SPEAKING TRUTH TO POWER: THE IMPORTANCE OF BLACK AND MINORITY ETHNIC STUDENT TEACHERS' STORIES

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Abstract

This paper explores the impact of institutional racism in initial teacher education (ITE) in the UK and its effect on Black and Asian student teachers. Drawing on critical race theory and the concept of "counter story," the paper presents personal stories of three Black and Asian primary student teachers as empirical evidence of hidden oppressions in ITE. These stories reveal the hidden discrimination that these student teachers face, which can silence and disempower them in their professional practice. The paper argues that it is necessary to embed race equality across the ITE curriculum and create anti-racist cultures to address the indifferent or hostile environment that Black and Asian student teachers encounter. The paper emphasizes the importance of listening to the stories of Black and Asian student teachers to understand their journey through ITE and to act against institutional racism.

INTRODUCTION

Stories from Black and Asian student teachers are personal and deep, and they provide crucial insights into embedded and unseen racism that are part of their existence, as they train to become teachers. Their stories can reveal suffering and a gamut of racial aggressions ranging from unintended and lazy comments to more intentional or overt actions, designed to demean and destabilise (Solórzano & Yosso, 2016). As this paper focuses on the role and usefulness of story, as a research tool to gain real insight into the journey of Black and Asian student teachers in their teacher education, it is expedient to share one here, as an early and powerful illustration. Suzanne, a British- Caribbean woman, is aware that she faces significant and difficult barriers in her teacher education course. She believes that the 'system', as she calls it, has 'failed' because it is stacked against her as a Black person. As a mother of five, her journey to become a primary teacher encompasses considerable complexities but her persistence to succeed, with an eye to future generations, prevails within her: *My struggles have shaped me… We have to be ready and understand that there are going to be barriers… It's going to be hard, but if it means that you're going to make a difference to your child, your sister's child or whoever it is, then it is worth it… It's a battle you know*.

In initial teacher education (ITE) in the UK, such stories are expressions of and responses to pervasive racisms. These are racisms that are often not seen or understood by White tutors or teachers in schools, but adversely affect

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Black and Asian student teachers and deny the idea that their race and ethnicity are important in becoming teachers (Bhopal, 2015; Ladson- Billings, 2016; Warner, 2018). ITE in the UK is often silent on racial inequalities and oppressions, preferring deracialised policy approaches such as the Core Content Framework teachers' standards document and the Ofsted Inspection Framework for all educational establishments (DfE, 2019, 2020a). These conspire to distance, silence and erase race, and leave Black and Asian student teachers with hard choices in reconciling their racial selves with White- centric ITE requirements (Wilkins & Lall, 2011). It is a complex and difficult compliance. Research that listens to and acts upon their stories is about understanding their journey through ITE, as an indifferent (even hostile) environment that does not recognise their views, interpretations and responses (Tolber & Eichelberger, 2016; Warner, 2018).

This paper presents three stories from Black and Asian student teachers to provide a narrow focus on how story reveals understandings and emotions directly from the teller. The stories come from the findings of a PhD study of 32 Black and Asian student teachers in England (Warner, 2018) that drew on critical race theory (CRT). CRT argues that personal stories redirect the gaze of the dominant culture to see hidden discriminations and provide necessary disruption for ITE to listen with intent (Taylor, 2016). This paper argues that it is important to see these personal accounts as empirical documents of hidden oppressions because they are significant pointers towards larger, structural and unacknowledged fissures in ITE. Stories can provide in- depth understandings of the effects of racism on Black and Asian student teachers' identity, confidence and professional practice. They can be seen as voices of actuality and reality because they tell it as it is (Warner, 2018).

LITERATURE REVIEW

Department for Education statistics for Minority Ethnic 2021/22 entry into ITE reports that 21% of postgraduates were from a minority ethnic group, a slight increase from 19% in 2020/21; while 16% entered Early Years ITT, a decrease from 19% in 2021/22 (DfE, 2021). This is higher than the UK Black, Asian and minority ethnic (BAME) population of 14% (DfE, 2021). It is instructive, however, to realise that these seemingly healthy figures at the start of ITE courses are eroded by the end of courses, with higher drop- out rates and realisation of actual teaching jobs with a permanent contract. Latest figures show that 6% of primary teachers and 10% of secondary teachers are Black and Asian (DfE, 2020b), but these figures hide the number who have faced long journeys to permanent contractual employment, remain as supply teachers or are on short- term contracts (Haque & Elliot, 2017).

Failures in race equality issues in ITE adversely affect progression for Black and Asian student teachers, between starting a course, achieving Qualified Teacher Status and gaining a teaching position in the classroom. They are far more likely to drop out at some point in the course (Haque & Elliot, 2017; Lander & Zaheerali, 2016). This racial disparity exists for multiple reasons. Black and Asian student teachers suffer greater financial and social barriers because they are more likely to be on lower incomes, be mature students, women, parents or carers (Connor et al., 2004; Wilkins, 2013). Structural racism, such as poor racial literacy among manager and tutors, curricula lacking anti- racism education and minimal support for students, may mean confidence and progression are not properly addressed (Mirza, 2015). Wilkins (2013) believes there is also marginalisation of race and diversity in official inspection procedures. Ofsted, he maintains, needs to effectively monitor teacher education programmes for race equality issues to replace procedures that do not impact sufficiently on and downgrade its importance.

Difficult experiences encountered by Black and Asian student teachers are manifold and complex. At university there is a lack of knowledge about Black and minority experiences among staff and a lack of role models (Wilkins & Lall, 2011); and in schools they may be stereotyped as 'other' or assigned leadership on cultural, racial and religious activities (Lander & Zaheerali, 2016). On teaching placements, Black and Asian student teachers experienced poorer relationships with class teachers than White students and described how the over- exacting requirements by mentors existed alongside less communication and support (Basit et al., 2006; Tolber &

Eichelberger, 2016). This drained their confidence, confused their understanding of requirements and reduced their capacity to learn how to become a teacher. It also affected their progression on the course and in later applying for teaching posts (Basit et al., 2007). Training at a mainly White university led to further hurdles, where Black and Asian student teachers felt shocked at the lack of racial diversity and less engaged with their heritage (Jessop & Williams, 2009). The 'critical absence' of discussion and engagement with race issues, on their university course, caused them to mute their views and opinions and internalise their feelings of inadequacy and marginalisation (Wilkins & Lall, 2011). Revell and Elton- Chalcraft (2021) use the term 'chilling' to describe how the ignoring of race issues makes Black and Asian students feel left out in the cold. This may lead them to reproduce value systems of the White majority and move away from or disguise their heritage (Bhopal & Rhamie, 2014; Moncrieffe, 2020; Smart et al., 2009).

Experiences and problems such as these are set against deracialised approaches prevalent in ITE curricula, where teacher skills, knowledge and identity are premised on a canon of 'incontestable' White academics (Moncrieffe, 2020). White student teachers can see their trajectory reflected in curricula such as these and accept them as objective and aspirational, while their Black and Asian peers are limited and diminished in their understanding of Black achievement in education, and simultaneously drawn into cultural reproduction of White, hegemonic discourses (Moncrieffe, 2020). Conversely, while Black and Asian student teachers feel they are role models for young people, they feel less equipped to enact this role and carry these complex, racial responsibilities with them as they train (Bhopal, 2015; Bhopal & Rhamie, 2014). The dearth of anti- racist and diverse discourses in ITE curricula creates critical absences of race talk, understood as a process of racial disempowerment and invisibility for Black and Asian students (Gillborn, 2005; Ollson- Rost et al., 2020; Solórzano & Yosso, 2016).

Concomitant with these problems are structural inequalities across higher education that Warmington (2008, p. 145) describes as being 'sinewed' into its fabric. Others note how these inequalities are strengthened, recycled, normalised and achieve hegemonic stability (Alexander & Arday, 2015; Gillborn, 2013; Mirza, 2015). ITE is complicit in this process by raising hidden barriers and framing desirous prototypes of the ideal and expected teacher through its standardising procedures (Bhopal & Maylor, 2014). Furthermore, Maylor (2016) asserts that ITE programmes, such as the narrow- focused and fast- paced Postgraduate Certificate in Education, disallow consideration of different student trajectories or critical race education in their curricula. School- centred ITE approaches can further exacerbate problems by reducing opportunities to educate about race, particularly if the schools are mainly White, leaving the problems to remain unnoticed and unchallenged (Maylor, 2016). Black and Asian student teachers also face racism displayed by children, an issue addressed by some schools and ignored by others. It can prove a difficult and sensitive area because of the children's age and naivety, but pro- White and anti- Black racial bias by children is shown to occur between 3 and 7 years and varies in intensity (Escayg, 2019; Rizzo et al., 2022). Whiteness is equated with higher social status, wealth and power, while Blackness is equated with cruelty, badness and stupidity. Significantly, both non- White and White children show these preferences, whether they live in White or non- White majority countries (Gibson et al., 2015). Therefore, Whiteness as representing desirable status is understood and expressed by young children.

These barriers are not insurmountable but require serious consideration in the profession. Hick et al. (2011) assert that ITE policymakers and ITE senior managers should embed race equality across the curriculum, to create cultures of knowledge, understanding and interconnectedness. Solórzano and Yosso (2016) contend that analyses of race and racism should move from simple Black and White discourses to an examination of multiple voices within a dominant power base, such as ITE. Roberts (2007) recognises 'processes of othering' and argues for deeper examination of perceptions and responses of Black and Asian student teachers. These viewpoints are echoed in Bhopal's (2015) challenge, that Black and Asian student teachers, often seen as 'others' and outsiders, should be fully acknowledged and supported through research, policy and curricula. This integrates their unique

knowledge and experiences, so they become 'insiders' and 'assets'. It moves understanding from blaming individuals' lack of aptitude and capability towards recognising structural and persistent inequalities that create deficit and stereotypes (Alexander & Arday, 2015; Bhopal & Maylor, 2014). The responsibility is shifted towards ITE, as a powerful body, to reverse its limiting and damaging ideologies that hide race and replace them with open approaches, acknowledging difference (Ollson- Rost et al., 2020, 2021). Addressing the multiple challenges of racial inequality in ITE has implications for the teaching workforce, for pupils and for their school communities. Maylor and Ross (2009) remind us that teachers are the one aspect of society with which all children have contact, so they need to represent all of society.

The shifting sands of education policy— where race and diversity are at best subsumed in the continual resurfacing of curriculum basics, such as Literacy and Mathematics, and performative agendas such as teacher accountability (Ball, 2017) and at worst erased within a White, normative and biased curriculum and course— mean the progression and outcomes of Black and Asian student teachers are unstable (Warner, 2018). The stories in this paper are a microcosm of perspectives showing interlocutory insights into and evidence of their realities and how these reflect on the structures of ITE.

METHODOLOGY

CRT frames discussion of the stories in this paper. It offers a race- focused lens to examine the effects of hidden and pervasive racisms present in ITE (Ladson- Billings, 2016; Parker & Roberts, 2011). It has the capacity to reveal and trouble structures that maintain subordination of Black and Asian student teachers and supports racial justice discourses and reforms (Ladson- Billings, 2016; Solórzano & Yosso, 2016). CRT values Black and Asian narratives as lived experiences of racism and understands this empiricism as oppressions. The key tenets of CRT are: that racism is endemic in societies, including racial micro- aggressions; that liberal, colour- blind and neutral ideologies need to be challenged because they do not necessarily negate racism; that race is a social construct, built on hierarchy and power and used to control and disadvantage; that the intersections of race, sexuality and class are celebrated as dynamic and necessary in society; and that Black and Asian peoples have the authority to speak about their experiences in their own way. This final tenet encompasses the concept of 'counter story', which exposes the falsity of hidden and accepted majority discourses (Delgado & Stefancic, 2001; Solórzano & Yosso, 2016).

For Black and Asian student teachers, counter story is a space to understand the complex and multiple challenges that can impact on performance, retention and self- worth (Maylor, 2010; Roberts, 2007). Delgado's (1989) arguments are compelling, suggesting that counter stories have the capacity to 'shatter complacency' and move the teller from hopelessness to self- knowledge, showing that they have relevant contributions to make (Delgado, 1989, p. 2414). He also theorises that the telling of their stories opens dialogue with the White majority, reducing a resistant, siege mentality on their part and inviting a greater receptive, listening response. The counter story then becomes creatively constructive because it reveals how and why racist hierarchies are constructed, lays the foundations for understanding and proposes actions for how they can be dismantled. Criticisms of CRT question whether it presents Black and Asian peoples not as diverse, empowered or multi- dimensional but as victimised and helpless (Duncan, 2005). Counter storytelling, as a narrative device, is also criticised as being highly subjective and fore- fronting the needs of the teller. This may unbalance and narrow the effect of the stories portraying the storyteller as uncritically privileged or the perpetually minoritised other, who is finally given a voice (Maylor, 2009a). Furthermore, analytical rigour, debate and interpretation can be potentially suspended because sympathy with the teller and their issues may be raised above wider and contextual considerations (Delgado & Stefancic, 2001; Zamudio et al., 2011).

In addressing these criticisms, Delgado (1989) recognises the imbalances of counter stories, noting exaggerations and personal emphases and that they can be over- condemnatory of the majority group. He believes that the nature

of stories is as 'primordial meeting grounds of human existence' (p. 2437) where, through dialogue, the resistance of the dominant group can be addressed, the 'otherness' of subordinated groups can be reduced to create new shared experiences and stereotypes can be replaced by realities. It is this ability of the people- centred nature of counter stories that has the capacity to shift the focus from power and dominance, inherent in the majority narrative, to the construction of more pluralistic understandings at an institutional and societal level. Majority discourses are powerful and can appear as immovable weights for those on the outside (Delgado, 1989). In ITE the majority discourses are seen in statutory teacher and curriculum requirements, where the focus on skilled performance and knowledge appears prodigious and unquestioned. The effect of this can render Black and Asian student teachers' stories and experiences as irrelevant, invisible and undesirable (Rollock, 2011). It can distort and silence, even destroy the cultural fabric of these student teachers, so that their beliefs and values are questioned and denounced (Villenhas & Deyhle, 1999).

Methods, ethics and the tricky terrain of working as a Black race researcher

As a Black teacher educator, I have the capacity to understand the participants' positions at a more profound level, because of undertaking a similar journey. However, this insider– outsider position, though acting outwardly as a conduit, is unstable in itself. Corbin Dwyer and Buckle (2009) suggest the 'space between' is a meeting place of paradox and dialectic, unlocking an either/or perspective; and Acker (2000) takes us further into an 'in/outside' space, denoting greater fluidity and instability by the researcher. In responding to this I aimed to exercise greater sensitivity when collecting participants' stories by being as transparent as possible about my position. I shared my own journey, including the tension of being an ITE tutor, while asking them to look critically at ITE, in an endeavour to show culpability (Maylor, 2009a). I was aware of over- assuming racial parity with them. Gunaratnam (2003) suggests that while sharing racial commonalities and being empathetic can draw out deeper responses, this can blind researchers to seeing different and deeper aspects in participants' responses. In addition, Roberts (2013, p. 350) warns that Black researchers should beware of falling into the trap of adopting a 'neat and self- justifying manner in their research'. These attempts to expose the vulnerabilities of my position were a necessary stance in gathering stories of marginalised participants and reflects CRT's understanding of centralising hitherto silenced voices (Delgado & Stefancic, 2001).

Ethical processes

Three stories were chosen from 32 student teachers' stories, collected during PhD research. While their responses were taken from focus groups and individual interviews, they were shaped into single, continuous narratives to convey the sense of the person (Bold, 2012; Elliott, 2005). This was not to simplify them but to provide a keener focus on their points. The orders of events in their transcripts were kept as they were stated; grammatical structures and pauses in interviews that break up the narrative were sometimes removed and at other points left in to show the hesitancy or unsureness of the participants' feelings (Warner, 2018). The participants, on full- time, campus-based courses at four English universities, were at the mid- point of their ITE courses. This avoided the emotions attendant at the start of a new course and the post- reflections at the end of a course. At mid- point they were speaking about live experiences and thoughts. However, this point could also have meant they were more guarded and muted in order to protect their anonymity, position and progression on the course (Jones et al., 1997). This suggests they projected both a stability and an instability in their responses, which embraces the idea of a fragile tension surrounding collection of data on race and ethnicity (Gunaratnam, 2003; Roberts, 2013).

The use of focus groups and individual interviews provided safe, supportive listening spaces so that as minoritised participants, they could experience a sense of nurture and minimal symbolic violation (Barbour & Schostak, 2011). Their tutor's knowledge of their participation was also kept confidential (BERA, 2018). Out of the three chosen stories for this paper, one came from an individual interview and two from focus groups. All were at different universities presenting a broad, yet unified set of responses. Focus groups were chosen as empowering

and democratic because members share status, voice and ownership; to safeguard this, ground rules of respecting one another and confidentiality were shared (Barbour, 2007; Barbour & Schostak, 2011). Individual interviews provided a greater level of protection and allowed space and time for in- depth responses to emerge. This is important in critical race research because it further resists essentialising experiences into stereotypes (Maylor, 2009b; Roberts, 2013). Semi- structured questioning was used because it allowed the emergence of perceptions not envisaged or planned by participants or researchers. It also provided the potential for a more layered storying to occur as new thoughts and memories were given the space to form. Barbour and Schostak (2011) argue for researchers problematising discussions so that power and hegemony are dissipated and replaced with discourses that value difference but are still grounded and real.

Interviews and focus groups were video recorded with consent and transcribed. From their stories, emerging points were coded and developed into themes that reflected commonalities and disparities. The analysis of the three chosen stories shows the nature of narrative subjectivity, in that they are partial pictures of experiences and reflections at a point in their teacher education. Analysis of their stories attempted to avoid reductionism and patronage (Gunaratnam, 2003; Maylor, 2009a). Pillow (2003) argues that this moves research away from hegemonic dominations to being more accountable to participants and Delgado (1989) believes it frames their stories as positions of power.

FINDINGS— THREE STORIES

The focus on the three stories of Tiana, Zainab and Suzanne allows deeper understanding of their experiences. It moves the gaze from a landscape view of a wider dataset into intimate engagement with the idea of the 'counter story' as humanising and nuancing that defies stereotyping of Black and Asian experiences as passive and atrophied (Milner & Howard, 2013). Telling it from their side enables resistance by participants who wish to define, choose, control and limit what is knowable about them and to whom (Gunaratnam, 2003).

Tiana

Tiana identifies as Black- African. At her university, which has a significant Asian- Muslim population of students, she acknowledges that her racial self- awareness has developed. Her story focuses on a particular scenario where her race is being attacked by the mainly Bangladeshi- Muslim children but as a Black student teacher, much more aware of her minoritised position, she faces the challenge of how to respond and its implications for her.

If I'm honest I never thought about race before joining this university. [The course] *made me reflect because I come from a mixed community, Black and English people mainly. For the first time I am more aware of other ethnicities. In a way I've actually felt like an ethnic minority in regard to me being a Black person*.

On placement I have only been in schools where the children were mainly from a Bangladeshi background. It has been challenging for me because I felt very different. One of the children said to me, 'Do you know what we call you? We call you Black Girl. I don't like your black skin. I don't like your black ears and I don't like your black lips.' Then the other children said, 'Yeh, you've got black skin, black lips and a black face.' I paused and thought let me handle this carefully because she was five [years- old]. *I discussed with her about me treating her fairly and asked her if it was nice of her to say those things. I saw her reflect. I knew from that environment, the parents, many of whom wore the hijab, were hostile to the way I looked and dressed and from walking through that area, I was asked by market traders if I wanted to buy a hijab so that I could cover up. The class teacher explained the very narrow environment in which the children live and that they had never seen anyone as black as me. They could not work me out*.

I found a way to embrace being different for the sake of being liked by the parents and the children so I have changed the way I dress, with my arms and legs mainly covered, even though I do not want to change the way I am. If I can adjust I will, so that it is not a barrier. I've also been in schools where the children are Black, White, Hispanic, but I've never had problems there. I've found that it tends to be schools with Asian- Muslim children.

I have read research that found schools ask for supply teachers with English names. This shocked me because I do not want to be discriminated against because of my name. They would not know how good I am. I am aware though that my skin colour has had and does have a big effect on people which I have noticed more from placement. It is making me anxious about where I fit in and possibly that I will not be fully accepted.

Zainab

Zainab is a British- Indian student teacher. Her experiences in a predominantly White school are in contrast with those of Tiana in a predominantly Bangladeshi- Muslim school. She lives in a mainly Asian- Muslim community and attended schools reflecting this culture. She chooses to wear an abaya, the long outer- wear garment, and hijab head covering. She related racialised difficulties from children on her school placement, which she felt were due to her clothing, particularly her hijab.

I was in the sixth form when I realised, I was in a minority ethnic group… we were like a small minority; and then I started noticing that we were different. When I came to uni[versity] *I felt it a bit more. I do not really know what I feel about terms like 'Black and minority ethnic' or 'Asian'. With another Asian person, you can have the same cultural understanding. You bond a lot quicker… it just happens that you do group together. We're old enough not to be shy about that. We know our identity. I know that I'm Asian and most people are White and there are differences. I've learnt that you do gravitate towards the other Asians and the Whites gravitate more to themselves. On a more personal level you have more in common with people who share the same culture.*

[My placement] school was 95% White. When I first went into the class, to be honest, I felt a bit weird because there was one Asian child. One girl said to me 'Do you speak English' and I said to her, 'Well, what language are we speaking now?' and she said, 'I do not know.' They asked me, 'Are you Indian. Are you Pakistani?' One did, like an Indian dance next to me. She did it in a cute way, it wasn't like being mean or anything. It was like you see in Bollywood movies and she did those dance moves, those kinds of things. When somebody said, 'Oh, Miss are you Indian?' I looked over and they were like doing this dance. They asked me as though they were curious. They were not asking me in a rude way. But when we went into assembly, we (there was another Asian student in the school) were stared at, you know, the whole school. Well, I realised that I was being stared at. One kid was like twisting his head round to look at me. They did not look at the other Muslim student in the same way or ask her so many questions. (Zainab pointed out that the other student wore an abaya but not a hijab and wondered if this was the reason for her extra attention from the children.)

All the time I was comparing it to what she was experiencing (her Muslim partner student). If she wasn't there, I would have just thought it's maybe because I'm new. If I was White, I may have thought that it was because I was new. Another thing is I felt quite aware of what the parents might think; I do not know why. Every time we told people that we are going to [name of the school] *every single person responded, 'be careful, it's a racist area'. I felt quite secure within the school, in that the teachers were nice, the children were nice, but I do not know why, as soon as I think about the parents, that they might not be happy… I do not know. All the teachers were White in the school, so maybe the parents are… I do not know… are not familiar with… In the* [children's] *questioning it shows that they have not been around many Asians. I think it's just that. It's not because they are racist. I do not know if their parents might be racist, and they get racist things off their parents.*

You do not know what to expect. I think I was worried about those things. I think I'm strong enough, even if I was compared to other teachers, I would not change. No, it's part of me… I would not really know how to handle a situation if one child said something racist to another child. There was one Asian child in my class, and I did notice that I felt that I should not be too much around him. I do not know why. The teacher might think I'm too… I do not know… I do think I should not be too involved with him. When I was at his table, I did think I should start moving around [to other tables].

Suzanne

Suzanne is of African- Caribbean heritage. She has five children, three of whom are in special schools. Her children's conditions and her struggles to achieve support for them compound her racial struggles. She feels that while education is a path to success, she also experiences it as a 'wall' against which she continually pushes.

My children have been my drive to the pathway I've taken now. Over the years me and my husband have put in that support which has been very difficult and upsetting to go through the various ordeals with them. However, it has made me passionate about this area of teaching and special needs. My struggles have shaped me.

In my children's school there's only one teacher that's from a Black heritage and a few Asian staff. I said to them why is it that my son has a one- to- one who's Black and my other son has a one- to- one who's White? They said the one- to- one who's White has mixed- heritage children, so should understand the culture. But I said if you feel that children from a particular background should have someone working alongside who can understand them, then why do you only have one Black teacher in the school? It does not reflect what you are talking about. The only Black males are the caretaker and a sports coach. It's showing our children that these are things you should aspire to— being a caretaker or maybe a sports coach, who may not have formal qualifications. So, it does not give them any hope.

England is a White country, so we have to fit in wherever we can. You need to be educated because that's the route upwards. We cannot get in unless we educate ourselves and hold ourselves as a community. I know people out there with degrees and Masters [degrees] *and they are not working, they are unemployed. Somewhere along the line the system has obviously failed. It's a battle you know. I'm not clueless; I'm going in there with my eyes open. It's like when we had a lesson* [in the university] *and they showed a video of a woman on a train with her young child and she was shouting out racist comments about Black people, saying 'get back to your own country'. I could not believe how some of the class (White students) made excuses for her, saying she was on drugs or something. She was just being racist, and they could not see it.*

When I went into my placement, I got to the point where I wanted to make myself a badge that says, student teacher on it, because I think as soon as I got there, it was almost like, 'yeh, you're the support person…' They want you to clean up the equipment and to do this and do that, so you're doing all the underdog work. A couple of times I've had to say, 'you know, I'm a student teacher, I'm observing at the moment'. I did not want to come across as rude because obviously you want people to like you in your placement and they are going to give you feedback as well, so they could make life difficult. We have to be ready and understand that there are going to be barriers, as a student teacher, for those from a particular background. It's going to be hard, but if it means that you are going to make a difference to your child, your sister's child or whoever it is, then it is worth it.

At the end, when you qualify, you are then faced with another barrier of trying to get a job and you are competing with other people and you are part of a minority group, it's harder. You have to show that you can do far more; you have to be exceptional. You have to come across that you can do your job 150% more than the other person. I can push myself as far as I can go but there will be limitations in this country. You can get to a point where you are respected and seen as a professional person but it does not mean that you are 'up there'. We're not given the opportunity to get to that level. You can have [Black] *people with equal qualifications and they are not pushed to reach their full potential. That's degrading but they want to keep it a certain way. In some ways there's an order going on. No matter what job you do there is a level you can reach and no higher. If you are lucky to go past a certain stage where no other ethnic person has gone, you are seen as high up in the Black community, but that person is probably doing much more than a White person in the same position.*

DISCUSSION

Within these stories there are interweaving different issues, such as the effects of university, school placement, family and community and wanting to express aspects of their culture but feeling constrained by requirements.

These layers of existence reveal multi- dimensions to their teacher training (Roberts, 2007). This discussion identifies the perspicacity of resistance through speaking out and complex/nuanced identities, and explores Delgado's notion (Delgado, 1989) of a sense of hopelessness leading to an emergence of self- knowledge.

Resistance through speaking out

Their stories transform them from prototypes of Black and Asian people who are succeeding against the odds but who are still viewed as deficit examples of the ideal student teacher because of their colour and culture, towards becoming themselves through their narratives. Story, particularly counter story, Delgado (1989) argues, is a route to embracing the seemingly alien and extraordinary and learning the unity of experiences. Tiana, Zainab and Suzanne resist conferred images of deficit, by speaking out against distaste about their looks, racism from children, seeing distorted images of their heritage and feeling a sense of not fitting in as student teachers. By speaking out they show resistance and refuse to be anomalies or mere statistics of Black and Asian under- achievement subsumed in White- dominated higher education (Alexander & Arday, 2015). They critically engage by expressing how outward experiences of overt racisms and micro- aggressions collide with their inward beings, creating trauma. Inequality in the locus of power becomes more exposed.

The journey through ITE for Black and Asian student teachers is maze- like. The perpetual barriers they face include: 'a lack of personal racial knowledge' as purported by White tutors and teachers; being stereotyped; being seen as 'other' or alien; and experiencing a dearth of role models of Black and Asian tutors, teachers and educational leaders (Lander & Zaheerali, 2016; Tolber & Eichelberger, 2016). The stories of Tiana, Zainab and Suzanne reveal marginalisation because there is minimal knowledge surrounding race by university and school staff, or how to support them (Wilkins & Lall, 2011). Opportunity to tell their stories gives them confidence to unmute, to question White, normalised cultural systems and to draw on their own heritage (Bhopal & Rhamie, 2014). Tiana and Zainab state, 'we know who we are', while Suzanne says, 'I am going in there with my eyes open'. Their speaking up disrupts their hiddenness and the mere expectation to quietly reproduce majority cultural norms. They challenge that race in teacher education is not categorisable but irrepressible (Carter Andrews et al., 2019). Counter story allows the teller to frame and interpret their thoughts in ways that offer themselves, and express them in ways they choose (Parker & Roberts, 2011; Roberts, 2013).

Complex and nuanced identities

The idea of a lack of neatness and instability in race research is shown in the complexities of the identities of the participants. The three stories show how they engage in levels of self- interrogation that reveal their heritage as embodied in becoming a teacher. But they also show fragility and unsureness. Tiana is rendered less confident by the expression of the children's racist comments against her (Gibson et al., 2015). It destabilises her, causing her to reflect that her Blackness may stop her getting a job. Zainab wears an abaya and hijab with conviction, as a sign of her religious and cultural identity, but has a palpable fear when thinking about racist parents' reactions to her. When she experiences torn loyalties, between relating to the only Asian child in her class and not wanting to be seen as showing undue favour, she decides to withdraw from him to appear dispassionate and professional. She seems to refute being a role model for him but through her retelling expresses doubt and regret at her decision that reveals the complex and multi- faceted position Black and Asian student teachers face (Bhopal, 2015; Bhopal & Rhamie, 2014). Suzanne can challenge the lack of Black teachers in her children's school but is cowed by the thought of racial obstacles as she enters the profession (Basit et al., 2007). They move between hope, confidence and confusion, displaying their complex interplay of thinking. Their use of nomenclatures, such as 'Muslim' or 'Black', embraces their growing Black or Asian teacher identity and reflects Delgado's (1989) interpretation of counter story as creating new shared experiences. But their expressions of racial confidence are balanced against words of fear, 'battle', 'worried', 'shocked'. We see this through their unsure and unsteady lens, which veers between quiet acceptance and engagement with clearer considerations of themselves.

Their stories convey perplexity and shock at various micro- aggressions and overt racisms that occur in the professional and respected institutions of university and school premises (Ladson- Billings, 2016), affecting the sense of who they are. Suzanne realises that some of her peers cannot see racism, challenging her expectation that broadmindedness and awareness exist at university (Wilkins & Lall, 2011). School placement was problematic for Zainab who, when confronted with questions and actions by the children about her language, culture and dress, explained them away as not being racist, just 'curious'. When Tiana felt the hostility of parents and the surrounding area of the school, she attributed it to the narrowness of the community. They experience compromised positions as teachers, who have power, and Black and Asian women, with little power. Their expectations and understanding of being a student teacher were disrupted. In response to these disturbing and complex contexts, their stories reveal how counter narrative can replace simplicity and reductionism with nuance and speak to power ideals (Roberts, 2007).

A sense of hopelessness leading to self- knowledge

Their stories convey a reckoning of how they fuse dimensions of their identity, through the events related, with the expectations and rhetoric of ITE (Bhopal, 2015). They demonstrate thinking through and deconstructing their experiences, which portray a growing self- knowledge. The participants bring the understanding of racism as a negative, destructive entity and transpose it onto their situation, conscious that ITE, as a White space, has a detrimental effect on their being and progress (Solórzano & Yosso, 2016). The idea that university and schools are sites of unease for them and arrest their sense of vision and purpose (Bhopal, 2015) is seen in Suzanne's belief that the school system has failed Black children and may fail her as a student teacher. Understanding their experiences as external phenomena, things that happened to them because of their colour and racial heritage, creates questions and challenges for them that take them beyond simple solutions. They realise that they cannot just talk about their cultural heritage to explain their dress, language or expound their history or provide statistics that show Black and Asian people are disadvantaged. They know these will not make others see and understand. Their sense of the ongoing battle and the slipperiness of racism demands other ways of telling and compelling the powerful majority to listen and discuss (Delgado, 1989). Their stories encompass aspects of the wholeness of their being, as told by themselves.

Their feelings of disorientation, shock and disquiet articulated 'uncovering and working through tense entanglements' to find out about the effects of race on them (Gunaratnam, 2003, p. 22). Suzanne's words are profoundly sad and show a gloomy realisation about the profession and her place within it (Jones et al., 1997). She notes the lack of Black teachers, recognising this as rejection of her values and place in the classroom. This is a hard realisation for her. She appears fatigued by the struggles of her journey and almost a readiness to give up (Rollock, 2011). This is also shown in the unravelling of self by Zainab, faced with caricatures and senseless questioning from the children because people like her only exist in Bollywood films, not as teachers in English schools. They feel unaccepted and unsure about their capabilities, are under- confident about projecting their futures and are left wondering how to position themselves (Wilkins & Lall, 2011). They are at an interface between drawing on themselves as raced beings or as student teachers in a new and never- ending unbalanced state (Jessop & Williams, 2009).

These stories demonstrate self- knowledge as a dialogue with White ITE. They portray confusion, wonder and loss of direction at times, but indefatigably they share what it means to be Black and Asian with its intersections of race, class and socioeconomic status, gender, parenting, religion and language, and how these impact on their ITE journey. They understand how their identities are in flux due to the White discourses in which they are required to engage as minoritised 'others' (Maylor, 2010; Roberts, 2007).

CONCLUSION

\Stories of Black and Asian student teachers convey prisms of realities that expose hidden and pervasive racism. The three stories present individual voices and reveal how they meet destabilising challenges in their teacher education journey. In telling their stories, they unveil and transform the thinking and actions of those around them, which involves the telling of unwelcome and uncomfortable truths (Solórzano & Yosso, 2016). These student teachers see ITE as a disconcerting landscape and speak of the way racism has a significant impact on them, from the continuous, daily grind to more overt forms. Their stories, as counter stories, convey their humanity, foreground their voices and act to dispel stereotyping and erasure of Black and Asian student teacher issues in ITE (Merriweather Hunn et al., 2006). The limitations of using three stories magnify them as very personal with their inconsistencies, ambiguities and reliance on human feelings and memory. Furthermore, story as data can be accused of narrowness, single- directional perspectives and the elicitation of over- sympathetic, uncritical responses towards the participants. Yet Delgado (1989) recognises that in stories, we look at the person and they are made human and agentic. These three stories speak into majority ITE discourses to challenge ideas of Black and Asian students as problems to be offered culturally deficit solutions, such as expecting assimilation or downplaying racialised difficulties (Solórzano & Yosso, 2016).

The implications for ITE point to how personal stories can provide frames of reference to generate structural change and raise challenges of how to move from 'tick- box' and procedural approaches to establish listening, continuously monitored and senior management- engaged cultures. Significant research calls for structural responsibility, from policy guidance to institutional and departmental levels, to achieve these aims (Bhopal, 2015; Solórzano & Yosso, 2016; Wilkins & Lall, 2011). These should include support mechanisms for Black, Asian and racially minoritised student teachers, such as safe and nurturing spaces that are student- led and staff- supported; curricula and pedagogy that are regularly scrutinised for embedded racisms and hegemonic assumptions; curricula that include cultural breadth in subjects and areas of pedagogy; and tutors' and partner schools' continuing education and training that promotes Black and Asian student teachers as assets and insiders, not as idiosyncrasies or additional others (Bhopal, 2015). It is about taking seriously, creating and sustaining cultures that replace lack of knowledge, expertise and will with racial equality and literacy within a whole- university approach. This will move towards engaged and sensitive action for change to address racial inequality in ITE.

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CONFLICT OF INTEREST

The author reports no conflict of interest.

DATA AVAILABILITY STATEMENT

The data that support the findings of this study are available at the Lancaster University repository at https://eprints.lancs.ac.uk/id/eprin t/13186 9/. It is also available at the British Library repository: https://ethos.bl.uk/OrderDetai ls.do?uin=uk.bl.ethos.768186

ETHICS APPROVAL STATEMENT

Ethics approval was obtained from the author's former university, the University of Cumbria.

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