, 30) serves not only to overlook the material effects of structural inequality on young people's educational experiences, but also (more covertly) produces a raced, gendered and classed notion of the ideal student within British schools (Shain, 2003; Youdell 2006a; Archer et al., 2010). As Wright et al. (2000) put it: 'policy has exacerbated the problem of exclusion [of some social groups more than others] through a reinforcement of the concept of the 'ideal' pupil [via] cost efficiency, examination performance and marketization in schools.' (10).

What makes an 'ideal pupil' under a neoliberal framework can be understood through Leathwood and Hey's discussion (2009) of the 'educable body' (430) within a target-driven education system: rational, unemotive, efficiently productive, innately capable of academic success, and, if not, then at least compliant and hardworking in pursuit of this goal. Significantly, these features of 'educable bodies' within a target-driven system cohere with what researchers discuss as white middle class norms of (academic, rational) masculinity and (docile, compliant) femininity that dominate institutional expectations and inform disciplinary practices in UK schools (Archer and Francis 2006; Francis and Skelton 2005). A discourse of educational success that

covertly requires white middle class forms of embodiment in these ways, while sidelining the tangible effects of structural inequality, positions those who fail to 'embody [educational] success' (McRobbie 2009, 73) not only as uneducable, but also 'at risk', and therefore implicitly at fault within this 'risk society' (Kelly 2001; te Riele 2006). And indeed, it is often working class young people from ethnic minority communities who are positioned through a 'risk' discourse in UK schools and post-16 providers (Ball et al., 2000; Archer et al., 2010). In a similar way, Youdell (2006a) argues that particular students can become not just 'uneducable', but 'impossible' bodies in educational institutions, exploring how this manifests in specific and acute ways for black, working class young people (2003), and for black working class young women in particular (2006a). Indeed, intersections of 'race', class and gender should be foregrounded in seeking to understand the particular effects of neoliberal discourses of educational success for young people.

Much research in recent years has explored how young women are positioned through and engage with a neoliberal discourse of educational success, often referring to the image of the high achieving, upwardly mobile, can-do girl of the contemporary UK education system (Harris, 2004; McRobbie, 2009; Ringrose, 2007, 2013). Such research suggests that young British women are positioned by schools, media outlets and educational policy as the ideal neoliberal subject: goal-oriented and brimming with (economic) potential. Ultimately however, this critical research highlights the high levels of anxiety striving for such an impossible subject-position can create, demonstrating how a postfeminist rhetoric of *girls can do anything* masks a judgemental rhetoric of *girls should do everything* with little recognition that young women's life chances are still affected by structural inequalities, and are so in different ways for different girls. Walkerdine et al. (2001) and Baker (2010) indeed highlight the complicated and sometimes painful identity work working class girls engage in within an education system that demands not only high academic attainment against all odds, but that they embrace a notion of (upward) social mobility as part of their educational success. This works alongside research into the integral

but often side-lined role emotion plays in the formal education process for girls and young women (Gordon, 2006; George and Clay, 2013). The question is, how might such a process of emotion-imbued striving for (neoliberal) feminine educational success play out specifically for Black British working class girls, and for my research participants in particular? To answer this question, it is first crucial to explore how a neoliberal discourse of educational success manifests in the research site at an institutional level.

An institutional discourse of success: from policy to people

An idea of neoliberalism as a rather automatic system of governance (Kelly, ..; Davies, 2014) is recognisable in the research site, and at the time of research the college's key strategies and policies indeed articulated a seemingly depoliticised discourse of educational success – one that emphasised individualised academic achievement as it translates in numerically measurable ways in the public realm. This sat against a background aim of the survival of the institution in precarious times, as discussed in Chapter One, with rhetoric of the college's survival dominating speeches delivered by the Principal at the start of the year and translating into a number of policies and strategies.

A significant aspect of this system were the attainment targets that came to wholly dominate the aims for each curriculum area. These targets were not differentiated for particular student groups, thus positioning all students from the outset as having an equal capacity or at least need/right to achieve. However, attainment was always measured after the fact in terms of ethnicity and gender (which were treated separately) in order to, in the words of one Vice Principal, "identify areas for intervention" and, implicitly, weakness. Key strategies in this respect included regular monitoring of students' grades throughout the year, frequent "intervention" sessions set up for those judged to be underachieving, and course evaluation proformas, to be completed by teaching staff. These proformas evaluated the 'success' of a course through detailed attainment data analysis, also inviting teachers to provide data on the

success of their class in terms of ethnicity, specifically, 'BM' (Black and Minority students), as (implicitly) an 'at risk' group to be closely monitored. The college's pastoral system was also put to the service of this goal of attainment, with pastoral referrals often being made with the primary purpose of addressing perceived underachievement. For example, on the following HSC proforma, students' "academic issues", "personal issues" and academic intervention referrals ("PIXL") were conflated into one C4C ("cause for concern") document:

C4C Student Chart for H&SC and Social Sciences

Name	Course/Level/Subject Eg. HSC L3 Yr2	behavioural issues,	academic issues,	personal issues	poor attendance MAIN	Poor attendance English	Poor attendance Maths	Behind with work	Absent from PPE (Abs)	PPE_U or well below TAG	Tutor contract	ST contract	Attending interventions	Not attending interv'ns	PIXL	PIXL Att	PIXL not attending	Progression concerns	Comments: Parental involvement Mitigating or aggravating circumstances Any other comments
1. ▮▮▮	Level 3 yr 2	x	x	x										x			x		Is known to the department. May have a SEN. very disruptive in class. Finds it hard to sit still Needs a lot of one to one and help

Figure 1. Health and Social Care 'cause for concern' document

This all worked alongside the introduction of performance-related pay for teaching staff[28]: of the three targets that now dictated whether a teacher would receive their annual pay -rise, at least one needed to be numerical and related to student attainment. An additional performance-related strategy, in aid of the college surviving its next impending Ofsted inspection, was an increased focus on the measurement of teaching and learning, with relentless lesson inspection schedules, and frequent CPD sessions on how to teach an "Ofsted Outstanding" lesson. This training, as I remember it as a teacher at the time, had an overt focus on the new buzzword within school inspections, demonstrating 'progress' towards meeting assessment criteria within lessons, with this becoming the sole focus of the pedagogy we were encouraged to develop as teaching staff.

Another focus was on securing funding for the following academic year, primarily through enrolment numbers and retention. This drive was often at odds with the attainment targets, as there was now a financial imperative to

---

[28] https://www.gov.uk/government/news/new-advice-to-help-schools-set-performance-related-pay

recruit and retain students deemed 'at risk' of failing. In alignment with this, there was increasing emphasis on developing marketing materials in order to attract prospective students. The kinds of success story that the college came to showcase through its marketing materials again emphasised individual academic achievement, with a focus on students who achieved top grades in their Level 3 and A Level courses, and who went on to study at the country's "top universities". A key marketing material developed to this end were a series of stories-of-success posters, featuring head and shoulder images of the college's most high achieving students, accompanied by a list of their examination grades and their future university destination; these images dominated the college website, and lined the gates on entrance to the college building. Where there was any reference to the broader educational life of the college, and the more evidently embodied identities of its students, marketing materials included almost always the achievements and accolades of the college's (all-male) sports teams.

The combined weight of these policies and strategies dictates a narrow discourse of educational success that not only emphasises individualised and measureable achievements for future economic use (university progression, sporting careers) but also precludes any kind of 'failure' as a possibility. It also leaves explicit recognition of the embodied politics of education and (particular) social identities out of the frame, other than in positioning certain groups of young people as worthy of a story of success, and others as in need of "intervention". This is all consistent with critical discussions of education under 'a neoliberal political framework' (Archer et al., 2010, 6) as presented above. Through the lens of this critique, there is indeed a covert politics to this seemingly neutral discourse of success, operating in how it foregrounds an equality of aspiration and opportunity, with a focus on each student as an individual on their own path towards high attainment - if only they draw on the support mechanisms available to them. This discourse thus produces a view of students who do not meet college targets as a "cause for concern", as 'at risk' of failure - but as also more covertly as putting the institution itself 'at risk' of

failure, and indeed teachers 'at risk' of losing their pay rise. It also seems that particular student groups come to be covertly positioned through this 'at risk' discourse: specifically, 'BM' cohorts (through the course evaluation sheet), those experiencing "personal problems" (through the 'Cause4Concern' proforma), along with those student groups unrepresented in the 'stories of success' marketing materials. The politics of all this emerges even more explicitly, bur is also complicated, through interviews with three senior members of the Senior Leadership Team (hereafter SLT).

Tom is the Interim Principal, introduced in Chapter One. Christine is a Vice Principal who was in role for the first half of the year, resigned due to her dissatisfaction with various aspects of the institution, and then returned the following academic year. Christine identifies as White Irish British working class woman, and within our conversation around girls' educational success, shared with me that she was herself excluded from secondary school at the age of 15, and worked her way into senior roles within the education system through non-conventional routes. I interviewed Tom and Christine individually in the academic year that followed the research period, and asked them to reflect on this period, especially the narratives and policies surrounding a notion of 'educational success' at the time.   A third senior staff member who I interviewed is Mark who was a Vice Principal in charge of student welfare and pastoral provision, and had been in role since the college opened. He is a white middle class man in his 60s who had acquired a reputation among teaching staff for being "ineffective" and "too soft" in his approach to discipline, with a common complaint being that "he never actually gets rid of anyone"[29]. My research participants describe Mark as "kind" and "understanding" with Cairo saying, "he actually listens to us". I experienced my conversations with these staff members as important spaces of learning regarding how a rather automatic neoliberal governance moves from policy to be mobilised through

_____

[29]Quotes that I noted down from informal conversations with teaching staff during the fieldwork year.

the people of an institution in deeply embodied, emotive and always contested ways.

In separate interviews Tom and Christine at first embrace a dominant institutional discourse of success by reinforcing the importance of academic achievement. Phrases repeatedly used throughout their talk on educational success include "outcomes", "qualifications", "employment/employability", "life skills", but also "equality". These terms work together to build a picture of the ideal neoliberal subject (Kelly, 2001; Walkerdine, 2003) who moves through the world as a responsible individual, with an unchecked capacity for success and social mobility given the right opportunities. This discourse was also mobilised through a more acutely embodied orientation (Ahmed, 2004) of pride and celebration, with broad smiles accompanying their talk and, in Tom's case, affirmative hand gestures when explaining his achievement-oriented vision for the college, as if laying down the terms of his students' success in life. Indeed, Tom and Christine mobilise a neoliberal discourse of success in a way that is emotionally engaged and mindful of the students as young people who will be facing competition in university entry and the job market, rather than as mere 'machines of productivity' (Ringrose, 2013, 3) who serve the survival of the institution. In this way, a neoliberal discourse of success embeds in the institution through the convictions of these senior staff members that they are doing right by their students, working towards an individualised but also equality-serving form of success. And indeed, the notion of a young person becoming ambitious, resilient and academically high achieving is not problematic in itself, especially when understood as a key route to further educational opportunities and economic stability for a group of young people who do not have easy and automatic access to such things.

These senior members of staff also, however, come to critique how this goal manifests in the institution, suggesting that the college's drive for educational success was also a narrow and almost automatic one of institutional need:

Tom: in the first instance we looked at success by exams or qualifications (.) just getting students to get through the qualifications
Interview with Tom, 23rd June, 2016

Christine: the official line would have been that SLT would want all of our learners to achieve […] passing their exams […] so I think it was about achievement for achievement's sake in terms of the fact of (.) as a college (.) getting our results over the [target] line
Interview with Christine, 21st June, 2016

Mark, who has worked in education for longer than Tom and Christine and has seen the growth of the college itself over almost a decade, also takes up this theme but develops it into a more direct and encompassing critique of how a discourse of "achievement for achievement's sake" had embedded in the college:

CS: what do you think the challenges are to developing an effective approach to education in this college?
Mark: Ofsted, if you like […] Ofsted and success rates[30]. Our focus has switched […] It's a particular beef of mine that the focus on just getting kids through exams has altered the nature of what we do […] which <u>was</u> about trying to be the best for all students, regardless of whether they were going to pass their exams […] because positive outcomes shouldn't necessarily just be measured in terms of whether students do well in their final assessment […] but because of Ofsted, and the way that's affected people's thinking, I think we've moved quite a way away from that.
Interview with Mark, 28th January, 2015

Mark's words here evoke what Mirza (2009) refers to as 'a dark cloud enveloping education' (154) regarding effects of a neoliberal political climate on the UK education system. Mirza's choice of metaphor is helpful for elucidating Mark's suggestion that a previously more holistic vision of education has been clouded over and distorted by a narrow and arguably darker focus on institutional survival via success rates. Mark's critique also features a term that all three senior staff members use, namely "getting students [through exams/over the line]". This language produces an idea of students in need of

---

[30]College 'success rates' were calculated through the combination of two measurements of success: student attainment and student retention

pushing, or herding, towards one narrow idea of success, with little room for acknowledging let alone celebrating difference and young people's agency – an agency that by definition should include the potential for choices/actions to the contrary (Ahmed, 2004). Indeed, an emerging institutional discourse of an uphill struggle produces a view of students who veer from this narrow path as a burden, reflecting Shain's (2003) discussions around how particular student groups are constructed as placing demands on schools' resources within 'a system of marketised educational provision' (129). Mark's educational philosophy on the other hand, demonstrated though his "beef" with a narrow idea of success, leaves space for understanding young people 'at risk' in a different way, and thus goes some way to explaining what the students experience as his "kind" approach to discipline and "accepting us as we are" (Cairo).

Tom and Christine do themselves come to identify another element of 'darkness' in the particular way an achievement discourse manifested, suggesting that SLT at the time did not interrogate the relationship between achievement and social identity, and instead held a patronising view of some student groups:

> Christine: there was always this feeling that um (1) because […]
> we might have a number of students who would have been on
> free school meals or would have come from (.) in brackets er "the
> disadvantaged" – I don't agree with that label - that as long as
> they passed (.) that that was OK because (.) of the kind of learner
> we were dealing with
> **Interview with Christine, 21st June, 2016**

> Tom: I think some of the senior leaders had quite a depressed
> view of what we were doing here [sighs] so I think they felt we
> were doing a good job for the [he uses scare quotes] "poor
> disadvantaged students in [names town]" (.) you know (.) as if we
> were a charity
> **Interview with Tom, 23rd June, 2016**

Reflecting discussions of the construction of 'at risk' youth within a neoliberal climate (Ball et al., 2001; Kelly, 2001), Tom and Christine suggest, with clear

signs of disapproval, that certain groups of students in the college had been positioned as a problem to be overcome, or even to be tolerated while they inevitably underachieve, with ultimate limits to the kind of success that can be imagined for them. However, neither staff member fully speaks to the particular student groups they believe were treated in this "depressed" way, with only Christine tentatively putting down a marker of "disadvantage" in terms of familial wealth. Gender and the often un-stated marker of 'race' are still left unspoken, and in this the covert politics to a neoliberal discourse of success again emerges, even when under critique. Indeed, the absence of direct considerations of intersecting systems of oppression in developing institutional understanding of educational success is critiqued by a number of researchers who explore the educational exclusions of black (and especially black working class) girls (Mirza, 1992, 2009, 2014; Wright, 2005; Phoenix, 2010).

Christine, however, *does* later go on to engage explicitly with considerations of 'race' and gender, and highlights an institutional trend of sidelining these matters when analysing and planning for success. Significantly, she chooses the treatment of Black Caribbean girls in the college as a prominent example of this:

> Christine: [during the fieldwork year] Black Caribbean girls' retention was very low (.) and we [SLT] looked at the different reasons for that and (.) as you know there were several students that got pregnant (2) and [she starts to speed up] that's not an excuse for us as staff because "oh they're Black Caribbean girls and we're expecting them to get pregnant" (.) basically we didn't take it anywhere
> **Interview with Christine, 21ˢᵗ June, 2016**

Christine's complaints here echo research exploring how young black women are constructed as 'at risk' of pregnancy, and thus of becoming a burden to the school/state (Mirza, 1992, 2009). For this institutional context, it is "Black Caribbean girls" in particular who are constructed as a homogenous 'at risk' group in this way, and through a seemingly simplistic and uncritical use of data.

Christine's complaints here are also consistent with critiques of a neoliberal system that is content to name markers of "disadvantage", for example ethnicity, gender and class, but only as part of a superficial equality drive, or, as Christine suggests, in order to justify underachievement in a time of institutional scrutiny. Indeed, there is a sense that outside of this nod towards, or co-opting of, structural inequality, there is little engagement with its deep, reaching effects on young people's educational success and opportunities.

Christine goes on to explain a seeming lack of engagement with matters of 'race', class and gender on the part of SLT firstly in terms of the "pressures" to meet never-ending targets, but also in terms of the team's almost exclusively white middle class membership:

> CS: so do you think there is something of an elitist white middle class culture in SLT?

> Christine: yes (1) without a doubt [...] I would rather see you actually dealing with the students (.) rather than writing a policy and paying lip service to show you're down with the working class and the black children (.) and I think we need to stop tip-toeing around these issues and be open with each other

Christine demonstrates a dis-identification with the rest of SLT here, addressing them as "you". She suggests that this group of people do not boldly and directly engage with the class and racial identities of the students they serve, reflecting research exploring the predominantly white middle class nature of the UK education system, as it manifests at a deeply institutionalised level (Gilborn, 2005; Archer et al., 2010). Indeed, by the end of this interview, which had become much more of a critical dialogue at this point than any of the other interviews I conducted with senior staff, Christine had come to give a more explicit critique of "the system", also discussing her sense of "sticking out" as a working class, Irish British woman who has had her own turbulent relationship with the UK education system. Her identifications in these ways serve to elucidate the impassioned way she finally discusses opportunities for female students in the college:

Christine: the question is what are we going to <u>do</u> because these
students [Black Caribbean girls] <u>should</u> have the same outcomes as
anybody [speeding up, starting to get more fervent in her tone, her
eyes begin to fill with tears] and when I say anybody, I don't mean
white middle class people who go to private schools [slightly
scathing tone] I mean just the same as <u>every</u>body <u>else</u> (1)
otherwise there's no equality in the system

Interview with Christine, 21st June, 2016

Reflecting an Ahmedian (2004) view of emotion as operating through embodied

personal and social histories, Christine's politics of success seems to be

entangled with her own history as a working class woman who has become

deeply angry at a system that fails young people, especially girls, from

"disadvantaged" backgrounds.

So it would seem that a neoliberal discourse of success has a particular

stronghold in the research site at an institutional level. It is mobilised through

policy but also in politically invested, sometimes celebratory ways by senior

staff who understand the implications (and importance) of academic success for

their "disadvantaged" students' futures. There is also, however, a fear among

members of SLT that this discourse takes a rather too narrow understanding of

the purpose and potential of education, and increasingly so. There is also an

emerging opinion that this institutional paradigm and its attendant procedures

do not necessarily serve social justice, nor facilitate the educational inclusion of

"Black Caribbean girls" in particular, instead constructing particular learner

groups as not only "disadvantaged", but as problematic to themselves and the

institution.

It is also clear, however, that this discourse manifests in deeply emotive

(Ahmed, 2004) and conflicting, shifting ways (Foucault, 1978, 1979). In this an

important space for hope, namely for things being otherwise, emerges. Indeed

Christine concludes our discussion by imagining an alternative and better

paradigm for educational success in her workplace:

"we should be empowering the students and making them have a
passion for the fact that it doesn't matter what their background is

> […] they need to have enough fire in their belly that […] they're comfortable with where they're from and what their journey has been […] it should be about helping young people know how to thrive in society […] because we're not understanding that pastoral and personal development is as valid a success as education"
> **Interview with Christine, 21st June, 2016**

I now develop this particular example of hope, an idea that education go beyond "achievement for achievement's sake" and "employability", to embrace the wider social and more deeply personal lives of young people, to create "fire in the belly" and to "empower". I explore this idea further through the educational engagements of Cairo, Felicia, Kayla and Winter and some of their teachers. Specifically, I explore how these people navigate a neoliberal discourse of success while also engaging in an alternative discourse: that of education as black female empowerment.

Educational success as black female empowerment: legacies and contexts

In later chapters I advocate a particular pedagogical model rooted in the work of Paulo Freire (1996) and bell hooks (1994), and the critical, liberatory praxis they propose. In this chapter, however, I focus specifically on the term 'empowerment'. This is a term that my research participants use, both staff and students, and thus is one that resonates with the contextualised meanings they mobilise in our discussions. It is also consistent with the notion of agency discussed in Chapter Three, with a sense of freedom 'within' rather than entirely 'from' discursive terrains. This term comes with complications, however, and no one obvious definition. Indeed, 'empowerment' is broad and contested as a concept (Sears, 2010; Yuval-Davis, 1994), employed across a variety of disciplines and as manifesting at various levels, from the individual to the community, and in various ways, from increased 'self esteem' to locally organised political action (Jenners et al., 2006). A common characterisation across this literature, however, is that of the actor, be it a family, individual, or even organisation, 'gaining control and mastery within the social, economic and

political contexts of their lives, in order to improve equity and quality of life' (Jenners et al., 2006, 32). In this respect, a discourse of education as empowerment has clear overlap with a neoliberal discourse of education as an individual's route to economic stability, but also is fundamentally distinct from it in recognising the differing contexts in which this might occur and an urgent need for 'equity' to be worked towards. As I argue for the rest of this chapter, a neoliberal discourse of education is indeed not replaced, but rather enriched and given more critical and caring meaning through the ways staff and students mobilise a discourse of empowerment in their educational engagements. Drawing on Yuval-Davis's (1994) discussions, I also work with an idea of 'empowerment' that resists such totalising notions as 'control' and 'mastery' (Jenners et al., 2006, 32), but rather 'can be felt momentarily' (180), in ways that 'connect a sense of the personal and the communal' (180), but always leaving room for 'shifting boundaries and internal power differences' (194). So, what might education as 'empowerment' mean for this particular context, namely the education of, for and with black working class girls studying HSC in the research site?

For critically situating a theme of education as black female 'empowerment' within a British (and Commonwealth British) context, the work of Heidi Mirza is of central importance. Mirza has traced notions of educational success, failure and, more recently, educational desire for black women in post-Windrush Britain over the past three decades (1992, 2007, 2009, 2014). A central theme throughout Mirza's findings is of education being nothing short of a 'consuming passion among the…black British community' as articulated in her work with Diane Reay around the 'new social movement' of black (female centred) supplementary schools in the UK (Mirza and Reay, 2000, 521). The authors draw on legacies of research in the US (Fordham, 1996) and France (Fanon, 1993) to argue more generally that black people's engagements with education serve to fundamentally challenge the 'dehumanisation' of black communities and 'invert the myth of black intellectual inferiority' (Fordham, 1996, cited in Mirza and Reay, 2000, 524). As Mirza puts it elsewhere, 'education in this sense

is not about the process of learning or teaching; it is about refutation' (2006, 153). Mirza also works to locate any 'consuming passion' for and understanding of education within Afrocentric feminist notions of community, and draws from the work of Hill Collins (1990) in this respect. I quote at length here to capture how Hill Collins, as cited within Mirza's (2009) discussion of black supplementary schools, draws out the contrast between neoliberal and Afrocentric feminist models of community:

> 'The definition of community implicit in the market model sees community as arbitrary and fragile, structured fundamentally by competition and domination. In contrast, Afrocentric models stress connections, caring and personal accountability…through daily actions [such as black supplementary schools] black women have created alternative communities that empower' (cited in Mirza, 2009, 108-109, addition mine).

The young and adult women who feature in Mirza's research indeed articulate a view of education as supporting black women and girls in becoming agents of their own lives, liberated (at least partially) within the structural inequalities that cause them harm and hinder their contributions to and sense of value within wider society. But how might such processes work in a distinctly neoliberal British context within mainstream, rather than supplementary schools?

Mirza's work demonstrates that young black women do relatively well within UK schools, in terms of attainment and in terms of their identifications *as* educationally engaged. Mirza does, however, highlight the complex identity and emotion work required to secure educational success in this particular context, contesting 'inappropriate, ethnocentric theories of female oppression that dominate educational research' (2009, 11). She therefore asks: 'how do we attempt to theorise the black female positive orientation to education' (2009, 11), and especially (I would add) in an increasingly neoliberal climate? Mirza's answer is to propose young black women's 'strategic' and 'dynamic' 'rationalisation' (2009, 26) of the unequal education situation they find themselves in: namely, that young black women adopt seemingly neoliberal

ideals of meritocracy and individualism in their striving for educational success, but as a way of 'strategically employ[ing] every means at their disposal in the educational system and the classroom to achieve a modicum of mobility in a world of limited opportunities' (2009, 11). Mirza discusses this 'strategic rationalisation' as enacted by the individual black girl as nothing less than a political act, operating within the very same framework of a community-oriented model of education as black female empowerment. In this, there is a 'paradoxical pattern of personal education desire and collective community commitment' (2009, 106) that plays out in young women's individual acts of educational striving. Ultimately then, according to Mirza's research, a potentially oppressive individualistic discourse of attainment can be re-embodied and re-mobilised through a discourse of collective black female empowerment.

Mirza's discussions and findings certainly resonate here. Firstly, with the experiences of my young research participants who strive for educational success in a results-oriented climate while mobilising a collective sense of an empowered, black, female identity, and secondly with the educational engagements of their classroom teachers. However, as I show now, the empowerment that some of Mirza's participants encounter within the supplementary school setting is tempered for this particular 'mainstream' and increasingly neoliberal educational context, as it has been described thus far. As Mirza puts it, 'in the recent climate of educational reform the creative and dynamic rationalisation of black, working class young women are now being tested to their limits' (2009, 26).

Discourses of educational success in a neoliberal climate: young black women and their teachers
(i) the young women: motivations, struggles and images of black feminine success

My four main research participants certainly adopt the rhetoric and the e/affects of a neoliberal discourse of success, and in ways that involve particular

emotion and identity work as black working class girls studying a L2 HSC course. Cairo and Felicia, for example, describe their immediate educational goals in terms of obtaining grades and qualifications: "my main aim this year is to get through Level 2 so I can progress to Level 3" (Cairo); "I'm aiming for Distinctions this year, and then I want to get on to Level 3" (Felicia). A sense of "getting through", and doing so on a linear path, echoes the institutional discourse of success explored earlier, and also reflects a covert opinion, reflected in the college's Level 3 focused marketing materials, that to be on a Level 2 course is to be somehow a failure. This is something that Kayla explicitly discusses in one of my first interviews with her: "if you do HSC and especially Level 2 courses - everyone looks at you like "oh you're dumb"…like "why are in you in Level 2?" I'm 19, so I like should be in my final year of college now". Kayla seems to be acutely aware that in being a Level 2 HSC student, she could be considered a failure in an education system not only shaped by covertly white, middle class, masculine ideas of success (as discussed in the previous chapter), but also so dominated by a linear sense of progress. This sense of not being far along, or good, enough in this competitive education system also resonates through the young women's complicated discussions around the "stereotype" (Winter) that black (working class) women become midwives, rather than, for example, doctors (see previous chapter). In all this, the covertly oppressive and normalising function of a neoliberal discourse of success emerges.

It is no surprise then that Cairo, Felcia, Kayla and Winter show considerable, if not anxious, interest in their grades and the precise mechanics of securing them. Before turning to a discourse of these young women as oppressed, however, I draw on Mirza's (2006) concepts of their 'dynamic rationalisation' of this system, as it manifests in a particular 'educational urgency' (144), as perhaps a better term than 'anxiety': namely, 'a desire to succeed against the odds' (144). For example, in our first interview, Cairo talks at length about the different GCSE Science exam papers she took at school, and how they added up to what was for her a disappointing D grade overall; and, again in our first interview together, Felicia is at pains to inform me that she secured a B+, not a

B (as I had initially thought) for her mock GCSE English exam the previous week. On the one hand, the young women's talk here reflects a focus on the minutae of results that researchers discuss as being a central characterisation of education under a neoliberal political framework. However, I suggest that within an apparently politically neutral attention to their grades, there is also a particular 'urgency' in asserting one's identity as academically successful. Indeed, it is significant that Cairo and Felicia undertake a narrative of proving their academic worth in this particular context: to me, their new white teacher, who is interviewing them for the first time for her study on black girls' educational journeys. Indeed, I read their insistence on proving their academic worth in this context as a more communally rooted desire for educational success (Mirza, 2009), perhaps emerging from their acute awareness, or embodied memory (Ahmed, 2004), of exclusion from and within the UK education system (as I discuss further in Chapter Seven).

My four main research participants also display an acutely personal, celebratory and indeed political motivation for educational success: a form of 'dynamic rationalisation' (Mirza, 2009) rooted in a sense of community (while still embracing a sense of individual striving). In a joint interview with Winter and Felicia, one in which I gained a sense of being 'schooled' around cultural norms I was not privy to, the young women explain the importance of education within their families:

> Winter: Caribbeans teach their children um without money you won't get nowhere [and] with most African children they stay on to further education (.) so both will like stay onto college and uni
>
> CS: so there is this drive for success?
>
> Felicia: yeah within the black community (.) it's either a focus on money or education
> **Interview with Winter and Felicia, 8th June, 2015**

The young women's assertions here speak to Mirza and Reay's (2000) discussion of education as a 'consuming passion' (521) for Black British communities, and also Mirza's discussons of an 'African Caribbean migrant

working-class ethos' (2009, 13), thus placing any (individualised) drive for educational success in the context of the wider community. This 'strategic rationalisation' (Mirza, 2009, 26) of the education system takes shape in a particular way for Kayla who, in her discussions of education, remobilises a discourse of the 'at risk' working class single mother (Phoenix, 1991) towards the future empowerment of her daughter:

> K: my daughter's my motivation [for being at college] because like when I was growing up I didn't have everything (.) like I wanted more things but I didn't get them (.) so I don't want my daughter to go through that (.) I want her to like be able to get anything she wants (.) so obviously I need a good job for that
> **Interview with Kayla and Winter, 2nd December, 2014**

Kayla's ultimate goal of providing for her daughter positions education as an empowering (for herself and for her daughter) route to a particularly material form agency and comfort - one that ultimately signifies a form of social change. Indeed, throughout these discussions, the young women all emphasise a particularly pragmatic motivation to any discourse of education as empowerment, that of "money" and material "things".

I had entered the teaching profession, as a young white woman from an affluent background, with a notion that "money" was a superficial motivation, and could even serve as anti-education in placing a focus on material gain rather than knowledge. My privileged and naive understanding of this particular motivation has shifted through working as a teacher in inner-London, but it is these interview sessions in particular that have produced a new understanding on my part. Indeed, the young women's emphasis on "money" as a primary goal of education entangles with their imaginaries of the educated, knowledgeable and empowered adult black woman, who stands on her own two feet in a world marked by inequality. Cairo and Felicia, for example, discuss their educational success not in terms of "achievement for achievement's sake", but for the purpose of becoming "independent", financially solvent career women. In doing so, they make reference to black female family members they admire: Felicia refers to her grandmother, who "works hard...and supports

everyone, and looks after herself", and Cairo refers to her mother's own return to education later life. Winter also discusses the role her mother and other black women have played in driving her towards educational achievement:

> Caribbean parents (1) they show tough love (.) so she'll say things like "ahh you're gonna be worthless if you don't go college (.) education is free (.)" so then it makes me feel bad – and that's also like the reason why I enjoyed studying with mature students at [names her former college] there was this one lady, she was Jamaican and she worked also […] and she always used to school us [the black girls in the class] (.) like "don't do this, you're here to learn" (1) and I miss that now
> **Interview with Winter and Kayla, 2nd December, 2014**

A sense that these young women find inspiration in an immediate legacy of black female engagement with education and "hard work", speaks to Mirza's (2009) and Mirza and Reay's (2000) research into adult black women's work to encourage educational striving in future generations of black girls. It also speaks to the affective power of images of other women in developing girls' embodied subjectivities (Coleman, 2009) and, specifically, to Black feminist research on the power of images of black women in developing black girls' identities (Hill Collins, 2000; Wyatt, 2008). This is not, however, to reintroduce the one-dimensional image of the 'strong black woman/mother' with its function of erasing the hard and complex work young black women engage in through their 'dynamic rationalisation' of the education system (Mirza, 2009). But rather, it is to say that Cairo, Felicia and Winter's deeply embodied 'orientations' (Ahmed, 2004, 209) towards educational striving and success seem to have been partially formed and consolidated through a legacy of performances (Butler, 1990) of educationally engaged black femininity that these young women have been emotionally affected/shaped by (Ahmed, 2004).

In these respects it is unsurprising that a clear sense of not only desire, but sometimes even of 'consuming passion' (Mirza and Reay, 2000, 521) manifests in the ways all four of my research participants engage with their college work. All four girls took (to varying degrees) a meticulous, proud and driven approach to producing their work during the fieldwork year, especially in their more

153

obviously material engagements with it. As I observed during their lessons and in reviewing their submitted work, they often tackled their individual written assignments with a painstaking attention to detail, ensuring the work was perfectly word-processed, included carefully chosen images and that choices of font and layout were consistent and neat. Kayla emphasises the importance of this in interview:

> CS: do you take pride over your work?
>
> Kayla: [smiles broadly] very [laughs] extremely (.) like even just like [picks up the pace, with another smile] if it's on the computer like (1) I like it to all be aligned correctly (.) like I hate messy work
>
> CS: do you think that is all tied up with a desire to learn, having it looking nice?
>
> K: yeah it just makes it feel like you're interested
> **Interview with Kayla, 8th June 2015**

A sense of "interest", investment and indeed embodied pleasure as bound up in materially producing college work is evident here in Kayla's smiles, her laugh and her increasing pace (unusual speech characteristics for her within our interviews). A drive for not just good but perfect work is also evident in Kayla's English teacher's reports of her becoming "obsessed" with spelling tests, begging to do them at the start of every English lesson, and also in the amount of detailed content and high level analysis Cairo and Winter would put into their assignments, despite being told by their teachers that this often far exceeded the pass criteria. Felicia indeed indicates the pleasure she felt in doing a piece of work not just well, but at its very best:

> CS: so what does your work mean to you?
>
> Felicia: Everything (.) I just love doing the work and getting it right (.) I love it (.) I'm very competitive
>
> CS: With other people or with yourself?
>
> F: Both
>
> **Interview with Felicia, 13th April 2015**

I interpret this kind of deep involvement with the very look of one's coursework, and a commitment to mastering the tiny details of one's work, as a

drive for perfection, or faultlessness, that has its own gendered, raced and classed context. Indeed, any deeply embodied pride and striving in respect to their college work can be understood in terms of these young women not only proving their educational worth, but materially producing themselves as empowered, black women, reflecting Ellsworth's (2005) discussions of the identity-work that can take place through material acts of learning and making. These investments also clearly extend to the young women's articulations of their educational identities. Indeed, when asked to describe themselves as learners, all four girls position education as central to their identities, and describe themselves as committed learners in ways that are affirmative, and, especially in Winter's case, proud: "I am just someone that wants to learn" (Kayla); "education really matters to me" (Cairo); "I'm a hardworking student" (Felicia); "I'm self-educated Winter!" This again reflects research suggesting black girls have a positive relationship with education, and position education as integral to their identities (Mac an Ghaill, 1989; Mirza, 1992, 2009).

Despite all the ways in which a discourse of education as empowerment clearly entangles with - and at times seems to triumph over - a neoliberal discourse of success, there are also ways in which this neoliberal discourse pervades and 'clouds' (Mirza, 2009, 149) the young women's educational experiences still. This is in regards to other approaches the young women take to completing (or not) their college work, and in regards to their ideas about themselves as "good students" (or not). I discuss these instances in detail in Chapters Six and Seven, in which I analyse the processes of educational exclusion the young women encountered throughout the year. However, I foreground now how a neoliberal discourse of educational success, even when enriched by a discourse of black female empowerment and the 'dynamic/strategic rationalisation' of young black women, still produces a discourse of the 'ideal pupil': namely, a white, middle class norm of femininity, exacerbated by the need for a docile, productive and visibly un-emotive educable body in a target-driven system. It is with this in mind that I now explore a final, and crucial, group of people who

mobilise discourses of educational success within the college: the young women's classroom teachers.

(ii) the teachers: joys, pressures and the production of uneducable bodies

The teachers I interviewed for this study also reinterpret, to a certain extent, a neoliberal discourse of attainment in terms of the social empowerment of their black female students. A more Afrocentric feminist vision of education, one that strives to push against the conditions of gender, racial and class oppression through building loving and critically-minded learning communities, emerges especially in Sophie's and Anala's discussions around the purpose of education for HSC students in their workplace. Anala is especially explicit about a notion of empowerment when discussing her teaching practice, articulating an understanding of educational attainment-as-empowerment in terms of her own experiences as a woman from an ethnic minority community (British Indian), attending school in the UK. Sophie, on the other hand, had recently completed an MA in the sociology of education in which she researched black girls' friendships and their relationships with their white female teachers, and she often spoke about the complicated role she might play in her students' empowerment as a white, middle class woman. These more critical and liberatory ideas about education also manifested in particular teaching approaches I witnessed these teachers engage in (see later chapters). This all reflects research around teachers' political and emotional engagements with their jobs and highlights, in a Foucauldian sense, the small but significant processes of professional resistance teachers engage in within this system (McInerney, 2007; Youdell, 2012; Carlile, 2013; Giroux, 2013).

These teachers also exhibited an ostensibly embodied pleasure at the learning and achievements of their students, and, just like Cairo, Felicia, Kayla and Winter, come to mobilise a neoliberal attainment discourse in emotive and politicised ways. For example, on a number of occasions Anala called me over to her desk to look at work one of the research participants had done,

accompanied by a beaming smile and references to how "bright those Caribbean girls are". These moments often led to animated discussions about the need for the institution to support these girls more in their educational endeavours, during which I would suddenly remember my research and ask if I could turn my phone recorder on. This level of emotive engagement in and excitement over students' work was also visible in Sophie's talk, and in the way both women marked students' work, using words such as "fabulous!" and "brilliant!", an example of their own embodied pleasure entangling with deliberate pedagogical strategies to encourage and motivate their students. This pleasure can be understood as an embodied and pleasurable 'orientation' towards their students' success that has developed through a set of 'norms' (Ahmed, 2004, 209), namely, their own respective feminist and anti-racist educations and educational experiences.

However, there is another discourse at play through which a young woman's educational achievement triggers a seemingly spontaneous emotional reaction in her teacher: namely that of an oppressively neoliberal discourse of educational success. Indeed, Anala and Sophie discuss the pressure of this system, and the difficulty of finding both physical and emotional the space for a more empowering educational approach within the neoliberal climate in which they teach. In this, they demonstrate another facet to their emotive engagement with an attainment discourse: that of their own professional success in the eyes of the institution. In this, an underlying theme of success-as-*survival* again emerges, not only relation to these teachers' pay and job security, but also to their sense of worth and value as a teacher. Indeed, Sophie found herself having to fight for her yearly pay rise after not meeting a particularly ambitious performance target. She describes the emotional rather than the financial weight of this, and as a blow to her very sense of self as a teacher:

> Sophie: I had to put together this ridiculous (.) long (.) long
> document proving my worth and efforts as a teacher (.) and Camilla

I actually cried in [Vice Principal's] office (1) I care so much about my students but it felt as if they were doubting that.

Interview with Sophie, 30th August, 2016

Sophie's experience suggests that within a high-pressured and precarious neoliberal context, 'failure' (construed in terms of attainment and achievement) comes to produce another kind of 'impossible body' (Youdell, 2006z): indeed, there is no room within the discursive terrain of this college for teachers to be considered successful, or in any way worthy as teachers, without the requisite attainment targets having been met. This reflects research exploring the increasingly narrow possibilities for teachers' identities within this neoliberal system (Shain and Gleeson, 1999; Lasky, 2005), and pressures and resulting stresses of working within it (Perryman et al., 2011; Lasky, 2005).

In interview these teachers also discuss, and seemed to relish doing so, the intense and relentless pressure they feel to "get the students through" (Anala), echoing the rhetoric that the three senior members of staff used to describe the college's agenda at the time. Anala and Sophie also reference, in a way that the senior staff members do not recognise in their respective interviews, the sheer volume of the workload and the anxiety this all produces. For Sophie in particular, it seems that this entangles with feelings of guilt and concern that she is not providing the best education possible for their students, and she describes a dream she had in which Winter criticised her teaching style. Indeed, researchers discuss how teaching as a practice and an identity operates in acutely emotive and embodied ways (Zembylas, 2005), through desire and anxiety, exhilaration and exhaustion, pride and guilt, and often in relation to relationships with students (hooks, 1994). Particularly significant to this research is Sophie's and Anala's discussion of the emotional exhaustion they feel in trying to balance this 'achievement work' with the pastoral work they need to do on a daily basis. They describe this balancing act of sorts as "draining" (Sophie), "testing" (Anala) and "exhausting" (both),

especially in relation to their "emotion work" (Sophie) with the HSC cohorts, and with my research participants in particular:

> Anala: in this context you cannot operate unless you are willing to give yourself emotionally (.) I don't want the emotional burden anymore because I'm so empty, the tank is so empty (.) and it's because I can't give anything to my son and my husband (.) it cannot work…

> Sophie: Definitely, because if you look at the size of our groups and the complex nature of the students we tutor and the pressure we've been put under (.) it's not – I mean (.) I don't know (.) it's not A Levels though, is it?
> **Interview with Anala and Sophie, 16th June 2015**

In their articulations of exhaustion and guilt, these teachers suggest the physical and emotional costs of teaching in the contemporary education system. It also seems that the pressure these teachers experience works to contribute to the institutional view of these particular students, "not A Level" students, as a burden - and yet again, despite everything, as a problem.

In interview, Anala and Sophie openly reject and resist using a discourse, and a dichotomy, of the good/bad student. They insist that they do not view their students in these terms, but instead articulate a desire for what Sophie calls "an ideal classroom environment", which they both describe, in separate interviews, in terms of respect for difference, regard for other members of the learning community and the possibility for critical thinking. However, these teachers, and especially Anala, do also describe particular aspects of student behaviour that are crucial to producing the kind of work that needs to be achieved within this system. Commonly stated expectations for their students are good attendance, good punctuality, coming prepared for lessons with the right "equipment for learning" (Anala), being focused on their work in lessons, and meeting deadlines. Cairo, Felicia, Kayla and Winter also list these features of a "good student" in my individual interviews with them about this topic. These features on the one hand meet some practical necessities of holding a lesson: it is of course useful, for many learning purposes, for students to all be

present in the room at the same time, with particular forms of equipment. However, these features also serve to reinforce a neoliberal understanding of education as preparing students for achievement in assessments. This reflects research arguing that, in a target-driven educational culture, certain forms of learning and educational engagement become more desirable than others, namely those that maximise the opportunity for consuming content for exams and for producing coursework under time-starved conditions (Wright et al. 2000; Shain, 2003). This emerging discourse of the ideal learner coheres with Foucauldian (1979) ideas of schooling in which bodies become 'docile' for the purpose of efficiency and control. While seemingly politically neutral, some particular requirements for ideal student 'behaviour' in such a system, quiet, ordered, ready to consume knowledge, serve again to covertly render some bodies, with their unique forms of educational engagement, more 'educable' (Leathwood and Hey, 2009, 430) in this system than others. And again, I suggest this will have exclusionary consequences for my research participants, as I discuss in later chapters.

Conclusion: a 'dark cloud' of neoliberalism, and rays of hope

In this chapter I have explored some ways in which 'a dark cloud enveloping education' (Mirza, 2009, 154) seems to have taken hold within the research site. This is a performance oriented institution in which questions of emotion, social identity and politics of education are often erased or at times subsumed and used within a uncritical drive for institutional success/survival. Caught up in this drive are young people who must embody an image of an ideal neoliberal subject or else be positioned as a failure or a burden. Also caught up are their teachers, who must ensure their students' attainment whatever the cost. I have also explored how this manifests in particular and particularly acute ways for my research participants as black working class female HSC students, and for their politically engaged yet "exhausted" teachers. In light of this, Mirza's question within her own work seems appropriate: '...is all this talk of love and the new social movements naïve, a black feminist Utopia?' (2009, 154).

However, through the hopeful and critical educational engagements the young women, of the adult black women who support them, and of staff members, I have also shown that a drive for 'empowerment' as well as 'attainment' does prevail within this space. In this there might be something concrete in this 'black feminist utopia' (Mirza, 2009, 154). The question is how might these groups of people work together towards this 'utopia' within a sometimes oppressively neoliberal institution? This question needs to be understood in light of the findings of the previous chapter. Namely, that any quests for educational success for my young research participants will be taking place *alongside* their quests for social success as "prestigious" black girls, and all within one target driven institution. With this in mind, I now explore how Cairo, Felicia, Kayla, Winter navigate and negotiate their journeys towards "prestigious" black femininity and educational success simultaneously within their sometimes oppressively neoliberal college. In doing so, I address my first research question directly: what are the processes of educational exclusion that these young women experience? I discuss all this in relation to two key aspects of their identities: that of a sexy and classy "buff" black femininity, and that of a strong and independent "bold" black femininity.

Chapter Six

Stories of exclusion and empowerment (1): buff black girls in the neoliberal college

In an opinion piece posted [two days after the 2012 US Election], [white feminist blogger] Alice Robb complained that President Obama 'conformed to the ideology that sets up beauty as something young girls should aspire to'[31] when he referred to his daughters as "beautiful" during his victory speech.

My first thought was "Really? No..*really?*" Overall [I agree] there is too much importance placed on women's looks… But it doesn't apply here. At the heart of the issue, one Robb may not even realise, is that Black girls turn into Black women who don't get so many regular affirmations of their beauty in this world.

There's no question, it can be difficult to be full-lipped, kinky-haired and/or wide-hipped in a world where those traits are much more celebrated when they are on a paler hue…

Black girls, and Black women too, need to hear they are beautiful.

(Demetria L. Lucas, November 12th 2012, *Essence Magazine*)[32]

When I asked my research participants what particular "challenges" black girls face in the college, the topic of "looks", "appearance" and the "pressure" around this always emerged as their first or second response. The complicated and pressing engagement these young women had with their "looks" as "prestigious" black girls indeed became clear during the research period, as did a particular and detailed discourse of beauty: buffness. In this chapter I explore how my research participants navigate an imperative to achieve this particularised, sexy and classy, form of beauty in the college space: navigations that I read as part of striving for recognition in a context that offers limited routes to success as black, female, HSC students, but plenty of spaces for judgement. Specifically, I explore how my research participants' engagement with a discourse of buffness intersects with their educational exclusion, in an institution shaped by neoliberal and white patriarchal discourses of educational success. I also, however, consider how buffness acts

---

[31] Robb (2012) 'Strong, Smart, Beautiful?' accessible at: http://toglobalist.org/2012/11/strong-smart-beautiful/

[32] Lucas (2012) 'Real Talk: Why Black Girls Need to Hear They're Beautiful' accessible at: http://www.essence.com/2012/11/14/real-talk-why-black-girls-need-hear-theyre-beautiful

as a space of empowerment for black working class girls, with reference to a critical discourse of black female self-affirmation that positions 'self-love' as a political strategy and understands a young woman's 'buffness' as part of her "hustle"[33].

The young women explain what it means to be "buff" with reference to a particular set of physical characteristics related to their figures and to the styling of their hair and make-up. In this chapter I elucidate the details of this corporeal 'ensemble of rules' (Foucault, 1994, 131), and how these details manifest within panoptic and synoptic 'fields of visibility' (Foucault, 1979, 202) and 'economies of touch' (Ahmed, 2004, 2006) as processes of both subjection and agency (Butler, 2004) within wider systems of domination. The details of buffness are important to elucidate here given that its codes seemed to dominate, in painful and pleasurable ways, the young women's time, their relationships, and indeed our conversations in interview. These details are also important to articulate specifically with reference to my research participants' *own* words and perspectives, given that students would often come under institutional scrutiny for them. I explore how buffness intersects with processes of educational exclusion with respect to the sexualisation and pathologisation of young black women's bodies in formal educational spaces (Youdell, 2006a; Archer et al., 2010), and also with respect to the balancing acts young women encounter in navigating different discourses of success in this neoliberal and media-saturated context. I also, however, suggest that the young women's beauty practices can be understood as '[re]creative agency' (McNay cited in Ahmed, 2002, 190) within the institutional space – a space they mark with their *own* images of the empowered and educated black woman.

I also acknowledge here, from the outset, a particular complication and indeed discomfort in an adult white middle class woman writing about young black women's (sometimes painful) relationships with their appearance. In this I aim

---

[33] A term introduced to this discussion in dialogue with Diana, see page 179.

to maintain a critical and caring awareness of what it means for me to discuss these matters, employing reflexive strategies discussed in earlier chapters that have allowed me to better understand - and attempt to implement in my practice - the liberatory politics of 'Black girls…hear[ing] they are beautiful' (Lucas, 2012).

The buff black girl's figure and educational exclusion

(i) "the bum…the breasts…it's Nicki Minaj!": (de)constructing the figure of buffness

When I asked the young women to explain buffness to me by selecting an image of the "ideal celebrity woman", they all chose the same person: Nicki Minaj. Winter refers to Minaj as "the ideal black woman", and Lara, Melody and Cairo engage in a similar rhetoric, with Cairo citing particular bodily characteristics to this effect:

> Cairo: the big bum and the big breasts and pretty face (.) it's //
> Nicki Minaj
>
> Lara: // Nicki Minaj [while laughing – as if 'oh of course']
>
> Melody: Nicki Minaj
>
> Lara: cos with Nicki Minaj (.) any boy would just run up to her (.)
> and just lick her
>
> **Interview with Cairo, Melody and Lara, 19th May 2015**

In a similar way within a separate interview, Winter also discusses having a "slim thick" body, which she defines as having "a small waist, but big bum, thighs and breasts". Ideas about this aspirational bodily form also manifested in the young women's dance studio practices, such as standing in front of the studio mirrors, taking selfies or for one's own gaze, in postures that emphasise/create this particular kind of hourglass figure: through the pop of a hip, the arch of the lower back and lift of the chest, with hands placed, sometimes squeezed, firmly around one's waist. The young women's (de)construction of the buff black girl's body in these verbal and corporeal ways, with a focus on particular hetero-

sexualised bodily parts, reflects a legacy of black feminist research into the depiction of black, feminine bodies across Western history: from turn of the century European depictions of *the Hottentot Venus* (hooks, 1990; Ahmed, 2002; Hobson, 2003), to more contemporary representations of dancing black women as companions to the hegemonic black man in mainly US hip hop videos (Emerson, 2002; Weekes, 2004; Hunter, 2011a; Zhang, Dixon and Conrad, 2010).

On the one hand this research highlights how such representations of black feminine bodies enact a racist, sexist and classist discourse that positions black women's bodies (and specific body parts) as objects for heterosexual consumption, and indeed ownership: from the consuming/owning (and dehumanising) gaze of white, patriarchal, European colonisation, to the more contemporary consuming/owning gaze of the patriarchal, capitalist mainstream media, which rarefies specific parts of the black feminine form as objects for consumption, and profit. As Jarman-Ives (2006) puts it in her analysis of black masculinity and femininity within US hip hop videos, 'when women are objectified and fetishized – reduced to body parts – they become ideally packaged for exchange as cultural capital' (201). Lara indeed brings the language of hetero-sexualised consumption into the girls' celebratory discussion of Minaj, in imagining that "any boy" would "run up…and just lick her", a hypothetical encounter in which Minaj is imagined clearly in terms of value and prestige, but also, arguably, as an object rather than agent of sexual desire. Given populist and scholarly discussion of Minaj's persona/representation as a figure who embodies both a self-directed, black female sexual agency (Clifton, 2014) and also a bold, queer black identity (McMillan, 2014; Smith, 2014), I find it an indicator of the grip of compulsory heterosexuality in their immediate cultural terrain that my research participants filter their understandings of Minaj's body, her worth and her sexuality through an image of her as an object of male desire.

However, the researchers cited above also discuss the complex ways in which black women mobilise such representations for their own empowerment and

indeed pleasure. For example, Hobson (2003) explores black women artists' practices of 'turning the camera on myself' (Carla Williams, photographer, cited in Hobson, 2003, 98) and developing an aesthetic of the large-bottomed black woman for artistic and self-defining purposes, in a way that is reminiscent of hooks' (1992) discussions of the 'oppositional' black female gaze. Researchers have also discussed how young black women locate, mobilise and utilise a sense of value in their appearance and heterosexual appeal, but in selective ways that suit them (Hill Collins, 2000; Weekes, 2004; Gordon, 2008; Cox, 2012). Indeed, in Lara imagining Minaj as an object of attention from "any boy" (emphasis mine), the buff black girl is afforded desirability, status and so, arguably, power within her subcultural peer group, the importance of which I discuss in Chapter Four. The "ideal black woman" in these girls' eyes is not in fact pinned up within and fixed down by a white, patriarchal, capitalist gaze, but rather her desirability is re-mobilised within the more local terrain of the personal relationships a girl (might) have and (might) enjoy with black boys. Indeed, a sense of a two-way enjoyment of "buffness", that of their own bodies and the bodies of the boys they desire, is reflected within our group interview discussions: for example the young women sighing and laughing over Cairo's description of her favourite rapper's "sweaty" torso as she saw (and apparently touched!) it at a music concert, and Melody's beaming references to her sex life with her boyfriend. Researchers have indeed explored how young women engage in empowering identity-work and experience pleasure through articulations of their sexualities (Weekes, 2002; Ringrose, 2013; Ringrose and Harvey, 2015). In all this, a more liberatory appeal of a discourse of buffness becomes clear for the young woman.

In addition to the young women's talk around Minaj's body, an idealised image of the "slim thick" black woman operates in deeply embodied and material ways. For example, the effect (or rather affect) of their chosen images of Minaj was evident in how the young women leaned in around my laptop/Winter's phone to get a closer look, and in their apparent excitement when explaining the idealised nature of Minaj's (mediated) body to me. I read these reactions in

terms of deeply rooted orientations set up towards objects within cultural

terrains over time (Ahmed, 2004), and also in relation to how images of

femininity materially shape young women's aspirations, their desires and so

eventually their bodies (Coleman, 2009) into particularised gender

performances (Butler, 2010). The young women's own gender performances

take place in some deliberate, carefully constructed ways, as required within

the synoptic spaces of the college (Jagodinski, 2010), for example, in wearing

tight jeans with stitching around the buttocks that emphasise (or create) curves,

and through curve-creating poses for snap chat photographs and in front of the

dance studio mirror. I suggest that these small and persistent acts of bodily

construction, ones that require expertise and are no doubt felt through

sensations (the tightness of the jeans, the muscles contracting around the base

of the spine), serve to deeply reinscribe and reinforce the legitimacy of

buffness. As Ahmed (2004) puts it, 'this knowledge is bodily, certainly' (7),

rooted in the very fibre of bodies, and thus operating in both 'fields of visibility'

(Foucault, 1979) and through 'economies of touch' (Ahmed, 2006). These acts

of bodily construction also serve as a deeply embodied process of 'submission

and mastery tak[ing] place simultaneously' (Butler, 1995, 45). Indeed, the

creation of images of the self – in the mirror, on the smart phone - can be read

as an example of '[re]creative agency' (McNay cited in Ahmed, 2002, 190): the

young black woman quite literally, 'turning the camera on [her]self', to mobilise

an image of her own buffness at her own hands and for her own self-definition

(Ringrose and Harvey, 2015; Davies, 2013).

The notion of a corporeally entrenched set of rules, felt and enacted at a deeply

embodied level, also serves to explain both the pleasure and the pain that

seems manifest in the young women's performances of this bodily norm.

Indeed, these beauty norms operate through the emotions and relationships, in

ways that can both elevate and also crush young women, all within a number of

heightened fields of visibility that contain the promise of reward, but also of

punishment (Foucault, 1979; Butler, 1990; Ahmed, 2004). The potential to be

punished, and crushed, by failing to embody the ideal(ised) image of the buff

black girl's body seems to operate largely through young women's ideas around "what boys like", with Melody explaining that "it's girls and boys [who monitor black girls' "looks"] – but the boys will judge more on body". My research participants indeed reported a number of incidents in which young women mobilise boys' judgements of girls' bodies as part of their conflicts with each other. One example is Winter's account of an argument with Cairo early on in the academic year:

> …when I had that big argument with Cairo [on the street] she was just like "look at you (.) you're fat (.) you're big"…I was trying not to let it bother me but she asked a guy that walked past (.) she was like "look at this girl (.) would you ever have sex with her?" he knew he was meant to say no (.) so he did...I feel like maybe if I was a little bit weaker I would have been crushed.
> **Interview with Winter, January 2014**

Winter's account paints a picture of a public, competitive arena where any aspect of a young woman's physical appearance, particularly in relation to her (hetero)sexual attractiveness through an imagined male gaze, is fair game - a game that has the power to "crush" a girl. This indeed reflects research suggesting that young women seek social status through shaming and policing each other's bodies within a discursive terrain of compulsory heterosexuality (Epstein and Johnson, 1998).

It is not only young women who deploy body shaming as a mode of power in the synoptic spaces of the college, however. The potentially crushing outcome of not embodying the perfect "slim thick" body is reinforced in Cairo's account of how *male* students reacted to Felicia and Kayla fighting in the college foyer:

> …all the boys that were watching and laughing (.) [Felicia] made out she was friends with every single one of them (.) and to see them laughing (.) and they were insulting her (.) like (.) there were parts of her body that they saw (.) cos they saw (2) saw her stretch marks and her (1) you know [quiet voice] flabs (1) you know (2) they saw that and they were insulting and laughing about it (.) but it's like (.) imagine you think you're close to a boy and he's just like (.) laughing at you while you're getting beaten up
> **Interview with Cairo, 2nd June 2015**

168

This account reflects research around how hegemonic masculinity operates for boys within school spaces, specifically in boys asserting/constructing their own (hyper)masculine identities through the policing of girls' bodies (Robinson, 2005). The effect, or affect, of this on young women can be quite devastating, and indeed I remember it seemed difficult for Cairo to tell this story, with her doing so in a low, gentle and apparently sympathetic tone, peppered with pauses. I find this significant given that her relationship with Felicia was strained at the time, and that in other spaces she seemed happy to "cuss" Felicia, in a similar way to how she had "cussed" Winter on the street. On the one hand, this interview space, one set up by and shared with a slim-bodied, white female teacher, might have felt like a place in which the curvaceous black girl's body was taboo, or needed protecting from the judgements implied in such a taboo. However, this private interview room was perhaps also a space where Cairo did not need to mobilise power against other black girls in the same way she did in the corridor and on the street: public spaces dominated by the discursive practices of her peer group, among whom she must maintain "prestige". It instead seemed that a sense of sympathy, or perhaps empathy, at having one's appearance critiqued by male peers operated here as a prominent orientation for Cairo, something that made increasing sense to me as I learned about Cairo's own experiences of being "cussed" by boys for aspects of her appearance (see later in the chapter).

It would seem then that the buff black girl's figure, as encapsulated in the aspirational image of Nicki Minaj, operates as a deeply embodied and compulsory blueprint for the prestigious black girl's success, but also for her pleasure. 'Success' should be understood in this context as the achievement of social status and desirability from an otherwise marginalised institutional position, but also as avoiding shame and rejection within an intensely competitive, exposing and unforgiving visual terrain. Meanwhile, 'pleasure' should be understood in this context as the young woman's potential sexual relationships with others, but also in relation to "feeling myself" as an act of empowerment. This is a phrase the young women used to refer to enjoying

their own sexiness/sexuality, and had gained popularity during the research period as the title of a song released by Beyonce and their beloved Nicki Minaj ('Feelin' Myself') evoking a black woman's love for herself and her own body. In all this I suggest the construction of the buff black girl's figure is a barely refusable act and experience of both subjection and agency within a sexist, racist and classist terrain. With this understood, my hope would be that an educational institution might accept or even celebrate the empowering aspects of this identity performance, and also work towards addressing the ways it serves oppression for the young women. The reality within the research site was far from this hope however, and I now discuss the ways in which the buff black girl came to experience educational exclusion in her endeavours at "feeling myself".

(ii) too sexy for school?

One way in which the buff black girl becomes educationally marginalised is in how a discourse of the curvaceous black feminine body for (sexual) consumption and objectification extends within the institutional space. Brown (2009) indeed explores how black girls' bodies are 'punished and consumed' (93) in the adult-populated space of the high school dance, findings echoed by Youdell's (2006a) discussions of a dance performance in an inner-London secondary school, and also by research into, more generally, the ways that young black women are positioned through discourses of hypsersexuality (Weekes, 2002). Similar processes occur within the research site, across which the body of the buff black girl becomes an object for institutional consumption and punishment, often through discourses of protection and healing. This seemed to play out differently in relation to male and female staff members, people whose own professional identities (and targets) intersect with personal values and experiences. This is all within an institutional space in which bodies and embodiment are often officially ignored (Paechter, 1998, 2006, 2007; Ahmed, 2012), leaving room, I suggest, for covert, and quite unmonitored, processes of sexism and racism to play out.

On separate occasions during the research period, the college's (Black Nigerian male) security guard and (White British male) Vice Principal approached me, requesting me to ask female dance students to either "cover up" or "wear more clothes". This was in response to them leaving the dance studio for a drink (the security guard), or rehearsing *in* the studio once it had been opened up for public viewing during a college open evening (the Vice Principal). An implicit sexualisation of these young women's bodies here, accompanied by a sense that their bodies are somehow a danger in the eyes of others is brought into more direct articulation by the words of another white, middle class male teacher. Within a staffroom conversation around a black female HSC student who was considered 'at risk' of exclusion, this teacher stated something to the effect of: "she should also real*y* wear less revealing clothes - she has the body of a stripper and I really don't want to be looking at her in that way". In this institutional sphere it seems that the body of the buff black girl is not something that a girl utilises in her own production of an art form or an aesthetic ideal, nor is it something that a girl has a right to enjoy for herself: it is an item of public property, whose meaning exists only within the patriarchal gaze of the institution, and indeed of individual men, and whose power exists only in its capacity to somehow harm – either the girl it belongs to, the institution it belongs in, or the man who is looking at it. This process reflects research into how young women's, especially young black women's bodies are sexualised, consumed and positioned through a particular (white patriarchal) gaze (Paechter, 1998; Archer et al., 2010), and even a discourse of threat in schools (Youdell, 2006a). I suggest this process is also compounded by an increasingly marketised education system, in which students within an 'in-crisis' institution become valuable in their potential to attract future "good" students: either in the results they achieve or in the image they present.

This positioning of the black, female, teenaged body as 'too sexy' for school in such ways can have tangible exclusionary outcomes for young women's education. Such exclusionary processes also seemed to be directly enacted

more by female staff members within the college, as if a young woman's sexuality is adult women's business to contain, for example in the security guard and the Vice Principal asking *me* to enact their need for the young women to "cover up". A key example is when a black, female HSC student, in fact one of the "Jamaican girls" whose dancing caused a stir during the college talent show (Chapter Four), was sent home from her work experience placement at a care home for wearing an outfit that was judged "inappropriate" for this particular workplace. While it is reasonable to encourage young people in learning to adapt their appearance for different professional and social spaces within an increasingly fragmented society, the particular ways in which young black women's bodies are subject to control becomes clear in how this incident was reportedly dealt with. According to the account of a HSC teacher who was present at the time (a friend of mine who shared this story during an informal conversation about my research), the student in question was called into the Vice Principal's office on returning to the college building. My colleague (a White British, working class woman in her 30s) gave a shocked account of this senior staff member (a Black British, middle class woman in her 50s), asking this student to "cover yourself up" on entering the room, apparently in a tone of "disgust". She reported how a conversation ensued about how this young woman was putting her very future at risk through her outfit choice - in addition to her poor attendance and work submission record at college. The young woman was then apparently put on report directly to this senior staff member, who promised to support her, telling her at the end of the meeting "I know you're a good girl really." This encounter is of course indirectly reported, but my colleague's memory of particular phrases was vivid and specific, and was remembered through a sense that this disciplinary encounter had been unfair and gone beyond what was reasonable.

In the institutional, disciplinary space of this Vice Principal's office it seems this young woman was addressed through a discourse of risk and responsibilisation (Kelly, 2000, 2001), in which the 'risk' is situated not only in the extent of her educational efforts, but also in her body itself, a body that needs to be

immediately covered, to be managed, even within the enclosed all-female space of the Vice Principal's office. This sense of moral panic (Cohen, 2002) around this young woman's 'at risk' body is reminiscent of the times I've heard the phrase 'at risk of pregnancy' attached to, particularly, black, female HSC students. The very small percentage of students who do report pregnancies while at college suggest this label operates as a pathologising rhetoric that 'sticks' (Ahmed, 2004, 13) to particular (raced and classed) female bodies more than others. Indeed, one of the research participants for the pilot study expressed outrage that the Principal had apparently enquired whether she was pregnant after hearing her being sick in the girls' toilets (she was in fact sick from period pain). The positioning of young women's bodies in such ways reflects research about fears around the hypersexualised black, female, working class body - a body that is at risk of pregnancy and therefore in need of intervention (Weekes, 2002; Sears, 2010).

In the case of the young woman who had been sent home from work experience, another pathologising label is also reported to have operated: that of the "good girl really". The positioning of this student as a 'good girl underneath' marks the way in which the black, female, working class 'sexy' body is an object not only for exclusion and control, but an object for institutional healing, or Foucauldian disciplining. Indeed, Archer et al. (2007c) explore the ways that black girls are positioned in UK schools as 'bad' in their behaviour, but 'good underneath', and are then nurtured, or disciplined, towards this 'goodness' through the norms of an appropriately demure, white middle class femininity. The positioning of the black HSC student as at risk (of pregnancy, of unemployment) is enacted in these two instances by Black British, adult women. I understand this not only in relation to a sexist responsibilisation discourse, in which women are to take responsibility for their own "goodness" within patriarchal societies, but also with reference to black feminist research around adult black women's protection of black girls' bodies within a racist and sexist climate (Brown, 2009; Richardson, 2013).

Overall then, it seems as if the buff black girl's body, specifically her figure, operates as a site for pathologisation and exclusion within the research site, with little regard for how it affords her success, pleasure and in fact becomes compulsory for her within a wider sexist, racist and classist societal context. However, it is not only in relation to the buff black girl's figure that processes of both exclusion and empowerment take place for my research participants as prestigious black girls. Indeed, another acutely detailed, and equally compulsory, aspect of the 'ensemble of rules' (Foucualt, 1994, 131) is that of the young woman's make-up and hairstyling.

The style of buffness and educational exclusion

(i) make-up, weave and wigs: the buff black girl's tools for success

Another prominent feature of the young women's practices towards buffness, having "the pretty face" (Lara) as well as the figure, is that of highlighting and contouring, namely the practice of using different shades of foundation make-up to sculpt the face and the appearance of its bone structure. On the one hand, the expertise and the artistry required in producing the perfectly contoured face can be read as a material act of gendered pedagogy (Ellsworth, 2005; Hickey-Moody, 2013), one entailing teenage, black, feminine learning and self-definition in the white, patriarchal college space. Indeed, some female students in the college pay minute attention to detail in their make-up work, and the ability to execute this contoured look well becomes a matter of both admiration and criticism from other girls. For example, Winter reported to me how Cairo articulated a desire to forge friendships with "the pretty girls who do their make-up nice", apparently exclaiming to Winter on the first day of term "where are all the pretty girls at?!" In this, the perfectly made-up face is a way to wield power over other, less prestigious girls, as Winter suggests: "it was awkward - like she was saying I *wasn't* pretty". However, the perfectly made-up face is also a shared practice and area of expertise for the prestigious black girl and her "girls" – a way of creating and defining themselves in the college space,

and through the perfect(ed) selfies they post on social media. To read these practices as material practices of 'recreative agency' resonates with existing work exploring how girls use style and the styling of their bodies to mark out their own territories, and subcultures, in both physical and digital space (Aapola et al., 2005; Harris, 2005; Pomerantz, 2008; Ringrose, 2013). It also resonates with research exploring how young people from ethnic minority communities mobilise styles of dress, hairstyling and even comportment to mark a subcultural territory in a potentially hostile school space (Shain, 2003; Youdell, 2003).

Another dimension to the young women's make-up practices emerged through our discussions however – one that seemed distinctly more 'taboo' and shot through with both pain and anger: namely the matter of skin-tone (Weekes, 1997). Within our group interviews and discussions after dance class, the young women sometimes spoke about themselves and other girls lightening the appearance of their skin, either through using filters on social media images or with make-up. An example of such a discussion was within a long interview session with Cairo and her two close friends. Our conversation around skin-tone started as a lively group critique of black boys' seeming preference for "lighties" over "us brown girls", the ideal Beyonce to his Jay Z, but soon turned into the sharing of stories:

> Cairo: when I was in year 8 (.) there was this boy and he was like (.) every girl liked him and he wanted me (.) and I remember like (1) cos I was sitting in Maths and some boy was sitting next to me and he was in front and they were like talking about me and how they thought I was good looking 'buff' that's the word 'buff' and they were like 'eh if she was light-skinned though!'
>
> *Melody, Lara and I all gasp*
>
> Cairo: and I was like (1) 'really motherfucka?' [laughs]
>
> CS: and that hurt you?
>
> Cairo: it hurt me when I was younger but now it's like (.) I get man [laughs]
> **Interview with Cairo, Melody and Lara, 19th May 2015**

Within this moment, resistance to a discourse that positions only light(er)-skinned black girls as desirable counterparts to hegemonic black boys continues, in (what I experienced as) our aghast and supportive gasp, and in the stylised and proud defence Cairo mobilises ("really motherfucka?...I get man"). I understand this anecdote, and its vivid, proud, indignant telling, against a legacy of research exploring how black women globally, and particularly in the Western hemisphere, are subject to and resist a set of implicitly racist beauty norms in relation to the colour of their skin (Weekes, 1997; Leeds Craig, 2002; Poran, 2006; Tate, 2007; Okazawa-Rey et al., 2008; Thompson, 2009; Hunter, 2011b). It is significant that such conversations with the young women took place months into the research relationships developing, and mainly in sessions with groups of close friends. I read this in terms of this particular conversation topic needing an especially safe and trusting space: one populated with other black girls who choose *together* to share their stories, and thus include a white teacher-researcher in discussions around an experience she could never herself be subject to. The importance of sharing in such contexts can also be explained with reference to a potentially judgemental peer group. Indeed, a discussion with Rebecca is revealing of how any attempts at skin-lightening must be carefully and secretly managed, especially for a prestigious black girl who should not only be sexy, but classy too.

In a private interview, Rebecca (the only research participant who spoke about this topic on her own with me) mobilises a sense of secrecy and shame in relation to the processes of skin-lightening she believes some prestigious black girls in the college to engage in:

> Rebecca: some some girls say that (2) cos they see the prestige
> group and sometimes think that that person has bleached
> themselves cos of the way their hands look (.) like in relation to
> their face (.) I'm not gonna say names (.) name names (.) I wanna
> say it?
> **Interview with Rebecca, 10th June 2015**

Rebecca's words, and her hesitant keenness in uttering them, point towards a more covert practice of shaming through which the necessity of being a buff

black girl is maintained. The bind a prestigious black girl might be held in in this respect – be light-skinned but don't let anyone notice your methods of making it happen - should be understood with reference to intersections of 'race' and class. As Leeds Craig (2002) puts it, specifically for an African American context, 'a pigmentocracy that reinforced the link between color and class [served to] disparage dark-skinned women' (135). The notion that 'racialization' (Ahmed, 2002) involves placing bodies in different hierarchal classes of person through (violent) 'perceptual practices' (Alcoff, 2006, 180), helps elucidate the idea of a 'pigmentocracy' here, one that has relevance given the complicated relationship between 'race' and class in the UK (Aziz, 1997). Indeed, this term evokes an understanding of class as shaped by a colonial history, and its legacy within modern media, in which status and civility are associated with whiteness (Ahmed, 2002). This serves to explain why it seems of particular scandalous significance that a "prestige" girl be 'caught' lightening her skin.

A tension between pride in black feminine beauty "traits" (Lucas, 2012), and shame in relation to achieving the correct, classy, mediated type of beauty is also present in how the young women discuss hairstyling, reflecting another body of research around black women's engagements with their hair within white, patriarchal systems (Leeds Craig, 2002; Okazawa-Rey, 2008; Thompson, 2009). For example, after I'd given Melody some of my planning for this chapter to review, she explained to me that it was increasingly desirable for prestigious black girls to style their hair in "nice afros", as well as through the long, straight or gently wavy weaves and wigs that I had initially written about as the only visible choice for a prestigious black girl in the college. Melody was adamant that these were not the only choices, and seemed keen to correct this white researcher's description of the "Afro" hairstyle as absent from the possibilities for a prestigious black girl's aesthetic. This is evocative of Weeke's (1997) research with young Black British women in which, as Weekes discusses, her participants mobilise a rhetoric of pride in essentialised black feminine qualities as a strategy of resistance and empowerment. However, Melody's discussion of the increasing desirability of "Afro" hairstyles is complicated by the way she

qualifies the rules for this hairstyle through the need for it to be "nice" and "neat", styled through the use of wigs and weave, but "no, never <u>natural</u> hair Miss!" again, revealing how a covertly racist discourse of class is woven through an image of black feminine beauty. Indeed, Melody's complicated engagements here reflect contemporary discussions regarding black feminine beauty being acceptable when carefully managed, or, more specifically, when filtered through hegemonic white beauty norms (Hobson, 2003) or, as the opening article suggests 'on a lighter hue' (Lucas, 2012).

Winter also takes up a view that black girls' relationships with their hair are shaped by a legacy of racism, as her analysis of a discussion with Kayla suggests:

> with Kayla (.) she's one of those black girls that self-hates [...] I told her that I like African boys and she was like, "watch when your baby comes out with tough hair" and I was like "my hair is tough, what the fuck (.) my hair's not straight and silky (.) my hair is Afro hair" [...] I'm not ashamed (.) and she shouldn't be either.
> **Interview with Winter, July 16th 2015**

A notion of being checked and disciplined by peers for the 'correct' performance of blackness is palpable here. The effects of this kind of surveillance are also encapsulated in the quite viscerally debilitating experience Shanice describes of walking through the college gates:

> CS: …so what are you guys feeling then when you're walking through the corridors?
>
> S: the eyes…the moment you tap your [ID pass on the entrance gates] everyone's staring at you and you're like thinking 'don't buckle'.
> **Interview with Melody and Shanice, 12th February 2015**

Shanice's words suggest that the public spaces of the college are felt as an intense 'field of visibility' (Foucault, 1979, 202) in which black, feminine bodies are disciplined through a particularised, and it would seem implicitly racist, classist and heterosexist, 'normalising judgement' (Foucault, 1979, 177). It also seems to require courage and nerve to just pass through this space, and no doubt it took a certain amount of courage, or at least trust, to talk about such experiences within the research process itself. Indeed, within these interviews

the young women were also often keen to (re)assert a discourse of pride within their discussions of "shame". For example, Winter responds to a question about the ways black girls are stereotyped for their appearance with, "listen, black girls are intelligent *and* wear make-up", delivered with a sense of defiance of, and perhaps resistance to, the very question itself. It seems then that mobilising buffness takes both courage and pride, and is still compatible with *other* forms of success. In this respect, it should be understood as part of the young women's overall "hustle": namely, their striving for success within a context that positions their social and educational identities as 'inferior' (Mirza, 2010, 8).

The term "hustle" as I use it here was offered by Diana, a friend and former colleague whom I had reached out to for her thoughts around the possibilities for 'female empowerment' through beauty practices. In addition to our conversations around this topic, Diana wrote me a particularly detailed and illuminating response to this matter. As a Black British woman who works in education, and as aunt to her seventeen year old niece, Diana had much to say around the processes of agency and subjection discussed in this chapter, offering, amongst other things, the idea that young black women's beauty practices are synonymous with striving for success on multiple fronts. I share Diana's response here, and quote at length due to how it both reflects and enriches the analyses presented thus far[34]:

> When I watch my niece applying makeup it seems this gives her the
> confidence to go out and measure up to an ideal of beauty [...]
> most girls would deny this was their intention but the subtext is
> real. This is why the Snapchat filters are so popular - face changing
> / creating is important to creating an ideal identity that makes
> them [...] admired by their peers, keeps them included within a
> male gaze that promotes a generic beauty that's far removed from
> what I would call more west African features [...] but I would say
> that the natural hair movement is counteracting this somewhat [...]
> So I think young black women are creating their own identities with

---

[34] See Chapter Two for further discussion of my inclusion of Diana's words in the research, as 'insight' rather than 'data'.

a fusion of influences […] But my concern is that being anything but yourself can be totally exhausting and soul destroying long term […]

This all plays out in the world of work when the managers, leaders, are perhaps unexposed white males, white females - the same pressures / dynamics are played out just in a different context. My first teaching job would have frowned upon me having my own natural hair i.e. an Afro hairstyle for example. There I never had one because I wanted to move up in the world. Now I'm 'up' I can do the fuck I like with my hair within reason. So whether they know it or not, these girls are trying to survive and thrive in a world where image is everything, and speaks volumes... the backdrop / overriding message is that their natural features are often not considered professional, beautiful, attractive, promotable, intelligent, deserving of respect, investment etc.

I feel for young black women growing up today and respect their hustle. This is partly why when I'm at work I wear my Afro loud and proud to allow them to see a professional black woman who had to go through the same things

Written response from Diana, 3rd September 2017

Diana's response here reflects a number of themes discussed so far. First is that of the young black woman constructing her appearance in relation to implicitly racist (and in deeply connected ways, classist) beauty norms, and having to do so in a context in which "image is everything". Alongside the idea of subjection within a racist and neoliberal context however, are also notions of resistance and '[re]creative agency' (McNay, cited in Ahmed, 2002, 190): in how young black women are mobilising their "natural hair", and in how they are "creating their own identities with a fusion of influences". There is also an understanding of beauty practices as central to quests for peer "admiration", as a process of subjection ("included within a male gaze…exhausting") and agency ("gives her confidence to go out and measure up"). However, Diana also discusses the place of black women's beauty practices in contexts *outside* of the social: namely the "world of work", a context that is significant given that my research participants are currently mobilising buffness within their neoliberal (and thus future and career oriented) college.

Indeed, in her own experience as a "professional black woman who had to go through the same things", Diana suggests that young black women's pursuit of buffness is synonymous with a *broader* process of "hustle": striving to "survive and thrive in [the] world". In this, the image of buff black (teen) femininity translates into the image of the successful, black career woman whose physical appearance entails how "promotable" and "deserving of respect" she is, as well as how "admired" (and desired) by her peers. The notion of beauty affording respect is particularised with a notion of a black woman needing to be "up" before having the freedom to wear her hair how "the fuck [she] like[s]", reinforcing an idea that embodiment is covertly circumscribed, if not prescribed, by institutional discourses around acceptable images of success. These institutional discourses, Diana implies, are dictated within systems of whiteness, "perhaps" by "unexposed white males, white females", thus leaving the young black woman in a particular bind: look buff/admired/deserving of respect, but in a way that does not offend white eyes – 'the only real eyes' (Fanon cited in Ahmed, 2002, 56). All this invites the following questions: how does the research site receive the stylings of buff black femininity discussed thus far, and how does the young women's "hustle" in this respect align with their other efforts, within this neoliberal educational space, to "move up in the world"?

(ii) books v. make-up: balancing different images of and pathways to success

When interviewing the students about their educational identities, I posed the question about what a "good student" might look like in the eyes of a teacher. I remember that Felicia and Cairo in particular, two students who tended to cultivate quite glamorous appearances at college, answered with seemingly knowing smiles in describing the distinctly unglamorous look this "ideal student" would embody. As Cairo explains:

> …[her] hair would be real hair (.) or if it's weave it would be nasty old cheap hair (.) if she would wear make-up it wouldn't be the eyebrows (.) the eyelashes […]now the *opposite* of the person I just

181

Indeed, in her own experience as a "professional black woman who had to go through the same things", Diana suggests that young black women's pursuit of buffness is synonymous with a *broader* process of "hustle": striving to "survive and thrive in [the] world". In this, the image of buff black (teen) femininity translates into the image of the successful, black career woman whose physical appearance entails how "promotable" and "deserving of respect" she is, as well as how "admired" (and desired) by her peers. The notion of beauty affording respect is particularised with a notion of a black woman needing to be "up" before having the freedom to wear her hair how "the fuck [she] like[s]", reinforcing an idea that embodiment is covertly circumscribed, if not prescribed, by institutional discourses around acceptable images of success. These institutional discourses, Diana implies, are dictated within systems of whiteness, "perhaps" by "unexposed white males, white females", thus leaving the young black woman in a particular bind: look buff/admired/deserving of respect, but in a way that does not offend white eyes – 'the only real eyes' (Fanon cited in Ahmed, 2002, 56). All this invites the following questions: how does the research site receive the stylings of buff black femininity discussed thus far, and how does the young women's "hustle" in this respect align with their other efforts, within this neoliberal educational space, to "move up in the world"?

(ii) books v. make-up: balancing different images of and pathways to success

When interviewing the students about their educational identities, I posed the question about what a "good student" might look like in the eyes of a teacher. I remember that Felicia and Cairo in particular, two students who tended to cultivate quite glamorous appearances at college, answered with seemingly knowing smiles in describing the distinctly unglamorous look this "ideal student" would embody. As Cairo explains:

> …[her] hair would be real hair (.) or if it's weave it would be nasty old cheap hair (.) if she would wear make-up it wouldn't be the eyebrows (.) the eyelashes […]now the *opposite* of the person I just

181

described to you here (.) when teachers first meet *this* student they would think "oh she's going to be distracting (.) she wouldn't do her work (.) she would bunk and probably get kicked out early" stuff like that

Interview with Cairo, February 22nd, 2015

Cairo displays a sense that in her own glamorous, "prestigious" appearance (one associated with a form of classed success that the girl with "nasty old cheap hair" cannot reach), she does not fit the institutional image of the academically motivated, focused and serious student who manages to finish her studies without getting "kicked out early". In this, she engages with a way in which she, as a buff black girl, is positioned as an "[un]educable body" (Leathwood and Hey, 2009, 430) in this institution. Cairo's perspective here is supported by existing research exploring how the glamorous appearance of young, especially working class women, is understood in schools as a marker of a casual, uninterested attitude towards their education (Archer et al., 2010). Indeed, after presenting my research to the Senior Leadership Team (six months after the research period officially finished), Christine (the Vice Principal interviewed in Chapter Five) admitted with regret that she had looked rather dismissively upon the wearing of make-up by female students, and had in the past chastised one student with the words, "who do you think you are? Kim Kardashian?" Christine herself acknowledged the pathologising nature of this question, and how it glossed over what maintaining a Kardashian-esque (or, more accurately, Minaj-esque) glossiness might afford young black women in the college. Christine's suggested answer to this particular 'problem', however, is also revealing of the stronghold of systems of whiteness in this institution, even through the most well-meaning and critically engaged of staff members.

In a subsequent meeting regarding setting up a girls "empowerment" project across the college, Christine articulated frustration and sadness on young women's behalf at the grip of beauty ideals within their daily lives at college. In light of this, she suggested a particular activity: that we (select female staff members) sit with female students in the dance studio, with all windows covered, and together remove our make-up, with the intention of "building the

girls' confidence" by seeing "that we all look the same underneath". On the one hand Christine's suggestion operates as a non-punitive approach to supporting young women in their navigations of a sometimes debilitating, heterosexist beauty discourse. However, there is also a sense, again, that the buff black girl's body needs changing, or healing in some way in order to thrive: instead of "covering up" in this instance however, there is a suggestion of enforced erasure of a particular aesthetic identity (although no doubt this was not Christine's intention). I read the suggestion that black girls "cover up" and remove their make-up in terms of what researchers discuss as an adult, feminine discourse of the young black woman as again an object for protection and for healing (Mirza, 1992; Brown, 2009; Sears, 2010). Such a process also seemed to occur, but in far less well-meaning ways, in relation to the college's public identity as a marketable institution.

In addition to the male Vice Principal's slightly anxious request for the girls to "cover up" on open evening, young, black women who embody a glamorous visual appearance did not at the time of research feature in any of the college's marketing materials. The depictions of young women found in these materials commonly included: white or Turkish young women; light-skinned or mixed-race young black women dressed formally in business wear (at a college that has no uniform policy); young Muslim women who wear Hijab. The scope for analysis here is broad regarding the images that do appear in these marketing materials, and how these young women too are subjugated through the co-opting of their images in particular ways. However, what is most palpable and most pertinent here is the absence, the absolute invisibility, of any images of the curvaceous, glamorous and darker-skinned buff black girl. Given that young women who embody this "look" in the college make up a significant minority of the college demographic (far more so than white, or mixed-race students), this seems to me a significant absence. Indeed, on asking the college's marketing officer if she could upload a picture of three HSC students – all perfectly 'made-up' self-identifying "brown girls", stood smiling with their arms around each other - onto the dance page of college's website, she agreed with a warm smile,

and then quietly told me that she had in the past been encouraged to direct her marketing camera away from "some students". It seems then that my research participants, in their "buffness", and indeed in their skin tone, are erased not only from any official institutional discourse of success, but also from visibility. In this, the body of the buff black girl is rendered not only a threat to the individual girl's success, or a threat to the institution's reputation, but as abject (Kristeva, 1982) in this educational space. As Hook (2004) puts it, 'Kristeva's notion of abjection has much to recommend it as the basis for a tentative analytics of racism [in being] able to understand racism's extremities of affect, its visceral forms, and its [mechanisms] of avoidance and aversion' (672).

In accordance with an understanding of power as 'textured' (Deveaux, 2010, 220), it is also important, however, to acknowledge something rather more apt in the notion of the buff black girl as educationally disengaged: namely in how a deeply felt imperative to perform buffness, with all the minutiae of its rules, does in fact infiltrate her learning space and time. Melody is particularly forthcoming in her discussions around how 'buffness' might shape a young woman's educational achievement:

> CS: so you're not just focusing on your work (.) there's this other…
>
> Melody: yeah that you have to (.) like the looks and everything
>
> CS: so does this distract you in any way?
>
> M: yeah Miss […] I don't think teachers notice [the way you look] they don't really care if your hair's not in place or anything, your eyebrows are not done, what you're wearing. They don't care - it's like they come teach you, that's all (1) but it's what happens outside of the lessons that students are more concerned about […] In my class, one of my teachers, she literally bans the phones, the mirrors – 'cos before at the beginning of the lesson, all we used to do is look at mirrors. People used to take selfies just to see how their eyebrows [looked]...
> **Interview with Melody and Shanice, 12th February 2015**

Melody's account here draws out two contrasting discourses of success that operate within the classroom space. Firstly, there is (according to Melody) what teachers want for this space, namely academic learning and/or achievement, to be worked towards without the implicitly distracting presence of the body ("I don't think the teachers notice"). And then there is young black women's discourse of social success, buffness, to be worked towards through preparing the body for visibility in the synoptic spaces of the college. Within Melody's account, there is clear sense of a clash between these two discourses, with buffness becoming a distraction from learning, a perception that Anala also articulates when discussing her frustrations around teaching her tutor group: "they're bright, but just so distracted Camilla - if only they carried as many books in their bag as they did make-up".

On the one hand, this idea that "the buff black girl" is fundamentally distracted from her education through prioritising her appearance can be can be critiqued as a product of a narrow, neoliberal, understanding of educational success. As argued in Chapter Four, the target-driven pressures of this neoliberal climate work to marginalise the needs and expertise of (differentiated) bodies and cultural practices, and instead require a paradoxically disembodied embodied presence that is geared towards efficient consuming and producing of academic knowledge. There is thus little room for acknowledging the material acts of gendered and racialised social pedagogy that take place in the young women's make-up application – the ways, for example, they are "blending cultural influences" (Diana) in their body's styling, arguably part of their contributions to an evolving, multi-ethnic society, as discussed in research around young people's art practices (Dash, 2010; Hickey-Moody, 2013; Stanger, 2016). In this institutional context however, such acts of creation are only a distraction from the business of real learning (for qualifications). There is also little room for understanding how these practices of "making-up" are far from a simple choice, and are in fact the product of the compelling, deeply embodied, and both locally and globally entrenched discourse of social success discussed earlier – part of the young women's "hustle" to "survive and thrive" in a racist, sexist and classist

world in which "image is everything" (Diana). In light of all this, a discourse that positions young women as largely responsible for choosing to enact their own educational marginalisation in respect to their pursuit of "buffness", seems rather unfair. Indeed, Anala's implication that the young woman marginalises her*self* from educational success through her choice of objects to pack in her school bag can be critiqued as a 'responsibilisation' discourse in which young people are held responsible for their successes and their failures in a neoliberal climate (Kelly, 2001).

However, as discussed above, there are ways in which 'making-up' buffness is not always pleasurable and empowering, and at times appears to be something the young women also want rid of, as conveyed in Melody's explanation of why "the mirrors" become such an important item of classroom equipment:

> Melody: …And I think with black girls yeah - within your classroom you've got girls yeah, that are <u>judging</u> you, but when you walk out you've got a <u>ton</u> of <u>other</u> girls that are judging you, so you need to look presentable for them <u>not</u> to judge you.
>
> CS: so you have to be, like, camera-ready the whole // time?
>
> M: // <u>yeah</u>
>
> CS: That sounds stressful Melody.
>
> M: It <u>is</u> Miss.
> **Interview with Melody and Shamica, 12th February 2015**

For Melody, it is the socially charged space of "outside the classroom" that comes to dominate the thoughts and actions (the pedagogic practices) of black female students in her BTEC class. The importance of life "outside the classroom" seems to be felt to the extent that lessons can become a site of preparation, a kind of backstage area, for when a girl enters the actual stage, the college's synoptic social arena, where she will then be carefully assessed for her performance of buff black femininity. These performances and preparations for performance are felt in deeply embodied ways, in the material construction of one's body, hair and face before entering the stage, and in the paralysing feel

of "the eyes" on you, replicated even in private moments through the use of mirrors and phone screens. Melody is clear that this process is stressful, and does not in fact criticise her teacher's choice to "ban" phones and mirrors. Indeed, Winter and Kayla discuss what they *also* see as a "problem" of girls being "too focused on what they look like and not on their work" (Kayla) while at college. In these respects, it would be naïve to position a discourse of attainment and responsibility (rather than responsibilisation) as wholly oppressive here, given that the young women do want (and need) to achieve qualifications by the end of the academic year, with only limited time, space and resources to do so. Indeed, these young women are dissimilar to Archer et al.'s (2007a, 2007b) and Davies' (2013) (largely white, working class) research participants, who pursue glamorous femininity, or generally "style", as an alternative to or even a replacement of academic routes to success within their own experiences of educational marginalisation. As I argue in Chapter Five, my research participants are wholly committed to their academic success, and to images of themselves as academically successful within this target-driven system.

Overall then, I suggest that the 'problem' here is not in a young woman's pursuit of buffness, but neither is it in an image of a young woman engaging in an autonomous, focused and self-disciplined pursuit of academic success. Both support pursuits of black working class female empowerment in their own ways. Of the main research participants, Felicia in particular comes to my mind here: a young woman who proudly describes herself as "hard working" and produced consistently excellent coursework throughout the year (see Chapters Seven and Nine), while also maintaining, to a combination of both criticism and praise from her peers, one of the most glamorous appearances of all the girls in her tutor group. Indeed, and as encapsulated in the make-up smudged worksheets sometimes left on desks at the end of lessons, books and make-up coexist in the black working class young woman's pursuit of educational success – her "hustle". I suggest instead that the 'problem' is the impossibility of space and time being shared between both pursuits of success in the neoliberal institution.

This manifests through the challenges teachers face in supporting young women's social identities, and their desires and anxieties around them, within their neoliberal classrooms, but also, more devastatingly in how the body of buff black femininity is rendered un-seeable, abject, within the college space.

One example of a teacher exploring ways to share this space and time is Sophie, who asked the students in Anala's tutor group to fill out an self-evaluation form, describing how they felt they were doing at college so far, and what aspects of themselves they would like to work on. Sophie had not specified whether the students should focus on their studies or not, and had deliberately left space for the young women to explore whatever aspects of their identities they wished. Cairo then used this form as a space to write about her aspirations to get a B grade in GCSE English, as well as her dissatisfaction with her body shape. This piece of paper ultimately became a space in which there was no clash between the young black woman's pursuit of social and academic success, and in which there was an opportunity for Sophie to support her in both respects. It is in this more 'hopeful' (hooks, 2003; Freire, 2014) spirit that I later ask: what further pedagogical approaches could be developed that resist some of the more debilitating and marginalising aspects of a discourse of buff black femininity, while embracing its more liberating, self-defining potential for young, black, working class women?

Conclusion: hope within systems of oppression

Overall, my research participants' performances of buffness as "prestigious" black girls are minutely detailed and material, taking place at the level of their clothing, hair and make-up choices, their online practices, their comportment, and their imaginations, sensations and desires. Their engagements with this particular beauty ideal, an embodied code of sexiness and classiness, are also nothing if not complicated, as a process of both agency and subjection within a local, national and global (media-saturated) context that positions a correct performance of buffness as a key marker of success and status for the black

188

working class young woman. In this, what is at stake for the young black woman is one's very identity as a proud, "prestigious" black girl who maintains desirability, status, and who avoids shame in the synoptic social spaces of the college. What also resonates throughout my research participants' discussions and practices is a sense of pride, pleasure and also black female solidarity amid all the "pressure" (Melody) to achieve the right look. Indeed, the young women seem to position Nicki Minaj, a figure they also discuss through a discourse of "strength", as their own, as "bae" (Winter), and adopt her as an emblem of sorts in how they boldly, and at times defiantly, construct and mobilise their appearances and friendship groups within the college. In all this, the young women's engagements with the buff black girl discourse are not easily refusable choices, but are part of an embodied history (and a hoped for future) that extends beyond the individual girl and how much make-up she chooses to put on each day.

However, it would seem that my research participants' journeys through buffness towards success clash with their journeys towards educational success within formal spaces of the institution: the classroom, the Vice Principal's office, the corridor during open evening, and even the college website. Within these institutional spaces, the body of buff black femininity finds itself under a different kind of surveillance, under concern and fundamentally under question. The young woman also finds herself needing to tread a tightrope of sorts, balancing her educational aspirations and the work required to achieve them, with the other requirements made of her as a prestigious buff black girl and forms of work they in turn invite. Through all this, the buff black girl comes to experience educational marginalisation within this target driven and covertly white middle class patriarchal institution. There is therefore, I suggest, a need for an institutional approach that does not consume, punish, seek to heal or erase the body of the buff black girl. This approach should instead recognise buffness as an embodied discourse of black, feminine, working class pride and "hustle". It would also support young women in critical and resistant engagements with the heterosexist, racist and classist contexts that produce

shame and "pressure" as well as pride. Before articulating such a pedagogical approach however, I explore a second key way in which my "prestigious" and educationally striving/"empowered" research participants experience educational exclusion in their quests for success: through their practices of a "bold" black femininity.

Chapter Seven
Stories of exclusion and empowerment (2): bold black girls in the neoliberal institution

Consider this a narrative in which we invent our own heroine, the Bulletproof Diva. A woman whose sense of dignity and self cannot be denied; who goes out every day greased, pressed and dressed […] She is fine and she knows it. She *has* to know it because who else will […] a Bulletproof Diva is whoever you make her – corporate girl, teen mom, or the combination – as long as she has the lip and nerve to raise up herself and the world.
Lisa Jones, from *Bulletproof Diva: Tales of Race, Sex and Hair,* 1994, 3

For us, true speaking…is an act of resistance, a political gesture that challenges politics of domination that would render us nameless and voiceless. As such, it is a courageous act - as such, it represents a threat.
bell hooks, from *Talking Back: Thinking Feminist, Thinking Black,* 1989, 8

During an interview conversation about the notion that "black girls fight", Felicia exclaims: "black girls are just so <u>bold</u>". In this chapter I explore how my research participants mobilise a bold black femininity, a femininity that comes out fighting, in various spaces of their college and in the face of various perceived opponents. I argue that this discourse, complete with an imperative to 'raise up herself' (Jones, 1994, 3) and to fight for one's social and educational success, operates within an institutional and wider British context in which black, working class girls are positioned as socially and educationally 'inferior' (Mirza, 2010). However, I also show how this discourse of success, this 'sense of dignity and self' (Jones, 1994, 3), shapes the young women's experiences of educational exclusion, leading to their pathologisation as 'a threat' (hooks, 1989, 8) within the institution, and providing tangible and emotive barriers to academic achievement.

I explore the processes of exclusion that occur in how an imperative to 'speak true' and in other ways to fight, part of being a "prestigious" black girl and becoming an "independent" black woman, extends to interactions within the neoliberal 16-19 college: those with staff, with male students and, perhaps

most explosively and most painfully, with one's black, female peers. I also, however, anticipate the place of a bold black femininity within developing an embodied pedagogy of hope. Indeed, in this chapter I argue for the political character of black girls' anger: that it should be taken seriously as a site of critique, identity formation and sisterhood, and therefore as a space for social change (Brown, 2009; Sears, 2010).

Lashing out and talking back: the bold black girl fighting for her education

(i) contexts and legacies

A particular manifestation of the 'strong black woman' discourse for my research participants is in how they boldly and urgently fight for their education, reflecting but also departing from research regarding how black girls come to face educational exclusion in UK schools (Mirza, 1992; Connolly, 1998; Wright et al. 1999; Wright, 2005; Archer et al. 2007c, 2010). This research explores how black girls' classroom behaviours are understood through a lens of pathology and threat, specifically in their interactions with teachers in classrooms in which black students are not the majority. Researchers explore how, in these settings, black girls are identified as troublemakers and singled out for disciplining more frequently than girls of other ethnic groups, with terms such as "disruptive", "challenging" and "aggressive" regularly emerging in teachers' talk around the black girls in their lessons (Mirza, 1992; Connolly, 1998; Wright et al. 1999; Wright, 2005). These patterns are explored in terms of processes of both institutional and interpersonal racism, sexism and classism that shape teacher expectations of appropriate feminine behaviour. As Archer et al. (2007c) put it:

> '[black and/or working class] girls' assertions of 'loud', active and visible femininities can be understood as challenging the forms of submissive, passive and quiet femininity that are usually rewarded within classrooms [and in this] are understood as deviant and undesirable.' (555)

Much of this research also explores how black girls themselves describe their own practices of ' "speaking my mind" ' (Archer et al., 2007c; Archer, 2008) in the face of what they experience as being 'picked on' or targeted for racist treatment by staff. Within these discussions, young black women's acts of speaking up, speaking out, and their use of other 'cultural resources' (Wright, 2005, 107) (such as kissing teeth and speaking in patois) are largely understood in terms of resistance to the processes of marginalisation they encounter (Mac an Ghaill, 1988; Wright et al., 1999).

These particular themes and patterns are visible within the research site. However, the ways in which Cairo, Felicia, Kayla and Winter come to experience educational marginalisation for any bold classroom behaviour are also specific to the setting of the increasingly target-driven 16-19 college with a predominantly black student intake. In this setting there is less occasion for black girls as a minority to be 'singled out', although there is still room for *particular* black girls to be so. There is also, as encountered myself as a teacher, little classroom resistance directed at teachers in an institution which (at the time of research) young people on the brink of adulthood had selected to attend as part of their transition into the increasingly 'risk' oriented worlds of HE and work (Ball et al., 2000; Harris, 2004). A post-compulsory educational setting such as the research site also serves, potentially, as a space for young people to 'rebuild self-esteem and personal efficacy undermined through school careers' (Ball et al., 2000, 140). As young women with personal histories of school exclusions (see Chapter One), these understandings of the role of the FE provider are pertinent for my research participants. Indeed the triggers for their conflicts with teachers often appear to be related to how their educational desires and anxieties manifest in the face of an imagined future laden with risk and responsibility (Ball et al. 2000; Kelly, 2001; Harris, 2004), especially as students enrolled onto an unofficially, but still quite clearly, low status course in the college. These particularised triggers for conflict occur in addition to those deliberate forms of resistance explored in the earlier research, something

important to note given Mirza's (1992) discussions around the perils of constructing black womanhood only through romantic ideas of resistance.

The complicated need for a young black woman in this particular context to fight for her education, a form of resistance to a hostile system *and* a form of individualised striving in a changing world, appears to manifest in two broad forms of bold behaviour for my research participants. The first is in what is experienced by teachers as "needy", "demanding" and sometimes "oppositional" behaviour in the classroom. The second is in assertive and sometimes quite explosive reactions to perceived injustice, especially in relation to one's education being hindered or taken away. This bold behaviour, while assessed in some sympathetic ways by the self-defining feminist and anti-racist HSC teachers I was researching with, invariably becomes pathological within this target-driven institution, often leading to processes of exclusion. However, it also reveals spaces for hope.

(ii) striving black femininity in the classroom

Cairo, Felicia, Kayla and Winter articulate strong and multi-faceted desires for educational success (see Chapter Five), but also have educational pasts marked by exclusions (see Chapter One). It is unsurprising then that an 'urgent' (Mirza, 2006, 144) sense of needing to prove oneself emerges in the young women's talk and classroom behaviours, as briefly discussed in Chapter Five. This was not unique to but was especially acute in Felicia's case, a young woman who had spent very little time in mainstream school after Year 9, and who explains a major motivation behind her educational striving in the following terms:

> Every school and unit I have been to they always think I am dumb because I have been kicked out […] So obviously they think, "she doesn't have any knowledge"[…] But I did – do you know what I mean? I know I did (1) they kept putting me down and making me lower set all the time (1) and I feel like here I got to show that I am actually smart (.) I had to show that.
> **Interview with Felicia, 16th July, 2015**

Felicia's drive in these respects seemed to manifest in her classroom behaviours, as what seemed to be an accompanying sense of anxiety in relation to her studies. For example her teachers reported, as I also perceived within some lessons, her tendency to barter and negotiate her grades, ask a steady stream of questions about the work, frequently request to leave the room to get a glass of water or go to the toilet, and even get up from her desk and lie down on the floor, especially at the start of a writing task.

I read Felicia's forms of educational engagement (and apparent disengagement) here in part with reference to her history of educational struggle in an exclusionary system, one in which black girls come to face disproportionately high rates of formal exclusion (Osler and Vincent, 2003). Indeed, it would appear that Felicia has experienced herself time and time again as constructed, by others through 'perceptual practice' (Alcoff, 2006, 180) and also by herself performatively (Butler, 2010) as "immature"[35] or in some other way difficult to teach ("they think I am dumb"). With this legacy deeply in place, Felicia's classroom behaviours, and narrative of proving herself, can be understood at least in part as a response to 'a cultural history or memory' (Ahmed, 2004, 7), the 'knowledge [of which] is bodily' (2004, 7). In other words, Felicia's anxieties around achieving educational success, demonstrated in sometimes quite challenging ways in the classroom, can be understood as an affective response to the triggering of a certain 'knowledge' (in the Foucauldian sense) that she is out of place in this (in any) institution, coupled with a striving for success that is intimately connected with her identity as an empowered black woman (as discussed in Chapter Five). In these respects, it would be at least in part the job of this "fresh start" institution to understand and find ways to work with Felicia's forms of educational striving and struggle, even when they manifest as challenging classroom behaviours. However, Felicia's particular acts of striving and 'raising up herself' (Jones, 1994, 3) in this new college context came to

---

[35] How Felicia describes herself for the reader in Chapter One.

frequently intersect with visible processes of exclusion, particularly in how she was experienced and positioned by her teachers.

At the end of the first term, I interviewed Felicia's English teacher Ana at her desk. Anala (whose desk was nearby) soon joined what became a lively discussion, or as Anala puts it a "counselling session" for these two teachers:

> Ana: Felicia is probably the toughest student I'm teaching right now (.) she struggles with concentration [laughs, as if to say 'that's an understatement'] she's struggling and her coping mechanism is to ask questions <u>continuously</u> […] she's very persistent and she's learned how to cope […] once at the very beginning (.) she kept claiming she was ill and at one point she lay down on the floor in the class because she said she was poorly
>
> CS: has that happened in your lessons Anala?
>
> Anala: mm hm [laughs] this is like a counselling session for me
>
> Ana: and I was like "ok I'm just going to ignore her because I know an element of this is attention seeking"
>
> Anala: yes it <u>is</u> (.) <u>definitely</u> […] she's so demanding […] but once she gets the focusing right she is able to engage really well and produce <u>fantastic</u> work (.) with a lot of insecurity (.) "Miss is that correct? Is that right? Is that right Miss?" (.) there is this desire to <u>really</u> succeed (.) but deep insecurity
> **Interview with Ana and Anala, 10th December 2014**

Anala and Ana acknowledge Felicia's determination to succeed, and Anala especially is attendant to the educational desire and anxiety that may drive her classroom behaviours. However, they also, from the standpoint of teachers under pressure to get through a syllabus with a classroom full of students, enter a more pathologising rhetoric of Felicia being "attention seeking"[36], "the toughest" and all together too much – the kind of student that necessitates a teacher's "counselling session".

---

[36] See later in the chapter for my suggestion that there is in fact a performative element to some bold classroom behaviours, related to the young women's relationships with eachother.

This rhetoric is clearly detectable in earlier studies of how black girls are subject to discourses of appropriately demure and compliant femininity in schools (Weekes, 2002; Wright, 2005; Archer, 2008), although this time nuanced for a more highly-pressured, target-driven context. Indeed, any racist, sexist and classist desire for a demure, or at least contained (white, middle class) femininity is exacerbated here by a neoliberal need for ordered bodies as consumers of knowledge for achievement in a high-pressured environment. The form of docile, efficiently productive embodiment required by this 'ideal pupil' serves to position Felicia, with her particularly emotive way of educationally engaging, at particular risk of being considered 'uneducable' (Leathwood and Hey, 2009, 430) in this context, and thus at risk of exclusion. Indeed, by the end of the academic year, Felicia's student record on the college database system was littered with entries relating to her "oppositional" (as another English teacher put it) classroom behaviour, with one teacher even articulating a preference not to have Felicia in the classroom when she taught – all despite her "desire to really succeed" (Anala). The young women's perspectives on these matters are especially revealing however: not only of the processes of marginalisation they face in these respects, but also of the agency and hard work that can be (and is) mobilised in order to succeed against these odds.

Both Felicia and Winter came to explain their educational identities to me in less than positive terms when discussing the institutional idea of a "good student". Indeed, Felicia's answer is that "the teachers would want [the good student] to be quiet and never speak up or ask too many questions - that's what the teachers want I think", finishing her thought with "…and I think I can be too immature". It is significant that Felicia changes her own identification as a student from "hardworking" (see Chapters One and Five) to "immature" once a discussion of a teacher's view of a "good student" takes place, especially regarding how many questions it is appropriate to ask in the classroom. Winter engages in a similar shift in rhetoric, in describing education as completely integral to her identity ("self-educated Winter!"), but also informing me that

"Miss, you'd find me annoying too if you taught me in a classroom", again with reference to the number of questions she likes to ask. In addition to this, early in the year interviews with Felicia often produced fast-paced and quite breathless monologic descriptions of her being "picked on" in the classroom. However, as the year went on, I noted that our discussions around these matters became more dialogue-based: not only with Felicia and I talking back and forth about why she was experiencing problems in the classroom, but also with Felicia seeming to engage her*self* in dialogue around how to address this.

The following extract is from an interview I conducted with Felicia the day after I found her sitting on her own in the corridor during lesson time, head bowed, having been sent out of Anala's lesson.   Felicia shows here, I suggest, a sense of struggle in still not quite knowing how to negotiate her teachers' expectations, but also a process of strategizing given the institutional context she finds herself in:

> Felicia: I want to prove to Anala that I can change (1) like yesterday I was trying my best to be quiet but engage (.) I came to that lesson with the intention of trying to be good, but I was being quiet (1) and she sent me out (.) I didn't know what I'd done (.) I was so confused (.) Then she was like, "Oh, you were sleeping…not physically sleeping, but you were quiet" (.) I was like (.) "But I don't know what to do (.) if I'm quiet I get in trouble (.) if I'm loud I get in trouble (.) so what do I do?" So I now I'm like (.) "my aim is to be quiet but engage in lessons, just engage in it" (1) I've realised what I'm meant to do (.) I can't be quiet (.) I can't be loud.
>
> CS: so what's your strategy now, then?
>
> Felicia: answer questions but not disrupt and all of that (.) it's hard for me not to talk (1) it's <u>normal</u> to talk and I won't stop that (.) but I'm not going to be rude
> **Interview with Felicia, 13th April 2015**

In this conversation, Felicia engages a potentially pathologising discourse of the "good/bad student" with a certain ownership, mobilising it for her own success, refusing to relinquish certain elements of her identity and coming to her own

compromise. Indeed, it appears that Felicia is finding ways to navigate the neoliberal classroom and build more trusting bonds with her teacher, who is herself subject to the "type" of classroom environment and thus the "type" of student the institution implicitly requires (see Chapter Five). I suggest this leaves space for Felicia to be part of the (re)solution, rather than passively at the mercy of oppressive structures and the institution's own responsibility to address them. While I acknowledge the institution's role in all this, I am glad in hindsight that I did not raise it in this interview with Felicia, which seems to serve as a space (in part) for Felicia's own analytical agency, as the 'expert on her own experience' (Brown, 2009, 34). In this space Felicia could, and worked hard to, 'imagine [her]self differently' (Mirza, 2010, 5) – outside of a discourse of pathologisation as the "bad student", but also outside of a discourse of oppression as a victim of a racist and sexist schooling system. As an alternative to exclusion and victimhood, Felicia seems to find her *own* way – another example of the 'dynamic rationalisation' Mirza (2009, 26) discusses in her research. To return to Felicia's words from earlier: "here I got to show that I am actually smart - I <u>had</u> to show that." In all this, a young black woman puts a seemingly neoliberal rhetoric of the 'D.I.Y. self' (Kelly, 2001, 30) to work in challenging an institutional discourse of success that fails to acknowledge her worth and the history of racism and sexism she has faced. This cannot be ignored as a form of personal empowerment and agency, one that should be drawn upon in developing any 'pedagogy of hope'.

However, there is of course injustice in Felicia (and those in her position) *needing* to engage in particular forms of identity work and negotiation in order to succeed educationally. And it is in relation to incidents of perceived injustice, particularly those in which one's route to educational achievement is denied, that my research participants exhibited *particularly* bold and fighting behaviour.

(iii) the bold black girl calling out institutional injustice

The question of how exactly young black women call out injustice is significant
when it comes to considering the processes of exclusion they face. A key
example is when Kayla quite explosively called out what she perceived as racism
in relation to a decision to formally exclude her from the college. Kayla, along
with her friend Maria (who is Latin American and White British in heritage, and
is identified by herself and her peers as white) had been involved in an incident
of perceived online bullying towards Felicia, Winter and Tinuke, resulting in an
altercation in the college canteen. After a group disciplinary meeting with the
newly appointed Principal (Tom), a decision was made to exclude Kayla
indefinitely and put her on "study leave". When informed of this decision, Kayla
(as reported to me by three members of staff who were present) repeatedly
kicked the Principal's door and called him a "racist cunt" at the top of her voice.
At this the college security guard was called and, as she had been two years
previously, Kayla was escorted off the college premises, but this time (just
weeks before her GCSE Maths exam) with instructions not to return. Kayla's
own story of how this permanent exclusion came about, however, highlights
the role that a black girl's 'true speaking' (hooks, 1989, 8) had to play in all this.
I turn to the words of Kayla here to put, for now at least, this excluded young
black woman's voice at the centre of her story (Hill Collins, 2000).

> CS: so how <u>did</u> you end up being excluded? I never really understood
> the details of that to be honest
>
> K: well in that final meeting [with the Principal and Anala, in which
> Kayla found out that she had been put on study leave] I kept asking
> for a reason and then finally he said it (2) so bascially in that group
> meeting before [about the bullying] at one point Anala was telling
> what happened and she got confused over who said what (1) like she
> didn't know who had said something (.) and it was Winter who had
> [said it] (.) so I must have gone like this towards Winter [Kayla
> demonstrates making a pointing gesture over the table] and he just
> went "there's no need for that" (.) and I went "I'm just trying to help

my teacher" and he went "there's no need for that and if you continue doing that you can be excluded right now" (.) and he obviously took it as me being rude (2) like I can see how he interpreted it in that way (1) but Miss I think he's a bit racist 'cos of the [more lenient] way he acts with Maria [who was the only white student in the meeting] and Maria feels it too (.) as in <u>she</u> was the one that got very angry in that group meeting (.) and yet he's acting weird towards <u>me</u> (.) and so I told all that to Anala [as they were finally leaving the Principal's office after her final exclusion meeting] and I was so annoyed about it I must have sworn or something as she said "oh I'm going to tell him [you said he was racist]" (.) and then I got angry (.) <u>angry</u> and I was like "I don't mind (.) I'd rather tell him myself" [at which point, by staff members' accounts, she went back and did just that]
Interview with Kayla, 4th June 2015

Within this account and her own analysis of the situation, Kayla explains her final actions, calling Tom a "racist cunt", in terms of increasing emotion: "I was annoyed…then I got angry, <u>angry</u>". Kayla's increasing anger in this context, one that seems to boil over, might be partly understood in terms of the triggering of an orientation formed through an embodied cultural memory (Ahmed, 2004) of her previous exclusions (see Chapter One), and also with reference to Kayla's intense desire to "succeed in my education, for my daughter's sake". Indeed, a complex layering of experiences and desires can be understood as affectively shaping Kayla's reaction here, experiences that are developed within a cultural terrain in which she has repeatedly needed to fight for educational success, economic security and also social status in light of (as she puts it) being "judged for being a single mother". Kayla also explains her final action here in terms of needing to call out (when no one else will) the Principal of her college on what she perceives as his racist behaviour. Kayla suggests that her actions within the initial group disciplinary meeting, with its own codes of carefully contained behaviour, might have been quite understandably interpreted as "rude". Yet, she takes issue with how her methods of communicating as a young woman of colour were (mis)interpreted and positioned as "rude" much *more* so than the "very angry" behaviour of a young white woman. Kayla's analysis in this respect

echoes research findings in the UK (Shain, 2003), and indeed ultimately seems to trigger her fighting response. In all this, Kayla's final statement to Tom can be understood as an act of 'true speaking' (hooks, 1989, 8): one which was, however, experienced in this context as a 'threat' rather than 'courageous act' (hooks, 1989, 8). Indeed, Kayla's ways of embodying her anger and calling out perceived injustice only confirmed an institutional view of her as an 'impossible' if not dangerous body (Youdell, 2006a). It is indeed important to consider here institutional responsibilities to provide an environment free from physical violence and verbal abuse. In such a context, with a particular duty of care to enact, the complex reasons behind a student kicking the Principal's door and calling him "racist cunt" can be (and with perhaps a sense of relief) erased.

Cairo, on the other hand, tended to mobilise a different, less explosive approach to calling out the institutional injustice she perceived. A key example is her response to being temporarily excluded in January of the fieldwork year, for poor punctuality and attendance, but also for reports from her GCSE English and Maths teachers that she was difficult in class. Cairo was informed she could appeal in writing, and she did so to the ultimate decision that she would be allowed to carry on at the college under a strict contract for attendance, punctuality and behaviour. It seems on this occasion that Cairo's choice to engage in a more institutionally readable form of resistance, the formally written letter, facilitated a space for her voice to be (on some level) heard. Indeed, Ahmed (2012) discusses the kind of cultural literacies necessary to have one's voiced heard in institutions, literacies Cairo found it easier to mobilise than some of the other research participants. However, Cairo's method of defence here did not come without cost - namely being subject to its own process of gendered and racialised labelling.

Within her letter Cairo had taken particular issue with the fact that her English teacher of all people had complained about her classroom behaviour, and had made the point that this teacher, Cosima, should have approached her directly about it, given the strong grades she was achieving in this subject and the positive

relationship she felt she had with Cosima. This operated as one of her key arguments for being given a second chance, and afterwards Cosima (now teaching a different GCSE English class) reported to me that Cairo had taken to completely ignoring her in the corridor – behaviour that Cosima felt "a little intimidated" by. In an interview on the day she had returned to college, one that took place in the dance studio after the tutor group had welcomed her return with hugs and cheers, Cairo explains her view of the situation to me as follows:

> There are some teachers that I thought I was quite close to and for
> them to say that I don't do work (.) I don't participate (.) I don't join
> in any teamwork (.) I don't do nothing hurt me because […] in those
> particular classes when I <u>do</u> do my work it's really good […] they tell
> me my work it's really good and all sorts of stuff (.) and for them to
> tell [the Vice Principal] and basically put my career and my future at
> risk and say I don't do nothing (.) I'm negative (.) I'm whatever (1)
> hurt me
> **Interview with Cairo, 21st January 2015**

This was the first of a few rare moments where Cairo admitted vulnerability and indeed discussed her feelings in our interviews. The way she speaks here, using terms such as "close to" and "hurt me", contrasts with the more formal letter she wrote, one that operated on cool, logical argument. I suggest that in this more private and (after her warm welcome from the tutor group) caring space, Cairo is able to articulate the emotive matter of being excluded by one's teachers. This seems to be an emotive matter for Cairo firstly because of the "risk" it placed her imagined future at. I understand the depth of her feeling here in light of her talk in other interviews around a desire, and in fact *need*, to become an "independent" career woman, coupled with the "stress" she experienced around the pressure to achieve in a school environment. The "hurt" Cairo articulates here is also consistent with researchers' discussions around how acutely emotion operates within teacher-student relationships (hooks, 1994; Gordon, 2006; George and Clay, 2013). Anala, however, had a different reading of Cairo's emotional engagements with this incident:

> My interpretation of that was what Cairo's done (.) it was obvious to
> me that [Cosima] felt intimidated by Cairo […] Cairo is not stupid (.)
> she knows what she does to people […] and she's used that (.) and I

> think (1) she picked on Cosima (.) she took that because she needed
> something […] she was angry at the institution and she had to find
> somebody [to blame]
> **Interview with Anala, 23rd April 2015**

Anala's interpretation here imagines a strategic aspect of Cairo's ways of navigating the college, consistent with the ways Cairo herself had spoken to me about her own personal strategies for her education (for example, in only completing Merit tasks, the minimum she needed to pass Level 2). However, this explanation of Cairo's (re)actions as primarily manipulative is also consistent with research highlighting how black girls, when not being 'loud', are positioned as 'sly' and 'devious' within schools (Mirza, 1992).

These different occasions of resistance to exclusion are revealing of how the strong black girl, a position that the research participants mobilise in fighting for their education, holds the young woman in a particular bind. If she fights for her education in a loud and explosive way she is aggressive and dangerous (rather than finally and painfully losing her cool at a system of injustice); if she does so in a quiet and measured way she is trying to intimidate as part of a clever and devious strategy (rather than holding her hurt inside, and trying to survive in a hostile system). Ultimately, this is a bind in which the young black woman does not possess the capacity for vulnerability. As Griffin (2016) puts it in a blog post reviewing the voices and representations of African American teenage girls in fiction:

> 'at worst black girls are portrayed in stereotypical ways: big, loud
> and tough-talking. In some instances they are portrayed as
> resilient, strong and capable. In the midst of this sit real girls with
> vulnerabilities, dreams and challenges.'

Indeed, black feminist researchers advocate for the possibility of viewing black girls outside of discourses of anger and strength (Springer, 2002; Wyatt, 2008). In a similar way, I suggest that the examples here call for new forms of institutional understanding of black girls' practices of 'calling out'. These behaviours should be understood in the context of lived histories of marginalisation, lived presents of educational desire and anxiety, and with

attention to young black women's vulnerabilities as well as to their strength. Such an avocation resonates when considering exclusionary processes that involve my research participants' altercations not just with staff but also with young men.

"I'm not gonna lie – if a boy touched me I'd bang him like": the bold black girl versus hegemonic black boy

(i) a discourse of self-respect

In Chapter Six I explore how a particular discourse of physical attractiveness, that of the "light skinned black girl" operates for my research participants. It became clear during a lively discussion with Cairo, Lara and Melody that this discourse is anything but skin deep:

> Melody: most boys would be like "oh [dark skinned] black girls are feisty"
>
> Cairo: [*in agreement*] mmm
>
> Melody: and "white girls are easy" (.) so light-skinned girls are a bit of both
>
> Cairo: yeah
>
> Lara: yeah apparently black girls are too aggressive
>
> Melody: yeah black girls will hit back [*laughs*] and all that (.) tho I'm not gonna lie (.) if a boy touched me I'd bang him like [*slams her fist into her hand*]

Interview with Cairo, Lara and Melody, 19th May 2015

As the young women understand it here, an image of bold black femininity, one that is 'undesirable' (Archer et al., 2007c, 555) in school spaces, seems to extend to their heterosexualised interactions with young black men, in which it is positioned as similarly undesirable and even as an explanation for boys' preferences for white(er) femininities. As with earlier discussions, the young women find ways to mobilise critique here, with Melody stepping directly into the image of the fighting black girl within the interview space itself - but rather

than as a form of "aggression", understanding (and performing) it as a mode of resistance to, specifically, heterosexualised and seemingly inevitable violence. This reflects a body of research into how black girls, and indeed black women, engage in both subtle and bold ways of circumventing the possibility of being positioned as anyone's sexual object (Griffiths, 1995; Hammond, 1999; Weekes, 2002). However, the young black woman's self-protecting and self-respecting behaviour found itself being positioned as 'deviant' (Archer et al., 2007c, 555), wild and even dangerous within the institution, and to exclusionary effects.

(ii) Cairo and the sports boys

As explored earlier, Cairo could mobilise quiet and ultimately effective forms of resistance to the injustice she felt she faced from staff. However, when it came to sexual harassment enacted by male students, she could come out quite literally kicking and screaming. I now turn to the words of Cairo and her friends to explain a significant incident involving one of the football academy students. I rely heavily on Cairo's direct voice and quote at length due to the ways her perspectives came ultimately to be silenced within the institution:

> CS: what actually happened with him?

> Cairo: he's a pussy (.) that's it

> Melody [*laughs*]

> Lara: he just thinks he's a ladies' man

> CS: so did he make a move on you?

> Cairo: he said that I 'tried' [*uses scare quotes*] to have sex with him

> Melody: in the school toilet! [*bursts out laughing*]

> Cairo: exactly (.) exactly (2) [*all laughing now*] and I'm like 'am I a rapist?' [*laughs*] that's how it makes me sound (1) and everyone knows that he kept coming to me (.) and would stand there and wait for me as I walk (.) even Felicia was like (.) why's he waiting?

> CS: so this has been going on for a while?

Cairo: I would say 3 weeks or something (.) so I stopped speaking to him (.) kept my distance away from him like he (.) he would <u>look</u> at me (.) just watching me (.) and even when I was just walking he'd watch me (2)

CS: so then what actually happened? Did you confront him?

Cairo: yeah I confronted him and he said that he never [*spread the rumour about her trying to have sex with him*] (.) and I'm like "you know you did it you're just denying it"

CS: and wasn't there like an actual incident and the headteacher had to get involved?

Melody: yeah we went to him together (.) like confronted him (.) and at first he didn't do anything (.) he was calm…and then other boys came down the stairs…and he was like [*affects deep voice*] "I'm gonna bang 'er I'm gonna bang 'er"

Cairo: as soon as he clocked them he just started shouting

Melody: yeah! And Miss it was so <u>weird</u> (.) the <u>t</u>ransformation [*she claps her hands*] CHANGE (.) he was shouting shouting (.) he tried to hit Cairo (.) Cairo moved back

CS: he actually tried to hit you?

Melody: yeah!

Cairo: if he had actually hit my face it would have been the shittest punch in the world (.) it was so like [*Melody and Cairo do impressions of the boy delivering a weedy punch, while laughing*]

Lara: basically he is one of those people who wants to be known as a big boy // when he's not

All :// yeah

Interview with Cairo, Lara and Melody, 19th May 2015

This account presents the stronghold of patriarchal norms and practices within the college. It is an account of a young man spreading a rumour around a young woman's sexual behaviour within a heteronormative context in which the term "slut" is the highest level of insult for a girl, and acutely so for the "prestigious" black girl, as discussed in Chapter Four. It is also an account of a young man's

attempts to sexually possess a young woman, attempts that are at first quietly resisted by her and then, once more assertively articulated, are met with violence. This reflects research around the ways young men respond violently to girls' bold behaviour as a form of hetero-sexualised policing, and especially in front of other boys (Epstein, 1996; Robinson, 2005). Indeed the term "pussy", evoking in this context a misogynistic discourse of a young man's weak and ultimately feminine behaviour, (and a term that Cairo re-mobilises), is similarly the highest form of insult for a boy in a setting that requires particular forms of hypermasculinity – especially so from a group of young men who are otherwise socially marginalised (see Chapter Four).

This account is also, however, one of a young woman's resistance to the societal and institutional norms that dictate that she must available to 'emphasise' and satisfy the needs of hegemonic black masculinity (Connell and Messerschmidt, 2005, 848). Framed within the witty and scathing group critique the young women enact within the interview itself, we learn that Cairo first mobilises such resistance quietly and on her own, then secondly in a direct act of non-violent confrontation supported by her friends, and finally, in a bold act of physical retaliation and self-defence at the boy's violent response. However, it is Cairo's reaction to this male violence - her final act of resistance - that ultimately becomes the institutional focal point:

CS: so how did you react? How did you deal with it?

Cairo: I went mad

Lara: yeah no one can touch Cairo (.) Cairo don't want anyone to touch her (.) not even the teachers

Cairo: yeah [the college security guard] tried to hold me and I ended up punching him in the arm (1) I was so angry

CS: who were you angry at?

Cairo: at him [*meaning the boy*]

CS: umm (.) and how did you feel that staff dealt with that Cairo?

Cairo: well like I said a long time (.) this college is so shit…I said to my teacher (.) Anala like "if you guys don't do something about it (.) I will"

CS: was he suspended?

Melody: nothing // happened

Lara: // <u>nothing</u> (.) <u>happened</u> (.)

Interview with Cairo, Lara and Melody, 19th May 2015

At the time of this interview, I had already discussed this incident with the one of college's middle managers who had intervened, alongside the college security guard and the new college Principal, to put a stop to the altercation. This staff member reported, with a tone of amazement, that it had taken all three of them to remove Cairo from the scene, and I remember her using the phrase "absolutely wild!" to describe Cairo's behaviour. Indeed, in my view it was Cairo, rather than this young man, who came to be institutionally labelled as a result of this incident, with a formal note going on Cairo's student record and her reputation among staff established. Indeed, this incident was subsequently evoked in staff discussions around whether to permanently exclude Cairo when a similar incident occurred the following year, this time with one of the college's basketball academy students.

I spoke with Cairo about the events of this second incident at the time but did not record this discussion, as it took place where I found her in the corridor, sitting with her head bowed, hands shaking, with a senior member of staff stood over her explaining that she needed to leave the premises until she was called in the next day. As I sat next to her this staff member asked if I would stay with her until she left, and I gained a distinct sense of this "wild" young person being handed over to my care/guardianship: a sense that was heightened as we noticed one of the college security guards following us to go and pick her bag from the library before she left. From our conversation, I remember a similar story of Cairo's prolonged attempts to ignore this second

boy's sexual interest in her, leading to him to confront her in the college canteen and to insult both her appearance and her mother. At this, Cairo by her own account "went mad". Indeed, I remember her stating to me, with still shaking hands, "Miss, he can cuss my clothes all he likes, but he should <u>never</u> have brought my mother into it". The insult to Cairo's mother as well as the sexual harassment Cairo had faced was not (as far as I know) acknowledged in the institutional responses to the incident. Instead, a white, male staff member who had intervened at the time described Cairo's behaviour to me, again in a tone of wide-eyed and quite othering amazement, as "one of the most aggressive things I have ever seen", adding "I felt sorry for [the boy]", while Cairo's new form tutor, a newly qualified teacher who had admitted to finding Cairo "intimidating", exclaimed in the staffroom, "a teacher might be next!" In light of all this, a middle manager, the same who had intervened in the first incident, requested that Cairo be permanently excluded, later explaining to me that "she might not be a bad girl, but she has complex needs that we can't meet here". And finally, later on in the year, my attempts to speak to the context of Cairo's "wild" behaviour were also silenced, with me being quite literally copied out of a staff email around deciding Cairo's fate. The staff member who had removed me later admitted that she feared my voice might have convinced the new "sympathetic" principal to allow Cairo to stay, when the majority of staff thought that she should go.

The idea that young women come to be institutionally punished/excluded for their own bold attempts to defend themselves against sexist and sexual attacks by young men is highlighted in the work of Griffins (1985) and Griffiths (1995). However, I also read such staff reactions in terms of the discursive possibilities for understanding specifically young *black* women's displays of fighting behaviour within this institution, namely as pathological and in need of intervention, or fundamentally as a 'threat' (hooks, 1994). These discursive possibilities operated here in three intersecting ways: firstly, in relation to ideas about the dangerously violent black body (Fanon, 1986; hooks, 1989); secondly, in relation to ideas about the pathologically violent female body

(Waldron, 2011); thirdly, and perhaps most insidiously, in relation to ideas about the damaged black girl, with "complex needs", in need of psychiatric intervention (Brown, 2009). It seems here that a young black woman acting from an 'orientation' (Ahmed, 2004), an emotive and political space, of frustration (at continued sexual harassment), defence (of her mother's honour) and desire (to be a prestigious black girl who stands up for herself) can only be understood as pathological, in a way that a male body acting in the same way might not. Indeed, later in the year the same basketball student who had harassed Cairo shattered a glass door in the college by punching it during an argument with his girlfriend, a HSC student in the college who he was known by staff to physically abuse. Rather that being placed 'at risk' of exclusion, this young man, a star basketball player for the college team, instead came to receive mentoring for his "anger problems" from a senior member of staff. Cairo on the other hand, a "wild" black female student who did not bring public accolades to the college through any of her wider educational activities, was put on her final warning for permanent exclusion for her own "anger problems". It seems then that there is little space or inclination in the publicity-oriented institution, covertly shaped by racist and sexist values, for acknowledging and accommodating the histories of pain and harassment that could form intense orientations of fight (once her attempts at flight have failed) in the bold black girl.

A space for hope does emerge within all this however: namely, in young women's capacities for working together to fight injustice and legitimise their bold identities in the college space. The examples discussed here see young women coming together in critical discussion ("apparently black girls are too aggressive"), in scathing humour ("it would have been the shittest punch!"), in acts of protection ("we went to him together") and celebration of each other ("nobody can touch Cairo"). However, resistance through black, teen sisterhood is often superseded in the college by a discourse of competitive black femininity. This becomes another, and less self-serving, way for young the black woman to mobilise a discourse of the "bad bitch" who no one will

mess with, and indeed is another if not *the* major trigger for the exclusions my research participants encountered during the fieldwork year.

"a rollercoaster of drama": competitive, fighting black teen femininity and educational exclusion

(i) legacies and institutional perspectives

For decades feminist education researchers have argued that young women's friendship formations and dynamics centrally shape their experiences of schooling. From Hey's (1997) ethnography on the 'secret worlds' of girls' friendships in the classroom, to George's (1997, 2010) work on the complexities and intensities of inner-city girls' inter-relational and emotional lives at school, to Paechter and Clark's (2010) explorations of the acute workings of power through girls' social relationships, the research highlights how difficult it is to understand young women's educational trajectories without considering the daily workings of their relationships with each other. This research also explores the significance of girls' friendships, as sites of pleasure and pain, in relation to schools as acutely gendered and hetero-normative spaces, in which girls experience each other as both allies and competitors. Mikel Brown and Chesney-Lind (2005) and Waldron (2011) discuss, more specifically, practices of aggression and 'meanness' that operate between girls, as forms of mutual (quite panoptic) identity policing and battles for status in sexist institutional and societal spaces. Crucial here, as highlighted in the work of George (2010) and Jones (2010), are the ways in which 'race' and practices of class and status-seeking shape how young women form relationships, with these relationships becoming sites of both alliance and competition in a hostile environment. These analyses also speak to a body of black, prominently African American feminist theorising around the deeply complex, both painful and fortifying, nature of black women's relationships with each other, especially in white, patriarchal spaces (Lorde, 1984, 2009b; hooks, 1993).

These different studies and areas of research deeply resonate with my experiences within the research site, and with my research participants' own understandings of their lives at college. Indeed, it is difficult to overstate the role that my research participants' often quite turbulent relationships played here, dominating time and energy both in and out of the classroom, and for both students and teachers. A defining moment is when Anala and I sat together in the staffroom towards the end of the academic year, exhausted after "dealing with" (as our teacher language positioned it at the time) two major physical altercations that had taken place the day before. In this staffroom moment, and in a way that felt quite cathartic at the time, we listed the many public altercations that had occurred between members of the tutor group throughout the year, keeping only to those we considered to be "major" and that had led to serious disciplinary action (such as exclusions): we arrived at a final figure of nine, with one of these in fact covering a whole lunchtime of related incidents.

All four of the research participants also spoke in interview about the fights, fall-outs and shifting friendship formations between girls in the group as the most defining and also the most damaging feature of their year, with Cairo describing the overall feeling of this as "a rollercoaster of drama". That such incidents came to form the fundamental basis for my research participants' formal and permanent exclusions was clear by the end of fieldwork period, with all four young women either choosing to leave the college, or being formally prevented from returning, due to this "drama", especially that involving physical altercations. The young women indeed speak about their own aversion to this "drama". They cite wanting to feel "safe" in the college (Felicia), the pain and upset that friendship rifts could cause (Felicia, Cairo and Winter), and also the thought of having to come in every day "ready for something to kick off" as being an unwelcome distraction from their work (Winter). Felicia and Kayla also spoke separately, and in very clear terms, around feeling that the college was not doing enough to address the problems of "bullying" (Felicia) and "immaturity" (Kayla) among young women and their friendship groups. In light

213

of all this, it is important to consider how staff encounter and position these friendship "dramas".

Both Anala and Sophie speak about feeling "exhausted" by the continual, complex and shifting friendship rifts their students were navigating. This is not only in relation to addressing dramatic altercations within the college space, but also in relation to how these tensions manifested in more subtle ways within the classroom. In discussing all this, the teachers enter a complicated discourse of care for young women who are encountering friendship problems as "part of growing up in a sexist world" (Sophie), but also of these friendship problems being a distraction from the business of learning for achievement in a highly pressured institutional context. As a teacher as well as a critical researcher, I can relate to the emotions that produce this discursive positioning (Ahmed, 2004). Even during our dance and discussion project, one in which I was keen to embrace young women's relationships as the very matter of and for learning, I experienced moments of real frustration at how friendships rifts, and attendant performances of "bad bitch", could manifest in and disrupt the classroom. My fieldnotes after a classroom literacy lesson I was leading convey my own sense of "exhaustion" at all this:

> I had been looking forward to the session today but my hopes blew up
> before we could even start. Tinuke had arrived early, so I'd asked her
> and a few of the other girls to help me move the tables into one block
> in the middle so we could all sit around it. Her immediate response: "I
> don't want to sit looking at those bitches all lesson" – so much for an
> intimate communal learning space! I want to be sensitive to the fact
> that TInuke is working things out, working out her identity within this
> group of big characters who she's trying to find a place within and
> show her loyalties to. But it really annoyed me in that moment – I
> remember thinking "can you not just give it a rest for one second".
> **Fieldnotes, 12th May, 2015**

As I experience here myself, teachers - as feeling, desiring and aspiring bodies in the classroom (hooks, 1994), bodies with a job to do - can experience (and

214

position) young women's relationships, and by proxy the young women themselves, as real problems. An arguably more pathologising 'problem girls' (Lloyd, 2005) discourse emerges in relation to the young women's physical altercations: indeed, it seems that the spectacle and sometimes quite physical encounter of the girl fight can produce an institutional discourse of disdain. For example, during an informal conversation in her office, Christine told me about how, after breaking up a particularly energetic fight between a group of HSC students, she had said to the girls something to the effect of: "I know Camilla is always fighting your corner, but this is unacceptable! You girls have no class". I had always experienced Christine as extremely supportive of both the students and my research goals, but, by her own admission, there seems to be something about breaking up this fight, itself an intensely physical and intimate act, that was just too much. Indeed, this encounter seems to invite Christine into a sadly recognisable rhetoric around not just what these young women are doing, but what they are: low class, a threat, and again, abject within the institution.

Given the processes of exclusion and pathologisation that seem to occur around my research participants' relationships with each other, it is crucial to explore the 'nature' of their conflicts in more detail. However, as a teacher-researcher within this institution and as someone who has had literally no experience of physical fights as a teenage girl, it is crucial that I turn to the young women's own understandings of these conflicts. In doing so, I hope to offer something of a 'girls' eye view' (Osler and Vincent, 2003, xi) that, drawing on black feminist theory and existing empirical research, understands fighting teen black femininity outside of a discourse of disdain and abjection.

(ii) "the bad bitch", her "reflexes" and her "girls": themes of fighting black femininity within the research site

Much of my discussion here is based on insight gained during my final interview with Cairo, taking place the day after a set of major altercations in the college (the same day Anala and I had written our list). Cairo spent much of this subsequent

very emotionally charged interview, during which she sat sporting a badly split top lip, talking about the numerous fights that had taken place throughout the year. She shared anecdotes and opinions related to black girls' forms of anger and why "black girls fight" in a way that resonates with discussions I had with the other research participants, and also resonates with a body of black feminist research around these matters. This interview took place a mere twenty minutes after Cairo had taken her GCSE English exam, a 9am exam that she needed to sit after having spent most of the previous evening in a hospital A&E department, and after which she had apparently asked Anala where I was so that I could interview her. I suggest that Cairo's strong desire to talk about these matters points towards the interview as a space of relief and resolution (see Chapters Two and Nine), but also to Cairo's own understanding of the deep significance of these "black girl fights" to her ability to succeed in her educational journey.

I shape my analyses here around one particular account Cairo shared with me, an edited transcription of which I share here:

> Ok this is what happened. (1) You know how Melissa and Mo […] were together […] and then Mo you know was speaking to loads of girls[…] then (1) one day he followed me, Felicia and Kerri to Sainsburys […] meanwhile we looked back and saw Melissa, Janai and Melody following at the back, and we thought like 'why are they following?' So obviously they're <u>protecting</u> Mo kind of thing.
>
> ...so when we got into Sainsburys Melody <u>pulled</u> him and was like 'oh you're not with them - you're with <u>us</u>' and then Felicia got angry and started arguing […] it's like chill (.) you lot are acting bear protective over all these boys(.) but these boys will <u>cuss</u> <u>you</u>
>
> …and seeing [Melody] all mouthy mouthy […] I was like 'don't, don't act up in front of your new friends' Cos I felt like she came to a college in [name of area] and tried to make herself look like she was one of the baddest girls [name of area].
>
> …and then she came closer to me innit, and I'm the type of person that if you do that in my face, it triggers me […] and I see the other girls running to Felicia […] so I go running as I don't anyone to touch

Felicia (2) And then when I'm running Janai just comes in front of me
(1) I felt like she was going to hit me, so being my reflexes, I punched
her (1) I punched her.

…and when everyone tried to sort out the situation (.) everyone's just
trying to say 'Cairo just apologise' […] and I was like 'no don't talk
about me. You know me. You've heard about me. Why are you trying
to talk about me'…
Interview with Cairo, 2nd June 2015

One key idea that emerges through Cairo's account is the role that young black
men play in the fights and fall-outs between young black women, often through
their own performances of hegemonic black masculinity, for example flirting
with "loads of girls" while forming a steady relationship with one prestigious
black girl. Indeed, researchers discuss how a major point of conflict between,
and indeed distress for young women in schools is their relationships with young
men, and forms of competition and policing that operate around this (Waldron,
2005; Brown and Chesney Lind, 2005). These areas of research certainly
resonate here, with at least four of the nine major public altercations Anala and I
counted being triggered in some way by the research participants' experiences
of a raced and classed compulsory heterosexuality and the battles for status, or
"prestige", emerging through it. One example is when Kayla and Maria, at the
time sitting with a group of male sports students, called Felicia, Winter and
Tinuke the status-ridden term "ugly peasants" across the synoptic arena of a
college basketball match, later taking this insult onto social media, and being the
trigger for the disciplinary meeting in which Kayla (not Maria) was excluded. My
research participants often move towards a critical understanding of such
incidents, discussing in our interviews how boys seem to enjoy and encourage
fights between girls (in both physical and digital space), with Cairo identifying a
self-defeating aspect of young women's competitive behaviour in this respect:
"these boys - these boys will cuss you yet you're bear protective over them". In
this, I turn to the work of Brown and Chesney-Lind (2005) who argues that girls
fight each other in spaces where fighting the 'real' opponents (in this context,

boys, teachers, the institution and so on) might not occur as an option, or indeed might be too risky.

Another, and perhaps *the* central theme of my research participants' fighting relationships with each other is that of being the prestigious, high-status girl who no one will mess with: "the baddest girl in [town]", or as Winter and Tinuke playfully put it in a sing-song ode to Nicki Minaj, the "bad bitch, bad bitch!" As already discussed, it is of key importance for the "prestigious" black girl never be "moist". She should indeed be a 'Bulletproof diva' who has 'the lip and nerve to raise up herself' (Jones, 1994, 3), measuring up against and within a world saturated with images of impenetrable, bold black femininity, encapsulated in figures such as Nicki Minaj, images that come to entangle in deeply emotive and embodied ways with young women's understandings of themselves (Ahmed, 2004; Coleman, 2009). Indeed, the spectacular event of a physical fight between teenage girls, one in which a girl's boldness is visible, audible and (for the opponent) tangible, operates as a particular form of agency. It is a way to 'raise up herself' (Jones, 1994, 3) within a racist, sexist and classist institutional and wider societal context that offers limited opportunity for the black, working class girl studying HSC to win public accolade. Winter even mobilises the language of a theatrical performance in recounting a near-fight in the college canteen with Kayla's friend Maria: "I made sure I didn't appear scared - I was just thinking, 'show time'". Cairo also emphasises the seeming importance of being *known* as the "baddest girl…" at the end of her story, and indeed re-performs this identity through her storytelling: "don't talk about me – you know about me". In a Foucauldian and Butlerian sense here, to be "known", to be intelligible, is fundamental to being validated as a social subject within a particular discursive terrain. Within this particular social terrain, being known as "the baddest girl…" offers my research participants easier opportunity for status than the 'ensemble of rules' (Foucault, 1994, 131) that characterises the institution, with its 'raising up' of the academic high achievers and sports boys.

It is not only this rather synoptic understanding of a deliberate performance of "bad bitch" that emerges through Cairo's account, however. Twice, she refers to her "reflexes". An idea that there is something deeply embodied, and seemingly automatic at play here resonates with the young women's explanations of their fights. Indeed, the young women all discuss the *feeling* of fighting, putting it in terms of an intensely physical, almost unstoppable and quite distracting urge, for example in Cairo citing her fantasies of fighting as a compelling distraction when she is at home "trying to do my work". Winter, in recounting the momentum of a physical fight, even seems to re-live the embodied feeling of it within the very interview space:

> Winter: when she touched me [...] there was too much going on my head [to walk away] (1) I didn't feel (.) even now (.) sitting here (.) it's my eyes (.) my eyes feel dizzy (.) I was really hot (.) I was bothered (.) I was annoyed (.) everything was like (1) Miss what I'm trying to say it wasn't my pride (.) for me that was the tip of the iceberg (.) everything just came crumbling down (.) when I think about it I just think "I should have walked away" (2) I almost don't know what happened

> CS: so it wasn't a decision?

> Winter: it wasn't a decision (.) it just happened

> **Interview with Winter, 20th May 2015**

I remember experiencing this particular interview, especially the way Winter put her head in her hands as she spoke about her eyes feeling "dizzy", as a powerful moment of learning. I had up until this point felt on some level disappointed that Winter, my star research participant who was always able to critically deconstruct and stay away from "drama", had punched another girl in the group. When I heard this news I remember thinking, "it's such a shame that she's allowed herself to get sucked into all this". Sitting opposite Winter in the interview room however, I was moved to new understanding of how a person might experience a fight as an outpouring of something that had hitherto been kept inside in a way that then creates its own momentum ("tip of the iceberg...everything just came crumbling down"). Indeed, traces of this

experience seemed to return for Winter as a visibly 'embodied memory' (Ahmed, 2004). My own encounter of this served to move me from (or at least within) a space of my own 'schooled' white, feminine and acutely British middle class knowledge/experience in which one's body can and must always be kept under control (Youdell, 2006a). It also alerted me to some of the ways in which I too had been covertly judging my research participants' 'choices'.

It is important to consider how and why these young women might experience their fighting practices as forms of "reflex" and release. There are risks in exploring these questions, especially as a white, middle class researcher: specifically, a risk of entering a rather essentialising and pathologising discourse around black women's anger (Griffin, 2012). As ever, a helpful strategy here is to take a 'girls' eye view' (Osler and Vincent, 2003, ix), and so I now turn to the words of Felicia who engages in a complex and revealing analysis of the stereotype that "black girls fight". This is a stereotype that the research participants seem to discuss through an orientation of both painful acceptance (Cairo: "it's true – it's disgusting and its true") and resistance (Winter: "there's no such thing as a typical black girl!"). In this conversation however, Felicia offers a resolution between the two positions, and in doing so adopts a more abstract form of analytical discussion than she usually did in our interviews. Indeed, I suggest there is something particularly 'moving' (Ahmed, 2004) about this topic, something that moved Felicia, and also myself, to new modes of knowledge-production and understanding:

> CS: do you think that stereotype is true?
>
> Felicia: it is (.) even I am black myself (.) I know it's true
>
> CS: why would it be true though?
>
> Felicia: we make it true…and we hate when it people say "black girls are like this" but it is true because you won't see a white girl retaliate like that
>
> CS: I have seen white girls fight

Felicia: yes but they are not as (1) like black girls are just so <u>bold</u> (.) they are so out there and they are so vocal

[*I then share my opinion that this is a social stereotype, but Felicia is not convinced*]

CS: ok so where do you think that [the 'truth' that black girls are bold] would even come from?

Felicia: I feel like it is because (1) I don't know (.) black people have more anger going down

CS: why would that be?

Felicia: I don't know (.) I think it is because of slavery (1) I don't know

CS: so kind of like a history of racism has caused //

Felicia: // yes (.) I feel like they are just so angry (.) they have a reason to be (.) like (.) to show their selves because (1) even though I have never been through it myself but I feel like that is why we just have it in ourselves (1) I haven't been through it so I don't really care about slavery…that was back in the day (.) it has not got nothing to do with my mum (.) it is nothing to do with me (.) but I feel like it's just in us to like (2) our families have shown us to make ourselves out there
Interview with Felicia 16th July 2015

Within this discussion, Felicia weaves together a complex and illuminating understanding of black girls' fighting behaviour. She works with the idea of performing an available identity position - "we make it true" - a process of 'subjectivation' (Butler, 2004) in which there is, implicitly, always room for becoming otherwise. Felicia also explains the mobilising of this identity with reference to a legacy of racial oppression that has shifted in nature, but still manifests in the modes of resistance that black communities teach each other ("our families have shown us to make ourselves out there"). This, I suggest, works hopefully in conjunction with the potentially more essentialising explanation she initially gives ("we just have it in ourselves"), to ultimately cohere with an Ahmedian view of deeply embodied 'orientations' formed over time in response to oppressive social relationships: but still ones that have the capacity for becoming and change. Felicia's multifaceted explanation of why

black girls fight here indeed resonates with black feminist thought around how histories of oppression work to produce deeply embodied experiences, or orientations, of anger and pain, ones that can be mobilised (and transformed) for empowerment and social change (Lorde, 1988; Brown, 2011).

There is also space within Felicia's explanation to draw discussions of class as well as 'race' into the analysis. The history of oppression Felicia refers to here as productive of fighting femininities is not simply raced. Indeed, and as consistent with an intersectional understanding of 'race' and how it intersects with class in the UK (Aziz, 1997), particularised histories of class oppression can also serve to explain an orientation of fighting behaviour, as also discussed in regards to White British working class girls (Brown and Chesney-Lind, 2005). An understanding of fighting as a particularly classed practice also serves to explain a discourse of shame and regret that emerges for the young women. Indeed, as discussed in previous chapters, the prestigious black girl should achieve the perfectly balanced performance of an unquestionable strength that is also glossy and *classy*. It is in this respect that my research participants' mobilise the insult of the "ratchet" girl, whose undignified fighting behaviour renders her "unattractive" (Felicia) and "disgusting" (Cairo), in a way that painfully reflects Christine's retort: "you girls have no class".

In all of this I ultimately suggest, drawing on the work of Ringrose (2006), that decontextualized understandings of young women's conflicts that do not acknowledge the racist, classist and heterosexist contexts through which these girls' inter-relational aggression emerge, serve to 'maintain appropriate modes of repressive, white, middle-class femininity…which continue to produce normative (mean) and deviant (violent) girls' (Ringrose, 2006, 405). I also, however, indentify an important space for hope here: namely, just how much the young women's relationships with each other matter. My research participants' friendships and their presence in each other's social terrains have the power to reduce each other to tears, and even to physical violence in defence of both oneself and one's "girls". Indeed, Cairo's account of the fight

in the supermarket car park centres around not only performances of "bad bitch" and the "protection" of a boy, but also protection of each other: "so I go running as I don't anyone to touch Felicia". It also seems, from the long and detailed discussions that took place in each of the girl's interviews around their friendship breakdowns throughout the year, that there is scope for great pain at being betrayed by another black girl, especially a friend. I read this in terms of a body of research that argues for the importance of girls' friendships in developing personal identities and resilience in a sexist world (Hey, 1997; George, 1997) but also in terms of ideas around the deep pleasure and power within black (teen) sisterhood (Brown, 2009; Sears, 2010).

Conclusion: abject bold black femininity and spaces for hope

Overall, it appears that the imperative for a prestigious black girl to be bold, to have 'the lip and the nerve' to 'raise up herself' (Jones, 1994, 3), and also call out injustice in service of 'true speaking' (hooks, 1989, 8), has little place in the research site. This is especially the case when this imperative is mobilised through embodied behaviours that fall outside of the neoliberal institution's covertly white, middle class, patriarchal view of what makes an 'educable [and marketable] body' (Leathwood and Hey, 2006, 240). Indeed, despite some individual staff members' moments of sympathy/empathy and commitments to feminist and anti-racist politics, it becomes difficult in this setting to acknowledge and honour both the vulnerability in and the critical, political potential of my research participants' bold behaviours. This seems to be especially true within a setting that condones performances of hegemonic black masculinity, covertly encourages competitive black femininity, and places constant pressure on teachers and students to achieve. In all this, mechanisms emerge through which the bold body of prestigious and educationally striving black working class femininity becomes abject within the college space.

There are certainly spaces for hope, however, centered around young women's practices of self-respect, their capacity for choosing alternative more

institutionally acceptable forms of action, and in ways of working together. Throughout the incidents discussed here, it becomes clear that these young women aren't willing to compromise on their boldness, nor give up the fight for success, often against the different forms of injustice they feel: there is certainly power in this. It is also clear that these young women are finding ways to perform and navigate their boldness without clashing with the institution, with its duty of care to all, as well as its covertly gendered assumptions around who is most and least responsible for upholding this care/safety. And indeed, it is clear that some staff members do acknowledge young women's vulnerabilities, their histories, and the validity of their critical voices where it is institutionally permissible to do so. I identify these as small cracks within the system, ones that have scope for being widened. I now discuss how to mine these small cracks and create others, in developing an embodied pedagogy of hope with my research participants: one in which the togetherness of young black women, in dancing body and debating voice, might be a site of hope in regards to finding space for the bold (and buff) black girl within the neoliberal 16-19 college.

Chapter Eight

From critical education to an embodied pedagogy of hope: defining an alternative approach

In this chapter I take the conclusions drawn so far and ask, what can be done? As I have shown, some young women who study HSC and embody particularized black, working class femininities encounter forms of educational exclusion in the research site. These forms of exclusion include the co-production of practical and emotional barriers to the forms of study and conduct required within the neoliberal institution. These forms of exclusion also, and simultaneously, include racist, sexist and classist pathologisation through which the young women are positioned as uneducable or even abject bodies within this institution. Both forms of exclusion operate around the young women's performances of "buff" and "bold" black femininities, mobilized in their quests for success as "prestigious" black girls and "strong, independent", educationally achieving black women. In this then, the very instigators for exclusion also operate as sites for agency and empowerment. So the question to now explore is what spaces and practices could be developed to disrupt these forms of exclusion, while drawing on and further facilitating black, working class young women's existing practices of (self) empowerment within systems of oppression?

As discussed in Chapter Four, this research speaks to a tradition in which education is understood as central to black, female resistance and in which 'education…is not about the process of learning or teaching; it is about refutation' (Mirza, 2006, 153). In light of this, I now explore specifically pedagogical answers to the question above. I understand the term 'pedagogy' here as much more than a particular approach to teaching and learning a designated curriculum within a formal educational institution, but also as something more specific than 'education in the broadest sense of the term' (Petrie et al., 2006). I instead take 'pedagogy' to mean a view of the purpose of

education within a world marked by particular social and economic relations, and the approach to educational practice that achieves this purpose (Freire, 1996; hooks, 1994). The pedagogy I articulate here is specifically one that understands education as taking place within a world marked by social inequalities that live out and are resisted through embodied lived experience. It is therefore one fundamentally different to but that might also work alongside current neoliberal practices and curricula within the research site, in serving the empowerment and resisting the marginalization of my research participants as black, working class young women. Within this, I maintain an understanding of 'praxis' developed in Chapter Two: that theory and practice inform and emerge through one another (Lather, 1986; hooks, 1996).

In this chapter, I describe such an approach as 'an embodied pedagogy of hope', and define a 'vision' of this pedagogy with reference to existing pedagogical theory and practice. I first situate it in relation to the rich and dynamic concept of critical education (Apple et al., 2009), and with primary reference to the work of Paulo Freire (1985, 1996, 2014). However, I ultimately problematize this tradition of 'classical liberatory pedagogies' (Weiler, 1995, 24) with reference to feminist educational theory (Ellsworth, 1989; Morley, 1998), and with particular reference to the work of bell hooks (1989, 1994, 2003), which I offer as a enriched and more appropriate vision of pedagogy for this research context. In doing so, I come to think of the critical, and thus critical education, 'in at least two ways – as a cognitive, intellectual, deconstructive, textual task, *and* as a form of embodied political anger and action…[as] lived…embodied, experience' (Luke, 2004, 26). In developing these understandings of 'the critical', I draw on discursive-affective theories of embodiment to finally propose some concrete pedagogical practices, rooted in the workings of bodies within discursive terrains. These would be particular forms of (dialogic) dance and discussion work within black girl centered extracurricular spaces. I propose this approach with reference to literature exploring similar projects (Brown, 2009; Sears, 2010; Showunmi, 2017) and to existing examples of such practice within the research site itself.

Critical and liberatory education: a pathway from Freire to hooks

(i) Freirean pedagogy and a constructive feminist critique

The pedagogy I propose in this chapter speaks to a rich body of discussion about critical pedagogies and the benefits of them for education with socially marginalized groups (McLaren, 1995; Luke, 2004; Norton and Toohey, 2004; Apple et al., 2009). Theorists of this tradition often root their discussions of critical education in the work of Freire, with Weiler (1995) referring to this tradition in terms of 'Freirean pedagogies'. When discussing the possible application of his work in multiple contexts, Freire himself (1985) acknowledges the historic and social specificity of his work, namely, that of class struggles in mid-twentieth century Brazil. However, the researchers cited above advocate a number of broadly applicable principles in Freire's pedagogical discussions. I suggest these principles can work against, or at least towards enriching, the socially unjust practices of schooling under a 'neoliberal political framework' (Archer, et al. 2010, 6), as discussed in previous chapters. However, as I will discuss, there are ways in which a Freirean approach needs to be enriched for work with marginalized social groups in general, and black, working class girls in particular.

Central to a Freirean view of education is the notion that 'besides being an act of knowing, education is also a political act. That is why no pedagogy is neutral' (Freire and Shor, 1987, 13). Through this view of education, every act of learning takes place in the context of, and so is fully shaped by power relations, and to ignore this, for example in viewing education as a depoliticized 'DIY project of the self' (Kelly, 2001, 30), would be to maintain and even collude in processes of marginalization, or, in Freiren terms, oppression. Under this alternative framework then, the purpose of education (as innately political) should instead become 'a shared consciousness of oppression, leading to a shared sense of knowledge, and a shared commitment to…finding [a] path to liberation' (Jackson 1997, 464). Indeed, the process through which such a goal might be achieved can be found in Freire's own articulation of praxis, namely,

'reflection and action upon the world in order to transform it' (Freire, 1996, first published 1970, 33). 'Transformation' here is not the improvement of the economically productive self, as under a neoliberal framework, but is grounded in an understanding of the world as marked by oppressive power relations that should be 'acted upon' in the name of 'human liberation' from them and their effects (Freire, 1996, 21). So for Freire, education should always involve processes of both naming situations of oppression, a process that he calls 'problem posing education' (1996, 60), and also finding ways to transform them, thus be liberated from them, in what then becomes a liberatory education. Freire (1985) describes this educational praxis as working towards 'utopia', where 'to be utopian is not to be idealistic or impractical but to engage in denunciation' of oppressive social structures and relations 'and annunciation' of new, less oppressive forms of relationship and being in the world (57). Freire (1996) discusses this process in terms of oppressed groups becoming 'subjects in rather than objects of education' (111), so that education takes on a 'humanizing' (36) purpose in which each student 'achieves significance as a human being' (50).

For Freire this humanizing education takes place only in practice, and throughout his work he advocates a number of pedagogic practices, or methods, towards this aim. The first is a commitment to privileging the personal experiences of students within the learning process: in this, a traditional 'banking concept' (Freire, 1996, 53) of education, in which the teacher imparts (their privileged form of) knowledge to the students, is disrupted in prioritizing what the students already know through their lived experiences. Central to this process is the practice of 'dialogue', namely, 'the encounter between [students], mediated by the world, in order to name the world' (Friere, 1996, 69), in which teacher-as-knowledge-holder is disrupted, and in which ' 'students-of-the-teacher' become 'students-teachers' ' (Friere, 1996, 61). Within this, Freire also articulates a need to develop pedagogical methods that recognise the corporeal and emotional dimension of living and

learning, asserting that 'I know with my entire body, with feelings, with passion and also with reason' (Freire, cited in Darder, 2002, 98).

This vision of education stands in marked contrast to the individualized, meritocratic, attainment-driven and seemingly disembodied view of education that so centrally shapes the research site. In its requirement for education to liberate from oppression, and to do so in deeply embodied ways, it also coheres with a discourse of education as black, female empowerment and the black feminist epistemologies discussed in this study. In these ways a Freriean critical education implies a praxis that might take action against the material and symbolic processes of exclusion that my research participants face. However, a number of theorists have explored problematic elements of Freire's articulation of a critical pedagogy, and in doing so, resist 'reify[ing] it as a methodology or romanticiz[ing] it as a tradition that merely needs to be learned and applied' (Brady, 1994, 145). Feminist thinkers in particular (Ellsworth, 1989; Brady, 1994; Weiler, 1995; Jackson, 1997) have discussed ways in which Freire's work needs 'enriching and expanding' (Weiler, 1995, 31), with three broad recurrent concerns emerging.

First, are considerations of difference, primarily the 'the political and pedagogical importance of addressing issues of identity and difference…within and between different groups of oppressed people' (Brady, 1994, 146). This is something that Freire does not explicitly and consistently do in his work, and I would add that this failure to address 'issues of identity and difference' head-on in Freire's work is compounded by a lack of detailed discussion of *how* exactly the body and emotions manifest in and serve a 'humanizing' education (Freire, 1996, 36). Second, are considerations of the role and authority of the teacher within a liberatory learning process, particularly within formal educational institutions, with Ellsworth (1989) suggesting that 'strategies such as student empowerment and dialogue give the illusion of equality while in fact leaving the authoritarian nature of the teacher/student relationship intact' (306). This is of particular concern when the teacher occupies a position of privilege in relation

to their 'race', gender and/or class. Third, are concerns regarding the rather rigid, dualistic notion of power relations within Freire's work (Brady, 1994; Weiler, 1995; Jackson, 1997) in which 'the oppressor' and 'the oppressed' are conceived of in fixed and opposing terms. This leaves little room for seeing the more complex and shifting ways in which power operates (Foucault, 1978, 1979), and with the more dynamic and complex understanding of power employed in this study, the central Freirean goal of 'liberation' from oppression is also fundamentally problematized.

These concerns, related to difference, embodiment and relations of power, take on specific significance in this research: in that I am a white, middle class teacher-researcher seeking a liberatory praxis with black working class girls who face and resist marginalisation in a neoliberal institution in which power is mobilized in shifting and 'textured' (Deveaux, 2010) ways. In this educational context, there is much scope for 'perpetuating relations of domination' (Ellsworth, 1989, 298) while seeking to collectively enact a liberatory pedagogy. In fact, in a detailed discussion of her own attempts to do critical pedagogy in practice, Ellsworth (1989) asks a question that speaks to much critical discussion of a classical, Freirean approach: why doesn't this feel empowering? A key example from the research site that brings this into view is the college's creative writing club. This is an extra-curricular group, led by one of the college's English teachers (Cosima) in collaboration with a mixed gender and multi-ethnic group of A Level students. Its mission statement is certainly liberatory in ways that are consistent with the Freirean vision stated above, and in my experience of working with this club, so is its practice. Its members also speak highly of what it has brought to their lives as students and young people. However, it seems as if black female students who study HSC have particular reasons for not engaging with this club. None of my research participants joined, despite being taught by Cosima and having (at least at the start of the year) positive relationships with her, and also despite Kayla and Winter in particular professing to enjoy creative writing. Another student in Anala's tutor group *did* attend one session, never to return, saying that she found it "boring" and "not for me". Cosima herself has

spoken in interview about the relatively narrow demographic the club attracts, articulating a desire for greater engagement from BTEC students. She also expresses a view that the young black women she teaches A Level to "seem to have greater confidence in themselves – they've got the protection and the status of that label, 'A Level' "[37]. Indeed, could it be that my research participants were reluctant to engage in an extracurricular activity seemingly designed for "the clever ones" (as Kayla describes A Level students), and also then run the risk of being rendered a "coconut girl", as Rebecca's analysis of her club-attending identity suggests?

In these respects it seems that a particular space and form of pedagogical praxis needs developing in order to welcome the liberation and empowerment of black, working class girls studying vocational courses in this college. Indeed, Jackson (1997) and Brady (1994) suggest that a core problem with a Freirean approach is its rather abstract and inadvertently universalizing nature, thus advocating a need for developing pedagogy only in-practice, and in regards to a specific setting and a specific student group. In the spirit of imagining a more nuanced and tailored pedagogical approach, one that is also cognizant of the three broad problems of Freire's work highlighted above, I now turn to the work of bell hooks (1994, 2003) in her discussions of an engaged pedagogy of hope.

(ii) the hopeful and engaged pedagogy of bell hooks

Apple et al. (2009) see hooks' work on pedagogy as 'taking on part of the role of Paulo Freire in the United States' (ix), with hooks herself discussing the influence of Freire's thought on her studying, writing and teaching practice. Specifically, hooks (1994) asserts how as an African American woman from the poor, rural South, 'one sentence of Freire's became a revolutionary mantra for me: 'we cannot enter the struggle as objects in order later to become subjects' ' (46). However, to position hooks as 'taking on part of the role of...Freire in the

---

[37] From an informal discussion with Cosima after a process of respondent checking during the 'writing up' period.

United States' serves to gloss over the ways in which her work provides serious challenges and deep enrichments to that of Freire. Indeed, there is a significant body of education research that draws on hooks' work in order to seek a *particular* vision of liberatory pedagogical praxis with marginalized groups, especially with women, and more so with women of colour (Buffington, 1993; Bartlett, 1998; Morley, 1998; Bauer, 2000; Sears, 2010; Carolissen et. al, 2011; George and Clay, 2013). So, it is now in hooks' work, as it credits and draws on the work of Freire, that I locate a vision of education that may better achieve a sense of liberation for the young women that I am developing pedagogical projects with. hooks introduces two key concepts in particular that serve as helpful enrichments to Freire's work: her discussion of a pedagogy of 'hope' (2003), and her articulation of an 'engaged' pedagogy (1994).

The term 'hope' sits comfortably within the Freirean tradition of education advocated thus far, and indeed is a term that Freire uses to describe his evolving thought on pedagogical practice:

> 'I do not understand human existence, and the struggle needed to improve it, apart from hope and dream […] Hopelessness is but hope that has lost its bearings [but] hope, as an ontological need, demands anchoring in practice' (Friere, 2014,2).

hooks (2003) takes up this term in a similar way to Freire, in positioning it as a necessary driving force behind the sometimes draining and disorientating practice of teaching in a system of domination. However, hooks defines this system of domination in a particular way throughout her work: that of a 'white capitalist patriarchy' (1994, 2003), in which individuals experience processes of power - privilege and oppression - in relation to their 'race', gender and class. This intersectional approach is a crucial development of Freire's work: one that serves to re-imagine the term 'liberation' as individual and collective freedom within intersecting racist, sexist and classist processes of oppression, and as therefore the decentering of 'race', gender and class based privilege within education systems (Bauer, 2000; Carolissen et al., 2011). hooks (2003) also foregrounds the ways in which the term 'hope' resists the somewhat idealistic

notion of full liberation taking place amongst the now myriad power relations that shape any educational space. This resonates with the complicated possibilities my research participants already mobilise within the research site as an institution shaped by a white, capitalist patriarchy, acting through ideas of the "prestigious" black girl, and the autonomous, attainment focused (neoliberal) "good student" reinterpreted as the "strong, independent" black woman. Through an orientation towards a (better, fairer) future, a surely uncertain space, hooks' pedagogical vision also offers a sense of optimism in the *potential* for change, rather than 'imposing precarity and stress upon individuals' (Davies, 2014, xi) in the way a neoliberal discourse of the future does. Indeed, Davies (2014) discusses 'uncertainty' in a way that resonates with hooks' work, and might resist the paralysing kind of uncertainty experienced in the neoliberal classroom: 'to say that the future is uncertain […] can be a basis for political and existential hope […] it allows us to dream, to reinvent, to reorganize' (Davies, 2014, xi).

In alignment with this imagined 'us' engaged in 'reinvention' and 'reorganization', the primary way in which hooks (2003) imagines hope in action, is through her concept of learning communities working together against 'continuing institutionalized systems of dominance' (1). Indeed, Carolissen et al. (2010), who explore the application of hooks' ideas in university classrooms in South Africa, discuss how 'a successful pedagogy of hope […] allows students to collaboratively recognize their own and others' humanity, and assists them to become critical citizens who may affect change in themselves and their own communities' (158). This understanding of the classroom leaves necessary room for difference, and the *valuing* of difference that may not have been experienced (or at least imagined) by my research participants in relation to the college's creative writing club. It also resonates with the collaborative ways in which my research participants mobilise resistance to the forms of oppression they face, as discussed in previous chapters. This idea of learning communities, working with and celebrating the humanity of others in resistance to domination, offers another key approach:

that of an 'engaged pedagogy' (1994), as also advocated by Bauer (2000) and George and Clay (2013) in regards to education with girls and women in particular.

One key aspect of an engaged pedagogy, and something that hooks (1994) identifies as lacking within Freire's discussions, is embodiment. Specifically, she refers to 'the notion of pleasure in the classroom' (7), its liberatory effects in 'stimulating serious intellectual…engagement' (7), and more generally, the power of emotion and 'the erotic' (194) in generating learning and change. hooks (1994) makes clear that by 'erotic' she does not (necessarily) mean an experience of sexuality, but more generally the sensual, physical and emotional 'energy' (195) that can charge a learning process and 'excite the critical imagination' (1994, 195). Woven throughout these discussions is an emphasis on what hooks refers to as 'wholeness' (1994, 14): namely, a movement away from a Freirean 'concern with the mind' (hooks, 1994, 14) with a 'calling attention to the body' (191) in the classroom. This not only speaks to explicitly hooksian research that develops emotionally and sensually engaged pedagogies (Bartlet, 1998; Morley, 1998; Carolissen et al., 2011) but also to a body of contemporary education research that calls for attention to the ways in which bodily experience, including sensation, emotion and movement, is central to processes of learning (Ellsworth, 2005; Zembylas, 2005; Hickey-Moody, 2013). This can be also interpreted with reference to the Ahmedian and Butlerian understanding of embodiment articulated in Chapter Three, namely that identities, relationships and ways of inhabiting and knowing the world take shape affectively over time within discursive terrains. An embodied and sensually and aesthetically engaged pedagogy such as this might powerfully work with the acutely embodied aspects of my research participants' identities as "buff" and "bold" black girls, and the ways in which acutely embodied pleasure is a space for mobilizing power.

Another feature of an engaged classroom is the need for it to be a communal space in which there is 'ongoing recognition that everyone influences the classroom dynamic' (1994, 8), and not always in positive ways. For hooks, in order to 'create an open learning community' (1994, 8), there must be recognition of the ways that oppressive power relations between teachers and students, and between students, can shape the educational space, but can also be shifted and reinscribed by a spirit of openness and 'collective effort' (1994, 8). Indeed, a number of teacher-researchers find hooks' foregrounding of palpable power relations in the classroom useful in developing realistic teaching approaches that can still work towards a spirit of openness and critical liberation (Buffington, 1993; Bauer, 2000). An open learning community can be created amongst this myriad of power relations through the collective recognizing of everyone's presence and 'unique being' in the classroom (hooks, 1994, 13), for example, through teachers and students bringing 'narratives of their experience into the classroom' (21), so that 'everyone claims knowledge as a field in which we all labour' (14). This foregrounds the importance of including different lived experiences to create dialogic learning communities that resist hegemonic relations and do not position my research participants' perspectives as young black women as inferior (Mirza, 2010), a threat (hooks, 1989) or as bearing shame (Weekes, 2002).

These offerings of a hopeful and engaged pedagogy will prove useful in developing a liberatory praxis with my research participants: especially in its potential to enact 'the critical' as a distinctly communal 'form of embodied political [emotion] and action' (Luke, 2004, 26) and to embrace rather than gloss over the workings of power within learning spaces. However this pedagogical vision is not yet enough. Indeed, hooks' discussions of pedagogy emerge largely from her experiences of teaching in multi-ethnic Humanities classrooms in North American universities. So in a hooksian spirit of developing praxical approaches that are contextualized, I now discuss the possibility for a more specific manifestation of hooks' Freirean thought for the particular educational context of this study.

Defining a liberatory praxis with black, female vocational students in the neoliberal college

The task is now to articulate existing models of a critical, hopeful and engaged pedagogic praxis that might serve the liberation of my research participants as black, working class young women who study HSC and are positioned as 'at risk' of exclusion within their multiethnic 16-19 neoliberal college. Such a praxis might also serve a (different kind of) liberation for the politically engaged yet "exhausted" (Anala) teachers who could be part of building 'learning communities' with young women in this system. I ask four broad and interrelated questions in service of this task. Where might such a praxis take place, in what spaces and locations? Who might participate in it, in what sort of 'learning community'? How might it operate, through what methods and practices? And what might its material, the knowledge it engages and produces, be?

Before embarking on this research, I had already attempted to answer such questions, specifically in relation to the use of dance and critical discussion with young black women in the A Level Dance class and a voluntary extra-curricular club (Stanger, 2013, 2016, 2017). With this earlier research and its limitations in mind, I now introduce a discussion of the pedagogical theory and practices of others: specifically that which serves the articulation of concepts and principles for analyzing (and evaluating) my own attempts at developing a liberatory pedagogy with Anala's tutor group. I cite some inspirational and aspirational aspects of theory and practice, including that of my research participants themselves, as by definition unachievable by my own efforts – namely, in respect to my attempts to practice anti-racist research with black girls as a white middle class woman. However, in offering these models and concepts for practice, I hope to lay the foundations for understanding both the successes and the failures of the work I went on to develop.

(i) alternative educational spaces and curricula

As the discussions of previous chapters suggest, a target-driven, teacher-led neoliberal classroom, one that requires the efficient consumption and (re)production of knowledge for individual assessment, is not an ideal space for a critical, engaged and hopeful pedagogy to manifest. Given the ways that the college's PSHE curriculum is also coopted for neoliberal ends (see Chapters One and Five), it seems appropriate that pedagogical spaces are sought *outside* of the college's curriculum and pastoral structures. This would imply finding locations for building engaged learning communities outside of college classrooms, or at least in ways that reconstruct the space of these classrooms. As a teacher-researcher within the research site, it became clear that I was not alone in feeling this, and indeed a number of the interviews I conducted with Anala, Sophie and Cosima produced similar attitudes regarding the need for alternative educational spaces. For example, one evening during a HSC trip to Euro Disney, Anala came to make the following comments about her tutor group's education, and her wishes for it:

> I do think they're disengaged from the institution […] I'm kind of thinking "what would I like to see?" when I walk into that institution (.) the first time I walked in there I just thought it was dull (.) barren […] we put up posters of Malala [Yousafzai] and [SLT] rip them all up to make things look "wonderful"[…] I'd like to see (2) many of the students are West African, Somalian [sic] (.) like messages about people who have come from these countries, what these countries have achieved so when [students] are walking down the corridors there's a sense of pride (.) a sense of belonging (1) [the college] doesn't represent the students in any way […] we should be having more debates [for example] about wearing a veil (.) what does that mean in contemporary society? It's like [names white male teacher] when he said something like "well it doesn't make sense to me when they wear these skinny jeans and then have a scarf around their head"[…] he (.) we all (.) are coming with this very Euro-centric binary […] but that's (.) I'm criticizing the *institution* here because we should be educating our teachers
> **Interview with Anala, 16th February 2015**

The discourse of education Anala employs here stands in marked contrast to the attainment-driven discourse of success that she would often (albeit critically) use while 'at work', especially around the time of coursework deadlines. Indeed, it seems as if the re-organised educational space of the trip, and perhaps the interview itself, freed up room for Anala to 'to dream, to reinvent' (Davies, 2014, xi) around her students' education. Anala's specific vision of an institution marked by a sense of cultural belonging for the young women in her tutor group, with personal narratives of experience and critiques of "Eurocentric" and patriarchal discourses around femininity, is undeniably hooksian. However, given the stronghold of neoliberal discourses of success within the institution, such a vision would need a particular and 'doable' starting point lest the development of an alternative, critical space is "ripped up to make things look wonderful", becoming nothing but 'a utopian vision' (Apple, et al. 2009, 277).

For a more 'doable' starting point, I consider the critical power of, and within, all-female, extra-curricular spaces within educational settings. As an example of practitioner-research that resonates with my own, Bjorck (2013) draws on the metaphor of Virginia Woolf's 'A Room of One's Own', to discuss her girls-only critical music project within a Swedish school. Bjorck (2013) explores the re-creative, subversive power of this project with reference not only to its 'curriculum', but also with reference to a 'spatial turn' in feminist thinking (Rose, 1993; Massey, 1994), in relation to which girl-only and girl-created spaces are liberatory because they disrupt a male (and adult) disciplinary gaze. Bjorck (2013) discusses such spaces 'as a temporary strategy, like that of a cocoon' (14), thus leaving room, I suggest, for girls 'to dream, to reinvent, to reorganize' (Davies, 2014, xi). These discussions resonate with the similarly critical potential of what Carter (2007) describes as the 'counter-spaces' young black people mark out in schools, in an article aptly titled 'Why the black kids sit together at the stairs'. By contrast, however, Carter (2007) theorises this acutely *visible* spatial practice as a way of 'affirming' black identities in predominantly white spaces, as well as a serving as a 'protective force for these

students…allowing them to maintain a strong racial sense of self, while maintaining school success in a racially hostile environment' (543). In alignment with an Ahmedian and Butlerian understanding of how power moves through bodies in space, there is something deeply liberatory in the notion of literally reinscribing a social space by developing, or writing, pockets of difference across it: pockets that comprise new and different arrangements of bodies residing together.

There is certainly pedagogic potential in these self-created alternative spaces. The identity formations they celebrate and generate, and the new relations of power they inscribe, are consistent with a hooksian call for the decentering of raced, gendered and classed privilege through education. However, and in alignment with an intersectional approach, it is crucial to identify the *particular* ways black, working class young women form spaces, and also design curricula, for themselves in their college. Indeed, the black 'counter-spaces' my research participants form with their male counterparts (largely in the college canteen and outside the sports hall) are often the very locations in which their subjection through hegemonic black masculinity and competitive black femininity takes place. So, what sort of spaces, curricula and communities could serve liberation for my research participants in particular?

(ii) black working class girls and pedagogic spaces

During my time teaching and researching in this college, I have encountered ways in which black female vocational students create spaces for themselves in their college building. The most prominent examples include girls' toilets and the college dance studio, the windows of which are covered by thick black curtains and the door of which is self-locking - with students nonetheless having found strategies to enter it without teachers' knowledge. I have at times entered these spaces feeling like an alien invader, to find subcultural territories being inscribed with practices of young black working class femininity. These territory-marking and community-building practices, as I have observed them,

239

are often of the "buff" and "bold" kind, such as beauty practices (doing each other's eyelashes and hair), photograph taking (for example, for snap chat), storytelling (the latest "drama"), debating (for example, the precise translation of a particular phrase from Twi to Igbo[38]), good natured "cussing" and its attendant laughter. Practices of black, working class femininity within these co-created spaces are also of the studious kind, with makeshift writing desks developed (from the backs of coursework folders, from changing room benches) to finish worksheets before the next lesson. They are also of the aesthetic kind, for example playing music and dancing, sometimes in outbursts of freestyle to whatever track is currently playing from someone's phone.

These spaces straddle the 'private' of girls'-only spaces and the more visible, 'public' of black working class (male) students' 'counter-spaces' in schools. Indeed, these black girl spaces are partially invisible to and protected from the white middle class patriarchal gaze and the black hypermasculine gaze that operate within this neoliberal, sports-promoting college. However, these spaces are also always potentially visible and clearly audible in the institution, and thus are subject to disciplinary action (Foucault, 1979). They attract the attention of the security guards and teachers (me included) who enter asking girls to keep the noise down or to leave; they also attract the attention of male students who cluster around the doors, either patiently waiting for particular girls to leave or trying to listen-in, peek through the cracks ("Miss, what are they *doing* in there?) and even enter uninvited. I suggest there is hopeful pedagogy taking place in such spaces: a kind of pedagogy that is grassroots and self-generating. First, these spaces draw no real distinction between young women's social and educational identities, in being spaces where make-up, music and coursework can comfortably co-exist, and where black girls learn together who they are and who they can be. Secondly, and in a similar way, these spaces celebrate and normalise black, working class girl culture, positioning it at the very centre of an educational space, and the very material

---

[38] Two common national languages spoken among, respectively, Ghanean and Nigerian students within the college.

for learning. Thirdly, in a radical subversion of the usual spatial norms of the college, these black girl spaces position those entering, those who are not black working class girls, as Other, as the true 'space invaders' (Pulwar, 2004). But how might such spaces, with their hopeful and radical potential, infiltrate the formal institution rather than remain (for staff) worryingly suspicious and (for the boys at least) mysteriously exotic/erotic at its margins? And how might such spaces infiltrate without losing their counter-hegemonic force, and in a way that avoids appropriation?

To start to articulate how informal black girl spaces and practices might form within the formal institution, I introduce the work of Nicole Ruth Brown (2009) and Stephanie Sears (2010), African-American practitioner-researchers who have developed pedagogies with teenage girls in the context of two different after-school clubs run for and with black girls by black women. I discuss their work in-depth, and continue to do so, in that their findings, articulations and insights, and those of the young women they worked with, do much to help me to articulate and evaluate my own practice. In the words of one of its participants, the SOLHOT ('Saving Our Lives, Hear Our Truths') project, facilitated by Brown along with other black women, is '" more than an after-school program focused on Black girls and building self-esteem […] SOLHOT encourages us to create a space that is all our own […] In this space we discuss, dance […] and reform the politics of Black girlhood" ' (cited in Brown, 2009, 4). The GEP ('Girls Empowerment Project'), in which Sears was involved as a member of the steering committee, was an 'Africentric womanist after-school program' (Sears, 2010, 3) based in a deprived Michigan housing project, incorporating a homework club, a discussion group and dance classes, with an aim of 'Black women and girls working to change how they perceive and identify themselves, as well as how larger society views them (Sears, 2010, 3).

Brown (2009) and Sears (2010) foreground the importance of space within their respective projects, and both employ the metaphor of 'home' (Brown, 2009, 143) or a 'home place' (Sears, 2010, 63-64) to conceptualise the sanctuary-like

feeling of the spaces that opened up for and with the project members. They explore how, within these 'home places', young black women came to feel connected, free to engage in their own cultural practices and never out of place through the intersections of their race and gender. From their respective discussions, it also seems that these 'home places' (like the black girl spaces described above) welcome a harmonious relationship between young women's educational identities and their social identities, a harmony that is witnessed, sanctioned and shared in by adult women. While employing the metaphor of 'home' however, neither Brown (2009) nor Sears (2010) analyse their projects in terms of a simple and untroubled safe space. Like hooks (1994), they emphasise the continual potential for tension in the learning communities they describe. Indeed, what is clear is that these 'home spaces' should include practices for acknowledging and responding to tensions that arise within them, and in ways that involve 'collective effort' (hooks, 1994, 8). This is reminiscent of George and Clay's (2013) discussions of how girls' friendship formations, and the emotion inherent in such formations, should never be overlooked within the classroom, but could instead be capitalised on in developing engaged and critical pedagogies. Indeed, within Brown's (2009) and Sears' (2010) projects, there is scope for a direct 'problem posing' education that names and critiques the power relations that shape them, both in 'intellectual, textual' and also more 'embodied, lived' ways (Luke, 2004): for example, discussion activities around media representations of black women, but also forums for group members to argue out and resolve differences. Sears (2010) in particular discusses the importance of argument and laughter within the GEP, citing the 'critical thinking' (105-6) and 'self-love' (103-4) that opens up through it as acutely political acts for black women in the face of racist and sexist oppression.

Another feature of the 'home places' that Brown (2009) and Sears (2010) discuss is the importance of young black women experimenting with their identities *outside* of the subcultural norms ascribed to and mobilized by them. A conversation I had with Winter is also revealing in this respect:

Winter: [black girls] are intelligent (.) *as well* as being into the make-up and the hair
CS: can you have both in one identity?
W: yeah I think you can be all in one (.) like you can be a coconut (.) and you can be someone who's into beauty (.) and you can be very intelligent (2) or you can just be one or the other
Interview with Winter and Tinuke, 8ᵗʰ June

Winter's resistance to pinning down a singular "black girl" identity here, and her desire to instead name this identity in terms of multiplicity and contrast suggests the importance of developing pedagogical spaces that invite experimentation and becoming. My research participants indeed work towards developing these spaces themselves in the research site, including the lively 'off-topic' and critical debates around 'race' and gender that frequently opened up in the HSC classroom, often initiated by Winter or Kayla. In our interview sessions, Winter would also talk about her interest in politics and history, spending around ten minutes of one session telling me in great detail, and with great excitement, all that she knew about the Spanish Armada, "because I'm self-educated Winter!" In another example of note, Felicia and other black girls in the class created a dynamic role-play depicting the relationship break-down and "bold" arguments between a group of female employees in a care home, and the subsequent reinvention of these characters as consummate professionals who resolved their differences (albeit with styles of speech that seemed to me not just formal, but distinctly middle class). These examples suggest that becoming and critical identity work is a priority for these young women in their educational engagements. In addition to this identity-work, the young women's often impassioned ways of engaging in the classroom could create exciting and thrilling learning spaces that contained the emotive potential for becoming (Ahmed, 2004), in alignment with hooks' (1994) discussion of 'energy…exciting the critical imagination' (195).

That these celebratory, critical and now also experimental spaces can translate outside of their private boundaries is also crucial to Brown's (2009) and Sears' (2010) pedagogies. Indeed, a key critique of girl-centered spaces, as discussed

by Leathwood (2004) is that they naturalize difference between the sexes, and therefore risk essentialising girlhood. The various ways in which Brown's and Sears' participants took their work from SOLHOT and GEP into the 'public' realm are significant in this respect, for example, in public dance performances and fundraising events. These more public practices, emerging from the 'cocoon' (Bkjorck, 2013) of the girl space, are also reminiscent of one of the few extracurricular activities Felicia, Cairo and Winter engaged in during the fieldwork year: volunteering as student ambassadors at college events. In this, I suggest that a young woman's desire for public status, to be "known" within her otherwise marginalizing institution, but this time on her own terms, should be taken seriously in developing pedagogy of hope with her.

Brown's (2009) and Sears' (2010) discussions depict a useful model for a pedagogy of hope here: namely, of sometimes private, sometimes public black-girl centred learning communities that challenge dominant discourses, embrace emotion and relationships, and offer new ways of thinking and being. As Brown puts it:

> 'SOLHOT isn't the traditional kind of 'Girl Saving' or 'Youth' saving program [...] when SOLHOT works, I do quite believe that lives are saved by collectively acting on our own behalf. How the 'saving' happens is not in the logistics and activities, but in our coming together' (Brown, 2009, 64).

These notions of 'acting on our own behalf' and 'coming together' are also reminiscent of Mirza's (2006) and Mirza and Reay's (2000) research around the liberatory potential of black (British) supplementary schools. This research describes, specifically, communities of black girls and black women coming together to continue legacies of black female empowerment through education. Mirza (2006) discusses the 'radical pedagogy' of these spaces, one that compliments the neoliberal curriculum while also 'centering on Black history and knowledge' (142). Ultimately, such educational spaces and curricula are places 'where Whiteness is displaced and Blackness becomes the norm,

creating a sanctuary for the Black child in which […] she is celebrated and recentred' (Mirza, 2006, 142).

While liberatory, there are clear constraints, however, to taking such separatist approaches within this research context. Indeed, the particular 'home places' discussed thus far are set up in locations and at times outside of formal institutional structures. And the particular 'coming together' is that of black girls/children with adult black women. Within this research however, I aim to develop a liberatory pedagogy with black working class girls as a white middle class teacher-researcher, and very much *within* the four walls of their institution. This raises an important question of how the hopeful features of black-girl 'home places' might work *outside* of black girl/woman communities in which 'acting on our own behalf' is so central to why and how such 'home places' can 'save our lives'. In this, I suggest that the precise 'logistics and activities' (Brown, 2009, 64) might matter *more* than they do in Brown's project. Specifically, in their being able to facilitate a 'coming together', a building of community, across difference. In this, I now introduce two practices developed within the pilot study for this research: that of dialogic dance and group discussion.

In introducing SOLHOT and how it was set up through a 'coming together' and 'acting on our own behalf', Brown (2009) critiques a legacy of institutionalized and implicitly controlling interventions into the lives of black girls by well-meaning white middle class women. Brown's critique here voices a pertinent area of 'risk' for this study, one that I have attempted to mitigate in employing two key hooksian strategies. These strategies lay the foundations for 'dance' and 'voice' as pedagogic practices within this research. The first is to develop pedagogic spaces that center black girl culture and experience, as articulated by the young women, but while also leaving room for multiplicity and difference. The second is to develop collaborative approaches that facilitate critique and becoming in ways that the young women discover for themselves, *alongside* the

245

white middle class adult (and the other girls in their class) they are working and learning with. This second strategy would call for any hierarchical embodied difference within a learning community to be acknowledged and embraced as a space for radical learning, subversion and cultural production. Two pedagogic practices I employed to enable these strategies in action are particular forms of dialogic dance and group discussion work. I suggest that these 'textual, intellectual' and also 'embodied, lived' practices (Luke, 2004) are rich for creating a black girl centered, critical and community-building pedagogy across difference. To conclude this chapter, I introduce these strategies now with reference to existing praxis around the pedagogic potential of dance and voice.

Building embodied learning communities across difference: dance and voice

As discussed in Chapter Two, I conceive of dance as an embodied articulation of a specific cultural, historical and political context, as well as a space for intensely embodied social interaction, community-building and therefore change-making. This understanding of dance has been offered by a number of researchers regarding the often overlooked (yet always complicated) potential of dance for political and community action (Hickey-Moody, 2009, 2013; Stanley-Niaah, 2010; Youdell, 2012; Beausoleil, 2014). These understandings of dance can be elucidated with reference to the understanding of embodiment employed throughout this study. Indeed, if identity formation is an acutely social process that operates through the visible and visceral experiences of bodies residing together in space, then perhaps it is through bodies moving together in space, in culturally specific and emotionally charged ways, that mutual understanding and radical change can occur. This would be change that emanates from 'the partially self-knowing […] practices of subjects as well as their […] affective experiences and the ways that these might exceed their subjectivation' (Youdell, 2012, 144).

Education researchers indeed discuss the power of dance education with young women, specifically in its scope for materially resisting and reinscribing confining discourses of hetero-sexualised gender norms (McRobbie, 1984; Stinson, 1998; Blume, 2003; Paechter, 2013; Stanger, 2013). Stinson (1998) and Shapiro (1998, 1999) even discuss what they refer to (respectively) as feminist and critical dance pedagogies, in relation to how embodied learning through dance can enact self-reflection and social change in regards to confining gender norms. And an understanding of dance as a powerfully resistant practice for black women in the face of controlling white, patriarchal discourses (Hebdige, 1979; Gottschild, 2003; Stanley Niaah, 2010), finds its place within research around critical dance education for, with and by young black women (Youdell, 2006a; Atencio, 2008; Hickey-Moody, 2013; Stanger, 2013). The work of Brown (2009) and Sears (2010) also has much to offer in this respect. Indeed, dance is foregrounded within their respective projects as an embodied yet 'metaphysical' (Sears 2010, 3) practice through which black girls and women can 'access their power' (Sears, 2010, 66) and through which 'the power and genius of black girls' (Brown, 2009, 3) can be celebrated. The particular challenge for my praxis was in finding the dialogic potential in dance as a liberatory pedagogic practice across difference, as I discuss in the next chapter.

For Brown (2009) and Sears (2010), black girl dance is a vital part, yet not the only part of their girls' 'empowerment' projects: various acts of speaking and verbal expression, through group discussion and writing, also take a central role in their respective praxis. Both writers employ the term 'voice' in discussing these practices, a term that has a long and rich history in feminist research and research methodologies (Griffiths, 1998; Usher, 2000; Hesse-Biber, 2012) and that takes particular significance within black feminist theory (Lorde, 1986; Hill Collins, 2000; hooks; 1994) and empirical research (Lewis, 1996; Wilkins, 2012). Within this diverse body of work, voice is always more than a de-contextualized speech act: rather, exercising one's voice means asserting one's position as a gendered, raced and in other ways socialised subject. In this respect, 'voice' is acutely political in character, in being a way to mobilise power and speak back

to silencing racist and sexist discourses. Another key feature of 'voice' within this diverse body of thought, is its necessarily communal character: no voice can exist in isolation, but can only materialise, mean, and develop in relation to other voices. This understanding of voice resonates with the epistemological framework for this research, as well as with two hooksian pedagogic practices: firstly, the importance of sharing personal, lived experiences, and secondly, the importance of engaging in dialogue as a way of naming oppression and transforming understanding.

Education researchers and practitioners have explored similar uses of voice in anti-racist and feminist work with young women within schools, for example collaborative writing with (respectively) young black women in the US to produce slam poetry 'to lay down their life's complexities' (Oesterreich, 2010, 129) and young queer women in Australia to produce song lyrics speaking back to sexual harassment/harassers (Scrine, 2018, forthcoming). Meanwhile, Retallack et al. (2017) and Showunmi (2017), based in the UK, describe the critical group discussion and personal storytelling work that emerged through a girls' feminist group in a performing arts college (Retallack et al., 2017), and a critical research project that eventually became, as entitled by one of its young participants, a "Black Girls Club" within a London school (Showunmi, 2017). Across this diverse body of research praxis there is a theme of girls and young women mobilising a collective agency through the work of their critical and deeply personal voices, and often doing so across difference.

In all this, I propose that dance and voice work should be understood as parallel practices, as verbal and non verbal methods through which can bodies speak, position themselves, interact and (re)invent in oppressive neoliberal spaces. I too have encountered ways in which particular practices of dance and voice have hopeful pedagogic potential for young black women in neoliberal colleges. For example, in addition to the bursts of music and dance encountered in the girls' toilets and 'unsupervised' dance studio sessions, I have also encountered ways in which young black women resist and rewrite the decorated and

confined body of glamorous femininity within dance class (Stanger, 2013). I have also experienced how a young black woman resisted systems of white supremacy within her A Level dance curriculum through choreographing in a dialogic style, drawing on elements of classical ballet blended with contemporary and Nigerian dance styles (Stanger, 2016). And in addition to those practices of voice work I have already discussed (the lively and witty group 'take-downs' of the sports boys, the role-play in the HSC classroom), I have also encountered hopeful and critical voice-based strategies employed by the young women's teachers. Key examples include the worksheet Sophie gave to the HSC tutor group (see Chapter Six), Anala's invitations to her tutees to 'talk back' (hooks, 1989) to her in their one-to-one meetings if they felt unfairly treated or misunderstood, and the critical discussions both teachers would encourage within their HSC curriculum lessons. These are all practices I drew upon in my own attempts to develop an embodied pedagogy of hope for this research.

Conclusion: an embodied pedagogy of hope - in theory

In this chapter I have suggested that in order to develop a liberatory pedagogic approach with my research participants, black-girl centered yet dialogic spaces might be developed that are both sanctuary-like and radical, in their potential to subvert norms, open up new 'perceptual practices' (Alcoff, 2006, 180) and build new forms of community and identity. Drawing on practitioner research and existing pedagogic practices of my research participants, it would also seem that particular forms of dance and group talk might also be fruitful in such spaces. However, as intimated throughout this chapter, the development of a caring and critical pedagogy for social change was not without its tensions and challenges (Ellsworth, 1989; hooks, 1994). With this said, I now explore my own attempts to develop an embodied pedagogy of hope with Anala's tutor group across the fieldwork year.

Chapter Nine
Putting the vision into practice: developing a pedagogy of hope in the neoliberal institution

In the previous chapter I articulate a vision of a specific pedagogical praxis that might disrupt processes of exclusion and marginalization my research participants encounter within their neoliberal college: namely, an embodied pedagogy of hope. This would be a black-girl centered (yet not exclusively black-girl populated), sanctuary-like yet radical 'home place' (Sears, 2010, 63). It would comprise dance and group-talk as dialogic praxis through which embodied community and hopeful self-definition is built in resistance to particular oppressive discourses: namely, hegemonic black masculinity, emphasized (and competitive) black femininity and the 'ideal neoliberal subject' with its unspoken counterparts of the 'too sexy', 'out of control' and 'educationally disengaged' black girl. However, as discussions thus far have anticipated, putting such a pedagogy into practice will involve risk and indeed moments of failure, in which 'relations of domination' are 'perpetuated' (Ellsworth, 1989, 236). It is with this in mind that I now proceed in exploring my own attempt to develop a embodied pedagogy of hope across difference, with Cairo, Felicia, Kayla, Winter, their tutor Anala and their multi-ethnic HSC tutor group within this neoliberal institution.

Project overview: four stages of an evolving and devolving praxis

This project took place during a one hour timetabled slot on a Tuesday morning, and often extended into the girls' free study period afterwards. Our work together in the Autumn term began with classroom-based discussion sessions, in which we shared and explored our understandings of our national, cultural and gender identities, and ideas of 'community' (see Chapter Two). This portion of the project concluded with a discussion session in the dance studio itself, in which we watched youtube clips of dance suggested by various members of the group, and discussed what dance means to women from different cultures. This

session erupted into a spontaneous freestyle dance session after the lesson time was officially over, in which some of the girls 'showed off' their moves in dancehall and bellydance. These practices came to form the basis for our future dance sessions.

From November – March, we had all of our sessions in the dance studio, during which dance became a main part of our work together. Although the format of the dance sessions continually evolved, a broad overview of the session structure up until December was as follows. To begin each session we played a physical group-bonding game or activity (often in some form of competition), followed by a basic dance/fitness warm-up led by me. The main part of the session was then learning a short and simple dance routine, facilitated by me but in styles suggested by the young women. The three main music and dance styles selected by the group to explore were Caribbean dancehall, Turkish and Arabic belly dance, and Afrobeats (with music and steps from Ghana, Nigeria and Congo), all together representing the main national and ethnic backgrounds within the class. I developed basic beginner-level sequences 'within' these styles with the help of youtube clips suggested to me by the young women, and also with the direct assistance of students in the tutor group, and other students who I taught on a dance leadership course at the college. In the teaching itself, I was also at times assisted by designated 'experts' in these styles within the tutor group. Another often central part of these sessions, sometimes to start, sometimes to end, and sometimes spontaneously in the middle, was the dance 'cipher' (Brown, 2009) or freestyle circle, an element introduced and usually led by the young women. And lastly, if time permitted or sometimes in place of any dance-based session, we would have a variety of group discussions based on topics voted on by the young women (including representations of women in the media, the meaning of female power, sexual relationships and female relationships in college). Anala would be present for most of the dance studio sessions, sometimes joining-in (much to the girls' delight!), but sometimes taking the opportunity to finish work in her office and have one-to-one meetings with the girls.

The dance sessions were continually adapted in response to what happened in the room each week, and through more direct consultation with the tutor group and with Cairo, Felicia, Kayla, Winter and Anala in our interviews. A key outcome was that we should eventually work towards a public performance within the college for International Women's Day during the Spring term, and it was at this point that the students came to take more control over the sessions. We decided there would be three groups working on pieces to represent the three main dance styles we had explored in the first eight weeks. Students selected which of the styles they wanted to work on, and took on a particular role within the creative process: performer; choreographer; make-up, hair and costume design (with some girls taking on more than one role). During this period, the young women co-led their own mini rehearsal/planning sessions in three adjacent and relatively secluded spaces of the college: the dance studio, drama studio and college theatre. In the weeks building up to the International Women's Day performance in mid-March, Anala allowed some of her curriculum lessons to be used for rehearsals and planning, and the young women would increasingly come to use the dance studio in their free periods, lunch breaks and after college. The performance itself took place during the college lunch break, to a 60-70 strong audience of female-only students and staff. The young women were in charge of sourcing costumes, make-up and organising the backstage area on the day.

At the conclusion of this IWD project, Anala and I decided that after a celebratory 'awards-ceremony' style session the following Tuesday, the girls would return exclusively to their curriculum studies for a while, as some of them had fallen behind with deadlines. After a period of recalibrating in this way, we resumed our dance and discussion sessions during the Summer term in what I can only describe as a devolved, rather than evolved extension of the project. This was a combination of dance studio and classroom discussion sessions that were similar to but less purposeful than those at the start of the year, given that we could not start a new project during a time of impending

coursework deadlines. The year finally concluded with two discussion sessions exploring and debating the group's attitudes to education. Throughout the entire process, I continued to conduct varying forms of interview with the young women (as discussed in Chapter Two), in which we spoke about their lives at college, and also about the progress of our project.

With this basic view of what this project might have looked like from the outside established, I now explore its details, its complexities, how it felt to participate in, and what it did (and did not do) in relation to the aims and values of an 'embodied pedagogy of hope'. I conceptualise processes of 'hope' here in relation to performances of "buff" and "bold" black femininity as explored in earlier chapters: specifically, ways in which our pedagogic practice worked firstly to critique potentially oppressive aspects of these discourses, especially in relation to an emphasised and competitive black femininity, but also worked to mobilise these often pathologised identities as embodied practices of young black female discursive agency (Buterl cited in Youdell 2006b, 519) within the neoliberal institution. I explore moments of seeming success and failure in these respects and focus on aspects of the project which took place within the college dance studio, on the college stage and within the research interviews: three main spaces in which I believe some worthwhile, yet always compromised, liberatory praxis took place.

Buff black femininity and an embodied pedagogy of hope

(i) re-imagining and re-deploying buff black femininity
One hope was that the dance studio could become a space in which the sometimes "stressful" (Melody) and confining pressure to embody buffness was relaxed and critically addressed. I also hoped, paradoxically, that this space could be shaped by the young women's styles of embodiment, in aim of de-centering hegemonic institutional norms (hooks, 2003) and allowing us "to

create a space that is all our own"[39]: a space in which black working class girls' embodied forms of "hustle" (Diana) were respected. In light of these aims, namely liberation both *from* and *through* "buffness", I did not initially set any rules for clothing within our dance sessions, other than that heavy jewellery and shoes be removed (for safety purposes and to protect the studio floor). I invited the girls to bring more comfortable clothes to change into, but did not enforce this in the ways I did in the after-college dance classes that students elected to attend. However, as time went on, and especially as we got deeper into the formal rehearsals for the IWD project, some of the young women took it upon themselves to adapt and relax their 'uniform' for buffness, all while putting their bodies into motion in particular ways.

The rule of removing shoes, something I had to really encourage at first, seemed to become for some girls a seemingly pleasurable ritual in preparing for the sessions, in literally kicking off their shoes and rushing into the centre of the room to freestyle in front of the mirrors before warm-up started. One of these studemts was Cairo, and this was to my surprise given how she had spoken in interview about the importance of a prestigious black girl wearing the right, immaculately kept trainers, and also given the "ice queen" (Anala) persona she often adopted around college. I also noticed that she seemed to take physical pleasure in the sensation of her socked feet on the dance studio floor, sometimes catching sight of her playing with sliding around on its surface. Cairo was not the only student to do this, and as sessions went on other details of buffness would be relaxed, or all together removed, with the young women seeming to take a playful and visceral pleasure in their bodies and what their bodies could do in this space. One student also started removing her wig before dancing, doing so for the first time on entering a dance freestyle circle her friends had set up before the session, and with a real sense of theatre. In this moment, I remember being struck by a sense that this young woman's wig removal was an act of rolling up one's sleeves: getting ready to go to work –

---

[39] Statement by a participant in SOLHOT, cited in Brown, 2009, 4.

specifically, in dancing for her fellow black girls to the Afrobeats music that was playing. Her entrance was met with cries of seemingly delighted shock and amusement, but eventually this young woman's wig removal became a normal(ised) ritual, no longer provoking reactions from the class. As the students came to be more invested their rehearsals for IWD, others also started to experiment with their appearance, bringing alternative clothes to change into, or even wearing rehearsal clothes to college on Tuesdays, "dance day" as a few of the girls came to call it. A similar sense of purpose started to extend to other young women within the college, including Lara and Melody who, although not in the tutor group, joined the Afrobeats rehearsals in their lunch breaks. As Lara explains in relation to preparing for the performance: "we rehearsed…we was serious…I was like (.) yeah (.) they're my <u>girls</u>".

I read these processes as a partial liberation from the sometimes debilitating hold of emphasised black working class femininity, in a way that allows the young black woman to 'imagine the 'self' differently, that is, beyond [oppressive] discourse' (Mirza, 2010, 8). In this space, the young woman does not have to be dressed to impress: heterosexually alluring and classy, with branded markers of success. This 'self' can instead be comfortable, playful and caught up in basic physical pleasures, such as skidding across the floor in socked feet. This 'self' can also be "serious" and prepared to put her body to work, seeing and feeling herself create: not only in her body's adornment or configuration with contouring make-up and tight jeans, but through her body's movement with fellow black girls. In this, I suggest that the young black woman can resist racist and sexist 'perceptual practices' (Alcoff, 2006) that render black feminine bodies docile (Bordo, 1993) through a discourse of hegemonic black masculinity, or at odds with each other through a discourse of competitive black femininity. Indeed, this is not a body to be held up and pinned down within a judgement-ridden and quite debilitating frame: "you're thinking, like, don't buckle!" (Shanice, of walking through the college gates). Nor is this a body that stands perfectly still while "any boy would just run up and lick [it]" (Lara, of Nicki Minaj). This playful, yet "serious" and creative black feminine body can

255

also, I suggest, resist the pathologisation and hyper-sexualisation inherent in a white patriarchal and neoliberal discourse of the good girl underneath (Archer et al. 2007c). Indeed, this body is neither 'too sexy for school', nor passively and pathologically 'at risk' of pregnancy. Instead, within this space young black women come together to move and mobilise their bodies in acts of play and artistic cultural production. In this, the ways in which buffness *itself* operates in part as an act of play and artistic cultural production is also brought into relief.

The dancing that took place here might be also understood as a practice through which identities, as discourses written and mobilised through the very fibre of bodies (Butler, 1990), are shifted and rebranded in deeply embodied ways. Indeed, the acts of artistic cultural production and playful experimentation I perceived here are, in my own experience as a dancer, felt deeply through the workings of one's body: the squeezing and aching of muscles, the stretching of limbs, the rotation of joints, the suddenly noticeable pumping of the heart, the increased speed of one's breath, and of course, in the feeling of a beat resonating through one's feet, pelvis, belly and chest, especially given the music genres the young women were dancing with, and the volume at which they tended to play music in the studio. These acutely corporeal sensations are experienced within social and cultural contexts, and thus over time can become synonymous with particular social and cultural meanings, and therefore identities (Ahmed, 2004). Indeed, in its potential to set up pleasurable orientations (Ahmed, 2004) within social space through, for example the beat in the stomach, the stretch in the limbs, dancing has the potential to inscribe and embed a new sense and sensation of self: perhaps that of 'the dancer', who purposefully wears a different uniform/armour entirely on "dance day". A young woman who I interviewed for a different study describes such an experience thus: "in dance, you have a different frame […] if I come out [of dance class] and I look a mess, I don't care. I'm like "I'm a dancer. That's what I do" " (cited in Stanger, 2013, 4.7 – 5.4).

Within this current research, Cairo, Felicia, Kayla and Winter did not verbalise their thoughts around their dancing, how it felt and what it meant, with the same degree of directness as this A Level Dance student, a young woman who was much more accustomed to speaking and writing about dance and also had "the protection of that label A Level" (Cosima). However, one adjective that *did* come up more than a few times among the HSC tutor group to describe our sessions and the IWD performance was "live". This is a colloquial term that means something between 'lively', 'energised' and 'exciting'. I suggest it evokes something of the deeply embodied, affective and quite visceral experience of dancing, what it means and the identity work it can therefore do. To further conceptualise the "live" experience of dancing within this project, and the ways in which it seemed to cut through the confining rules and pathologising labels for prestigious black femininity in the research site, I turn again to the work of Brown (2009) and Sears (2010). Their work also explores the young black woman as experiencing a deep pleasure and sense of freedom through her dancing, and again in a way that reclaims and rewrites a black feminine identity. Indeed, Brown (2009) refers to the apparent 'pleasure *in* their bodies' (90) and explains this with reference to her *own* embodied experience of being on the dance floor with her students:

> '…by dancing we too, 'shifted the paradigm, our body parts are not objects but subjects. The Black female (dancing) body is given back – or takes back – what has been stolen by the white colonist gaze...' Certainly, I felt free' (Brown, 2009, 91).

This rhetoric of becoming a 'subject', and feeling 'free' through the exhilarating and embodied pleasure of dancing as a black woman, resonates with hooks' language of liberation from white, patriarchal oppression, and in ways that draw on how 'energy' might 'excite the critical imagination' (hooks, 1994, 195). It also reflects research into the ways that dance, a practice that uniquely occupies an overlapping space between the athletic cultural production of sport and the aesthetic cultural production of art, can serve to deconstruct the physically oppressive norms of patriarchy for the young woman, freeing an embodied space for her to do and to create (Paechter, 2013; Stanger, 2013).

However, in alignment with a hooksian approach, there were also ways in which the young women's experiences in the dance studio were far from liberating. There were indeed moments when the young women's "hustle" through buffness needed to stand its ground, specifically within the systems of whiteness that still permeated the dance studio space.

(ii) oppression and resistance in the dance space: when buffness prevails

Despite the moments of liberation discussed above, it is clear that there was never a complete and consistently liberating sense of 'pleasure in their bodies' (Brown, 2009, 90) in moving and creating together as a group. Felicia rather hit the nail on the head when she described our early dance sessions together: "I like it - it's just a bit of a break [...] but it's a bit awkward sometimes – like with everyone there". I remember a sense of disappointment in hearing Felicia describe the sessions in this way; however, I was also not surprised. The dance studio was *not* always a "live" and sanctuary-like space in which acts of embodied liberation took place, such as 'expanding the boundaries of beautiful black woman's body' (Tate, 2007, 300) on "dance day". Indeed, I too felt a sense of "awkwardness" in the dance studio at times, and sometimes needed to really encourage a minority of girls to participate. I understand this partially in relation to the stronghold of competitive black femininity in a pedagogical space made up of young women between whom there were friendship rifts, and a history of arguments during which "cusses" about each others' bodies had been mobilised (see Chapter Six). This was, I suggest, compounded by the fact that a dance studio is a space where the body is on show and surrounded not only by the gaze of other participants, but also by the reflective surfaces of the wall-to-wall mirrors. In this respect it can serve as its own synoptic arena, potentially reinforcing a norm of one's body as an object for (visible, surface) consumption, rather than a site of one's own more viscerally felt pleasure in dance and cultural production. Within this, the 'normalising judgement' (Foucault, 1979, 177) of hegemonic black masculinity and emphasised black femininity can still prevail: firstly, through young women's watching of each other and secondly

through a more panoptic watching of the self, with the mirror acting as a proxy for the synoptic (Jagodinski, 2010), and sometimes "stressful" (Melody), spaces of the college corridor and social media.

Another source of "awkwardness" within this not quite 'Black girl centred experience' (Brown, 2009, 6) was that my norms and practices, those of a white ballet-trained adult woman still dominated. One of the ways in which this operated was in respect to our engagements with our bodies, and I first came to notice this through experiencing some palpable acts of resistance from the young women. For example, during a warm-up in which I was leading a series of hamstring stretches, it became clear that the girls who were wearing tight jeans were unable to perform the movements. In my desire to retain a sense of the embodied 'learning community' (hooks, 1994, 8) that had emerged in the group's synchronised movements just seconds before, I cheerfully called out to the room that maybe these girls should start bringing leggings on a Tuesday. At this suggestion, Felicia laughed out loud with apparent scorn, and exclaimed, "I don't <u>wear</u> leggings", in the defiant kind of tone that often got her in trouble with teachers.

Given the ways that Felicia was subject to fat-shaming within the college (see Chapter Six) and more generally the ways that body-policing occurs in the college and the digital platforms that heavily feature in the young women's lives, it is of little surprise that Felicia resisted my, in hindsight, rather breezy and flippant suggestion that she swap her carefully chosen pair of jeans for a more exposing outfit of leggings. This was one of the many occasions within the dance studio where I encountered a disconnect between my experience of my own thin white body and its privileged social positioning, and the embodied experiences of the young women I was attempting to develop an embodied pedagogy of hope with. This evokes Brown's (2009) discussions of white feminist practitioners' well-meaning but misguided 'interventions' with black girls, and a 'lack of a language for working with Black girls in a way that is not

about controlling their bodies and/or producing White, middle-class girl subjectivities' (Brown, 2009, 2).

Another example of buffness prevailing as a form of resistance emerged in direct relation to the dancing itself. The first style the class had voted to learn was Caribbean dancehall, and so a week before our first session together I invited one student to devise and teach a routine with me. With a day to go and still not having found a time to meet with this student, I agreed with Anala that given the tensions in the group at that time, it might feel safer for me to take the lead in this first session. So, I went ahead to devise and teach a simple sequence adapted from a dancehall workout video, explaining to the girls that this was just a starting point for their own choreography – especially given that I wouldn't have been able to teach a "proper" dancehall sequence given my lack of experience in this style. The dynamics in the room during this session, and the young women's engagements during it, became an important space of learning for me, as my fieldnotes that day suggest:

> I was disappointed in today's session and at myself I suppose. I got a real sense that my 'whitewashed' version of this routine was not engaging the black girls in the class. They did initially seem excited to perform some of the movements they recognised and Winter took her role of 'DJ' seriously e.g. when she went to play us a Sean Paul song that "fits the routine really well Miss!" BUT someone also said "Miss this isn't even proper dancehall". She was right! A (consequent??) lack of focus on the routine seemed to come out in an alternative focus - on bodies in the mirror, with [name] striking poses while I was demonstrating a movement, and Cairo preening her hair (although still obviously managing to keep one eye on me the whole time!). I felt at a bit of a loss – their lack of engagement in this routine is understandable, but I'm still frustrated that this mirror-work is their go-to 'resistant' activity. Perhaps I should have stopped and invited a more critical discussion of why this wasn't working…
> **Fieldnotes after dance session, 18th November 2014**

On reflection, I suggest that in my own frustration at the 'failure' of my pedagogic choices, I did not consider the ways in which this mirror-work, rather than being disengaged "preening" and "posing", did indeed count as proper

resistance to my co-opting of a black-girl dance practice. There is certainly a deeply embodied agency to be noted here in how the young women came to re-prioritise a particular aesthetic-identity and form of cultural production in this increasingly irrelevant space. I felt this resistant practice quite palpably in the room (as my fieldnotes suggest), resonating with Luke's (2004) and hooks' (1994) discussions of the possibility for 'the critical' to operate in deeply embodied ways. This feeling of being 'checked' by the young women in this space, and how it instigated my own critical reflection, also resonates with hooks' (1994) and Ellsworth's (1989) discussions around how tensions within learning communities can serve as productive spaces for learning and change. I discuss some pedagogical methods that evolved in this respect later in the chapter with reference to the dance freestyle circle, and also the hair and make-up practices that took place within the IWD performance itself. One other attempt to seek spaces for addressing these kind of power relations, however, was within our group discussion sessions. In these spaces the particular dynamic noted so far, tension between liberation and constraint, also emerged.

(iii) talking through buffness: liberation and constraint

Around four weeks in to our dance studio practice, I facilitated a particular group discussion activity in the hopes of encouraging 'narratives of experience in the classroom' (hooks, 1994, 21) regarding our ideas of 'female empowerment' as a diverse group of women. In pairs and groups of three, the students chose their own ideas of "most powerful" and "least powerful" from a variety of images of women, including an athlete mid-leap over a hurdle, a model wearing lingerie, a university student on graduation day, a mother caring for her children, and a politician giving a speech. It is not within the scope of this chapter to discuss the young women's choices and ideas here in detail, however the dynamics of this session were interesting to perceive. Within the initial paired and small group discussions there seemed to be much engagement, and a bold pleasure in how the young women debated with one another. I noted that Cairo, Winter and Kayla seemed particularly engaged in

their discussions with their chosen partners, and were employing critical approaches to analysing black women's objectification within mainstream and social media. Within all this there were also some excited discussions around pleasures and freedoms of sex, and "feeling sexy". Critical and embodied learning seemed to be taking place here, in which a form of pleasure-power operated though young women's animated discussions, working together to complicate oppressive discourses around their bodies and bodies like theirs.

Brown (2009) elucidates the politics of similarly complex group discussions within the SOLHOT project, referring to how black girls and women are frequently spoken about without their voices being included in the conversation, and in a way that (re)produces 'stereotypical narratives' (Brown, 2009, 34) about their lives and identities. As a counter to this, Brown explains the importance of 'listen[ing] to Black girls and […] including them in the conversation [because] Black girls [are] experts on their own lives' (2009, 34). The kind of 'self-defining' group discussion activities that Brown advocates resonate with Freire's discussions of how people from marginalised communities become 'subjects' rather than 'objects' through opportunities to 'name the world' (Freire, 1996, 69) and (re)define it for themselves. As Brown (2009) puts it:

> 'when we [the participants in SOLHOT] begin to think about, speak out about, and act on how the narratives created by Black girls counter or collude with popular messages and stereotypes about Black girls and women, we are required to find a different way to interact with each other and become new' (34).

The notion of there being a legitimate space in the research site, outside of curriculum content and preparation for assessment, for black girls to 'counter and collude' with 'popular messages' about their identities is a hopeful one, given the pathologising ideas that can 'stick' (Ahmed, 2004) to my research participants in this space. And indeed, these young women seemed to approach this 'opportunity' with relish.

Within her discussions, however, Brown (2009) highlights how crucial a sense of learning community is to this critical identity work, and to 'becoming new' through it. Indeed, when it came to sharing our ideas as a whole group, I noted the atmosphere quite dramatically changing from lively to something again more "awkward". To start off our group sharing, a young Iranian woman and her friend, a young Turkish woman, volunteered ideas regarding the tension between freedom and control in sexualisation of women in the media, giving in-depth and complex explanations. My four main research participants seemed less forthcoming in their contributions however. Cairo "forgot" her idea when I called upon her to share it, and during a (by now lukewarm) discussion around media objectification of women's bodies, Felicia exclaimed: "do we have to talk about this? We know all about it already". I then reminded Felicia that on the previous week's questionnaires this particular choice of topic had scored highly, to which Felicia turned to the room and rather accusingly, perhaps in response to what I recall as my defensive response, asked "who chose that one?" Later, in a one to one interview/'consultation' session I sought Winter's advice, regretting the way I had handled this moment within the session. In turn, Winter explained to me her interpretation of this small but emotionally charged classroom event.

> CS: From your point of view…what's the best way to do [our group discussions] because you saw in the session today when we were talking about women in the media (.) some people were like //
>
> Winter: // I just think they just don't want to talk about it […] when Felicia (.) when she did that little (.) I was just thinking "yes we know you don't want to talk about it" (.) I think because she knows what's going to be said (.) body type, make-up, hair colour (.) she knows what's going to be said (.) I feel like she feels like it's going to be directed at her (.) like "ok so I wear make-up so what are you lot trying to say about me?"

Interview with Winter, January 2014

The group discussion space indeed seemed to serve here as another arena for judgment, again among a group of young women who didn't feel safe with

each other. I suggest there was another dynamic present here however, relating to the challenges of facilitating a 'home place' across difference.

The difficulty of creating a 'home place', or a 'coming together' (Brown, 2009, 64) in this instance was firstly in relation to a white middle class woman leading such a discussion with young women who are sometimes "crushed" (Winter) by the particularised rules for buffness. Indeed, after the "awkwardness" that ensued from this moment, I re-directed the conversation towards ideas of 'sexiness v. sexualisation' that had emerged in the pair work. I then shared a narrative of my own experiences of feeling sexualised in male-dominated spaces. This was in a hooksian spirit of teachers 'sharing narratives of experience' (hooks, 1994, 21) in the classroom, and also in an effort to take the 'heat' off Felicia, and sensitively respond to, rather than gloss over, the emotionally charged atmosphere. I also hoped to invite critique of what I felt was the 'real' culprit at play here: patriarchal culture. However, this too seemed to miss the mark, with Felicia and many other students remaining quiet, perhaps feeling that their specific engagements had been misunderstood, or worse, judged. Another more subtle aspect of difference was in relation to other members of the tutor group. Indeed, the young Iranian and Turkish women who confidently spoke up appeared to experience a greater sense of freedom in sharing their thoughts in this space than the "prestigious" black girls in the room. Although Winter does not suggest it is these girls who will potentially judge Felicia, I did note how my research participants would at times speak about "the Turkish girls" and "the others" in the class as having an easier time and facing less judgement than they did as black girls. Both Winter and Tinuke (on different occasions) even refer to this group of young women (all from ethnic minority communities themselves) as "the white girls in the class", in nuanced yet clear reference to the forms of societal and institutional privilege their non-blackness appeared to afford them (Gilborn, 1990).

A more hopeful space that emerged in respect to developing critical and engaged dialogue however, was in our interview sessions together. Within these spaces, the young black women within the group *did* talk more openly talk about processes of judgement they might encounter from each other and society more widely. Indeed, it is here that Winter, and then later Felicia herself, unpicks the "awkwardness" of discussing "buffness" in front of the whole group. It is also here that I learned of Winter's and Tinuke's feelings that "the other girls" in the class received preferential treatment - from both Anala and society at large (see later in this chapter). And it is in our small group interview sessions that the young women came to talk through the "stress" and pleasure they took in their identities as "buff" black girls, even seeming hungry to do so. In this space, I also felt more able to share my experiences as part of mutually supportive yet critical dialogue, and have my vantage points challenged in ways that felt like community was being built, and whiteness was being shaken. This experience of learning across difference is reminiscent of Youdell's (2012) discussions of the critical pedagogy of Allen (2005, 65): '[Allen] position[s] the White teacher and student as 'humble learner' in a cross-race dialogue, creating 'dissonance' in Whiteness, and offering White students and educators 'other ways of being white' (145). It is in these respects that I offer the interview space itself, initially a research method for this study, as a more private and thus more potent space for developing an acutely dialogic pedagogy of hope across difference, especially in an institution marked by competitive black femininity and deeply rooted ideas around the 'too sexy' black girl. Another important task however, was in finding ways to celebrate the body of buff black femininity within this multi-ethnic, all-female dance space.

(iv) the buff black girl in the dance cipher: a new discourse of success

A particular practice emerged within the dance studio sessions in which the body of buff black femininity was not only understood, but celebrated: the all-female dance cipher. Brown (2009) and Sears (2010) indeed discuss the power

of the black girl dance cipher, or freestyle circle, in their respective projects. This is a dynamic communal space that forms through dancer-participants placing themselves in a close-knit yet still loose and constantly moving circle. With the circle formed, participants take it in relatively spontaneous turns to enter the middle. Once arrived, surrounded by the gaze but also the movements and cheers of one's peers, and using whatever movements they choose/feel in that instance, they dance: for their fellow black girls, and for themselves.

Brown (2009) conceives of the cultural event of the black girl dance cipher as nothing less than 'serious education' (100), in that 'the knower (Black girl/woman participant) chooses to be at the center and make who she is known by deciding how her body moves' (100), going on to argue that the dance cipher 'provides the possibility of creating a narrative of the self in communal company that insists on complex identities… [regarding] who we are and what we want to be' (101). Brown (2009) and Sears (2010) also discuss the importance of 'black dance styles' within this practice, specifically those that incorporate movements centered around the pelvis and hips. Brown (2009) provides a vision of this in her discussion of the African American girls' ring games that would commence each SOLHOT session with a sense of 'experiential learning, culture and identity' (Brown, 2009, 100). She cites Hobson's (2005) discussion of 'batty'[40] dancing within such games:

> 'in that instant, the game of sashaying and hip shaking transforms
> into a sacred space […] this added spiritual component elevates
> black women's dance to a higher plane of aesthetic appreciation'
> (Hobson cited in Brown, 2009, 99).

Within the conceptual framework of this study, a 'sacred space' can be understood as firstly a 'sanctuary' of sorts, one that resists a white, patriarchal and neoliberal gaze through which black girls' bodies are somehow deviant or a threat. A 'sacred space' can also be understood as an arena for cultural remembering, as triggered and passed through the very sensations and

---

[40]In this context, the word "batty" refers to bottom or buttocks.

orientations of moving bodies in space (Ahmed, 2004), and in which black cultural histories are danced out and 'appreciated' in material form. To embed such a practice in the neoliberal London college, a space in which cultural differences are sometimes marginalised and (for black working class girls in particular) pathologised, would work towards an act of 'transforming consciousness' (hooks, 1994, 194). Sears (2010) too discusses the importance of embedding a space for 'shaking the butt' (Zollar, cited in Sears, 2010, 132) in the GEP, in order to, as she puts it, 'teach girls to love and respect their history, their bodies, and ultimately who they were as Black girls' (2010, 133). In this respect, the practice of young black women 'shaking the butt', a particular bodily part that is imbued with cultural significance and history in its movement, can disrupt a neoliberal (and implicitly white, middle class, masculinist) discourse of learning bodies as ideally docile, or even as a contradiction in terms.

The acutely communal practice of the black girl dance cipher came to manifest within our dance studio sessions at the young women's direction rather than my own. Indeed, my own experience of learning and teaching dance, namely as individualized artist-students, facing the mirror and copying another's movements (as is customary within the style I had trained in, classical ballet), had proved less than successful so far in developing something resembling a liberatory space with the group (and see Stanger, 2016, for more on this). In light of this, I was more than open to suggestions from the girls, and so the first time we all engaged in a dance cipher was at Winter's suggestion that we play "One Black Girl in the Middle", a British version of the dance freestyling games Brown's girls played in SOLHOT. After a number of the black girls in the class showed me, Anala and "the other girls" the rules of this game, we all took it in turns to come to the middle and dance to the Bashment music that the black girls were choosing on the stereo. Winter held back from entering the circle until everyone had taken a turn, and then at last strutted her stuff into the

centre, turned sideways, adopted a bold squat and proceeded to "brukkout" to rapturous cheers and applause from the rest of the group.

After the research period was over, I consulted two professional dancers (see Conclusion and Chapter Two) regarding the meaning of the term "brukkout" within such a context. Their answers certainly cohere with a hooksian, engaged pedagogy – one that decentres raced and classed privilege in a sensuous, pleasurable, erotic and community-affirming act:

> Chanellle: brukkout means freedom of expression (.) letting loose (.) being free and truthful and fluid with the music […] for women of our [African Caribbean] culture it is about embracing womanhood (.) stepping into womanhood
>
> Kloe: brukkout is going all out (.) letting go (.) not having any inhibitions […] in front of a teacher like that (.) it's kind of like a little secret (.) like their own language
> **Phone interviews with Chanelle and Kloe, 20th December 2017**

These professional dancer-teachers' words are reminiscent of Atencio's (2008) discussions of a young woman of colour experiencing 'a resistant *and* self-empowered minority ethnic identity' (317) in her own engagements in improvisational African American dance: engagements that 'symbolised 'self-expression', 'pleasure', 'control of space and time' and choice-making' (Atencio, 2008, 317) in an educational and social context otherwise marked and shaped by whiteness. Indeed, within the dance cipher, the prestigious black girl's body was no longer an object for ridicule or scorn (as in Cairo's shaming of Winter on the street), nor was it 'at risk', an object for institutional protection or disciplining. Instead, I suggest, Winter deployed her body in "brukking out", specifically her hips and 'butt' (Sears, 2010, 125), as a form of 'cultural and political expression' (Sears, 2010, 123) that was indeed erotic (hooks, 1994, 195), but in a way that is 'outside of oppressive discourse' (Mirza, 2010, 3).

It is important to highlight, however, how a rhetoric of black female empowerment through 'shaking the butt' (Sears, 2010, 125) is not without complication. Indeed, Brown (2009) cites the work of Hobson (2005), who

positions this form of black girl dance as simultaneously empowering *and* as rehearsing a 'script' for the 'male gaze' (cited in Brown, 2009, 90). In order to address this complication, I return to the importance of the black dance cipher as a *communal* practice, in which the young black woman's sexuality might be experienced through the feeling of her body dancing for and with other girls, rather than as a surface version/vision of sexuality detected within the male gaze. In this activity the group's gaze was indeed directed away from the mirrors, and towards the "One Black Girl in the Middle", herself cocooned away from the mirrors' reflective surfaces by the moving bodies of other girls around her. In order to enrich this sense of the feeling rather than the look of the dancing, I left the circle briefly to turn the studio lights all the way down, to even louder cheers from the room as Winter continued to dance. Just as the young women in the GEP experienced a deeply embodied sense of 'Black female bodies as sites of beauty, pleasure, agency and power' (Sears, 2010, 134), within in this enclosed, all-female, and now only partially visible dancing space Winter's final dance quite clearly marked the pinnacle of the game. For that moment, the black girl 'shaking her butt' was a (new) form of embodied success in the college.

The dance cipher can also be understood as site of learning not only for the young women, but also for the adults who dance with them. Brown (2009) suggests in relation to her project that 'the adult-girl dance cipher transforms typical binary power relationships' (89), in no small part because 'to understand what dance does, you have to dance' (102). Indeed, through the dance freestyle circles that took place within our project, in which both myself and Anala participated, a space opened up in which a hierarchy of middle class, adult teacher against embodied, scandalous HSC student to be healed/disciplined was disrupted, and in deeply material form. I experienced a critical pedagogical process here embedded in the sensation of my own hips and pelvis moving to the beat of the Afrobeats music, accompanied by the lively, visceral feeling of pleasure and celebration in the room: the cheering, the

clapping, the laughing, the bodies moving in close proximity to each other. This deeply embodied experience of cultural sharing was one of critical and political learning/transformation for me, in that I now have more understanding of and respect for the embodied practices of my students, and the forms of pleasure-power and sisterhood these practices can invite and create. Drawing on an Ahmedian (2004) understanding of how social orientations and identifications are established through sensations and their attendant (meaning-making) emotions, I ultimately suggest that the visceral, intimate and "live" black girl dance cipher is a powerful space for unlearning institutional racism and sexism: specifically in respect to ideas around the 'too sexy' and 'at risk' black girl's body. And in parallel to my experience of the group interview, this was a space in which 'the White teacher [could become] 'humble learner' in a cross-race dialogue, creating 'dissonance' in Whiteness, and offering […] 'other ways of being white' ' (Youdell, 2012, 145, citing the work of Allen, 2005, 65).

Bold black femininity and a pedagogy of hope

(i) making space for the body and voice of bold black femininity

Just as the dance studio sessions offered a space in which the 'sexiness' of particular young women could be experienced differently, similar processes took place in respect to their embodied boldness. One example is in the competitive warm-up games that would often start our sessions together. Within these games a space opened up for playful and extremely physical forms of competition between the young women. A significant example is a game of musical chairs that ended with Winter and Felicia (the 'finalists') laughingly wrestling each other to the floor, and subsequently helping each other up. This occurred while they were members of different friendship groups and indeed shared a distant if not tense relationship. The most either young woman had to say about these games in our interviews was that they found them to be "fun" and "live", however, through being in this "live[ly]" space with them, I perceived

a way in which their relationship was momentarily re-drawn, as were other perceptions. Indeed, rather than being understood as "wild", dangerous or a threat to one another, or indeed "demanding" and "attention seeking" within a learning space, their playful yet determined sparring became a legitimate practice: one in which forms of competition and boldly articulated determination were no longer threatening or out of place for young women within the institution. I indeed noted how the rest of the group, including myself and Anala, cheered the young women on in their efforts to win by whatever means necessary - and how I at least felt galvanised in encountering their 'no holds barred' approach to winning. Here, the 'urgency' in a young black women's striving for success (Mirza, 2006), and any "bold" ways it manifests, the young women's "hustle" as Diana puts it, becomes a mark of striving rather than deviance. I suggest it is no coincidence then that the two young women who were most often positioned as demanding in the classroom were the same young women who, in a practice of seeming mutual respect, wrestled each other to the ground to win this game and then, at the end of the year took pride of place on the college stage, standing together to receive their certificates as the only two students in the class to achieve a Distinction*.

A sense of there being celebratory space for a particularly bold femininity also emerged within the dance ciphers. I noted that Anala seemed to take a particular pleasure in these sessions, often actively encouraging the young women to shout louder for each other: "more noise everyone! Come on!" Perhaps this was a space in which the pressures of the neoliberal classroom did not dictate the need for the 'docile body of [white, middle class] femininity' (Bordo, 1997, 103), and in which Anala could finally enjoy and encourage the forms of bold, and loud, educational engagement that some of the young black women in the class practised. As Anala articulated in an interview later in the year, after the dance sessions had come to a close: "the dance sessions – well they did help me to see the girls in a different light". Anala's support of this particular form of bold femininity here is in stark contrast to some complaints made about her by members of the tutor group. These complaints were

articulated, and subsequently worked through, within a (rare) group interview I conducted with almost all of the black girls in the class. I offer some discussion of this interview in how that it, again, served as a pedagogical praxis within this study.

This interview took place a few weeks after the IWD project had come to a close. As I discuss later in the chapter, the tutor group had struggled to return to, as Anala put it, the "normal classroom environment". Indeed, classroom tensions had developed between Anala and some of the more outspoken black girls in the class, who, conversely, had come to form closer relationships with me than before. I decided, perhaps unfairly on Anala, to capitalise on this shifting dynamic, and interview the whole group around their experiences in the classroom. This 'interview' turned into a clear example of a critically engaged 'meaning-making' (Ramji, 2009, 56) discussion:

> Felicia: I come in every single <u>day</u>, give my work in on time every single <u>time</u>, not one mistake in my work and I'm still not the teacher's pet
>
> CS: why do you think that is then?
>
> Felicia: cos I'm loud
>
> Rose: yup
>
> Winter: yeah Miss that is so true
>
> [*noises of agreement in the background*]
>
> Winter: so I'm reading out loud my work to myself and Anala's like "Ah Winter button it, button it" [*in comedic aggressive tone*]
>
> [*giggles from the group*]
>
> Felicia: it's our personalities
>
> [*At this point Anala enters the room to collect books – the room falls quiet and she says, with a smile, "are you talking about me? I know you're talking about me – carry on". She leaves, Winter shrugs and the conversation continues.*]
>
> Winter: but a certain Turkish girl is sat there at the back like this [*does an impression of someone on their phone under the desk*]
>
> [*general consternation and laughter – shouts of "always on the phone"!]*

Felicia: but she don't notice that! She's so focused on <u>us</u>!

Group interview with Felicia, Winter, Cairo, Rose, Tinuke and 2 other black girls in Anala's tutor group, 23rd March 2015

Here the young women offer ideas that resonate with the educational research cited earlier: namely, of black girls being unfairly singled out as troublemakers, not for their educational efforts and outputs, but for their 'assertions of 'loud', active and visible femininities' (Archer et al., 2007c, 555). I suggest there is much pedagogic value in this conversation. Indeed, Brown (2009) and Sears (2010) discuss a practice of 'speaking out' on perceived injustice as an integral part of black female identity and agency in the face of forms of oppression. In this respect, Sears (2010) discusses black girls' anger and 'willfull behaviour' (Sreas, 2010, 71), rather than a trivial mark of disrespect, as nothing less than political critique. This resonates with hooks' (1994) discussion of an engaged pedagogy, in which the ostensible presence of emotion and passion is viewed as a stimulus for 'serious intellectual…engagement' (7). The pedagogical and political weight of such an approach can also be illuminated with reference to Brown's (2009) description of 'the Black girl who you dismissed as 'loud', but who you also somehow managed not to hear' (53). I posit Anala's existing engagement with this, evidenced in her own practice of encouraging the girls to 'talk back' (hooks, 1989) to her, as explanation for her not calling an end to this potentially disruptive interview, and this something for which I am grateful.

Brown (2009) and Sears (2010) also, however, highlight the perils of any approach that seeks to somehow 'give voice' (Brown, 2009, 49). It is in this respect that I decided to engage in this critical conversation, rather than silently sitting in a disingenuous act of 'giving space' to the young women's voices. Indeed, even in being present and asking the first question, I was a participant in this meaning-making process. Therefore, and out of my own orientation of empathy for Anala's position as a teacher myself, I decided to ask of the unfair treatment the girls experienced: "but <u>why</u> do you think this is?" Brown (2009) suggests that 'when Black girls act up and speak out […]

their actions are partial answers to messy yet critical questions' (2009, 27). In addition to the 'partial answer' that the young women's 'speaking out' had already offered, Winter came to give an even fuller answer to my 'messy yet critical question' around Anala's classroom management:

> Winter: Miss do you know what I think it is? (2) Alright, when I was in secondary school yeah, like the black teachers and the ethnic teachers always used to say to me like "you're a black girl (.) you're always gonna have it (.) tougher than all the other girls (.) than all the other nations of girls"
>
> Felicia: it's true
>
> Winter: maybe Anala's saying like "you lot, buckle down cos you lot are going to have it the toughest (.) you are the black girls so you're going to have it the toughest"
>
> Rose: cos in life yeah, us black people are going to have it the toughest than most
>
> [*general noises of agreement*]
>
> Winter: Yeah! Yeah.
>
> Tinuke: cos even when you walk down the street they'll think "what's she gonna do? She's gonna do something" whereas if a white person walks down the street they'll think "ah she's so sweet, she's so nice"
>
> **Group interview with Anala's tutor group, 23rd March 2015**

Here a critical dialogue opens up around the wider system of oppression in which young black women and also their "ethnic" teachers need to live and work. Indeed, in discussing pedagogical approaches to addressing racialization processes in schools, Shain (2003) cites the Council of Europe's (1995) suggestion that 'young people cannot make sense of their position and gain […] mastery of it without an understanding of the […] circumstances that shape their world' (cited in Shain, 2003, 132). This arguably Freirean and hooksian approach to learning is one that Winter brings into this space, as a "self-educated" young black woman who also appreciates the critical learning she experiences with and from her "black and ethnic" teachers. While the "buckle down" discourse Winter attributes to Anala here is complex and itself problematic, I wish to foreground how the group interview, just like the dance cipher, has scope for welcoming the bold voices and bodies of young black women, and acknowledging the critical

work of black "and ethnic" teachers such as Anala. Another way in which room for re-drawing perceptions and relationships seemed to open up throughout the project was in relation to the young women's bold relationships with each other.

(ii) competitive black femininity v. embodied black sisterhood

As Oakley (1993) suggests, ' 'sisterhood' [is] a somewhat nebulous and problematic, but nevertheless important, concept' (226), and indeed it is one that I draw on here. I do so in recognition of its legacy in black feminist thought (Lorde, 1984, 2009a), but also in how it resonates with certain processes I perceived and experienced within the dance project. I have already, for example, explored ways in which communal practices of women dancing together in the dance cipher produce new empowering discourses of femininity and success. In this respect, this space can also be considered an embodied and spatialised form of resistance to the stronghold of competitive black femininity in the college, and the system of 'white capitalist patriarchy' (hooks, 2003) that produces it. Indeed, the freestyle black girl dance circle, within the all-female space of the enclosed dance studio, curtains drawn, stands as a contrasting symbol, or even an antidote to the spontaneous fight circle described by Cairo (see Chapter Six), in which two fighting black girls are gazed upon within the synoptic space of the college corridor, to be ridiculed/desired by hegemonic black boys, and ultimately excluded by the institution.

Another dance practice that emerged as one of arguable sisterhood within the project was that of creating and preparing together for the IWD performance. To return to the words of Lara:

   "we rehearsed…we was serious…yeah (.) they're my girls."

Indeed, all four of the main research participants, and many other girls in the tutor group, had the same thing to say about the experience of putting together this event: that is "brought [us / the group / all the girls] together". It is significant that this was the most clearly and commonly verbalized response to our time in the dance studio together. This speaks to how the young women's

friendships and the "rollercoaster of drama" therein was of fundamental importance to them in understanding their lives at college. It also speaks to the power of creating such a deeply embodied and culturally specific art form together (Thomas, 1997; Brown, 2009; Sears, 2010; Hickey-Moody, 2013).

As I came to take a more peripheral role in the IWD dance project during this devising period, I was indeed able to have a clearer view of the power in young women creating dance together. I suggest this was in no small part because my position was finally (more) de-centered, meaning the terrain of our project was reinscribed by the young women's formations and creations with each other, as something closer to a 'Black girl centered experience' (Brown, 2009, 6). Despite some early 'teething problems', it did indeed seem that these black girl-directed, creative and deeply embodied spaces facilitated new and increasingly strong bonds of sisterhood between the young women. One key example is in how the Afrobeats dance group came to have some lively and choreographically productive conversations around their respective West African heritage countries, during which they shared music, language and dance steps. Another is in how Felicia and Cairo, who declined to perform in the final show, came instead to take on creative roles as (respectively) make-up artist and choreographer. In such leadership roles these bold black girls, known for mobilizing "bad bitch" personas with their peers, enacted forms of power that served the cohesion and creativity of a community of black girls working together, with one girl in the group quietly sharing with me, "no-one's afraid of Cairo now".

A final example of a sense of bold black sisterhood being mobilized in the dance project space was in respect to our final, non-dance session of the year. In this farewell session, we used the more open and secluded space of the dance studio for what became a lively and impassioned debate on education and its role in women's lives. One general underlying strategy that Brown (2009) employed during the SOLHOT project was never to tell the girls in the room to be quiet during group-discussions. She explains how such a principle was

difficult to implement, especially for the adult women who volunteered at the sessions, and how this often led to complaints of the sessions being unruly. However, Brown (2009) understands her young participants' bold, loud and often overlapping forms of dialogue as 'embodying types of knowledge about the ways the world works for Black girls' (27). Indeed, our debate on education became nothing but bold, loud and impassioned: in a way that no doubt would have been 'unruly' within the neoliberal, Ofsted-ready classroom, but which I experienced as a manifestation of how 'education is a consuming passion' (Mirza and Reay, 2000, 521) for these young women.

The use of voice within this space was indeed a marker of educational engagement rather than disruption, and both Anala and I had no real choice but to 'let' it flow. Significant here is a particularly impassioned speech delivered by a usually quiet black girl in the class, a student who I had heard described as the dreaded "moist" by a number of girls in the group. As this young woman stood to her feet, and declared in an uncompromising way the importance of education to "us black women", Felicia and Tinuke broke into (seemingly delighted) cries of "yes Auntie! speak Auntie!", delivered in strong West African accents. It seems that a performative space opened up here in which the body of bold black femininity was synonymous with the body of the "good", committed student, and in a way that spoke to a deep sense of nationally-rooted black female community and pride. A similarly performative space opened up on the college stage itself, during the IWD performance. I conclude this chapter now with a discussion of the role this performance played in the developing pedagogy.

The 'public' dance performance: prestigious black girls running the show

(i) forging new spaces for success: one side of the story

The IWD project served a number of important roles within the pedagogy. First, with its loose 'scheme of work' towards a final work-sharing, it provided scope

for imagining how this pedagogic praxis could actually embed within the institution, therefore helping 'critical research be, rather than a utopian vision, actually doable' (Apple, et al., 2009, 277). There was also, in the dance performance, an acutely embodied way of 'disseminating' our work together into the broader college space (Oakely, 2005), and, importantly, an opportunity for a group of L2 HSC "prestigious" black girls to finally run the show – and this time in a more celebratory and institutionally sanctioned form of "drama" than the kind they were otherwise "famous" for in the college. A number of researchers in addition to Brown (2009) and Sears (2010) explore how the public dance performance can serve as a (complicated) space for young women of colour to project their own multi-faceted identities and teach audiences who they are, and who they might become (Youdell, 2006a; Atencio, 2008; Hickey-Moody, 2013; Stanger, 2016). Indeed, this all-female, HSC led performance event was a space where my research participants' identities might become legitimately visible rather than erased/abject, and take on a new meaning within the institution, at least for an hour. In light of my methodological discussions around the value of dance in this study, and the problems in writing about it, I do not attempt to describe the young women's performances. However, I do focus on the responses to these performances, as the young women articulate it and as I experienced it in the audience that day.

Two L3 HSC students (friends with girls in Anala's tutor group) hosted the show, and introduced each dance performance with reference to the national culture being represented. This elicited playful and not un-competitive cheering from the audience that highlighted the different national and cultural allegiances within the auditorium, itself a hopeful pedagogic moment within a British education system that 'offers powerful interpretations of what it means to be British – of belonging and non-belonging and inclusion and exclusion' (Shain, 2003, 125). The cheering and clapping always seemed to go up a notch (or a fair few notches!) as soon as the performers entered the stage, wearing costumes carefully designed to evoke particular, distinctly feminine national identities. During the dress rehearsal, the young women had also boldly (and

successfully) negotiated with me and the college's theatre technician that the music for each piece be turned up to the maximum, and indeed the sound of the music and the female students' cheering seemed to fill the auditorium from every angle during the show. To me, the atmosphere felt electric and warm, in an audience of (it seemed at least) smiling faces, jubilant cheers and standing ovations, enacted largely by young women in response to their peers dancing onstage. It certainly seemed that in this space, young women could experience each other through a charged and sensually engaged discourse of sisterhood.

I interpret this quite visceral sense of sisterhood as operating in two distinct yet ultimately overlapping ways. Firstly, in the absence of male students within this space it appeared that a heterosexualised gaze, one that contained 'knowledge' of "what boys like" as a consuming and potentially shaming force, was disrupted with its own a kind of 'oppositional gaze' (hooks, 1992). Not one in which young women's sexualities were somehow erased, but one instead more consistent with the processes of "feeling myself" (and indeed appreciating other girls) that operated through the young women's performances of buffness. Cairo in particular was keen that their performance be for an all-female audience, replying "thank fuck" when I confirmed that no boys would be "allowed in". She also made a particular point of saying that there was "no way" she would go onstage if the football student who had spread the rumour around her was there. In this, it seems that this space was also one in which the young women could be free of the potential harassment and harm contained within the relationship of hegemonic black masculinity to emphasized black femininity. A second way in which I interpret the sisterhood of this more literally performative space is in through the celebratory representations of inter-national moving femininities onstage, including performances by students of Black African, Black Caribbean, Turkish and White Eastern European heritage, with some of these students performing in pieces 'outside' of their national heritage. Within this a potential space opened up in which 'the focus [was] on what racialised working class femininities have in common with other groups'

(Shain, 2003, 132), rather than on institutional (and social) hierarchies between these groups.

It also seemed that in this performance space the girls' aesthetic practices and embodied cultural identities could smoothly take centre stage and become synonymous with (a particular form of) success in the institution, in a way that is reminiscent of Youdell's (2012) discussions of how Pacific Islander students - during a dance and music performance in an Australian school - could be, for once, ''Pacific Islander' *and* student and learner' (2012, 142), rather than 'impossible bodies'. In a similar way, the HSC tutor group seemed to take this rare opportunity to be simultaneously "prestigious black girls" *and* "good students" on board with relish. For example, Felicia arrived two hours early to set up her make-up station, and proceeded to create careful, striking and perfectly finished make-up looks for each black girl in the class. This proud and unapologetic identity work also took place onstage. For example, we had developed a skit for the end of the Dancehall piece, in which all the performers would start to freestyle apart from one girl, who would indignantly pick up a prop stereo from the front of the stage, perform turning off the music, and stride offstage. The humorous potential of one bold black girl stopping other bold black girls in their tracks was brought alive in the moment by the performing student's 'ad lib' decision: to dramatically roll her eyes and loudly kiss her teeth at her dancing peers – and then at the audience, to much laughter and cheers. A rhetoric of (communal) pride also emerged through the young women's written responses to this event:

> "I felt confident and like I achieved something" (Kayla)
>
> "It made me feel excited and proud of ourselves" (Felicia)
>
> "I took great pride in this project" / "I felt good about myself" (two more responses from black girls in the group)
>
> **Extracts from evaluation forms**

While pride at being a prestigious black girl among other girls may have already operated within the subcultural spaces of the institution, I suggest that the way it manifested onto these written feedback forms in response to this public

event was a marker of this cultural pride entering the institutional space itself.

I also noted ways in which 'the institution' too took note of the young women's proud articulations of their "prestigious" identities. Throughout the performance, I was sitting next to the college's Principal and Vice-Principal. I noted the pleasure that seemed to operate for these women in their watching of this show, with smiles, applause and spontaneous laughter – especially in response to the student's bold 'ad lib' at the end of the Dancehall piece, and also as the whole tutor group ran on stage to dance and sing to the final Afrobeats song, in a rush of movement and noise that would have no doubt been met with disciplinary acts of containment in other spaces of the college. After the event had finished, both women turned to me with wide smiles and requests for it to happen again next year, and the following statements that I made a note of after the event: "we have some *really* good dancers, don't we?" (the Principal); "it was a breath of fresh air – one that we really need at the moment" (Vice Principal); "it's great to see these girls presenting a different side to themselves – especially in comparison to how they normally dress and things around the college" (Principal). Here, two senior members of staff position this institutionally marginalized group of young women as important within the neoliberal institution: they are skilled; they are "good"; they have the capacity to bring something new and refreshing to a workplace increasingly depressed by an impending Ofsted inspection. In the Principal referring to the young women presenting a "different side to themselves", there is also a complicated sense that the way she sees these students has, to a certain extent, changed. Indeed, many of the young women were wearing costumes no less revealing than clothes they might wear in the classroom, and performed identities that were no less bold. In short, these young women were not presenting a different side to themselves: this senior staff member was seeing them differently. Her 'perceptual practices' (Alcoff, 2006, 180) in relation to the bodies of her black, female HSC students seemed to have shifted, whether she realized it as this or not. I read any (partial) processes of learning and transformation here, even though 'incomplete and fragile' (Youdell, 2012, 142),

in relation to my own learning within the dance cipher, namely of the visceral, emotive kind within this charged, black-girl centered performance space.

However, as with earlier analyses of any liberatory processes within the dance studio, oppressive power relations still operated and were arguably perpetuated through this dance performance – perhaps in ways that I resisted acknowledging at the time, given my own desires and anxieties around the success of this project as a teacher and a researcher (Walkerdine et al., 2001).

(ii) …and yet oppression remains: the other side to the story

This performance event, while liberatory in parts, was not a perfect utopian space of women celebrating women. Indeed, after the event ended and excitement surrounding it had dissipated, a number of the students reported processes of judgement and shaming that had taken place that day between the participants, both backstage and in the commenting on images from the performance posted online. And after an initial and relatively short interview discussion with Felicia around her positive feelings about this day ("it really brought us together"; "it was fun"), she goes on to talk at length about how Kayla "tried to ruin" the day, by apparently resisting the sense of camaraderie in the dressing room. It seems that competitive relationships between young women were both challenged *and* reinforced by this dance performance project, as also became clear in the weeks after the performance had finished.

In these subsequent weeks, new bonds of friendship/sisterhood between the black girls in Anala's tutor group came to shape the classroom in ways that produced new forms of conflict with Anala (as discussed earlier). During a stress-relieving cigarette break after a particularly difficult lesson, Anala even commented something to the effect of: "the black girls are too powerful in the class now Camilla…it was easier when there were rifts as they would police each other and I could just get on and teach!" Such a statement is ripe for critical analysis, in regards to a teacher's apparent positioning of young black women's

empowerment a hindrance to learning. However, I do empathise here. Indeed, in my own experience of teaching the group a literacy lesson later in the year, I found myself struggling at Winter, Tinuke and Rose's playfully resistant (but to me at the time, extremely frustrating) decision to, as a group, question almost every instruction I gave. As I left the classroom that day, feeling dejected, I remembering Anala saying (it seemed with some satisfaction) "now you know how I feel". Back in the neoliberal space of the classroom, I indeed felt the weight of this education system: the pressure to be efficiently productive as a teacher, the expectation for my students to listen and 'get to it'. In this context I did not feel I had the time or emotional energy to work with this group of bold young women and their newly drawn bonds of friendship. And indeed, it was in this period after the IWD project that Anala made the most phonecalls home to the young women's parents in relation to their 'problematic' classroom behaviour.

In addition to the young women's relationships with their teachers, their relationships with each other also underwent processes of instability after this project. For a while at least, there was indeed a clear sense of 'sisterhood', frequently referred to by the young women, that also came to manifest in a particularly spatialised way: namely, the girls seeking me out so that they could continue to spend time in the dance studio during their break times. At one point the black girls in tutor group even arrived at the door to avoid a fight that was taking place between another group of girls in the college. However, this 'sanctuary-like' 'home place' did not last for long. In fact, the "coming together" of the group came to produce new friendship rifts in the end, with Cairo gradually pulling away from Felicia and forging a new close friendship with another girl in the group. It is not within the scope of this chapter to give the details of this dynamic, however it became the catalyst for a number of new friendship re-formations, and new conflicts with the group. One of these conflicts resulted in a major incident within the dance studio itself, spurring a whole lunch break of altercations that resulted in most of the tutor group being sent home for the day. It is significant to note that this all occurred during a

time at which our dance project had lost a particular focus and momentum, with Winter noting: "it would be better if we were working towards something again – that's when we really came together". But again, the requirements of the institution, in this case impending course deadlines, meant that another full-scale project was out of the question.

A general, and fundamental point to also make here is that, by the end of the year, my four main research participants, despite having passed their courses (with varying degrees of success), and despite having experienced new forms of success and liberation throughout our work together, still all came to ultimately face permanent exclusion from the college (see Chapter One). Indeed, it is crucial to ask of any liberatory processes that did occur here: did they translate outside of the dance studio, the theatre and after the IWD project? And if they did, were they lasting in any way? And in a final critique of the project, Anala reported to me the year after the fieldwork period had ended that Rita, a Black British woman who had recently joined the HSC team, had made remarks that the increasing visibility of black girls dancing at college events was perpetuating a stereotype that dancing is all that black women can do. Such a critique is reminiscent of research exploring the complex ways in which young black people experience both empowerment, and social (re)positioning as successful only within certain spheres, in their participation in dance (Youdell, 2006a; Brown, 2009; Sears, 2010) and sport (Carrington and Wood, 1995).

So a final question to ask now in light of all these problems, and to paraphrase Ellsworth's (1989) own bold question: why didn't this all, in the end, feel empowering? My answer is that the stronghold of oppressive discourses within this space, and the underlying neoliberal system, with its erasure of difference and covert re-centering of raced and class privilege, was too much for some of the small moments of liberation within this praxis to puncture through. This failure at any major or permanent shifts in power relations also, I suggest, are embedded in my attempts to develop this anti-racist pedagogy – one that would serve the 'coming together' (Brown, 2009, 64) of black working class girls

and the de-centering of institutional privilege - *as* a white middle class teacher within the institution. However, in the spirit of critical research and educational practice being a continual process of small moments like the ones in this study (Apple et al., 2009), this was not the end. As discussed in Chapter One, I interviewed Rita regarding her specific concerns, and the pedagogy I am still striving to develop two years later, during the 'writing-up' period for this research. This conversation proved illuminating in helping me form critical yet still hopeful conclusions on this complex "rollercoaster" of a year. In the spirit of a dialogic approach, I draw on aspects of this interview now, in the conclusion to this research.

Conclusion:

'Come Together, Dance Together, Grow Together': an embodied pedagogy of hope?

In this thesis I have drawn on different feminist understandings of embodiment and education in order to understand, and attempt to act upon, processes of educational exclusion encountered by young black women who study HSC within an increasingly neoliberal and media-saturated climate. These processes of exclusion manifest, at the surface, as strained relationships with teachers and various distractions from study, as a lack of representation in institutional depictions of achievement, and as emotionally charged altercations with peers and staff that often result in permanent exclusions. Informed by Foucauldian understandings of power as 'textured' (Deveaux, 2010) and black feminist understandings of the 'white capitalist patriarchy' (hooks, 2003) as a far-reaching, deeply embodied and insidious system of oppression, I have interpreted such instances of exclusion as produced through the intersecting, often conflicting discourses of 'success' that operate across these young women's social and educational lives. Key to this interpretation is that these young women live as a marginalized student group who are "hustling" and striving to "thrive and survive" (Diana) in a world that offers them little opportunity for status and varied self-identification within hegemonic spaces. I also, however, have explored a variety of ways in which these young women, and indeed the adults in their lives, mobilise resistance to and within such processes of exclusion. I drew on this, in addition to feminist pedagogic theory and practice, in my attempts to develop an embodied pedagogy of hope with four of these young women in particular: one enacted across difference as a white middle class teacher-researcher and with their multi-ethnic tutor group and teachers.

Specific findings

Question (1) What are the processes of educational exclusion experienced by some young black women in an inner-London college?

I have found that three key discourses of success intersect within my research participants' lives at college, and do so in ways that contribute to their educational exclusions as black working class girls who study HSC in the neoliberal institution. These are discourses of the ideal neoliberal subject, the educationally empowered black woman and the "prestigious" black girl. These emerge against existing institutional, media, peer and familial discursive terrains that work together to require that young women embody all three images of success simultaneously, in ways that are sometimes "stressful" (Melody) or even impossible. These three images also serve as appealing, if not compulsory, pathways to success for a student group who are placed in an 'inferior' (Mirza, 2010, 3) institutional and social position in respect to the intersections of their gender, 'race' and class/course of study. Indeed, these discourses of success entail both subjection and resistance within a context shaped by other deeply embedded discourses: those of compulsory heterosexuality, hegemonic black masculinity, emphasized/competitive black femininity, and racist, classist and sexist ideas about 'the ideal pupil'/'educable body' (Leathwood and Hey, 2009, 190) and what makes a high status course choice within an individualized, supposedly 'meritocratic' education system. These images of success therefore become the matter of young women's educational empowerment *and* exclusion.

On the one hand, discourses of the "prestigious" black girl, the educationally empowered black woman and the ideal neoliberal subject offer important and empowering opportunities for who and what these young women can become against broader 'racialised and gendered patterns of inequality' (Mirza, 2010, 2). For example, through going out 'greased, dressed and pressed', (Jones, 1994, 3), "classy" and "feelin' myself" in performances buff black femininity. Through 'raising up herself' (Jones, 1994, 3) and "self-respecting" in the

construction of bold black femininity. And through becoming the "hard working", "self-educated" and "independent" black career woman, who 'rationalises' (Mirza, 2006) the ideal of autonomous individualized achievement prescribed within her college. Each of these identity performances also invites particular, sometimes deeply embodied and emotively mobilized, behaviours from my research participants within their (sometimes) hostile institutional environment – especially as students with histories of educational exclusion. Examples include asking many questions in class and negotiating grades, calling the head teacher a "racist cunt" at his preferential treatment of a white student, never being anything other than perfectly contoured in face and figure, and boldly defending one's honour at either a black boy's or a fellow black girl's attempts at "disrespect". I understand and respect these behaviours as embodied responses to, and social and educational striving within a sometimes hostile, sometimes exhilarating world. Yet these behaviours are frequently (mis)understood and positioned within the neoliberal institution as deeply 'problematic' (Lloyd, 2005): as examples of educational disengagement or defiance ("she was just attention seeking"), as psychological need/damage ("she has needs we can't meet here"), or worse still, as threat ("a teacher could be next!") and abjection ("you girls have no class"). Such positioning sometimes occurs in clear examples of racist, sexist and classist thinking/embodied responding from staff, but at times it occurs through the more 'automatic' processes of this in-crisis neoliberal institution, and indeed through teachers' equally emotive behaviours/responses within a target-driven and performance-oriented system that leaves them "exhausted".

All this works together to leave little space for understanding and supporting, let alone celebrating, the deeply embodied forms of social and educational striving that Black British working class girls mobilise. This would be as a marginalized group who live and learn within a culturally disengaged (and covertly racist, sexist and classist) neoliberal institution, and a media-saturated climate that offers an empowering but nonetheless narrow set of possibilities for conceiving black, working class, feminine success. It is in this that my

research participants experience what I argue are unjust processes of educational exclusion, despite their clear educational engagement and investment. Ultimately however, the focus for this thesis is spaces for hope, resistance and change. A key space for hope consistently emerged across these experiences of exclusion: the young women's pleasure (and power) in their identity-work, and their ways of supporting and empowering each other in black sisterhood, at times supported by the adults in their lives. I drew on this in approaching my second research question.

Question (2) Can a dance and discussion based pedagogical approach disrupt these processes of exclusion?

My hopeful approach was to collaborate with my research participants, both teachers and students, to develop 'an embodied pedagogy of hope', namely, a critical, collaborative and 'engaged' (hooks, 1994) pedagogical praxis developed across difference through dialogic forms of dance and voice. This was in the form of an extra-curricular, girl/woman-only dance and discussion project that worked towards a performance for a female-only audience, and that also came to include interview sessions with the young women and my colleagues as part of its praxis. Through drawing on young women's dance practices, their dynamic formations of black sisterhood, their (and our) critical discussions around education and identity, and spaces for mutual learning across difference, I hoped our project might disrupt processes of exclusion within the institution. What I came to discover instead was an imperfect and always-in-process educational approach that made some momentarily hopeful and sometimes exhilarating 'break-throughs', but ultimately did little to re-arrange relations of power for these young women within their institution.

Break-through moments included firstly those in which the identity of the "prestigious" black girl, in her buffness and boldness, became an emblem of educational success and also of an aspirational - knowing, driven and creative - femininity. Examples of this took place within the freestyle dance cipher, the

289

competitive games that started our sessions, aspects of the IWD performance, and also through the impassioned, critical offerings within our interviews and class debate around women's education. In these contexts, my research participants (in varying ways and to varying degrees) were 'the ones who know', the ones who inspire and can direct others (including this teacher-researcher) in discovery and in learning. Other moments included those that afforded opportunities for all participants – the young women, "the other girls" within the tutor group, and also me and my colleagues - to explore and negotiate our identities together, outside of the pressures of performance for assessment and within (relatively) private all-female spaces. Through dialogic uses of body and voice, these spaces for critique and becoming served to redraw relationships and shake hierarchies, and to, as Felicia put it, "bring us all together" – even if all momentarily. In these ways, the pedagogy was a process through which Lara could assertively state, "we rehearsed…we was serious…they're my girls". It was also a process, in our talking, dancing, playing, laughing and arguing together, through which I and other staff members could see the young women outside of reductive discourses of need, pathology, threat, demand and struggle.

Despite these break-through moments however, the pedagogy did not serve to more than momentarily shake oppressive power relations. Indeed, a number of oppressive discourses operated not only despite of, but also *through* our work together in the dance studio and on the college stage. A discourse of emphasized black femininity, and its counterpart of competitive black femininity, was mobilized in the pedagogic space. This was most often through forms of policing, such as the silencing (of self and others) within our group discussions, and also through some more public forms of shaming, such as cruel comments on social media at a girl's perceived lack of skill in her final dance performance. The requirements of the neoliberal classroom, and the ways it shapes teachers' own emotive responses to young black women, also meant that any liberatory "coming together" and consequent 'empowerment' within the project in fact served to re-position my research participants as outright

'problem girls' (Lloyd, 2005) within the institution after its ending. And finally, in an overarching sense, there were the ways in which my values, norms, practices and personal hopes still shaped the space, despite attempts to practice dialogue and encourage a centering of black girlhood in all its multiplicity and becoming. I indeed take Rita's concern seriously that aspects of this project inadvertently served to reposition and essentialise black girlhood through 'white eyes'.

What now?

To consider the implications of these findings and to consider next steps, I turn to my final interview with Cairo. After our long discussion around black girls' fights and exclusions, I asked her the following question:

> CS: is there anything teachers can do to help improve things?

Her answer was as insightful as ever:

> Cairo: but you can't improve it (.) cos you'll have to change
> everyone's actual mind set - and how they think and how they think
> up the world (1) and how black females have a role
> **Final interview with Cairo, 2nd June, 2015**

Within the apparent hopelessness of "you can't improve it", Cairo in fact answers my hopeful question. Indeed, Cairo's answer serves to articulate my precise aims within the context of the institution. In reality, this ambitious task of "chang[ing] everyone's actual mind set…how they think up the world and how black females have a role" manifested in small and sometimes fleeting ways within this pedagogic-research praxis, itself suggesting that education as a practice of freedom (Freire, 1987) in this context would be a slow and persistent task of shaking and shaping orientations and relationships, as a way of enacting change within entire institutions and the wider systems in which they are embedded. A fundamental way in which this began to occur is in the processes of embodied and verbal dialogue that took place, and the learning that emerged. It is for this reason that I continue to draw upon the voices of others in imagining some ways of 'being new' (Brown, 2009, 2) or at least hopeful, in

future discussions about and practices of education with black working class young women in the neoliberal institution. To introduce and frame the following suggestions, I refer to a recorded discussion I had with Rita whose insights, in a similar way to Diana's, served to reflect and to further illuminate my findings.

One key area for hope that emerges is the 'use' of the theories of embodiment discussed and deployed in this thesis. Indeed, a Foucauldian, Butlerian and Ahmedian understanding of embodiment can explain without pity or pathologisation why, for example, a young black woman might lash out at the boy who is harassing her and in a way that leads a white male teacher to describe her actions only as "the most aggressive thing I've ever seen". It can also explain with important space for empathy why, for example, an educationally engaged young black woman might feel compelled to take out a compact mirror in the classroom to check the shape of her eyebrows, and why her teacher, also under acute pressure, might send her out of the room in frustration. The critical and compassionate mode of understanding invited through this lens of embodiment finds new articulation within my conversation with Rita:

> R: with these girls (.) it's hard […] they're still battling with this thing of how people look at them (.) sexually (.) how people look at them culturally
>
> CS: mm hmm
>
> R: you know (.) the expectations (.) do they buy into it do they not (1) I think there's a lot of anger with them because of the way they're being treated (.) anger because of the ways black guys treat them (1) it's like layers
>
> **Interview with Rita, 14th September 2017**

With this understanding of the 'layers' of experience that produce orientations, also come possibilities for developing practice: ways of forming new relations and communities within educational spaces, underpinned by mutual understanding and empathy. Indeed, what if teachers had the space, and the

permission, to consider and respond to a young woman's history, her social position, and how this deeply shapes both the way she feels and her ways of 'raising up herself' (Jones, 1994, 3)? And what, in turn, if there was more space for young women and their teachers to talk together around the pressures they both face in the classroom? As well as this kind of engaged dialogue (hooks, 1994), dance (and dancing together) is a possibility, and a powerful one at that, in being a form of communication and cultural exchange that can re-draw perceptions and expectations in deeply embodied ways.

Another area for hope is the spaces for becoming and change that sit between key discourses that shape identities within the research site, for example, the apparently conflicting perspectives of the neoliberal versus the politicised educational subject, as Anala articulates here:

> it's really funny because I think there are two kinds of different conversation that take place by the same teachers and I don't know whether it's depending on the day (1) I myself sort of swing from "seriously these girls really need to get their act together (.) they have brought this onto themselves" (.) you know? (.) "they need to take some responsibility" (.) and then the next day (1) it will be completely different (1) "they are victimised (.) they are marginalised" (.) like I can see where they're coming from.
>
> **Interview with Anala, 16th February 2015**

My conversation with Rita also gives new articulation to an idea of spaces for overlap, and spaces 'in-between', but in specific relation to the young women's identities:

> R: I think these girls are always kind of stuck between two worlds you know?
>
> CS: yes
>
> R: well it's three (.) the expectations of society (.) the expectations of their families (.) and then the expectations of themselves
>
> CS: yes and their peer group and their social // lives
>
> R: their peer group yeah
>
> **Interview with Rita, 14th September 2017**

Rather than subjects becoming simply "stuck between" however, within this research I encountered even momentary spaces in which overlapping identities could be productive. Indeed, it seems that in finding the time and space to mine contradictions and places of overlap that new forms of understanding and practice opened up, for example in my discussion with Felicia around black girls' anger (Chapter Seven). For the future, I suggest specifically that it would be important to explore the overlaps that Rita identifies here: society, family, themselves, peers.

In respect to this final suggestion, a key limitation of this research is its scope. This is in relation to my decision not to explore the young women's experiences and identities outside of the college, but also in relation to focusing on aspects of their experience that highlight their striving and empowerment in a hostile world. Indeed, my intention to highlight and critique 'patterns of gendered and racial inequality' (Mirza, 2010, 2) within this research, there is a risk that 'black womanhood' has been (re)constructed through a rather reductive lens of struggle and resistance (Mirza, 1992, 2009). I raise this risk to highlight the importance of continuing this project in ways that explore and embrace the complex and heterogenous identities of black working class girls: in relation to their families, their interests and their relationships. Articulating this limitation also highlights the importance of continuing the project in ways that turn 'the lens' onto the systems of both whiteness and heteronormativity that operate not only in the institution, but have also operated through this research process itself. In this, a final area for future practice emerges.

A final key 'finding', or area for hope, is the importance of those in positions of privilege researching, thinking and practising across difference. For this particular context, that would be white and/or middle class teachers, or in any case, staff within the institution. Some of the ways I have attempted to do so as a teacher-researcher are in engaging with black feminist thought, practising a commitment to emotionally engaged reflexivity, seeking out and sharing in

dialogue with black women around the research questions, and also, fundamentally, seeking out and sharing in the conversations and embodied practices of my young research participants. I suggest these were all ways I could encounter and understand better 'the power and the genius of black girls' (Brown, 2009, 3) within an increasingly hopeless system. And while my attempts to do so were not transformative within the institution, there are certainly hopeful legacies of this praxis. To locate a starting point for sharing these, I turn again to my conversation with Rita:

> CS: I feel that [the project] didn't quite succeed in doing the opening up I had hoped (.) so going forward (.) have you got any advice or ideas
>
> R: …it's about expansion isn't it (.) expansion of knowledge (.) but it also seems about appropriateness (.) when I see the girls twerking in the corridor (.) it's about context sometimes because we <u>know</u> what people will think
>
> CS: yeah but this is what I'm struggling with…if we want change to happen (.) if we want those eyes and that looking to change (.) then keeping everything behind closed doors might just keep the status quo
>
> R: yeah and I agree with that (.) but then it always seems to focus on the black person (.) having to lead it
>
> **Interview with Rita, 14th September 2017**

As discussed, there are serious complications in a white woman, and indeed the white institution in any sense, seeking to engage those aspects of a black girl pedagogy explored here and striving to facilitate a "coming together" of and with black girls. However, in respect to developing a pedagogy of hope across difference, or what might also be understood as a pedagogy of solidarity, there are indeed ways in which it was no longer "the black person having to lead it". And, while the research praxis did not succeed in the ways I had hoped, there are ways in which it has informed subsequent attempts to engage the institution in more critical and engaged practice.

One has been my own attempts to continue developing the dance and discussion praxis as a member and beneficiary of the white institution, but in different guises and experimenting with some of the lessons learned from this research. For example, I have attempted to work more closely with young people in designing aspects of the project, leading to approaches that recognise young people's different sexualities and gender identities, and also to the development of a project motto – one that we are striving to implement in practice: 'Come Together, Dance Together, Grow Together'. I am also developing the practice of working across difference and de-centering my position within a 'Black Girl centred experience' (Brown, 2009, 1). A key aspect of this has been engaging the support, guidance and expertise of Black British women in this work, including that of professional dancers, writers, teachers and musicians who develop voice and/or dance based pedagogies with young people. I also continue to work with Anala and the HSC team, and we have made a commitment to finding spaces for critical discussion within our working days, even without the structured space of 'the interview'. And following presenting elements of my research to the Senior Leadership Team (to a mixed reception), I have been able to work more directly with senior staff members to develop initiatives addressing gender related oppression within the college, working with young men as well as young women. These are imperfect and small-scale practices that I hope to develop in the spirit of viewing 'critical pedagogy and critical education as a whole – and the research that is dialectically connected to it – as a maturing and ongoing set of projects […] projects that are unfinished' (Apple et al., 2009, 9).

Conclusion:

So while an increasingly neoliberal education system, one that accommodates and perpetuates racist, classist and hetero-sexist practices as a 'programme of hopelessness' (Freire, 2014, 1), shows no sign of cracking, attempts to 'dream, reinvent and reorganise' (Davies, 2014) certainly prevail. This is among both staff members *and* the young women whose forms of 'raising up herself' (Jones, 1994, 3), and raising up "her girls", can exhaust but can also galvanise staff

members within this system. Indeed, a final and enduring space for hope and motivation within this attempt to understand and to trouble processes of exclusion is in the resolve and the determination of the young women who shared their perspectives and experiences within this research – as summed up in one of my final conversations with Winter:

> CS: I guess one thing I've been concerned about is whether this [research] project is even quite labelling
> Winter: No (.) the thing is with books (1) is this going to be a book?
> CS: kind of
> W: well the things with books (.) you always have to start off with "they're bad girls" or "they're this they're that" (.) then (.) gradually (.) as the pages go on you're knocking the barriers down (1) gradually the readers are going to think "yes (.) the bad girl is smart (.) she's got her head screwed on" (1) that's what they're going to think
> CS: Winter (.) I love // that
> Winter: // and another thing the reader doesn't know about me (.) I love writing (.) let me just leave that there

After leaving the college all of these young women went on to secure and engage in subsequent forms of study and/or employment, in further acts of 'raising up herself' (Jones, 1994, 3) and showing the world that "we rehearsed…we was serious".   The task for education practitioners, researchers and institutions is to ensure that these young women do not have to do this work always against the odds, or on their own.

Bibliography

Aapola, S., M. Gonick and A. Harris (2005) *Young Femininity: Girlhood, Power and Social Change.* New York: Palgrave MacMillan.

Acker, J. et al. (1991) 'Objectivity and Truth: Problems in Doing Feminist Research' in: M. Fonow and J. Cook (Eds.), *Beyond Methodology: Feminist Scholarship as Lived Research*, Indiana: Indiana University Press, 133-153.

Ahmed, S. (1997) 'It's a sun tan, isn't it?' in: *Black British Feminism, a Reader.* H. Mirza (Ed.), London: Routledge, 153-167.

Ahmed, S. (September 11th, 2013).'Making Feminist Points' from: https://feministkilljoys.com/2013/09/11/making-feminist-points/ (last accessed 4th April 2018).

Ahmed, S. (2002) 'Racialised Bodies' in: M. Evans and E. Lee (Eds.), *Real Bodies: A Sociological Introduction*, Hampshire: Palgrave, 46-63.

Ahmed, S. (2000) *Strange Encounters: Embodied Others in Post-Coloniality.* London: Routledge.

Ahmed, S. (2004) *The Cultural Politics of Emotion,* Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press.

Ahmed, S. (2012) *On Being Included: Racism and Diversity in Institutional Life,* Durham and London: Duke University Press.

Alaimo, S. and S. Hekman (2008) 'Introduction: Emerging Models of Materiality in Feminist Theory' in: S. Alaimo and S. Hekman (Eds.), *Material Feminisms,* Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1-19.

Alcoff, L. M. (2006) *Visible Identities: Race, Gender, and the Self,* Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press.

Alcoff, L. (2007) 'Fraser on Redistribution, Recognition and Identity' in: *European Journal of Political Theory*, 6(3), 255-265.

Allred P., and N. Fox (2015) 'The sexuality-assemblages of young men: A new materialist analysis' in: *Sexualities,* 18(8) 905 – 920.

Ali, S. (2010) 'Black feminist praxis: some reflections on pedagogies and politics in higher education.' in: H. S. Mirza and C. Joseph (Eds.) *Black and Postcolonial Feminisms,* Oxon: Routledge, 79-86.

Allen, K. (2011) The 'right' kind of fame? Celebrity Culture and the structuring of young women's fantasies of 'success', in: Negra, D. and Holmes, S. (eds.)*In the Limelight and Under the Microscope: Forms and Functions of Female Celebrity*, Continuum.

Allen, R.L. (2005) 'Whiteness and critical pedagogy' in: Z. Leonardo (Ed). *Critical pedagogy and race*, Oxford: Blackwell, 53 – 68.

Apple, M., W. Au and L. Armando Gandin (2009) 'Mapping Critical Education' in: M. Apple, W.Au and L. Armando Gandin Eds. *The Routledge International Handbook of Critical Education.*New York: Routledge, 3-20.

Archer, L. (2003) *Race, Masculinity and Schooling: Muslim boys and education,* Berkshire: Open University Press.

Archer, A. (2008) 'The Impossibility of Minority Ethnic Educational 'Success'? An Examination of the Discourses of Teachers and Pupils in British Schools' in *European Educational Research Journal,* 7(1), 89-107.

Archer, L. and B. Francis (2007) *Understanding Minority Ethnic Achievement: Race, gender, class and 'success',* Oxon and New York: Routledge.

Archer L., A. Halsall and S. Hollingworth (2007a) 'Class, gender, (hetero)sexuality and schooling: paradoxes within working-class girls' engagement with education and post-16 aspirations in *British Journal of Sociology of Education*, 28:2, 165-180.

Archer, L. A. Halsall and S. Hollingworth (2007b) 'University's not for Me – I'm a Nike Person: Urban, Working-Class Young People's Negotiations of 'Style', Identity and Educational Engagement' in *Sociology*, 41:2, 219-237.

Archer, L., A. Hansall and S. Hollingworth (2007c) 'Inner-city femininities and education: 'race', class, gender and schooling in young women's lives' in: *Gender and Education,* 19(5), 549 – 568.

Archer, L., Hollingworth, S. and Mendick, H. (2010) *Urban Youth and Schooling*, Maidenhead: Open University Press.

Atencio, M. (2008) 'Freaky is just how I get down':investigating the fluidity of minority ethnic feminine subjectivities in dance' in: *Leisure Studies*, 27 (3), 311-327.

Aziz, R. (1997) 'Feminism and the challenge of racism: Deviance or difference?' in: H.S. Mirza (Ed.) *Black British Feminism: A Reader,* London: Routlegde, 70-77.

Bakare-Yusuf, B. (1997) 'Raregrooves and raregroovers: A matter of taste, difference and identity' in: H.S. Mirza (Ed.) *Black British Feminism: A Reade,* London: Routlegde, 81-96.

Baker, J. (2010) 'Great expectations and post-feminist accountability: young women living up to the 'successful girls' discourse' in: *Gender and Education,* 22(1), 1-15.

Ball, S.J., M. Maguire and S. Macrae (2000) *Choice, Pathways and Transitions Post-16: New Youth, New Economies in the City,* London: Routledge Falmer.

Barad K. (2008) 'Posthumanist Performativity: Toward an Understanding of How Matter Comes to Matter', in *Material Feminisms,* Stacy Alaimo and Susan Hekam (Eds), Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 120-154.

Bartlett, A. (1998) 'A Passionate Subject: Representations of desire in feminist pedagogy', in: *Gender and Education*, 10(1), 85-92.

Bauer, M. (2000) 'Implementing Liberatory Feminist Pedagogy: bell hooks' strategies for transforming the classroom' in: *Oxford Journals*, for *MELUS,* 24(3), 265-275.

Beausoleil, E. (2014) 'Only they Breathe: identity, agency and the dancing body politic' in: *Constellations,* 21(1), 116-129.

Beck, U. (1992) *Risk Society,* London: Sage.

Beck, U., A. Giddens and S. Lash (1994) *Reflexive Modernisation: Policits, Tradition and Aesthetics in the Modern Social Order.* Stanford, California: Stanford University Press.

Bernard, C. (2015) 'Black Teenage Mothers' Understandings of the Effects of Maltreatment on their Coping Style and Parenting Practice: A Pilot Study', in: *Children and Society*, 29(5), 355- 365.

Bhopal, K. and F. Shain. (2014) 'Educational inclusion: towards a social justice agenda?' in: *British Journal of Sociology of Education*, 35:5, 645-649.

Blackman, L. and C. Venn (2010) 'Affect' in: *Body and Society,* 16(1):7-28.

Blume, L. (2003) 'Embodied [by] Dance: adolescent de/constructions of body, sex and gender in physical education' in: *Sex Education,* 3(2), 95-103.

Bordo, S. (1993) *Unbearable Weight: Feminism, Western Culture, and the Body,* London: University of California Press.

Bordo, S. (1997) 'The Body and the Reproduction of Femininity' in: Conboy, K., Medina, N. and Stanbury, S. (eds) *Writing on the Body: Female Embodiment and Feminist Theory,* New York: Columbia University Press, 90-110.

Bordo, S. (1999) 'Feminism, Foucault and the Politics of the Body' in, *Feminist Theory and The Body: A Reader,* J. Price and M.Shildrick (Eds.), Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 246-257.

Brady, J. (1994) 'Critical literacy, feminism, and a politics of representation' in: P. McLaren and C.Lankshear, Eds. *Politics of Liberation: Paths from Freire ,*London: Routledge, 143-153.

Brooks, D.E. and L. Hébert (2006) 'Gender, Race and Media Representation' in: B. Dow and J. Wood (eds), *The Sage Handbook of Gender and Communication,* London: Sage Publications Ltd, 297-317.

Brown, R.N. (2009) *Black Girlhood Celebration: Toward a Hip Hop Feminist Pedagogy,* New York: Peter Lang,

Brown, L. and M. Chesney-Lind (2005) 'Growing up mean: Covert aggression and the policing of girlhood' in: G. Lloyd (Ed.) *Problem Girls: understanding and supporting troubled and troublesome girls and young women.* Abingdon Oxon: Routledge Falmer, 76-88.

Buffington, N. (1993) 'When Teachers Aren't Nice: bell hooks and feminist pedagogy', paper presented at The Conference on College Composition and Communication, San-Diego, March 31st – April 3rd, 1993.

Butler, J. (1990) *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity,* New York and London: Routledge.

Butler, J. (1995) 'Contingent foundations: feminism and the question of 'postmodernism'' in: Benhabib, S., Butler, J., Cornell, D. and Fraser, N (Eds.) *Feminist contentions. A philosophical exchange*, New York: Routledge, 35–57.

Butler, J. (1998) *Selection from 'Bodies That Matter'* in *Body and Flesh: A Philosophical Reader,* D. Welton (Ed.), Oxford: Blackwell Publishers Ltd, 71-83.

Butler, J. (2004) 'Preface to 1999 Edition of *Gender Trouble'* in *The Judith Butler Reader,* J. Butler and S. Salih (Eds.), Oxford: Blackwell Publishing, 94-115..

Butler, J. (2010) 'Performative Acts and Gender Constitution: An essay in phenomenology and feminist theory' in: Jones, A. (ed) *The Feminism and Visual Culture Reader: 2nd Edition,* Oxford: Routledge, 482-492.

Carlile, A. (2013) *Permanent Exclusion from School and Institutional Prejudice.* Rotterdam, The Netherlands: Sense Publishers.

Carolissen R., V. Bozalek. L. Nicholls, B. Leibowitz, P. Roleder and L. Swatrz (2011) 'bell hooks and the enactment of emotion in teaching and learning across boundaries: a pedagogy of hope?' in: *SAJHE* 25(1) 157 – 167.

Christian, M. (2005) 'The politics of Black presence in Britain and Black male exclusion in the British education system' in: *Journal of Black Studies,* 35(3), 327-346.

Clifton, D. (August 4th, 2014) 'Nicki Minaj's 'Anaconda' Is the Fiercest Take on Female Sexuality of the Year' accessible at: https://mic.com/articles/95520/nicki-minaj-s-anaconda-is-the-fiercest-take-on-female-sexuality-of-the-year#.FHbTuTxFD (last accessed 2nd December 2016).

Coleman, R. (2009) *The Becoming of Bodies: Girls, Images and Experience.* Manchester: Manchester University Press.

Connell, R.W. (1987) *Gender and Power: Society, the Person, and Sexual Politics.* London: Allen and Unwin.

Connell, R.W. and J.W. Messerschmidt (2005) 'Hegemonic Masculinity: Rethinking the concept' in: *Gender and Society.* 19(6), 829 – 859.

Connolly, P. (1998) *Racism, Gender Identities and Young Children: Social Relations in a Multi-Ethnic, Inner-City Primary School.* London: Routledge.

Cox, A. (2012) 'Thugs, Black Divas and Gendered Aspirations' in: S. McGlotten and D. Davis (Eds.) *Black Genders and Sexualities.* New York: Palgrave MacMillan, 85-110.

Crenshaw, K.W. (1995) 'Mapping the Margins: Intersectionality, Identity Politics, and Violence Against Women of Color' in: K. W Crenshaw, N. Gotanda, G. Peller and K. Thomas (Eds) *Critical Race Theory: The Key Writings that Formed the Movement,* New York: The New Press, 357-383.

Cullen, F & Bradford S. (2011) 'Research and Work with Young People: Politics, Participation and Policy' in :S. Bradford & F. Cullen (Eds*), Research and Research Methods for Youth Practitioners: An Introduction*, London Routledge.

Darder, A. (2002) *Reinventing Paulo Friere.*Oxford: Westview Press.

Davies, J. (2013) 'Trainee Hairdressers' use of Facebook as a community of gendered literacy practice in: *Pedagogy, Culture and Society, 21(1),* 147-169.

Davies, W. (2014) *The Limits of Neoliberalism: Authority, Sovereignty and the Logic of Competition,* London: SAGE Publications Ltd.

Dean, C. (2007) 'Young Travellers and the Children's Fund: Some Practical Notes on an Experimental Image-based Research Project' in: *Journal of Research in Special Educational Needs,* 7(1), 16–22.

DeFrantz, T. (2002) *Dancing Many Drums: Excavations in African American Dance.* Madison: University of Wisconsin Press.

Deveaux M. (2010) 'Feminism and Empowerment: A Critical Reading of Foucault' in: *Feminist Interpretations of Michel Foucault,* S. Hekman (Ed.), Pennsylvania: The Pennsylvania State University Press, 211-240.

Dyer, R. (1997) *White.* London: Routledge.

Edwards, E., S. McArthur and L. Russell-Owens (2016) 'Relationships, being-ness, and Voice: exploring multiple dimensions of humanizing work with Black Girls' in: *Equity and Excellence in Education*, 49 (4), 428 -439.

Eckert, P. (1989) *Jocks and Burnouts: Social Categories and Identity in the High School.* New York: Teachers College Press.

Emerson, R. A. (2002) 'Where my girls at? Negotiating black womanhood in music videos' in: *Gender and Society*, 16, 115 – 135.

Epstein, D. (1996) 'Keeping them in their Place: Hetero/sexist Harassment, Gender and the Enforcement of Heterosexuality' in: J. Holland, L. Adkins (Eds.) *Sex, Sensibility and the Gendered Body.* Hampshire and London: MacMillan Press Ltd, 202-221.

Epstein, D. (1997) 'Boyz' Own Stories: Masculinities and sexualities in schools' in: *Gender and Education.* 9(1), 105-166.

Epstein, D. and R. Johnson (1998). *Schooling Sexualities,* Buckingham: Open University Press.

Ellsworth, E. (1989) 'Why Doesn't This Feel Empowering? Working Through the Repressive Myths of Critical Pedagogy' in: *Harvard Educational Review,* 59(3), 297 – 324.

Ellsworth, E. (2005) *Places of Learning: Media, Architecture, Pedagogy.* New York: Routledge.

Fanon, F. (1986) *Black Skin, White Masks,* London: Pluto Press.

Fitzpatrick, K. (2013) 'Ethics, Power, Representation, and Socially Just Research' in: Critical Pedagogy, Physical Education and Urban Schooling, Vol. 432, 53-72.

Fordham, S. (1996) *Blacked Out: Dilemmas of Race, Identity, and Success at Capital High, C*hicago: The University of Chicago Press.

Foucault, M. (1978) Trans. Hurley, R. *The History of Sexuality vol. 1: The Will to Knowledge,* London: Penguin Books.

Foucault, M. (1979) Trans. Sheridan, A. *Discipline and Punish,* London: Penguin Books Ltd.

Foucault, M. (1994) 'Truth and Power' in: J. D. Faubion *Michel Foucault, Power: Essential Works of Foucault 1954-1984, Volume 3,* London: Penguin Group, 111-133.

Francis, B. (2006) 'Heroes or Zeros? The discursive positioning of 'under-achieving' boys in English neo-liberal education policy' in: *Journal of Education Policy,* 21(2), 187-200*.*

Francis B. and C. Skelton (2005) *Reassessing Gender and Achievement,* London: Routledge.

Francombe-Webb J. and M. Silk. (2016) 'Young Girls' Embodied Experiences of Femininity and Social Class in : Vol 50(4), 652-672.

Frankenberg, R. (1993) *White Women, Race Matters: The Social Construction of Whiteness.* London: Routledge.

Fraser, N. (2007) 'Feminist Politics in the Age of Recognition: A Two-Dimensional Approach to Gender Justice' in: *Studies in Social Justice,* 1(1).

Freire, P. (1985) *The Politics of Education,* London: Macmillan.

Freire, P. and I. Shor (1987) *A Pedagogy for Liberation,* .London: Macmillan.

Freire, P. (1996), *Pedagogy of the Oppressed,* London: Penguin Books.

Freire, P*.,* (2014) *Pedagogy of Hope: Reliving Pedagogy of the Oppressed,* London: Bloomsbury Academic.

Gaventa, J. and A. Cornwall (2006) 'Power and Knowledge' in: P. Reason and H. Bradbury, (Eds), *Handbook of Action Research,* London: Sage Publications Ltd, 465-471.

George, R. (2007) *Girls in a Goldfish Bowl: Moral Regulation, Ritual and the Use of Power amongst Inner City Girls,* The Netherlands: Sense Publishers.

George, R. (2010) 'Inner city girls: choosing schools and negotiating friendships' in: C. Jackson, C. Paechter and E. Renold, *Girls and Education 3-16: continuing concerns, new agendas,* Berkshire: Open University Press, 91-102..

George, R. and J. Clay (2013), 'Challenging Pedagogy: Emotional Disruptions, Young Girls, Parents and Schools' in: *Sociological Research Online,* 18(2): 5

Gillborn, D. (2005) 'Education policy as an act of white supremacy: whiteness, critical race theory and education reform' in *Journal of Education Policy, 20:4,* 485-505.

Gordon, T. (2006) 'Girls in education: citizenship, agency and emotions' in: *Gender and Education,* 18(1), 1 – 15.

Gordon (2008) 'Media Contributions to African American Girls' Focus on Beauty and Appearance: Exploring the Consequences of Sexual Objectification' in: *Psychology of Women Quarterly.* 32 (2008), 245 – 256.

Gottschild, B. (2003) *The Black Dancing Body: A Geography from Coon to Cool.* New York: Palgrave Macmillan.

Griffin, C. (1985) *Typical Girls?Young Women from School to the Job Market.,*London: Routledge and Kegan Paul.

Griffin, F. J. (2016) 'On Black Girlhood' accessible at: http://www.aaihs.org/on-black-girlhood/ (last accessed 20th February 2017)

Griffiths, V. (1995) *Adolescent Girls and their friends: a feminist ethnography,* Aldershot: Avebury.

Griffiths, M. (1998) *Educational Research for Social Justice: Getting off the fence,* Buckingham: Open University Press.

Groundwater-Smith, S. & N. Mockler. (2015) 'From data source to co-researchers? Tracing the shift from 'student voice' to student-teacher partnerships' in: *Educational Action Research*, Vol 24 issue 2 (2016), 159-176.

Gunaratnam, Y. (2003) *Researching 'Race' and Ethnicity: Methods, Knowledge and Power,* London: SAGE Publications Ltd.

Hammonds, E.M. (1999) 'Toward a Genealogy of Black Female Sexuality: the problematic of silence' in: J. Price, and M. Schildrick (eds), *Feminist Theory and the Body: A Reader,* Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 93-104.

Harris, A. (2004) *Future Girl: Young Women in the Twenty-First Century,* New York: Routledge.

Hatcher R. and K. Jones (2011) 'Introduction: No country for the young: Education from New Labour to the Coalition' in: R. Hatcher and K. Jones, Eds., *No Country for the Young: Education from New Labour to the Coalition,* London: Tufnell Press, 1-6.

Hebdige, D. (1979) *Subcultures: The Meaning of Style,* London: Methuen.

Hekman, S. (1998) 'Material Bodies' in *Body and Flesh: A Philosophical Reader,* D. Welton (Ed.), Oxford: Blackwell Publishers Ltd, 61-70.

Hesse-Biber, S. (2012) 'Feminist Research: Exploring, Interrogating and Transforming the Interconnections of Epistemology, Methodology and Method' in: S. Hesse-Biber (Ed.) *The Handbook of Feminist Research: Theory and Praxis,* London: Sage Publications Ltd, 2-26. .

Hickey-Moody, A. (2009) *Unimaginable Bodies: Intellectual Disability, Performance and Becomings.* Rotterdam, The Netherlands: Sense Publishers.

Hickey-Moody, A. (2013a) 'Tradition, innovation, Fusion: Local Articulations of Global Scapes of Girl Dance' in: A. Hickey-Moody (author), *Youth, Arts and Education: Ressambling Subjectivity Through Affect.* Abingdon: Routledge, 67-91.

Hickey-Moody, A. (2013b) 'Affect as Method: Feelings, Aesthetics and Affective Pedagogy' in: J. Ringrose and R. Coleman (Eds.), *Deleuze and Research Methodologies,* Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 79-95.

Hill Collins, P. (2000) *Black Feminist Thought (2nd Edition),* Oxon: Routledge.

Hobson, J. (2003) 'The 'Batty' Politic: Toward and Aesthetic of the Black Female Body' in *Hypatia* 18 (4), 88 – 105.

hooks, b. (1989) *Talking Back: thinking feminist, thinking black.* Boston: South End Press.

hooks, b. (1990) *Yearning: race, gender and cultural politics.* Boston: South End Press.

hooks, b. (1992) *Black Looks: Race and Representation.* New York: Routledge.

hooks, b. (1993) *Sisters of the Yam: black women and self recovery,* Boston: South End Press

hooks, b. (1994) *Teaching to Transgress,* London: Routledge.

hooks, b. (1997) 'Selling Hot Pussy: Representations of Black Female Sexuality in the Cultural Marketplace' in: K. Conboy, N. Medina and S. Stanbury (eds), *Writing on the Body: Female Embodiment and Feminist Theory,* New York: Columbia University Press, 113-128.

hooks, b. (2003) *Teaching Community: A Pedagogy of Hope,* New York and London: Routledge.

Hook, D. (2004) 'Racism as Abjection: A Psychoanalytic Conceptualisation for a Post-Apartheid South Africa' in: *South African Journal of Psychology,* 34 (4).

Hunter, M. (2011a) 'Shake it, baby, shake it: Consumption and the new gender relation in hip-hop' in: *Sociological Perspectives,* 54, 15 – 36.

Hunter, M. (2011b) 'Buying Racial Capital: Skin-Bleaching and Cosmetic Surgery in a Globalized World' in: *The Journal of Pan African Studies*, 4 (4), 142 - 164

Izekor, J (2007) 'Challenging the stereotypes: reaching the hard to reach young black men ' in: Sallah, M and Howson, C. (Eds), *Working with Young Black People.* Lyme Regis: Russell House Publishing Ltd 64-74.

Jackson, S. (1997) 'Crossing Borders and Changing Pedagogies: From Giroux and Freire to feminist theories of education' in: *Gender and Education,* 9(4) 457 – 468.

Jagodzinski, J. (2010) *Visual Art and Education in an Era of Designer Capitalism: Deconstructing the Oral Eye* New York: Palgrave Macmillan.

Jarman-Ives, F. (2006) 'Queer(ing) Masculinities in Heterosexist Rap Music' in: S. Whiteley and J.Rycenga (Eds.), *Queering the Popular Pitch,* New York: Routledge, 199-220.

Jayaratne, T.E. and A.J. Stewart (1995) 'Quantitative and Qualitative Methods in the Social Sciences: Feminist Issues and Practical Strategies' in: J. Holland and M. Blair with S. Sheldon (Eds) *Debates and Issues in Feminist Research and Pedagogy,* Clevedon: The Open University, 217-234.

Jones, L. (1994) *Bulletproof Diva: Tales of Race, Sex, and Hair.* New Yorok: Doubleday.

Kelly, P. (2001) 'Youth at Risk: Processes of individualisation and responsibilisation in the risk society', *Discourse: Studies in the Cultural Politics of Education*, (22)1, 23-33.

Kelly, L., L. Regan and S. Burton (1995) 'Defending the Indefensible: Quantitative Methods and Feminist Research' in: J. Holland and M. Blair with S. Sheldon (Eds) *Debates and Issues in Feminist Research and Pedagogy.* Clevedon: The Open University, 235-249.

Kehily, M. J. (2001) 'Issues of Gender and Sexuality in Schools' in: B. Francis and C. Skelton (Eds.) *Investigating Gender: Contemporary Perspectives in Education.* Buckingham: Open University Press, 116-125.

Kumari, A. (2016) 'You and I': Identity and the Performance of Self in Lady Gaga and Beyonce in*: The Journal of Popular Cuture*, Vol 49, No 2.

Lasky, S. (2005) 'A sociocultural approach to understanding teacher identity, agency and professional vulnerability in a context of secondary school reform' in: *Teaching and Teacher Education,* 21, 899-916.

Lather, P. (1986) 'Research as Praxis' in: *Harvard Educational Review,* Vol. 56, No. 3, 257-277.

Lather, P. (1991) *Getting Smart: Feminist Research and Pedagogy With/in the Postmodern,* London and New York: Routledge.

Lather, P. (1995) 'Feminist Perspectives on Doing Empowering Research Methodologies' in: J. Holland et al., (Eds.) *Debates and Issues in Feminist Research and Pedagogy,* Bristol: The Open University, 292-307.

Leathwood, C. and V. Hey (2009) 'Gender/ed discourses and emotional sub-texts: theorizing emotion in UK higher education' in: *Teaching in Higher Education,* 14(4), 429 – 440.

Leeds Craig, M. (2002) *Ain't I a Beauty Queen? Black women, beauty and the politics of race,* Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press.

Lewis, G. (1996) 'Situated Voices: 'Black Women's Experience' and Social Work' in: *Feminist Review,* No. 53, 'Speaking Out: Researching and Representing Women', 24-56.

Lloyd, G. (2005) 'Introduction: Why we need a book about 'problem girls' in: G. Lloyd (ed) *Problem Girls: understanding and supporting troubled and troublesome girls and young women,* Abingdon Oxon: Routledge Falmer, 1-7.

Lorde, A. (1984) *Sister Outsider: Essays and Speeches*. New York: Ten Speed Press.

Lorde, A. (1994) 'Naturally' in: *In Search of Color Everywhere: A Collection of African American Poetry*. Eds. E.E. Miller. New York: Stewart, Tabori & Chang.

Lorde, A. (2009a) 'Sexism: An American Disease in Blackface' in: *I Am Your Sister: Collected and Unpublished Writings of Audre Lorde,* R. Byrd, J. Betsch Cole and B. Guy-Sheftall (Eds.), Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Lorde A. (2009b) 'I Am Your Sister: Black Women Organising Across Sexualities' in: *I Am Your Sister: Collected and Unpublished Writings of Audre Lorde,* R. Byrd, J. Betsch Cole and B. Guy-Sheftall (Eds.), Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Luke, A. (2004) 'Two Takes on the Critical' in: B. Norton and K. Toohey, Eds. *Critical Pedagogies and Language Learning,* New York: Cambridge University Press, 21-29. .

Mac and Ghaill, M. (1988) *Young, Gifted and Black, M*ilton Keynes: Open University Press.

Mac and Ghaill, M. (1994) *The Making of Men: Masculinities, Sexualities and Schooling,* Buckingham: Open University Press.

Mahony, P. (1998) 'Girls will be girls and boys will be first' in: D. Epstein, J. Ellwood, V. Hey, J. maw, Eds. *Failing Boys? Issues in Gender and Achievement.*Buckingham: The Open University Press, 36-55. .

Majors, R. (1998) 'Cool Pose: Black Masculinity and Sports' in: G. Sailes (Ed.) *African Americans in Sport.,*New Jersey: Transaction Publishers, 15-22.

Makkar, J.K. and M.J. Strube (1995) 'Black women's self perceptions of attractiveness following exposure to White versus Black beauty standards: The moderating role of racial identity and self-esteem' in: *Journal of Applied Psychology,* 25, 1547 – 1566.

McInerney, P. (2007) 'From Naive Optimism to Robust Hope: Sustaining a commitment to social justice in schools and teacher education in neoliberal times' in: Asia-Pacific Journal of Teacher Education 35 (3), 257-272

McMillan, U. (2014) 'Nicki-aesthetic: the camp performance of Nicki Minaj' in: *Women and Performance: a journal of feminist theory,* 24(1), 79 – 87.

McRobbie, A. (1994) *Postmodernism and Popular Culture,* East Sussex: Psychology Press.

McRobbie, A. (2009) *The Aftermath of Feminism: Gender, Culture and Social Change,* London: Sage Publications.

McRobbie, A. (19th November 2011), 'Top Girls – (Un) Doing Feminism',http://www.angelamcrobbie.com/2011/11/top-girls-un-doing-feminism/

Mendick, H. and K. Allen (2013) 'Young people's uses of celebrity: class, gender and 'improper' celebrity', in: *Discourse: Studies in the Cultural Politics of Education,* 34(1), 77-93.

Milligan, L. (2016) 'Insider-outsider-inbetweener? Researcher positioning, participative methods and cross-cultural educational research' in: *Compare: A Journal of Comparative and International Education*, 46(2), 235-250.

Mirza, H. S. (1992) *Young, Female and Black,* OXON: Routledge.

Mirza, H.S. (1997) 'Introduction: Mapping a genealogy of Black British feminism' in: H.S. Mirza (Ed.) *Black British Feminism: A Reader,* London: Routlegde, 22-28.

Mirza, H.S. (2006) 'Race', gender and educational desire' in *Race, Ethnicity and Education,* 9(2), 137-158.

Mirza, H.S. (2009) *Race, Gender and Educational Desire: why black women succeed and fail,* London and New York: Routledge.

Mirza, H.S. (2010) 'Plotting a history: Black and postcolonial feminisms in new times' in: H. S. Mirza and C. Joseph (Eds.) *Black and Postcolonial Feminisms.* Oxon: Routledge, 1-10.

Mirza, H.M. (2014) 'Are girls losing out? Educational issues for Muslim, black and minority ethnic migrant girls' in *BERA Respecting Children and Young People Wordpress,* posted June 23rd, 2014. Accessible at: https://berarespectingchildren.wordpress.com/2014/06/23/are-girls-losing-out-educational-issues-for-muslim-black-and-minority-ethnic-migrant-girls/

Mirza, H.S. and D. Reay (2000) 'Spaces and Places of Black Educational Desire: Rethinking Black Supplementary Schools as a New Social Movement' in *Sociology,* 34(3) 521 – 544.

McNay, L. (1992) *Foucault and Feminism,* Cambridge: Polity Press.

Morgan, J. (1999) *When Chickenheads Come Home to Roost: My Life as a Hip Hop Feminist,* New York: Simon and Schuster.

Morley, L. (1998) 'All you need is love: feminist pedagogy for empowerment and emotional labour in the academy' in: *International Journal of Inclusive Education,* 2(1), 15-27.

Morris, J. (1995) 'Personal and Political: a feminist perspective on researching physical disability' in: J. Holland and M. Blair with S. Sheldon (Eds) *Debates and Issues in Feminist Research and Pedagogy.* Clevedon: The Open University, 262 – 272.

Nayak, A. and M.J. Kehily (2008) *Gender, Youth and Culture: Young Masculinities and Femininities,* Basingstoke: Palgrave.

Neal, A.M. and M.L. Wilson (1989) 'The role of skin color and features in the Black community: Implications for Black women and therapy' in: *Clinical Psychology Review,* 9, 323 – 333.

Noble, D. (2000) 'Ragga Music: Dis/respecting black women and dis/reputable sexualities' in: B. Hesse (Ed.) *Un/settled Multiculturalisms: Disaporas, Entanglements, Transcriptions,* London: Zed Books, 148-170.

Norton, B. and K. Toohey (2004) 'Critical Pedagogies and language learning: An introduction' in: B. Norton and K. Toohey, Eds. *Critical Pedagogies and Language Learning,* New York: Cambridge University Press, 1-17.

Oakely, A. (2005) 'Paradigm wars: some thoughts on a personal and public trajectory' in: A. Oakley (Ed.) *The Ann Oakley Reader: Gender, women and social science,* Bristol: The Policy Press, 245-250.

Oesterreich, H. (2010) 'From 'Crisis' to 'Activist': the Everyday Freedom Legacy of Black Feminisms' in: H. S. Mirza and C. Joseph (Eds.) *Black and Postcolonial Feminisms,* Oxon: Routledge, 115-134.

Okazawa-Rey, M., T. Robinson and J. V. Ward (2008) 'Black women and the politics of skin color and hair' in: *Women and Therapy,* 6 (1-2), 89 – 102.

Osler, A. and K.Vincent (2003) *Girls and Exclusion: Rethinking the agenda,* London: Routledge Falmer.

Paechter, C. (1997) *Educating the Other* Paechter, C. (1998) *Educating the Other: gender, power and schooling,*London: Routledge.

Paechter, C. (2000) *Changing School Subjects: power, gender and curriculum,* Buckingham: Open University Press.

Paechter, C. (2003) 'On goodness and utility in educational research' in: P. Sikes, J. Nixon and W. Carr (Eds), *The Moral Foundations of Educational Research: Knowledge, Inquiry and Values,* Maidenhead: Open University Press, 105-117.

Paechter, C. (2007) *Being Boys, Being Girls: Learning Masculinities and Femininitie,.* Berkshire: Open University Press.

Paechter, C. (2013) 'Girls and their bodies: Approaching a more emancipatory physical education' in: *Pedagogy Culture and Society,* 21(2), 261-277.

Paechter, C. & S. Clark (2010) 'Schoolgirls and power/knowledge economies: using knowledge to mobilize social power' in: C. Jackson, C. Paechter and E. Renold, *Girls and Education 3-16: continuing concerns, new agendas,* Berkshire: Open University Press, 117-128.

Pearce, S. (2003) 'Compiling the White Inventory: the practice of whiteness in a British primary school' in: *Cambridge Journal of Education,* 33 (2),   273 – 288.

Pearce, S. (2004) 'The development of one teacher's understanding of practitioner research in a multi-ethnic primary school', *Educational Action Research*, 12(1), 7-18.

Perryman, J. (2009) 'Inspection and the fabrication of professional and performative processes 'in *Journal of Education Policy*, 24 (5), 611-631.

Perrymnan J, S. Ball, M. Maguire, & A. Braun. (2011) 'Life in the Pressure Cooker- School League Tables and English and Mathematics Teachers' Responses to Accountability in a Results Driven Era' in: *British Journal   of Educational Studies,* Vol.59, No 2, 179-195.

Perkins, K.R. (1992) 'The influence of television images on Black females' self-perceptions of physical attractiveness', in: *Journal of Black Psychology*, 22, 453 – 469.

Phoenix, A. (1991) *Young Mothers?* London: Polity Press.

Phoenix, A. (2010) 'De-colonising practices: negotiating narrative from racialised and gendered experiences of education' in: H. S. Mirza and C. Joseph (Eds.) *Black and Postcolonial Feminisms,* Oxon: Routledge, 101-114.

Pomerantz, S. (2008) *Girls, Style, and School Identities: Dressing the Part,* New York: Palgrave Macmillan.

Pomeroy, E. (2000) *Experiencing Exclusion,* Stoke on Trent: Trentham Books Ltd.

Poran, M. (2006) 'The Politics of Protection: Body image, social pressures and the misrepresentation of young black women' in: *Sex Roles,* 55, 739 – 755.

Puwar, N. (2004) 'Space Invaders: Race, Gender and Bodies Out Of Place', London: Bloomsbury.

Poynting, S., Noble, G., & Tabar, P. (2003) 'Protest masculinity and Lebanese youth in Western Sydney : an ethnographic study', in: *Male Trouble: Looking at Australian Masculinities*. North Melbourne: Pluto Press, 132 – 155.

Rabaka, R. (2011) *Hip Hop's Inheritance: From the Harlem Renaissance to the Hip Hop Feminist Movement,* Plymouth: Lexington Books.

Ramji, H. (2009) *Researching Race: Theory, Methods and Analysis.* Maidenhead, Berkshire: Open University Press.

Renold, E. (2018) ''Feel what I feel': making Da(r)ta with teen girls for creative activisms on how sexual violence matters' in: *Journal of Gender Studies* 27(1), 37-55.

Retallack , H , J. Ringrose & E. Lawrence (2016) 'Fuck Your Body Image': Teen Girls' Twitter and Instagram Feminism in and Around School' in: *Learning Bodies*, 85-103.

Reynolds, T. (2010) 'Re-thinking a Black Feminist Standpoint' in: *Ethnic and Racial Studies.* 25 (4), 591 – 606.

Rich, A. (1981) *Compulsory Heterosexuality and Lesbian Experience,* London: Onlywomen Press Ltd.

Richards, S. (2008) *The Way We See It,* Stoke on Trent: Trentham Books Ltd.

Richardson, E. (2013) 'Developing Critical Hip Hop Feminist Literacies: Centrality and Subversion of Sexuality in the Lives of Black Girls' in: *Equity and Excellence in Education*, 46 (3), 327 – 341

Riddell, S. (1989) 'Exploiting the Exploited? The Ethics of Feminist Educational Research' in: R.G. Burgess, *The Ethics of Educational Research,* London: Routledge Falmer, 72-92.

Ringrose, J. (2007) 'Successful girls? Complicating post-feminist, neoliberal discourses of educational achievement and gender equality' in: *Gender and Education,* 19(4), 471 – 489.

Ringrose, J. (2013) *Postfeminist Education? Girls and the Sexual Politics of Schooling,* London New York: Routledge.

Ringrose, J. and L. Harvey. (2015) 'Boobs, back-off, six packs and bits: Mediated body parts, gendered reward, and sexual shame in teens' sexting images', Continuum in: *Journal of Media and Cultural Studies,* 29(2), 205-217.

Robinson, K. (2005) 'Reinforcing hegemonic masculinities through sexual harassment: issues of identity, power and popularity in secondary schools', in: *Gender and Education,* 17(1), 19-37.

Rollock, N. (2014) 'Race, Class and the 'Harmony of Dispositions'' in: *Sociology,* 48(3), 445-451*.*

Rose, N. (1996) 'The death of the social? Re-figuring the territory of government' in: *Economy and Society*, 25(3). 327–356.

Ruddick J. and M. Fielding (2006) 'Student voice and the perils of popularity' in: *Educational Review,* 58(2), 219-231.

Sears, S. (2010) *Imagining Black Womanhood: the Negotiation of Power and Identity in the Girls Empowerment Project,* Albany: State University of New York Press.

Sewell, T. (1997) *Black Masculinities and Schooling: How Black Boys Survive Modern Schooling,* Staffordshire: Trentham Books Ltd.

Shain, F. (2003) *The Schooling and Identity of Asian Girls*, Stoke-on-Trent: Trentham Books.

Shain, F. and D. Gleeson (1999) 'Under new management: changing conceptions of teacher professionalism and policy in the Further Education Sector' in: *Journal of Education Policy,* 14 (4), 445 – 462.

Shaprio, S. (1998) 'Toward transformative teachers: critical and feminist perspectives in dance education' in: S. Shapiro (Ed.) *Dance, Power and Difference: critical and feminist perspectives in dance education,* Champaign, IL: Human Kinetics, 7-21.

Shapiro, S. (1999) *Pedagogy and the Politics of the Body: a critical praxis,* New York: Garland.

Shildrick, T. and R. MacDonald (2006) 'In Defence of Subculture: Young People, Leisure and Social Divisions' in: *Journal of Youth Studies*, 125-140.

Sikes, P., J. Nixon and W. Carr (2003) 'Introduction' to P. Sikes, J. Nixon and W. Carr (Eds), *The Moral Foundations of Educational Research: Knowledge, Inquiry and Values.* Maidenhead: Open University Press, 1-16.

Simmonds, F.N. (1997) 'My Body Myself: How Does a Black Woman Do Sociology?' In: H. Mirza (Ed.) *Black British Feminism*: *A Reader*. London: Routledge, 226–39.

Simons, H. (1989) 'Case Study in Educational Research and Evaluation' in: R.G. Burgess, *The Ethics of Educational Research,* London: Routledge Falmer, 106-129.

Skeggs, B. (1994) 'Refusing to be Civilised: 'Race', Sexuality and Power' in: H. Afshar and M. Maynard (Eds.) *The Dynamics of 'Race' and Gender: Some Feminist Interventions.* London: Taylor and Francis, 106-120.

Skeggs, B. (2002) 'Techniques for Telling the Reflexive Self'. In: T. May (Ed.) *Qualitative Research in Action*, London: Sage, 349-375.

Smith, M. (2014) ' 'Or a Real, Real Bad Lesbian': Nicki Minaj and the acknowledgement of queer desire in hip-hop culture' in: *Popular Music and Society,* 37(3), 360 – 370.

Stanger, C. (2013) 'Bodies in a Frame: Black British, Working Class, Teenage Femininity and the Role of the Dance Class' in: *Sociological Research Online*, 18 (2).

Stanger, C. (2016) ' Let me change it into my own style': Cultural domination and material acts of resistance within an inner city dance class' in: A. Hickey-Moody and T. Page, Eds. *Arts, Pedagogy and Cultural Resistance,* London: Rowman and Littlefield, 113-131.

Stanger, C, (2017) 'The challenges of a white feminist teacher-researcher developing emancipatory research praxis with young black women: A pilot study and a change of research design' in: *SAGE Research Methods Cases.*

Stanley, L. (1990) 'Feminism and the Academic Mode: An editorial introduction' in: L. Stanley (Ed) *Feminist Praxis: Research, Theory and Epistemology in Feminist Sociology,.* London and New York: Routledge, 3-19.

Stanley, L. and S. Wise (1983) *Breaking Out: Feminist Consciousness and Feminist Research.* London: Routledge and Kegan Paul.

Stanley Niaah, S. (2010) *Dancehall: From Slave Ship to Ghetto.* Ottawa: University of Ottawa Press.

Stinson, S. (1998) 'Seeking a feminist pedagogy for children's dance' in: S. Shapiro (Ed.) *Dance, Power and Difference: critical and feminist perspectives in dance education,* Champaign, IL: Human Kinetics.

Tate, S. (2007) 'Black Beauty: Shade, hair and anti-racist aesthetics' in: *Ethnic and Racial Studies,* 30 (2), 300 – 319.

Taylor, C. and C. Robinson (2009) 'Student voice: theorising power and participation' in: *Pedagogy, Culture and Society,* 17(2), 161-175.

te Riele, K. (2006) 'Youth 'At Risk': Further Marginalizing the Marginalized?' in: *Journal of Education Policy* 21(2), 129-45.

Thompson, C. (2009) 'Black women, Beauty and Hair as a Matter of Being' in: *Women's Studies: An inter-disciplinary journal,* 38 (8), 831 – 856.

Thornton Dill, B. (1979) 'The Dialectics of Black Womanhood' in: *Journal of Woman in Culture and Society,* 4(3): 543- 555.

Usher, P. (2000) 'Feminist approaches to a situated ethics', in: H. Simons and R. Usher, Eds, *Situated Ethics in Educational Research,* London: Routledge Falmer, 22-44.

Walkerdine, V., H. Lucey and J. Melody (2001) *Growing Up Girl: Psycho-Social Explorations of Gender and Class.* London: MacMillan Education UK.

Walkerdine, V. (2003) 'Reclassifying Upward Mobility: Femininity and the neo-liberal subject' in: *Gender and Education,* 15(3), 237 – 248.

Wallace, M. (1979) *Black Macho and the Myth of the Superwoman,* London: Verso.

Walter, N. (2010) *Living Dolls: The Return of Sexism,* London: Virago.

Watkins, M. (13th April 2005) 'Pedagogic Affect/Effect: Teaching Writing in the Primary Years of School' presented in *Challenging Pedagogies CKCI Seminar Series,* at University of Technology - Sydney.

Watkins, M (2007) 'Disparate bodies: the role of the teacher in contemporary pedagogic practice' in: *British Journal of Sociology of Education,* 28(6), 767-781.

Watkins, M. (2011) 'Teachers' tears and the affective geography of the classroom' in: *Emotion, Space and Society,* 4: 137-143.

Watkins, M. (2012) *Discipline and Learn: bodies, pedagogy and writing,* Rotterdam: Sense Publications.

Weekes, D. (1997) 'Shades of Blackness: Young Black Female Constructions of Beauty' in: H.S. Mirza (Ed.) *Black British Feminism: A Reader,* London: Routlegde, 113-126.

Weekes, D. (2002) 'Get Your Freak on: How black girls sexualise identity' in: *Sex Education,* 2(3): 251-262.

Weekes, D. (2004) 'Where My Girls' At? Black Girls and the Construction of the Sexual' in: A. Harris (Ed.) *All About the Girl: Culture, Power and Identity.* New York and London: Routledge, 141-154.

Weiler, K. (1995) 'Freire and a Feminist Pedagogy of Difference' in: J. Holland, M. Blair and S. Sheldon, Eds. *Debates and Issues in Feminist Research and Pedagogy.* Avon: The Open University, 23-44.

Weiss, G. (1999) *Body Images: Embodiment as Intercorporeality.* London: Routlegde.

Wetherell, M. (2012) *Affect and Emotion: A New Social Science Understanding,* London: Sage Publications.

Whannel, G. (2002) *Media Sports Stars: Masculinities and Moralities,* London: Routledge.

Wilkins, A. (2012) 'Becoming Black Women: intimate stories and intersectional identities' in: *Social Psychology Quarterly,* 75(2)173-196.

Wilson, M. and K. Russell (1996) *Divided Sisters: Bridging the gap between Black women and White women,* New York: Doubleday.

Wolf, N. (1991) *The Beauty Myth: How Images of Beauty Are Used Against Women,* London: Vintage.

Wright, C. (2005) 'Black femininities go to school: How young black females navigate race and gender' in: G. Lloyd (ed) *Problem Girls: understanding and supporting troubled and troublesome girls and young women,* Abingdon Oxon: Routledge Falmer, 103-113.

Wright, C., D. Weekes and A. McGlaughlin (1999) 'Gender-blind Racism in the Experience of Schooling and Identity Formation' in: *International Journal of Inclusive Education,* 3 (4).

Wright, C., D. Weekes and A. McGlaughlin (2000) *'Race', Class and Gender in Exlcusion from School.* Oxon and New York: Routledge.

Wright, C., N. Darko, P.J. Standen, P.J. Patel (2010) 'Visual Research Methods: Using Cameras to Empower Socially Excluded Black Youth' in: *Socioloy,* 44 (3), 541 – 558.

Wyatt, J. (2008) 'Patricia Hill Collins's Black Sexual Politics and the Genealogy of the Strong Black Woman' in: *Studies in Gender and Sexuality,* 9(1), 52-67.

Youdell D. (2003) 'Identity traps or how black students fail: the interactions between biographical, subcultural and learner identities' in: *British Journal of Sociology of Education,* 24(1), 3-20.

Youdell, D. (2005) 'Sex-gender-sexuality: how sex, gender and sexuality constellations are constituted in secondary schools' in: *Gender and Education,* 17(3), 249-270.

Youdell, D. (2006a) *Impossible Bodies, Impossible Selves: exclusions and student subjectivities,* Dordecht, The Netherlands: Springer.

Youdell, D. (2006b) 'Subjectivation and performative politics – Butler thinking Althusser and Foucault: intelligibiliyu, agency and the raced-nationed-religioned subjects of education' in: *British Journal of Sociology of Education,* 27(4), 511-528.

Youdell, D. (2012) 'Fabricating 'Pacific Islander': pedagogies of expropriation, return and resistance and other lessons from a 'Multicultural Day' ' in: *Race Ethnicity and Education*, 15 (2), 141-155.

Youdell, D. and F. Armstrong (2011) 'A politics beyond subjects: The affective choreographies and smooth spaces of schooling' in: *Emotion, Space and Society,* 4, 144-150.

Yuval-Davis, N. (1994) 'Women, Ethnicity and Empowerment' in: *Feminism and Psychology,* 4 (1), 179 – 197.

Zembylas,M. (2005) 'Discursive practices, genealogies, and emotional rules': A poststructuralist view on emotion and identity in teaching ' in: *Teaching and Teacher Education*, 21, 935-948.

Zembylas, M. (2011) 'Investigating the emotional geographies of exclusion at a multiracial school' in: *Emotion, Space and Society*, 4: 151-159.

Zhang, Y., T. Dixon and K. Conrad (2010) 'Female body image as a function of themes in rap music videos: A content analysis' in: *Sex Roles,* 62, 787 – 797.