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**Teacher Identities and Agency:
A Study of the Use of a Persuasive Life
History Approach in Educational Research
(Volume 1 of 2)**

by

Patrick Roger Roach

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ABBREVIATIONS

BERA	British Educational Research Association
GCSE	General Certificate in Secondary Education
HND	Higher National Diploma
ICT	Information and Communications Technology
IT	Information Technology
ITT	Initial Teacher Training
LEA	Local Education Authority
NASUWT	National Association of Schoolmasters Union of Women Teachers
OFSTED	Office for Standards in Education
PGCE	Post Graduate Certificate in Education
TTA	Teacher Training Agency
UCAS	Universities and Colleges Admissions Service
UCE	University of Central England
UK	United Kingdom

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DECLARATION

I, Patrick Roger Roach, as sole author of this work, declare that this thesis is my own work which has not been used or published before. I confirm that the thesis has not been submitted for a degree at any other university or institution.

ABSTRACT

The use of life history approaches in educational research has become increasingly fashionable. However, interest in exploring teachers' stories has met with resistance, largely, though not exclusively, on the grounds that some educational life history studies have prevented informed third party interrogation and validation. The life historian's interest in democratising the Academy has been thrown back onto the life historian with the charge that the life historian's practice has been undemocratic and unrepresentative. At the same time, the quest for 'giving voice' in educational research has provoked a desire to critique the power of researchers in the production of educational knowledge and to interrogate the practices within the knowledge factory.

This thesis provides a study of re-presentations in educational life history research. It examines critically previous scholarship and identifies a series of principles for the conduct of persuasive educational life history study. In exploring the use of a persuasive educational life history approach, this study applies a conceptualisation of persuasiveness which recognises the personal and political nature of educational research practice. The research takes as its starting point a particular interest in the lives of black men teachers.

In advocating the pursuit of a persuasive life history approach, this thesis is presented in two volumes: volume 1 contains the main substantive thesis; volume 2 contains key materials to complement and underpin the arguments set out in volume 1. The form of re-presentation applied here seeks to enable the reader to evaluate this research story and to participate in an extended dialogue about the reading of the teacher's life story presented here.

The thesis lends credence to the contention that the teacher's professionalism orientation, identity and agency are historically and biographically contingent whilst also reflective of formal and informal processes of professionalisation and institutionalisation. The study suggests that the process of understanding the teacher's professional identity and agency is contingent upon the contexts in which story telling occurs. The study argues that teaching and research practice should provide space for self re-presentation.

CHAPTER 1: RATIONALE

'I remember them because they loved folks, especially women and children. They were caring and giving. They were black men who chose alternative lifestyles, who questioned the *status quo*, who shunned a ready made patriarchal identity and invented themselves.'

(bell hooks, 1992b, p.88)

This thesis is a study of re-presentations: the nature of re-presentations in research; the purpose of research re-presentations; the making of research re-presentations; the ways in which teachers are re-presented in research; the use of research in re-presenting and understanding social realities; the limits to re-presenting social realities faithfully, authentically and convincingly; the consequences of re-presentation. This study provides a story of being black and male in the context of being a teacher (and researcher). It explores how the teacher's identity is articulated and how, through the teacher's agency, the institutional and discursive contexts in teaching are negotiated. However, this study is concerned with more than

merely storying the teacher; for, at the centre of this thesis is the concern with the issue of re-presentation – how teachers are re-presented within scholarly discourses and the function of research as re-presentation. By ‘re-presentation’, I am referring to the ways in which language and discourse constructs social realities. I contend that researchers deal in matters of re-presentation not only as a means to providing gateways to the past but in fashioning present and future knowledge, understanding and action. Indeed, to engage in social research is to engage in action which has social consequences (Sikes, Nixon and Carr, 2003; Foley, 2002; Plummer, 2001; Fine et al., 2000; Lather and Smithies, 1997; Lather, 1991 and 1997; Habermas, 1971). How social realities are depicted is a matter with which researchers must grapple in order for their scholarship to be seen by others to have legitimacy and authority (Lincoln, 2002). Yet, in dealing with re-presentations there is also a need to recognise their partiality; for research re-presentations are contextually contingent and are designed to perform particular functions in relation to the wider social order, whether as a force for change or resistance or reproduction of the status quo (Denzin, 2000; Fine et al., 2000; Tierney, 2000). In order for the social force of research to be realised, research must be capable of speaking to those with power and for those who lay claim to it. Research which persuades others to think differently might also be capable of persuading others

to act differently; and it is here that my interest in the issue of the persuasiveness of educational research is located.

To define what I mean by the notion of 'persuasiveness', I turn to a standard dictionary definition which describes the quality of 'persuasiveness' in terms which relate to 'the act, process, method, art, or power of persuading':

'persuade ... to induce by reasoning, advice, etc; to bring to any particular opinion; to cause to believe; to convince... persuasive... having the power to persuade; influencing the mind or passions...'

(Chambers Dictionary, 1998, pp. 1220-1221)

If we accept this definition as a starting point, we are brought towards a consideration of the practices and qualities of researchers in informing and influencing others. Thus, whilst the practices of researchers might be concerned with the subjects and qualities of their research, researchers must also address the issues of persuasiveness in order that their work contributes to social change.

Thus, as Clough has also remarked:

'For what is it, ultimately, that is persuasive about this or that piece of research? It is... its manifest (and manifestly taken-for-granted) ability to speak to our experience because it shares our objects. For what is research in educational settings *for* if it is not to *understand* and when we understand, we can change...'

(Clough, 2004, p. 373)

In speaking of persuasiveness, I am referring to the ways in which researchers seek to re-present the practice of doing research and the social realities they seek to explore. This has implications for the methodological and writing practices that researchers use to cause readers to believe and be convinced (Garza, 2005, p. 8; Stroobants, 2005, p. 57; Stronach and MacLure, 1997, p. 56). Indeed, this issue in persuasiveness mirrors developments within the field of qualitative research scholarship and the interest in developing new forms of practice which engage readers intellectually, emotionally and physically (Ellis, 2002, p. 403; Reed-Danahay, 2002, p. 421; Plummer, 2001, p. 215; Richardson, 2000, p. 11; Coffey, 1999, pp. 150-152; Charmaz and Mitchell, 1997, pp. 194-197). Thus, whilst some writers have remarked on the need for qualitative research to address rational/intellectual concerns (see Evans, 2002; Tooley, 1998), it is also recognised that persuasiveness is more than mere

technique (Ellis and Bochner, 2000, p. 748; Coffey, 1999, p. 138). In order to influence the mind or passions of the reader, the researcher needs to attend not only to the techniques of research practice, but also the to values expressed by the readers of their work (Lincoln, 2002; Plummer, 2001; Tierney, 2000). Where research is capable of evoking and articulating the past, present and future desires of its readers, it is possible that research might be capable of persuading others to see and act differently. To do this, research needs to be concerned with the mind and the body (Hodkinson, 2005; Richardson, 2000).

In setting out the rationale for this study, I have chosen to tell my story of what brought me to this research, the questions which provoked my thinking about the need for this research and the issues with which I wanted to engage, such that my values are made evident. This chapter sets out the central issues which have informed this study: namely, to develop a persuasive life history approach. The chapter outlines the factors which provoked my interest in framing a persuasive life history approach that addresses the problem of representation in relation to the use of educational life history research to understand teachers' lives and work. The chapter outlines the shape of the thesis as a whole and guides the reader to the key theoretical concerns which inform this study.

Introduction

Goodson (1995, p.95) has argued that 'the way we story our lives (and, therefore, the way we present ourselves for educational study, among other things) is deeply connected to story lines derived from elsewhere'. Individuals' stories – whether as teachers or researchers – are situated within and reflective of the biographical and social contexts in which they are located. The desire to tell and hear stories is informed by the contexts of our upbringing and our everyday lives, the stories told in the media, the stories told as educational 'knowledge', everyday and 'common sense' stories, the religious and mythical stories told to us; these stories tell us what is, how things are, why things came to be, and what the future holds for ourselves and for others. Yet these stories are not 'just so'; for they are reproduced, refuted and given legitimacy within particular historical, social and cultural contexts. Plummer (1995, p.29) has argued that 'stories... are always embedded in the political flow'; thus, how stories are told, their consumption, trustworthiness and impact rests upon the political contexts in which story telling takes place, which research should seek to uncover (West, 1993). This is no more 'true' than for the stories told as research, which may be empowering or repressive in their effect (Denzin, 1989; Riessman, 1993; McLaughlin

and Tierney, 1993). Stories are political and social, providing the means for reproducing, reclaiming or resisting the political flow which informs how we are told (Tierney, 2000; Neumann, 1996). As such, the re-presentational nature of the stories told as research is at issue here; for the crisis of re-presentation (Coffey, 1999; Fine et al., 2000; Tierney, 2002) is reflective of concerns about the purpose of social research, its conduct, the nature and meaning of research stories and the contribution which research stories make within the wider political flow (Sikes, Nixon and Carr, 2003; Plummer, 2001; Denzin, 2000; Tierney, 2000; Stronach and MacLure, 1997). Stories told within a critical theoretical framework might be capable of recovering the individual from the context of repressive discourses and enabling individuals to disrupt the dominant political contexts which have silenced them and, thus, disrupt the political flow by enabling different voices to be heard (Dixson and Rousseau, 2005; Ladson-Billings and Donnor, 2005; Grace et al., 2004; Ladson-Billings, 1999; Tierney, 1993 and 2002; Giroux, 1988). Research stories told from a critical perspective provide a basis for interrogating repressive discourses and casting a spotlight onto how such discourses are formed, how they function and their effects (Tierney, 2000; Stronach and MacLure, 1997). It is by exploring the values and beliefs of researchers that it is possible to understand fully the purpose and meaning of their research re-presentations. This central interest in

the power of research re-presentations and the desire to deconstruct dominant discursive re-presentations lies at the heart of this thesis and is particularly important in the context of exploring the stories told by and about black men (Petersen, 2003; Solórzano and Yosso, 2002).

A Note on Terminology

For the purposes of conceptual clarity, in using the term 'black' to refer to teachers and other persons I am referring to persons who self-define their ethnicity as of a black - 'Caribbean', 'Black British' or 'mixed heritage' - background as suggested by the British population census. However, in recognising the 'problematic necessity' of ethnic identification/categorisation (Bonnett and Carrington, 2000, p.488), this study seeks to explore the ways in which black men teachers construct their own identities (Bulmer, 1996, p.36; Nazroo and Karlsen, 2003, pp. 902-903); as such, it is not my intention to treat ethnic conceptual categories as given or unproblematic, for such categories are 'politically and culturally constructed' (Hall, 1988, p.28) and might give rise to oppressive treatment (Tierney, 2000, p. 547). The use of other ethnic/racial terminology in this thesis reflects the manner in which ethnicity and 'race' have been re-presented in other texts.

Stories About Black Men

Britain has been dubbed the 'white man's country' (Miles and Phizacklea, 1984) despite a historical record which shows that 'there were Africans in Britain before the English came here' (Fryer, 1984, p.1). Racialised social divisions and inequalities can be detected within all spheres of British social, economic and political life and have proved largely intractable (Daniel, 1968; Smith, 1977; Brown, 1984; Skellington, 1992; Modood et al, 1997; Christian, 2005). The 'black presence' has been presented as destabilising, at odds with core British values, and requiring limitation through strict immigration controls (Christian, 2005; Anwar, Roach and Sondhi, 2000; Miles and Phizacklea, 1984; Solomos, 1989). A racialised ideology has storied black Britons as 'aliens', 'interlopers', 'guests', 'immigrants', 'others', 'minorities', and, hence, inferior, outside that which can be described as truly 'British', and as a threat to British society and British values (Gilroy, 1987; Alibhai-Brown, 1999).

Du Bois (1903, p.13) has suggested that 'the problem of the twentieth century is the problem of the color-line, – the relation of the darker to the lighter races of men [*sic*] in Asia and Africa, in America and the islands of the sea'. Black people's experience of racialised

oppression has been seen as reflective of a globalised phenomenon which satisfies the interests of white supremacy (hooks, 1994; Yeboah, 1988; Bhattacharyya, Gabriel and Small, 2002). Black people's experience of social, economic and political disadvantage has been extensively documented, although the cause has sparked some contention (for example, see Foster, 1990b and 1992; Hammersley and Gomm, 1993).

Black men's lives have been subject to negative treatment and representation. Stereotypes abound which depict the black man as a threat to white society - mugger, drug dealer, rapist, murderer, mentally unstable – and therein permit and legitimate certain types of response – including the disproportionate use of school exclusion, police stop and search, criminal conviction, incarceration, forced detentions and state sanctioned execution (Christian, 2005; Marriott, 2000). The historical legacy of structural racism, it has been argued, has created the conditions in which black men have become 'marginalised' (Miller, 1994), 'endangered' (Staples, 1988) and incapable of raising future generations (Wideman, 1994). Black men have been storied as a threat to the stability of (white) society (Christian, 2005, p. 327; hooks, 1992b, p.89); these re-presentations have cast black men as volatile, sexual predators bent on internecine conflict (Miller, 1994; Taylor, 2004; West, 1996; Staples, 1988).

Dominant historical and present day stories have told of the power of 'whiteness' and its ability to silence, tame, mutilate and terminate black men (Carson, 1999; X, 1965; Macpherson of Cluny, 1999; Mercer and Julien, 1988). For example, in Britain and in the United States, the dominant stories about black men re-present them as criminally disposed rather than educationally orientated, as more black men are incarcerated in prisons than enrolled in higher education (Smithers, 2005; American Federation of Teachers, 2004). The dominant re-presentations of black boys are likely to story them as violent and disruptive and meriting disproportionate exclusion from school (Callender, 1997; Blair, 2001; Majors, 2001; Sewell, 2002a). Damaging, destructive and deadly stories about black men have circulated through scholarship, literary fiction, music, cinema and the mass media, and have proclaimed the vulnerability of black men to powerful white interests (hooks, 1992b and 1996; Morrison, 1992; Dyer, 1997; Marriott, 2000). Black men, shackled by these damaging re-presentations which depict them as pathological, inhuman and 'the symbol of Evil' (Fanon, 1952, p.188), have been the subject of a public spectacle for consumption by white (male) society which reproduces the white male as the "real male" (Marriott, 2000, p.xiii). These re-presentations have negated the political and social agency of black men and given rise to repressive effects. However, these damaging re-presentations are not the whole story, for they have

failed to recognise black men's agency in the real world (Campbell, 1985; James, 1980). Indeed, feminist and pro-feminist scholarship has challenged the negative re-presentations of black men by identifying how all men benefit from the practice of patriarchy (Lingard and Douglas, 1999; Digby, 1998; Connell, 1995; Kimmel and Mosmiller, 1992; Brod, 1987; Heath, 1987; Snodgrass, 1977; Friedan, 1963). bell hooks (1992b), in critiquing the dangerous re-presentations of black men, has argued that:

'The portrait of black masculinity that emerges in this work perpetually constructs black men as "failures" who are psychologically "fucked up," dangerous, violent, sex maniacs whose insanity is informed by their inability to fulfill their phallogentric masculine destiny in a racist context. Much of this literature is written by white people, and some of it by a few academic black men. It does not interrogate the conventional construction of patriarchal masculinity or question the extent to which black men have historically internalized this norm. It never assumes the existence of black men whose creative agency has enabled them to subvert norms and develop ways of thinking about masculinity that challenge patriarchy.'

(hooks, 1992b, p.89)

From this perspective, hooks has argued that some black men may be reluctant to critique or challenge the stereotypes and damaging re-presentations of black men given the rewards made to those men who collude with the interests of white patriarchal society (hooks, 1992a, 1992b and 1996). Thus, black men may reproduce or act out these damaging re-presentations in order to ensure that their personal and psychological safety and comfort are not threatened (West, 1996). Indeed, throughout history, where black men have engaged in daring to dream themselves differently, they have followed a dangerous path (Marriott, 2000). Nevertheless, whilst black men's power has been mitigated by the effects of racism, it would be spurious to deny their power and agency in the real world (Clatterbaugh, 1990; Mercer and Julien, 1988). In order to disrupt the history of damaging re-presentations, black men must story themselves (ourselves) in ways which are true to who we are, who we want to be, and by re-constructing ourselves in ways not circumscribed by dominant ideological conventions (Marriott, 2000). It is within this context of re-presenting the black man that my study is situated; for the struggle for re-presentation (West, 1993) is at the heart of the story line which has driven me to undertake this study, the central purpose of which is to open up the re-presentational space, the narrative space accorded to black men in ways which

defeat exoticisation and Othering (Rolling, 2004; MacLure, 2003; Petersen, 2003; Richardson, 2001; Fine et al, 2000; Tierney, 2000; Stronach and MacLure, 1997), whilst recognising our common humanity (Plummer, 2001).

Exploring the Stories of Black Men Teachers

Within an extensive and growing body of life history research scholarship, remarkably few British studies have been undertaken with black teachers (Bariso, 2001). This position is not unique to the British scholarship (Howard-Vital, 1989; Foster, 1993). Moreover, the predominant rationale for undertaking research involving black teachers has been to describe the effects of racism on black teachers' lives (Basit and McNamara, 2004). These 'images of racism' studies (Troyna, 1994a) have, perhaps unintentionally, reproduced a discourse of black teacher 'pathology' (Fanon, 1952) wherein the black teacher has been depicted as lacking the professional status, authority and agency of white teachers (Blair, 1993). A sordid legacy of colonialism (Denzin and Lincoln, 2005, p. 1) has been the conduct of research predicated on a 'trickster' notion of 'giving voice' (Dray, 2003; Lather, 2001) but which has produced repressive forms of black teacher re-presentation in educational life history scholarship. Whilst the re-presentation of black teachers'

agency has been limited to images of 'coping with racism', scholarly developments elsewhere have identified an extended range of issues and dilemmas faced by the generality of (white) teachers during the course of their careers (Woods and Jeffrey, 2002; Sikes, 1997; Nias, 1985; Sikes, Measor and Woods, 1985; Connell, 1985). However, a thin epistemology of racialised re-presentation has been enshrined within the scholarship about black teachers, which has stunted the development of educational theorising and knowledge in relation to all teachers and compromised the democratic basis of scholarship as a whole (Troyna, 1994a). These racialised re-presentations provide a form of 'consumerist commodification' to satisfy hegemonic group interests (McLaren, 1993, p. 217); indeed, these colonising texts have served to reinforce dominant views of the black teacher as 'Other', not one of us, not authentic (Neumann, 1996, p. 177). Moreover, and in the context of the commitment to social research for social justice, these dominant research texts fail to critique underlying power relations and epistemological assumptions whose purpose has been the perpetuation of oppressive commodified knowledges 'and the concomitant exotification of phallogentric black masculinity' (hooks, 1992b, p.102). This has particular implications for the way in which research is and should be conceptualised and the manner in which the lives of black men teachers are and should be storied through research (Sikes, Nixon and Carr, 2003). It has

implications, too, for how researchers reveal themselves in their scholarship and what our research says about who we are (Stroobants, 2005, pp. 55-56; Plummer, 2001, p. 208). Given that research stories are produced in the collaboration between researchers and participants, the researcher's story is implicated and should therefore be told. This auto/biographical perspective (see Stroobants, 2005; Ellis and Bochner, 2000; Reed-Danahay, 1997; Neumann, 1996; Stanley, 1993) recognises that the life history speaks not simply of an individual participant's life, but reveals the interests of the author and her/his power over the participant and reader. This thesis seeks to consider the nature, persuasiveness and impact of research re-presentations of the teacher (and particularly the black male teacher) and to locate the process of knowledge production as far as possible in the presentation of a detailed research story.

Exploring Teachers' Lives

A critique of the re-presentation of black teachers in the scholarship, whilst important, should not overshadow a proper assessment of the work of those scholars who have not sought to observe the position of black teachers when theorising about teachers in general; for a scholarship that omits the black teacher's experience also provides a

form of black teacher re-presentation – albeit in a covert form – whereby the black teacher is neither to be seen nor heard. Indeed, it is my contention that such studies have served a particular purpose; namely, to reproduce ‘whiteness’ as a hegemonic position in relation to teachers and teaching whereby to be seen as a ‘real’ teacher is to be white (Foster, 1993; Weber and Mitchell, 1995; Mitchell and Weber, 1999; Karamcheti, 1995; Bangar and McDermott, 1989).

Increasingly, and particularly since the 1970s, educational life history research has provided a gateway into understanding teachers and teaching (Goodson and Sikes, 2001, p.10). The body of educational life history scholarship has pursued the contention that in order to understand teachers and teaching it is necessary to understand teachers’ personal lives (Goodson, 1981, p.69). However, a criticism of mainstream studies of teachers’ lives (for example, Lortie, 1975; Connell 1985; Sikes, Measor and Woods 1985; Evans, 1998) is that it reveals a tendency towards a ‘deracialised’ epistemology which has served to silence the dynamic of ‘race’ and ethnicity in relation to theorising about teachers (Troyna, 1994a, p.329). Concerns about the deracialised condition of mainstream scholarship have been echoed by a number of scholars (Moore, 2002; Foster, 1993 and 1997; Osler, 1997; Bariso, 2001; Howard-Vital, 1989; Humphrey-Brown, 1997; and others). The mainstream scholarship has

reproduced what Humphrey-Brown (1997) has described as the 'myth of the universal teacher', predicated on a 'cultural plot' to ensure the hegemony of whiteness within the context of racialised social relations within the school, the Academy and the wider society.

Dyer (1997) has expressed this argument in the following terms:

'The invisibility of whiteness as a racial position in white (that is to say dominant) discourse is of a piece with its ubiquity.... In fact for most of the time white people speak about nothing but white people, it's just that we couch it in terms of 'people' in general. Research ... repeatedly shows that in Western representation whites are overwhelmingly and disproportionately predominant, have the central and elaborated roles, and above all are placed as the norm, the ordinary, the standard.'

(Dyer, 1997, p.3)

Indeed, interest in the practice of whiteness has emerged within the context of a postmodernist/poststructuralist assault, the rise of critical (race, feminist and queer) theories, and the 'turn to the person' (Frank, 1995, p. 145) which have challenged the basis, authority and interests of existing knowledge claims. The desire to deconstruct research knowledge and re-presentations has been a central spur to

the work of numerous educational and social researchers (Tierney, 2000; Stronach and MacLure, 1997; MacLure, 2003). Indeed, my own research interest here is grounded, at least in part, within my desire to uncover the operation of racism by shifting the 'critical gaze' towards the practices within the Academy and the interests served by research scholarship (see Tierney, 2000; Stronach and MacLure, 1997; Bagley, 1992). The social research for social justice clarion has resonated with my desire to resist research practices which demonstrate the social vulnerability of black people (Dixson and Rousseau, 2005; Ladson-Billings and Donnor, 2005; Laible, 2000; Fine et al., 2000; Tierney, 2000; Ladson-Billings, 1999; Morrison, 1992; Dyer, 1997; Troyna, 1994a; McLaughlin and Tierney, 1993; Sikes, Nixon and Carr, 2003). I wanted to confront the invisibility of whiteness as a practice within social research, whereby false notions of researcher neutrality have been invoked to deflect attention from the practices of researchers in the field (Stronach and MacLure, 1997, p. 53). I contend that this has undermined the scholarship on teachers' lives, limited the persuasiveness of educational life history research and compromised the democratic basis of this area of academic knowledge. By confronting the power of researchers, by deconstructing research practice, and by opening up the democratic narrative space within which research stories are produced, I aim to

pursue an approach which moves readers to see, think and act differently (Clough, 2004; Tierney, 2000).

Exploring the Use of Educational Life History

I declare myself an enthusiast for educational life history research, given the potential of the life history to provide a basis for thinking critically about the nature of the social structures we inhabit whilst enabling us, through story telling, to re-construct our social realities anew through critical and transgressive discursive practices (Ladson-Billings and Donnor, 2005; Kainan, 2002; Tierney, 2000; Denzin, 2000; Ladson-Billings, 1999; hooks, 1994; Rosenwald and Ochberg, 1992). Life history research provides an opportunity for researchers to get under the skin of their participants, enabling not only the observation of behaviours but the exploration of motivations, feelings, desires and commitments. This is particularly relevant to the study of teacher identity and agency. Plummer (2001, p. 8) has argued that through the study of life stories it is possible to bridge 'the chasm between a *compassion* for the sufferer and a *neutrality* towards him or her; between looking inside, exploring, feeling and imagining, or recording externals, measuring, generalizing and theorizing. The images are starkly opposed: one 'falls in love', the other 'observes love'.' However, I am not arguing that life history is concerned either

with sentimentalising the lives of others or engaging in the work of the psychotherapist (Lather, 2001); instead, in creating the conditions for the individual's agency to find expression, life histories enable us to consider how the individual's identity is informed by and, in turn, informs the wider social/cultural contexts. I consider that the life history provides a basis for the individual's voice to be heard and, so, provides a means of contesting oppressive discursive and structural practices which seek to control or render invisible the desires of individuals (Plummer, 2001; Tierney, 2000). At the same time, I believe that life history research has a fundamental potential in relation to understanding teachers and educational systems (Casey, 1992; Goodson, 2000), whilst enabling us to uncover the practices of educational knowledge production and disrupt their oppressive effects (Stronach and MacLure, 1997).

Despite my commitment, I also recognise that life history and other qualitative approaches have had a difficult ride (LeCompte, 2002; Pring, 2000a and 2000b; Tooley, 1998; Hargreaves, 1996; LeCompte and Goetz, 1982; Evans, 2002). The criticisms levelled against qualitative research practice - its relevance, trustworthiness, neutrality, rigour, reliability, replicability and accessibility - have also obtained a heightened form in the case of gender and 'race' research (Tooley, 1998, p.33). These criticisms have, in turn, been challenged

in terms of their relevance and appropriateness to ethnographic and qualitative research practice (Sparkes, 2000). However, as a result of these criticisms, and given the power relations within the Academy, educational life history scholarship has tended to operate at the margins of educational scholarship, outside the mainstream (Culyba et al., 2004; LeCompte, 2002); this has occurred despite the rapid and dramatic rise in the number of publications now dealing with ethnographic and qualitative research issues (Culyba et al., 2004, p. 365; Plummer, 2001, p. ix; Delamont et al., 2000, p. 224). Indeed, I, too, have not always been satisfied by some life history accounts I have read and those in which I have been involved (see Harris, Roach and Thiara, 2001). Recognising the possibilities of my own scepticism, I considered that a deeply sceptical audience would be unmoved by research which failed to address the criticisms previously identified. I have delved deeply into the literature to identify the reasons for my own scepticism and deduced that my central concern relates to the persuasiveness of educational life history research.

Goodson (2000) has argued that the desire of the educational life historian is to bring the teacher's life out of the shadows by ensuring that the person of the teacher takes centre-stage in the process of educational development. However, a review of the mainstream

educational life history scholarship suggests that black teachers are not only in the shadows, they are rarely in the script (Moore, 2002, p. 634); moreover, it is difficult to rely on the scholarship of 'conviction' researchers whose essentialist approach to storying the lives of black teachers has been predicated upon a parallel thin epistemological approach (Troyna, 1994a). The 'moral purpose and social mission' (Sikes and Goodson, 2003, p. 33) of social research seemed to me to have been defeated by a body of work which displayed the repressive and colonising tendencies of traditional research practice. From a values standpoint, I could not connect emotionally with scholarship which denied my story, or which re-presented me as the Other, the object of racism (Rolling, 2004, p. 9; Fine et al., 2000, p. 117). At the same time, I also found that I could not connect with these studies from a rational/intellectual point of view. I experienced difficulties with the nature of the research practices described in the empirical texts. Researchers did not seem to me to be clear about what they understood by the distinctiveness of the life history approach. Whilst the interest in life history research has become fashionable, it seemed to me to be a label worn casually, without due attention to detail, often masked by a cloak of mystery surrounding its practice, how stories were brought to life, and how theoretical claims related to the individual stories told (Culyba et al., 2004). Whilst many such studies included the use of extended interviews with research

participants, this did not seem to me a sufficient basis for declaring a study to be a 'life history' (Goodson and Sikes, 2001; Dollard, 1935). I wanted to be persuaded by scholarship grounded in the detailed re-telling of the personal stories of teachers (Goodson and Sikes, 2001); a scholarship which recognised the fragmented yet cumulative potential of knowledge and theory (Tooley, 1998); a scholarship which revealed the agency and values of researchers themselves (Sikes, Nixon and Carr, 2003; Plummer, 2001; Tierney, 2000; Charmaz and Mitchell, 1997; Neumann, 1996); a scholarship which allowed others to evaluate researchers' interpretations and theoretical claims regarding the stories of teachers (Riessman, 1993); a scholarship which did not require readers to suspend their disbelief by taking the researcher's re-presentations on trust – for, even in the medium of theatre, audiences do not look on impassively and without judgement; we are moved by those stories which appear to us to be believable (Young, 1996; hooks, 1996). The believability, authenticity and influence of research stories, for me, depended on the purpose of these stories, their scope, how they were told and the contribution they made to wider social justice concerns. This thesis seeks to provide a basis for a persuasive life history scholarship which satisfies my own and others' desires for story telling in educational research and the pursuit of democratic educational

knowledge (LeCompte and Goetz, 1982; Riessman, 1993; Dhunpath, 2000).

The Contribution of This Study

In exploring the identities and agency of black men teachers, this thesis considers the following theoretical issues:

- the relationship between personal biographies and teachers' professionalism orientations, as suggested by: Hoyle, 1974 and 1980; Evans, 1998 and 2001; Sikes, Measor and Woods, 1985, Woods, 1990; hooks, 1994; Freire, 1970; Casey, 1993; Osler, 1997; Callender, 1997;
- the nature of teachers' coping strategies and their relationship to the teacher's identity, as suggested by: Nias, 1985; Carter, 1986; Rakhit, 1999; Carrington et al., 2001; Woods and Jeffrey, 2002;
- the relationship between ethnicity and gender and the expression of teachers' identities and agency, as suggested by: Osler, 1997; Callender, 1997; Pole 1999 and 2001; Lingard and Douglas, 1999; Williams and Villemez, 1993; Kauppinen-Toropainen and Lammi, 1993; Skelton 2001a, 2001b and 2003; Sargent, 2000;

- the relationship between social class and the expression of teacher identities and agency, as suggested by: Frazier, 1957; Lester, 1971; Rex and Tomlinson, 1979; Brown, 1984; Daye, 1994; Miles, 1984; Sivanandan, 1990.

This thesis is concerned with issues of re-presentation and, through this, seeks to provide a contribution to the development of persuasive educational scholarship by:

- disrupting the damaging re-presentations of black people by affording respect to the whole life of the black man teacher. This thesis seeks to explore the identities and agency of black men teachers in a manner which seeks to defeat the dominant, essentialising and pathologising re-presentations of black people as the objects of racism. For the reader, a central question arising from my study is whether it is possible to construct stories of black men teachers which are transgressive, counter-cultural, insurgent whilst also holistic;
- contributing to a more inclusive understanding of teacher professionalism which includes rather than excludes black men teachers' perspectives. This thesis seeks to explore the salience

of existing theories of teacher professionalism as identified in the scholarship;

- developing a persuasive educational life history research approach. This thesis explores the rationale for the conduct of educational life history research. It provides a critique of previous educational life history work and seeks to build on the strengths of the approach by identifying a series of principles for the development of persuasive educational life history scholarship.

The Structure of This Thesis

In chapter 2, I explore what is meant by the life history approach, its strengths and the issues to be considered by the educational life history researcher. I offer a series of principles for the conduct of persuasive life history study which have guided me in the course of my own research. Chapter 3 illustrates the principles for persuasive life history by reference to a number of contributions from the field which, I argue, highlight the importance of a persuasive life history approach and the desirability of telling the whole story of how life stories and research knowledge are made. In chapter 4, I describe the methodological approach I applied in the study of black men

teachers' lives. The chapter sets out how I sought to address the principles for persuasive life history and how I sought to avoid the limitations of previous research. In chapter 5, I set out a story of the theoretical context pertaining to the professional identities and agency of black men teachers. This story of context provides a contextual backdrop to the story of Jay, the central protagonist in my own research, and whose life story is presented in chapter 6. Chapter 7 relates the story of Jay to the story of context presented previously and considers how the discursive arena is negotiated by Jay. Furthermore, the chapter seeks to broaden the basis of the contextual reading of black men teachers' lives, recognising the limitations of the racialised theoretical paradigm which has provided the principal parameter for locating black teachers' identities and agency. I conclude this study in chapter 8 by reviewing my approach and the issues it raises. Given the limitations of space, the Appendix to this thesis has been presented separately; however, the Appendix should be read as an integral part of the thesis and is reflective of my commitment to the construction of persuasive educational life histories.

CHAPTER 2: STORYING TEACHERS' LIVES

This chapter describes the use of life history as a methodological approach in educational research. It considers the contribution of educational life history research and some of the criticisms made of it. The chapter responds to the main critiques made of the use of qualitative methods and argues for the development of a persuasive life history approach which recognises and addresses the interests of research participants and readers and which works for social change. The chapter concludes by proposing that the conduct of life history research should apply certain principles which embrace the needs of narrators, researchers and user constituencies in the democratisation of educational knowledge.

Introduction

Central to this study is a quest to contribute to the development of theory and knowledge about teachers and their work. Why individuals choose teaching, the nature of professional commitment, motivation and agency and what it means to be a teacher are key elements of this study of black men teachers. In order to unpack these aspects of the teacher's identity and agency, it is necessary to

understand the person of the teacher; to get under the skin, as it were (Goodson, 1981, 1992 and 2000; Goodson and Sikes, 2001; Nias, 1989; Osler, 1997; Casey, 1992 and 1993). My epistemological starting-point, therefore, places the life experience of the teacher centre stage, recognising the relationship between the teacher's biography, current work, career and the possibilities for the development of educational systems (Goodson, 1981 and 2000, Casey, 1992). From this starting-point, the use of a life history approach is particularly relevant to the question of exploring individuals' identities (Chaitin, 2004; Dhunpath, 2000).

C. Wright Mills (1959) has argued that the study of society requires the examination of the relationship between personal life experiences and the historical contexts in which lives are lived. Thus, as Sikes and Everington (2004) have argued:

'Who and what we are depends on who and what we have been, on the experiences we have had and on the consequent attitudes and values we hold. Our past contributes to our present and, thereby, to our future. We are historical beings, both in a social sense as well as in a personal sense, and understanding the centrality of this is crucial for any social research.'

(Sikes and Everington, 2004, p.24)

In this sense, teachers' lives may be considered to be constructed at a variety of levels which require historical contextualisation in order to be interpreted and understood (Berger and Luckmann, 1967; Bogdan and Biklen, 1982). However, this is not to contend that human beings are determined by their history; rather, that identity and agency reflect the dialectical 'struggle to create a future out of the past' (Abrams, 1982, p.8). Individuals interpret and give meaning to their social world – its historical and structural constraints and future possibilities – and 'act' in particular and personal ways (Geertz, 1973; Searle, 1983; Gergen and Davis, 1985; Plummer, 2001). This has a particular relevance to the ways in which the lives of individuals (and the practices of researchers) should be re-presented, interpreted and understood. Marx (1869, p.10) has argued that whilst individual agency is historically and structurally situated, individuals, nevertheless, have power 'to make their own history... under conditions given and handed down to them'. This requires an ontological and epistemological approach which avoids the pitfalls of sociological reification, structural determinism and the obscuration of individual agency (Riessman, 1993, p.2). Indeed, the balanced study of personal biographical narratives and contextual conditions should neither 'swamp' the individual within a positivist determinist discourse

nor 'subjectivise' the social within phenomenological and relativist frames of reference (Erben, 1993, p.15).

Studying Teachers' Lives

Interest in personal biographical narratives has developed along a current of philosophical shifts which have characterised changing practice in social research. However, the production of biographical and autobiographical writing in the Western world is far from being a recent or modern day development, dating back to antiquity (Abbs, 1974, p. 17). However, the rise of Western existentialist, postmodernist and poststructuralist thought has challenged the hegemony of discourses of objectivism, scientific rationalism, structural determinism, behaviourism, absolutism, god and a single, universal human truth (Alvesson, 2002; Plummer, 2001; Burr, 1995). In these conditions, interest in the interpretative experiences of individuals within society has become increasingly important, as the scholarly focus has turned to explore how individuals story and give meaning to the social world and their place in it (Stronach and MacLure, 1997; Plummer, 1995 and 2001; Thomas, 1995b; Riessman, 1993; Allport, 1943). Indeed, Richardson (2000, p. 8) has asserted that 'we are fortunate, now, to be working in a postmodernist climate... a time when a multitude of approaches to

knowing and telling exist side by side.' Under these conditions, it is possible to challenge boundaries, to question thinking and practice and to break free from the repressive and colonising discourses of the past (Lather, 1997 and 2001; MacLure, 2003; Petersen, 2003).

The focus on storytelling recognises the centrality of the individual's perspectives in understanding the social context. This reflects the postmodern emphasis on the discursive nature of social reality, recognising that what we interpret as reality is fluid, changeable and contingent. From the perspective of postmodernity, there is a crisis of re-presentation, linked to challenges to the salience of meta-narratives – the dominant stories - and the assertion that knowledge is plural, ideological and embedded within wider social relations of power (Petersen, 2003; Alvesson, 2002). By focusing on the primacy of discourse, it is recognised that how individuals come to speak of themselves – their possibilities for self expression – and how they are heard, is mediated by the social and historical contexts in which they are situated (Denzin, 2005a, p. 21). From this perspective, the idea of an objective and neutral research text, cleansed of authorial contamination, becomes the fiction of traditional social scientific discourse, for the researcher constructs the text and is revealed by the text (Mykhalovskiy, 1996). Hence, knowledge of social reality must be seen, at least in part, as self constructed, not discovered

(Stanley, 1993). From the perspective of postmodernism, it becomes possible and necessary to open up the discourses of research knowledge to explore how knowledge is constructed (Foley, 2002). Indeed, given that language provides a critical site for the construction of social reality, the life historian should seek 'to reflect upon our method and explore new ways of knowing' (Richardson, 2000, p. 8) through the use of alternative forms of language and writing which confront orthodox practices (Richardson, 2000 and 2001).

Lather (1991 and 2001) has argued that postmodernity highlights the uncooperative and elusive nature of knowledge and truth, forcing researchers to rethink the nature and purpose of their work. According to Lather, postmodernity signifies not merely the destabilising of orthodox and insurgent knowledge claims, but also the 'troubling' of prior claims about the ability of researchers to represent others, 'problematizing the researcher as "the one who knows"'; postmodernity identifies 'the limits of our knowing', and invites researchers to engage in 'self-wounding' practices which enable 'the rules by which truth is produced' to be discovered (Lather, 2001, pp. 201-202). The researcher's 'desire to possess, know, and grasp' (Lather, 2001, p. 213) the lives, identities and emotions of others as part of the colonising zeal of modernism, now

gives way to a desire to explore the intersection between researcher and researched, 'situating both researcher and researched as bearers of knowledge' (Lather, 2001, p. 215). The 'decentering' of knowledge work has led to a crisis of faith and confidence regarding the purpose of research and how it should be conducted (Gonick and Hladki, 2005).

Not surprisingly then, the emergence of postmodern and experimental qualitative research approaches has not been without difficulty in gaining a foothold within the Academy (Culyba, 2004; Morse et al., 2002). Denzin and Lincoln (2005) have traced the historical development of eight moments of qualitative research practice which denote the struggle of qualitative research within the Academy. Denzin and Lincoln predict that the next historical moments will be characterised by the fracturing of the Academy, into a world in which 'methodologists will line up on two opposing sides of a great divide' of scientific educational research versus 'the pursuit of a socially and cultural responsive, communitarian, justice-oriented' studies (Lincoln and Denzin, 2005, p. 1123). Though Denzin's and Lincoln's original assessment has sparked contention (see Delamont et al., 2000), it nevertheless serves to highlight the politics of epistemology, methodology and knowledge. Moreover, the emergence of an increasingly ethnically and culturally diverse

Academy has given rise to developments in critical theory which has opened up further debate about whose interests knowledge production within the Academy has served, coupled with a renewed pressure to democratise the Academy (Denzin and Lincoln, 2005; Dixon and Rousseau, 2005; Ladson-Billings and Donnor, 2005; Grace et al., 2004; Plummer, 2001; Fine et al., 2000; Carter, 2000; Ladson-Billings, 1999; Gilroy, 1987 and 2000; Giroux, 1988 and 1992; hooks, 1994; McCarthy and Crichlow, 1993). Paradoxically, some recent developments to critique the Academy from within have informed scholarly movements to unite the opposing factions, to speak together across the paradigmatic divide (Ellis, 2002, p. 404) and to utilise the best of what the mainstream and insurgent paradigms have to offer in the manner of the 'critical organic catalyst' (West, 1993, p. 22). Indeed, this is a central dynamic of this thesis.

It is in this context that educational life history research has sought to provide a gateway into understanding how teaching is given meaning by teachers themselves (Scott, 2000; Goodson and Sikes, 2001; Goodson, 1981). The work of the life historian seeks to situate how knowledge about teachers and teaching is socially constructed, politically framed and historically contingent (Tierney, 2000). This is not to argue the futility of undertaking life history study, but to highlight the need for research to proceed within a framework which

emphasises critical reflexivity (Foley, 2002; Foley and Valenzuela, 2005).

The origins of the life history approach date back over a century, although it 'fell from grace and was largely abandoned by social scientists' in the 1930s (Goodson and Sikes, 2001, p.9). Since the 1970s, there has been a resurgent interest in life history as an approach for the study of social life (Hoyle and John, 1995, pp. 60-61) and it has become increasingly fashionable (MacLure, 1993, p.311). The use of qualitative approaches to the study of teachers' lives and careers is well established (for example, Abbs, 1974; Berk, 1980; Ball and Goodson, 1985; Burgess, 1985; Sikes, Measor and Woods, 1985; Woods, 1986, 1990 and 1993a; Goodson, 1992; Thomas, 1995a; Munro, 1998; Goodson and Sikes, 2001). The canon of ethnographic and life history educational research has sought to 'capture' the experiences of diverse teacher constituencies, including primary teachers (Nias, 1989), women teachers (Munro, 1998; De Lyon and Migniuolo, 1989), lesbian and gay teachers (Grace and Benson, 2000; Rensenbrink, 1996), parents who teach (Sikes, 1997), teachers of particular curriculum subjects (Sikes and Everington, 2004; Armour and Jones, 1998) and to explore the factors motivating career change entrants into teaching (Priyadharshini and Robinson-Pant, 2003). Life history and

biographical research has also sought to explore the particular experiences of minority ethnic group teachers; this scholarship has been especially significant outside the United Kingdom (UK) (Clark and Blythe, 1962; Fields and Fields, 1983; hooks, 1994; Foster, 1989, 1990a, 1991, 1993, 1996, 1997; Peterson, 1990; Casey, 1993; Etter-Lewis, 1993; McElroy-Johnson, 1993; Alfred, 1997; Nee-Benham, 1997; Henry, 1998; Asher, 2001; James, 2002). An emergent seam of educational life history scholarship within the UK has been concerned specifically with the lives and work of minority ethnic group teachers (Osler, 1997; Pole, 1999 and 2001; Rakhit, 1999). At the same time, life history research practice has not merely been concerned with documenting social phenomena, but with developing the potential of story telling as political action in which individuals collaborate to disrupt prevailing oppressive orthodoxies (Ellis, 2002; Plummer, 2001; Fine et al., 2000; Tierney, 2000; Goodson, 2000; McLaughlin and Tierney, 1993; Rosenwald and Ochberg, 1992). In this sense, the life historian has been concerned with the democratisation of educational research and knowledge (Plummer, 2001; Neumann, 1996).

Life history scholarship has sought to challenge ideologies and practices which have served to silence less powerful individuals and groups (Casey, 1992; Goodson, 1981, 1991, 1992, 1995, 2000). A

central *raison d'être* for life historians has been to 'give voice' to less powerful groups, particularly women (Goodson, 2000; Goodson and Sikes, 2001; McLaughlin and Tierney, 1993) and life history's genealogy has tended to focus more on the lives of the relatively 'powerless' than on 'social elites' (Mann, 2003, p. 67). The study of black teachers' lives has evolved from the counter-cultural contributions of black women scholars who have sought to disrupt the hegemony of the white, patriarchal Academy (Osler, 1997; Callender, 1997; Rakhit, 1999; Foster, 1993 and 1996; Etter-Lewis, 1993). Black women scholars have engaged in a struggle to reclaim the lives of women oppressed by sexism and racism and created the conditions for studying the lives of black men (hooks, 1989 and 1994). In this sense, life history research has operated within wider 'social movements' which enable less powerful groups to be seen, heard and able to disrupt the dominant social relations of power within the society (Riessman, 1993; Goodson, 2000; Tierney, 2000; Sikes and Goodson, 2003; Rosenwald and Ochberg, 1992; Foster, 1993, 1996 and 1997; McLaughlin and Tierney, 1993).

What is Life History?

Etter-Lewis (1993, p.xiii) has identified that *oral history* provides a reliable and generally representative account of an individual's past

life as re-constructed through collaboration between the researcher and the narrator. The *life story*, however, requires not merely an understanding of the narrator's past life, but an attempt to understand how past and present lives are connected. The *life history* requires an attempt to 'situate' the narrator's life story within an appraisal of wider social and historical contexts (Goodson and Sikes, 2001, pp. 17-18). Goodson (1992) has suggested the following distinction between the 'life story' and the 'life history':

'The crucial focus for life history work is to locate the teacher's own life story alongside a broader contextual analysis, to tell in Stenhouse's words 'a story of action, within a theory of context'.... The life story is the story we tell about our life'; the life history is a collaborative venture, reviewing a wider range of evidence. The life story teller and another (or others) collaborate in developing this wider account by interviews and discussions and by scrutiny of texts and contexts. The life history is the life story located within its historical context.'

(Goodson, 1992, p.6)

Taking up Goodson's remarks, it is important to view the life history not simply as a device to access the stories about past and present

lives, but to recognise the potential of story telling in constructing social realities through language and discourse (Dhunpath, 2000, p. 545). Tierney (2000, p. 549) has invited life history researchers 'to change the more oppressive aspects of life that silence and marginalize some and privilege others'. This requires that research addresses the problems of oppressive practice within the society as a whole; but, even so, researchers need to begin by confronting their own potential and contribution to defeating or reproducing dominant discursive practices. Thus, Tierney invites researchers to consider the following questions:

'As one undertakes a life history, one needs to consider (a) the purpose of the text (What is the author trying to do and why?), (b) the veracity of the text (How does one deal with the truth of what is presented?), and (c) the author of the text (Who pens a story?)... one needs to consider these issues as one interprets, constructs, and reads texts.'

(Tierney, 2000, p. 550)

The life history should provide a critical reflexive space within which identity creation and social agency can occur (Lincoln, 2002, p. 337; Tierney, 2000, p. 551). Thus, the life historian needs to be reflexive

about the purpose of her/his writing, the nature of the stories told, and what these stories signify about the researcher's self and story. For the 'postmodern condition' (Lyotard, 1984) confirms that story telling is contingent upon the interaction between the researcher and the participant, and in these circumstances, the values and perspectives both of the researcher and the participant need to be located fully within the re-presentation of the life history text (Plummer, 2001, p. 208). In this sense, we might begin to talk of the *new* life history or the *post-life* history or what is described as auto/biography and auto/ethnography (Stanley, 1993; Reed-Danahay, 1997).

Life history research recognises and addresses itself to the fundamental ontological relation of structure and agency (Scott, 2000, p.3; Pring, 2000a, p.69). Indeed, within the structure of the Academy, the life history provides an opportunity for individuals to challenge, negotiate and resist structure and re-inscribe themselves through story telling (MacLure, 2003). Life history is not simply autobiography or anecdote, for it seeks to understand how individual lives shape and are shaped by social context (Scott, 2000, p.95) and contributes towards social movements for social change (Plummer, 2001; Tierney, 2000). The educational life historian seeks to understand teachers and their work by exploring the nature of

'teachers' talk' and the narratives or stories they create (Biklen, 1995, p.143). In speaking of the issue of 'narrativity', I am referring to the issue of re-presentation and the ways in which individuals, through their talk, construct and give meaning to their lives (Hall, 2000b; McLaren, 1993; Syrjälä and Estola, 1999; Kemp, 1989). The life historian recognises how narrative re-presentations reflect, inform and articulate the individual identities and agency of the research participant and the researcher also (Stanley, 1993; Letherby and Ramsay, 1999; Bruner, 1987; Hall, 2000a). Central to the life history approach is the use of a range of techniques, including the use of extended interviews, time lines, documentary sources, diaries, journals, letters and other manuscripts, which may provide 'clues' as to the nature of the individual's identity and agency. As Ricoeur has suggested, the life historian seeks to explore the nature of individual stories by examining discrete life events which have meaning because they provide a window into the structure of the narrative of the life (Wood, 1991). Moreover, the life historian seeks to explore the relationship between the personal and the social and how personal narratives interrelate (Woolf, 1967). For example, Sikes (1997) has identified how teachers' stories of becoming parents relate to the meanings such teachers give to their work and the exercise of their professional agency. Yet, the stories individuals tell are told within specific contexts and are contingent upon these

contexts, such that these stories might be said to re-present the contexts wherein story telling takes place (Hertz, 1996). Thus, the life history needs to be concerned with the stories of the participant and researcher and their relationship together, if it is to be meaningful, credible and ethical, and, in so doing, it must reveal the researcher's presence in relation to story telling as social research (Tierney, 2000; Plummer, 2001; Letherby and Ramsay, 1999; Stanley, 1993).

Contribution of the Life History Approach

The key strengths of the educational life history approach lie in the opportunities to explore detailed biographical narratives, articulate the complex nature of individual and social life, provide for individual reflection and self-expression, access experiences which have traditionally been silenced or rendered invisible, and contribute to the development of balanced theory which is grounded in the personal and professional experiences of teachers themselves (Goodson, 2000). The life history approach recognises the limitations of meta-narratives and 'grand theory' which often overlook the complex, multi-dimensional and subjective nature of personal and social life (MacLure, 2003; Munro, 1998). Where life history studies are undertaken in a grounded, transparent, rigorous, reflexive, comparative and cumulative manner, it is possible to develop a

refined and informed understanding of the nature of social life in all its commonality, complexity, confusion and contradiction (Glaser and Strauss, 1967; Becker, 1970; LeCompte, 1993; Riessman, 1993; Munro, 1998; Goodson and Sikes, 2001). In this sense, the life historian must attend to the need to develop theorising that is richly contextualised by the personal stories of research participants and which attends to the issues of individual and wider contextual interpretations (Sikes, 1997, p.30).

The use of qualitative and life history approaches has distinct advantages:

‘For example, it makes it possible to gather data that are inaccessible in any other way and the data gathered can be very rich and fine-grained. In the hands of a skilled interviewer followed by sensitive and perceptive analysis, they are capable of providing insights and glimpses of reality obtainable in no other ways.’

(Tooley, 1998, pp. 42-43)

Life history may have a transformational potential (Scott, 2000, p.95). The writing of stories from the perspectives of less powerful or oppressed groups may have a profound political impact in disrupting

exclusionary and silencing narratives (Richardson, 2001; Plummer, 2001; Tierney, 2000; Neumann, 1996; Biklen, 1995; hooks, 1994; McLaren, 1993). Where individuals engage in a cross-cultural dialogue, they can begin to expose what Denzin (1991, p.156) has referred to as 'the cultural plot'. The life history approach may be empowering for individual research participants and wider communities (Beattie, 1995, p.146). The life history research approach aims to bring the individual's voice to the centre of educational research and policy narratives (Goodson, 2000, p.19). However, empowerment claims should be pursued cautiously (Troyna, 1994b, p.9; Harvey, 1990, p.20) since, whatever the avowed claims of the researcher, the conduct and presentation of research work may produce unintended 'disempowering' effects (Goodson and Sikes, 2001; Troyna, 1994b; Bhavnani, 1988; Bourne, 1980), especially where the researcher's voice dominates the re-telling of the life history (Denzin, 1989). Conversely, it cannot be assumed that those whose lives are the focus of research may not already 'be quite vocal about their life situations' outside the glare of more powerful groups such as researchers (LeCompte, 1993, p.10). Furthermore, it is necessary to examine closely just how far researchers are really willing to go in bringing about social change (Goodson and Sikes, 2001; Troyna, 1994b; LeCompte, 1993). Nevertheless, by bringing the voices of individual social actors to the centre of the debates

about, or within, social institutions does provide the potential to overcome the limiting, prescriptive and repressive tendencies inherent in other forms of methodological practice (Sikes and Goodson, 2003; Casey, 1992).

Life history research is a reflexive practice which provides opportunities for the personal and professional development of research participants (Sikes and Aspinwall, 1992; Griffiths, 1995; Thomas, 1995b; Goodson and Sikes, 2001), affords greater self-knowledge and self-awareness on the part of the researcher (Rosenthal, 2003; Richardson, 2001; Plummer, 2001; Moustakis, 1990), and has the potential to bring about 'social change and social fellowship' (Tierney, 2000, p. 551). Evans (2002, p.15) has argued that 'the 'reflective', or 'reflexive' approach to undertaking research has the potential to incorporate both attitudinal and functional development'. The pursuit of a reflexive approach at all stages of conceptualisation, design, implementation, interpretation, writing and communication of research may enable researchers to develop and enhance their own practice (Evans, 2002; Luttrell, 2000; Alvesson and Sköldbberg, 2000; Mathner and Doucet, 1997). Reflexivity also affords new insights into the nature of research knowledge, the personal nature of theorising and bridges the divide between the

researcher and the participant (Stanley, 1993; Norum, 2000; Tierney, 2000; Hertz, 1996; Fine, 1994).

Within certain contexts, life history study may contribute to the development of effective and sustainable educational policies and programmes (Butt, et al., 1992, p.51; Casey, 1992, p.188). Goodson (2000, pp. 17-19) has argued that a person-centred approach in educational research and policy making brings 'a valuable range of insights into... policy concerns and directives', provides a mechanism to unlock the person of the teacher as a means of developing her/his professional practice, contributes to the development of 'teacher-centred professional knowledge' and provides 'vital and generative insights into teaching as a gendered profession'. Other writers contend that educational life history research contributes to understanding teaching as a gendered *and* racialised profession (Foster, 1997; Osler, 1997; Rakhit, 1999). Moreover, the life history approach operates as a counter-cultural practice which, it is argued, disrupts the hegemony of exclusionary theories and knowledges by 'giving voice' to individual social actors and, thereby, recognising their agency (Goodson, 2000).

Doing Life History

The nature of human endeavour is intrinsically social; so it is with the stories we share. Stories do not arrive simply from the 'self'; stories find expression through a shared linguistic and cultural repertoire which is historically rooted and contextualised within wider social, economic and political frames (MacLure, 2003; Riessman, 1993). The life historian engages in dialogue with individuals in order to explore the relationship between individual lives and wider contextual conditions (Plummer, 1995, p.167; Thomas, 1995b, p.8). A key concern for the life historian has been to develop a broad contextual framework that enables individuals to tell the stories of their lives in a manner reflective of their life experiences and which also recognises the multiple possibilities for story telling and interpretation (Troyna, 1994a; Goodson and Sikes, 2001). The life historian recognises how her/his own biography, language, experience and values and those of the research participant intersect in the production of the life story (Stanley, 1993, p. 50; Neumann, 1996, p. 177; Hertz, 1996, p. 5; Plummer, 1995, p.21). This makes the life history approach a difficult and complex undertaking, and one which relies upon the pursuit of a reflexive research approach (Riessman, 1993).

The process of story telling in social research is a dance of the desires and interests of the researcher and the research participant in their mutual struggle to construct social reality (Syrjälä and Estola, 1999; Beattie, 1995; LeCompte, 1993; Denzin, 1989). This has implications for the conduct of life history research as a democratic and egalitarian practice wherein the contributions of the researcher and participant need to be acknowledged fully in the re-presentation of the life story (Riessman, 1993; Plummer, 2001; Goldstein, 2002). Rosenthal (1993) has argued that the life history researcher's task is to collaborate with participants in the reconstruction of an overarching life narrative from which will emerge the key thematic elements of the life story. The interpretation of the life story is, thus, an iterative process involving interaction between the researcher and the participant in the field; in this sense, interpretation 'is not a simple action *on* the text but also an act *of* the text' and should be manifest within the individual's life story (Erben, 1993, p.19). The life historian seeks to ensure that the documenting and interpreting of life stories is recognisable to the individuals concerned and that the stories 'produced' are persuasive to the readers of research stories also (Riessman, 1993; Thomas, 1995c). This suggests the need for the life historian to be concerned with the democratic application of her/his research, its design, implementation, presentation and communication. These issues will have implications for my own

research; in particular, the need to make explicit the process of the research and to document the extent of the collaboration that has taken place with the individuals concerned.

In adapting Dollard's (1935) criteria for compiling the life history, Polkinghorne (1995, pp. 16-18) has argued that life stories should be re-presented in ways which emphasise the principles of contextualisation, person-centredness and plausibility. Notwithstanding the dangerous 'stranglehold' which can arise from researchers' pursuit of linear forms of re-presenting individuals' lives (Tierney, 2002, p.396), Polkinghorne's guidelines highlight the need for life stories to be presented in ways which are convincing both to the individual whose life is told and to the reader of the story. The composition of the life history should attend to the whole person of the research participant, recognising her/his individuality in so doing. Whilst story content is important, 'spinning a good yarn' is not sufficient for the purposes of doing educational research. Educational life history must attend to the issue of story telling at other levels; in particular, by demonstrating the authenticity of the stories presented and by demonstrating to the reader the appropriateness of the interpretations attributed to individual stories. Thus, the life history researcher is concerned not merely with telling stories which are 'pleasing' to read in a Shakespearean sense; but to identify, through

their retelling, that stories and their interpretation are well founded and meaningful.

In responding to this imperative, LeCompte and Goetz (1982) have provided a detailed argument on the need for ethnographic researchers to secure the credibility of their findings by assuring the reliability and validity of their work. LeCompte and Goetz highlight the need for researchers to develop strategies to secure external validity by attending to the potential for researcher contamination and informant bias, to mitigate the effects of interpersonal contexts in which data are gathered, to provide clarity in the delineation of analytic constructs, and to afford transparency in reporting procedures. According to LeCompte and Goetz, external validity can be aided through the use of strategies within the research to provide for internal reliability, such as presenting primary data fully, the use of self-validation, participant validation and peer review techniques, and through the use of appropriate arrangements for recording research data. Similarly, Riessman (1993, pp. 65-68) has argued for researchers to open to scrutiny the manner in which research stories are constructed and interpreted by taking account of four axes for the validation of the life story in terms of: (a) the believability of the story as a literary device; (b) the extent to which, through correspondence between the researcher and the participant, the story provides an

authentic re-telling of the life of the individual; (c) the extent to which the research achieves coherence in relation to wider theoretical and analytical questions; and (d) at a pragmatic level, the extent to which the research is useful to other researchers for the purposes of evaluating and developing knowledge claims. The arguments advanced by LeCompte and Goetz (1982) and Riessman (1993) and more recently (see LeCompte 2002; Lincoln, 2002) attest to the need for the validation of life history study as a basis for the democratisation of life history practice. Moreover, the personal nature of life history practice also means that researchers should demonstrate that they have done justice to the stories told in the field; thus, life history researchers should also attend to the struggle for re-presentation (West, 1996; Tierney, 2002), how participants are treated during and at the end of the research process, and whose voice is re-presented in the authoring of the life story. This raises the issue of the relationship between the researcher and the participant and how this should be re-presented in research writing. Given that the research process reflects the desires of researchers, this has implications for the way that research is presented and how stories are told (Plummer, 2001; Richardson, 2000; Tierney, 2000; Stanley, 1993). Thus, the act of doing life history relies not simply on telling the stories of others, but telling one's own story as the researcher

and the story of one's relationship with the participant in producing the text of the life.

Ethical Considerations

Research, including life history research, has the potential to affect profoundly people's lives, and it is arguable that it should do so (Ladson-Billings and Donnor, 2005; Sikes, Nixon and Carr, 2003; Hughes, 2003a; Tierney, 2000 and 2002; Plummer, 2001; Fine et al., 2000; Casey, 1992). The findings of research and their use or misuse can affect dramatically the formulation of policy and practice (Blaxter, 2003; Goodson, 2002). The outcomes of research might lead to critical decisions being made about how economic, political and other resources within the society are allocated (Goodson and Sikes, 2001, p.89). The time and emotional demands on individuals who consent to participate in research can also be considerable (Goodson and Sikes, 2001, p.26; Pole and Morrison, 2003, p.37). Life history research participants and researchers may encounter personally sensitive issues during the course of a study (Goodson and Sikes, 2001, pp. 91-92) and might be invited to engage with issues which are traumatic or which present personal risks and a heightened sense of vulnerability (Bell, 2002, 538; Williams, 2002, pp. 559-560; Ellis and Bochner, 2000, p. 742; Riessman, 1993, p.3). Goodson and

Sikes (2001, p.91) have argued that the life history researcher should attend to the issues of risk and vulnerability in the design and conduct of research, since 'knowledge is power and knowing something about someone puts the researcher into a potentially powerful situation'. Indeed, in order for research to proceed ethically, researchers should make themselves known to participants and readers (Malone, 2003; Norum, 2000; Richardson, 2000; Plummer, 2001; Reed-Danahay, 1997). In this sense, life history researchers must concern themselves with ethical principles which emphasise respect for others (Measor and Sikes, 1992).

The British Educational Research Association (BERA) (1992) has identified a set of ethical guidelines for the conduct of educational research which, during the course of my own research, were subsequently revised (British Educational Research Association, 2004). There is not sufficient space here to critique the BERA guidelines, although I am mindful of the limitations of the original guidelines in the context of undertaking a life history research approach (Goodson and Sikes, 2001, p.92). Nevertheless, the original BERA guidelines conferred a number of rights on research participants (as well as researchers) which are important to the practice of the life historian (British Educational Research Association, 1992, p.2). Moreover, the BERA revised ethical

guidelines confirm that 'all educational research should be conducted within an ethic of respect' (British Educational Research Association, 2004, p.5). The revised guidelines were developed in order 'to take account of changes in the legislation but mainly to recognize the diversity of our members' research and the ethical concerns we all share about the relationships between our work and those who participate in it, those who commission it and those who look to it for new knowledge, understanding and practical support' (British Educational Research Association, 2004, p.2). The BERA revised ethical guidelines make clear that:

'The Association considers that educational researchers should operate within an ethic of respect for any persons involved directly or indirectly in the research they are undertaking, regardless of age, sex, race, religion, political belief and lifestyle or any other significant difference between such persons and the researchers themselves or other participants in the research.'

(British Educational Research Association, 2004, p.6)

Whilst there remain some shortcomings with the revised BERA guidelines (for example, they make no direct reference to sexual orientation, despite this being a specific provision within the British

legislative framework on equal opportunities and non-discrimination), the revised guidelines do make clear that researchers should assume responsibility for the care of their participants by obtaining voluntary consent, applying a non-deceptive approach to research, providing participants with the right to withdraw from research, complying with legal requirements concerning children and vulnerable adults and the appropriate use of incentives to encourage participation. Additionally, researchers should explain clearly to participants any potential detriment that might arise from their participation in the research, recognise participants' entitlements to privacy, confidentiality and anonymity, and responsible disclosure. This signals the need for the life history researcher to pursue a collaborative and non-exploitative approach, which, previous scholarship suggests, cannot be assumed (see Goode, 2002). Whilst some researchers and institutions might seek to hide behind ethical codes (Christians, 2005; Ranney, 2005; Malone, 2003; Fine et al, 2000), this does not deny the need for the design, presentation, interpretation and communication of research to take account of ethical principles and the need to treat participants with dignity and respect within a values framework which privileges democratic and anti-oppressive practice (Goodson and Sikes, 2001, p.90). These ethical concerns are particularly relevant to my own study of black men teachers' lives where concerns about the need for 'respect' are

likely to be paramount, given concerns about the historical misuse of research as a means of legitimising racialised social oppression (Plummer, 2001; Brar, 1992). The conceptualisation, design, framing, implementation, writing and communication of life history scholarship should demonstrate at all stages its manifest concern with an ethic of respect for the participants in the research, whilst not masking the practices of dominant hegemonic interests (Baez, 2002). Indeed, it is also important for researchers to consider the consequences of their work for participants and others; thus, whose interests are served, the effect of the stories told and their capacity to influence others to act in desirable ways should be foundational concerns for the life historian (Sikes, Nixon and Carr, 2003; Fine et al., 2000; Tierney, 2000; Hertz, 1996).

Issues for Life History Research Practice

Thus far, I have outlined the ideological rationale for the use of a life history approach in the study of teachers and teaching. I now want to discuss a number of issues for the life history researcher which will need to be addressed in relation to the conceptualisation, design, implementation, writing and communication of my own study. These issues, identified from various critiques of life history and other qualitative research approaches, have raised concerns as to the

validity, bias/partisan nature, generalisability and truth of these research accounts. There are also concerns as to whose interests are served by research (Fine et al, 2000; Hughes, 2003c). These concerns speak of the 'triple crisis of representation, legitimation, and praxis' (Denzin and Lincoln, 2005, p. 19), a feature of these postmodern times, which directly informs the issue of persuasiveness as it pertains to this study. Where life history seeks to inform and influence others, it will need to attend to these issues.

(i) Validity

Educational life historians have traditionally sought to re-present authentic stories of teachers whilst providing convincing scholarly accounts for wider communication. As such, the researcher must attend to a particular dilemma: namely, to re-present teachers' stories faithfully whilst satisfying the institutional demands relating to the production of scholarly inquiry. There are at least three areas where the life historian should be concerned with the quest for research validity. The first of these concerns the validity of researchers' interpretations and theorising as it relates to individuals' lives.

Researchers are in a powerful position in the context of their research relationships with participants which may lead to a

misguided belief that “we know best” when it comes to the interpretation and construction of the story of an individual’s life; however, as Thomas (1995b, p.8) has argued, life history researchers should ‘resign claims to a privileged interpretation of events’ and engage in a collaborative practice with the participants in their research in a way which respects the rights of research participants to name their own experiences, but recognises also the life text as a co-constructed narrative. As researchers, we might not readily recognise (or be prepared to admit) how our values and practices shape the processes and products of our research (Ellis and Bochner, 2000). Nevertheless, the design, implementation and communication of life history research should seek to avoid brutalising teachers’ life accounts and resist actions which would otherwise undermine a central tenet of the life history approach – namely, to ‘give voice’ (Lincoln, 2002; Lincoln and Guba, 1985; Denzin, 1989; Goodson, 1991; Goldstein, 2002; Francis, 2003; Hughes, 2003b), even if this central purpose is likely to prove more illusory than real (Lather, 2001, pp. 203-204). By being open and transparent in one’s approach to writing the life history, it is possible to convey to the reader in some way how the researcher has contributed to writing the life story (Riessman, 1993).

A second validity concern relates to the politically contested nature of research practice, by which I mean whether researchers and their practices will be regarded as legitimate and credible within and outside the Academy, particularly where such practices do not conform to orthodox conventions (Holt, 2003; LeCompte, 2002). This is a particular issue for qualitative, ethnographic and life history research which, despite its rapid development in recent years, remains largely outside the mainstream discourses (Culyba et al., 2004, p. 365; Plummer, 2001, p. ix).

The lives and stories of teachers exist within wider structural and discursive contexts; so, too, does the process of 'doing' research (MacLure, 2003; Plummer, 2001; Riessman, 1993). Research activity exists within particular historical contexts, structural power relations and discursive positions (Becker, 1967; Plummer, 1995 and 2001; Tierney, 2000; Denzin and Lincoln, 2005). Given this, where the topics chosen for research and the deployment of particular research methods do not equate with the traditions of the Academy, such scholarship might be viewed with suspicion (Marker, 2003; hooks, 1994; Becker, 1970) and might not be considered 'good enough' in scholarly or theoretical terms (Luttrell, 2000). In this sense, that which constitutes knowledge needs to be regarded as contingent upon its historical, cultural and political context (Kuhn, 1962; Becker,

1967). Research which challenges dominant discursive traditions may encounter backlashes, as witnessed by the silencing of counter-hegemonic scholarship (hooks, 1989), or by such researchers 'not receiving deserved recognition or reward' for their work (hooks, 1994, p.71). For example, Rakhit (1999, pp. 121-122) has argued that within the context of racialised social relations, the voices of black scholars tend to be regarded as less 'authoritative' than the voices of white scholars, even when they are exploring the same phenomena. Thus, the issue of validation of research might have a heightened importance where the focus of study, the methods used and the characteristics of the researcher do not equate with the traditions of the Academy. This raises important implications for my own research and conduct as a black male researcher, and how fairly my scholarship will be assessed against the standards of a conservative Academy (see Lincoln, 2005; Keating and Cooper, 2005; Sparkes, 2000). This highlights the desirability of providing for an extended level of transparency and reflexivity in the approach taken by the researcher, the need to utilise modes of writing that are accessible, and the need to ensure that the findings and conclusions from research are grounded fully in the tales from the field (Riessman, 1993; LeCompte and Goetz, 1982; Evans, 2002; Tierney, 2002).

A third validity issue concerns the extent to which life historians are able to demonstrate the trustworthiness of their findings, interpretations and conclusions. The purpose of social science inquiry is the identification of social processes leading to the development of theory which should inform policy and practice (McIntyre, 1997; Evans, 2002). However, much qualitative research in education has been criticised as weak or dismissed on the grounds of its methodological and conceptual rigour, reliability, relevance for policy and practice purposes, and the extent to which it contributes to a cumulative knowledge base (Pring, 2000b and 2000c; Tooley, 1998; Hargreaves, 1996; Hammersley, 1992; LeCompte and Goetz, 1982; Evans, 2002; Mann, 2003). The reasons for such criticisms may be attributable to a failure by some researchers to make explicit the process of story re-construction and interpretation and, thus, to open up their practice to scrutiny by other researchers (Morse et al., 2002; Riessman, 1993; LeCompte and Goetz, 1982). Making transparent how research has been undertaken can help to resist claims of research bias, distortion, sensationalising and falsification (British Educational Research Association, 2004, p.12).

The issue of whether bias free research is possible has been the subject of much debate (Evans, 2002; Ellis and Bochner, 2000;

Hammersley, 2000 and 1992; Hammersley and Gomm, 1993). However, the life historian's concern is not to pursue the mirage of neutrality, but to contribute to the process of deconstructing research scholarship in a way which opens up the text to a scrutiny of how truths are made and how research stories are told (MacLure, 2003; Alvesson, 2002; Foley, 2002; Stronach and MacLure, 1997; Frank, 1995). A particular interest of this thesis is to make the process of story interpretation visible with regard to the practices and values of the researcher. Mathner and Doucet (1997, p.138) have argued that researchers should 'trace and document' the process of story interpretation in a 'concrete and nitty-gritty way' as a means of focusing on the processes which underpin the formulation of the research story and knowledge claims. Additionally, it is also argued that researchers should make explicit their own values and purposes for doing research (Sikes, Nixon and Carr, 2003; Goodson and Sikes, 2001; Plummer, 2001; Stanley, 1993) which has a bearing on the choices they make throughout the research process, from the selection of the research topic, to the identification of participants, the relationships formed with research participants, the coding and interpretation of research 'data', and the writing and communication of the research story (Stroobants, 2005; Letherby and Ramsay, 1999). Thus, the validity issue invites researchers to discuss their work not merely in mechanistic or technical terms – that is to say,

“this is what I did” - but also in ways which recognise how the researcher’s humanity connects with the lives of participants in the process of producing research stories – that is to say, “this is why I did it”. Documenting the researcher’s reflexivity needs to be a critical part of this process, and can be approached in numerous ways, including the inclusion of researcher notes, commentaries, thematic coding schemes and journal entries, through to the inclusion of researcher self-reflexive texts and extended researcher auto/biographies (Stroobants, 2005; Garza, 2005; Foley, 2002; Plummer, 2001; Richardson, 2000; Stanley, 1993).

(ii) Partisanship and bias

The issue of partisanship in qualitative research in education and in gender and race research has been identified as a significant area of concern (Tooley, 1998). By referring to the issue of partisanship, Tooley (1998, p.15) has argued that the focus, conduct and presentation of research may be contaminated by the ‘emotional or political commitments’ of researchers which can serve to ‘cloud their research judgements’. Concerns regarding bias and partisanship in qualitative research are not new and remain the focus of considerable scholarly attention (Evans, 2002; Morse et al., 2002; Hammersley, 2000 and 1992; Pring, 2000a). The debate on whether bias free research can ever emerge has been challenged by

numerous writers who recognise the contextually contingent nature of research practice, knowledge and theorising and the ethical and moral choices that underpin the research process (Sikes, Nixon and Carr, 2003; Ellis and Bochner, 2000; Charmaz and Mitchell, 1997). The researcher-effect can never be removed entirely from the research process, and is deeply implicated in the research stories that follow; indeed, as Norum has advised:

'Researchers are biased. We are biased by our experiences, our education, our knowledge, our own personal dogmas. As researchers, we inevitably commit acts of intervention... Rather than work against us, these biases direct our research. They help us identify stories. They help us choose what to describe... They help us define the beginning and ending points... They help us determine whether we are listening to a story or for a story... They can serve as the "source of fruitful ideas and illuminating perspectives"... Indeed, an author's passions and prejudices not only motivate but accompany his or her writing... Authorship is neither silent nor innocent... Thus, I believe it is both sociological good sense and an ethical obligation to disclose our biases.'

(Norum, 2000, pp. 319-320)

Accepting this, it would be profitable to focus on locating the nature and effects of the researcher's practice in the construction of research stories (Charmaz and Mitchell, 1997; Fine et al., 2000; Rhodes, 2000; Morse et al., 2002). Nevertheless, concerns regarding bias and partisanship in life history research demand consideration; for it would be misguided to abandon the pursuit of truth in our research, particularly if, as life historians, we intend to move our scholarship from the margins to the centre of educational knowledge, where it can begin to exert some influence in disrupting the dominant discursive and structural practices of the day (Fontana and Frey, 2005, p. 720; Stake, 2000, p. 443; Tierney, 1998, p. 66).

Tooley's critique highlights the need for life history researchers to pursue a reflexive approach to their work, which: first, recognises the possibilities for multiple interpretations of research stories (Alvesson and Sköldbberg, 2000, pp. 5-6; Riessman, 1993, p.14); second, subjects the practice of research to a constant process of critical evaluation leading to improvement (Evans, 2002, p.19); and, third, maintains an awareness of the potential for biases to occur at each stage of the research, and a commitment to taking the necessary steps to highlight, if not mitigate, these (Tooley, 1998, p.15).

The need for the life historian to attend to issues of bias and partisanship is a particular concern, given that life historians have traditionally sought to privilege the voices of silenced and marginalised groups (Plummer, 2001, p. 96); yet, in the context of postmodernity, such advocacy is unlikely to be viewed without suspicion and scepticism as to the motives of researchers and whose voice is heard (Alvesson, 2002). By documenting what has been done and why, the life historian might be better able to persuade readers with their texts (Plummer, 2001; Tierney, 2000; Charmaz and Mitchell, 1997; Riessman, 1993; LeCompte and Goetz, 1982). This signals the need for research texts to demonstrate to the reader how the researcher's power to dominate the stories of participants has been resisted or mitigated. In considering the issue of the researcher's power to influence research outcomes, Evans (2002, p. 121) has identified the problem of 'suggestibility'. The problem of suggestibility might manifest itself by dint of how a research project is named or how research questions are framed, which could privilege one issue or dimension of the research over and above other facets of the study (see also Hammersley and Atkinson, 1995, p.265). This might give rise to mono-dimensional readings of life stories which belie the complexities of individual lives. By pursuing a reflexive approach, the life history researcher should maintain a critical stance in framing the research project and research questions in such a way

as to open up the opportunities for the participant's story to emerge fully and, thus, for multi-dimensional readings of lives to be made possible (Evans, 2002). Evans does not argue that suggestibility bias can be eliminated, but that researchers should attend to its possibilities by pursuing a critically reflexive approach. Indeed, where problems of suggestibility bias do occur – and they will inevitably occur if researchers care about what they are doing - these should be openly considered in the text (Norum, 2000). By making herself/himself vulnerable in the writing of research, the researcher has the opportunity to convince others of the truth of the research story and, thereby, negotiate any potential suspicion that could otherwise arise (Richardson, 2000; Tierney, 2000; Hertz, 1996).

The choice of approaches for collecting and re-presenting stories is a complex action which may be privileging or silencing (Bloom and Munro, 1995). Moreover, the social, political and ideological contexts in which life history research takes place affects the language, content, tenor and wholeness of the stories told (Goodson, 1995, p.95; Sikes, 1997, p.26; Goodson and Sikes, 2001, p.42). Whilst the researcher should be concerned with collecting, recording and re-presenting stories as faithfully as possible, the act of story telling is not a straightforward endeavour. A range of factors can affect the process of communication between stories as they are told and how

stories are heard and received (Youngblood Jackson, 2003; Plummer, 1995); key to this is the issue of language (MacLure, 2003; Alvesson, 2002). Riessman (1993, p.4) has argued that language is often, and inappropriately, viewed by social researchers 'as a transparent medium, unambiguously reflecting stable, singular meanings'. However, language – the words we use, how words are used and other levels of verbal and non-verbal communication – must be problematised if researchers are to understand the stories individuals tell of their experience without privileging the voice of the researcher over that of the participant (Riessman, 1993, p.6).

The 'literary turn' within the social sciences (Lather, 2001, p. 201) has led to a recognition of the centrality of language and discourse in the construction of social reality (MacLure, 2003; Youngblood Jackson, 2003; Alvesson, 2002; Burr, 1995). Recognising that discursive practices are the product of the social relations of power enables us to understand that the stories told in research are not merely a re-presentation of the individual's life, but that our stories are the product of the contexts in which they were told (MacLure, 2003; Plummer, 2001; Bakhtin, 1981; Casey, 1993; Etter-Lewis, 1993; Sikes, 1997). From this perspective, language and discourse need to be deconstructed (Derrida, 1981; Wigley, 1993; Stronach and MacLure, 1997; MacLure, 2003).

Researchers should not assume that they are 'talking the same language' as their participants (Evans, 2002, p.56); this has implications for the interpretation and writing of research stories and the approaches used to validate all forms of research work, not merely the qualitative. The question of whether it is possible to arrive at an authentic re-presentation of a participant's story during the course of doing research is at issue (Cook and Campbell, 1979). The researcher's preferred language, values and experience will inform and influence the life stories heard and how they are interpreted and re-presented. Indeed, as in the case of oppressed peoples forced to use their oppressor's language to tell of their experience and suffering (see Moody, 1990; Rich, 1968; Douglass, 1845), research participants might find also that they need to draw upon particular forms of language and discourse in order to be heard. This suggests that, through a reflexive practice, researchers should attend to their own language and how it reflects the practices of the self in the process of seeking to understand life stories (Plummer, 2001; Norum, 2000; Tierney, 2000; Richardson, 2000; Sparkes, 2000; Charmaz and Mitchell, 1997; Reed-Danahay, 1997; Stanley, 1993).

Problems of miscommunication and misrepresentation occur where participants and researchers fail to understand each other properly.

Evans (2002, p. 69) has suggested that, through a process of 'construct validation', researchers should attempt to authenticate, calibrate and corroborate the language, key words and concepts they and their participants use in order to avoid problems of miscommunication arising. Similarly, Woods (1996, p.40) has identified the importance of 'respondent validation' as a means of enabling participants to review and confirm the appropriateness of the researcher's interpretations and re-presentations. For the purposes of life history study, I interpret Woods' recommendation as constituting a desire that researchers should seek to achieve 'participant validation', recognising the democratic, collaborative and egalitarian basis of the life history approach (Goodson and Sikes, 2001). Nevertheless, the use of validation procedures is relevant to the process of storytelling in research, where the desire is to represent others in ways that are meaningful, sensitive and empowering to them (Beattie, 1995; LeCompte, 1993; Wittgenstein, 1953; West, 1993; Tierney, 2002). However, the existence of validation procedures should not be regarded as foolproof, nor do they absolve researchers from responsibility for the research stories they write. As researchers, and from the outset, during and after we complete our research, we imbue our work with our own *a priori* assumptions, beliefs, interests and concerns which both struggle and dance with the assumptions, beliefs, interests and concerns of

participants, such that we can only accept that the individual's life story is also our story, which will need to be reflected in how we seek to write about our selves, our work and the lives of others (Ellis and Bochner, 2000; Richardson, 2000; Stanley, 1993). The stories of the narrator and the life historian need to be told to the reader if the story of the life is to be credible and believable (Charmaz and Mitchell, 1997; LeCompte and Goetz, 1982; Riessman, 1993; Mathner and Doucet, 1997). This signals the importance of ethics, collaboration, reflexivity, validation and contextualisation in relation to the conduct of life history research practice.

(iii) Generalisability

A life history relies upon the detailed exploration of life stories. It applies a 'data' thick and 'data' rich approach, which limits the possibilities for any single study to include large and statistically representative samples of participants. This may be said to restrict the contribution of any single life history study to the development of theory or knowledge, particularly where sample size is considered to be an acid test of research validity. However, in the quest for valid life history research, there is a very real danger of falling into 'the positivist trap' (Scott, 2000, p.73) of being more concerned with the number of participants involved than with the quality of the life history itself. In matters of sample size 'so much depends on the aims of the

research, on the topic, and on what is actually possible' (Goodson and Sikes, 2001, p.23). However, the concerns about generalisability seem most intense when the sample size is small. Indeed, where research focuses on a single person, the reader is confronted by a fellow human being who, in turn, confronts the reader's humanity and this can be an uncomfortable place to be. Thus, as Muncey (2005, p. 10) has suggested, 'the closer people come to the objects or subjects of research, the more worried they appear to be about believing their story'.

Whilst a single life story makes generalisation across a social group difficult, this does not undermine the value of studying individual lives (see Asher, 2001; Nee-Benham, 1997; McElroy-Johnson, 1993), especially where the researcher is able to demonstrate the richness of the 'data' and that an adequate level of saturation has been achieved (Sikes, 1997, p.30). Indeed, the life history is concerned with developing theory that is grounded (contextualised) in the personal life stories emanating from the field (Glaser and Strauss, 1967). A comparative approach across different lives can be helpful in the quest for persuasiveness, and where the findings of the study are able to demonstrate a degree of replication (Bertaux, 1981, p.187). However, given that the life history study has much to do with the lives of individuals which are, by their very nature, relatively

unique, generalisation should, at the very least, proceed cautiously (Connolly, 1998; Keith, 1993). The 'small is beautiful' approach (Sanders and Liptrot, 1994) of the life history does mean that individual stories can be told in a detailed way whilst also opening up the research process to detailed scrutiny, and for this reason it merits attention.

In the context of research which seeks to contribute to the development of theory, the single case study approach provides opportunities to deconstruct theory and knowledge and to open up theorising to focus on personal agency within the context of wider discursive and structural relations (Youngblood Jackson, 2003; Pierce, 2003; Silva, 2003). Indeed, the single case approach would seem to be particularly apposite to a research approach situated within postmodern concerns about the reliability of grand narratives, the challenge to meta-theory, the emphasis on fragmented identities, the relationship between knowledge and power and the emphasis on local, individual and multiple perspectives. The emphasis on narrative depth and the opportunities to broaden narrative scope enables the single case study to disrupt the essentialising tendencies of the Academy (Muncey, 2005; Garza, 2005; Linde, 1993). The single case approach provides opportunities to explore how meaning

is made in the context of interactions between researchers and research participants.

Single case research studies enable researchers to concentrate their 'meager resources' (Stake, 2005, p. 444) on developing a detailed and intricate re-presentation of the case in all its complexity, contradiction and contingency. The study of individual lives provides opportunities for self-reflexivity on the part of researchers, readers and narrators and for the development of self-awareness and awareness of the operation of wider social processes. By developing mutually insightful relationships, and through the opportunities presented by detailed case study work for the co-construction of stories, storytellers and readers are afforded unique opportunities to develop themselves and their social/cultural milieu (Plummer, 2001, p. 14). However, the focus on the single case study approach does not negate generalisation in qualitative research. Stake (2005) has argued that detailed case study work affords unique opportunities for generalising within the case itself, and 'can be seen as a small step toward grand generalization... especially in a case that runs counter to a rule' (2005, p. 448). The single case approach contributes to a process of concretising the reader's understanding of social and cultural processes and phenomena through the detailed exploration of the lived experiences and perspectives of individuals, whilst

simultaneously anchoring theory to the everyday contexts of people's lives (Archer, 1979 and 1995). In this way, the life history can provide an important complement to, and critique of, theories derived from non-person-centred methodological perspectives; for, the particular contribution of life history lies in its capacity to situate and contextualise educational knowledge in the personal lives of individuals, which can make for a particularly persuasive form of educational scholarship (Goodson, 2000). However, the researcher and reader should avoid becoming obsessed with the issue of generalisability, since this might undermine the intrinsic benefits of the single case approach; for, as Stake has reminded us, 'damage occurs when the commitment to generalize or to theorize runs so strong that the researcher's attention is drawn away from features important for understanding the case itself' (2005, p. 448).

(iv) Truth claims

Researchers concerned with individuals' stories face criticism on the grounds that their stories might not be believable and might be deliberately false or misleading. Thus, to speak of 'stories' in research presents a particular dilemma, given that the notion of 'stories' might imply something which might either be 'true' or 'false'. Turning to a lexicographical definition, the nature of the dilemma that confronts the life historian can be illustrated as follows:

'story... legend; a narrative of incidents in their sequence; a fictitious narrative; a tale; an anecdote; the plot of a novel or drama; a theme; an account, report, statement, allegation; a news article; a lie, a fib (colloq)...'

(Chambers Dictionary, 1998, p.1630)

When individuals tell stories about their lives, they do not provide researchers with the actuality of their lived experience, but a representation of their past lives, which is contingent upon the time, place and circumstances of the research as well as the qualities, skills and influence of the researcher and the participant (Stroobants, 2005, p. 54; Riessman, 1993, pp. 8-9; Bruner, 1984). In the novel, *Dreamer*, Johnson (1999) presents the story of Chaym Smith, who, as a result of sharing an almost identical physiognomy with Dr Martin Luther King Jr., masquerades as Dr King Jr. in order to lend support to the civil rights cause. The doppelganger motif enables the author of this tale to explore the dichotomy between fact and fiction, as Chaym Smith reveals:

'All narratives are lies, man, an illusion. Don't you know that? As soon as you squeeze experience into a sentence – or story – it's suspect. A lot sweeter, or uglier, than

things actually were. Words are just webs. Memory is mostly imagination.'

(Johnson, 1999, p.92)

Whether or not the stories of our pasts constitutes lying or would be better termed fabrications (Muncey, 2005, p. 2; Stanley, 1993, p. 49), Chaym's remarks raise the question of whether the truth of life stories can ever be captured and, if not, whether this matters. This is an issue not only for the stories that participants tell us (Sikes, 2000), but also for the stories we seek to tell as researchers (Frank, 1995). Hence the truth of life stories and research stories needs to come under scrutiny.

Scott (2000, pp. 97-98) has argued that the re-telling of stories is inevitably transformed by virtue of present day perspectives and discourses on which individuals draw in order to story their past lives. Riessman (1993, p.15) contends that stories told in research 'represent reality partially, selectively, and imperfectly' and are contingent upon the historical, social and cultural contexts in which they are told. In this sense, 'truth' claims represent an uncertain terrain; for researchers deal in re-presentations. For the life historian, the watchword of 'believability' acquires a heightened significance. One consideration is whether the life story appears to be plausible;

that is to say, whether the story of the life experience appears likely, reasonable and capable of being 'true', given the other historical possibilities and conditions (Pring, 2000a, p.49). This has been referred to as the quest for 'fidelity' (Blumenfeld-Jones, 1995, p.26). Pring (2000a, p.87) and Fontana and Frey (2005, p. 716) have argued that researchers should take responsibility for ensuring that their research stands up to robust 'common sense' [*sic*] scrutiny. In considering the issue of the 'truth' of research accounts, Scott (2000, p.115) has also argued that researchers must contend with the limits in the capacity of their participants; thus, participants, in storying their lives, may be hampered by the extent of their memories or knowledge about past events and their meanings. Moreover, individuals might, for an infinite variety of reasons, be partial and selective in the re-construction of their past 'experience', as evidenced in the telling of the stories of their lives (Burr, 1995). This implies that the best that the researcher can achieve is a reading and not *the* definitive or exhaustive 'truth' of the matter (Francis, 2003, p.65), recognising, too, that other readings may be possible in different circumstances and contexts (Youngblood Jackson, 2003; Tierney, 2000; Thomas, 1995b). Indeed, the truth of the stories told by research participants is also guided by the practices of researchers themselves, which need to be declared (Fontana and Frey, 2005; Gubrium and Holstein, 2002; Järvinen, 2000; Hertz,

1996; Neumann, 1996). The contingent nature of story telling means that the whole truth is always elusive; however, by resisting the colonising zeal of modernism, the researcher recognises the oppressive limitations of a singular focus on the facts of the life, and instead seeks to explore how the research story was conceived through the interactions between self and other (Fontana and Frey, 2005; Gonick and Hladki, 2005; Youngblood Jackson, 2003; Lather, 1991, 1997 and 2001; Lather and Smithies, 1997; Ellis and Bochner, 2000). For it is in the narrative space that self identities are constructed through story telling (MacLure, 2003; Stronach and MacLure, 1997; James, 1994).

How the research story is told is central to how well researchers can negotiate reader scepticism. Where research writing is presented in a manner that allows readers to participate in the dialogue, there is the potential that scepticism and uninformed challenge might fall away and give way to informed dialogue. At the same time, the truth of the telling can be enhanced by limiting the scope of the research; for example, exploring a single life case provides for richly nuanced and thick descriptions to be offered 'so that readers can vicariously experience these happenings and draw conclusions (which may differ from those of the researchers' (Stake, 2000, p. 439). Such studies might also enable the 'rich *texture* of vocality' to be

considered, recognising how story telling enables voices to weave together rather than stand alone, and all the time bridging the chasm between self and other (Youngblood Jackson, 2003). By bringing a descriptive and emotional engagement to the writing of an individual's life, a single case study approach can provide opportunities for the reader to connect with the personal lives of others and so develop not only knowledge about, but also empathy for the individual's plight (Plummer, 2001, p. 8) and so assist the persuasiveness of the research text. Indeed, the emotional engagement of the reader provides a basis for a deeper insight to be acquired into personal and social issues and for a more enduring commitment to action to be planted (Stake, 2000 and 2005; Plummer, 2001; Ellis and Bochner, 2000; Richardson, 2000; Tierney, 2000). In this sense, the truth of the telling is re-presented through the impact that life stories have on the lives of those who write and read them. The need for reflexivity, contextualisation and validation in the presentation of the life story would, therefore, seem to be central to the pursuit of a persuasive life history approach.

Review and Implications

This chapter has sought to clarify what is meant by life history and highlight its potential contribution to the field of educational inquiry. In

discussing the use of life history approaches, I have recognised that educational research is a value-laden activity that reflects the perspectives of the participant, researcher, sponsor, reviewer/reader, and the wider social contexts in which research is situated (Goodson, 2000). Indeed, I have argued that life history researchers should recognise that their work is involved not only with the personal perspectives and viewpoints of themselves and their participants, but also with the wider structural power relations within the society which research should seek to inform and influence (Lincoln, 2002, p. 334; Tierney, 2000, p. 549; Scott, 2000, p.119). I have argued for the development of a persuasive educational life history research approach which recognises the importance of re-presentation and democracy in the development, framing, implementation and writing of life histories. Indeed, given the counter-hegemonic nature of life history research, and that the legitimacy of the approach has been viewed with some degree of scepticism, the need for a persuasive approach would seem to be essential. This chapter has argued that educational life historians must be concerned not only with their relationship with the participants in their research, but with the wider research community in which they seek to engage in dialogue and debate. Moreover, life history research should resonate with the life experiences and perspectives of those who are engaged as participants and seek to inform, challenge or transform the

normative, 'common sense' and exclusionary understandings of social realities (Plummer, 2001; Tierney, 2000). Hence, the dimensions of personal authenticity and external validity should be paramount considerations for the educational life historian.

This chapter has highlighted the need for the educational life historian to make explicit her/his own ontological, epistemological and methodological perspective as a means of developing persuasive scholarly accounts. I have argued that the life history should be concerned with the issue of re-presentation at a number of levels, including the nature of the stories told as life history, how life stories are told, and how the story of research itself is told. Indeed, this chapter has suggested a number of issues or principles for the life history researcher which deserve reiteration here. I suggest that these principles, which I have sought to apply in all stages of my own study, are relevant to those undertaking educational research and are intended to provide a basis for scholarly debate and development within the field. Each of the principles is summarised below.

(i) Counter-cultural

The counter-cultural principle refers to the need for research to pursue a person-centred approach to the development of theory and knowledge. The counter-cultural principle recognises that

knowledge is historically and contextually contingent, reflecting the interests of more powerful groups within society. It requires that researchers critically evaluate how their research approaches reflect the interests of themselves and the participants in their research, whilst recognising and confronting 'race', gender, masculinities, sexuality, social class and other forms of social inequality and oppression and their impact on individual self-expression. The counter-cultural principle is predicated on the aim of research for social change and it seeks to open up the narrative space by locating those whose stories have been silenced by dominant groups. The counter-cultural principle requires that researchers collaborate with their participants in developing knowledge and theoretical claims. It recognises that researchers do not possess privileged knowledge and understanding and that the insights of both researchers and participants need to be synthesised. The counter-cultural principle challenges researchers to confront their own attitudes, beliefs, behaviours and desires in fundamental ways, to make themselves known, and to undertake their work along democratic and egalitarian lines. The counter-cultural principle is concerned with issues of representation and the democratisation of research and knowledge. It recognises the rights of individuals to name their own experience and for participants and readers to question the practices, assumptions, interpretations and procedures of researchers.

(ii) Multi-dimensionality

The principle of multi-dimensionality recognises that all individuals live complex lives which has implications for re-presenting lives in research. It implies that researchers should be concerned with the individual, unique and everyday lives of research participants. The multi-dimensionality principle eschews reductionist and essentialist readings of individual lives and seeks to provide a rich, polyvocal narrative space which recognises how different strands of identity ('race', gender, masculinities, sexuality, social class and other factors) intersect, cohere and find expression through social interaction. The principle of multi-dimensionality recognises that identities are never fixed or final, but always changing, unresolved and contingent. It requires that researchers explore the conditions in which identities find their articulation and consider ways to open up the discursive space to enable individuals to break free from pathologising and colonising re-presentations. The multi-dimensionality principle requires that researchers should be willing and able to engage with a wide range of theoretical discourses as a basis for developing research practice that enables a whole person approach to be evident.

(iii) Theory building

The theory building principle refers to the need for researchers to apply a theoretical approach that is grounded in the personal stories of participants and wider contextual analyses. The theory building principle places the personal stories of individuals at the centre of knowledge development about institutions and society, and recognises how knowledge claims are situated within social relations of power. It negotiates the pull of structural reification and individual subjectivism through balanced readings of the structure-agency dialectic. It recognises, too, that research exists within a wider body of scholarship to which it should seek to contribute and by which it should be informed. The theory building principle recognises the benefits of reflexivity and 'data' thick/'data' rich approaches to understanding social life. The theory building principle grounds theoretical and knowledge claims within the life texts of research participants and recognises the difficulty of sustaining grand theoretical claims.

(iv) Ethic of Respect

The ethic of respect principle refers to the need for researchers to create the conditions for individuals to name their own experience as a basis for re-presenting lives faithfully. The ethic of respect principle provides for research to take place in an informed

and non-exploitative manner. It provides that research should operate within a democratic and non-discriminatory frame of reference, taking account of 'race', gender, masculinities, sexuality, social class and other social relations and human rights. The ethic of respect principle recognises that researchers need to be honest with their readers and participants by being themselves and by declaring themselves openly. The ethic of respect principle recognises the wider significance and implications of research and the need for research to contribute towards social justice objectives. The ethic of respect principle seeks to build upon the idea of individual and collective empowerment through social research and the pursuit of social research for social justice.

(v) Collaborative

The collaborative principle refers to the need for research to be undertaken *with* and not *on* individual participants. The collaborative principle emphasises non-exploitative relationships between researchers and participants and relies upon a democratic and egalitarian relationship between the researcher and the participant. It recognises the need for researchers to critically evaluate their research approaches to confront 'race', gender, masculinities, sexuality, social class and other forms of exclusion, inequality and oppression and their impact on individual self-

expression and authentic re-presentation. It requires that researchers describe how participants have been involved in the process of storytelling, interpretation, writing and theory building. The collaborative principle recognises that research knowledge is socially constructed and that the research process should open up the public space for dialogue between researchers, participants and readers as part of the process of developing knowledge.

(vi) Reflexivity

The principle of reflexivity refers to the process of critically reviewing the choices, interpretations and decisions made at each stage of the research. Reflexivity should operate at the level of the detailed processes and decisions that take place within the conduct of research, as well as requiring the researcher to reflect on the significance of wider historical, structural and discursive factors and social relations (including 'race', gender, masculinities, sexuality, social class and other social relations). Reflexivity provides space for individual reflection, self-expression and discussion by the researcher, participant and reader. The reflexivity principle recognises that stories are contextually contingent and seeks to open up the theoretical space to the possibilities of multiple interpretations. It recognises, too, the need for researchers to exercise political

reflexivity in contexts where their work might be misused, misrepresented or misappropriated by others.

(vii) Validation

The validation principle refers to the process of opening up the re-presentational space to critical review by the researcher-self, participant and reader. It recognises that theoretical and knowledge claims should be grounded in the personal stories of research participants. The validation principle requires that researchers attend to the need for validation through detailed and transparent reporting of the research process and the bases of theoretical interpretation. It recognises also the need to document the values and practices of researchers as a basis for locating the meaning and significance of research stories. It relies upon a democratic and egalitarian relationship between the researcher and the participants in the research and recognises the need for researchers to critically evaluate their research approaches to confront 'race', gender, masculinities, sexuality, social class and other forms of inequality and oppression and their impact on individual self-expression and representation.

(viii) Contextualisation

The principle of contextualisation involves locating personal stories and research stories within biographical, historical, discursive and structural contexts, taking account of 'race', gender, masculinities, sexuality, social class and other social relations. The contextualisation principle requires that researchers demonstrably situate their theoretical and knowledge claims within the personal stories of research participants and themselves, whilst confronting the ways in which research stories reflect and re-present the researcher's self, values and practice.

The salience of each of these principles will be explored further in the following chapter.

CHAPTER 3: CRITIQUE

In the previous chapter, I identified a series of principles for the conduct of persuasive educational life history research. This chapter seeks to illustrate each of the principles of a persuasive life history approach by reference to some existing scholarship in the field which had provoked my interest in undertaking this study. The chapter argues for a persuasive life history approach which addresses the crisis of re-presentation and contributes to the democratisation of educational scholarship and knowledge.

The Counter-Cultural Principle

I have described the counter-cultural principle as referring to the need for research to be concerned with the pursuit of a person-centred approach to the development of educational theory and knowledge and the democratisation of the Academy and other institutions. In referring to the notion of 'culture', I mean the dominant attitudes and values of the social group, institution or society, as revealed through language and discourse (Biklen, 1995, p.81). Social discourses enable or disable individual and group agency and impact on what is considered possible; they might be empowering or

disempowering, and might give rise to generative or repressive outcomes (Foucault, 1984, p.61). This has particular implications for story telling and requires that researchers should attend to the particular cultural contexts in which their research takes place, critically evaluate the prevailing conventions of story telling as research, and consider the nature of research knowledge and whose interests it serves (Ladson-Billings and Donnor, 2005; MacLure 2003; Hughes, 2003c; Alvesson, 2002; Richardson, 2001; Fine et al., 2000; Tierney, 2000; Ladson-Billings, 1999; MacLure and Stronach, 1997; Troyna, 1994a; Plummer, 1995). A critical perspective (Dixson and Rousseau, 2005; Ladson-Billings and Donnor, 2005; Foley and Valenzuela, 2005; Foley, 2002; Ladson-Billings, 1999; Tierney, 1993 and 2000; Rosenwald and Ochberg, 1992; Giroux, 1988) is, therefore, necessary. From such a perspective, Troyna (1994a) has identified the problem of 'deracialised' discourses which serve to obscure the oppressive practices of dominant white groups so that their interests can be assured. According to Troyna (1994a, p.326), the problem of deracialisation is a particular feature of the 'mainstream' or dominant discourse of the Academy. Troyna's critique suggests that the conceptual, methodological, analytical and theoretical omission of 'race' and ethnicity has produced an underdeveloped understanding of educational systems and teachers' work which has contributed to the reproduction of

'commonsense racism' that is both 'ethnocentric' and 'exclusionist' (Troyna, 1994a, pp. 326-327). This has had the effect of producing educational research which is politically 'maladroit' and sociologically suspect (Troyna, 1994, p.330; McCarthy and Crichlow, 1993, p.xviii). Thus, Troyna's critique suggests that educational researchers should critically evaluate the conventions of story telling within racialised discursive contexts.

The writing of autobiography and biography has been recognised as a central device in the exercise of women's resistance to patriarchal oppression (Lather 1991 and 2001; Coffey and Delamont, 2000; Etter-Lewis, 1993). However, bell hooks (1994, p.113) has argued that black women have been excluded from the 'private cult' of feminism 'whose members are usually white'. The practice of whiteness (Dyer, 1997; Morrison, 1992) has meant the silencing of black women's voices within dominant (white) autobiographical and life history research (Braxton, 1989; Etter-Lewis, 1996; Hull et al, 1982; Smith and Watson, 1992). Pioneering black women writers have dared to speak as an act of challenging hegemonic (white) feminist theory (Angelou, 1969; Davis, 1982; hooks, 1982, 1984 and 1989; Gilroy, 1976; Morrison, 1987 and 1992; Walker, 1983; and others), although often without mainstream recognition or reward (Andrews, 1986; Etter-Lewis, 1993; and McKay, 1988). Nevertheless,

through their agency, black women scholars have made a critical contribution to resisting racist and sexist oppression for the benefit of black women and black men (Bryan et al., 1985, p.239) by pursuing a counter-cultural approach within the counter-cultural movement of feminist scholarship itself.

An example of a deracialised research approach is found in Munro's (1998) study of women teachers' life history narratives. In this study, Munro (1998, p.44) attests to the need for women to tell their stories as a means of resisting and disrupting patriarchal oppression; however, Munro's stated commitment to a feminist counter-cultural scholarship is compromised by an adherence to a deracialised theoretical framework. Munro's study provides a window into the lives of three white women teachers in the United States, encompassing a time line across the twentieth century. Munro presents the story of Agnes, a ninety-four year old woman from Chicago whose teaching career extended over a period of forty-one years. Agnes' story serves to signify the counter-hegemonic agency of women teachers who became professionally empowered as teachers whilst remaining socially disempowered as women. However, whilst Agnes played a central role in the development of teachers' knowledge and practice, Munro does not consider that Agnes' work took place against a backdrop of racially segregated schooling in America. Thus, within a

patriarchal and racialised society, white women teachers like Agnes might be storied as simultaneously occupying 'oppressed' and 'oppressor' positions. Thus, Foster (1997, p.xxvii) has described how white and black teachers working at the same time in Agnes' school district occupied very different structural positions and statuses within the education system, which was to the detriment of blacks and to the advantage of whites. However, Munro's story of Agnes appears not to be sensitive to this and seems to reflect a tendency within the wider scholarship 'to concentrate on sex differences and ignore the question of ethnicity' (Malveaux 1992, p.35). Munro's counter-cultural feminist approach valorises the lives of white women teachers, yet takes little account of how 'whiteness' as a racial position might have resulted in these teachers' 'collusion' with the 'cultural plot' of racism (Dyer, 1997, p.3; Denzin, 1991, p.156). The apparent resistance to exploring Agnes' fragmented and contradictory identity seems indicative of the modernist 'desire to possess, know, and grasp' (Lather, 2001, p. 213) by imposing an authoritative and singular reading onto a life of multiple possibilities (Alvesson, 2002; Stronach and MacLure, 1997). Moreover, subscribing to a thin epistemological approach, which is blinkered to alternative possibilities, distorts the life and leaves such research open to the challenge of partisanship. The issue of whose interests are served by this form of scholarship

becomes central, particularly if writing educational history in this way might damage those whose experiences are excluded.

The Multi-Dimensionality Principle

The principle of multi-dimensionality refers to the need for researchers to recognise the complex, intersecting and contradictory nature of individuals' identities and to eschew essentialist readings of individual lives. As with the counter-cultural principle, the multi-dimensionality principle places an emphasis on the rejection of thin epistemologies. The persuasive life history approach recognises that essentialist research silences the 'noise of multi-dimensionality' (Troyna, 1994a, p.330) and leads to the imposition of the authorial voice of the researcher and the denial of other voices and other stories (Alvesson, 2002; Plummer, 2001). This has important implications for scholarship that seeks to understand the individual's life experience since essentialist scholarship obscures the diversity and complexity of individual lives (Muncey, 2005; Garza, 2005; Plummer, 2001; Mac an Ghail, 1999; Gilroy, 1993; Said, 1993; Bhabba, 1990; Spivak, 1988a and 1988b) and limits the possibilities for collective agency to emerge to oppose hegemonic interests (Tierney, 2000; Fine et al, 2000; Neumann, 1996; Giroux, 1992; hooks, 1994; Minh-ha, 1991; McLaren, 1993; Harris, 1990; Essed,

2001). Troyna (1994a, pp. 327-332) has identified the feature of 'ethnicism' as a particular form of essentialist scholarship relating to the re-presentation of black people in scholarship. Ethnicist scholarship involves a mono-dimensional epistemological perspective which limits the possibilities for individual self-expression and results in narrow scholarly re-presentations of black people which are incapable of signalling black people's agency other than in racialised terms. The pursuit of ethnicist forms of scholarship serves to consolidate 'hegemonic definitions of normality and 'the other'' (Troyna, 1994a, p.331). An examination of ethnically essentialist research reveals that, by privileging 'race', racialisation and ethnicity, such scholarship fails to capture the complex nature of everyday reality and may serve to perpetuate racialised ways of seeing black people. Such research feeds off and nourishes dominant discourses of black people as pathologically marked by racism (Fine et al, 2000; Small, 1994; Etter-Lewis, 1996).

Foster (1993, pp. 171-172) has suggested that the negative portrayal of black teachers is principally a consequence of white researchers' practice. However, Troyna (1994a) has identified that negative stereotyping and the trend towards ethnicism is not the exclusive preserve of white researchers, but reflects a generalised problem of methodological underdevelopment in educational ethnographic

research concerning black people and the 'conviction' which some researchers attach to demonstrating the operation of racism (Troyna, 1994a, p.332). In the context of social research for social justice such 'conviction' might not always be a bad thing (Denzin and Lincoln, 2005; Sikes, Nixon and Carr, 2003; Tierney, 2000); however, it is vital that it does not stifle voices, repress individual self-expression, limit democracy or reproduce oppressive discourses of the Other (Fontana and Frey, 2005; Plummer, 2001; Fine et al, 2000; Tierney, 1998 and 2000; Troyna 1994a; Sleeter, 1993; van Dijk, 1993; Riessman, 1993).

In James' (2002) life history study of a black, male teacher in Canada, the tendency towards ethnicism is revealed by the researcher's failure to explore the connections between the teacher's ethnicity, gender, social class and professional status. James' study suggests the important role played by masculine role models in shaping black men's career aspirations and choices. The teacher protagonist in James' study states that on becoming a teacher:

"It took me a good year and a half to actually confront the fact that medicine was not what I wanted to do. It was what my *father* wanted me to do... [*H*]e was the factor,

because I love *him* and respect *him* and I wanted to please *him*, I guess that's what it was all about.”

(James, 2002, p.177) (my emphasis)

The theme of masculinity seems to be clearly identified in the teacher's own words which speak to me of a desire to become a 'legitimate' adult male in the eyes of his father and to be seen as successful even within the occupational arena of “women's work” (Williams, 1993). Similar observations about men in teaching have been made elsewhere (see Aspinwall and Drummond, 1989; Skelton, 2001a). However, the issue of masculinity is not addressed within James' interpretative analysis and theorising. James overlooks the possibility that the male teacher's identity and agency connects with dominant patriarchal and masculinist discourses (Friedan, 1963; Heath, 1987). It may be, of course, that James had considered this possibility and dismissed it as neither significant nor relevant; however, the researcher's silence on this issue serves to compromise the study as a whole and raises questions as to the researcher's purpose (Foley, 2002; Tierney, 2000; Richardson, 2000; Hertz, 1996).

Bateson (1989, p.44) has argued that the everyday operation of oppression may be so customary that it is taken for granted and may

not be recognised; this is not only an issue for teachers as narrators of life stories, but for researchers as life historians also. The silences within James' study raise important issues about the social and historical contexts in which men engage in story telling (Evans, 1993, p.8); male beneficiaries of patriarchy may be unwilling to "own up" to their exercise of male power (hooks, 1994, p.116). James' study suggests a challenge for black men, as researchers, to confront identity within multi-dimensional frames which disrupt the comforting identities created by and around black men (Petersen, 2003; West, 1996). James' study privileges an essentialist (ethnicist) representation of the teacher's story which has the effect of denying the complexity of the teacher's life experience (Hearn and Morgan, 1995; Pleck and Sawyer, 1974).

The Theory Building Principle

The theory building principle refers to grounding theoretical claims about individuals in their personal stories and in the context of wider discursive, structural and historical analyses. Indeed, the development of educational theory and knowledge relies upon the review and testing of existing knowledge claims (Tooley, 1998). The pursuit of life history as a counter-cultural practice recognises the need to disrupt the oppressive tendencies of research which deny

the experiences and voices of less powerful groups (Goodson, 2000; Tierney, 2000); indeed, many educational life history scholars have identified that since teachers are subject to these oppressive tendencies, educational researchers should seek to 'give voice' to teachers who have been silenced by orthodox forms of theorising and knowledge (Casey, 1992 and 1993; Goodson, 1981, 1991, 1992, 1995 and 2000; Goodson and Sikes, 2001; Thomas, 1995a; McLaughlin and Tierney, 1993). However, a feature of scholarship from the 'deracialised' and 'ethnicist' discursive traditions (Troyna, 1994a) is a dislocation of theory building across the racialised paradigmatic divide. Thus, "conviction" research involving black teachers has often failed to exploit the opportunities to test, refute or develop the educational knowledge claims arising from "mainstream" scholarship involving white teachers, and *vice versa*. This has limited the development of educational scholarship and consigned 'conviction' research scholarship to the margins of the Academy (Culyba et al, 2004; LeCompte, 2002; West, 1993).

For example, 'mainstream' research on teacher identity and commitment (see Woods and Jeffrey, 2002; Sikes, 1997; Woods, 1990 and 1993; Connell, 1985; Sikes, Measor and Woods, 1985; Lacey, 1977) has argued that the nature of the teacher's commitment is reflective of the individual's beliefs, values, life circumstances and

socio-economic conditions and is linked strongly to the teacher's age/generation, gender, school context, pupils and the subjects that teachers teach, although the salience of 'race' and ethnicity on teacher commitment has not been considered in theoretical terms within 'mainstream' scholarship. Instead, research on black teachers in Britain and North America (see James, 2002; Callender, 1997; Foster, 1997; Osler, 1997; Casey, 1993) has sought to fill the void. This 'conviction' scholarship has identified that the professional commitment of black teachers is linked to their experiences of racialisation which gives rise to their articulation of professional commitment in terms of a 'giving back to the community' narrative. The black teacher studies suggest that black teachers' professionalism is tied to notions of the "black community" and is, in part, an expression of it. However, it is suggested that much of this scholarship has tended to overlook other interpretative possibilities: for example, that there are some white teachers who express forms of teacher commitment similar to those articulated by black teachers (see Sikes and Everington, 2004). The need to explore this issue further would seem appropriate. Nevertheless, the black teacher studies do suggest a critical shortcoming in the teacher commitment typologies offered by 'mainstream' scholarship, given its general failure to explore the relationship between ethnicity and professionalism orientations. However, the existence of parallel

'mainstream' and 'conviction' epistemological and methodological paradigms which do not speak to or critique each other has the effect of limiting educational theory building and undermines the persuasiveness of educational research scholarship as a whole (Morse et al, 2002; Troyna, 1994a). Yet, the possibilities for a different approach have been suggested elsewhere; West (1993, p.22) has argued that a 'desirable option' is the pursuit of a 'critical organic' approach which 'stays attuned to the best of what the mainstream has to offer... yet maintains a grounding in affirming and enabling subcultures of criticism'.

The Ethic of Respect Principle

The ethic of respect principle refers to the need for research to operate in an informed, non-exploitative and democratic manner and in the interests of securing social justice outcomes. The life history researcher should demonstrate a concern to respect the perspectives of research participants and to afford participants the right to name their own experiences (MacLure 2003; Goodson, 2000; Etter-Lewis, 1993; Tierney, 1993). If it is argued that the life history approach is intrinsically empowering for research participants (Beattie, 1995, p.146), then researchers should pursue an approach that is non-oppressive and democratic in its orientation.

One area of interest to those undertaking research with black teachers concerns the issue of racial naming. The use of the term 'black' to define the identities of particular individuals and groups has its roots in a discourse of resistance to racist oppression. However, the term's usage has become distinctly problematic and imprecise (Modood, et al., 1997; Tizard and Phoenix, 1993), and has served to suppress the particular experiences of women, lesbian, gay and disabled people (Mac an Ghail, 1999; hooks, 1994). Racial naming is deeply bound up with issues of rights, status and power and has implications for the potentialities of social actors (Fanon, 1952). Racial naming raises ethical concerns about how individuals and groups should be treated and the effects our research has within the world (Ladson-Billings and Donnor, 2005; Laible, 2000; Fine et al, 2000).

Banton (1997) has argued that:

'The names given to plants do not affect the behaviour of the plants, but humans are very concerned about the names by which they are identified. Groups claim that they themselves should be able to choose the name by which they are known. *People give to themselves names which*

show who they claim to be rather than who they actually are. They give to others names which show how they perceive these others, and which may differ from the names these others have for themselves.'

(Banton, 1997, p.15) (original emphasis)

Etter-Lewis (1996, p.4) has asserted that 'the power to name is the power to define and control'. Examples of the negative impact of racial naming abound throughout history, wherein the right to exploit, torture or kill individuals has resulted from the naming of groups on the grounds of colour, culture, sexual orientation, religion, history, political opinion, national origin, language or other attributes. Racial naming has long been the practice of powerful groups who have exerted claims against others categorised as 'Negro', 'Jew', 'fundamentalist', or whatever else. Racial naming is the site of an oft bloody struggle, contested by individuals and groups who seek to name their own desires and, in so doing, claim social rights, recognition or resources (James, 1980). These naming practices reveal the modernist zeal to impose one's will and desire onto the Other, to present the Other as less than ourselves, to control the Other for our own purposes (Ladson-Billings and Donnor, 2005; Fine, et al., 2000; Laible, 2000; Marker, 2003; Court, 2004; Lather, 2001; Neumann, 1996; Coffey, 1999).

Osler's (1997) life history study of the education and careers of black teachers is illustrative of an approach taken by some researchers in relation to racial naming and illustrates how naming others' experiences may be considered a repressive exercise in researcher power and control. At the outset of the study, Osler states that:

'The sample was made up exclusively of black people, that is people of African, African Caribbean or Asian descent. No white students or teachers were included as the intention was to consider black perspectives within education. In choosing to consider black people as a group, *I am assuming a shared experience of racism*, while acknowledging that the forms in which individuals may experience racism are likely to differ, and may vary according to such factors as gender or perceived ethnicity.'

(Osler, 1997, pp. 57-58) (my emphasis)

Osler's research approach assumes that persons whose cultural backgrounds are widely diverse, encompassing three different continents, and embracing an extremely diverse range of histories, cultures, languages, religions and myriad localities can be reduced to

a singular, universal 'black' perspective or experience. Indeed, Osler's approach denies the complex and contradictory nature of racialised identities, experiences and agency which means that, 'as far as "race" is concerned, what you see is not necessarily what you get' (Gilroy', 2000, p.23). Moreover, Osler's sampling rationale overlooks that ethnic and racial naming and categorisation are deeply problematic areas for educational researchers which, in the postmodern context, are highly contested (Bonnet and Carrington, 2000; Bird, 1996; Byrd, 2000; Mason, 1990; Modood, 1992, 1993 and 1994; Modood et al, 1997; Tizard and Phoenix, 1993; Berrington, 1995; Goulbourne, 1998; Bhatt, 1997; Hall, 2000a). Indeed, Osler's denial of difference occurs despite at least one participant in the research expressing 'discomfort' with the racial name imposed on her by the researcher (Osler, 1997, p.102); instead, Osler overrides the research participant's point of view. In the context of racialised social relations and in the hands of a white researcher, the anti-democratic approach taken by Osler is likely to have had a particularly negative connotation and significance (Lather, 2001; Foley, 2002; Gonick and Hladki, 2005). Osler's imposition closes down the re-presentational space, the narrative space wherein identity is constructed through story telling (Rolling, 2004; Richardson, 2000; Youngblood Jackson, 2003; Derrida, 1981). Osler's story denies identity as being contested, fluid, narratively constructed, and historically, socially and

culturally contingent (Hall, 1988 and 1993; Mac an Ghail, 1999; Bruner, 1987; Syrjälä and Estola, 1999; Bulmer, 1996; McLaren, 1993; Butler, 1993). In demonstrating the power of the researcher, Osler's study highlights the ethical and moral issues which emerge as a consequence of undertaking life history study and which arises from the use of conceptually expedient categorisations which deny space for individual self-determination (Nazroo and Karlsen, 2003). Indeed, life history research cannot lead to individual empowerment where researchers' commitment to ethical practice leads them to exercise power to name the lives of research participants (LeCompte, 1993, p.13).

The Collaborative Principle

The collaborative principle refers to the need for research to be undertaken *with* and not *on* individual participants, within a relationship of non-exploitation, democracy and equality. Sikes (1997, p.17) has advised that the process of storying and meaning making is a collaborative endeavour which engages 'tellers and hearers' who must work together to arrive at a shared understanding. Riessman (1993, p.21) has argued that the life 'text is not autonomous of its context' and, as a result, should explicitly examine the relationship that exists between researcher and participant. The

process of telling stories in research is defined by context, reflecting the desires, biographies, practices and values of the narrator, the researcher and the relationship between the two (Youngblood Jackson, 2003; MacLure, 2003; Norum, 2000; Plummer, 1995 and 2001; Rosenthal, 1993).

The following example, taken from Munro's (1998) study of women teachers, illustrates the importance of researcher and participant collaboration in the construction and interpretation of teachers' stories and in the development of theory in respect of teachers' lives. Munro provides a series of life story texts wherein the voices of both researcher and participants are to be heard. In Munro's study of women teacher resistors is told the story of Cleo – a sixty-plus year old teacher and administrator of over thirty years. The first insight into Cleo's story is told in Cleo's own words as she narrates how she negotiated the racially proscribed expectations of her white middle class family within the racially segregated American south:

'I tended not to follow the norms... what I'm thinking of right now is that Atlanta was made up of many cultures... I made friends in those culture groups. I never had any close friends who were blacks except who worked in our homes. We always had black servants... I don't know, but I

tended to pick friends from groups who were not smiled on by my parents.'

(Munro, 1998, p.66)

Despite Cleo's strong assertion, Munro privileges a gendered interpretation of Cleo's story, emphasising Cleo's resistance to 'comply with dominant gender expectations' (Munro, 1998, p.71) and in order to satisfy the researcher's 'quest to 'find' resistance to gender norms' (Munro, 1998, p.73). Munro interprets Cleo's life of rebellion as symbolic of a female adolescent assertion of independence. Munro subordinates Cleo's resistance to racism by portraying Cleo as a rebel with a gendered cause (Munro, 1998, p.67). However, the researcher's transparent approach reveals that Cleo is not compliant with the researcher's attempts to name her desires. Throughout, Cleo's story is punctuated by a struggle for representation between the researcher and the participant in giving meaning to Cleo's life, as the following extracts illustrate:

'Cleo's tendency towards rebelliousness or her anti-authority stance became clear to me on several levels in our early interviews. When I asked her age, she flatly refused to answer.'

(Munro, 1998, p.68)

'Her description of herself as a drifter contrasted strongly with my own perception of Cleo as ambitious and as actively pursuing a career in spite of the norms that assumed that women get married and have families.'

(Munro, 1998, p.72)

'Initially, I interpreted her statement as a form of false consciousness...'

(Munro, 1998, p.74)

'Because I did not understand her ambivalence to teaching as resistance at the time of the interview, I pursued my line of questioning...'

(Munro, 1998, p.75)

'But what I interpreted as resistance, Cleo named as something else.'

(Munro, 1998, p.78)

Cleo's counter-interpretations 'thwarted' Munro's 'desire to find resistance' to patriarchy (Munro, 1998, p.78) and Munro dismisses Cleo's counter-interpretations as evidence of 'confusion' (1998,

p.69), 'myth creation' (1998, p.69), 'rebelliousness' (1998, p.68) and 'masking' (1998, p.67). Munro's study illustrates the ultimate power researchers exert over their participants and the difficulties inherent in sustaining a collaborative and democratic research approach throughout the course of a study (Thomas, 1995b). Whilst this may place the researcher in a vulnerable position, collaboration can assist the persuasiveness of the life history and vulnerability should be regarded as a desirable step towards resigning authorial power (Lather, 1991, 1997 and 2001; Riessman, 1993).

The Reflexivity Principle

I have described the principle of reflexivity as referring to the process of reviewing – within a wider conceptual, discursive and ethical framework - the interpretations and decisions made at all stages of conceptualisation, design, implementation, writing and communication of the research. Reflexivity is concerned with the authority of the author, the ability of any individual to see and know all (Alvesson, 2002; Alvesson and Sköldberg, 2000). By engaging in reflexive practice, the researcher can question her/his practice and begin the process of opening up the narrative space, disrupting dominant discourses, exposing the process of knowledge production and resisting hegemonic interests (MacLure, 2003; Stronach and

MacLure, 1997). By working within a reflexive approach the researcher, participant and reader can begin to question whose interests are being served by the stories they share (Tierney, 2000). A reflexive approach shapes the space for story telling and the dimensions of the stories we tell. Whilst research might always reflect the biases of the researcher (Norum, 2000), this does not mean that researchers should ignore their biases where this might lead to story telling which produces stereotypes and repressive imagery (Fontana and Frey, 2005; Ladson-Billings and Donnor, 2005; Stake, 2000; Tierney, 1998 and 2000; Laible, 2000).

Pole's (1999) life history study of black teachers seeks to understand the lives and careers of black teachers. However, from the outset, the researcher confirms that his interest is to identify the impact of racism on the lives of black teachers (Pole, 1999, p.315). Pole looks for the presence of racism and finds it privileged in the stories told by the teachers concerned. The researcher-effect on the production of Pole's black teachers' stories would seem to be highly apparent, and could well lead to such work being dismissed as partisan (Evans, 2002; Tooley, 1998); hence, leading to the denial of these black teachers' stories and the re-inscribing of their social vulnerability (Laible, 2000). Paradoxically, by confirming these stories of racism in this way, Pole's work might provide a vital escape route for those

whose interests are served by racism. Pole's study suggests the potential for deliberate or unintentional biases to arise during the course of research and highlights the need for a reflexive research approach to be pursued which considers the nature and meaning of the knowledge it produces, the effect of the processes and techniques employed and the likely effect of research in bringing about social justice objectives (Tierney, 2000).

The Validation Principle

The principle of validation refers to the need to open up the research process to critical review by the researcher, participant and reader. It recognises the importance of the information that is shared during the course of research. The validation principle necessitates a collaborative and democratic approach that engages the researcher, participant and reader in the process of story construction and meaning making by attending to the story as text (what is said?) and the story as subtext (who is saying and why?). The power of the life history may be undone where information about the research story is not provided (Riessman, 1993).

The principle of validation can be illustrated by reference to the continuing debate on insider/outsider research (Foster, 1996; Naples,

1996; Jewkes and Letherby, 2001; Edwards, 2002; Stanley and Slattery, 2003), although the notion of an insider or outsider status as a fixed position dividing self and other is difficult to sustain (Francis, 2003; Jewkes and Letherby, 2001; Lather, 1991 and 2001; Rakhit, 1998; Mirza, 1995; Fine, 1994). For example, Casey (1993), a white woman researcher, has asserted that her access to the stories of a community of black women teachers was aided by virtue of her 'insider' status derived from being the mother of a black ('mixed race') child. Using this claim, Casey proceeds to assume that her insider privilege obviates the need to present to the reader the details of how the processes of story re-construction, interpretation and re-presentation occurred. Instead, the researcher's persuasiveness relies on the stories she presents rather than where these stories come from (Fontana and Frey, 2005; Gubrium and Holstein, 2002). By choosing not to tell the story behind these teachers' stories, the reader is left to speculate on how the researcher's conclusions were arrived at and whose interests are served (Tierney, 2000).

Pole (1999), a white male researcher, has also considered the issue of insider/outsider research, but from the perspective of an 'outsider'. A central methodological concern for Pole is the ability of a white man to interpret sensitively and appropriately the life stories of black teachers; Pole (1999, p.315) asserts that his research benefits from

his position as a white “outsider” since he is able to pose ‘naive’ questions of participants in order to ‘seek more clarification of basic issues than could an ‘insider’’. Pole’s claim to a more objective or neutral stance is open to challenge, not least on the grounds that the researcher provides no information on his values or beliefs or about his relationship with the participants. By denying access to the researcher’s self, Pole seeks to mask his power as author (Fontana and Frey, 2005; Charmaz and Mitchell, 1997; Stronach and MacLure, 1997; Mykhalovskiy, 1996). Moreover, by not providing a paper trail of his actual fieldwork practices, Pole’s appeal to a scientific neutrality appears to be wanting (Garza, 2005; Riessman, 1993). The purpose of Pole’s study must, therefore, be questioned with a view to whose interests are served (Tierney, 2000).

The Contextualisation Principle

The principle of contextualisation involves locating personal stories and research stories within the contexts of their production. It requires an attempt to anchor theory and knowledge claims to the personal stories of research participants and researchers. It involves the researcher in declaring her/his contribution to the process of knowledge production.

A number of approaches have been taken to the re-presentation of black teachers' life stories, ranging from minimalist and disembodied accounts and excerpts to elaborate and richly detailed teacher narratives. These various approaches have a bearing on the persuasiveness of life history scholarship. For example, Foster (1997) has provided a series of twenty first-person life accounts in a brief and highly "polished" form, but one which does not allow the reader to interrogate the researcher's contribution to the construction of the life story texts. Etter-Lewis (1993) has provided edited versions of nine life texts identified as 'the most interesting' from a sample of eighty oral histories she had assembled (1993, p.xii), and Osler (1997) has adopted a similar approach in her sample of forty-eight teachers; however, in neither study is it clear why the handful of selected stories were deemed to be 'the most interesting' by the researchers. By not disclosing their biases, both Etter-Lewis and Osler obscure attempts to examine how the research knowledge was produced or to figure out in whose interests it was produced (Riessman, 1993; Charmaz and Mitchell, 1997; Norum, 2000; Rhodes, 2000; Morse et al, 2002). Of course, the absence of contextual information within these texts might be illustrative not of researcher bias, but of an overly ambitious attempt by the researchers to provide reasonably accessible scholarly texts in a publishable form; indeed, this might suggest the advantages of a

single case study approach (Stake, 2000 and 2005). Nevertheless, the failure to contextualise knowledge claims within a detailed exposition of the individual's life betrays a central tenet of educational life history: namely, 'to assure that the teacher's voice is heard, heard loudly, heard articulately' (Goodson, 1991, p.36).

Pole's (1999) study of black teachers provides highly edited and selected excerpts from twenty teachers' stories. Pole seeks to "give voice" to the lives of black teachers and states emphatically that 'the voice that is heard is that of the teachers and not that of the researcher' (1999, p.316), though such a claim ought to be treated with caution since life texts are always socially produced and, hence, co-constructed from the perspectives of researchers and participants (Fontana and Frey, 2005; Norum, 2000). By making this claim, however, it might be suggested that Pole is seeking to throw the reader of the scent so that his authorship, his voice, can evade capture and, thus, go unchallenged (Charmaz and Mitchell, 1997; Fine et al., 2000; Tierney, 2000; Plummer, 2001).

Pole presents a number of 'collective' themes in preference to presenting individual teacher's stories. Pole's approach does not include 'gritty' contextualisation (Morse et al., 2002; Mathner and Doucet, 1997; Riessman, 1993), and the teachers' disembodied

stories are denied their humanity (Hodkinson, 2005; Plummer, 2001). Stories collected – some might say these stories represent the spoils of ethnographic ‘theft’ (Clough, 2004) – from these black teachers by this white researcher become a form of ‘commodified knowledge’ (McLaren, 1993, p. 217) that glosses over the complexities and differences (Plummer, 2001, p. 31) and delivers the Other for easy consumption by dominant interests (Youngblood Jackson, 2003; Fine et al., 2000). Returning to Pole’s original purpose – to “give voice” – the reader is confronted with a colonial story, which oppresses at the same time as it claims to empower (Etter-Lewis, 1993; Spivak, 1993; Bhabba, 1994; hooks, 1994; Lather, 2001; Hughes, 2003b; Court, 2004). Pole’s story forces the reader to question who has authority, who speaks, and for what purpose and with what effect is the story told (Coffey, 1999, pp. 142-143).

Review

LeCompte (1993) has suggested that the act of reclaiming the knowledge of the Academy may be a very bloody struggle:

‘Bringing about change is not a quiet academic pursuit; to empower is to get into trouble. If one really is engaged in research meant to be empowering, one should never

expect to reconcile warring constituencies or stakeholders; rather, one should expect continual conflict with informants and the Establishment. This is because by its nature, true empowering, rare though it may be, is a revolutionary activity that requires wrenching privileges away from entrenched interests – even those privileges without which members of the Establishment feel they cannot survive. In these terms, the problem of empowerment becomes a problem of life – or death.’

(LeCompte, 1993, p.15)

Educational life history is a rapidly developing area of practice. In drawing on a number of illustrative examples of practice from the field, I am mindful of their historical situatedness and my position to them today. In looking back at these texts, I benefit from the present-day and the shifting cultural perspectives and insights which inform my reading of these past texts. Indeed, I also recognise that my reading of these texts is constrained by my present-day situatedness and that further readings will be possible. However, I do not suggest that key texts from the past are beyond critique; rather that whilst interrogating these texts, I am drawn to the opportunities they present for us to reflect upon the nature and meaning of research knowledge and its purpose.

I am mindful, too, that what I have presented here might be misappropriated by those who seek to dismiss the work of life historians and could give succour to those in the 'opposing camps' (Lincoln and Denzin, 2005, p. 1123); yet I have felt impelled to discuss the issues raised by these texts in order to open up those practices within the Academy which have taken place in the names of those who have traditionally been excluded from it; by doing so, I have sought to challenge the stereotypes and create a more informed and inclusive knowledge. Indeed, I know that I am not alone in my desire to democratise the Academy:

'The important thing to note about many practicing interpretivists today is that they have been shaped by and influenced toward postmodern perspectives, the critical turn... the narrative or rhetorical turn, and the turn toward a rising tide of *voices*. These are the voices of the formerly disenfranchised, the voices of subalterns everywhere, the voices of indigenous and postcolonial peoples, who are profoundly politically committed to determining their own destiny.'

(Lincoln and Denzin, 2005, pp. 1115-1116)

In critiquing what Fine et al (2000, p. 127) call the 'bad stories' I do not seek to silence or suppress them; for these stories provide vital sources for researchers to reflect on their work and its consequences more clearly. By means of critique is the narrative space opened up to enable the continuing cycle of development of the life historian's practice by accepting, not denying, that which exists.

As with the study of the stories of individual lives, the texts from the past considered in this chapter have enabled me to reflect on my own life and the work I wanted to do. These texts provoked me to embark on the journey of this study and seek out other stories about teachers' lives. The dialogic action of these published texts affected me as a reader and provoked me to reply to them through the action of my own research. Thus, instead of dismissing these texts, I embraced them in shaping my own story, as Tierney has remarked:

'A life history also may represent a process whereby the researcher and reader come to understand the semiotic means by which someone else makes sense of the world... Through this use of the life history, the researcher and reader hopefully are able to reflect on their own lives.'

(Tierney, 2000, p. 545)

This chapter invites the reader to ask questions about what we do when we claim to be doing life history and why we do it. It recognises that the life story is never fully told, and it invites others to participate in a dialogue in pursuit of the life historian's purpose of fashioning a better world. Thus, engaging in 'critical exchange' should become a generative practice which can re-ignite our commitment and passion 'to increase understanding, produce knowledge, or convince people to work for social change and civic renewal' providing that we are really willing 'to listen to another's perspective' (Ellis, 2002, p. 400).

By exploring the principles of persuasive life history in this chapter through the window of other scholarship, it has been possible to recognise that knowledge is power and that power provides the basis to name and re-present others in empowering or repressive ways (Foucault, 1977 and 1980). Knowledge and its production is an ideological action which cannot be separated from the silencing of the 'voices from below' (Plummer, 2001). The principles of persuasive life history relate to the postmodernist and poststructuralist rejection of 'the idea of universal truth and objective knowledge' and assert that 'truths are always partial and knowledge is always 'situated' – that is, produced by and for particular interests, in particular circumstances, at particular times' (MacLure, 2003, p. 175). Accepting this signals the need for a persuasive life history

practice to develop which seeks to interrogate the underlying purpose of research re-presentations, expose the nature of practice within the knowledge factory, and develop transformational and transgressive re-presentations which disrupt the dominant social order and interrupt repressive knowledge practices (Petersen, 2003; Youngblood Jackson, 2003; Tierney, 2000; Denzin, 1989; hooks, 1994). Recognising the context in which research knowledge is produced, the persuasive life history approach seeks to examine the nature of the stories that produce the stories told in our research; it brings the practices, values and actions of story tellers (both participants *and* researchers) to the fore, so that we can make sense of the stories we are told; and it remains resolutely focused on the personal and social purpose and contribution of research work, so that when we are persuasively informed we might be compelled to act.

CHAPTER 4: METHODOLOGY

In chapter 2, I provided an overview of the life history method and identified eight principles pertaining to the conduct of a persuasive life history approach; chapter 3 illustrated these principles – counter-cultural, multi-dimensionality, theory building, ethic of respect, collaborative, reflexivity, validation, contextualisation – by drawing on a number of published studies. This chapter, which describes how I applied the principles for persuasive life history in my own research, should not be read in isolation from the preceding chapters or those which follow. This chapter describes my story of undertaking this life history study and I recognise issues of completeness and partiality in my re-telling of this story of research. Thus, I am engaged here in a process of re-presenting the actuality of my experience as I try to construct a coherent narrative of what took place during this study. This is not to deny the need for me to provide a trustworthy account of my experience, but recognises that the act of telling this research story is representative of my viewpoint at the time of writing this account (Riessman, 1993, pp. 64-65).

Research Orientation

I described in chapter 1 the rationale for this study, which has been concerned with disrupting the negative discourses about black men, overcoming the silencing of black men teachers' stories within the teacher life history scholarship and establishing a persuasive approach to the use of life history in educational research. This study has been the product of a relationship between Jay (the research participant) and me; our respective agency is implicated in Jay's story (Oakley, 1981; Munro, 1998). Whilst eschewing a vanity ethnography (Maynard, 1993), I recognise that Jay and I are told by the story of this research (Sikes and Everington, 2004, p.25; Thomas, 1995b, p.3). The act of storying Jay's life has been reflective of my own personal and professional interests, beliefs, values and attitudes as a black male researcher and former teacher. This research study relates directly to my own biography and my story of research desire (Stanley, 1993; Stroobants, 2005). Moreover, despite my commitment to hearing the story of Jay I understood how contingent his story was; for I identified the terms on which Jay has told his life story and the means by which his story was told; I initiated the relationship with Jay on terms which met my research desire; I determined, albeit with Jay, the arrangements for interpreting and re-presenting Jay's life story; and the final

'production' of this thesis is founded on *my* interest as a researcher (Stake, 2000, p. 441). I express my position in this way to make a point: that the balance of power in the relationship between Jay and myself seemed tilted towards me (Charmaz and Mitchell, 1997, p. 210; LeCompte, 1993, p.13). Thus, whilst I subscribed to a collaborative approach, I recognise that in Jay's story I am told also (Stanley, 1993; Reed-Danahay, 1997; Letherby and Ramsay, 1999; Norum, 2000; Plummer, 2001). Jay's story suggests the limits of a collaborative research approach (Francis, 2003, p.63; Goldstein, 2002, pp. 166-167), the problem of (and struggle for) self-identification (McLaughlin and Tierney, 1993; West, 1993; Tierney, 2002) and the contingent nature of story telling in educational research (Mykhalovskiy, 1996; LeCompte, 1993; Riessman, 1993).

The nature of life history research is such that researchers enter into 'personal' relationships with their research participants. I relied upon Jay's willingness to enter a series of conversations with me about his personal experiences, his feelings, beliefs and hopes for the future. This afforded me a privileged position and one which was dependent upon Jay's belief that I would treat him with dignity and respect. My orientation was to assume a personal and professional responsibility towards Jay – in particular, in relation to how Jay was treated during and at the end of the research process, in the writing of his story and

how his story is reported and told to others. Guided by an ethic of respect, I was concerned to ensure that Jay did not feel exploited or abandoned during or at the end of the research process (LeCompte, 1993, p.20). I am not suggesting that I befriended Jay; however, I was concerned to proceed with sensitivity and respect in the way the story of Jay's life was collected, interpreted and reported, whilst also making clear to Jay my purpose and the limitations of what I could or could not do for him.

As with any personal relationship, establishing common ground and rapport with my research participant was essential. This was particularly important given that my relationship with Jay needed to be established and sustained over an extended period of time – it continued for a period of some eighteen months. Sharing information about my own life – for example, why I was involved in doing this study - was a necessary part of developing and nurturing my relationship with Jay. Working within an ethical framework (see British Educational Research Association, 1992 and 2004), I declared openly to Jay my orientation and values as a researcher and reassured him that my approach would be non-judgemental, that there were no right or wrong answers but only a desire to hear his story. In this way, I sought to assure Jay that his personal and

professional life would be valued and respected throughout the process.

Undertaking this study also presented challenges for me as a researcher: sustaining interest and enthusiasm; finding the time to bring the process to a conclusion; dealing with my own isolation; and the dangers of expediency in the review and writing of this research. I was also moved personally by Jay's willingness to invite me into his personal world in sharing the story of his life. In order to deal with these issues, I established access to a range of individuals (including family, friends, colleagues, and my research supervisors) with whom I discussed the development and conduct of the research and regularly evaluated my ideas and emerging interpretations, whilst respecting Jay's anonymity. I, thus, recognised the limits to my own reflexivity and the need to access other points of view and personal support. Additionally, I maintained a research journal to record my experiences and thoughts during the course of the research process; this provided a valuable documentary and reflexive source during the process of interpreting and writing this research story. Presentations I made to postgraduate research seminars also provided opportunities to organise my own thinking, to review my research and to tentatively evaluate the emerging research findings.

Research Sample

At the outset, I was interested in exploring the lives of male teachers in the United Kingdom whose cultural heritage was from the Caribbean/African Diaspora. I included in my search teachers who identified their cultural heritage as 'black' (Caribbean, African-Caribbean, Black British or mixed heritage) as denoted by the Office for National Statistics Census of Population 2001. My emphasis throughout was to engage individuals within an ethical framework which meant respecting how individuals self-identified their ethnic background/heritage (Bulmer, 1996). Self-identification was intended to provide a means of encouraging participants to discuss their identities in a manner with which they felt comfortable (Nazroo and Karlsen, 2003), whilst attending to the problem of racial identification as 'politically and culturally constructed' (Hall, 1988, p.28).

I was interested to explore the perspectives of practising classroom teachers working in primary and/or secondary schools. I excluded headteachers on the grounds that they might exhibit forms of professional identity and agency qualitatively different from those of classroom practitioners (Campbell and Neill, 1994b, p.130). I was also interested in comparing the perspectives of the teachers in my

study with those of other classroom teachers as identified by previous scholarship. Financial and other resource constraints affecting the conduct of this research meant that the population for this study was restricted to black men teachers living and working in the West and East Midlands regions in England.

At the outset, I had no fixed view on the number of teachers who would be involved in the study. Initially, I anticipated that I would interview a group of teachers as a means of comparing the experiences of black men teachers who occupied similar positions and in order to provide for an extended form of narrative emplotment. I utilised four bases for sample selection – purposive, convenience, homogeneous and snowball - as suggested by Goodson and Sikes (2001, pp. 24-25). I recognised that there were limitations arising from each of these sampling strategies; in particular, the potential for research bias (Goodson and Sikes, 2001, p.25), although I did not assume that it would be possible to establish a 'bias free' research approach (Hammersley, 2000; Norum, 2000). In drawing a 'convenience' sample of research participants from teachers who were members of a particular organisation or network – in this case, members of the NASUWT teachers' union and a local education authority (LEA) network of black and other minority ethnic group teachers - I recognised from the outset the potential for bias to occur

arising from the use of a relatively restricted pool of potential research participants (Burgess, 1984, p.57). However, and in the absence of a comprehensive national database providing information on the ethnic backgrounds of all teachers, I viewed my sampling approach as a pragmatic response to real world constraints. Moreover, the combination of a range of sampling strategies was intended to mitigate the biases which might have arisen from reliance on a single sampling strategy.

Prospective research participants belonging to the LEA black and other minority ethnic group teachers' network were approached via the network's administrator/gatekeeper; a publicity notice (see Appendix) was provided to the network's gatekeeper for distribution to network members and I was also invited to attend a meeting of the network to help promote the research. Issues of suggestibility bias were considered and attempts made to address these in the design of the publicity notice. In the event, the meeting dates for the network were repeatedly cancelled. I made several attempts to contact the network gatekeepers, by telephone and follow-up letters, and, on a number of occasions I was reassured that the opportunity would be afforded to me to discuss my research with members of the network. However, the opportunity to meet with members of the network never materialised. The problem of dependency upon gatekeepers to gain

access to the field was recognised as an issue from the outset, but the limited accessibility to black men teachers dictated the necessity of this approach. No participants were identified using this source.

All prospective research participants were identified via a combination of the NASUWT database source and via the snowball strategy. The process of identifying potential participants via the NASUWT database involved obtaining a written agreement and support from the union's General Secretary. Issues of data protection were discussed and addressed prior to commencement of the fieldwork, to ensure that ethical principles were not compromised and that the provisions of the Data Protection Act 1998 were observed. The union's membership secretariat undertook a search of members in the relevant locality to identify teachers who met the sampling criteria. Prospective participants from the NASUWT database and those identified through snowballing were initially approached by letter (see Appendix), inviting teachers to express their interest in the research by completing and returning to me a short pro-forma (see Appendix) using the stamped addressed envelope provided. The potential for suggestibility bias was explored and attempts made to address these in the drafting of letters of invitation, whilst attending to my desire that participation should take place on the basis of some notion of 'informed consent'. However, I chose not to hide behind the

ethical codes which were a guide to my practice (Ranney, 2005; Malone, 2003) and I prepared myself to discuss with participants the purpose of the research and the story of my involvement in it.

A total of twelve black men teachers initially agreed to participate in the study as a result of the combined sample selection strategies. All were contacted initially by letter, welcoming their agreement to participate in the study. I then followed up these letters with telephone calls to arrange times, dates and venues for meetings, and, to those who had not provided telephone contact numbers, I sent further letters. Eventually, some form of personal contact or exchange was secured with most of the teachers and meeting dates were agreed. However, a number of the teachers contacted me prior to these meetings to request their postponement, though none indicated directly that they did not intend to continue their participation. Attempts were made to contact these teachers on a number of occasions, but eventually I had to accept that their evasion signalled their disinclination to participate. Two initial meetings with participants went ahead. In the event, one person participated in the full research process, since the other teacher seemingly disappeared and I was left with no means of contacting him.

Whilst initially disappointing, the apparent limitation of a sample of one provided me with the opportunity to pursue a 'small is beautiful' approach (Sanders and Liptrot, 1994, p.26); this allowed the presentation of a richly detailed life account, affording narrative depth and breadth and a high degree of reflexive validation as a consequence of this study's sole participant focus. Despite my initial concerns about the sample size, I became less concerned over the course of the study of the desirability, value and significance of having a larger sample of participants. I also realised that I was not alone, for my sense was that the emergence of the 'interview society' had made many individuals more discriminating about where and with whom they made their "confessionals", and also more aware of the risks associated with doing so (Fontana and Frey, 2005, p. 699). My initial concerns about how credible my research might seem to those reading it from a positivist standpoint increasingly gave way to my interest in exploring the life in a way which attended to its rich multi-dimensionality and complexity and which afforded extended opportunities for reflexivity by the reader and me (Stake, 2000 and 2005).

Research Bargain

Prospective participants were provided with a written explanatory statement outlining the purpose of the research and its implications. The written statement (the research bargain) set out the rights of the research participants as suggested by Sikes and Goodson (2001) and Burgess (1984; 1985; 1989). The research bargain (see Appendix) outlined to prospective informants what the research process would involve, so that the individuals concerned could make an informed choice about their participation, as befits the collaborative and ethical principles underpinning this study. In developing the research bargain, I sought to present the study as an interesting and relevant piece of research whilst seeking to avoid the pitfalls of suggestibility bias (Evans, 2002). I recognised, too, that, as a black man undertaking research with other black men, there was a potential to lead prospective participants to see my research in particular and narrow ways (Petersen, 2003) – for example, as research concerned either with ‘race’ and racism or with men and masculinities. Key to mitigating this effect, I took great care to avoid the pitfalls of essentialism by explaining the study against a broad canvas of interest in exploring teachers’ professionalism. Nevertheless, despite my efforts, there is a clear implication in Jay’s

story that the problem of suggestibility was not entirely eliminated, as I mention in chapter 6.

Using the research bargain, I discussed with Jay why I was doing this research and why I felt it important. He expressed interest, up to a point, but seemed more anxious to get started, to begin the process of the interviews and to talk about his life. I explained how his story would be used and presented and outlined his rights in relation to the research and the 'production' of reports based on the research. From the outset, I wanted to encourage participants to exercise 'informed choices' when sharing personal information about themselves; however, I recognised the tensions and potential duplicity inherent in claiming that research participants make informed choices (Malone, 2003) and the difficulties of anticipating fully from the outset the full implications of the research (Pugsley and Welland, 2002, p.1; Goodson and Sikes, 2001, p.91). Prospective participants were advised how they could contact me during the course of the research and were encouraged to do so at any time. I confirmed to participants that they could pause the process, take a break or withdraw at any time. I recognised the importance of assuring the anonymity of individual respondents and the ethical issues of vulnerability and risk associated with research of this nature (Brar, 1992; Goodson and Sikes, 2001). I determined that the names of research participants,

together with other personal identifiers (for example, name of school) would be changed, but that all other details would remain as they were articulated by participants unless otherwise requested.

Two individuals agreed to an initial pre-meeting at which the research bargain was discussed and explained; others indicated that it was more convenient for them to receive the pre-research statement as correspondence by post or email. In the event, the face-to-face meetings with prospective participants proved most effective, yielding the sole participant whose life story is presented here. It is unclear whether more face-to-face pre-meetings with prospective participants would have obtained an increased number of participants, although I suggest that this might have been the case. However, in view of my concerns to assure the 'privacy' of individuals, I did not insist that individuals meet with me to discuss the terms of the research, although they were encouraged to do so. Participant 'commitment' and 'non-commitment' were critical issues in the conduct of the research, although the manifestation and underlying causes were not straightforward. Thus, none of the prospective participants at any stage actually confirmed that they were not willing to participate; all indicated that the terms of the research bargain were acceptable to them; but, in the event, a number did not respond to the initial research instruments provided. I elected not to interrogate

prospective participants on the reasons for non-response, although repeated attempts were made to encourage participation. From the various follow-up conversations with participants, time constraints were an oft-cited factor by prospective participants; others did not respond to follow-up letters, telephone calls or email messages. The potential for informant bias (see LeCompte and Goetz, 1982, p.38) arising from the voluntary (and limited) participation in this study is recognised; however, the advantages to be obtained from the study of a richly detailed biographical story provides an important counter-balance (Stake, 2000 and 2005; Evans, 1993). Indeed, I believe that there are practical limits to what could have been obtained by the inclusion of a larger number of research participants, which, as I have suggested in previous chapters, could well have obscured or distorted the presentation of the personal narratives and compromised my pursuit of a contextualised approach.

At the commencement of the fieldwork, Jay was provided with a statement of the research aims, process and implications. We met and discussed the research bargain and I encouraged Jay to discuss the issues raised, to let me know any areas where clarification was needed and to let me know if there was anything with which he disagreed or which he wished to add. No additional comments were forthcoming. I was mindful that Jay's perception of my position as an

'authoritative' researcher might have contributed to his assent (Goodson and Sikes, 2001, p.36). Jay was not asked to sign the research bargain document; he was provided with a copy for reference and encouraged to review the document throughout the course of the research.

Tools of Inquiry

A number of tools of inquiry have been identified as relevant to the life history researcher (see Thomas, 1995c, p.xii; Goodson and Sikes, 2001, pp. 28-32). I determined the use of three principal strategies for collecting Jay's life story:

- (i) documentary sources;
- (ii) time line;
- (iii) interviews.

(i) Documentary sources

Life history research seeks to relate the stories individuals tell about their lives to the social, cultural, political and historical contexts in which their lives are lived (Goodson, 1992, p.6) in a way which recognises and addresses itself to the fundamental ontological relation of structure and agency (MacLure, 2003; Scott, 2000; Pring,

2000a). In my attempt to explore the context of Jay's life, I recognised the need to examine the prevailing social and cultural discourses which pertain to teachers and to black men teachers specifically (see Sikes, 1997, p.17). An extended literature review was undertaken, not merely to explore the stories about black and male teachers, but in order to critically interrogate how such teachers are written about and understood within mainstream and insurgent discourses. I wanted to consider the life of Jay in relation to these existing discourses, and also to consider the salience of these social narratives in the context of Jay's personal story (Stake, 2005; Archer, 1979 and 1995).

The literature review provided a critical complement to the life story which is at the centre of this study. The conduct of a balanced review of the literature was intended to counter-balance the story of Jay's life against a broad contextual theoretical backdrop (Goodson, 2000, p.22). In undertaking the review of the literature, I sought to locate my research within the wider scholarship on teachers generally and black teachers in particular and to enter a dialogue with the wider scholarship. The literature review was based upon a detailed review of UK and overseas published sources, including books, journals, conference papers, online sources, government and other reports and media/press sources (e.g. newspapers). I reviewed the existing

literature in relation to the thematic issues underpinning the research and in relation to the application of the life history approach. I pursued a reflexive approach throughout, questioning and reframing my interpretations of the contexts that pertain to black men teachers to develop a broad based grounding in the salient theoretical and discursive issues. The review of existing scholarship enabled me to develop, refine and focus my own study. Examples of previous research in the field were identified through systematic keyword and author searches of library catalogues. The scope of the research was developed by reading outwards and following up alternative thematic, conceptual and methodological issues from my initial scrutiny of published texts. In this sense, the literature review involved both deductive and inductive processes (LeCompte and Goetz, 1982, p.40). Key texts were identified, scrutinised and critically evaluated in relation to epistemological and methodological concerns. The literature review provided a basis for exploring the relationship between the story of Jay and other narratives about teachers. The nature and relative paucity of published research about black men teachers raised a number of issues for my work; in particular, it encouraged me to reflect upon the salience of other teacher life history studies and contribute to developing theory in respect of teachers and teaching which would disrupt the mono-dimensional discourses that served to re-present black teachers in particular and

narrow ways (Troyna, 1994a; Bertaux, 1981; Small, 1994). I tuned into the strengths of the mainstream and insurgent paradigms, theorising and methods as a means of contributing to a 'critical organic' approach to theory building on teachers and teaching (West, 1993, p.22).

I also paid particular attention to the micro-contexts of Jay's life: namely, the historical, geographical, cultural and institutional specificities of Jay's experience and within which his everyday self is situated (Troyna, 1994b; Mac an Ghail, 1999). Information about Jay's local and school contexts was gleaned from a review of published sources, including local population census data, school inspection reports, the school prospectus and published school performance data. Whilst this information helped to inform my reading of Jay's life story, these sources were not without their limitations - not least in terms of the timeliness and validity of some of the available information. However, the application of a collaborative approach to compiling Jay's life story meant that it was possible to review the relevance of this contextual material with Jay during the course of the study.

(ii) Time Line

From the outset of the process, I was concerned that constructing a life story would pose significant challenges for the individual, key to which would be whether and how he would be able to recall former events in his life and talk openly about his whole life if suddenly thrust into an interview situation. Thus, the time line strategy was devised in order to provide an opportunity for Jay to prepare himself mentally and emotionally for the interviews and to avoid potential difficulties which might have arisen as a result of answering questions 'cold' in an interview situation. The time line also represented a critical element in my strategy to encourage participant-reflexivity and self-reflexivity during the research process. The time line also provided a means for me to ground my research in the local concerns of Jay's life rather than positioning Jay's talk as a response to grand narratives about black men teachers.

The time line was devised with a relatively simple architecture within which Jay could plot significant events in his life and his life story. The time line document was an attempt to 'storyboard' Jay's life (Riessman, 1993, p.55), plotting the main phases of Jay's life experience around which his life story could then be woven. The time line provided a prompt for Jay and me during the interview process,

facilitating Jay's recall of past memories whilst focusing my questions around the actual events of his life rather than my own assumptions.

In developing the time line template, I wanted to ensure that Jay would not be constrained or burdened in producing this life document. I wanted Jay's personal story to drive our conversations. I identified a series of prompts rather than questions which were concerned with life 'events' rather than how these were interpreted by Jay. The prompts were identified as those which might apply to any teacher and reflected my commitment to a whole life approach whilst avoiding the pitfalls of an essentialist or mono-dimensional reading. The time line template sought to elicit the following information:

- family background – birthplace/country, occupation, home location, ethnic origin of parents/grandparents;
- date and place of birth of participant;
- siblings – dates of birth, occupations, home locations;
- education and upbringing – including, schools and colleges attended, university attended and courses of study;
- domestic and family history – including details of home locations, marriage/partnership, children;

- work career – including details of paid and unpaid work;
- teaching career – initial training, sector/age-range, employment history, types and characteristics of schools worked in, positions held, promotion history, job changes, locations;
- critical incidents during the participant's professional life;
- membership of professional bodies and political organisations and any positions held;
- other interests and pursuits.

The time line template (a paper copy and electronic word-processed file) was provided for use by Jay and he was encouraged to develop the document in a manner which he deemed most reflective of his life. Headings and prompts were a flexible guide, not fixed questions to which Jay had to respond, and Jay was invited to add to or change these headings as he felt appropriate. Issues of presentational quality were not a concern to the production of the time line. Jay developed his time line using the word-processed file provided, on the grounds that he felt this enabled him to revisit, revise and develop his textual expositions prior to providing me with his initial life text. Jay spent an initial period of three weeks preparing his time line.

The time line provided an historical map of Jay's biography, including information about key events and critical incidents, both traumatic and celebratory, in his personal and professional life (Thomas, 1995b, p.12). The time line provided an initial opportunity for Jay to begin to reflect on his identity and agency as a teacher (Woods, 1993b; Turner, 1969). By encouraging Jay to give emphasis to those events which he felt most significant in his life, I sought to mediate my power as researcher by enabling Jay to set the course for our future conversations.

I collected the time line from Jay prior to conducting the interviews and used the opportunity to discuss with him any issues or concerns he had about completing this document of his life. Jay commented on the length of the documents and that his initial feeling was one of being daunted by the time line. However, he also expressed satisfaction with the process in which he was involved. Prior to the first interview, I provided Jay with a printed copy of the time line so that he could refer to it throughout the interview process. Jay's time line text was, thus, an important reflexive source for Jay during the course of the research. The time line also informed the construction of the topic guide for the interviews and became the focus of our extended conversations. By reading and re-reading Jay's time line text, I was able to locate the interviews in the events of Jay's life,

thus avoiding the pitfalls of privileging my own *a priori* theoretical assumptions (Glaser and Strauss, 1967; Katz, 1983; Riessman, 1993). Jay was encouraged to develop the time line during the course of the research. The time line template document is presented in full in the Appendix, including details of Jay's response to the same.

(iii) Interviews

The life story interviews provided the main points of encounter between myself and Jay. The interviews explored the content of the time line and provided opportunities for Jay to give meaning to his life story. There were two principal components, which were:

- telling the story of becoming a teacher;
- telling the story of being a teacher.

Utilising the approach taken in previous research (Casey, 1993; Rosenthal, 1993; Osler, 1997), I began by inviting Jay to "*Tell me the story of your life*" and "*Tell me the story of your life as a teacher*". Restricting myself to two relatively simple invitations, I wanted to provide Jay with an open-ended opportunity to narrate his story on his own terms and in his own words (Riessman, 1993, p.55). Whilst I

wanted to enable Jay to talk about his whole life, I was concerned that 'big' questions could be silencing. I was, thus, concerned that limiting my questioning to two very open-ended invitations might yield a truncated response; a more 'interventionist' strategy was, therefore, taken (Denzin, 1989, p.82). I prepared a topic guide (a series of prompts) to help guide me through the loose, semi-structured interviews. The topic guide enabled me to prepare for the interviews, in much the same way as the time line had enabled Jay to prepare himself mentally and emotionally for the interviews. The interview topic guide was subject to a number of drafts and redrafts and was also refined in light of the comments received from my reference group. The process of developing and refining the topic guide was essential to achieving clarity in my use of language and key concepts, addressing the potential for suggestibility bias, and in achieving coherence and structure in the overall shape of the interviews (Evans, 2002). The drafting and review of the topic guide allowed me to clarify how I might begin to elicit Jay's life story; it also enabled me to think about Jay's life prior to commencing the interviews. The topic guide provided a template for my conversations with Jay. Adopting a loose, semi-structured interview approach enabled me to respond flexibly to issues that arose during the course of the interviews. This meant maintaining a reflexive approach not only prior to but also during the course of our conversations, whilst

also seeking to minimise the potential for biases to occur as a result of privileging aspects of Jay's story as told for the purposes of follow up exploration. To mitigate this effect, the use of a discrete topic guide was helpful, but I also sought to maintain a reflexive stance in relation to my own practice and the interventions I made during the course of our conversations (LeCompte and Goetz, 1982, p.43). I recognised that it was my task 'to draw out from the person interviewed the deeper significance' of the events of his life, which required skills beyond mere recourse to the scripted questionnaire or topic guide (Pring, 2000a, p.39). I wanted to open the narrative space wherein Jay could talk about his whole life in a way which broke free of orthodox masculinist and ethnicist re-presentations (Petersen, 2003); I prepared for us to lose our way in his personal story whilst enabling a transformative story of his experience to take root and emerge (Youngblood Jackson, 2003; Lather, 2001). My ability to establish a rapport with Jay, to enable him to feel comfortable about the process, to be responsive enough that he could articulate his life story in his own terms, whilst being sensitive to gain Jay's confidence in talking openly with me - a stranger – were essential attributes of my interview approach. I also felt that having no history with Jay meant that we could explore his life in ways which might not be open to someone who knew him better (Charmaz and Mitchell, 1997, p. 210).

A “thick” data approach was pursued in order to capture the richness of Jay’s life story (Stake, 2000 and 2005; Nee-Benham, 1997) and to avoid the pitfalls of a reductionist and mono-dimensional reading (Troyna, 1994a). The interviews were geared towards exploring Jay’s family, childhood, personal and professional life, his reasons for becoming a teacher, his view of teaching, his philosophy of teaching, and his identity and agency as a teacher. The interviews provided an opportunity to consider Jay’s professional relationships within and beyond his school and the salience of these relationships for his professional identity and practice. The interviews were premised on my commitment to the principles of persuasive life history research practice which recognises the importance of a person-centred approach to understanding the teacher. My seemingly banal interests enabled me to begin to foreground the everyday and the ordinary in Jay’s life over the exotic and the different, and, thereby, connect with our shared humanity (Plummer, 2001; Fine et al, 2000; Laible, 2000). The interviews sought to explore issues of teacher identity and agency with reference to:

- earliest memories of home;
- earliest memories of school;

- mother/father;
- family values and socialisation;
- family circumstances (e.g. geography/place of residence, social class);
- favourite teacher and description of his/her style/values;
- life goals, values and political or social motivation;
- experiences of challenging discrimination;
- reasons for entering teaching;
- stories of 'good teaching';
- philosophy of teaching;
- teaching career to date;
- professional values, beliefs and commitment;
- characteristics of students in Jay's class(es) and school;
- relationship between Jay and his students;
- relationship between Jay and his work colleagues;
- views on the need for change within the school, the curriculum and in the nature or quality of relationships that exist;
- critical incidents which have shaped/occurred during Jay's professional life;
- involvement in professional and other networks within and outside the school;

- strategies taken by Jay to achieve change within or beyond his school and in his professional life;
- future goals and aspirations – in career and other terms.

I discussed with Jay at the outset the purpose of the interviews and how the interviews would be conducted. I sought his permission to use an audio tape recording machine to assist recording the life story interviews, to which Jay agreed. I recognise that there are limitations to the use of such technologies in terms of their reliability, potential effects on the interview process (Goodson and Sikes, 2001, pp. 32-33) and limited capacity to 'capture' the subtle nuances of verbal and non-verbal communication (Riessman, 1993, p.11). Nevertheless, the use of a recording device was considered necessary to ensuring some degree of 'completeness' to the text of Jay's life which would assist the process of validating the interpretations given to Jay's story (LeCompte and Goetz, 1982, pp. 42-43). Nevertheless, I did not rely on the use of these recordings; the audio tape recording was supplemented by my own written notes of the interviews which provided an alternative source of "data" (as well as a vital back-up in case of technological failure) and allowed me to record issues for follow-up questioning without interrupting the flow of Jay's speech. Thus, I noted significant non-verbal elements for future reference,

such as my reading of Jay's demeanour, body language and the environment where the interviews took place. Non-lexical cues were subject to coding and review (see Appendix). After each interview and meeting with Jay, I wrote up my own perceptions about the process, using my research journal. Throughout the process, Jay appeared relaxed and comfortable with the flow of the interviews. I explained to Jay how the tapes would be used and I assured Jay that these would be held securely by me throughout the research process. I confirmed with Jay that he would be given a copy of the audio recordings and the interview transcript for his reference and validation and also to enable his participation in the final phase of constructing his life story.

Constructing the Life Story

The process of constructing the life story requires that the individual is afforded time to retrieve and construct a narrative of her/his life (Etter-Lewis, 1993, p.149). This is central to the principles of reflexivity, collaboration and ethical practice to which I referred in chapter 2. The need to afford time for eliciting the life story had implications for the number and duration of interviews undertaken. There were considerable time implications for Jay outside the conduct of the formal interviews where he was invited to reflect on

and revisit his story. Jay needed a high degree of commitment to the research, beyond the process of sitting through the interviews.

I recognised that the process of collecting the life story would be intrusive and time-intensive, not least because, in the case of Jay, the interviews were conducted in his own personal time, at the end of a full teaching day when he was likely to be tired and under pressure to prepare for his next day in the classroom. Not only this, but Jay's life was put on hold, as it were, in order that he could prepare for and participate in the interviews. I was concerned to structure the process of collecting Jay's life story in such ways as to mitigate these effects and to respect his time, concerns, interests and needs. I invited Jay to choose the venue for the interviews, which took place in his home; indeed, given the personal nature of our conversations, Jay's home was probably a particularly appropriate location, potentially enabling him to be more relaxed and lucid (Herzog, 2005). The interview location brought with it particular disturbances and distractions, although these did not appear to affect the flow of the interviews in ways immediately apparent from the transcript. Jay decided that his involvement in the research was a worthwhile endeavour; nevertheless, my responsibility towards Jay was affected by an ethical concern to make the process meaningful for him, whilst

respecting Jay as a human being and not merely a 'respondent' (Plummer, 2001; Denzin, 1989).

I also sought to ensure that the research proceeded at a pace which enabled Jay to tell his story without unnecessary encumbrance (Etter-Lewis, 1993, p.149). Whilst my own time was limited, I was keen to ensure that this did not militate against Jay's ability to tell his story or result in a repressive outcome (Goodson and Sikes, 2001, p.26; Denzin, 1989, p.83). I anticipated that a single interview would be insufficient for the construction of Jay's life story. I had no fixed view of the number of interviews that would be required, although I anticipated that the process of collecting the life story would take place over a number of distinct phases (Rosenthal, 1993, p.68), as follows:

- agree the process of the research, rights and responsibilities (*first phase/research bargain*);
- statement of the main biographical elements of the life as lived (*second phase/time line*);
- life story interviews and review of initial life texts (*third phase/time line and interviews*);
- final review of the life story (*fourth phase/interviews*);

- re-presentation of the 'completed' life story (*fourth phase/interviews*).

In all, I met with Jay on five occasions in which we spent over six hours in the interview process, in addition to the time he spent discussing the research with me in the pre-interview stage (over one hour), preparing his time-line document (around 2 hours) and reviewing and commenting on the transcripts and draft life texts (estimated at around 6 hours). Jay also spent other time reflecting on the research process which I am unable to quantify.

Transcription and Interpretation

The process of transcription was a key part of the research process and provided an important documentary source of our conversations. The interview materials, together with the time line document, provided the "raw materials" for the compilation of Jay's life story. Through full and detailed transcription, I sought to achieve a high degree of validation in relation to matters of story interpretation and the final re-presentation of Jay's life story (LeCompte and Goetz, 1982; Riessman, 1993; Mathner and Doucet, 1997). Jay was provided with a copy of the transcript and drafts of his life story for his

review, together with a copy of the tapes from which the written texts had come. Jay was invited to let me have feedback on the written texts (participant validation) and the interview transcript, together with emerging interpretations, which were also shared with my personal reference group (third party/peer review) and to assist the internal reliability of the study (LeCompte and Goetz, 1982, p.42).

Transcription of the interviews was undertaken by me, not only because of the financial constraints governing the research, but also to ensure that the final transcripts reflected the sense Jay and me had about what had taken place during the interviews. Since I was involved in these conversations, I regarded it as vital not to delegate the task of transcription to others who might bring their own interpretations to bear on the presentation of the primary source of Jay's life text. Moreover, I did not consider it appropriate to my ethical approach to distribute the audio recordings of my conversations with Jay to a third party which could, in the event, have compromised his anonymity. Each interview was transcribed fully, without editing for colloquialisms, grammatical errors or other individual characteristics of speech. I attempted to preserve within the written text of the interviews the mundanity of my conversations with Jay – namely, the 'silences, false starts, emphases, nonlexicals like "uhm", discourse markers like "y'know" or "so", overlapping speech, and other signs of

listener participation in the narrative' (Riessman, 1993, p.12). Nevertheless, I recognise that the transcript I have presented is subject to my interpretations and, thus, provides a re-presentation of Jay's life experience as told. The transcript of the interviews is included in the Appendix, together with thematic coding signifiers.

Full transcription of the interviews was a lengthy, yet essential and beneficial part of the process of retelling Jay's story and in my search for meaning (Riessman, 1993; Tilley, 2003; McCormack, 2004). It involved multiple listenings to the tape recordings and careful perusal of the written text itself. By listening carefully to the tapes of the interviews and through detailed reading of the written texts, I did not merely seek to check the texts for accuracy of content; for the process of re-listening and re-reading was an essential part of the process of textual interpretation. Reading the transcripts enabled me to locate the main thematic elements of Jay's narrative. Through this process, the thematic coding of the life texts took place. Interpretation ('analysis' is a term with which I am uncomfortable in the context of this form of research and given the term's implications of privileged researcher insight and understanding) was not a discrete activity; for it was integral to the conversations and exchanges in which Jay and I engaged, our readings of his life text, our subsequent conversations and exchanges about his emerging

life story. I undertook a process of coding the main arguments in Jay's life text as provided by the interview transcript and shared these with Jay for his review and further development (Erben, 1993). These codes provided an initial long list of issues or themes which were then subject to further review and refinement, taking account of thematic connections between arguments in Jay's speech and feedback received from Jay (the coding structure is set out in the Appendix). I deduced main and supporting themes within Jay's story which provided a preliminary basis for establishing the meaning of Jay's story. Each of the readings brought new insights into Jay's life story; interpretations were revised, developed, extended and rationalised as a consequence of our discussions and textual readings. A refined thematic coding structure emerged from multiple readings of the detailed transcriptions (Katz, 1983). I interrogated the written texts, comparing and contrasting Jay's story with the stories of other teachers as identified by previous scholarship which, in turn, prompted further questions about Jay's life story and brought about alternative readings. I was also alive to the need to interrogate the written texts with reference to wider social discourses of gender, masculinities, 'race'/ethnicity, social class and professionalism which had functioned as key theoretical concerns guiding me in the conduct of this study. I grouped and regrouped the textual elements and themes of Jay's story as I sought to establish the architecture of

Jay's narrative; as I sought to identify key words, phrases and forms of expression; as I sought to identify areas of repetition in Jay's life text; as I sought to consider the significance of the stops, starts, pauses and false starts in Jay's speech; and as I reflected on the significance of those times when Jay expressed laughter or was more or less emphatic in his speech. Non-lexical elements were also coded as I considered the patterns of Jay's speech – the modes of Jay's articulation; forms of expression were compared and interrogated with reference to the content of Jay's narrative as I sought to explore other (hidden? deeper?) levels of meaning within Jay's life text. Interpretation was a difficult, messy, challenging, complex and enthralling process throughout, involving conscious and intuitive actions. I read Jay's text initially at the level of a straightforward interview between a researcher and participant, exploring how Jay had responded to the questions that I had asked him. However, as I read and re-read the life texts, some aspects of Jay's story stuck in my mind more than others and also contributed to my initial attempts to make sense of his story. As I read the life texts, I tried to approach the process in a relatively systematic way at first, but also became drawn emotionally into Jay's story as a whole story, a story which pulled me deeper into his life in various and inexplicable ways which informed my interpretation of the text (Coffey, 1999, p. 139). As I read and re-read Jay's life text, I

sometimes stumbled accidentally upon ways of 'seeing' Jay's life. I read the text as text; I read across the text; I read between the lines; I had certain hunches which I wanted to explore further; I discerned certain clues that might help me understand Jay's story, followed these through, became side-tracked at times and, no doubt, missed many other clues. I recognised themes that seemed familiar to me, that resonated with my experience and which drew attention to themselves because I found, in Jay's life, fragments of my own life retold, replayed and renewed (Coffey, 1999, p. 139).

I was aided by having Jay's text available on a word processor which enabled me to search quickly for particular patterns in his speech; having the interviews available on audio tape enabled me to listen and re-listen to how he told his story and recapture the moment of our conversations together. I was aided by being able to return to Jay to discuss my readings and to gauge whether he felt I was reading his story on the "right" lines. Interpretation involved personalistic, impressionistic, analytic, systematic, specific and strategic processes of working with the life story within a deductive and inductive *modus operandi* (LeCompte and Goetz, 1982, p.40). Moreover, interpretation proceeded collaboratively; Jay was invited to review the transcripts and my drafts of his life story and we discussed these together and together we acted to refine the life document. I sought

to test my own interpretations of Jay's story through processes of self-validation, participant-validation and peer review. Jay was encouraged to critically evaluate my interpretations as he contributed to the process of storying his life. I say all of this to illustrate the complexities of the process and to highlight the difficulties of reproducing in full here all of what took place and how meaning was made. Nevertheless, I remained committed to pursuing a transparent approach to the presentation of Jay's life story and in presenting my actions and decisions as researcher in fashioning the story of Jay (Morse et al., 2002; Mathner and Doucet, 1997; Riessman, 1993; LeCompte and Goetz, 1982).

Writing up

I applied a structured process for compiling and re-presenting the life story of Jay (Rosenthal, 1993, p.68; Polkinghorne, 1995, pp. 16-18; Riessman, 1993, pp. 64-69; Blumenfeld-Jones, 1995, p.26). In essence, this involved:

- Collating the materials from the interviews to create a detailed and rich story of Jay's life;

- Constructing with Jay a story from his point of view, drawing on extensive use of Jay's own words to describe and signify his actions, motivations and interests;
- Presenting Jay's story as a story in its own right, recognising its historical continuity;
- Reviewing with Jay our respective interpretations of his life as told;
- Creating with Jay a story which is meaningful to Jay and resonates with his experiences as told;
- Re-presenting Jay's life story in a manner that is readable and understandable, and which demonstrates credibility and persuasiveness of interpretation.

In presenting the life story of Jay, I wanted to provide the reader with a detailed and richly textured account of Jay's story of becoming and being a teacher which explores his life fully and recognises its complexities and contradictions. I wanted to avoid a mono-dimensional reading of Jay's identity and agency as a teacher and to provide instead a multi-dimensional account as befits the principles of persuasive life history and to defeat the colonising urge to define the Other (Coffey, 1999, p. 143). I set out to ensure that Jay's voice was heard clearly as befits my commitment to life history as a

counter-cultural practice (Goodson, 2002, p.16) and that the story was the whole story as told to me. I was alive to the potential backlashes that might arise from this study (Mann, 2003, pp. 67-68; Campbell, 1985, pp. 24-26) and the need to consider the reader's perspective and agency when telling this story of research (Plummer, 1995, p.21); for the story giver (narrator), interlocutor (researcher) and reader each bring with them their own histories, language, ways of understanding, preferred interpretations, prejudices and experiences which mediate between the life story as it is told, written and received (Tierney, 2002, p.391). I recognised these implications for the validation and re-presentation of my research. Moreover, in writing this thesis, I have been subject to the orthodox conventions of writing and presentation for the purposes of examination of my work (Lincoln, 2002). I have sought to pursue a research approach that satisfies the scholastic demands of the Academy, without brutalising or compromising the individual life story. I have been committed, also, to resisting a treatment of the life story of a black man as offering 'curiosity' or 'exotic' value or which is re-presented for easy consumption and exploitation by elite groups (Fine et al., 2000; Troyna, 1994a; Hughes, 2003b). This has meant an extended exposition of the research process and the life story, but which seeks to ensure the persuasiveness of this study both for the research participant and other readers.

Jay's life story, as set out in chapter 6, provides a faithful account of Jay's life as told, providing both confessional and impressionistic elements as befits the way in which Jay recounted his story (Van Maanan, 1988; Syrjälä and Estola, 1999). I have sought to re-present Jay's story in his own words whilst attending to the conversational nature of the encounters through which Jay's story was told to me. The focus on the story of a single life led me 'to pay attention to the method of telling the story to enhance [its] credibility' (Muncey, 2005, p. 2). The Appendix to this study includes the interview transcript, research instruments, details of the thematic coding and other parts of the paper trail of this story telling (Morse et al., 2002) and this should be regarded as an integral feature of this study since it is intended to facilitate the reader's understanding of the story of Jay (Garza, 2005, p. 8).

My task, as life historian, has been to collate the narrative elements of Jay's story into a coherent whole. The final re-presentation of the story of Jay's life was undertaken following my discussions with Jay on how his story should be re-presented and in order to avoid the pitfalls of partisanship bias (Bloom and Munro, 1995). Given constraints on Jay's time, the final draft texts were shared with Jay by correspondence. We talked by telephone and by email exchanges.

This was an essential part of ensuring that the life text readings were faithful to Jay's perspective and experiences. I have endeavoured to preserve the fidelity of Jay's story, and to provide a document of a life that Jay recognises as his story (Lincoln and Guba, 1985; Skeggs, 1994; Denzin, 1970; Thomas, 1995b; Blumenfeld-Jones, 1995). However, I am responsible for the story re-presented here, the persuasiveness of which is predicated upon the quality of my application of the life history research approach (LeCompte and Goetz, 1982, pp. 35-37; Riessman, 1993, p.67; Pring, 2000a, p.73). At the same time, this thesis re-presents my story. From the moment that I declared my purpose in doing this research, I began a process of seeking to understand the auto/biographical / which is the axis of my story telling (Stanley, 1993; Neumann, 1996; Sclater, 1998; Ellis and Bochner, 2000; Jewkes and Letherby, 2001; Fontana and Frey, 2005; Sikes, 2005; Stroobants, 2005). Rather than providing a self-indulgent text (Mykhalovskiy, 1996; Lather, 2001; Richardson, 2001), this thesis invites the reader to reflect on the relationship that produced this research story and to recognise how the values and practices of myself and Jay informed our story telling (Tierney, 2000; Plummer, 2001).

Communication

The process of communicating this research has been predicated on an ongoing dialogue with Jay where we discussed our interpretations of his life story. We communicated formally and informally on the telephone, by email and by letter and discussed the research when we met. He enquired about the research – *“how were things going?”*, *“was it proving to be useful?”*, *“what would happen next?”* I regarded these ‘informal’ exchanges as an important part of my communication strategy, reflecting my commitment to working collaboratively with Jay within a framework of an ethic of respect. Moreover, these exchanges were meaningful in terms of research validation and represented, in part, an ongoing dialogue about teachers and their work. At the same time, I was also concerned to give back to Jay something that might be of value to him and which would, in some way, demonstrate the significance of his contribution throughout the research process. Informal conversations were part of my commitment to giving back to Jay whilst also providing valuable feedback to help shape the presentation of this thesis. In addition, Jay received a written copy of his life story together with a summary of the main issues identified by the research and which confirmed to Jay what would happen next.

The second strand of my communication approach rests upon the presentation of this study as a whole. I adopted an approach which, I believe, confirms my commitment to the principles I have identified for persuasive educational life history research. The presentation of this research seeks to privilege the voice of Jay, but also tries to delineate Jay's voice clearly and distinctly from my own. I have tried to present Jay's story as told as fully as possible in this thesis. I have devoted chapter 6 to the inclusion of the life story of Jay; this is intended to signify the centrality of Jay's voice within the study as a whole. Jay's voice locates my theoretical critique on teachers' professional identities and agency (see chapter 7). I have avoided an approach which negates or marginalises Jay's story and which would reduce his contribution to a series of edited or oblique statements and opinions for the purposes of illustrating and legitimising my own views. Instead, for purposes of theoretical contextualisation, it is Jay's voice that 'is heard, heard loudly, heard articulately' (Goodson, 1991, p.36), thus affording a humanity which has been forsaken in other studies of black teachers and black people (Laible, 2000).

I have suggested previously that my life is implicated in the telling of this story of research, and this provides a clue to the third strand of my approach to communication. This study has been, in many

senses, a labour of love. I have invested myself personally and emotionally in this study. In eliciting Jay's personal story, I have formed a relationship with him which cannot be switched off because the research has come to an end with the submission of this document. The research has affected me at a number of levels and will, no doubt, inform my future work, the way in which I see my life and the society of which I am a part. It has informed my sense of self whilst heightening my commitment to a person-centred approach in the development of educational research, policy and practice. It has informed, and will no doubt continue to inform my discussions with others within the Academy, schools and other arenas where I am present. My discussions with persons unconnected with this research, together with my reference group, have been informed – directly or inadvertently - by my personal experience of undertaking this study. In this sense, communication has and will operate through my relationship to the world around me beyond the terms of this study; for my way of seeing the world of teachers and teaching has been affected, fundamentally, as a result of engaging in this research. I envisage that I will continue this conversation with myself and others; indeed, Jay may also do the same. At the same time, readers of this story of research may be affected by it in some ways, whether they are positively moved by it or dismissive of my approach, for I do not regard the reader as a 'passive observer, a

bystander in the author's world' (Tierney, 2002, p.392). In this sense, the agency of myself, Jay and the reader will come into play; for this text is intended to offer a point of connection between myself, Jay and other readers of this study in a wider situated dialogue about teachers' lives and work. Thus, I have not merely been concerned with the production of a bound document which can be made available for scrutiny, but in providing an opportunity for an ongoing conversation to be had about the issues presented here; for this text is replete with ideas and interpretative possibilities which have the potential to transform and move - or at least inform, influence, affect or engage – the reader's emotions, attitudes and perspectives in myriad and unpredictable ways (Davies, 2003, p.112).

Review

The above description provides a story of the research process in practice, albeit a partial re-telling, bounded by the context and conventions of research communication. In reality, the experience of conducting this research was far more complex and messy than I can express here. However, what is presented in this study reflects the conversations I undertook with Jay, whilst recognising that these conversations were bound by the context of this research (Goodson, 2000; MacLure, 1993). I have outlined the strategies I deployed to

enable Jay to speak openly and without encumbrance about his life; however, I do not claim that the account presented in this study is definitive of Jay's life although it is a faithful account of my encounters with Jay during the course of this research (LeCompte, 1993). I recognise, too, that this study might be limited, at least in part, by two critical factors – Jay's desire to speak personally about his life and his capacity to recall and articulate past events. At most, I may claim to have accessed the private life of Jay which he has deemed appropriate for public view and as this relates to his life as a teacher. However, I do not know the extent to which Jay regarded other aspects of his private life to be private and not for (my) public view. Thus, during the course of the interviews I sensed that my very presence, our particular relationship, was informing (affecting) the process of story telling in ways I could not easily discern or fathom, but, I suggest, in ways that related to the interplay of our biographies, interests, perceptions of each other, our bodies and their proximity to each other, our gender, ethnicity, sexuality, prior knowledge of the other and our perceived power in this relationship (Stroobants, 2005; Fontana and Frey, 2005; Petersen, 2003). In some ways our relationship opened the story telling process, it defined its dimensions, whilst also limiting its scope and its telling. In short, this thesis provides the story of my life with Jay.

Throughout the process, I was mindful of the difficulties of engaging Jay in storying his life. I recognised and sought to mediate my power as researcher by resisting a thin epistemological approach. However, the scope of Jay's story was affected in other ways. Whilst, in practical terms, I had the benefit of systematic records, notes, journals and diaries to assist me in re-constructing this story of my experiences, such aids did not generally exist for Jay (the time line aside), and he had to rely on the frailty of his memory when re-constructing the story of his life. The meanings which individuals attribute to events in their past lives at the point when talking of their lives (the present) may vary from the interpretations brought to bear at the time of these experiences. Questions such as "*how did you feel back then...?*" may be difficult and challenging for the research participant who may have given little thought at the time to the meaning of everyday events. Indeed, in undertaking this study, I have become increasingly aware of the way in which the past is re-constructed (if not reinvented) in the very act of storying a life (Plummer, 2001; Sikes, 2000). For example, during the interviews, I had asked Jay why he left school at the age of 16. Jay's response suggested to me the difficulties of remembering the past and the partiality of the stories told in all research, including life history:

Jay: I don't... Well, I would have thought it would have been... [pause] I don't know, actually. The obvious answer is that there was no money in the family and that... But when I was sixteen there was money. Erm... My brothers and sisters were working. I just think... I don't know actually, I just think I wanted to earn my own money. Erm... My mum and dad didn't want me to. [laughs] They had quite a nice house when I was sixteen, but erm... I just wasn't... I wasn't engaged, I don't think. There were other things I wanted to do. I didn't want to go into education, I wanted to have fun. Mmm... Now I've thought it I can't even decide whether I think it's so or not. [laughs] Erm... I've always thought it was because I wanted to have my own money, actually. [783-800]

In providing a detailed account of my methodological approach, I have sought to consider the possibilities for a robust and detailed life history approach which is capable of countering some of the criticisms levelled against previous scholarship. The pursuit of a reflexive approach produces more questions than answers. However, I have been committed to opening up the narrative space, to creating a dialogue and to giving over my scholarship to informed scrutiny, recognising the risks and benefits of so doing. I have recognised

throughout that other scholars are unlikely to be convinced by a methodology whose practice is obscured from view. The persuasive life history research approach seeks to contribute to the democratisation of educational research. Readers of my research will, no doubt, judge for themselves the efficacy of my approach and the extent to which this study provides, at least, a helpful contribution to the future development of this area of educational scholarship.

CHAPTER 5: BLACK MEN TEACHERS: A STORY OF CONTEXT

Educational life history study requires that teachers' stories be considered within a broad contextual analysis to assist the development of theory in relation to teachers and teaching (Goodson, 1992, p.6). This chapter argues that exploring the lives of black men teachers requires a recognition of the impact of racialised and gendered discourses and structural relations. By discourses, I refer to forms of re-presentation in the scholarship and the wider public arena. By structural constraints, I refer to factors and conditions which impact on professional participation. However, it is my contention that racialisation and gender are not the sole factors relevant to understanding black men teachers' professional identities and agency; a broader contextual analysis is also necessary, which recognises the complex, multi-dimensional nature of the identities and agency of black men teachers (Troyna, 1994a; Mac an Ghail, 1999; Essed, 2001). The purpose of this chapter is to provide a *story* of theory, or a lens through which it might be possible to view and interpret the lives of black men teachers (Goodson, 2000, p.22). It provides a contextual backdrop against which the life of Jay (the protagonist in this study) might be read. However, this story of context is a story of a particular form of re-presentation, the salience

of which merits critical interrogation and review (Troyna, 1994a). Thus, this chapter is not intended to provide *the story* of the context of Jay's life, but to allow the commonalities and differences of Jay's story of teaching to be considered in relation to the storied experiences of other black and male teachers. By adopting a focus principally on the dimensions of racialisation and gender/masculinity, this theoretical analysis represents a partial story and one which, as I will suggest in chapter 7, is not the whole story. The chapter explores existing statistical and other research data in relation to black and male teachers and identifies a number of theoretical issues which merit further exploration.

My main interest here is the British context; however, a comparative contextual analysis is also provided as I consider appropriate, whilst recognising the potential for 'errors and misinterpretations, distortions and over-simplifications' to occur where comparative analyses are not treated sensitively and critically (Small, 1994, p.5). The chapter considers the theory and knowledge about black men teachers *qua* other teachers by reference to relevant published statistical data and life history sources and provides a theoretical backdrop against which the story of Jay (provided in chapter 6) is presented.

Racialisation in Britain

Racialised social divisions and inequalities can be detected within all spheres of British social, economic and political life (Christian, 2005; Skellington, 1992); indeed, these problems have been resistant to change and have proved largely intractable (Daniel, 1968; Smith, 1977; Brown, 1984; Modood et al, 1997). The history of immigration control since 1945 and the development of a race relations legislature reflects the paradoxical protector-predator role of the state which has enacted a racialised immigration policy to limit the number of migrants entering the country whilst simultaneously bringing forth a post-war palliative racialised legal framework to, at least symbolically, check the worst effects of racial discrimination (Christian, 2005; Anwar, Roach and Sondhi, 2000; Miles and Phizacklea, 1984; Solomos, 1989). The need for strong immigration control has been asserted as a necessary precondition to the maintenance of good 'race relations', but has assured the reproduction of a racialised ideology which has challenged, overtly and implicitly, the presence of black and other minority ethnic populations in structural and policy terms and impacted on public perceptions of black people within the general population (Bulmer, 1996; Gilroy, 1987; Alibhai-Brown, 1999; Rethon and Heath, 2003). Any concern to understand how racism is manifested should not overlook its devastating consequences on the

lives of its 'victims' (Marriott, 2000; Macpherson of Cluny, 1999; Sivanandan, 1988).

The decennial Census of Population provides the most comprehensive data source on the size and diversity of the population in Great Britain by ethnic group. A detailed critique of the ethnicity question in the Census is beyond the scope of this chapter; however, it is recognised that the framing of questions on ethnic group has been problematic and highly contested (Byrd, 2000; Owen, 1996). At the 2001 Census, the minority ethnic group population had increased from its position in 1991 (5.5%) to 7.9% (4,635,296 persons) of the British population (Office for National Statistics, 2003a, pp. 230-231). The Census identified that, at 2% of the British population, black (Caribbean, African and Other) ethnic groups occupied a low 'critical mass', which might have a bearing on the forms of professional and political organisation in which they are engaged (Small, 1994); the largest of the black ethnic groups was the black Caribbean group which constituted some 49% of the total black ethnic group (Office for National Statistics, 2003a, pp. 230-231). However, the Census has identified a decline in the number of persons identifying as 'Black-Caribbean', which might be due to 'an increasing trend for Black people to identify themselves as 'Black British' rather than 'Black-Caribbean' (Owen et al., 2000, p.9). The

Census has identified that the black ethnic groups have, overall, a younger age profile than the population as a whole, with 12.8% of black (Caribbean, African and Other) ethnic groups in the 16-24 year age cohort compared with 10.9% within the population as a whole; however, the proportion of the black Caribbean population aged 16-24 stands at 10.8% (Office for National Statistics, 2003b, pp. 230-231). Black ethnic group populations are concentrated mainly in London and the West Midlands, although they are also dispersed generally across the country (Owen, 1996, p.94; Office for National Statistics, 2003b).

Black Men in Education

Data in respect of educational participation and school attainment indicate that black ethnic group students – in particular, black Caribbean and black Other ethnic groups - are likely to do less well than the majority of their academic peers (Christian, 2005, p. 327; Bhattacharyya et al., 2003, p.9; Owen, et al 2000, p.26). Examining more closely the educational experiences and achievements of black pupils at age 16 indicates that black (Caribbean and Other) boys achieve significantly less well than their female peers (Office for National Statistics, 2002; Bhattacharyya et al., 2003, p.11). The problems of educational disadvantage and exclusion have been

identified as particularly acute for black Caribbean boys and men (Blair, 2001; Gillborn, 1995 and 1997; Gillborn and Gipps, 1996; Skellington, 1992; Office for National Statistics, 2003a). Overall, black school students are significantly more likely to leave school at age 16 without confirming a place in full time education, training or employment than are students from other ethnic groups (Owen et al, 2000, p.34) and they are disproportionately represented amongst the ranks of the unemployed (Owen et al, 2000, p.88). It has been argued that the educational outcomes of the black ethnic groups may be related to wider socio-economic disadvantage amongst these groups in the population (Owen et al 2000; NASUWT, 1999). However, despite the relative concentration of socio-economic disadvantage and poverty amongst black populations, black ethnic groups achieve less preferential outcomes than their white counterparts even where socio-economic factors are taken into account, suggesting the operation of racial discrimination in relation to the educational experiences and outcomes of black students (Bhat et al., 1988; Brown, 1984; Majors, 2001; Gillborn, 1995; Gillborn and Gipps, 1996; Blair, 2001). However, given the nature of the professional entry requirements into teaching, it is important to consider how, within a context of relative low academic attainment, some black men manage to gain entry to the teaching profession. There is some evidence that black (Caribbean) pupils educated in

mainly white schools perform better than similar pupils in urban, multi-ethnic schools (Cline, et al., 2002, p.1). This might suggest that for some black men, becoming teachers might be linked to their formative experiences and their access to the educational and career opportunities otherwise afforded to other (white) ethnic groups.

Data in respect of participation in higher education indicate that black students are more likely to access higher education as mature students having previously followed 'non-standard' vocational qualifications and part-time programmes of study (Bhattacharyya, et al., 2003, p.28; Owen et al. 2000, p.55). Black Caribbean men are particularly under-represented in terms of their participation in higher education (Bhattacharyya et al., 2003, p.29). The available data indicate that black students in higher education are less likely to be awarded an upper second or first class degree which has consequential implications for participation in study leading to the award of higher degrees (Owen, 2000, p.67). Racial discrimination and racial stereotyping have been highlighted as significant factors in relation to higher education access, course/institutional participation, and the academic outcomes of different ethnic groups (Connor et al., 1996; Osler, 1997; Modood and Acland, 1998). However, and contrary to their generally inferior labour market outcomes at age 16-18, the picture of graduate destinations indicates that black

(Caribbean and Other) men are as likely as white men to be in permanent employment having completed their degree, regardless of their duration of study and the level of qualification achieved (Owen et al. 2000, p.68).

Numbers of Black Student Teachers

Black (Caribbean and Other) new graduates are more likely than other minority ethnic groups to be employed in the education sector six months after graduating (Owen et al., 2000, p.A11). However, it is the extent to which black graduates seek to enter the teaching profession which is of interest here. The available data indicate that whilst minority ethnic groups in general are under-represented amongst teacher trainees, the extent of their under-representation has decreased over time, as Table 1 (below) suggests.

The profile of minority ethnic group teacher trainees indicate that they are heavily concentrated in teacher training institutions in London and the West Midlands (Teacher Training Agency, 2000a and 2004b). The statistical data published by the Teacher Training Agency (TTA) (2004b) and the Universities and Colleges Admissions Service (UCAS) (2004) indicate that minority ethnic group student teachers are more likely to participate on undergraduate teacher

training programmes than their white counterparts. Minority ethnic group trainee teachers experience high rates of drop-out from teacher training, which has been associated with problems of racism and racial discrimination during the course of their training (Ranger, 1988; Singh, 1988; Clay, 1991; Siraj-Blatchford, 1990, 1991 and 1993; Jones and Maguire, 1997).

Table 1:

Initial Teacher Training (ITT): Sector Level Statistics

Characteristics of First Year Trainees by Phase and Minority

Ethnic Background

Phase	Percentage of minority trainees				
	1998/99	1999/2000	2000/01	2001/02	2002/03
Primary	5%	6%	6%	6%	7%
Secondary	7%	8%	8%	8%	10%
Key stage 2/3	5%	4%	5%	5%	6%
ITT Total	6%	7%	7%	7%	8%

(Source: Teacher Training Agency, 2004b)

Owen et al. (2000) have identified that, in the 1999/2000 period, black (African – 30.7%; Caribbean – 46.6%; Other – 47.7%) ethnic groups were less likely to be accepted onto postgraduate initial

teacher training courses than were their white counterparts (59.7%), and black (Caribbean) students, in particular, were markedly less likely to be accepted onto undergraduate education courses (60.8%) than were all other groups (73.4%) (Owen et al, 2000, pp. 64-65). Minority ethnic groups have also been less represented on the prestige programmes of initial teacher training designed to identify the future leaders of the profession; for example, less than 3% of places on the Fast Track Teaching Programme in England were offered to 'non-white' groups in its first year, despite such groups comprising around 10% of applicants to the scheme (Department for Education and Skills, 2001, p.Overview). Targeted provision of 'Access courses' has been identified as a mechanism for increasing the number of minority ethnic group teacher trainees (East and Pitt, 1989; Showunmi and Constantine-Simms, 1995; Carrington et al, 2001). Indeed, Black Caribbean applicants to university are more likely than white applicants to have 'Access qualifications', a finding which is 'linked to Black students' older age at application, with far more Black students entering higher education aged 21+' (Bhattacharyya et al., 2003, p.27).

Numbers of Black Teachers

At the time of writing, in Britain there are no definitive national data to confirm the total number of black and other minority ethnic group teachers (Bhattacharyya et al., 2003, p.33). However, it has generally been argued that black and other minority ethnic groups are under-represented within the teaching profession (Ranger, 1988; Osler, 1997; Commission for Racial Equality and Teacher Training Agency, 1997; Bariso, 2001; Department for Education and Science, 1981 and 1985; Maylor et al., undated). The failure of teachers' employers in Britain to undertake rigorous ethnic monitoring of teacher appointments has impeded efforts to identify the ethnic profile of the teacher workforce and to check the operation of discriminatory employment practices (Ranger, 1988; OFSTED, 1999; Basit and McNamara, 2004). Statistical data on the school workforce published by the Government confirm that ethnicity data are available in fewer than four out of every five local education authorities (LEAs); of those LEAs providing data in 2003, 4.7% of teachers who declared their ethnic backgrounds were identified as from minority ethnic groups, including 1.6% of teachers who identified as from black (Caribbean, African and Other) ethnic groups; over half of black ethnic group teachers (56%) were from the black Caribbean group (Office for National Statistics, 2004). The increased recruitment of minority

ethnic groups to the teaching profession has been signalled as a policy priority both by the Government and the national body governing teacher workforce training (Department for Education and Skills, 2003; Teacher Training Agency, 2000b).

Bariso (2001) has reported that minority ethnic groups constitute 2.5% of employed teachers and educational professionals (Bariso, 2001, p.168); this compares less favourably with the proportions of minority ethnic groups in the general population and the number of 'non-white' pupils in schools within the primary sector (11.8%) and the secondary sector (11.5%) (Owen et al 2000, p.20). Data from the 2001 Census of Population indicate the number of each ethnic group employed as teaching and research professionals; whilst the published data do not relate exclusively to the position of school teachers, they are, nevertheless, informative, as Table 2 (below) indicates.

Table 2:

**Occupation and Ethnic Group by Sex (England and Wales) 2001
(Teaching and Research Professionals)**

All Teaching and Research Professionals						
<u>Ethnic Group</u>	Men		Women		All	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
White	359175	94.0	644662	95.0	1003837	94.6
Mixed	3112	0.8	5170	0.7	8282	0.8
Asian or Asian British	9712	2.5	14881	2.2	24593	2.3
Black or Black British	5792	1.5	10146	1.5	15938	1.5
Chinese or other group	4476	1.2	4258	0.6	8734	0.8
All people	382267	100.0	679117	100.0	1061384	100.0

(Source: Office for National Statistics (2003a) Census 2001: National Report for England and Wales, pp. 136-137 (adapted). Crown Copyright)

The 2001 Census indicated that the black Caribbean ethnic group (54%) constitutes the largest of the black ethnic groups employed as

teaching and research professionals. Maylor et al (undated) have analysed data from a survey undertaken for the General Teaching Council for England in November 2002. Based on an analysis of ethnicity data provided by 64,764 teachers, Maylor et al (undated, p.1) estimate that 'just 2.4% of all teachers' in England are from minority ethnic groups and that, within this statistic, 'only 0.8% of teachers are Black'. The analysis undertaken by Maylor et al (undated, p.1) further indicates that minority ethnic group teachers are concentrated in particular geographic areas which 'fairly closely matches the distribution of the communities... and 53.3% of all Black teachers are found in London'. Maylor et al (undated, p.7-8) have also provided a statistical profile of teachers by ethnic group which suggests the relative under-representation of black men teachers; the relative over-representation of black teachers employed in secondary schools; the relative under-representation of black teachers employed as headteachers and assistant/deputy headteachers; and that minority ethnic group teachers have relatively fewer years of teaching experience than their white colleagues. Maylor et al conclude that minority ethnic group teachers are seriously under-represented within the teaching profession in England and contend that:

'...[I]f the teaching force was to match the school pupil population, the country would need five times as many minority ethnic teachers than it currently has... If members of the minority ethnic population had been recruited into teaching in the same proportion as the White population in each age cohort, then there would have been about 23,000 minority ethnic teachers in the workforce today, rather than 9,100'.

(Maylor et al., undated, pp. 5-6)

Black Teachers Choosing Teaching

Since the 1990s, and coinciding with an associated 'crisis' in the supply of new teachers, there has been a renewed strategic effort to increase the number of persons from minority ethnic groups in the teaching force (Teacher Training Agency and Commission for Racial Equality, 1998). The TTA has established a positive action strategy to increase to 9% the overall proportion of minority ethnic groups entering programmes of initial teacher training by 2005/6 (Teacher Training Agency, 1999; Teacher Training Agency, 2000c). However, the policy desire to recruit and retain black teachers should be considered alongside the motives of black teachers and black students and the reasons individuals give for choosing to become

teachers. The research literature provides a complex picture of the reasons for black teachers' choice of teaching as a career. At its most basic, it is possible to observe a number of push-pull factors associated with individual motivation and commitment and external constraints and enablers.

Dhingra and Dunkwu (1995, p.47) have suggested that minority ethnic group students may be dissuaded from entering the profession because of the effects of racism, negative stereotyping, poor school experiences of black students, the perceived negative experiences meted out to black teachers, and as a consequence of the lack of black role models within the profession. Maylor et al (undated, p.11) have also suggested 'that minority ethnic groups are less likely to enter teacher training where they have had negative experiences of schooling'. A similar argument has been made by Osler (1997) and Basit and McNamara (2004). However, Bariso (2001) has argued that minority ethnic groups may be dissuaded from entering the teaching profession due to a number of intrinsic and extrinsic factors:

'The reasons for underrepresentation of black people in teaching include: some black people's negative attitudes towards teaching resulting in internal exclusion from the profession; the limited relevance of the National

Curriculum to black people, inaccessible and inadequate
ITT, discriminatory recruitment and promotion practices,
low financial rewards and poor race relations in
educational establishments, which can be categorised as
external exclusionary factors.'

(Bariso, 2001, p.180)

A number of studies have sought to explore why, despite school-based and societal racism, some black people 'choose' to pursue a career in teaching; these studies have suggested that such career choices relate to a mix of intrinsic and extrinsic factors (Casey, 1993; Sikes, 1997; Foster, 1993; Humphrey-Brown, 1997; Osler, 1997; Callender, 1997). Comparative studies of black teachers have argued that within racialised and post-colonial societies, teaching has traditionally been one of the few professional career options available to black people (Cundall, 1914; Eisner, 1961; Goulbourne, 1988; Foster, 1997; Etter-Lewis, 1993; hooks, 1994). Foster (1993) has argued that the history of black teachers in the United States can only be understood within the context of Jim Crow/Jane Crow segregation:

'For the first six decades of this century, teaching was one of the few occupations open to Black college graduates, a

condition reflected in the oft-heard phrase, “the only thing a college-educated Negro can do is teach or preach.”

(Foster, 1993, p.156)

In Britain, Bangar and McDermott (1989, p.138) have argued that social pressures may determine, or at least shape, the nature of black teachers' career aspirations and motivations. In Canada, James (2002, p.183) has argued that black teachers' career choice is complex, contradictory and multi-dimensional in nature, reflecting a cocktail of influences – namely, biographical, social, political, contextual, and personal factors. In the United States, a survey of 'African-American male honor students' found that none identified teaching as their principal career choice and only half would even consider a career in teaching (Smith, 2004). Carrington et al (2001, p.41) have stressed 'the importance of intrinsic considerations' in the choice of teaching as a career option amongst British students from minority ethnic groups; indeed, Carrington et al. identified that students from minority ethnic groups were likely to cite factors such as job satisfaction and a sense of achievement as key reasons for pursuing careers in teaching. Powney et al (2003, p.27) have concluded that minority ethnic group teachers' reasons for entry to the profession are more likely to be related to their individual circumstances and personal ambition than to external/structural

drivers such as ethnic segregation and racism. Carrington et al (2001) have suggested that minority ethnic group student teachers enter the profession with a broad desire to 'give back to the community' rather than specifically being concerned to challenge racism (Carrington et al., 2001, p.67). From their analysis of a survey of teachers in England in 2002, Maylor et al (undated, p.11) have also identified that 'Black (33.2%) and Asian (33.4%) teachers were more likely than their white (18.9%) counterparts to regard teaching as a means of 'giving something back' to the community/society and that minority ethnic group teachers were more likely to cite this as a motivating factor on their choice of teaching as a career. Indeed, Maylor et al (undated, p.11) assert that "giving something back' to the community takes on greater significance where minority ethnic teachers are teaching in areas that they have grown up in and they are very much part of the community that they reside and work in'. In a similar vein, Callender (1997, p.21) has argued that a key motivation for some, though not all, black teachers relates to the agenda of black community empowerment. In the United States, a number of writers have also suggested that black teachers' reasons for becoming teachers is related to a narrative of 'giving back' as a means of empowering black students and contributing towards social reform objectives (Foster, 1997; Jones, 2000; Casey, 1993). However, Osler (1997) has suggested that, in England, whilst black

teachers' motivation and commitment may suggest a strong community empowerment narrative, the underlying issues may be more complex:

'Black and ethnic minority students presented a wide range of reasons for choosing teaching as a career.... few seemed to have benefited from formal careers advice and some found their initial choice of occupation disappointing or unsatisfying; a number of these were then encouraged to consider teaching by family and friends.... While some students knew that they had always wanted to teach, others had simply pursued their education for its own sake and had made a recent career decision.... Black and ethnic minority students' career choices and life chances are nevertheless restricted by experiences which are determined by 'race' and skin colour.'

(Osler, 1997, pp. 167-168)

Increasing the Number of Black Teachers

Public policy arguments about the need to increase the numerical representation of black teachers within the profession are located within two distinct yet related discourses: first, that black teachers

should be deployed to assist black students to cope with the unfamiliar linguistic or cultural demands of the British education system by providing specific forms of instruction, guidance, mentoring, care and other forms of support (Foster, 1997; Callender, 1997; Basit and McNamara, 2004); and, second, that there exists a “community responsibility” on the part of black professionals (including teachers) to secure the social and economic advancement of the black population and, by such means, contribute to ‘raising the race’ (Lester, 1971). An implicit assertion here is that white teachers lack the capacity to educate black children (Christian, 2005; Jones, 1999); indeed, the preparedness for cultural diversity in the classroom has been a consistently identified development need amongst newly qualified (predominantly white) teachers immediately on completion of their training (Teacher Training Agency, 2004a; 2002, 2001 and 2000d).

In the British context, the public policy interest in promoting the recruitment of teachers from minority ethnic groups extends over a period of at least five decades. The post-war arrival and settlement of significant immigrant populations from the Caribbean and Indian sub-Continent and the consequential displacement of resident white professionals from urban areas during the 1950s and 1960s required

an appropriate response from central Government and local authorities:

'Many L.E.A.s found it hard to find and hold their ordinary [sic] teachers, quite apart from getting teachers specialized in E2L [English as a Second Language]. This situation led some authorities to employ immigrant teachers specifically to teach immigrant children, not always to the benefit of the children or the longer term professional prospects of the teachers themselves.'

(Deakin, 1970, pp. 177-178)

Furthermore, the public policy discourse throughout the period and beyond is saturated by a conceptual assertion that the education of black children relies upon the presence of black teachers to serve as role models for black pupils, advocates for black pupils and their parents, and to act as the multicultural educators of white teachers (Community Relations Commission, 1977; Department of Education and Science, 1981 and 1985; Duncan, 1990; Singh, 1988; Department for Education and Skills, 2003; Bryan et al., 1985; McKellar, 1989; Callender, 1997; Basit and McNamara, 2004). Specifically, the recruitment of black men teachers to serve as mentors to black boys in order to overcome their low academic

attainment and high rates of school exclusion has been identified as a specific policy and institutional priority (Roach and Sondhi, 1997; Sewell, 1997). The seminal report of the Committee of Inquiry chaired by Lord Swann highlighted the centrality of this assertion within the public policy discourse:

'Ethnic minority teachers may be "role models" in all-white schools as well as in multi-racial schools, in the sense in which their presence may serve to counter and overcome any negative stereotypes in the minds of pupils, parents or teachers from the majority community about ethnic minorities and their place in our society. Where such teachers are able to bring with them a degree of knowledge and personal experience of other cultures, religions and languages this can also be particularly valuable in enriching the "resources" available in an "all-white" school and in assisting the staff in perceiving how the school's curriculum can be broadened along genuinely pluralist lines.'

(Department for Education and Science, 1985, p.604)

However, Basit and McNamara (2004, p.112) have argued that 'we cannot expect ethnic minority teachers alone to 'plug the knowledge

gap' of the teaching force as a whole'. Minority ethnic group teachers may be uncomfortable with a 'role model' label being applied to them, and they may have no strong affinity with students from "their own" ethnic group (Carrington et al., 2001, p.64). James (2002) has also identified the limitations of the 'role model' discourse in taking account of the 'relative privilege' afforded to black teachers which serves to 'differentiate' black teachers from black students (James, 2002, p.181). However, whilst there has been a national policy emphasis on the need to recruit more black teachers, this has not necessarily translated into "real world" practice on the ground, nor extended to a belief amongst school leaders in the potential value and contribution of black teachers (OFSTED, 1999; Basit and McNamara, 2004). Accounts of white headteachers and senior managers suggest that school leaders may not recognise automatically the value of employing black teachers even where they are seeking to identify measures to secure improvements in the educational outcomes of black children (Roach and Sondhi, 1997). Within the context of "multicultural" service provisions, powerful groups may refuse to accept the notion of an ethnically and culturally diverse profession on the grounds that such diversity could undermine professional unity and cohesion and may not serve the interests of dominant white groups (Parekh, 1991, p.186; Roach and Morrison, 1998, p.168; Basit and McNamara, 2004, p.101).

In terms of exploring the motivations of black teachers themselves, Sivanandan (1990) has suggested that the interests of black middle class professionals and the black working class may not coincide:

'There is no such thing as a black-qua-black movement any more. There are middle-class blacks fighting for a place in the (white) middle-class sun and there are workless and working-class blacks fighting for survival and basic freedoms.'

(Sivanandan, 1990, p.125)

Frazier (1957) has also argued that 'when the opportunity has been present, the black bourgeoisie has exploited the Negro masses as ruthlessly as have whites' (Frazier, 1957, p.236). Indeed, Frazier has also argued that, within the context of a racially desegregated school system, black teachers may distance themselves politically, socially and culturally from the wider black community and the concerns of the black child and 'look upon teaching primarily as a source of income' (Frazier, 1957, p.235). Similar observations have been made by a number of other scholars (Miles, 1984; Cashmore, 1991; Wilson, 1978 and 1987; Marger, 1991; Daye, 1994; Boston, 1988). However, it is important to examine this trend closely; thus, whilst

black women teachers in the United States have been 'on a mission' to bring about the 'uplift' of the 'race' (hooks, 1994, p.2), this communitarian commitment may not be articulated equally by all black teachers (see James, 2002). Amongst middle class black women there has, perhaps, been a greater tendency to mobilise around black 'community' concerns than has been the case for black men (Small, 1994; Amott and Matthaei, 1991; Collins, 1991; Etter-Lewis, 1993; Osler, 1997). This suggests the political plurality of the black 'middle class' and that the political and professional agency of black teachers may be mediated by ethnic, gender, social class and generational factors (Savage, 1991, p.51; Layton-Henry, 1984, p.55; Daye, 1994, p.198).

Black Teachers' Careers

The racialised employment experiences of people from minority ethnic groups in, or seeking to enter, the teaching profession has been the focus of a significant body of quantitative research (Ranger, 1988; Department of Education and Science, 1985; Hubah, 1984; Pole, 1999; Carrington, et al., 2001; Maylor et al, undated). Much of this research has described the existence and effects of racial discrimination in relation to teachers' careers. Indeed, John (1993)

has asserted that black teachers' careers are determined by the structural effects of racism.

Bhattacharyya et al (2003, p.33) have identified that one in six students from minority ethnic groups on initial teacher training programmes are likely to report problems of racial harassment in their first teaching practice placements. Powney et al (2003, p.57) have argued that minority ethnic group teachers' concerns about racism, discrimination and harassment are related to the age and gender of the teacher, with male and older teachers more likely to identify racial discrimination and ethnicity as important or very important factors affecting their career progression. A similar argument has been made by Ghuman (1995, p.55 and 85) and Rothon and Heath (2003). Ranger (1988, p.65) has reported the existence of a racialised division of labour within the teaching profession which affects the employment prospects, pay and career progression of teachers from minority ethnic groups, with over half of these teachers believing they had 'personally experienced racial discrimination in teaching'. Bariso (2001) has argued that black teachers receive less favourable treatment during the course of their professional careers, leading to career blight. Ranger (1988, p.55) has argued that minority ethnic group teachers feel that they are not respected by white colleagues, parents or pupils. Singh (1988, pp.

28-31) has reported that minority ethnic group teachers experience problems of negative management relations, exploitation and marginalisation, blighted career prospects, poor relationships with peers, racialisation, invisibility, exclusion, differential status, lack of professional belonging, stress, ill-health, challenging pupil behaviour and low self-worth. These stories of black teachers suggest that whilst some achieve relatively high status within the British school system (Gilroy, 1976; Osler, 1997), they may experience a form of 'ambiguous empowerment' (Chase, 1995), wherein their high professional status conflicts with their subordinate racialised social status.

Powney et al (2003, p.Appendix 2) have identified that minority ethnic group teachers tend to be employed in posts 'associated with low status subject areas and pastoral roles, are less likely to be promoted, and feel undervalued and isolated'. Powney et al (2003, p.24) have also argued that minority ethnic group teachers' concerns with the problem of racialisation at school level may lead them to work in schools where other minority ethnic group teachers are present as a means of avoiding problems of isolation and racism. Whilst Maylor et al (undated, p.3) have identified 'striking' similarities in the views of minority ethnic group teachers and 'those of the profession as a whole', their analysis indicates that minority ethnic

group teachers are 'less likely to be in managerial positions than white colleagues with similar experience' (Maylor et al, undated, p.1). Other research suggests that some minority ethnic group teachers experience discrimination in access to teaching posts as a result of the lower currency attached to qualifications obtained from overseas institutions (Ghuman, 1995; Brar, 1991), although labour market and demographic changes have led to periods of heightened demand for teachers with overseas credentials (Deakin, 1970; Milne, 2000; Hackett and Elliott, 2001; McNamara et al., 2004). Paradoxically, it has been argued that minority ethnic group teachers may either experience feelings of 'marginalisation' (Ranger, 1988, p.66) or a heightened sense of professional legitimacy as a result of their 'marginal' status within the school and by virtue of their specialist linguistic and cultural skills (Pole, 1999, p.326). Basit and McNamara (2004, p.100) have argued that some minority ethnic group teachers perceive that ethnic bias in the selection practices of headteachers has operated in their favour where headteachers have 'adopted a principled stance to actively promote equality of opportunity in their schools and provide role models for their pupils'. In this sense, whilst black teachers may be subject to occupational segregation as a result of racism, they may, at the same time, derive a professional advantage from their racialised position – a form of 'dual closure' (Witz, 1992).

In terms of the issue of teacher retention, Smithers and Robinson (2003) have reported that relatively few studies have explored the phenomenon despite its increasing significance to the profession. Powney et al (2003, p.Appendix 2) confirm that there are 'few rigorous studies' on the issue of teacher retention and why teachers leave the profession. However, the limited available research suggests that retention is strongly associated with teachers' concerns regarding workload, pay, pupil behaviour, school level working conditions and status and respect (Smithers and Robinson, 2003; Powney et al, 2003). Smithers and Robinson (2003, p.iii) have argued that there is no significant correlation between retention and teacher ethnicity, although the absence of national benchmark data on teacher ethnicity makes it difficult to be conclusive on this point (2003, p.23). Smithers and Robinson argue that, on the relationship between ethnicity and teacher retention:

'No evidence was obtained that teachers from the ethnic minorities are more likely to leave or their reasons for going differed from the majority. Teachers from the ethnic minorities were, however, more likely to leave for maternity and less, to retire.'

(Smithers and Robinson, 2003, p.90)

This view appears to be supported by the analysis undertaken by Maylor et al (undated, p.3) who conclude that minority ethnic group teachers are 'rather less likely to be thinking of leaving the profession in the next five years'. Indeed, Maylor et al (undated, p.12) suggest that the desire to continue in the profession may be linked to minority ethnic group teachers' professional commitment to 'give something back to the community' which may sustain their enthusiasm for the job. However, Maylor et al (undated, p.13) also report that minority ethnic group teachers are significantly more likely than their white counterparts to express demotivation in the job as a result of concerns about pupil behaviour/discipline, pay and poor school management. Powney et al (2003, p.23) have suggested that in addition to the general retention factors that apply to all teachers, the actual or expected experience of racism during the course of their careers may account for the reasons why some minority ethnic group teachers leave the profession.

Men in Teaching

Whilst my research is concerned with the experiences of black teachers, it seeks, specifically, to explore the life of a black *man*

teacher. Thus, it is important to examine the implication of gender and masculinities in relation to the teacher's story.

Gender segregation in the labour market has been identified by a number of writers in the United Kingdom and elsewhere (Wilson, 1997; Acker, 1990; Baron, 1991; Borchorst and Siim, 1987; Reskin and Hartmann, 1986; Office for National Statistics, 2003a; Equal Opportunities Commission, 2003; International Labour Organisation, 1991) and is reflective of social discourses which define particular work arenas as "men's work" or "women's work" based on cultural assumptions and stereotypes about the role of men and women in society (Williams, 1993, p.3). However, the demise of traditional male-dominated occupational roles, coupled with the growth of women's representation in education and the labour market, has prompted debate about the meaning and usefulness of 'masculinities' as a sociological analytical concept (Warren, 2003, p.5). Nevertheless, in the British case at least, the Government has taken steps to redress the perceived 'imbalance' in the number of women and men teachers and to tackle the perceived dysfunctional effects of a feminised profession (Warren, 2003, p.6; Skelton, 2003, p.195). Corresponding with these policy shifts, the dominant social discourses suggest an insatiable lust for stories that revolve around a narrative assertion of the marginalisation and exclusion of boys'

interests in the cause of “political correctness” (Lingard and Douglas, 1999). ‘Let’s hear it for boys’ (Halpin, 2000a) has become a mantra for the new wave of backlash arguments which locate the problem of boys’ educational “underachievement” with the actions of women teachers and working mothers (Halpin, 2000b and 2000c; Mooney, 2001). The educational “underachievement” of black boys has also been attributed to a white and feminised school system (Miller, 1994; BBC, 2002a; Clark, 2002; Blair, 2001; Majors, 2001; Sewell, 2002a and 2002b). However, within these generalised assertions about the condition of boys within the school system, there has been a tendency to overlook the particular experiences of girls *qua* girls and that the persistence of male economic and political advantage has continued to be the order of the day (Elwood, 1995a and 1995b; Teese et al. 1995; Allen and Bell, 1996; Gillborn, 1997; Osler et al., 2002). The public and political demand for more male role models in schools and in the home has also been met by calls for action to tackle the feminisation of curriculum, resources, teaching and assessment methods which has, it is claimed, ‘conspired’ against boys’ attainment (BBC, 2002b and 2002c; Department for Education and Skills, 2002; Lightfoot, 2001; Charter, 2000). The ‘bardic’ function (McCarthy, 1998, p.83) of these discourses of male disadvantage has acted to assert the masculine gender order and claim male advantage and authority (Lingard and Douglas, 1999).

These discourses have been challenged as misplaced, naïve, inadequate and reflective of an attempt to reassert the dominant position 'of some men as 'natural leaders' in patriarchal societies' (Skelton, 2003, p.203).

In England and Wales, men predominate amongst employees in professional occupations, representing some 60% of professionally employed persons; however, men constitute only around 30% of teaching professionals (Matheson and Summerfield, 2001, p.39).

There are strong differences in terms of men's representation amongst teachers employed in primary schools (17%) when compared with secondary schools (48%) (Office for National Statistics, 2004, p.40). The feminised composition of the primary teacher workforce has been linked to neo-conservative discourses which provide that women, rather than men, should be responsible for the 'social, emotional and personal well-being' of children, particularly in their early years (Campbell and Neill, 1994a, p.220). Campbell and Neill (1994a) have identified that where men are employed in primary schools, they are likely to be teachers of older children or employed in management roles. Thornton and Bricheno (2000) have argued that male primary school teachers' careers relate to gender-typing at the institutional level. Skelton's (2003, pp. 196-197) review of the attitudes of male student primary teachers in

England has also identified that 'teaching upper primary children (i.e. 7 to 11-year-olds) may be more readily reconciled with prevailing notions of masculinity than working with younger children (i.e. 3 to 8-year-olds)'.

The proportions of men employed in teaching, in general, has been in decline over a period of half a century; neither is this situation unique to the British context (Wilson, 1997; Allan, 1993). In the last decade, a number of trends have been observed, central to which has been the relative decline in the proportions of men employed within the teaching profession – whilst 61% of primary headteachers were men in 1990, by 1999 the proportion had declined to 42% (Matheson and Summerfield, 2001, p.40). This decline appears to show little sign of abating (Graduate Teacher Training Registry, 2001). During the 1990s, the proportion of men in the teaching profession has declined by around half a percentage point on an annual basis (ATL et al., 2000, p.7). Data for the United Kingdom indicate the extent of the continuing decline in men's participation in teaching: over a twenty year period, men's representation amongst full time teachers in nursery, primary and secondary schools had declined from 40% of all teachers in 1981/1982 to 30% in 2001/2002 (Office for National Statistics, 2004). It has been argued that the representation of men in the teaching profession is unlikely to

improve unless the job of teaching can appeal to younger men (ATL et al., 2000, p.8). The data in respect of applications to postgraduate courses of initial teacher training indicate that whilst applications from men may be increasing, their participation on teacher training courses has remained low and generally static, with men constituting around 13% of primary trainees and 38% of secondary trainees (Graduate Teacher Training Registry, 2004; Teacher Training Agency, 2004b). Other statistical data indicate a pattern of sex segregation in teacher training; male and female teaching students are differentiated in terms of preferred teaching subject, with males predominating amongst trainee teachers in history, chemistry, physics, mathematics, business studies, economics, geography, design and technology, information technology and physical education (Teacher Training Agency, 2004b; Owen et al, 2000).

Within the feminised environment of schools, men predominate amongst teachers employed in senior management roles; men are also over-represented amongst headteachers and deputy headteachers. Matheson and Summerfield (2001, p.40) have identified that whilst 17% of all teachers employed in nursery/primary schools are men, men constitute some 42% of headteachers within the phase; similarly, in secondary education, men predominate in terms of headship (72%) despite their lower representation in the

secondary school teaching force (48%). Men are also more likely than women to earn higher salaries and be in receipt of additional financial allowances and incentives (Campbell and Neill, 1994b, p.152). In secondary schools, women teachers are more likely to have responsibility for the early phases of secondary schooling and pastoral care (Campbell and Neill, 1994b, p.151). Campbell and Neill (1994b) argue that:

'[T]he data we have presented indicate that female teachers in the schools were at a disadvantage by comparison with their male colleagues. They taught the larger classes more, and the smaller classes less, than men; they clustered more on the lower, and less on the higher, salary levels than men; and more women than men were on fixed-term contracts. There is no self-evident explanation or justification for this state of affairs. The women worked as long hours as men and spent more time on in-service training at weekends. Furthermore, there was no difference in 'conscientiousness' between men and women. The women, therefore, represented better value for money (from an employer's perspective) or an exploited group of workers (from the perspective of equal opportunities).'

(Campbell and Neill, 1994b, p.153)

In terms of the intersection of gender and ethnicity on teacher employment, the data indicate that across all ethnic groups, with the exception of teachers within the 'Chinese or other ethnic group', women are more likely to comprise teaching and research professionals, as Table 3 (below) illustrates.

Table 3:

**Occupation and Sex by Ethnic Group (England and Wales) 2001
(Teaching and Research Professionals)**

All Teaching and Research Professionals			
<u>Ethnic Group</u>	Men	Women	All
	%	%	%
White	35.8	64.2	100.0
Mixed	37.6	62.4	100.0
Asian or Asian British	39.5	60.5	100.0
Black or Black British	36.3	63.7	100.0
Chinese or other ethnic group	51.2	48.8	100.0
All people	36.0	64.0	100.0

(Source: Office for National Statistics (2003a) Census 2001: National Report for England and Wales, pp. 136-137 (adapted). Crown Copyright)

Whilst the proportion of all teaching and research professionals who are male is relatively modest at 36%, the detailed data also reveal that the proportion of black (*Caribbean*) ethnic group teaching and research professionals who are male is substantially lower at only 27% (Office for National Statistics, 2003a, pp. 136-137). Ranger (1988, p.15) has reported that teachers from African and Caribbean ethnic groups are more likely to be female (63%) than are teachers from other minority ethnic groups (51%) and white teachers (59%), and that teachers from African and Caribbean ethnic groups are less likely to be employed as primary teachers (37%) than are teachers from other minority ethnic groups (39%) and white teachers (43%).

Teaching has been one of the few professions to provide numerically significant employment opportunities for women, yet the presence of women teachers has remained highly contested as some men have fought a rearguard action to protect their interests (Skelton, 2003; Warren, 2003; Lingard and Douglas, 1999). In Britain in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, local rules and laws governing the employment of women teachers were enacted to restrict the professional entry, and limit the careers, of women teachers (Darling and Glendinning, 1996; Oram, 1983). The organisation by men of the separatist National Association of Schoolmasters in 1919 has been

charted as a direct attempt by some men to safeguard, if not bolster, their economic position by the maintenance of a gendered pay differential (Littlewood, 1989, p.181). Littlewood (1985 and 1989) has argued that for a period of over fifty years some men teachers have organised themselves separately and have advocated policies of sex discrimination in employment on the grounds that the educational and emotional development of boys depend on the employment of men teachers and that the effective running of mixed gender schools require the employment of men as headteachers. Men teachers, it has been argued, have sought to capitalise upon phallogentric notions of authority which rest upon 'the belief that power and authority in schools reside naturally in the male' (Aspinwall and Drummond, 1989, p.19). The continued challenge to the presence of women teachers shows few signs of receding (Wooley, 2004); the largely female supply and part-time teaching workforce is at the mercy of headteachers, governing bodies, school inspectors, politicians and the public at large who regard these women as 'less-committed teachers' (Darling and Glendinning, 1996; OFSTED, 2002). The extension of centralised control of teachers' work, coupled with a policy thrust to devolve managerial responsibility to schools has been associated with women teachers being blamed for the academic 'underachievement' of boys whilst, at the same time, assuring the 'retraditionalisation' (Giddens, 1994) of educational

systems. Indeed, as the number of women within the teaching profession has increased, so the job of teaching has become increasingly routinised, deskilled, monitored and externally regulated (Maguire, 1995; Acker, 1994; Yeatman, 1990 and 1994). The Teacher Training Agency has committed itself to increasing the number of men recruited into initial teacher training (Teacher Training Agency, 2000b, p.3). However, Thornton (1999) has argued that the public policy desire to establish a gender balanced profession reveals an attempt to bolster the interests of men rather than tackle the inequalities experienced by women; this interest may not have escaped the notice of male teachers and may 'explain why men, probably including some relatively untalented men, clamour for promotion' (Darling and Glendinning, 1996, p.70). Skelton (2003, pp. 203-204) has argued that in order to reconcile their work in the feminised arena of the primary school, male primary teachers may seek to 'emphasise those aspects of teaching compatible with 'proper masculinity', such as leadership and management' and by distancing themselves professionally from (women) teachers of early years children, whilst claiming that the teaching of older age group children constitutes the domain of 'proper teaching'. James (2002, p.180) has suggested that black men teachers may share the 'competitive careerism' of their white male colleagues (Darling and Glendinning, 1996, p.70) and, so, desire to demonstrate their

masculinity by seeking rapid promotion and career advancement out of the primary school classroom and into management roles.

Data on differential non-entry rates for persons who successfully complete programmes of initial teacher training suggest the equivocal nature of some men's initial commitment to teaching, as reflected by the higher proportion of male trainees who do not enter the profession despite having qualified (Smithers and Robinson, 2003, p.4). This might suggest that teaching, per se, and particularly the teaching of young children, may not conform to dominant masculinist narratives of what it means to be male (Warren, 2003; Sargent, 2000; Stroud et al., 2000; Johnston et al., 1999). The issue of 'career choice' for minority ethnic group men is also important; thus, whereas men in general may exercise alternative career choices, minority ethnic group men may find that they have fewer alternative options available to them (Williams and Villedore, 1993, pp. 75-77). Men who choose to enter the feminised arenas of "women's work" may be viewed with suspicion and run the risk of stigmatisation and victimisation associated with latent or expressed public fears about their sexuality and the safety of children in their care (Kimmel, 1993; Bradley, 1993; Lingard and Douglas, 1999; Skelton, 2001a and 2003; Sargent, 2000; Aspinwall and Drummond, 1989). This may be particularly significant in relation to the

experiences and perspectives of black men, where the pressure to be seen as a “real man” may be particularly acute (Taylor, 2004; West, 1996). Other studies suggest that men who are ‘more comfortable with their masculinity’ may be more able to resist prevailing cultural assumptions and stereotypes about what “real men” do and may, thus, be less equivocal in their commitment to teaching as work (Skelton, 2001a and 2003; Sikes, 1985).

Stories of Black Men Teachers

The teacher life history research scholarship has included a focus on the experiences of black and other minority ethnic women teachers (Casey, 1993; Gilroy, 1976; De Lyon and Migniuolo, 1989; Rakhit, 1999; Asher, 2001; Alfred, 1997; Nee-Benham, 1997; Henry, 1998). However, whilst a number of studies have included black men teachers within the sample of teachers interviewed (see Osler, 1997; Pole, 1999), few have specifically delineated the stories of black men. Indeed, the scholarship in respect of black men school teachers is restricted to a focus on teachers in the North American context (Foster, 1997; James, 2002). At the time of writing, there is no published British research which specifically articulates the life stories of black men teachers. I set out below a brief review of some

of the main issues identified in the two available life history studies on black men teachers.

C.E. James (2002) – ‘Achieving desire: narrative of a black male teacher’

Using a life history approach, James’ study provides an insight into the personal and professional world of a black male teacher, the pseudonymous Craig Francis - a 30 year old teacher of four years’ standing. In recounting Craig’s story, James identifies that this black man teacher’s professional orientation is embedded within his personal biography and upbringing in a black, working class, immigrant family in Canada. James’ research suggests the important role of parents, family and friends and the impact of racialisation and integration in relation to individual career choice; the study suggests the importance of reading parental expectations in the context of wider migration narratives of black families seeking a better future for their children (James, 2002, p.174). Craig’s story of desire for a better life suggests the importance of exploring the stories of black teachers within the wider narratives and theorising on migration from the Caribbean (Byron, 1994; Phillips, 1985).

Craig had originally sought a career in medicine, which was ‘something that his parents expected him to pursue’ due to their

perception that 'physicians... commanded respect and influence but also had privilege, prestige and status. Therefore, having a career with these characteristics would represent upward social mobility for their son' (James, 2002, pp. 177-179). However, as Craig confesses, he could not cope with the demands of a career in medicine and so set about reconstructing himself in career terms in a manner which would resonate positively with the patriarchal expectations to which he had been subject during his upbringing (James, 2002, p.177). Craig's story suggests the importance of exploring how black men teachers negotiate racism and dominant patriarchal expectations in their struggle to be seen as 'successful' men. For Craig, this meant re-siting his father's definition of career success by demonstrating achievement in an alternative yet respectable professional arena. The issue of 'respectability' is important here; Craig's masculinity is expressed in terms of a desire for 'respectability' as status.

The critical support, encouragement and driving aspiration of Craig's parents are key elements in Craig's story of becoming a teacher and are strongly linked to his desire to achieve future career progression (James, 2002, p.175). Craig's story highlights the important role played by reference groups – particularly Craig's white friends – in informing and supporting his desire to succeed academically (see Nias, 1985 and 1989). Despite incidents of racism at school, Craig's

story suggests the importance of white friendship and social networks which, James argues, are reflective of a need for ambitious black students to conform to 'white cultural values' as a means of achieving success at school (James, 2002, p.176); this suggests the need to explore the impact of reference groups and their composition in relation to the teaching desire of black men. Craig's story also indicates a desire to exploit the advantages afforded by his 'race' and gender by 'choosing' a career in teaching, an arena in which there was an existing policy commitment to recruit more black and male teachers and where, Craig believed, he could achieve rapid promotion out of the feminised environment of the elementary school classroom into a role which would command influence over the work of others (James, 2002, p.180). Craig's story suggests that the struggle for recognition and status may be particularly important for some men in the context of the feminised environment of the school (see Aspinwall and Drummond, 1989 Williams, 1993 Skelton, 2001a and 2003).

In his story, Craig explained that colour was 'inconsequential' to his desire to teach; indeed, Craig's motivation to become a teacher 'had more to do with his experience of working with children than having had minority teachers' (James, 2002, p.175). This might suggest that the teacher's ambivalence about the importance of 'race' in relation

to teaching desire is worthy of further exploration. Craig's motivation and commitment as a teacher were also bound up with his desire to work with children and to develop interpersonal relationships of mutual respect. Craig's desire was to make a difference to the lives of his black students; this provided an important driver to his professional motivation and commitment (James, 2002, p.180). However, Craig's story also suggests that being a black teacher is, of itself, not a sufficient basis for gaining the respect and support of black students; Craig expressed discomfort with being labelled as a 'role model' for black students and a belief that as he became older he would become more distant from his young students and less able to establish rapport with them (James, 2002, p.181). A similar point has been made by Sikes (1985) in relation to the impact of age and generational factors on teachers' commitment and agency and may, thus, be an issue meriting further exploration. As his story closed, Craig remained passionate about the need to utilise his position as a teacher and school administrator to improve the life chances of black students and the wider black community (James, 2002, p.183).

M. Foster (1997) – 'Black Teachers on Teaching'

Foster's study of twenty black teachers provides the stories of three 'generations' of black men and women teachers working in schools in the United States during the twentieth century. Foster

provides the stories of five men teachers which include two retired teachers, two 'veteran' or experienced teachers and one 'novice' teacher of two years' experience. Each of the men's stories is used to critique the provision of education for black children in America and provide an insight into the teacher's philosophies, beliefs, commitment, motivation, experiences and aspirations for the future. Constraints of space do not permit a detailed review of the stories told by each of the men teachers in Foster's study; however, consideration of the common thematic elements is helpful. It should be noted here that the thematic review presented below is based upon my own reading of the teachers' stories presented by Foster, given that the researcher does not provide an interpretative synthesis of the stories concerned.

The biographies of the men teachers were diverse, with particular differences in terms of relative affluence and geographical background. Common to the upbringing of these teachers, however, was their experience of being taught either in predominantly white schools or in schools with pupils from relatively affluent and professional backgrounds. As with James' study, each story suggests the importance for these men of being educated separately from their 'home' communities (see Foster, 1997, pp. 138-139). The issues of biography and of former schooling experience and

reference groups is suggested here as meriting further exploration. Having left high school/college, each of the men pursued careers in teaching only after having considered other career paths. As with the teachers in James' study, teaching was a secondary career choice for all of the men teachers (see Smith, 2004; Williams and Villemez 1993). Everett Dawson's (a retired teacher) story typified the experiences of the black men in Foster's study:

'Before I went to college, I considered agriculture... By the time I went to North Carolina A&T, I had become interested in medicine, my first love. I wanted to be a doctor... After graduation, I was called into the military service... I wound up being a teacher. It was not because I loved teaching that much. In fact, I didn't start loving teaching until I'd been in it, maybe, about ten years, once I started seeing where I was making a difference.'

(Foster, 1997, pp. 5-6)

Teaching was one of the few professional occupations open to these black men; this might suggest the need to explore further the nature of black men teachers' career choices. Nevertheless, teaching, for all of the men, provided a means of making a difference, particularly in terms of seeking to empower black students; indeed, the men's

experiences were principally confined to teaching black students within a racially segregated school system. This suggests the importance of exploring black men teachers' experiences of teaching and the impact of the contexts in which they teach. The teachers' stories provided an expression of Lester's (1971) concept of 'raising the race'; however, the men's stories articulated the concept of 'raising the race' in very particular terms: not 'nurturing', but 'rescuing'. The black men teachers' acts of heroic rescue – expressed in individualistic rather than collective terms - were summed up by Edouard Plummer's (a veteran) moralistic account:

'Without an education, what are black people going to be? If we can't read, and we can't write, what are we going to do? Without some type of training, without discipline, without self-control, without motivation, without drive, inspiration, or integrity, morals, values, what are you? These aren't old-fashioned values. These are the values that made us strong people. It made us able to endure being brought over on slave ships, survive the voyage, survive slavery. It made us survive the Ku Klux Klan. There's more coming and our children will have to be better than we were to survive it.... I don't think what I am

doing is old-fashioned at all; I am saving little black souls, teaching them how to survive.'

(Foster, 1997, p.110)

The teachers expressed a lack of professional affinity with other teachers. They engaged in activities outside their schools as a means of fulfilling their own self-concept and values (Woods and Jeffrey, 2002). These teachers regarded the racism of the formal school environment as a threat to their sense of self, to be resisted by the exercise of covert agency within or beyond the school (see Foster, 1997, pp. 178-179). The stories of the black men in Foster's study suggest the importance of exploring how the self-concept of black men teachers is articulated, negotiated and maintained in relation to their everyday work as teachers.

Review

The absence of detailed and comprehensive national data in respect of teacher ethnicity represents a major limitation to developing an understanding of the position of black teachers in Britain. The British data on black teachers is limited by its scope and currency and the research literature exhibits similar problems as there are no British studies which specifically explore the lives and careers of black men

teachers. The review of the literature has identified two North American studies which articulate the stories of black men teachers, although the persuasiveness of these studies is somewhat limited (see chapter 3). The reasons for the paucity of research and statistical data in relation to black men teachers are difficult to identify; however, without such material, it is difficult to develop a clear understanding of the position and experiences of black men teachers. Nevertheless, the review of the literature highlights a number of issues pertinent to future research on the identities and agency of black men teachers and in exploring the nature and significance of black men teachers' work and career experiences.

The review of the research literature and statistical data in respect of black men teachers has suggested the importance of the discursive and structural contexts in which teachers are located and how these are mediated and negotiated. The limited research and other statistical evidence suggests that black men teachers' professional experiences and motivation are biographically and contextually contingent. Indeed, the available research suggests that black teachers' career choice is complex, contradictory and multi-dimensional, reflecting the influence of personal, biographical, and social/historical contextual factors. A range of internal/personal and external/structural/institutional factors appear to impact on black

teachers' career choice and experience. Racialisation has been highlighted as an important mediating factor (potentially both enabling and constraining) in relation to black teachers' professional identities and agency. However, the research literature also suggests that gender, masculinities, social class, age, migration, locality and reference groups may also impact on black men teachers' attitudes and professional commitment and the personal and professional strategies they employ within and outside their schools. The need to explore the nature of black men teachers' career choice is, therefore, suggested by the existing data.

The motivation of black men teachers to 'give back' to the community suggests that the expression of the teacher's professionalism orientation might be related to the contexts of their teaching practice; within a racialised and segregated school system, black men teachers appear more likely to express affinity with role model and black community empowerment discourses (see Foster, 1997) than teachers living and working in more socially integrated contexts (see James, 2002). Given the difficulties of drawing upon cross-cultural comparative sources, it will be important to explore how the professionalism orientations of black men teachers in the UK are expressed and to consider the salience of the distinctive discursive and structural conditions that pertain to black men teachers' lives and

work. Similarly, the impact of locality might also be a particularly important area for further study in relation to black men teachers' careers, aspirations and philosophies.

The available data and research suggests that black men teachers tend to follow less conventional routes into the profession. The limited studies suggest that teaching is predominantly a second choice career for black men and that such teachers gravitate to schools serving high concentrations of black pupils. In the context of racialised segregation, the occupational segregation of black teachers might be easily explained; however, it might be worthwhile to explore why it is that in contexts where racial segregation is not considered to be a feature of the education system, black teachers, nevertheless, tend to be employed in schools with high concentrations of black pupils. The impact of individual choice and structural constraints are suggested as critical factors meriting further examination.

The available ethnographic studies suggest that black men teachers may articulate their professional agency in terms of being successful as men, whether in professional status terms or through individual acts from which they derive status within the wider community. Moreover, the competitive careerism of male teachers and the

gender segregated nature of teachers' employment suggests a need to explore further how masculinity in teaching is articulated and negotiated by black men teachers. The available research suggests, although does not fully explore, the cross-cutting nature of ethnic, gender, social class, migration, location and age/generational factors in explaining black men teachers' desire to teach and the nature of such teachers' professionalism orientations. These are key issues to be explored in the following chapters.

At the outset of this chapter, I referred to the need to consider this review as one story of the context of black men teachers. The review which follows provides an attempt to locate the life of a black man teacher within the theoretical context presented above and to interrogate the 'conventional wisdoms' which purport to 'explain' the nature of black men teachers' experiences in teaching (Troyna, 1994a, p.326). The extent to which Jay's story of teaching resonates in harmony with the contextual story I have presented here is, therefore, at issue.

Pen Portrait¹

Jay is a newly qualified teacher who lives and works in Birmingham, a large, urban metropolitan city in the West Midlands region of England. Jay teaches at Mast House School², a local 11-16 age range comprehensive secondary school. Data obtained from the school and the local education authority indicate that Mast House School has over 700 pupils on roll, a high proportion of whom are from minority ethnic backgrounds; over 70% of pupils are from 'Asian' and 'Afro-Caribbean' ethnic backgrounds and over 50% of pupils come from homes where English is not the first language. The school serves a geographic area that has been identified as having a very high degree of economic deprivation and unemployment; seventy per cent of pupils at the school are eligible for free school meals. Attainment of pupils at the school was described by OFSTED in the most recent school inspection report as 'well below the national average', although the most recent school performance data published by the Department for Education and Skills shows that

¹ The use of non-italicised and italicised text in this chapter indicates the voices of Jay and myself respectively as co-narrators of this life story.

² The names of all schools referred to in Jay's story have been changed for the purposes of ensuring Jay's anonymity.

academic attainment of the school's pupils is increasing. Jay has been teaching for about one year. Mast House School is the only school at which Jay has taught since he qualified to teach.

Jay is thirty years of age. He was born in Bromsgrove, Worcestershire, England in 1972, the fifth of six children to Jamaican immigrant parents – Vinton and Gwen. His brothers and sisters are Colin, aged 40 years who is a farmer; David, aged 38 years who is a caretaker; Debbie, aged 36 years, who is a registered nurse; Malcolm, aged 34 years, who is a senior manager; and Emma, aged 22 years, who is a student. Jay's grandparents were farmers in Jamaica. Jay spent his formative years growing up with his mother, father, brothers and sisters in the small town of Redditch, Worcestershire, where his family was one of the very few black families in the area.

After leaving school at the age of sixteen, much to the chagrin of his parents, Jay worked for a brief spell at a "fast food" restaurant, before acquiring what he regarded as his first meaningful employment, working for the Civil Service at a local Job Centre office in the Bromsgrove area. Jay remained working as a civil servant for a period of twelve years, during which time he enrolled on a vocational human resources management course with a local higher education

college. It was during this time that Jay decided to pursue his childhood ambition of becoming a teacher. Jay obtained a place on a teacher training course, specialising in teaching Information and Communications Technology (ICT) to secondary age pupils. He completed his teacher training at the University of Warwick in 2002.

Jay describes himself as “friendly, loyal, humorous, approachable, impulsive and caring” [Time Line].³ Jay lives by himself in the city of Birmingham. He has a very close and long-standing network of family and friends with whom he is in regular contact. Jay is buying his own home and, in the future, he hopes to move out of the city of Birmingham to return to the area where he was brought up. Jay would like to teach in a middle school environment and eventually secure promotion to become a Deputy Headteacher.

³ 'Time Line' refers to text drawn from the time line research instrument.

Jay's Life

Jay and I began our conversation by talking about his life and relationships with family and friends. We set about exploring Jay's life today and what had influenced him during his upbringing. I started by asking Jay about his father and mother.

My father's name is Vinton. He was born in 1940 in Jamaica. When I was growing up I viewed my father as a very busy, strict man, who never had time to pay his children attention. As we grew up he changed and started to become more open and interested in us. As we grew we began to see he was a very funny man with a keen sense of humour. Nowadays he is very much involved in the lives of his grandchildren, and he spends lots of time with them. [Time Line]

Jay had a distant relationship with his father, although his father was a constant presence in Jay's life. In talking about Vinton, Jay found it difficult to recall details of their relationship, but he did recollect that his father was the disciplinarian of the family. In growing up and as an adult, Jay was anxious not to displease his father by bringing 'shame' on the family. The physical chastisement of Jay and his siblings overshadowed Jay's talk about his father; this aspect of his

father's behaviour was something about which Jay felt uncomfortable but Jay was also anxious not to criticise his father.

I didn't really see much of dad. He worked quite a lot... When he came back in the evening he tended to go down the pub... Saying that, though, we always had meals together. So, yes, we did see him every day. I didn't remember that. We always sat down together. The pot would go on in the morning for soup or whatever, but we would always sit down around six o'clock in the evening and eat together. That would be when dad got back from work... He was very funny, very funny. Still is. Very funny man. Very sharp sense of humour... Likes a laugh and a joke. He used to like to drink, he doesn't drink that much now... What he said went, it was as simple as that. [laughs] Very keen sense of what's right and wrong, what's moral and what's immoral. As I say, we all had to follow what he said was right. A certain way that you had to present yourself. I remember him hitting us for not combing my hair... That bothered about detail. If you were going to school without your hair combed or without your tie done he would pick you up because you weren't presenting yourself properly or other members of the family... Yeah. Very strict but very

fair. I mean, I don't want to create the impression of somebody that was unreasonable to be strict. So... [264-324]⁴

Jay spoke of his father as the head of the family. It was Jay's father who set the family's values and who regulated the behaviour of Jay and his siblings in accordance with what he believed to be right and wrong. It was from his father that Jay learned the desire to lead a respectable life. Throughout his life, Jay strove to please his father. Getting a respectable job was one way that Jay could live up to his father's ideals.

[W]hen I got a job as a civil servant he [father] was as pleased as punch, because it was respectable... So when I went to university they [his parents] were ecstatic, and then I went into teacher training and teaching they were bursting with pride, telling everybody... [362-368]

It was in the early years of Jay's life that particular values and expectations were established by his father. Jay's father's sense of right and wrong provided a measure against which Jay could regulate his own actions and agency. The values imparted by Jay's

⁴ Numbers in parentheses refer to the line number references in the interview transcripts.

father continue to shape Jay's agency in the present day. Jay's father was a critical referent in relation to Jay's understanding of acceptable and unacceptable behaviour.

In fact, I still now present myself, I still try to present myself in a positive way... I certainly wouldn't want to do anything that I think that any of my family would be ashamed of. Erm... I still take care about the way I, I appear most of the time. [324-339]

As Jay grew older, he found that his relationship with his father changed; physical disciplining, or the threat of the same, was replaced by his father's 'advice' to Jay about how to live his life.

We've [with his father] got a good relationship. He's mellowed, I suppose, as we've become older he's not needed to be strict or anything like that... So, our conversations aren't to do with discipline and things like that. We just talk about general life, you know, how are you getting on. He's always offering advice. [377-385]

Jay talked with me about his relationship with his mother. Jay spoke openly, with fondness and great humour about his relationship with his mother. Jay's keen interest in building long-lasting relationships

with those around him reflected how he described his mother's relationships with the people around her.

My mother, Gwen, was born in 1945, Jamaica. My mother is a very kind woman, who always puts her children and others before herself. Hardworking, she took on two jobs in order to ensure that there was always enough food on the table. She is active in the Pentecostal Church which is very important to her. [Time Line]

Erm... She [mother] was really busy, but she took care of us more on, like, the day to day basis... Always very small, very slim, dainty. Erm... Hardworking. Again another keen sense of humour... She is very religious, very religious. [Pentecostal] [393-401]

Although Jay had not adopted the religious conviction of his mother, he believed that his own personality had been shaped by the kind of person his mother is.

I suppose she was very much a people person... [459-460]

Like his mother, Jay also considered himself to be 'a people person'. Jay has many long-standing personal friends, whom he regards as part of his extended family network.

I think that you sort of get your own grounding from your family and friends around you. They make you more interesting. [889-892]

Jay had and continues to have a close relationship with his mother. It was to his mother, Gwen, that Jay often turned for help, advice and for his motivation. I was later to learn from Jay that his relationship with his mother was central to Jay's orientation as a teacher.

I've always been able to talk to her [mother]. Always wanting us to do better, always pushing us, really. Not in an aggressive way. Always worried if we were outside or late coming back from school. She always worried about where we were and what we were doing. [416-421]

I wanted to find out more about Jay's upbringing and what it meant to him. Jay shared with me some of the difficulties encountered by his parents when they first moved to England.

We were quite poor. My parents had working class jobs. When I went into secondary school my dad was made redundant from an aluminium factory which caused a lot of problems because we'd just moved house as well so we were quite strapped for cash. [26-32]

Jay's recollection of his working class upbringing played a significant part in his life story and in his motivation as a teacher. Jay's financially impoverished upbringing had impacted on his sense of self in the present day context, and shaped his world view. However, Jay did not feel that he had missed out on life as a result; the past had made him grateful for what he had achieved in his life. Despite entering the "professional class" of teaching, Jay had not lost touch with his relatively humble beginnings of which he remained proud and which he recalled with fondness. Jay continues to regard himself very much as working class.

We lived in a terraced house. It was a very poor area. [146-147]

[W]hen they [parents] moved Redditch probably only had about four or five thousand people living in it. Er, so there was a shortage of accommodation and things, so, you'd end up with like three or four families living in the one house in like a back street. [pause] [527-533]

Whilst Jay saw his upbringing as working class in material terms, he did not regard the quality of his life as lacking in any way. Jay talked about the financial and other material limitations in the family home,

but he also spoke with pride about the quality of the relationships he had with his siblings, aunts, uncles, cousins and friends which had brought a richness to what could otherwise have been a basic existence.

I never really felt myself to be poor. Only on reflection. I can see that some people would have, and that would be a motivation to better themselves. But... [209-212]

I remember there being big windows and a garage at the back of the house. [laughs] But we had cousins and friends and stuff that all lived quite near to us. It was quite a happy time... I remember walking along the path and I cut my arm, it's a scar now. [laughs] Somehow I cut my arm on a nail and was actually hung from a nail and had to be rescued. We didn't have a bath! We had, erm... God, I sound like something from the thirties. [laughs] We had, erm... Perhaps we did have a bath. I remember my mum bathing me, because of all the blood... No, I think we must have had a bath... [153-166]

I was struck by the emotional intensity of Jay's story of growing up within a financially impoverished home and by the effect that this personal history had on Jay's sense of self. As Jay spoke, I noticed how he recalled his childhood experiences with fondness rather than

with regret; I noticed, too, the importance Jay attached to his working class roots in storying his adult identity.

I think that... [pause] You never forget where you've come from, you never forget how the family struggled to survive. There was no benefits, as such, for my parents. If one of them was out of work, then it was an issue. They also was starting from scratch. We never lived in rented accommodation at all. We always lived in... owned the properties. So they always had a mortgage to pay. Had five kids, and it was the tradition to send money back to Jamaica as well... It was a very happy time. We never really... I suppose we never really asked for anything, we never really went without. We were very playful kids. We just made our own entertainment. It makes me appreciate what we've got now. I wouldn't consider any of us to be poor. We were poor then, but I wouldn't consider any of us to be poor now. I still consider myself working class. [175-195]

Jay's fond childhood memories extended beyond his family life. Jay continued to have a deep attachment to the place where he was brought up. When Jay left home, he settled in Birmingham. Seven years ago, the more cosmopolitan and dynamic city of Birmingham held a youthful appeal for Jay. He continues to have a fascination with the 'trendy' side of city life; but this no longer reflects the person

Jay sees himself to be today. The appeal of city life has begun to wane and Jay now intends to leave the city to return to an area which mirrors that of his upbringing. [199-206] [247-257]

I learned that Jay's sense of identity was rooted strongly in his family and kinship networks and the long-term friendships he had formed during the course of his life. Jay grew up in a predominantly white working class area where he was able to draw on an extended family network, together with the friendships he established during his upbringing. The majority of Jay's friendship network was male and white; these were life long friends with whom Jay had grown up from childhood/adolescence through to adulthood. There were no sharp divisions between close friends and family in Jay's mind. Jay regarded his close friends as part of his 'extended family'.

Jay's identity was also associated with the place in which he grew up. Redditch, where Jay grew up, was not an area of significant settlement of black Caribbean families. I heard in Jay's talk a story of the context in which his life had been lived.

Percentage wise, there was still less than like one percent black people there. [535-536]

There were other families who were first generation immigrants, really, who lived along the street. But our next door neighbours were actually white, but he was a single father with like four kids. Very poor area. [147-152]

Jay's 'extended family' of friends reflected the context in which he was brought up, but also the choices he made during his upbringing. Jay chose friends who he believed reflected the person he saw himself to be.

I've always had a sense of family. Lots of friends. I suppose you define yourself by the people you choose to hang around with. [213-215]

In talking with me about his friendships, I sensed that Jay was anxious about how his life would be viewed. The ethnic diversity of his friendship network was at issue here. What had seemed to me to be a natural consequence of growing up in a mainly white area, and attending mainly white schools, Jay felt necessary to explain. Jay seemed hesitant in talking about his white friends and, at the same time, anxious to lay claim to having a diverse friendship base.

At my first primary school most of my friends were white. At the second school I had more black and Asian friends... For some reason I wasn't happy at the second school. I just didn't get on there, I just didn't like it. So in the third year of middle school I transferred back to the middle school which was my original primary school... Most of my friends... Most of the pupils were, there were only five black pupils, two Asian people there. Nearly all my friends were, were white... I quite enjoyed that. Then I transferred with them all to high school. I did have.... I hung around with black people outside of school. I had lots of cousins who lived nearby, and things like that. Because I wasn't going to school with them – they were all going to a high school which was completely on the other side of town, I didn't really see them that much. [22-60]

Jay benefited from a network of aunts, uncles and cousins whom he and his brothers and sisters could visit, play with and learn from. Indeed, it was to family members outside his home that Jay turned in order to gain a sense of his cultural heritage.

I associate my sense of identity from my mum and dad and my family, uncle Beddy [quietly] That's what I knew, that's what I grew up with, I didn't grow up in Jamaica. Of course, I spoke about Jamaica and had Jamaican food... I don't know, actually, no, we had English

food most of the time. [quietly...] Auntie Elsie, she cooked Jamaican food; we'd probably go there when we had proper Jamaican food.
[508-518]

Jay attended primary, middle and high schools in Redditch until the age of sixteen. His favourite subjects at school were History and Geography. Jay spoke about some of the positive and negative experiences he had whilst at school. He began by telling me of a critical incident that had occurred on his first day at school; an incident that had affected him greatly; an incident that had damaged his confidence as a learner and shaken his belief in his ability to succeed academically.

My least favourite teacher whilst at school was a reception class teacher who was about 56 years old. One of my first memories is of being really embarrassed by my reception school teacher. This knocked my confidence quite a lot. [Time Line]

I remember my first day at primary school when I was really embarrassed. We were in class, in reception class. Most of the kids knew the alphabet, but I didn't know it, and the teacher made me stand in the middle of the room looking at the board to try and

remember the alphabet. I felt really embarrassed. I never really was confident in the classroom after that. [12-20]

She [Jay's reception class teacher] obviously didn't enjoy teaching. I think she was just coasting to retirement. She probably viewed herself as strict... I don't know if she'd had a bad experience, but she was very cruel. She didn't have any time for anybody. So, I didn't really progress much academically at that school. [1133-1146]

Jay's educational career somersaulted between the end of his primary/middle school years and on entry to his high school as he moved between different schools and as he lost his confidence as a student. It was at secondary school that Jay's confidence as a learner began to be restored. Jay talked of particular teachers who had helped him to rebuild his self-belief as a learner.

My favourite teachers whilst at high school were Miss Jones [English teacher] who was aged about 24 years and Mr Zablocki [History teacher] who was aged about 32 years. [Time Line]

Jay spoke about how these teachers related to him as a person. He told me how he felt respected by these teachers. Jay felt that he was

able to relate to these favoured teachers because of their personal openness and their relative youthfulness.

Miss Jones always had time. She was an NQT actually. She always had time for us. She was much closer to our age as well. We would have been sixteen and she was an NQT and I wouldn't be surprised if she was about twenty-two. All the other teachers were in their thirties, so there was a... quite a shocking... not a shocking, but there was quite a... The other ones I felt were from quite a different generation. But we would just sit and chat and talk to her and she was great at really relating... She was always smiling and just an all round nice person. [pause] [laughs] She actually ran off with somebody in our year which perhaps wasn't so great, but made a good story. [laughs] Erm... Mr Zablocki was our history teacher. He was just a very nice, a very friendly, a very interesting person. I suppose both of them talked to us and we were able to talk to them about things, and not just the subject. We would talk about things going on in life and stuff, so... that probably made them seem more human. I notice kids, generally, would talk come and talk to them about all sorts of things. [1076-1101]

Jay related his growth in confidence to the teachers he had in secondary school; in particular, those teachers who were committed

to getting the best from their pupils and who were able to relate to Jay as a person.

I think that I got some of my confidence back academically through having them as teachers. They always had time for you in the class. They would explain and re-explain if you didn't understand. Erm... Miss Jones was really good at helping you work through, she was an English teacher, grammatical errors and spelling errors, and she was really good at working through with you so that you came up with the results. Very positive. [1119-1129]

Later on, I began to gain a sense of how Jay's childhood educational experiences had informed his professional values and teaching style. Jay referred back to the teaching styles of his favourite secondary school teachers when talking about his own practice as a teacher. He wanted to emulate the practice of his favourite teachers. As with his story of Miss Jones and Mr Zablocki, Jay believed in the importance of motivating his students by getting to know them and by being known by them. Jay believed emphatically in the importance of fostering personal relationships with his students.

Despite the difficulties Jay had as a student at school, he continued to attend school and got on with his studies. During the period of his

growing up, Jay had learned from his parents the importance of a good education as a means of providing opportunities to a better life.

They [Jay's parents] saw college, school, university as a way of bettering oneself. [pause] Not bettering yourself in a... Not in a sense of... I don't know if bettering... In a way of giving yourself opportunities to achieve more, rather than bettering yourself. They wouldn't see themselves as any better or any worse than somebody else. So, just a way of opening doors and giving more opportunities and... And also I think that they realised that there is no need to go straight into work, to have some fun. Erm... I don't think they wanted us to go into, like... They probably would have viewed their lives as quite mundane. They wouldn't have wanted us to have gone into that and to have settled into that. [737-754]

Despite the high expectations of Jay's parents, the value they placed on a good education and the encouragement they gave to their children, all but one of Jay's siblings dropped out of school by the age of 16 years.

All apart from one member of the family started work and then went back to fulltime education later on. Although our parents desperately wanted us all to stay on at school. [Time Line]

Despite the encouragement of his parents and some of his teachers, Jay left school at the age of 16, despite having commenced a programme of Advanced Level study. I asked Jay why this was the case. Jay found it difficult to put into words his motivation for leaving education when he was 16 years old.

I don't... Well, I would have thought it would have been... [pause] I don't know, actually. The obvious answer is that there was no money in the family and that... But when I was sixteen there was money. Erm... My brothers and sisters were working. I just think... I don't know actually, I just think I wanted to earn my own money. Erm... My mum and dad didn't want me to. [laughs] They had quite a nice house when I was sixteen, but erm... I just wasn't... I wasn't engaged, I don't think. There were other things I wanted to do. I didn't want to go into education, I wanted to have fun. Mmm... Now I've thought it I can't even decide whether I think it's so or not. [laughs] Erm... I've always thought it was because I wanted to have my own money, actually.... Mmm. But I'm just trying to think why. Dad wasn't really that strict anymore. Mum was never strict. [laughs] [pause] It just didn't engage me. I knew if I worked then I knew I would get money and I could buy things that I wanted and do things that I wanted

without having to ask them. I just think it was a case of wanting more money than they gave me. [783-809]

Later on, I began to learn from Jay that the factors influencing his decision to leave school were more complex than his words here suggested. The domestic financial circumstances in Jay's home played a part in the school leaving decisions made by Jay and his siblings. Whilst a desire for money and independence were factors for Jay, it was also apparent that Jay's lack of confidence was also key to his decision to defer educational study. Having left school for the workplace, Jay was eventually drawn back into formal learning. It was as his confidence grew as a learner that Jay developed a taste for continuing his studies.

After about six years I decided I was ready for education again. So I worked part year at the Benefits Agency, about 20 weeks and then I did a full time Bachelor of Arts, Business Admin honours at UCE. The first year was the HND and then I transferred to do the degree. I had a distinction on that. I loved University. I wish I was still there. [laughs] Wonderful time! And then, part way through I thought perhaps, yes, I could go into teaching. [75-85]

Jay told me how he had struggled with his confidence as a learner and as a teacher. It was as an adult learner that Jay began to see that he could succeed academically; he gained recognition for his endeavours as a student; he received encouraging advice from his careers advisors; and he received positive feedback from gatekeeper organisations when he enquired about pursuing teacher training. All of this contributed to reaffirming Jay's belief that he could achieve his childhood ambition of becoming a teacher. Jay's growing maturity and life experience helped to foster in him a self-belief that the time was right to become a teacher. Jay's story told me of the importance of an extended life experience outside the world of formal education in cementing his commitment and self-belief in his capacity to be a teacher.

Well, when I was younger I wanted to become a teacher but... but circumstances dictated that wasn't to happen when I was younger. I was quite glad in many ways because I wouldn't have wanted the responsibility of being tied to set... to set leave and all that stuff. So, erm... Part way through my university course the TTA came to the university. And I missed that, actually, but I telephoned them and liked what they said. Er... Training and development opportunities, erm... progression... erm... and at that time I had the confidence to go into teaching. [1317-1330]

Jay returned to study when he was 22 years old when he undertook a vocational qualification linked to his job. By the age of 26, Jay commenced study for a Business Administration degree at the University of Central England. He graduated in 2001 and went on to complete a Post Graduate Certificate in Education (PGCE), specialising in teaching Information and Communication Technology (ICT).

Jay's Life as a Teacher

On leaving school at the age of 16 years, Jay immediately took up employment in a local "fast food" restaurant. This was a short term measure. Jay did not seek careers advice and took it upon himself to find a job to which he felt he might be suited. At that time in his life, Jay adopted an opportunistic approach to finding work. Jay's desire to become a teacher was put on hold as he got on with the business of securing suitable paid work.

I started working in an office... no McDonalds when I was sixteen [pause] Then I left there and worked in an office as a returns officer. Although I always wanted to be a teacher at that stage I wasn't ready to remain in education. I did that for about a year. And at the Job

Centre there was a job to actually work at the Job Centre, and the woman behind the counter said, Oh, you'll never get that job. So I said to her, I bet you I will. So I applied for it and went all out to get it and I got it, so I was quite pleased about that. And I stayed there for twelve years. [61-74]

I was an Adjudication Officer for the Benefits Agency, Birmingham. My duties were mainly administrative for Jobseekers Allowance. I first started working for them when I was 17! And left when I was 29!
[Time Line]

Jay had wanted to become a teacher from about the age of 12 years. Yet, like his siblings, Jay left school at the first opportunity. In talking with me, Jay seemed surprised that he had remained as a civil servant for such a long period; this was not planned. During this period in his life, Jay went on to gain higher level qualifications. However, even at that time, Jay did not consider teacher training; instead, he enrolled on a course in business management. Jay's family and friends were surprised when Jay eventually switched to study for a teaching qualification. As Jay's confidence as a learner grew, he began to see teaching as a 'viable' career.

[B]ecause I didn't really consider teaching as viable until I started the second year of my degree and was part way through. [649-652]

Having acquired a renewed taste for learning and as his confidence grew, Jay felt able to commit to his life long goal of becoming a teacher. Jay was the first member of his family to attend university. Jay explained to me his reasons for wanting to become a teacher:

I first decided to become a teacher in 1984. I decided to become a teacher because I enjoyed being with young people; I thought that there were not enough Black teachers; and I saw it as an exciting and worth while career. [Time Line]

Jay initially emphasised three factors related to his desire to teach. Two were intrinsic to the job of teaching – working with young people and doing something worthwhile. The third factor – a concern about there being few black teachers - seemed to me to speak of something else. I wondered why this third factor was important to Jay. I asked Jay to tell me more about his desire to teach.

I'd imagine that I would have observed something or seen something... I had a lot of respect for a lot of my teachers. So... I got on well with them. And it... You can see that you're... using teacher's

speaking, but that you're adding value, and that must be a great feeling to... to know that, you know?... You've helped a kid do as well as they can do. So... I think they... it was... I don't know. It was the relationships and being relaxed with them. [pause] [quietly] Although, I never felt particularly academically bright, so... [pause] But I can't... Trying to think. I know there were teachers that I admired but... I can't put my finger on anything in particular. [1473-1487]

The issues of respect, making a difference and building relationships came to the fore in Jay's talk. This seemed to me to underscore what Jay had previously told me. Given this desire, I wondered why Jay had put off becoming a teacher. Jay remarked that:

I always wanted to... I don't know. [pause] It's something I always wanted to do but never had the confidence to do it. I suppose it would have been a case of... just seeing myself doing it.... [1241-1245]

I was then taken aback when, during the course of our conversation and seemingly unprompted by me, Jay added that:

Colour was never an issue. So, it's quite bizarre for me in this context, really, seeing myself as a black or Afro-Caribbean teacher, I

just... Colour was never an issue... I remember one racial taunt about somebody else, and then they turned around and looked at me and said it's alright we don't mean you, but... erm... [1245-1252]

I understood that I was being told by Jay that he was not comfortable with being re-presented as a 'black teacher'. This label did not resonate with how Jay saw himself. It seemed to me that Jay had initially answered my question informed by his reading of my research desire – namely, an interest in relating his identity as a teacher to his ethnicity. This revealed to me the limitations of my initial encounters with Jay and that the research had been affected by a degree of suggestibility bias. I tried to explore with Jay the issue of ethnicity and his desire to teach. Jay resisted my interest in exploring his life in teaching in this way. I learned that Jay's teaching commitment was far more complex and personal than was suggested by naming him as a 'black teacher'. Jay's teaching commitment reflected a personal and somewhat elusive array of life experiences.

When I first thought about it in 1984 I wouldn't have seen any black teachers. I would have only had white teachers. So, I would have lacked any kind of role model. Now, whether that influenced my decision not to pursue teaching earlier, I don't think it did, but it's one

of those things that you'll just never know, cos, you know, sliding doors and whatever. But... certainly was a lack of a role model... I suppose working in, like, Mast House now with like so many black teachers there it's hard to imagine being in a school, but I don't think we did. There weren't particularly many black kids really. So... At that time. It's totally different now. But no. I ... I don't know. It's not something I've really thought about. You make choices, don't you, and take the path that you choose. I still think, anyway, I wouldn't have actually gone into it any earlier. I was too busy doing other things. So, yeah, for myself I chose the right time to go into teaching.
[pause] [1564-1590]

Jay initially applied to undertake a school based programme of initial teacher training, following advice he had received from a university careers officer. He also made a speculative application for a PGCE course at the University of Warwick and was surprised that he was accepted onto the course. Again, the issue of Jay's confidence came to the fore.

While I was getting the... additional experience... just... with no actual confidence of ever getting in there I applied to Warwick and... they sort of like offered me an interview and I was so shocked that... I must have read three books on being a secondary school teacher

and, er... I actually practically did a GCSE book and an A level book in ICT, because I just couldn't believe I'd had the interview for Warwick, because it was just beyond belief, really. So, erm... I got there. The interview went extremely well, extremely well, and I got offered a place, so... I couldn't really ask for more. I thoroughly enjoyed being at Warwick. A great university. [1347-1363]

Jay's experience of teacher training was generally positive. Jay continued to grow in confidence, although a difficult student placement at a school in one of Birmingham's predominantly white and low income suburbs, almost dissuaded Jay from becoming a teacher [1376-1391]. However, mid way through his training, Jay secured his first permanent teaching appointment; this banished any lingering doubts Jay had about a career in teaching and he focused his efforts on becoming a qualified teacher. Jay was offered a post at the first school to which he had applied and which was close to where he lived. He took up his first teaching post in September 2002 at Mast House School, an inner city comprehensive school with a high proportion of pupils from minority ethnic groups. Jay teaches ICT and Business Studies to 11-16 year old pupils.

Initially, Jay found the experience of teaching in an ethnically diverse school setting challenging for him personally and professionally.

Jay's experience of teacher training had not prepared him for this challenge – having undertaken his teaching placements in mainly white schools. Jay found that having been educated in mainly white schools and with a largely white friendship network, he was not prepared for the prospect of teaching in a setting with a large number of black and other minority ethnic group students. The experience of teaching black and other minority ethnic group students was seen by Jay as related to a problem of understanding languages and behaviours. Jay found this experience difficult and uncomfortable. Jay felt 'surrounded' by the black and other minority ethnic group students he was asked to teach, as if he were being engulfed by them. At first, Jay found this teaching context threatening and difficult to negotiate.

I got my job at Mast House... I started in September. Very tough and challenging school to begin with. Kids [pause] Kids only respect you if you've been there for a while. Talking years rather than days and months. So, that was very difficult to start with... I've never been in an environment where, apart from a wedding, where I've been surrounded by – that's the wrong word – where I've been with so many Afro-Caribbean, er, Asian and er kids. Very much used to being in a white environment. So that was quite a challenge... like

patois. [laughs] Erm I'm enjoying, it got easier, and I'm starting to enjoy it now. [99-115]

This experience did not dent Jay's enthusiasm for teaching. Jay learned to adapt to this situation aided, in part, by his belief in his 'natural' predisposition to teach.

I just feel it's [teaching] natural, really. So... It's not... I don't know. I just feel it's natural, so it's hard to view it as special or different or anything like that. It's just what I do. And probably what I do well. So... I think I was definitely meant to be in this kind of role. It just sort of suits who I am a lot. [2316-2323]

Nevertheless, Jay's feelings of being ill at ease in a multi-ethnic school context remained present. Jay told me that he did not want to continue forever as a teacher in a school like Mast House school. Becoming a teacher was one thing; but, for Jay, being a teacher in a setting like Mast House school was another matter entirely. Mast House school represented the kind of school that Jay had never seen himself teaching in. In his own mind, Jay resisted the thought of being a teacher in a school like Mast House. Jay's commitment to teaching was articulated as a commitment to be a particular kind of teacher. Jay engaged in negotiating his professionalism orientation

and commitment and storied his commitment in future career terms – as a teacher in a school more suited to the kind of person he saw himself to be.

I think that... [pause] You never forget where you've come from... [I]t's difficult to know how it's influenced you. It certainly didn't influence me in my choice of career or even where I decided to work. Although I see it influencing my choice in a few years' time, because I want to move back. I'd rather work in a middle school anyway, and I prefer the pace of life, really. It's nicer than living in the big city... I'm going to move to Worcester in four or five years' time. They have first, second and high schools there. I prefer Key Stage 3. That's my plan. [laughs] [175-176; 198-206; 2258-2261]

Jay and I began to explore his teaching philosophy and practice. I wondered why Jay had chosen to teach, what teaching said about him, and how teaching represented the person that Jay is. Embedded within Jay's story of being a teacher, were echoes of the personal story he had already shared with me.

Jay had always wanted to be a teacher, despite his negative school experiences as a child. Jay regarded teaching as a profession that offered the respectability he desired in life. Jay was not driven to

become a teacher by virtue of the material benefits of the job such as pay and holidays; Jay's desire to teach reflected his deep and fundamental commitment to do something in life which would be meaningful and worthwhile in the eyes of his family and the wider society. In the context of his growing up, teaching was one of the few professions that Jay believed would provide the form of respectability he sought.

I'd imagine that I would have observed something or seen something... I had a lot of respect for a lot of my teachers. So... I got on well with them... I know there were teachers that I admired but... I can't put my finger on anything in particular... I think I must have seen them as being happy and... really, when you're twelve, you're not really exposed to that many professions really. I mean, teachers are what you're exposed to most of the time. But, we had some really good teachers. 'Cos, things like holiday and pay really wouldn't of even have come into it because at twelve, it doesn't really, does it? So... I think it must have been a profession that I respected.... and saw some value in. [1473-1508]

Jay's parents had wanted the best for their children and his father, particularly, instilled in Jay a desire for 'respectability' that was interpreted by Jay to mean securing a job that could be considered

good enough. Rather than bring disrespect onto his family (an issue which Jay expressed particular concerns about – he was committed to living a life which would not bring shame onto his family [324-339]), Jay sought a ‘respectable’ career. Initially, after leaving school prematurely, Jay was anxious to obtain a job which would be sufficient to persuade his parents that he had achieved a position of some respectability in life.

He [Jay’s father] was over the moon when I became a civil servant. [laughs]... He and my mum were just bursting with pride. And when I went to university, because I was the first one to go, they were just ecstatic, because they were desperate for me to stay in... Oh, God, yes, when I was sixteen I did a year in the sixth form and they were desperate for me to stay on. They were paying me money to stay in [laughs] erm school. They thought it was really important for me to stay, but I just wasn’t ready at that time. So, when I got a job as a civil servant he was as pleased as punch, because it was respectable... [350-364]

Becoming a teacher was regarded both by Jay and his parents as conferring greater respectability than was accorded to a Civil Service job. In the context of Jay’s upbringing and the value his parents

placed on education, teaching represented a respectable career worthy of public celebration.

So when I went to university they were ecstatic, and then I went into teacher training and teaching they were bursting with pride, telling everybody... [364-368]

Jay's desire for respectability was not simply about status and position; for Jay, teaching was intrinsically bound up with a desire for 'respect'. Teaching was respectable in Jay's view because, he believed, teachers treated other human beings with respect, humanity and dignity. Jay believed that teaching and learning should be predicated on acts of inclusion rather than exclusion. For Jay, learning cannot take place where individuals feel that they are treated as subordinate, inferior or where they feel they are not respected. Jay believes that his teaching style reflects this belief, and his orientation is towards inclusion and engagement of each individual within his class. Jay's practice as a teacher is informed by his own childhood experiences at primary and secondary school [12-20] [1133-1155]. Jay holds a deep commitment to the principle of respect for others. He described to me how he had witnessed and valued in his growing up the qualities of respect for others demonstrated by his mother, other family members and some of his

secondary school teachers. Jay had learned the importance of respect for others and self at an early stage in his life; it had begun with a critical incident at his first primary school where he was humiliated by a teacher.

After the first day when I was embarrassed, it took me a while to settle in. Erm... I almost didn't have any feelings about school, really. I hated anything where I had to stand in front of a group. Erm... I enjoyed playtime, lunchtime, socialising with the other children. [laughs] [981-987]

This experience had fostered in Jay a personal and professional commitment to sustain and engage pupils rather than criticise and damage them.

I would never... erm... in my teaching put a pupil in that position where they were embarrassed. I always praise effort as well as achievement... I would always praise for having a try. So... I use positive approaches. She [Jay's reception teacher] was always quite negative. [1150-1155]

Sometimes I pick up on things at school and actively seek and try to help people that are not enjoying school... perhaps I can sort of... I

don't know... understand reasonably well or a little bit why they might not enjoy school... [1061-1066]

I suppose that now, especially now that I'm in education, you are thinking about the impact of what you say... the influence and the difference... It's just like the advert. [laughs] But I have quite a lot of special needs [pupils], anyway, so, you have to think of... You constantly have to change your strategies because otherwise... [1213-1220]

Jay's teaching motivation related back to his experience of having lost confidence as a learner at an early stage in his life. For Jay, the teacher's role should be to develop the confidence of pupils. The theme of confidence was important to Jay's teaching philosophy. For Jay, building confidence amongst his pupils was key to unlocking their academic progress and achievement. Jay's negative experience of school had enabled him to empathise with his students; it had enabled Jay to develop teaching approaches which were inclusive, non-confrontational and empowering for each of his students. Jay was committed to developing the skills of each of his students, through whole class approaches and one-to-one teaching strategies. Key to building the confidence of his pupils, Jay believes that it is important to focus on the person of each child and to build their

confidence by getting to know them well, by disrupting the hierarchical divide between teacher and pupil and by letting his students get to know him as a person. By valuing each pupil, Jay believed that his students would value and respect him and thus become active learners who enjoyed the prospect of working with their teacher.

Erm... I feel very valued there by a lot of the kids. Er... I had a card from one that just said thank you for being a great teacher. So, even though he drives me mad. He's got no confidence in what he does, so... Involves a lot of one to one. [1435-1440]

I don't give in easily either. I think that's a difference between me and other teachers that they've had. Because, if they're not getting on well with something I still make them do it because you need to have the experience... I've always got them writing. [laughs] It goes against all the teaching, like, strategies and stuff, but they learn a lot more from copying, for some reason than they do from activity based things. And if they're copying, they're absolutely fine, no problem, and they can talk about what they've copied and stuff. It's amazing. But if you're on the same thing but in an activity... It may be confidence, actually, from their point of view... they just don't like it,

so there's no point in doing it, because they just don't like it, and they won't... they won't learn anything. [1756-1778]

Jay's preferred teaching style is predicated on a person-centred orientation which reflected the actions of his mother, who tended to put her children and others before herself [438-460]. For Jay, teaching was a way of him 'giving back' to others. Jay's professionalism orientation was told to me as a story of desire to 'give back' to his parents, students and the wider society. Jay told me how his parents, despite their low incomes and periods of unemployment, made sacrifices for the sake of their children's education. Jay told me how his parents had come to Britain in search of a better life for themselves and their children. Jay had told me how his parents wanted the best for their children in terms of education and jobs; how his parents had been anxious that their children should not enter the types of workplaces that they had to endure; and how his parents had aspired that their children should secure respectable careers [737-756]. The desire for white collar work (whether in the Civil Service or as a teacher) was indicative of the career aspirations that Jay's parents held for him, and he did not want to disappoint them. Becoming a teacher was, thus, a practical articulation of Jay's desire to give back to his parents.

Jay told me that his parents had demonstrated to him, during the period of his growing up, the importance of giving back: they had made sacrifices for their children at home; they had sent money back to Jamaica to support the family there; and they had been willing to help finance their children's education, despite their low incomes. Jay internalised his parents' commitment to 'give back'. As a teacher, Jay was concerned with giving back to his pupils; teaching in an inner city school, characterised by social and economic deprivation, had further intensified Jay's teaching motivation. For Jay, giving back was bound up with his personal sense of 'duty' and social responsibility. Jay regarded school teaching as an arena in which 'giving back' and making a difference to the wider society could find expression. Jay sought to 'give back' and empower all of his students in ways that his parents had done for him, his brothers and sisters when he was a child.

I think teaching is... is one of those professions, probably mainly like civil service professions, where you are... you are giving something back, and I think at the same time you are sort of... I think you have a sense of... duty, of some kind. A sense of duty. Erm... I'm just trying to elaborate that. [pause] Or perhaps a lot of your... your motivation comes... comes from the thought of... of giving something back. Of helping erm... yeah, teachers can make a difference in a child's life,

really, can't they? We always remember... that's an advert, isn't it? You always remember your good teachers, but it's true, isn't it. You always do remember... just as you always do remember your bad teachers as well, and all of the bad times at school. But I think teaching... well, society wouldn't really exist, would it, without teachers, would it? So... at a very fundamental lesson... level, sorry, teachers are vital. But I think that from what I've seen, the vast majority of teachers are constantly trying to ensure that they are giving the best to their pupils. They are serving their... serving their pupils who are customers in many respects, serving their customers' needs as best they can within the resources that are available. So... I think that teaching is very worthwhile. [1519-1549]

For Jay, giving back was concerned with helping his students to realise their potential. This meant not giving up on his students, or excusing poor performance as a consequence of their less advantaged home circumstances. Jay's high expectations as a teacher resonated with the high expectations that Jay's parents had for him when he was growing up [301-312] [350-368] [416-421] [1755-1766]. Jay believes that it is important for teachers to find the time to give (feed)back to each of their students.

I consciously make an effort to look at what they've done every day, every time. So, I think they like that, they like the attention. Even the older kids like their books being marked. I just like... [laughs] there's so many of you but you put a little tick in their book and it makes all the difference to them. I've had them thank me for comments I've made in their book, and I've had other ones that I've put... quite blunt with my comments, so... [1799-1809]

In Jay's story of teaching commitment, I learned that the desire to 'give back' was guided by the individual nurturing Jay had received from his mother and other significant persons (mainly women) whom he felt 'able to talk to' and who had wanted the best for him personally and emotionally [416-421] [1076-1101]. The women in Jay's life - such as Jay's mother, aunts and Miss Jones his secondary school English teacher - demonstrated that they cared for Jay; they were interested in Jay as a person; they had nurtured Jay's personal and academic development. Jay's formative development and upbringing had informed the kind of caring and nurturing teacher that Jay aspired to become.

I think it's vital for any school to have a caring attitude... It's my personality really, isn't it? [2286-2291]

A 'caring attitude' was something that Jay had learned from his female educators during the course of his upbringing, particularly his mother. Jay told me how his mother was person-centred in the way that she lived her life [438-460]. Jay's mother's agency provided a critical referent in Jay's teacher talk. Jay also learned from other members of his family and from his teachers the value of educating, valuing and engaging the whole child.

Uncle Beddy... He was extremely good – perhaps that's one of the influences on why I wanted to become a teacher – he was extremely good at explaining things. Explaining things like pollination of plants. He was the sort of person that engaged you as well... [703-712]

[F]or the longest time I did want to become a teacher. So, there must have been something that I saw. [pause] I had some inspirational teachers when I was growing up. Erm... Teachers who engaged me, took time to talk to me. So... I can't pinpoint it to any one thing or any one person really. I was lucky in the fact that there were so many good teachers around to help me at school. [815-824]

In his own practice as a teacher, Jay sought to apply strategies similar to those he learned from his family and favoured teachers. Jay's teaching practice emphasised the use of one-to-one, person-

centred approaches. For Jay, this was a critical part of being an effective teacher in a school where pupils come from less advantageous backgrounds. Liking the children and being liked in return was important to being a good teacher in Jay's eyes [1417-1446] [1793-1799]. For Jay, teaching is an expression of his personality. It reflects the person Jay sees himself to be. Jay's practice as a teacher represents his biography, the values imparted to him during the period of his growing up and his adult philosophical outlook.

Yeah. I think you have to be a very open person to succeed in teaching... I suppose I wouldn't do it if I thought that it was different to probably the core of what I'm about, really... [2226-2231]

During his upbringing and his own experiences as a student at school, Jay learned that teachers (himself included) cannot simply demand respect; for Jay, teachers earn the respect of their students by treating them with respect.

I got my job at Mast House in about February last year, so it was only about a few months into the course. I started in September. Very tough and challenging school to begin with. Kids [pause] Kids only

respect you if you've been there for a while. Talking years rather than days and months. So, that was very difficult to start with... [99-106]

This was central to how Jay sought to work with his own pupils. Jay was committed to developing personal relationships with his pupils, getting to know them as individuals and enabling them to get to know him as a person and as a teacher.

I think teaching is all about forming relationships. [1382-1383]

However, the challenging nature of the school where Jay teaches has necessitated that Jay deploy strategies for managing pupil behaviour along the lines of the strict, disciplinary practices demonstrated by persons like his father [301-346]. Jay felt that he would need to develop a disciplinary style as a means of coping in the classroom, but he also found that such practices did not come naturally to him.

I'm quite strict on discipline, or I try to be. I do find myself flagging sometimes. I am... sometimes it can be overwhelming... I just sort of... I almost sort of ignore those really if they're playing up... I'm, touch wood, quite lucky because I get on well with most of the kids, so... that makes it easier. And that's a difference because I talk to

them. That's why I like smaller classes so you can go round even, at least for a minute or so, with each of the children. [1783-1799]

Disciplining pupils did not resonate with Jay's personality and the value he placed on person-centred and humanist approaches in life and in the classroom. Jay relied on the support of colleagues in school to intervene when he could not cope with the problems of poor pupil behaviour; this reflected his limited experience as a teacher and also the personal challenges he faced in the classroom [1670-1684; 1935-1959; 1978-1984].

For Jay, teachers should build purposeful, meaningful and sustainable relationships with each student. Jay's practice as a teacher emphasised the importance of developing one-to-one relationships with his students. This reflected Jay's own troubled experience as a pupil in the reception class where, on his first day, respect was broken, where he was humiliated and where, as a consequence, his learning and self-belief were severely disrupted. Jay learned from his own experiences as a pupil in primary and secondary schools the importance of a person-centred approach to teachers' work. Jay's identity and agency as a teacher reflected his experience in the classroom as a child.

You can see that you're... You've helped a kid do as well as they can do. So... I think they... it was... I don't know. It was the relationships and being relaxed with them. [pause] [quietly] Although, I never felt particularly academically bright, so... [pause] [1476-1485]

The expression of Jay's professionalism orientation requires a school context conducive to a person-centred approach to teaching. Jay's teaching commitment is predicated on his need to work in a setting that allows his personality to find expression. During the course of a teaching practice, Jay found that his professional commitment was seriously tested and he contemplated giving up teaching because the school context in which he found himself thwarted his person-centred approach.

And my second placement was at Shuttlecock Hall, which is totally different. [smiling] White trash school. But erm... Staff were absolutely excellent there, but didn't really... Classes were too big. I think teaching is all about forming relationships. Some of the classes were like thirty-four, in a small room with like two to a computer. And it's just no way to form any kind of relationship there. So, er... I didn't really like it. I was sort of... sort of thing, I was part way through I thought well I may as well stick it out. I might as well get the

certificate at the end of it. If nothing else I can always go back to it later. [1377-1391]

Jay's person-centred professionalism orientation continues to guide his future career aspirations; he hopes to become a deputy headteacher in future years - one who will be committed to a person-centred and, indeed, pupil-centred approach in this senior role.

I'm going to move to Worcester in four or five years' time. They have first, second and high schools there. I prefer Key Stage 3. That's my plan. [laughs]... I think the next step is head of department or even Key Stage 3 co-ordinator. Take it from there, really... I think you still need to have a good deal of contact [with pupils], but... I think I see the deputy head's role as a lot being pastoral as well. So, being there to support the kids and things like that. So... I'd still like to keep the contact but just in a different context really, not always as teacher pupil. [2258-2282]

Jay's teaching style emphasises the value he places on treating pupils as individuals. Jay attaches a high value to respect for his students and to developing a learning environment of mutual respect and person-centredness. Jay desires to know each of his students in ways which extend beyond the provisions of the formal curriculum.

Jay has sought to apply one-to-one approaches in his teaching and he attaches a high importance to the pastoral role in his work as a teacher. This person-centred approach is, for Jay, key to enabling his pupils to progress and achieve academically. Jay strives to foster self-belief, self-confidence and self-respect amongst his students. To do this, Jay is concerned with disrupting the division between the teacher and pupil. Jay is committed to getting to know his students as people and to create opportunities that enable his pupils to get to know the person behind their teacher.

I think that's actually, it's something that we've not talked about, but I think is important and is vital to be successful as a teacher, is to have experience with the children outside of school. Erm... Took our form group to the Ranch [outdoor centre], taking the year 10s to Jaguar [car manufacturing plant]. We're looking to take some of the other classes to the City Learning Centre [local authority facility], just so you're on a... in a different environment, really. So that... you can see a different side of them and vice-versa. [pause]... I think so. It makes you less distant, I think. [2343-2358]

Jay believes that there are risks and difficulties involved in pursuing an open teaching style; pupils might take advantage of his openness towards them and thus subvert the rules of the classroom [1104-

1115]; such relationships can be difficult to maintain where class sizes militate against them [1376-1391]; and an open interpersonal style may be considered inappropriate by teachers and others in the context of concerns about child abuse [1085-1092]. Nevertheless, Jay is committed to a counter-cultural approach in his practice as a teacher.

Hmm. I don't think there's a need for teachers to be distant from, you know. You need to keep it relevant to where, to where they're [pupils] at and where you are and stuff, so... I think, yeah, I think I am quite informal with them... Yeah. I don't really see the, the need to try and create a sort of them and us, and trying to get respect that way. I think you get respect for who you are not what you do, and rather than trying to make yourself better than them in any way. I think the kids would resent it if I was like that anyway, because of where they're coming from, so... Maybe. [2034-2050]

For Jay, being a teacher is bound up with being a part of a professional community of teacher practitioners. Jay felt that it was important to get on well with his colleagues, and he had established a rapport with many of them. Jay felt a sense of belonging to the team of teachers within his own school and he did not rely on external institutional bodies (such as teacher associations) for

professional support [Time Line] [2108-2182]. On an everyday level, Jay sought the professional support of colleagues within his school to aid his professional development and to overcome difficulties as they arose in school. Beyond his colleagues at school, Jay continued to rely on the support and encouragement of his personal networks of family and friends, which provide him with opportunities to reflect on his professional practice and aid his emotional development as a teacher.

Erm.. Extremely well supported [by colleagues]. Because of the problems... I think it's the most inner city school in Birmingham and one of the most... highest number of... what is it? Certainly for free school meals, it puts it in one of the top brackets for that. And people... kids come in to school from... challenging backgrounds, I suppose, being polite, with nothing constant in their lives. So school is the only constant... I quite enjoy it. [pause] I think because you are so well supported it's hard not to enjoy it because there's always somebody to turn to if you're unsure. [1417-1435]

I like the staff that work at the school and how the school operates. I like its friendliness and it's a team. [1722-1724]

I learned from Jay the importance of long-term relationships through which he was able to sustain the confidence to express himself personally and professionally in the wider world. It was through these relationships that Jay grew as a person and as a teacher [964-975]. The professional relationships that Jay has established with his colleagues are important to Jay's development as a teacher. Jay thrives within a school environment where interpersonal relationships are an important part of the school ethos. The culture of Jay's school and the way it is managed provide Jay with the opportunities he needs to develop and extend his practice, to grow professionally and to work successfully within the professional, friendly and caring network of teachers at Mast House School.

I try not to ask too much of them. [laughs] I have a.... because my room's like multi used, so I have a direct support by offering IT advice within lessons. Erm... People have approached about my form because they are pretty wild, about strategies for the form. Erm... [pause] I don't know, they're not... People have asked for resources and things like that. Lesson plans and stuff. So... It's almost like natural to the school. It's not something that you're consciously aware of. If you're in a room... I wasn't even in... I was in the canteen and somebody 'phoned for some advice about the computer. So... It's not... I know I make it sound like it's paradise, but it's not paradise

but there are these things which work extremely well within the school. So, that's good. Yeah. I must admit it is good. [1917-1935]

CHAPTER 7: DISCUSSION

The previous chapter followed the story of the life of Jay as it emerged during the course of this study. The current chapter seeks to situate Jay's life story alongside a broad theoretical and contextual analysis (Goodson, 1992, p.6). I have taken as my starting point Jay's story and emphasised the centrality of his life text as a means of breaching the sway of dominant and repressive discursive practices (MacLure, 2003; Alvesson, 2002; Plummer, 2001). I have sought to re-tread key aspects of Jay's story across a cartography of theoretical concerns pertaining to teachers' lives and work. This chapter weaves together a theoretical reading with the story of Jay. In doing so, I have recognised the need for a reflexive approach to be pursued; nevertheless, I do not claim that the interpretations offered here are exhaustive. As with the re-presentation of Jay's story in the preceding chapter, this review does not claim to be 'complete', and I have resisted the exercise of authorial power in writing Jay's contextualised story, recognising the need to create a rich, polyvocal space wherein the ways of seeing and knowing the teacher are situated within narratives of self (Richardson, 2000; Lather, 2001). The theory of context provided here is constrained by the scope of the story Jay shared with me and the limits of my/our

reflexivity. In this sense, this chapter provides a re-reading of Jay's story constrained by time, place and the parameters for the presentation of this thesis. Jay's story is also a story of *one* black man teacher as told through his relationship with *one* black man researcher; it does not claim to be representative of the experiences of *all* black men teachers. Nevertheless, I will argue that Jay's story provides a helpful insight into the issue of teachers' professionalism orientations and suggests the potential for the stories of black men teachers to be re-presented against a broad canvas of life experience, defeating exoticisation and Othering (Fine et al., 2000; Youngblood Jackson, 2003).

Professionalism and Biography

Jay's life story provides a story of professionalism. Jay's story has told of why Jay became a teacher, what motivated him to choose teaching as a career, his professional values and ideology, commitment and preferred practice as a teacher. The reasons why individuals become and remain teachers and the contribution teaching as work makes to the lives of those who teach are central to understanding the nature of teachers' identities. In considering the issue of professionalism, I have sought to reflect on the extent to

which Jay's teaching story resonates with the professionalism stories of other teachers.

An interest in the professionalism orientations of teachers requires a consideration of why teachers teach, the values which inform their practice, and the behaviours exhibited by teachers themselves. Research into the recruitment and retention of teachers has often taken as its starting point the nature of teachers' commitment and motivation and the factors affecting the job satisfaction of teachers (Powney et al., 2003; Smithers and Robinson, 2003). If teachers are to be recruited and retained in the profession, it is important to consider their motivations (Spear, Gould and Lee, 2000). Moreover, in understanding the potential for developing the capacity of educational systems, the study of teachers' professionalism orientations should enable policy makers to determine the forms of support, development and intervention which may be needed to assure the wider development or improvement of individual classrooms, schools and educational systems as a whole (Hoyle, 1980).

The scholarly interest in the professionalism of teachers has reflected a concern with the role of teachers within changing educational contexts. In considering the teacher's role, interest has focused on

the nature of teachers' attitudes and behaviours. Hoyle (1974) has distinguished between 'restricted' and 'extended' professionals, guided by certain assumptions about the nature of the teacher's practice and a concern that teachers should exercise control over their work by building the base of professional knowledge. Hoyle's interest in the issue of professionalism reflects a wider interest in the effects of external prescription on teachers' work and the extent to which, within a context of legal and regulatory constraints, teachers exercise their own agency within the work they do. Hoyle (1980, p.49) has also argued that in the interests of assuring the professionalism of teachers – through the roles ascribed to teachers and the teacher's agency in the school or classroom – there should be a concern with ensuring the teacher's professional development and practice improvement along a continuum of extended professional practice. Similarly, Evans' (2001) interest in professionalism arises from concerns about the nature of the teacher's work, the potential for the deprofessionalisation of teachers' work and a belief that the teacher's practice should be guided by the reflexive and systematic evaluation of theory and practice relating to her/his work. Evans has offered the following definition of 'professionalism':

'I have defined professionalism as: an ideologically-,
attitudinally-, intellectually-, and epistemologically-based

stance, on the part of an individual, in relation to the practice of the profession to which s/he belongs, and which influences her/his professional practice.'

(Evans, 2001, p.293)

Reflecting postmodern critiques of the salience of meta-narratives in understanding the teacher's identity, numerous writers have argued that an interest in teachers' professionalism orientations requires a consideration of the beliefs, motivations and commitments of teachers themselves. Broadfoot et al (1988, p.283) have argued that the teacher's 'ideology, or to put it another way, the conception of their professional role... plays the most fundamental part in determining what teachers do.' Broadfoot et al argue that policy makers and researchers should interrogate the nature of teachers' ideologies and that a failure 'to take them into account' is likely to result in 'widespread resentment, a lowering of morale, and, with it, a reduced effectiveness' (1988, p.283). Sikes, Measor and Woods (1985) have explored the issue of teacher professionalism orientation with reference to the issue of the teacher's commitment. Sikes, Measor and Woods have argued that teacher commitment operates across a matrix and continua of beliefs (vocational, professional and instrumental), domains of focus/interest (education, subject, teaching, institution and career) and levels of personal/professional

intensification (core, mixed and peripheral) which intersect, interrelate and change over time. According to Sikes, Measor and Woods (1985, pp. 237-238), the form, focus and intensity of the teacher's commitment is mediated by societal, institutional and biographical factors. Woods (1990, pp. 131-132) has also argued that teacher commitment may be plotted along four axes: commitment as vocation, commitment as profession, commitment as identity, and commitment as career continuance, which also relate to the biographical and institutional circumstances in which the teacher is located. The arguments advanced by Sikes, Measor and Woods (1985) and Woods (1990) offer a template for interpreting teacher professionalism and the reasons why individuals choose and continue to teach. The theories of teacher commitment developed by these writers suggest the limitations of locating the teacher's commitment solely within a conceptual framework of understanding pedagogic practice. Individuals may become teachers for a host of reasons, including the desire to work with children and young people, to work within a particular arena of subject knowledge, theory and practice, or because of idealist concerns to make a difference to the lives of other individuals or the society at large (Carrington et al., 2001; Sikes and Everington, 2004). However, the articulation of the teacher's professionalism orientation may be influenced by her/his personal life experiences (Sikes, 1997) and by the particular conditions which

operate within the institutions or wider society of which they are part (Freire, 1970; Casey, 1993; Callender, 1997; Osler, 1997). In this sense, teaching has a 'dialectical meaning' (Giroux, 1988, p.195), as reflected in the interplay of the individual self and the wider institutional and social contexts wherein teachers exercise their agency in defining, shaping, organising or merely reaffirming the nature of the work they do. Thus, to understand why teachers teach, it is necessary to explore teachers' life stories and their relationship to the wider institutional and social contexts in which teachers work (Hoyle and John, 1995, pp. 60-61).

At the centre of my interest in teacher professionalism is the story of Jay. The narrative of Jay's life provides an individual account of becoming a teacher. Jay's story reveals how career choice is informed by personal beliefs about the contribution and value of teachers' work to individuals and the wider society. Jay's story tells of his values as a teacher and the extent to which he perceives teaching to be of value to himself and others. In first establishing why it was that he wanted to be a teacher, Jay told of how he regarded teaching as a valued profession within the wider society. For Jay, teaching provided a means of making a difference to the wider society. Jay's teaching story spoke of a congruent desire for 'respectability' which satisfied the expectations of his family whilst

also providing Jay with an opportunity to express his self in a role to which he felt suited. It is a story of a search for identity and meaning which contains a clear moral purpose (Sikes, Nixon and Carr, 2003). Jay's story, at one level, is a personal story of teacher commitment, informed by his biography and wider life experience, within the context of a personal and social values framework.

However, through the medium of a persuasive life history approach, it has been possible to situate Jay's teacher identity and agency within a wider social context. Jay's teacher story is located in his personal life experiences. Jay's upbringing, school experiences, personal relationships and other life experiences have informed his teacher commitment. In recounting his life story, Jay told of how he had observed teachers whose practices he wanted to emulate. Jay also witnessed the negative practices of teachers who confirmed to him the kind of teacher that he did not want to be. Thus, the notion of professionalism is situated in the local and particular experiences of the individual. Jay learned from his teachers - within his family and at school - the value of building positive relationships with others. These values, learned from significant others in Jay's life, provided a template within which Jay was able to ground his own approach as a teacher. Through the personal relationships established within his family and in the wider world, Jay's teacher commitment was formed,

nurtured and developed. Jay's story suggests the salience of the individual's family and friendship networks in the development of teacher consciousness and commitment.

In reading Jay's story, it is important to consider the wider social context in which Jay's life is situated: the place where Jay grew up, his friendship networks, the schools he attended, and the wider structural relations of racialisation, social class, gender and patriarchy which are foregrounded in the telling of Jay's story. In his life story, Jay recounted his experiences of a working class upbringing which informed his self-perception and his personal and professional motivation. Jay's story provided important details of his working class and financially impoverished childhood, his cultural experiences, the nurturing offered by his mother, other family members and teachers, his experiences of racism, and his father's displays of patriarchal power in his childhood home; these details provided critical contextual markers of Jay the person and Jay the teacher. By reflecting on these contextual markers it is possible to begin to understand Jay's life as a teacher, his desire to teach and his commitment and orientation as a teacher.

Jay's story is the story of the son of working class, Jamaican immigrant parents raised in a semi-rural setting in an English town.

Jay's story is a story of its time and the particularities of the place where he grew up. Jay's story is a story of the contexts of place and historical moment which provided particular opportunities for him to form relationships, to ground his cultural identity and to acquire his social, political and professional consciousness. Jay's story is also a story of migration and settlement: like many second-generation sons of Jamaican immigrant parents, Jay shared the experience of a working class upbringing; he had the benefit of a supportive extended family network; he discontinued his studies when he was 16 years of age to find work (Byron, 1994; Owen et al., 2000). However, unlike many second-generation sons of Jamaican immigrant parents, Jay did not grow up in an inner city urban area: Jay was one of very few black children at the schools he attended; he did not have many black friends; he had no black teachers; he was, despite his feelings to the contrary, an active student who achieved qualifications at a high level. Jay's story suggests the narrative continuities and discontinuities in relation to the stories of black men in British society and the plurality of black men as a social group. At the same time, Jay's story echoed the stories of other black men teachers who had benefited in career terms from the opportunity to be educated with pupils from more advantaged (if not white) social backgrounds (James, 2002; Foster, 1997). In this sense, Jay's story suggests that in order to understand the identities and agency of

black men teachers, it is necessary to consider carefully and with some precision, the particular experiences of teachers themselves. Jay's story suggests the limitations of seeking to understand teachers without reference to the inner world and deep biographies of individuals and the narratives they use to re-present their lives.

Osler (1997, p.57) has suggested that black teachers have a 'shared experience of racism'; indeed, Osler's acknowledged 'assumption' is predicated upon the researcher's reading of the wider salience of racism within the British social context. However, whilst it is important to understand the macro-context in which the individual is located, it is also important to not overlook the realities of the individual's lived experience or obscure the relationship between the macro-context and the individual self and micro-context of the life. A key advantage of the life history approach is that it seeks to 'situate' biographical narratives within both macro- and micro-contextual frameworks (Goodson, 1981, 1992, 2000). By exploring the particularities of the micro-context of place, space, institution and everyday social relations, together with an examination of the broader social context, it is possible to understand more fully the expression of the teacher's identity and agency (Troyna, 1994b; Mac an Ghail, 1999). Thus, in his story of becoming a teacher, Jay recognised the existence of racism within the wider social context; however, racism was not a

privileged theme within Jay's personal or professional story. Jay explained that he had not had a direct experience of racism during the course of his life; indeed, Jay resisted storying himself as a 'black teacher'. Whilst it might be convenient to explain Jay's narrative as exhibiting a form of 'false consciousness' (see Munro, 1998, p.74), this would be a crude and brutalising response to Jay's story and would merely serve to highlight the repressive nature of the researcher's power and privileged position in the writing of the individual's story (Thomas, 1995b; Francis, 2003). However, by delving deeply into Jay's narrative it is possible to understand why he storied himself in this way.

The geographical contexts or place in which the individual lives and teaches is pertinent to the development of the teacher's self-concept, identity and agency (Elbaz-Luwisch, 2004). Foster (1993, p.164) has identified that where black teachers are present in small numbers and are highly dispersed geographically, their political orientations have tended towards the individual rather than the collective. Foster has shown how, in the racially segregated school system within the American southern states, black teachers' self identities were influenced by their everyday lived experiences of racism within the social structure and institutions in which they had been educated and where they taught. Black teachers in the segregated American south

assumed particular forms of black political identification and collective resistance - the National Association of Teachers in Colored Schools was founded in 1902 to represent the collective interests of black teachers – to defeat workplace discrimination and to challenge the second-class status ascribed to black children and their schools. In contrast, the more geographically dispersed black teachers living and working in integrated schools in the northern American states have historically been less likely to organise on the basis of collective black political identification (Foster, 1993, p.164). Foster's research suggests the importance of exploring the macro- and micro-contexts in which individual teachers are situated and the impact of these on the teacher's self identity.

Frazier (1957) has also suggested that the development of black political identifications and forms of organisation amongst black professionals are a consequence of their everyday experiences and the social relations in which black professionals are engaged. In a comparative study of primary school teachers in France and England, Broadfoot et al (1988, p.265) have argued that the 'context within which teachers work deeply influences their professional ideology, their perceptions of their professional responsibility, and the way in which they carry out their day to day work'. Karakaya (2004, p.195) has made a similar argument in relation to the influence of

national and local contexts of English and Turkish teachers on the development of these teachers' identifications and orientations. Jay's story also suggests that in understanding the identities and agency of black men teachers, it is important to consider the national and local circumstances in which teachers live and work. Jay's story has told of the centrality of his working class experience and his whole life experience within the predominantly white neighbourhood and school contexts where he socialised with an exclusively white friendship network. Jay's journey into teaching and the formation of his professionalism identity and orientation were informed by the realities of his lived experiences; Jay's resistance to being storied as a 'black teacher' and his struggle for self re-presentation should, therefore, be understood in relation to his own situated, micro-contextual and personal life experiences, as well as with reference to the macro-context of life in British society. Jay's story signals the condition of postmodernity (Lyotard, 1984) and the need to critique dominant representational practices which are silencing and exclusionary.

Professional Desire

In telling his story of becoming a teacher, Jay told of how his entry into the teaching profession was marked by his childhood, adolescent and adult life experiences. Jay's confidence as a learner

was deeply affected by his earliest schooling experiences. Jay lost confidence as a learner following a critical incident on his first day as a school pupil. He recovered some of this lost confidence, but left school at the age of sixteen to enter the world of work. Jay told of how his confidence and self-belief as a learner and potential teacher took a number of years to recover. Without the support of family and a wide friendship network, Jay's belief in his potential to live out his childhood dream of being a teacher might not have been realised. Jay's story suggests the teacher's struggle for self-expression and the important role played by family and friends - significant others - in nurturing, developing and sustaining the teacher's identity and commitment (MacLure, 1993, p.312). Jay's teaching orientation, teaching style and values resonated with his early life experiences, relationships - positive and negative – and the critical incidents that had occurred throughout his life. It was during the period of his growing up that Jay acquired a desire to pursue a 'respectable' career, where he could present the caring and person-centred disposition he had acquired through the relationships he had formed with his family, friends and favourite teachers. Through an extended process of socialisation, Jay developed his desire to become a teacher and expressed this desire within a framework of ethical practice. These experiences and memories have shaped the kind of teacher that Jay desires to be. Jay's story suggests that the teacher's

identity and agency are contextually contingent and this might have important implications for understanding teacher commitment and the possibilities for teacher development (Casey, 1992; Goodson, 1992 and 2000; Stronach and MacLure, 1997; Alvesson, 2002).

Jay's teaching commitment reflected a twin desire: namely, to respond to the masculinist conditioning he had received from his father and a desire to exhibit a person-centred way of life, as learned from his mother and others during the course of his upbringing. Jay pursued the desire for 'respectability' his father had instilled in him; yet, securing a 'respectable' career in the white-collar Civil Service was not sufficient to meet Jay's desire to be himself. It was by becoming a teacher that Jay was able to give expression to his core sense of who he is: namely, to secure a position of respectability within a person-centred work context. Perhaps it was the case that, in leaving school and gaining a professional career, Jay felt he would be able to realise his personal desire; however, a lengthy spell in the Civil Service did not wholly satisfy him. Indeed, it was significant that, in pursuing a programme of higher education study, Jay initially enrolled for a programme in human resource management – perhaps this was an expression of his desire towards a person-centred orientation. For Jay, respectability and status alone were not enough; teaching provided the opportunity to give expression to the whole

person that is Jay. A similar point has been made by Priyadharshini and Robinson-Pant (2003) in their study of why people change careers to become teachers. Priyadharshini and Robinson-Pant have identified that for 'late starters' (2003, p.99) – it might be appropriate to regard Jay as a 'late starter' given his deferred entry to higher education - 'teaching was seen as an antidote to careers that left people feeling alienated, isolated, bored or 'empty'" (2003, p.102). According to Priyadharshini and Robinson-Pant, 'late starter' teachers are characterised by a former lack of confidence in their earlier life about their ability to work with children and by their idealistic motivation to teach 'as a way of giving back something to society and making a difference' (2003, p.105). These characteristics reverberated strongly in Jay's story. Moreover, Jay's story suggests the importance of considering men's cultural adaptivity within the wider social context wherein the journey to become a teacher is negotiated (Campbell, 2000).

Jay's story highlights the significance of wider personal life experiences in situating the individual's desire to teach. Jay's future career aspirations include a commitment to working with young people within a person-centred framework. Jay told of his ambition to relocate to an area akin to the place where he had been raised. Through Jay's talk is told a story of the push-pull of personal life

experiences in situating the teacher's professional motivation and commitment. Other research from the field has highlighted the importance of the individual's life experience, critical incidents and significant others in relation to the development of the teacher's identity (Nias, 1985 and 1989; Sikes, Measor and Woods, 1985; Foster, 1997; Osler, 1997; Sikes, 1997; James, 2002; Sikes and Everington, 2004). Jay's story further suggests the significance of wider life experiences and critical events – including, education and schooling experiences, friendship networks, family support, age, social class and place – in the formation of the identities, agency and desires of teachers. Jay's story suggests that the desire to teach is reflective of the individual's struggle for self re-presentation and self-actualisation (Maslow, 1943) in the social world.

Professionalism and Life Experience

Jay's story provides a narrative of an individual's growing up and maturation. Jay's story also reveals how context has shaped his personal and professional identity and agency. Jay's story suggests the ways in which personal life experiences may inform the expression of teachers' identities. This reflects an important contribution of the life history approach to understanding teachers: for, Jay's development as a teacher is grounded in his personal life

experience (Goodson, 1981). It is Jay's life experiences as a whole which have made him the teacher he is today. To ignore the nuances of Jay's personal story, is to overlook the complex and individual ways in which teacher identity is established and developed over time.

Johnson (1972) has argued that the process of 'professionalisation' - through regulatory frameworks, training and codes of conduct governing professional participation - provides a mechanism for assuring the acquisition of common values, ideology and behaviours amongst members of professional groups. Lacey (1977) has suggested that becoming a teacher confers a particular commonality of status amongst those who are teachers, and ensures their acquisition of a shared 'teacher perspective' (Lacey, 1977, p.14). Other research has argued that teachers' professional orientations are mediated by individual biography as well as by the institutional contexts of the school and the formal provision of professional training and induction (Connell, 1985; Coffey and Delamont, 2000; Sikes, 1985; Sikes, 1997). Indeed, Jay's story lends some credence to the contention that the nature and expression of the teacher's professionalism orientation are historically, biographically and contextually contingent whilst also being a feature of the formal processes of professionalisation and institutionalisation. However, in

contrast to Lacey's (1977, p.14) claim that there exists a common 'teacher's perspective' acquired through the process of professional training, Jay's story suggests the plurality of teachers' professionalism orientations which must be understood by detailed reference to the personal life stories of teachers themselves (Goodson, 2000).

Jay's story suggests that in seeking to understand teachers and teaching it is necessary to explore the teacher's biography; to look beyond the content of formal modes of professional development, qualifications and systems of regulation which, whilst important, do not tell the whole story of the teacher's orientation. Jay's story highlights the salience of private and public influences in the formation and development of the teacher's identity; indeed, it suggests that examining the 'socialising influences relevant to the formation of the teacher over the full life experience' enables an holistic and robust understanding of the teacher's life and work to be obtained (Goodson, 2000, p.19). It might be argued that Jay's professional socialisation commenced on his first day as a pupil in school when he was publicly humiliated by his teacher. This experience taught Jay the importance of a good teacher and the qualities which made for a good teacher. Throughout his schooling and childhood home life, Jay learned the value of building positive personal relationships with others, of getting to know people as

people, and of showing respect and care for others; these early life lessons played a crucial part not only in Jay's personal development but also his personal and professional socialisation as a teacher. On entering the formal world of teacher education, training, qualification and practice, Jay applied these earlier life lessons; he sought to practice these values through his teaching as he simultaneously acquired new skills and insights into how children learn, pedagogic practice, and the deployment and use of particular classroom strategies and resources. Jay's story suggests the limitations of locating understanding about the development of teachers' identities solely within the formal processes of professional regulation and training; for Jay's identity is structured along personal lines, mediated by the interplay of biographical and institutional experiences throughout his life (Giroux, 1988). Indeed, within an historical context of increasingly utilitarian and prescriptive approaches to the training of teachers, the core ideologies and beliefs of teachers themselves are unlikely to be affected by their receipt of mandatory pre- or in-service development programmes (Goodson, 2000, p.14). It might also be argued that current college based methodologies for teachers' preparation offer a technical, rather than professional, preparation (Robinson, 2003); this technical training of teachers is far from 'teacher-proof' - the ideologies, values, beliefs and life experiences which teachers bring to their work inform the teacher's

identity and agency and may run counter to the orthodox and prescribed knowledge of the school, training institution or nation state (Helsby, 1999, p.168). Indeed, the failure of technicist approaches to teachers' professional development may be indicated by established classroom teachers' concerns about declining standards of pupil behaviour in schools (NASUWT, 2003; Wright and Keetley, 2003) which have intensified during the period in which new teachers' dissatisfaction with the quality of pupil behaviour management pre-service teacher training has remained relatively high (Teacher Training Agency, 2000d, 2001, 2002 and 2004a). Jay's story suggests the difficulties some teachers might experience when confronted by disruptive pupil behaviour and where they believe themselves to lack the personal skills and resolve needed to 'manage' pupil behaviour in accordance with the prevailing professionally prescribed or institutional norms. This raises important issues about the ability of teachers to adapt to 'unfamiliar cultural environments' for the purposes of ensuring their professional survival and effectiveness (Campbell, 2000, p.37). Jay's story, thus, suggests the struggle for self re-presentation in the world of teaching as work.

Professional Adaptation and Survival

Teaching as work demands much of the person who is the teacher, such that teaching may require the individual to develop strategies for adaptation in relation to self or environment in order to facilitate professional survival (Nias, 1989, p.26). The extent to which teachers may need to adapt themselves to the situation of teaching may be a function of the power relations and ethos within the school, the requirements of the curriculum and the demands of pupils (Sikes, Measor and Woods, 1985; Woods, 1990; Evans, 1998 and 2001). From this perspective, it is argued that within the context of institutional/occupational life, individual teachers may encounter 'critical phases and incidents' which serve to confirm or transform in some way their perceptions and attitudes to the job and their continued desire to be seen as teachers (Sikes, Measor and Woods, 1985, p.69). Jay's story speaks of the crises which some individuals, particularly recent entrants to the profession, negotiate in becoming teachers and in sustaining teacher identity. Schools provide critical factories for the reproduction of cultural values and norms by constraining the identities and agency of teachers and pupils alike (Illich, 1971). Individuals negotiate these constraining discursive and structural imperatives in relation to re-presenting themselves as teachers.

Coffey and Delamont (2000) have provided a detailed analysis which points to the potentially repressive effects of a masculinist professional performativity culture on the commitment and agency of women and men who teach, where the teacher's self or preferred orientation comes into conflict with the normative modes of the institution and the profession. Connell (1985, p.157) has made a similar point by arguing that men who teach may seek to adjust their professional orientation in order to accommodate the expression of their preferred masculinist orientations. The rise of the compliance culture in schools, associated with the new public management agenda (Hood, 1991; Clarke et al. 1994; Clarke and Newman, 1997), finds expression through systems of external scrutiny, surveillance and internalised self-regulation (Lyotard, 1984) and places an emphasis on teachers being seen to perform in accordance with prescribed normative practices which are often masculinist and Eurocentric in nature (Blackmore, 1996; Lingard and Douglas, 1999). This may have important consequences for the expression of the teacher's identity, agency and commitment. Thus, Woods and Jeffrey (2002, pp. 98-104) have argued that the late modernity onslaught of a dominant performativity culture has produced 'strongly traumatic negative feelings... of guilt, shame, fear, shock' and other feelings which have resulted in teachers attempts to 'salvage' their personal

identities through such strategies as refusal, self-assertion, self-displacement, game playing and self-realignment. For particular groups of teachers, such as lesbian and gay teachers, pressure to conform to heterosexist expectations and to demonstrate professional commitment and aptitude may lead to the denial or silencing of personal identity within the workplace where being gay may be destabilising to the teacher's status, authority and career (Garber, 1994). The teacher's professional survival may depend on the individual's capacity and willingness to mask aspects of her/his personal identity in order to be seen as a 'proper' teacher (Coffey and Delamont, 2000, pp. 88-89). Teachers might also experience critical incidents in teaching associated with age/generational factors (Sikes, Measor and Woods, 1985), workplace sexism and racism (Foster, 1997; Osler, 1997; Munro, 1998; Rakhit, 1999), a desire to balance work and home life (Sikes, 1997; Smithers and Robinson, 2003), or the changing demands of the job itself (Connell, 1985). Sikes (1985, p.48) has identified that teachers may need to adapt their personal or professional aspirations or behaviours as a means of 'coping with 'reality''. Teachers might experience a form of 'reality shock' (Jones, 2003, p.394) where they find that the experience of teaching does not match their prior expectations of the job and the culture of teaching. From this perspective, it is important to consider how, in the story of becoming and being a teacher, Jay's self

interacts with the wider institutional and discursive contexts in which he is situated and how this affects the expression of Jay's professional identity and agency (Becker, 1964; Woods, 1990; Connell, 1985).

How teachers maintain their personal identities whilst engaged in a job that demands much of them personally requires an interest in teachers' coping strategies (Hargreaves, 1977 and 1978; Connell, 1985; Sikes, Measor and Woods, 1985; Woods, 1990; Ball and Goodson, 1985; Osler, 1997). Hargreaves (1977) has suggested that coping strategies are reflective of particular teacher orientations – paradigmatic and pragmatic:

'By paradigm I mean views about how teaching ought to be, how it would be in ideal circumstances... The pragmatic component of teacher perspective is concerned with what is or is not possible in given circumstances and with strategies and techniques for achieving goals.'

(Hargreaves, 1977, p.38)

In conditions of role conflict, teachers need to strike a balance between their preferred philosophy and practice and the realities of life within the school or classroom; thus, they may need to adjust

between paradigmatic and pragmatic responses. Ball (1972) has referred to the need to explore the dialectic between the teacher's 'situated' and 'substantial' identity which prompts a consideration of the 'self' in relation to the teacher's identity, motivation and agency (Nias, 1989, p.19). The concept of the 'situational' self draws on the work of symbolic interactionists (see Mead, 1934, Newcomb, 1950) and conveys the idea that the construction of the self is shaped by the interactions between the individual and generalised others. The 'situational' self is shaped by social encounters past and present. An individual may have multiple 'situational' selves which re-present the assigned social identity of the individual within the social world which may be expressed differently at different times and in different social settings. Lacey (1977, p.64) has argued that the micro-context of the school provides for the teacher's self to be 'situationally constrained', requiring teachers to present particular forms of identity and agency within the constraints imposed by school life. Foster (1997) has suggested that a feature of black men teachers' agency concerns the presenting of alternative self identities and behaviours within and outside the formal context of the school as a means of coping with the realities of institutionalised racism.

The concept of the 'substantial' self refers to the core self concept which results from contact with significant others (see Cooley, 1902;

Katz, 1960). The 'substantial' self is also socially constructed (Campbell, 2000), but the idea of the 'substantial' self suggests that individuals have a core self that defines the individual's primary values and beliefs and which requires preservation and integrity. The 'substantial' self is relatively impervious to change; it re-presents the individual's view of her/himself and is generally maintained across different contexts and through time. Woods and Jeffrey (2002, p.90) have referred to this as the 'personal identity' of the teacher. Taking up the concept of the 'substantial' self, it has been argued that teachers may need to take such steps to ensure the preservation of the self – for example, by taking such action as may be needed in order to change the way in which their school is organised and run - even if this has the potential to damage their careers (Lacey, 1977, pp. 141-142). The relationship between the teacher's assigned or situated identity and her/his personal or substantial identity may give rise to threats to the teacher's self concept in such a way as to destabilise the teacher's 'ontological security' (Giddens, 1991, p.36); a struggle over the self then ensues whereby teachers may seek to reclaim and reassert their personal values and interests in light of these challenges to the self (Woods and Jeffrey, 2002, p.104). This might have particular implications for understanding the professional identities and agency of black men teachers like Jay who operate in

contexts where the ascribed roles of black teachers do not accord with the preferred self identities which teachers give to themselves.

The work of educational life historians has focused on the maintenance of the self in relation to teaching, since it has been suggested that the teacher's self is crucial to the teacher's professionalism orientation (see Goodson, 1981). Osler's (1997, pp. 192-193) typology of black teachers' commitment suggests that the maintenance of a positive self concept requires that black teachers develop particular strategies in order to resist the racialised system of schooling and, thus, secure the maintenance of their personal identities and sense of self-worth. Biklen (1995, pp. 159-169) has argued that role conflict may have positive or negative consequences for the individual teacher and may give rise to alternative forms of teacher orientation ranging from 'unhappy compliance' to 'open resistance'. Sikes (1985, p.49) has suggested that in the interaction between the teacher's self and the structural constraints of teaching, a number of 'contingent coping strategies' of adaptation may be identified. Similarly, Woods (1990, pp. 99-118) has identified eight 'survival strategies' utilised by teachers to negotiate the conflicts between the self and the institutional contexts in which the individual is situated. Sikes, Measor and Woods (1985, pp. 237-238) have identified three principal coping strategies utilised by teachers –

namely, withdrawal, commitment change and commitment adaptation/modification. Rakhit (1999, p.61) has identified recourse to strategies of professional withdrawal amongst some Asian women teachers as a result of their experience of workplace discrimination and harassment.

In his story of becoming a teacher, Jay related his experience of self in teaching and his experience of resisting the power of dominant discursive practices (MacLure, 2003). Jay's professionalism orientation reflected his person-centred and caring self and revealed his personal desire to build meaningful and positive relationships with those around him. In his story, Jay told of the importance he attached to getting to know his pupils and in providing them with opportunities to know him both as a person and as a teacher. Jay's story revealed how his personal and professional identities were intertwined within a vocational and humanist epistemological framework (Woods and Jeffrey, 2002, pp. 92-93). Jay told of the importance of working within a school context which would enable the expression of his self concept in teaching. Without appropriate forms of institutional support, Jay's story suggests that he would experience difficulties of 'reality shock' (Jones, 2003, p.394) in maintaining his self concept; indeed, there were occasions where the context of school life forced Jay to re-evaluate his commitment to teaching as work; he nearly

gave up on his life-long desire to be a teacher whilst teaching at a 'white trash' school which did not provide a suitable context for the expression of his self concept; challenges to his preferred teaching style, arising from trying to teach large classes, also inhibited Jay's capacity to realise his self concept in ways which would enable him to develop personal relationships with each of his pupils. Jay's anxieties in working in a school setting with large numbers of black students also called upon Jay to negotiate his self concept in teaching; Jay's paradigmatic perception did not resonate with the realities of the institutional context in which he found himself as a teacher at Mast House School and, as a consequence, Jay had to develop appropriate pragmatic responses which would enable him to meet his teaching desire within a cultural context in which he did not feel particularly suited. In short, Jay had to manage his self concept in order to adapt to the demands of real world teaching (Campbell, 2000).

Merton and Kitt (1950), Sherif and Wilson (1953), Shibutani (1955) and Nias (1989) have identified the significance of reference groups as a means by which individuals maintain and develop their self concept. Reference group theory provides a basis for exploring how distinct teacher identities develop and are maintained over time. The existence of in-school and out-of-school reference groups – including

family, friends, professional colleagues and wider social, political or cultural networks - might enable or inhibit the individual's negotiation of particular professional identities, mores and modes of behaviour. Reference groups within and outside the school may support individuals in negotiating critical phases and incidents and periods of role conflict (Nias, 1985; Carter, 1986; Rakhit, 1999; Carrington et al., 2001). Moreover, such networks might inform the ways in which teachers construct and give meaning to their professional lives. In considering Jay's professional story, the concept of reference groups appears to be particularly salient. Jay derived considerable support from his personal networks of family and friends which supported the development and sustenance of his commitment and desire as a teacher. These personal networks provided Jay with the courage and confidence to continue as a teacher. Within the setting of the school, and as a beginning teacher, Jay also turned to the professional relationships he had established with his teacher colleagues to aid the development of his teaching skills and his survival in the classroom, particularly at times when he was experiencing difficulties with the behaviour of students and with the demands of the formal curriculum (Ball and Goodson, 1985; Sikes, 1985; Butt et al., 1992). Indeed, as Helsby (1999, p.173) has argued, the teacher's 'level of professional confidence may be affected by the personal characteristics and predispositions of individuals and by their

previous experiences' and by other factors including 'the amount and quality of professional support available to them'. Teachers do not exist merely as individuals; teachers' lives and work exist within wider social and political contexts and larger 'communities of interest' within the environs of the school and the locality which may provide an important basis of personal and professional support (Steelman, Powell and Carini, 2000; Carter, 1986; Virdee and Grint, 1994; Modood et al, 1997). At the same time, Jay was also able to draw upon his cultural biography – for example, his knowledge and experience of cultural signifiers, such as patois – to enable him to negotiate certain challenges in his teaching career, particularly the challenge he faced in teaching large numbers of black and other minority ethnic group pupils (Campbell, 2000, pp. 37-38). A blend of private and public coping strategies are evident throughout Jay's story and these strategies have provided the means by which Jay has been able to maintain his professional commitment and preferred orientation (Sikes, Measor and Woods, 1985, p.95). The concept of reference groups thus suggests that individual teacher identities are reflective not merely of individual self-consciousness and self-determination, but that such identities are dialectically constructed; in this sense, professionalism can be regarded as an expression of the interplay between the individual and the wider context of social relations and constraints which are historically situated. Jay's story

suggests the importance of both the individual's coping strategies and wider institutional and social contexts in enabling the expression of the teacher's identity and agency, the development and sustaining of teacher commitment and retention and the maintenance of a viable self concept which makes the teacher's life possible.

Professionalism, Ethnicity and Gender

Historical reviews have documented that teaching has provided one of the few professional opportunities for black people (Cundall, 1914; Eisner, 1961; Goulbourne, 1988; Foster, 1993 and 1997; Etter-Lewis, 1993; hooks, 1994). However, there is also an extensive scholarship which has identified that black people are dissuaded from becoming teachers because of racism, discrimination and harassment (Dhingra and Dunkwu, 1995; Maylor et al., undated; Osler, 1997; Basit and McNamara, 2004; Bariso, 2001). It is difficult to resolve the apparent disparity between these structuralist perspectives without reference to the agency of teachers themselves. Thus, understanding why some black people become teachers and others do not requires that theorising takes account of the structure-agency dialectic. For some black people, like Jay, teaching is a career of 'choice'. The available scholarship has argued that career 'choice' is informed by a mix of intrinsic and extrinsic factors, including a belief in the intrinsic

rewards of teaching, a desire to work with young people, a commitment to making a difference and to do something which has some social value (Casey, 1993; Sikes, 1997; Carrington et al., 2001; Foster, 1993 and 1997; Humphrey-Brown, 1997; Osler, 1997; Callender, 1997; Jones, 2000). In many of these studies, the notion of “giving back” to the community has been identified as a major narrative theme within black teachers’ stories of teacher commitment. Maylor et al (undated, p.11) have argued that ‘giving back’ appears relevant where individuals are able to serve the communities where they have grown up. Whilst Jay’s story of teaching commitment resonates with observations elsewhere in the scholarship about the nature of black teachers’ commitment, it suggests the limitations of locating the narrative of ‘giving back’ exclusively in relation to a blunt conceptualisation of ‘community’ interest; for Jay’s articulation of the purpose of teaching is concerned with ‘giving back’ in particular terms – where ‘giving back’ is related in specific and differentiated ways to parents, family, students, community and the wider society of which Jay is a part. For Jay, ‘giving back’ is not expressed as a desire to serve the “black community”, but as a desire of the individual which is related to his biography and circumstances. Jay’s story suggests the plurality of black men teachers’ professional commitment and motivation and the need to explore the stories of

black teachers in a detailed and finely-grained manner which allows for the full expression of the teacher's voice.

Osler (1997, pp. 167-168) has suggested that it is important to consider the factors underpinning career choice, which, in Jay's case at least, are complex and multi-faceted. James' (2002) study of a black man teacher in Canada has highlighted the complex, contradictory and multi-dimensional nature of career choice which is informed by biographical, social, political, contextual, and personal factors. The story of Jay's career choice, too, relates to a complex array of biographical factors reflecting his own school experiences, parental support, the contribution of mentors and significant others, and the opportunities made available to him at the moment when he began to pursue his desire to teach (for example, timely access to appropriate careers education and guidance).

A good deal of scholarly and public policy inquiry has suggested that black teachers are motivated to become advocates for black children and black parents in dealing with the problems of racism within the education system and in tackling problems of the educational "underachievement" of black pupils (Foster, 1997; Callender, 1997; Basit and McNamara, 2004; Lester, 1971; Deakin, 1970; Community Relations Commission, 1977; Department of Education and Science,

1981 and 1985; Duncan, 1990; Singh, 1988; Bryan et al., 1985; McKellar, 1989). However, Jay's story indicates that he has not been motivated along black community empowerment lines; moreover, Jay's story suggests that he has little cultural or political affinity with his black students (see also Carrington et al., 2001; James, 2002). Similarly, in contrast to the scholarship which has argued that the black professional class and the black working class pursue divergent personal and political agendas due to differing political identities and personal interests (see Sivanandan, 1990; Frazier, 1957; Miles, 1984; Cashmore, 1991; Wilson, 1978 and 1987; Marger, 1991; Daye, 1994; Boston, 1988), Jay's story suggests the importance of exploring in a detailed way the teacher's biography in order to understand the teacher's commitment to the agenda of empowerment and 'making a difference'. In Jay's story is told the personal life experiences of a teacher whose everyday life has been lived outside the generality of experience of a wider black population. In talking of his schooling experiences and friendship networks, Jay's story indicates that the significant others in his life were not blacks, but whites. Thus, it is not that Jay has lost sight of his roots, or that he is experiencing 'false consciousness', or that he has adopted white middle class norms, or that he is merely self-interested; for Jay's desire and commitment as a teacher are grounded in his personal life experience of growing up as a black male within a

context where he had little contact with black people beyond his immediate family. Jay's desire to make a difference to society is informed by his biography. Jay's story of desire is articulated with reference to all of his students, particularly those who share his own experience of economic disadvantage; indeed, these are the very students that Jay feels drawn towards teaching in the future. Jay's story suggests the plurality of the black 'middle class' and that the professional identities and agency of teachers are mediated not only by ethnic group identification (Savage, 1991; Layton-Henry, 1984; Daye, 1994), but also by biographical factors of place, childhood experience and former schooling experience. Jay's story challenges existing scholarship on black teachers and other black professionals and suggests the need to review the salience of dominant meta-narratives and grand theories which have laid claim to understanding the identity, work, motivation and commitment of the black teacher.

Jay's story of becoming a teacher also reflects the biographical influence of gender and patriarchal expectations. Jay's story suggests the negotiated nature of masculinity in the formation of teacher identity and agency. Jay's desire to become a teacher was informed by the influence of his father and his mother in the formation of the person that Jay is. In his story of becoming a teacher, Jay told of how he was driven to secure a position of status,

authority and 'respectability' as a result of the influence his father had upon him. In leaving school, Jay sought a 'respectable' career, initially in the Civil Service, but later in teaching; indeed, Jay's story confirmed that a 'respectable' career alone was not a sufficient basis on which he could express his identity. Despite a lengthy period of working in the Civil Service, Jay eventually left behind the career he had begun to make for himself and he turned to teaching. It is important to reflect on why this career change took place. Jay told of how he had always wanted to be a teacher; yet, he initially pursued an alternative career, leaving school at the age of 16. Jay was moved by his desire to express the caring, non-authoritarian and person-centred qualities he had learned from his mother and other persons (particularly women) during the course of his upbringing. Jay experienced a form of personal crisis during the course of his work career; he found that he needed to risk professional failure in order to assert the person that he saw himself to be - a person like his mother and others who had nurtured his personal development when he was growing up. In looking to the future, Jay intends to develop further this side of his professional self, by entering the largely female arenas of pastoral work and teaching younger age group pupils. The struggle of masculinist identity appears to be present in Jay's story of becoming a teacher and suggests that becoming and being a teacher is a negotiated act of self in the real world.

That there are few men who become teachers might suggest that many men do not regard teaching as a worthwhile career. It has been suggested elsewhere that men may regard teaching as “women’s work” and that, as a result of their masculinist conditioning, eligible men may seek alternative professional careers (Skelton, 2001a and 2003; Williams, 1993; and others). This is not merely an issue of concern to attracting more men into teaching; for the statistical evidence also suggests that black men are under-represented within the profession (Maylor et al., undated; Bariso, 2001; and others). It has been suggested elsewhere that as a result of their negative school experiences, many black people are dissuaded from becoming teachers on the grounds that they could not ‘resolve the push-pull effects of being members of a profession which is seen to fail Black children, whilst simultaneously being members of the failing community’ (Callender, 1997, p.x). Nevertheless, for some men and for some black people, teaching has become a career of choice. Jay’s story provides an opportunity to explore how it is that, for some black and male teachers, the act of becoming a teacher is informed, supported, negotiated, enabled and realised.

In seeking to explain why some black and minority ethnic group men are employed in the non-traditional occupations of “women’s work”, Williams and Villemez (1993) have distinguished between ‘premeditated’ and ‘diverted’ finders. Premeditated finders include persons who seek out particular forms of work in non-traditional areas; diverted finders include those men who merely ‘end up’ in female-dominated work areas as a result of a lack of alternative work opportunities to enable their expression of masculinist status. Williams and Villemez (1993; 75-77) have suggested that men, particularly ‘non-white’ men, engaged in “women’s work” are more likely to be ‘diverted finders’. However, Jay had always wanted to be a teacher; he was not the ‘diverted’ finder that Williams and Villemez have identified – for Jay had made a conscious decision to become a teacher since he believed that such a role reflected his personality and the kind of person he wanted to be. Despite being put on hold for a time, Jay’s teaching orientation was ‘premeditated’ from an early age. A caring and person-centred approach was writ large in Jay’s core self concept. Other writers have suggested that the expression of a caring form of masculinity orientation may be a particular feature within the motivations of some men teachers (Skelton, 2001a, 2001b and 2003; Sikes, 1985). Jay wanted to fulfil the expectations of his father (to be respectable) yet also be the kind of person he wanted to be (more like his mother and favourite teachers). Jay’s desire to

teach – particularly his desire to become a teacher of young children - may not have sat easily with a hegemonic 'masculinist ontology' (Warren, 2003, p.4). However, Jay's decision to become a secondary school teacher enabled him to live up to the masculinist ideal he had learned during his upbringing through the 'instituting practices' of patriarchy whilst simultaneously enabling him to construct a 'caring' and 'person-centred' identity which, at least, afforded some degree of proximity to the 'imagined' ideals of what 'real men' do (Warren, 2003, p.14). Jay's story suggests the plurality of masculine identities amongst men who teach (hooks, 1994).

I have argued throughout this chapter that in understanding Jay's identity and agency as a teacher it is necessary to understand the person who is Jay, to reflect upon the unique and particular nature of his life experience, whilst recognising the wider structural and discursive factors which have affected the formation, development and expression of his identity and agency. Jay had always wanted to be a teacher; yet, at the age of sixteen, Jay left school, entered the world of work and became a Civil Service administrator where he remained for a period of twelve years. In his story, Jay told how his desire to teach had not wavered over time; yet, Jay deferred his personal desire, ostensibly in the interests of gaining a greater degree of personal financial security and independence. Jay had

been socialised by his parents to place a high value on education; Jay's role models included some teachers who had nurtured his self-belief; Jay learned that education could provide a world of new opportunities in his life. However, Jay's loss of confidence as a learner, significantly affected by his experience of primary school, meant that he did not believe that he would be able to succeed as a teacher. Jay kept his desire to teach private; he did not share his ambition with others; it was his secret. Jay did not receive formal advice and career counselling to put him on a path towards becoming a teacher until he finally made the decision to "come out" to the wider world and declare his desire to teach. Indeed, it was whilst Jay was at university, undertaking a programme of study in human resources management, that he finally decided to declare his teaching desire; this came as a surprise to Jay's close family and friends who, for the first time, learned of Jay's hidden desire. They were surprised by Jay's revelation. Nevertheless, family and friends supported Jay in realising his career ambition and, when he eventually qualified as a teacher, this provided an important moment for the public celebration of Jay's life and achievements. In re-telling Jay's story in this way, I want to draw the reader's attention to the difficult and punctuated nature of Jay's journey into teaching. Jay's desire was not easily realised; indeed, it might never have transpired or been made real. Elsewhere in this chapter, reference has been

made to the importance of understanding the self in relation to teachers and teaching. Whilst Jay believed that he had always wanted to be a teacher, he displayed an alternative (situated) form of self even to those persons who knew him best. The reasons for this are uncertain; but Jay's story suggests that his personal confidence and self-belief played a critical part in the expression of his desire to teach and in the way in which he finally negotiated his entry into the teaching profession. This may have particular implications for understanding the motivations of men who teach and the reasons why some men enter the profession as late starters.

Goodson (2000, p.19) has argued that 'work on teachers' lives provides vital and generative insights into teaching as a gendered profession'. This is important in understanding teaching as a feminised profession (Casey, 1993; Munro, 1998); however, the conduct of life history also provides an opportunity to explore the nature and practice of patriarchy and its effects on women *and* men. A number of writers have argued that within a patriarchal society, conformity to hegemonic masculinist ideals may be incompatible with teaching children, particularly younger children (Skelton 2001a, 2001b; Williams, 1993; Allan, 1993; Kauppinen-Toropainen and Lammi, 1993). This might lead to a silencing of some men's desires to teach. Jay's story suggests important issues about the invisibility

and silencing of men's atypical desires, and challenges policy makers to develop and cultivate the confidence of pro-feminist men to become teachers whilst addressing the damaging effects which arise from the labelling of teaching as "women's work" (Williams, 1993).

In this research, Jay told of how his desire to teach was a desire to teach younger children; indeed, Jay was uncertain as to why he had eventually become a teacher of secondary age group pupils. The nature of Jay's entry into the teaching profession – in particular his 'diversion' from wanting to be a teacher of younger pupils to becoming a teacher of older pupils – might suggest the difficulties which some committed men may perceive when choosing teaching as a career. A number of writers have identified the risks confronting those men who choose to teach children and, particularly, younger children (Kimmel, 1993; Bradley, 1993; Lingard and Douglas, 1999; Skelton, 2001a and 2003; Aspinwall and Drummond, 1989). The scholarship has also highlighted how dominant discourses may also impact on black men's desire to conform to "hyper" masculinist forms of identity (West, 1996; Taylor, 2004). However, for some men the pursuit of a career in the feminised arena of teaching may not be incompatible with the expression of a masculine identity; men who are 'more comfortable with their masculinity' may be prepared to

resist prevailing cultural assumptions and stereotypes about what “real men” do, and, thus, be more willing to engage in “women’s work” (Skelton, 2001a). Sikes (1985, p.51) has argued that older men may be more comfortable and relaxed in expressing their masculinity within the context of teaching. Jay’s late entry to the teaching profession may lend some support to Sikes’ contention; thus, having spent a period of sixteen years nurturing his private desire to teach, Jay eventually gained the confidence he needed to establish and maintain a ‘respectable’ identity as a teacher. Jay’s story suggests that exploring the intersection of gender, masculinity, age and ethnicity factors may offer important insights into the reasons for the non-participation in, and deferral of, teaching as a career amongst some men, and why it is that men teachers in general tend towards the less feminised environment of the secondary school. Thus, Jay’s story suggests that teaching provides a site of struggle for the re-presentation of individual identity and agency.

Review

I have suggested elsewhere in this study how my imagination was fired by my frustration with the ‘images of’ racism studies of black teachers which are a commonplace within the scholarship (Troyna,

1994a). Bangar and McDermott's experience appeared symptomatic of the issues with which I was concerned:

'When we started teaching, we were both aware that our position would necessarily be different from that of white teachers, but we did not imagine that our working lives would be so dominated by issues to do with racism. We soon discovered that black teachers are generally expected to be involved with challenging racism, and throughout our teaching experience we have found ourselves channelled more and more into black issues.'

(Bangar and McDermott, 1989, p.138)

Elsewhere in this thesis, I have described how the dominant discourses pertaining to the black teacher have, over a number of decades, placed onto the shoulders of black teachers a burden of responsibility which might not be carried easily (Spencer, 2000, p.21). Blair (1993) has referred to this as the re-presentation of the black teacher as 'professional ethnic' – that is to say, that the study of the professionalism orientations of black teachers has been marginalised to the narrow exploration of ethnicity and 'race' interests. However, this study has suggested the potential to disrupt dominant and repressive black teacher discourses and to expose

these as neither neutral nor innocent (Stronach and MacLure, 1997; Alvesson, 2002; MacLure, 2003). The story of Jay has emphasised the voice of the individual over the power of grand narratives. Through Jay's use of language is provided a key to unlock a deeper understanding about the teacher and the significance and meaning of the teacher's work. In this sense, the story of Jay addresses itself to postmodern concerns with the issue of re-presentation and the stability, meaning and legitimacy of knowledge concerning teacher identities. The emphasis given to Jay's narrative serves to disrupt the dominant racialised discourses and open up the narrative space to enable black men teachers to speak of, and construct, their professionalism in terms which relate to their whole being and the broad scope of the work they do. By exploring the overlapping and multi-dimensional nature of the teacher's identity and by eschewing an ideologically determinist approach which has been reflective of the hallmark of racism (Essed, 2001), the storying of Jay's life suggests how the identities of black teachers 'are simultaneously classed, gendered and sexualized', recognising that 'a working-class identity is at the same time a sexual identity and an ethnic identity' (Mac an Ghail, 1999, p.47). It is the intersecting and inflexional nature of the teacher's identity that I have sought to explore in relation to the story of Jay, which has highlighted the postmodern crisis of re-presentation in relation to becoming and being a teacher.

Jay's story suggests that whilst the status of the teacher may be conferred through an array of institutional and discursive practices, the teacher's identity and agency are negotiated rather than conferred. Jay's story suggests that what you see is not necessarily what you get; for, in order to understand Jay's professionalism orientation as a black man teacher, it has been necessary to get under the skin of Jay by locating his personal and professional life story and the ways he sought to re-present himself in his everyday life. Jay's story suggests the plurality of black teachers' identities and agency and that not all black teachers will be oriented towards similar goals, such as the disruption of societal, institutional or occupational inequalities and oppressions (hooks, 1994; Ozga and Lawn, 1981). Jay's story suggests the fractured and atomised nature of black teachers' commitment and that the professionalism orientations of black teachers (as with all teachers) are mediated by biographical, gender/masculinities, 'race'/ethnicity, social class, age, locality and demographic factors. Jay's story suggests the political commitment of teachers to making a difference to the creation of a better society (Lawn, 1996, p.11). hooks (1994, p.2) has suggested that education – both the act of teaching and learning – is, fundamentally, political given a history wherein black people have been denied access to opportunities to be educated and to teach. Similar arguments have

been made by a number of other scholars (De Lyon and Widdowson Migniuolo, 1989; Coffey and Delamont, 2000; Casey, 1993; Callender, 1997; Osler, 1997; Munro, 1998; Marable, 1983). Yet, Jay's story also suggests that whilst black teachers might be committed to social change, the nature and focus of political activity will be different for different black teachers. Jay's story suggests that the expression of the professional and political orientation of the teacher is informed by the actuality of the teacher's lived experience which shapes not only her/his identity but also identification. This has implications for what is expected of black teachers and men who teach; it also suggests the need for the recruitment and professionalisation of teachers to be concerned with the core values, beliefs and ideologies of teachers where such processes are designed to effect educational or social change (Campbell, 2000).

This chapter has provided a reflection on the whole life story of Jay, a black man teacher living and working in a large British city. It has reflected on why Jay became a teacher, the nature of his teaching commitment and the nature of his identity and agency as a teacher. In doing so, I have drawn on the personal story articulated by Jay as set out in Chapter 6 of this thesis whilst seeking to engage with wider discourses about the work and contribution of teachers generally and black teachers in particular. I have been concerned to explore the

teacher's identity and agency by utilising appropriate tools which would allow for a finely-grained level of exploration and interpretation. The story of Jay's life as a teacher raises a number of important issues in relation to theorising on teacher identities and agency, which are worth summarising here.

The story of Jay suggests the importance of the self in understanding teachers and their work. Woods and Jeffrey (2002) have argued that teachers are engaged in identity work since the teacher's self concept is critical to teachers' commitment and practice. Jay's story contributes to the theorising on the teacher's professionalism in relation to the salience of the self concept and recognises the importance of the teacher's biography. This is not to argue that the teacher's agency is determined by her/his history; but that, in conceptualising and storying themselves as teachers, individuals draw upon critical biographical signifiers in explaining what it means to be a teacher and in practising their agency as teachers (Campbell, 2000). For Jay, a career 'late starter', these signifiers reflect his memory of how teaching seemed to be when he was a pupil at school. However, such assumptions may no longer match the realities of the teacher's work – which Jay, himself, admits is harder than he imagined – and may trigger future personal and professional dilemmas for Jay (Woods and Jeffrey, 2002, p.97).

Through the language of his life text, Jay has reconstituted his teacher identity in the real world (Alvesson, 2002; MacLure, 2003). Jay's story suggests the iterative nature of the teacher's identity and suggests that identities 'are never fully and finally made; they are incessantly reconstituted... They are that which is constantly marshalled, consolidated, retrenched, contested and, on occasion, compelled to give way.' (Butler, 1993, p.105). Jay's story of becoming a teacher has highlighted how his identification as a teacher has undergone critical moments of transition and transformation, from the moment when Jay first realised that he wanted to be a teacher, through his earliest teaching experiences, to his future desire to become a different kind of teacher to that which he is now. The fluidity of Jay's teacher identity suggests that the teacher's professionalism orientation is situated, contingent, contested and elusive, being constantly re-framed within an interplay of the individual's self concept and the wider institutional and social structures and discourses (Woods and Jeffrey, 2002; Lather, 2001; Hall, 1988). Jay's story suggests that identity is re-constructed and revealed through processes of storying teachers' lives and exploring teachers' talk (Bruner, 1987; Syrjälä and Estola, 1999; McLaren, 1993; Biklen, 1995). Jay's story suggests that the teacher's identity is rooted within the micro- and macro-contexts and social relations in

which individuals are situated. Within these conditions, the teacher engages in acts of negotiated professionalism by which to align her/his practice or work conditions to her/his substantial self concept through the deployment of an array of coping strategies (Woods and Jeffrey, 2002). To take up the argument developed by MacLure (1993, p.312), Jay's story further suggests that, in the everyday world of school life, the teacher's professional identity provides 'a continuing site of struggle'; Jay's story suggests that the teacher's professionalism is not 'a stable entity' but something that teachers use 'to justify, explain and make sense of themselves in relation to other people, and to the contexts in which they operate. In other words, identity is a form of argument'; it is discursively situated (MacLure, 2003) and is contingent upon the prevailing contextual conditions for its expression, together with the individual's ongoing struggle for representation and self-actualisation (Maslow, 1943) within biographical, historical, social and cultural contexts.

How teachers cope with the realities of life in school and the classroom is also a feature of the teacher's identity and self concept. Jay's story suggests that the coping strategies used most effectively by teachers may reflect the behaviours learned during the course of their life experience. The process of professional training may help to equip individuals with techniques to address particular critical

incidents in the classroom, but the teacher's approach to these events will reflect her/his life of cultural socialisation and her/his self concept (Campbell, 2000). Moreover, as Jay's story has suggested, the individual teacher does not exist in isolation from others; teachers access a range of sources of support – within and outside the school – which serve to inform and define their identities and agency. The community of teachers within the school might provide a significant reference group, as might the wider community of family and friends outside the school to which the individual teacher might turn for emotional and practical support when encountering difficult professional episodes. However, for some individuals such critical friends might not provide a sufficient basis for the maintenance of teacher commitment and effectiveness. Jay's story has suggested the importance of understanding how the teacher's self concept is articulated and negotiated in the real world of the teacher's life; for Jay's story suggests that being a teacher involves a dialectical struggle between the self and the conditions which are ascribed to being a teacher. This raises challenges for the provision of teachers' professional development and support (for example, through formal training provision and the work of the professional associations/unions) and the extent to which these programmes should migrate from an instrumentalist and utilitarian paradigm towards a person-centred, emotional, holistic and informal view of the

teacher's development, wherein the teacher's biography is recognised as the key to her/his professional growth (Abbs, 1974; Hodgkinson, 2005). Moreover, Jay's story has suggested that the teacher's professional identity is negotiated whilst, at the same time, the self identity of the teacher is constantly being negotiated and reconstituted in the contexts of her/his work and life. This finding suggests that teaching should provide space for self-expression and that ascribed forms of teacher behaviour as disseminated through forms of professional development might prove limiting and counter-intuitive, particularly where the behaviours which such training seeks to inculcate are antithetical to the teacher's sense of self. However, where teaching provides space for the self and the expression of the teacher's voice, the teacher is able to grow professionally, whilst also providing a basis for the development and transformation of the teacher's work over time.

The story of Jay is situated within a particular historical context. Changes to the structure of teachers' work will continue and are likely to gather pace. Whilst I will not seek to predict what these changes might be, it is clear that a policy development during the course of this study to remodel the school workforce in England and Wales - as advocated by a National Agreement signed in 2003 between the Government, employers, teachers' unions and unions representing

school support staff - heralds a further redefinition of the teacher's role given the consequential realignment of teachers' work and self concept that will occur (Giddens, 1991). It is likely that these and other systemic changes will intensify the professional development needs of teachers as teachers seek to respond to the challenges and uncertainties which will come about as a result of shifts in the nature of their work (Campbell et al., 2004, p.21). However, teachers will not be passive participants in these reforms; the extent to which the new reform agendas correspond with the teacher's self concept will affect teachers' perspectives about the value and contribution of the work they do, the articulation of teachers' professionalism orientations and commitment and the capacity of educational systems to develop and change (Woods and Jeffrey, 2002). How teachers like Jay cope with these future challenges is impossible to predict. However, this research suggests that the impact of these changes will be determined by the personal resolve of teachers, the life experiences of teachers, the everyday contexts of teachers' work, and the extent to which such changes reverberate in sympathy with the preferred identities and agency of teachers.

CHAPTER 8: EPILOGUE

The story of Jay is the story of our shared experience and our willingness to open ourselves to each other (Hodkinson, 2005; Stroobants, 2005). It reveals me, it reveals Jay and it reveals the practice of our relationship; it is the story of how we journeyed together through time in constructing this research story.

The story of this research is the story of personal journeys 'toward a moral life' (Frank, 2002, p. 16). This research story speaks of Jay's search for a moral life (his desire for 'respectability'), and for self-actualisation (Maslow, 1943). For me, this research story reflects my ethical impulse to contribute to shaping a better world through my writing (Holman Jones, 2005). Through our engagement in this process of story telling, moral affirmation was sought (Sikes, Nixon and Carr, 2003).

At the same time, I cannot escape that this research reflected my values and interests and, thus, the story it provides is a story of my self in the world which merits some discussion at the conclusion of this study (Stanley, 1993; Neumann, 1996; Sclater, 1998; Ellis and Bochner, 2000; Jewkes and Letherby, 2001; Sikes and Godson,

2003; Fontana and Frey, 2005; Sikes, 2005; Stroobants, 2005). Without committing the practice of self-indulgence (Maynard, 1993; Mykhalovskiy, 1996; Lather, 2001; Richardson, 2001), it is necessary to reflect upon my agency in relation to this research text in order to locate more fully the meaning and purpose of the research knowledge produced here.

I have been concerned not with the recreational pursuit of 'knowledge' for its own sake, but in making a difference within the wider social world (Tierney, 1993, 1998, 2000 and 2002). I have been concerned by the politics of knowledge production, the nature of knowledge produced in the knowledge factory and how new knowledge practices can work towards disrupting dominant, colonising and exoticising discourses (Spivak, 1988a and 1988b; Bhabba, 1990; Gilroy, 1993; McLaren, 1993; Said, 1993; Mac an Ghail, 1999; Essed, 2001; Fine et al, 2000; Plummer, 2001).

My starting point has rested in my belief that 'democracy needs research' (Tooley, 1998, p.7) and that research needs to be democratic in its design, orientation, implementation, presentation and communication if it is to be credible and capable of moving the powerful and powerless to act to change the discursive practices of the day. In pursuing a persuasive approach, I have suggested that it

is important to open up life history research practice to informed critique, so that the readers of our research might be influenced by the shape of our ideals and by the terms in which our ideals are translated into practice (Alvesson and Sköldberg, 2000, p. vii; hooks, 1994, p. 116). By committing myself to a practice that might negotiate the Scylla of dominant and exclusionary mainstream discourses and the Charybdis of marginalised narrative practices, I sought to use my scholarship to open up the critical space for a sustainable and organic practice to take root (West, 1993), a form of practice that seeks to suture the wounds of realist versus interpretive and mainstream versus conviction scholarship (Denzin and Lincoln, 2005).

In advocating a persuasive life history approach, I sought to engage the participant, Jay, myself and the reader in working through Tierney's (2000, p. 550) invitation 'to consider... the purpose of the text... the veracity of the text... and... the author of the text...'. In identifying the need for a counter-cultural approach, I sought to disrupt the negative re-presentations of black men and their exclusion from the dominant teachers' stories. By recognising the limitations of a thin epistemological approach, I sought to engage with Jay in exploring the complex and multi-dimensional nature of his life, breaking free from the constraining articulation of a 'coping with

racism' narrative and, thereby, recognising the agency of black men in the world. Through the theory building perspective, I sought to build upon the strengths of theoretical developments in mainstream/insurgent and realist/interpretive paradigms and to address the potential for this form of scholarship to make a difference across the Academy. Through a commitment to ethical practice, collaboration and reflexivity I sought to explore the life experience free from repressive narration and silencing. Validation processes enabled me to seek to bring an internal and external democracy to this study, to enhance its credibility and its potential to make a difference. By adopting a contextualised approach, I wanted to develop an educational theory that could be anchored in the story of the individual and which could begin to empower the individual within movements for social change. That, at least, was the theory; however, the practice of doing this study also revealed to me how the pursuit of a persuasive life history approach has operated at the level of my researcher-self in the process of 'moving inward toward social change' (Ellis, 2002).

As I travelled the borders of my experiences with Jay, I sought to obtain a view of the world and to make sense of it. However, by writing about Jay's life I found that I was also writing about my own. I found that as I 'looked outward on the social landscapes' I was

beginning to trace 'the coordinates of [my] own sense of place and identity' and that in Jay's story I was 'offered a site for marking the social locations of' my self (Neumann, 1996, p. 177). I began to recognise not merely the overlapping elements of our stories, but the rhizoid nature (Youngblood Jackson, 2003), as, together, we reconstituted ourselves in the world (Cassell, 2005; Stroobants, 2005; Sikes, 2005; Richardson, 2001). Through this journey, I learned to understand the meaning of what Tierney has suggested about the practice of the life history:

'A life history... may represent a process whereby the researcher and reader come to understand the semiotic means by which someone else makes sense of the world... Through this use of the life history, the researcher and reader hopefully are able to reflect on their own lives.'

(Tierney, 2000, p. 545)

This study re-presents a journey of self realisation and self-actualisation. Looking back, I can reflect on the moments which have passed in getting me to this point and their meaning and significance. I began this journey ready to talk to a number of different teachers about their lives; eventually, I spoke with only one teacher, Jay, and, as a result of this, I was confronted by the teacher's humanity and my

own. With hindsight, I can now revisit our time together to understand anew what took place in the story of this research.

Lather (1997, p. 302) has stated that 'postmodern closings should be anticlimactic, down to earth, grounded in learning our place in time'. Looking back over the vast terrain of interview transcripts, and immersing myself once again in the sounds of our voices echoing from the recordings of our conversations, I see how my research was located in my own struggle to undertake social research for social justice, grounded in concerns to open up research to informed critique and to overcome the repressive potential of research practice. However, in my looking back, I am startled by just how hard I resisted engaging emotionally in my conversations with Jay. I wonder why I was not persuaded to reveal more about myself to Jay and whether my intent simply to listen, to hear his words betrayed my commitment to do justice to him. I wonder, too, whether I was driven by my particular masculinist upbringing which had informed me that to be emotionally detached was a sign of maturity (hooks, 1994), or was my silence with Jay the realisation of my failure to break free from the 'flat, colorless' and unemotional social science that had been inscribed in me during the course of my research training (Foley, 2002, p. 487)? For there were many occasions in Jay's story telling where I caught sight of myself, where I recalled my own warm

and painful memories, where I was jolted back to the personal relationships I had had through my own life, and where I was transported to places I had long since forgotten. How different could this research story have been had I submitted myself to *my* feelings and engaged emotionally with Jay? These events remind me of how research stories re-present knowledge that is personally produced. These stories reveal the situatedness, partiality and contingent nature of story telling as research (Lather, 1991, 1997 and 2001).

As I opened this volume, I described this research as a study of re-presentations; that is where I began. It is a study of how re-presentations in social research are made and a study of how research re-presentations are also constrained by our values and practices. It is a study of the fleeting and elusive nature of re-presentations. It is a study that speaks of the physical and emotional nature of research stories and their personal and social genesis. It is a study of how researchers should attend to the personal, practical and political implications of persuasive re-presentations in life history research practice.

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