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Afrikan-Centred Social Work: The Importance of Situating People

of Afrikan-Origin in a Relevant Social Milieu in Social Work Practice

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Abstract

Afrikan-Origined people are challenging the appropriateness of the prioritisation of Eurocentric models of social work practice that keep Afrikan-Origined people locked into Eurocentric definitions of distress and wellbeing, whilst neglecting the importance of engaging with the 'race', culture, identity, context and histories of Afrikan-Origined people as fundamental aspects of Afrikan wellbeing. My research challenges Eurocentric models of social work, suggesting that Afrikan-Centredness is the relevant contextual paradigm for responding to the fundamental aspects of wellbeing that better inform appropriate models of helping and healing for Afrikan-Origined people and, from where appropriate models of success should emerge.

My use of Afrikan-Centredness as a paradigm of analysis is supported by my development of the Agwamba model, developed specifically for researching the life stories of seven Afrikan-Origined social work practitioners from their childhood experiences to experiences which informed their choice of social work as a career. Key features of the Agwamba model were specifically designed to support the research. The Centring Group is a group of Afrikan-Centred professionals who act as a support and validation mechanism aimed at keeping researchers focused on Afrikan-Centred priorities throughout the research. The principle of 'consequential-affectiveness' relates to the long-term responsibilities researchers must have for their research consequences, participants and communities in which their research is situated. 'Consequential-affectiveness' ensures that researchers adopt a live stance in their research.

My research revealed that my research participants shared a range of helping experiences and responses to racism informed by their encounters with racist and oppressive environments, people, and practices. However, significantly, my research findings also revealed that the need for the research participants to cope with constant racism in their lives inferred on their development of key coping strategies against unremitting racist experiences. The principles of the Agwamba model encourage all people to examine their own histories in order to adapt my model or create models which better represent their past, present and potential stories. I end by arguing for the positive benefits of all human potential existing in environments that prioritise pluralistically informed expressions of all human potential as a representation of parallel developments of difference.

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Afrikan Centredness: The Importance of Situating Afrikan-Origined People in a Relevant Social Milieu in Social Work Practice

Introduction

The appropriateness of social work practice with Afrikan-Origined people is currently stirring debate in the social work field (See Dominelli, et al, 2001; Graham, 1999 John-Baptiste, 2001 and Schiele, 2000 for a discussion on key issues). That debate has established that Afrikan-Origined people are not receiving a social work service that meets their needs. White social workers have disregarded the importance of engaging with the culture and identity of Afrikan-Origined people as a fundamental aspect of Afrikan wellbeing. As a result, white social workers have continued to deliver social work services that are inappropriate at responding to personal and social distress needs of Afrikan-Origined people (Graham, 1999; John-Baptiste, 2001). The resulting problems have led to accusations of racism and criticisms of inappropriateness, prompting attempts by the profession to reform its theoretical practice models whilst however, leaving its governing Eurocentric ideology intact. Consequently, no meaningful change occurred.

The term Afrikan-Origined people refers to Afrikan Nigerian, Afrikan British, Afrikan Dominican, Afrikan Caribbean, Afrikan American, etc - i. e., Afrikan people born outside Afrika, who will have both shared and adapted aspects of their Afrikan origins. The term Afrikan people signifies people born in Afrika or refers to aspects of shared origin and historical, spiritual, ritual, cultural and experiential etc. Aspects of connectedness, that unify and transgenerationally link Afrikan / Afrikan-Origined people as Afrikan people (see glossary for further definitions of these terms).

British social work theory and practice was established within a Eurocentric ideology, which dominated the analytical perspectives that underpinned white social worker responses (Graham,1999; John-Baptiste, 2001). As a paradigm Eurocentrism prioritises values on 'beingness' founded on an acceptance of the domination of man over nature (Kambon, 1996). Eurocentrism operates as the force which projects European culture and people as the centre of the universe (Ani, 1994). Eurocentrism projects European / western culture as the primary cultural force responsible for diffusing culture to all other people (Blaut, 1993). Eurocentrism also acts as a system of domination that sustains itself by projecting truth in its own image (Hilliard, 1991). Consequently, white

social workers have continued to follow institutional methods of servicing that locate responses to Afrikan-Origined personal and social need on the failure of Afrikan-Origined people to adapt to Britain's way of life (Blaut, 1993). White social workers have located their practice in methods that have disregarded the nature of Afrikan reality and the influence of that reality on the morals, values and attitudes that inform Afrikan designs for living and patterns of interpreting reality (Graham, 1999; Schiele, 1996; 2000).

Criticism of Eurocentrism as an underpinning paradigm in social work theory and practice only emerged after the profession had been through several attempts to reform its approach to social work with Afrikan-Origined people. Initially, reform focused on writing 'race' and culture out of social work practice in the belief that they had little bearing on practitioners' approaches to social work (McCulloch & Smith, 1974). Emphasis, instead, prioritised an expectation that Afrikan-Origined people would assimilate their 'race' and identity into that of white people (Cheetham, 1981; Roskill, 1979). This approach was later rejected because of its reliance on defining Afrikan-Origined people as a problem people, who needed to change in order to fit into existing models of practice (Rooney, 1980). It led to the profession being identified as racist and incapable of relating to Afrikan-Origined people as if they were anything other than white (Chand, 2000, Dominelli, 1988).

Protests from Afrikan and Asian-Origined (i.e. 'black') people also led to calls for more relevant models of social work practice, which gave rise to the development of equality-focused perspectives in social work theory and practice (Sivanandan, 1985; Rooney, 1981). The profession experienced various interactions between a number of equality perspectives and initiatives that suggested acceptance of 'black' people's cultures. However, white social workers still used their Eurocentric priorities to interpret the validity of 'black' cultures and the extent of the role cultures should play. Practitioners continued to use 'black' people's cultural habits to explain the failure of 'black' people to adapt to white norms, without challenging the Eurocentric contextual and institutional structures relied upon to assert white views (Ahmad, 1987; Dominelli, 1992; McFarland et al, 1989; Williams, 1989). This produced a range of equality perspectives like cultural awareness and ethnic sensitive approaches, which focused on equality as implying sameness but, simultaneously, failed to address power differentials as fundamental contributors to inequality. That failing contributed to the emergence of black perspectives and anti-racism perspectives which, unlike their predecessor perspectives, focused attention on equality as

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a value that needed to produce egalitarian social relationships. But, the failure of equality perspectives generally, to deliver the kind of changes Afrikan-Origined people demanded combined with Afrikan-Origined community activism, in my view, lead to the development of parallel discourses that addressed the need for relevant prescriptive routes to problem solving. Afrikan-Centredness is one such parallel discourse.

Afrikan-Centredness developed as a response to the weaknesses embedded within Eurocentrism and the subsequent detriment Eurocentric contexts, institutions and people exacted against Afrikan-Origined people. Afrikan-Centredness also offered a direct challenge to the omission of Afrikan voices from theoretical and practical ways of knowing and doing. Afrikan-Centredness stands on the principle of the importance of re-establishing Afrikan principles of self-determination and self-perpetuation via psychological and conceptual strengths (Asante, 1988; 1990; Diop, 1974; Van Sertima, 1976). Afrikan-Centredness is unapologetic in its primary relevance to Afrikan people (Schiele, 1990), and has been identified as the primary academic and practical conceptual framework from which any meaningful study of the cultural reality of Afrikan people should be grounded (Ani, 1994; Asante, 1980).

Incorporating the principles of Afrikan-Centredness, Afrikan-Centred social work codifies the cultural values of Afrikan people into analytical perspectives aimed at explaining and remedying personal and social distress by applying traditional Afrikan philosophical concepts as foundational aspects to social work models of practice. Afrikan-Centred social work has also sought to redefine personal and social problems by reducing distance and objectivity between the practitioner and the client. Reducing practitioner-client distance promotes the importance of interrelatedness in helping relationships and the importance of positive outcomes, given that the consequences of the helping relationship will be felt by both practitioner and client via the principle of interrelatedness.

The focus of Afrikan-Centredness, on the fundamental principles of Afrikan 'beingness' has prompted my use of the paradigm to explain my concerns about the practice of Eurocentric social work with Afrikan-Origined people. This is the focus of my research. It is a focus influenced by my practitioner experiences of working with the consequences of inappropriate social work responses on Afrikan-Origined people. Afrikan-Centredness also informs my desire to establish a way of practising that prioritises the wholistic expression of all that Afrikan-Origined people are in terms of our past, present and potential selves - en route to resolving personal and social distress. That desire fostered

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my initial exploration of the potential of Afrikan-Centredness through the setting up of a community social work unit working specifically with Afrikan-Origined people. The unit is situated in a city where 20% of the population are from 'ethnic minorities', of which less that 0.025% are from Afrikan-Origined communities. The unit offers culturally-relevant services to the local Afrikan-Origined community, taking account of the importance of aspects of Afrikan-Origined culture that reflect distress and wellbeing (e.g. a larger part of the Afrikan-Origined community do not speak English as their first language). My practice experiences fostered my interested in exploring what happens in the lives of Afrikan-Origined people affected by the hegemonic pressures of Eurocentrism, as experienced via their contact with white social work practitioners. I also wanted to account for the ability of Afrikan-Origined people to continue to rise, despite their experiences of unremitting racism and oppression.

I decided to explore this in my research, beginning at the childhood experiences of a small number of Afrikan-Origined participants, to a point at which my research participants were following careers in social work. Through the use of in-depth interviewing, I analysed the life experiences of my research participants to examine how their sense of their identities as Afrikan-Origined people, impacted on their desire to develop strategies to overcome experiences of racism and oppression. I also examined how the participants' identity influenced their sense of who they were as Afrikan-Origined people and enabled them to set their own agendas in personal and career terms, with particular reference to their desire to choose social work as a career. Afrikan-Centredness as the contextual paradigm was also useful as a model, from which all practitioners could learn in order to respond appropriately to the needs of racial and cultural groups.

This thesis charts my route of explanation of the priorities outlined above. Chapter one looks in detail at the influence of Eurocentrism, and the historical conditions that influenced initial social work responses to Afrikan-Origined people. The chapter also explores the development and influence of equality perspectives, charting their contribution to the profession. I also discuss my use of initial social work theoretical and practice positions to demonstrate their influence on the emergence of Afrikan-Centred social work as a parallel discourse informing social work practice. Chapter two looks at the paradigms of Eurocentrism and Afrikan-Centredness as expressions of their representative cultures, in order to demonstrate their influence on perspectives in social work practice. I establish a position of inappropriateness about Eurocentrism, by

identifying African-Centredness as an appropriate paradigm from which any reference to and study of Afrikan-Origined people should take place.

In order to conduct Afrikan-Centred research I had to establish an appropriate methodological model for conducting the research. Chapter three details my route to establishing that methodological model. The chapter is split into two parts with the initial part of the chapter highlighting the epistemological concerns that led to my need to develop a methodology that would better sit with the Afrikan-Centred ethos of the research. The second part of the chapter details the methodology in action and charts the innovative steps I had to take to incorporate an Afrikan-Centred stance into my researcher responsibilities. Having established the methodological model, that model was then used to research the participants' life stories. Chapter four deals with the analysis of the research participants' experiences using Eurocentrism and Afrikan-Centredness as lenses through which consequences of and solutions to their experiences are examined. Although the participants' stories are told in life story form, chapter four also focuses on the themes which emerged and re-emerged throughout the lives of the participants, in a bid to explore the links that may exist between the participants' contemporary experiences and the historical experiences of Afrikan-Origined people.

The final chapter draws together the findings of research through the conclusions that emerged from the research literature and the interview data. The chapter deals with the issues surrounding the representativeness of the research in terms of its likely relevance to other communities of Afrikan Origin in other districts etc, throughout Britain. It addresses my role as the researcher in the research and any influence I may have on the question of the representativeness of the research outside the district of my research. Chapter five also makes suggestions about the kind of approaches both non African-Centred Afrikan-Origined workers as well as all other workers, can focus on, and roles white workers can play in the provision of social work services to Afrikan-Origined people.

The History of Social Services' Responses to Servicing Communities of Afrikan-Origin

Introduction

Early writings about the social work experiences of Afrikan-Origined people paid little attention to Afrikan-Origined people's views about the structure, quality and content of the social work service they received (see Deakin, 1970; Finbush, 1965; Griffith, 1960 and Seebhom, 1968). Practitioners accepted that best practice was to stumble across the need to introduce changes in approaches to servicing Afrikan-Origined need, without necessarily involving Afrikan-Origined people (Black and In Care Steering Group, 1985; Pennie & Best, 1990 and Rooney 1987 demonstrate how the views of Afrikan-Origined people were overlooked in the development of social work services supposedly tailored to Afrikan-Origined needs). The literature search elucidates the damaging impact of Eurocentric approaches to social work with Afrikan-Origined people. The chapter also looks at the struggle of practitioners, clients and communities to transcend the limitations of Eurocentric approaches, leading to the emergence of equality approaches in social work theory, teaching and practice. The chapter ends with a focus on Afrikan-Centredness as a parallel discourse, the emergence of which, was viewed as inevitable given the self-determinatory struggles of Afrikan-Origined people, and the emergence of Afrikan-Centredness in other social sciences disciplines in the USA (See Asante, 1980, 1999).

Initial Social Work Responses

After the publication of the Beveridge Report (1942), the post-war social work model advocated the creation of a social security safety net covering all citizens and a variety of human circumstances. The model of social work reflected Eurocentrism as the paradigm of influence. Eurocentrism represented the European (i.e. western, white) worldview, founded on a belief in the dichotomy between humanity and nature and reflected in conflicting and antagonistic relationships commonplace in European culture (Kambon, 1996). The influence of culture in representation and knowledge creation is discussed in detail in chapter two of my thesis, suffice to say that culture is seen as the driving force underpinning human perpetuation, acting for humans as water is to fish.

European culture therefore underpins European priorities and processes of knowing as Afrikan culture would for Afrikans (Ani, 1994; Tchet Am Neter, 1995). Those values and customs are no better demonstrated than in the institutional influences of academia (Kambon, 1996).

Eurocentrism as it relates to worldview, has become interchangeable with Eurocentricity - seen as reflecting the cosmological, ontological and axiological interests of Europeans i.e. white people (Roberson, 1995). Eurocentrism is the force by which European (i.e. western; white) culture and its people are projected as the centre of the universe (Kambon, 1996) and as a system of domination that sustains itself by creating and projecting truth in its own image and interests (Hilliard, 1991). What is European is related to what is experienced as European (Ani, 1994). So, being European is related to aspects which those who identify themselves as European, have traditionally chosen to identify with - including an inherent need to define themselves in relation to the 'other' (Ani, 1994; Blaut, 1995; Scheuirch & Young, 1997). Consequently, many Eurocentric theories when focusing on the 'other' (the Afrikan other, in terms of my research), tend to centre on weakness-dominated and inferiority-orientated claims and conclusions (White, 1991). Eurocentrism did not limit this treatment to Afrikan or Asian-Origined people, but also established its tenets on an adapting historiography and history that had difficulties acknowledging the diverse ethnicities amongst its own people (Lorenz, 1994; Manning & Shaw, 2000). The response was to submerge those differing identities for nationalist interests and the desire to project Europe (and Britain) as homogeneously united in white culture and identity (Lorenz, 1994).

Beveridge's (1942) social work services were rooted in the same Eurocentric priorities of assumed homogeneity of the people using the service. But, the arrival of Afrikan-Origined people as immigrants to Britain highlighted the unpreparedness of the service and the failure of white social workers to respond to differing needs. Service providers continued to highlight an expectation that Afrikan-Origined people would simply learn to fit in with existing service provision and not give birth to an expectation of different or separate provision (Younghusband, 1978). The belief was that too much specific attention to Afrikan-Origined communities might cause friction amongst white communities (Deakin, 1970; Younghusband, 1978), and Afrikan-Origined communities would receive services at the expense of white people (Cheetham, 1981). The response, known as the 'colour-blind' or 'assimilationist' position, disregarded anything specific about

Afrikan-Origined need, in favour of an expectation that Afrikan-Origined people would adapt if they required social work services (Humphrey & John, 1971). It advocated the same service content and method of delivery irrespective of 'race' or cultural difference. The colour-blind / assimilationist position was also promoted as a definition of equal treatment for all, as a way to avoid racial bias and convey true regard for Afrikan-Origined people (Griffith, 1960; Kent, 1972; Proctor & Davis, 1994). White practitioners' responses to Afrikan-Origined people, therefore, focused on writing 'race' out of social work, suggesting that Afrikan-Origined people did not want and did not receive a more biased service than white service users (McCulloch & Smith, 1974).

Practitioners' responses were also supported by emphasis-driven social policy agendas, which detracted away from Britain's declining socio-economic position. Rather, the focus was on Britain's benevolence as a 'mother country' haven for its Commonwealth subjects, whilst simultaneously protecting British borders and nationhood via immigration legislation (Dominelli, 1988). Public opinion was controlled through racial scaremongering, which increased the climate of suspicion and distrust of Afrikan-Origined people, fuelling the notion that Afrikan-Origined people did not belong in Britain (Carter et al, 2000; Williams, 1987). Such scaremongering generated practitioner climates of distrust about Afrikan-Origined people's entitlement to welfare services resulting in exclusion of potential Afrikan-Origined usage of social work services (Alcock, 1996). Yet, this situation existed in a climate of open contradiction regarding the role in particular, of Afrikan-Origined women who made up the backbone workforce of the same welfare services that remained inaccessible to their communities. Here, punitive operations of exclusion coexisted alongside welfare services, whilst political climates justified women of Afrikan and Asian Origin providing a crucial source of cheap labour, enabling welfare services to meet white changing demographic demands (Mama, 1992).

Additionally, social work became further exclusive in practitioner denials of 'race' imperatives by locating their central organising principles of welfare state development on the essentiality of Eurocentric notions of 'family', work and nation. Williams (1987) argues that such policies played to the importance of white people above newly arriving immigrants, emphasising patriarchal and racial priorities. The influence of white men (and white male agendas), in developing the welfare state made it a white achievement for white people, and it was presented as such to Afrikan-Origined people (Williams, 1987). This created a consequential situation of hostility about Afrikan-Origined people not having

contributed to the service and therefore having no interest or entitlement to it (Alcock, 1996; Lavlette, 1998; Williams, 1987). Dominelli (1992) focuses on individual, institutional and cultural racism as other likely consequences of that political climate. She notes how personal racialised attitudes and behaviour elevated individual / personal racism from the level of prejudice via the institutionalised use of white power and culture, to that of gaining pubic legitimisation for exclusionary practices. Cultural racism also served to underpin the superiority of white culture over 'cultural others' as a way of further cementing 'otherness' to positions of inferiority and subordination (Wander et al, 1999).

Colour-blind / assimilationist approaches to social work therefore became characterised by partiality and assessment of Afrikan-Origined need according to standards set by white practitioners (Banks, 1997). The Family Welfare Association (FWA) (1960) and the Seebohm Report (1968) identified failings in the adaptability of social work services that had not informed themselves of the growing presence of 'immigrant' communities. But FWA and Seebohm failures to situate their findings within positions that challenged the Eurocentric worldview upon which services and public opinion were founded, left their findings with little impact. Indeed, their reports served to further endorse the philosophical and intellectual base of the social work profession (Graham, 1999).

Characteristics of Social Work Responses

Social work in the seventies and early eighties continued to be characterised by an overbearing emphasis on the newness of Afrikan-Origined communities and a belief that it was this factor which prevented them from shedding their culture and identity (Younghusband, 1978). Social work practice was made easier by the support of 'New Rightism', which had begun to surface in a call for 'rights for whites'. Politicians championed a common-sense approach to the defence of white nationhood, arguing that white people should be able to comment on their natural feelings about the presence of immigrants and the instability immigrants created - without such comments being labelled as criminal or racist (Scruton, 1980). Immigration was pinpointed as an additional enemy of white people and the state, encouraging support for harsher immigration controls as a route to reassuring white people of their white status in their own country (Hansard, 1976). This position also enabled the targeting of 'black' people for containment, as

representatives of a type of social decay that was alien to the general white populous (Harris,1988). Every effort was made to ensure that white people were never without the picture of 'black' people forming never-ending queues for scarce resources - legitimating the harsh policies of control, containment and exclusion (Layton-Henry, 1984; Williams, 1987). Consequentially, white people were empowered in knowing exactly where 'black' people were placed in the 'race' hierarchy (Goldbourne, 1998).

Racial tensions were further fuelled by the 1979 economic recession, further focusing public attention on a perception of the scarcity of resources - which influenced a new articulation on 'race' and the threat posed by a 'black' enemy (Rex, 1988; Richmond, 1973; Solomos et al, 1982). The threatened exhaustion of resources, racist stereotyping and pathologising served to keep 'black' people locked into what were seen as natural roles for them (i.e. roles connected with inferiority and servitude). Rex (1988) and Jones (1998) argued that such treatment also relegated 'black' people to the status of an underclass - excluded from welfare provision which even the white working class had come to take for granted. Yet, this stance contrasted with Afrikan-Origined people's view of themselves as 'family' to Britain (Fryer, 1984; Williams, 1987).

Practitioners continued to deliver racist and oppressive social work services, which conflicted with the 'caring' image of the social work profession (Ahmad, 1990; Draper, 1981; Williams, 1987). Rather than focus on methods of social work delivery and the ideological contexts that informed delivery, practitioners focused on bridging the gap between the two cultures, believing this would lessen the ambivalence and tensions felt by the new communities. Yet, practitioners found it difficult to operate outside an assimilationist practice model. Their refusal to cross cultural divides and lack of clarity and strategic depth, lead to need being defined in every other way apart from racial and cultural (Cheetham, 1981; Roskill, 1979), in order to avoid accusations of creating an apartheid-type service (Cheetham, 1972).

The refusal to challenge institutionally bad practices led to social work organisations being accused of discrimination and racism (Ahmed,1987; Brown,1984; Fryer,1984; Rooney,1987). White social workers' approaches to servicing Afrikan-Origined families were condemned for inferring racial problems as the likely cause of breakdown of Afrikan-Origined families - a view which went on to permeate assumptions about Afrikan-Origined families that were unjustified and untested (Pennie & Best, 1990; Phoenix: 1988). Patterns of Afrikan-Origined family life such as child rearing and child

minding practices; the place of children in the family; the relationships between parents and their children; and the role of mothers in the Afrikan-Origined family - were all areas characterised by misinterpretation and misrepresentation (Pennie and Best, 1990), and criminalisation (Ahmed et al,1986). White social workers' intervention into Afrikan-Origined families became characterised by a disproportionate number of Afrikan-Origined children being removed from their family homes on legal orders, a practice condemned by the Association of Directors of Social Services and the Commission for Racial Equality (ADSS/CRE, 1978). The report which deduced that the response from social work departments to the social work needs of 'black' people was 'patchy, piecemeal and lacking in strategy' (p14), also concluded that knowingly or unknowingly, different assessment criteria were being applied to Afrikan-Origined families. The report went on to inform a wide body of research which argued that the negative way in which Afrikan-Origined families were viewed was the underlying factor which contributed to the overbearing representation of Afrikan-Origined children in the care system, and Afrikan-Origined children almost becoming a 'client' group in their own right (Association of Black Social Workers and Allied Professions, 1983; Barn, 1993; Black and in Care Conference Report,1985; Cheetham,1987; Dominelli,1988; Macauley Hayes, 1990; Murray,1983; Pennie & Best,1990; Small,1984; Walker,1981). Attention focused on Afrikan-Origined children in care and the appropriateness of same-race placements, as opposed to placing Afrikan-Origined children in any available 'loving' family, characterised by 'transracial' placements. My study is not primarily concerned with these latter issues, but an overview can be found in the work of some of the authors above. Contrasting opinions appear in the Home Office Advisory Council on Child Care (1970); Gaber & Aldridge (1994); Gill & Jackson (1982); Macey (1995); Rowe & Lambert (1983); Silverman & Feigelman (1977); and Tizard & Phoenix (1989).

Accusations of racism were also attached to the overrepresentation of Afrikan-Origined youth in borstals and remand centres (Pryce,1979); and, disproportionately entering the criminal justice system (Baldwin & McConville,1982; Carrington & Denney,1981; Hudson,1989; Reiner,1989; Stubbs,1987). Resultant constructions of Afrikan-Origined dangerousness led to saturation policing of Afrikan-Origined people (Goldbourne,1998; Hall et al, 1978; Solomos et al, 1982). There was growing concern about the lack of appropriateness of services being offered to elders (Barker, 1984; Health Education Council, 1984; Farrah, 1986; Fenton,1988; and Norman, 1985). And, concerns

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about the disproportionate numbers of Afrikan-Origined people entering the mental health system under compulsory admission orders thereby increasing the likelihood of them being medicated (Burke, 1986; Caines, 1986; Cope, 1989; Fernando, 1988; Ineichen, 1986 & 1989; Littlewood & Lipsedge, 1982; Rack, 1982; and The Runnymede Trust, 1983).

Accusations of racism raised the issue of a conflict in practice models, personal, professional and agency cultures and values, and expectations regarding acceptable outcomes (Kent, 1972; Murray, 1983). Racism was seen as conscious (Finbush, 1965), as an oppressive force and a fundamental barrier preventing access to opportunity, privilege, power and social justice for 'black' people (Ely & Denny, 1987; Small, 1988). And, the failure of white practitioners to understand the dynamics of racism hindered their ability to deliver effective services (Dominelli, 1988). The effect produced social work literature that justified unhelpful positionings, stifling the impetus for change amongst white practitioners - giving rise to no new resources.

The Introduction of Equality Perspectives

Social work practitioners leaned on public opinion of 'black' people as dangerous and problematic (Brown, 1988), despite the profession being characterised by deficient models of practice (Small, 1989). This forced Afrikan-Origined people to struggle to hold onto ground made in the face of racial murders, attacks and racial warfare in parts of the country (Sivanandan, 1987). Agitations in 'black' communities followed, characterised by uprisings in Notting Hill in London, Bristol and Liverpool in the 1950's and 1960's, which signified first generation 'black' resistance to racism. Uprisings in the 1970's and 1980's in Leeds, Manchester, Liverpool, Birmingham and London, underpinned second generation calls from 'black' young people, for institutional and infrastructure changes (Sivanandan, 1985). Government attempts to address concerns heralded amendments to 'race' legislation culminating in an amended Race Relations Act (1976) which came on line in 1979. The Act facilitated the establishment of the Commission for Racial Equality as a national government quango; and Community Relations / Race Equality Councils as local representatives - both responsible for promoting good 'race' relations.

From late 1970's onwards, social work practitioners were directed to accept that 'black' people wished to retain their own cultural traditions and identity in their contacts with the service (Heptinstall, 1986). This facilitated an emergence of cultural / awareness-

type policies which focused on encouraging acceptance of a multicultural society as a route to eradicating racism (Williams, 1989). However, expressed through an unaffected Eurocentric hegemony, the cultural awareness model continued to present Afrikan-Origined people as problematic and inflexible. White social workers continued to use cultural habits to explain the failure of Afrikan-Origined people to adapt to white norms, labelling aspects of 'black' culture as normal and abnormal according to white cross-cultural explanations (Ahmad & Atkin, 1996; Ahmed, 1987). White practitioners continued their over-dependence on simplistic cultural explanations which ignored the need for proper analysis of 'black' clients' psycho-social situations. Instead, white practitioners favoured preoccupations with cultural-conflict models and explanations which ignored the role of racism and its influence on 'black' self-identity - making 'Afrikanness' and 'Asianness' conditions that needed to be overcome.

Cultural awareness models were succeeded by equality perspectives like multiculturalism. The 'race' emphasis in multiculturalism prioritised acceptance of all cultures as important via self-examination of attitudes to culture, and identified cultural misunderstandings as underpinning problematic interpretations and assessments of 'black' people (Ahmad & Atkin, 1996). But, again, attention focused on peripheral-type issues such as skin and hair care in fostering and adoption and food and festivals in education. The policies failed to reference the power of worldview and institutional racism as reinforcers of stereotypes of 'black' people as responsible for their own ills (Dominelli, 1988; Graham, 1999; Williams, 1989). It also led to racial equality positions loosing credibility in the face of New Right attacks on their legitimacy (Penketh, 1998).

Dominelli (1988) identified other failures in equality perspectives that attempted to address the chronic failings of broad-based multicultural policies. For example, ethnic-sensitive and multi-racial social work approaches relied upon defining all Afrikans as a homogenous group, which had consequences for access issues. Although such policies encouraged white social workers to recognise the role played by their own personal racism as a hindrance to the understanding of 'black' people, practitioners met the challenge of tackling racism by professionalising themselves into a state of helplessness. Consequentially, the institutional structures responsible for promoting and supporting racism and protecting racists, remained intact, which McFarland et al (1989) argued, was responsible for undermining the success of equality approaches. Those who attempted to

challenge were undermined by a Eurocentric model of social work and white practitioners, empowered by a supportive ontology, epistemology and axiology (Graham, 1999).

Black Workers in Social Work

The focus on equality perspectives extended to the introduction of 'black' (i.e. Afrikan-Origined and Asian-Origined) staff into social work departments. That 'black' staff could play a positive role in social work had long been argued by authors like Cheetham (1981), Deakin (1981), John (1972), Manning (1981), Tresiliotis (1972) and Younghusband (1978) - who noted the importance of 'black' social workers and their ability to bring to the job a common culture, language and understanding to that of 'black' clients. However, despite such positive outlooks, few writers were able to highlight what was positive about being 'black' in the social work services. Neither were they able to identify what organisational or structural changes and working practices had taken place or how 'black' workers were valued (Dominelli, 1989).

Instead, it was suggested that 'black' staff could make social services more approachable and accessible to their respective communities (Cheetham, 1981). That, 'black' workers had an everyday experience of 'black' communities which extended further than seeing 'black' client groups at the point of crisis (Ahmed et al, 1986; Small, 1988). 'Black' staff could help departments develop multiracial practices by helping to establish trust between the profession and 'black' communities, encouraging social work services to incorporate practices like racial and ethnic matching of 'client' to practitioner (Ahmed, 1981). And, future social work services to 'black' communities could not be achieved without 'black' workers' particular and unique experience, which were too difficult to communicate to white workers (Ely & Denny, 1987). However, as Rooney (1987) quite rightly noted:

> This litany of expectations did not so much reflect a breadth of
> vision but a limitation of it. These possible outcomes or benefits
> were not seen to require organisation or management but were to
> be passive effects of the social workers just being there (Rooney, 1987, p11).

Rooney (1987) suggests that the employment of local 'black' people by social services departments would ensure a calibre and quality of worker untypical of regular social work staff, and would bring:

> a unique perspective on the behaviour and practices of the department
> and their knowledge and experience of the community (Rooney, 1987, p23).

Rooney's earlier work (1980, 1981) alerted us to the importance of recognising that the benefits of employing 'black' workers, which later (1987) he identified, would not materialise if social services departments recruited workers who were 'black' but had no connections to local 'black' communities. However, Dominelli (1988), established that employers did recruit 'black' workers without shared communal ties and experiences, ensuring little challenge to the organisation and its ways of working. Such a strategy enabled local authorities to:

> use black workers in controlling the community ... these
> black social workers [would be unable] to develop forms of
> collective organisation which could effectively challenge the
> local authority's ways of working with black people, transform
> its definition of social work, develop appropriate forms of
> service delivery to black clients, and empower black people
> (Dominelli, 1988, p134).

The 'Opening the Door Model' of recruitment (Dominelli, 1992), characterised agencies' recruitment of 'black' social workers who were used to meet conventional social work demand - with no attempt to direct their skills and expertise in ways that might have been advantageous to 'black' communities. 'Black' workers were also used to work specifically with 'black' clients - but not out of concern for ensuring best practice, but as a route to facilitating a type of white abdication of responsibility for development of appropriate 'black'-client practice bases. That abdication, however, did not prevent white practitioners from stigmatising 'black'-on-'black' social work relationships as poor relatives of real social work practice. Or, the imposition of an exclusively white generic model of social work practice on 'black' clients and 'black' practitioners (Rooney, 1987). Consequently, 'black' workers ended up with the responsibility for eradicating racism,

which tended to excuse white workers from change processes, whilst simultaneously marginalising 'black' workers because of their limited roles in social work organisations (Dominelli, 1988).

This identified a second model of practice, which Dominelli (1992) noted as the 'Black' Specialist Model. This model employed 'black' social workers in specialist posts to deliver specialist responses to 'black' clients, which merely served to further entrench and marginalise the professionalism of 'black' practitioners. 'Black' workers recruited via this model could expect to be employed on transient contracts, such as those financed via 'Section 11' of the 1966 Local Government Act. Such posts, again, merely reinforced racism, marginalisation and the ghettoisation of 'black' communities and 'black' workers and their careers. 'Black' workers employed via 'Section 11' were linked to jobs viewed as subordinate, with no real decision-making opportunities, unrealistic achievement expectations and roles with no mandate for implementing the kind of change typically associated with Section 11 (Connelly, 1981; Ferns, 1987; Rooney, 1987; Scott, 1988). Contrastingly, however, when 'Section 11' funds were used to employ white specialists on problem 'black' people these posts were seen as high profile because of the 'race' element, and rewarded with appreciation because of white staff commitment to working with problem communities (Dominelli, 1988). White workers were also encouraged to recognise the practical and professional benefits of specialising in 'race' (Nixon, 1983).

'Black' practitioners' knowledge and understanding of 'black' communities and clients seemed to threaten the institutional theoretical and practice base of the profession, and the majority white practitioner workforce who practised from their own culturally centric standpoints (Small, 1988). Consequently, white social workers' responses were accusatory and inflammatory towards the introduction of anything remotely 'black' or considered political, into the profession (Hutchinson-Reis, (1989). Protests by 'black' workers against the negative perceptions of their role and the elevation of white social work methods, were met with accusations of 'black' workers deliberately seeking to work against the grain (Social Work Today, 1987). 'Black' workers were accused of over-identifying with 'black' clients - expected to choose between their loyalties to the profession and the agency, and their loyalties to 'black' communities (Ballard, 1979). It is a choice that Umoja a participant in my research, also had to make and to which I make reference to later in this thesis. Umoja faced similar accusations, which eventually forced her out of her practitioner post, highlighting the realities behind the kind of costs Ballard

(1979) identified. Divine (1987) and Murray (1983) suggested that a failure to commit all aspects of the profession, to the development of 'black' workers in the social work field was in itself, a way of ensuring that no meaningful change would take place. Critically, the effects of using 'Section 11' were also passed on to 'black' communities, affecting the survival of 'black' voluntary sector organisations who found themselves worse off in terms of their ability to provide for the general needs of 'black' community members (Dominelli, 1988). The failure to consult 'black' communities on 'Section 11' usage despite legislative requirements to do so further entrenched the unethical absorption of funding into general local authority priorities (Johnson et al, 1989). Rooney (1987) notes however, that despite the difficulties and enormous contradictions experienced by 'black' social workers, sometimes at huge costs to themselves and their communities - they still managed to succeed in all realms of the social work profession. A tribute no doubt to their skills, talents and determination.

Black Perspectives and Anti-Racist Social Work

The arrival of black perspectives in social work also developed out of a number of high profile confrontations (and subsequent concerns about their precipitating factors) between the Afrikan-Origined community and a range of representative government authorities (Gifford, 1986; Scarman, 1982). The reports from Gifford and Scarman stressed the need for institutions and service providers such as social services and the police, to redefine their approaches to service delivery, equal opportunities and distribution of resources. There was also a general recognition that Afrikan-Origined people might not welcome a view that their cultural traditions and identity were incompatible with access routes to social and welfare support services (ADSS/CRE, 1978; Gilroy, 1992; Heptinstall, 1986; Solomos, 1987).

Black perspectives were seen as a theoretical and practice tool that could answer the failings in social work practice (Singh, 1992), whilst illuminating the need to develop broader understandings of social issues and issues surrounding the aetiology of human problems (Bryant-Soloman, 1976). Its defining feature, was a concern that social work theory should have a core element of knowledge construction focusing on the interests of 'black' people. Black perspectives also supported an expectation that discussions on 'race' issues, be grounded in a broad political framework of 'black' liberation and self-

determination (Singh, 1992), and should not be seeking to prescribe practice for 'dealing' with 'black' people (Ahmed, 1990). Black perspectives were viewed as being somewhat essentialist in nature, in terms of its exclusivity to 'black' people (Keating, 2000). However, black perspectives were also seen as facilitating the construction of a 'black' identity based on common experiences, where 'black' voices could be heard, and from where strategies aimed at surviving and challenging racism could be developed (Singh, 1992).

Black perspectives also strengthened the role and place of the 'black' political perspective in social work (Hutchinson-Reis, 1989), which continued to protect the space of Afrikan-Origined workers to call themselves 'black' in reference to themselves as a distinct racial group. I found this to be so during the interviews I conducted with my Afrikan-Origined research participants, who comfortable referring to themselves as 'black' when they were clearly Afrikan-Origined people. Black perspectives were seen as encouraging academia to focus on being imaginative and insightful rather than be one hundred percent right (Bryant-Soloman, 1976). Black perspectives were seen as a valuable route for allowing white practitioners to develop a critical awareness of their subjective selves to assist in the process of clarification on issues surrounding the use of concepts of difference and deviance (Singh, 1996). And, as a route to encouraging a shift towards the importance of social work outcomes focused on changing the views and actions of the powerful, whilst mobilising the powerless. This latter focus however, did not extend to addressing the role played by Eurocentrism as the contextual paradigm within which systems of oppression were situated.

The emphasis on overhauling the Eurocentric paradigm is one that does emerge in black feminist perspectives, where responses and outcomes are particularised towards the experiences of 'black' women, and, also generalised to incorporate broader feminist responses to racism. Whilst my research was not concerned with critiquing broad feminist perspectives, I did look at black feminist perspectives in terms of their contextual relevance and prescriptive applicability to Afrikan-Origined people. Hill Collins (1990) for example, saw black feminist perspectives as needing to transcend Eurocentric feminist methodological and sociological forms of enquiry because of inherent inequalities in Eurocentric feminist methodologies, which exclude 'black' women's' stories. Hill Collins' experiences as an Afrikan-Origined woman and community member informed her assertion that the process of self-determination was not one that could come at the expense

of 'black' men or the 'black' community. Hill Collins (1990) breaths reality into her position by developing an Afrikan-Centred feminist methodology (which I shall be critiquing in chapter three of my thesis), which she felt, best represented a relevant contextual approach to Afrikan-Origined women's issues. hooks (1991) continues the sentiment that 'the masters tools will never dismantle the masters house' asserting that, white feminist women's' discussions about 'race' should be seen for what they are – as attempts to re-centralise white authorial presence on discourse. James Myers (1991) supports the call for a separate contextual space, arguing that the nature, method and purpose of the exclusion which currently operates in traditional epistemologies and methodologies invalidates any research on 'black' women, conducted within its boundaries.

Whilst black perspectives were good at theorising the changes needed in social work and other epistemologies, the failure to dislodge black perspective from Eurocentric hegemonic influences, reduced black perspectives to a reactionary status that could not prioritise its focus on a holistic response to Afrikan-Origined people's needs (John-Baptiste, 2001). Black perspectives came out of a time (late 1980's and early 1990's) that demanded theoretical perspectives be 'race' specific. The focus then, prioritised responses to failing equality perspectives, rendering the usefulness of black perspectives as being rooted in the arguments of their time. Usefulness became that of responding to Eurocentric social work priorities. This allowed white social workers to develop a critical awareness of their subjective self to assist in the process of clarification between different and deviant, towards the creation of positive theories and methods of interaction with 'black' people (Singh, 1996). As a strategy, it was both political and necessary at the time. However, the failure of black perspective advocates, to contextually submerge black perspectives in the identities of 'black' people left black perspectives muddying the waters on issues like radical or transformatory approaches. Although black perspectives came out of structural inadequacies, they did not go beyond immediate reasons for those inadequacies, largely as a result of the pressures of racist rhetoric from the 'right' and the weakness of the 'left' at protecting ground that had been won. This left black perspectives leaning towards reform of epistemologies, which excluded the role played by white practitioners in their personal, communal and institutional roles. Epistemological reform also encouraged a push towards convergence of 'black' and white experiences at a pace determined by the comfort white people felt in believing 'black' perspectives to be the vehicle for understanding the complexities of Afrikan and Asian-Origined people. There was also a certain degree of

comfort 'black' people felt, in using a perspective they perceived white people to comfortable with.

Anti-racist perspectives were, therefore, seen as more suited to the need for white workers to address their own issues about 'race'. Dominelli (1988) argued that white people cannot and should not appropriate 'black' people's voices. Instead, their priority should be to work on their own racism via anti-racist approaches to social work which focus on treating all people on the basis of their specific needs and interests. This approach to anti-racist perspectives was also supported by the Northern Curriculum Development Project (NCDP) based in the Central Council for Education and Training in Social Work (CCETSW, the governing body of social work education, training and practice). Through a series of publications, the NCDP promoted the importance of anti-racist social work as fundamental to the need for social work to change its value base. NCDP argued that social work needed to move from being a profession which assumed a false neutrality on the main social and ethical issues of the day, to one that was explicit in its value base and its commitment to challenging all forms of oppression. The NCDP also believed that anti-racist perspectives in social work would support the profession to adopt a commitment to the implementation of justice and equality for all, across all aspects of the profession. The NCDP believed that 'black' people had a right to determine the types of welfare provision on offer to them. And, in pursuit of the definition of resources, an anti-racist social work profession would not seek, via the voice of professionals and experts, to substitute itself for the voices of the oppressed (NCDP, 1992).

Anti-racist perspectives also shaped social work education and training at a time when Thatcherite policies dominated the political agenda. Anti-racist perspectives also challenged the dominant political structures and united people across racial differences (Dominelli, 1992). This culture of demand for change extended out to oppositional political parties, local government and equal opportunities supporters, which influenced CCETSW to act. CCETSW explored the pressing concerns of 'black' organisations and activists, regarding the inadequacies of much of the social work education programme in preparing social workers for anti-racist social work practice (Penketh, 1998). In response, CCETSW set about redefining its policies and positional statements, culminating in the production of several papers on anti-racist social work education and practice. CCETSW's Paper 30 for example, envisaged that all social work programme providers would have

Clear and explicit anti-discrimination and anti-racist policies

and explicit practices and procedures which provides evidence

that these policies will be implemented and monitored in all

aspects of the programme (CCETSW, 1989b, p22).

However, experiences of students on social work courses did not match the desired outcomes. In 1992:

"The black Student's Voice" Conference was a proactive response

to the misery and confusion experienced by black social work

students, both in academic institutions and practice placements.

This experience is not isolated in small pockets of rural Britain,

it is the experience of Black students everywhere (The Black

Students Voice, 1992, p4).

The Conference noted a range of concerns about the failure of learning environments to validate the experiences of 'black' people as students, practitioners or as potential clients; and extended its concerns to practice teaching environments, which were felt to be unwelcoming and intent on systematically failing 'black' students. Further, 'black' students and 'black' practitioners identified social work teaching environments as failing on 'race' matters. The report supporting the need for a monitoring protocol, noted that such catastrophic failures were incomprehensible given the impact many expected as a result of the implementation of CCETSW's Paper 30. Research undertaken by Amer and Bryan (1996) and Penketh (1998, 2000) further supported the existence of unhealthy learning environments for 'black' students on social work courses, typified by multiple loyalty demands associated with 'race' and identity issues. The above findings also concur with the experiences of six of the seven participants in my research, all of whom encountered 'race' and identity concerns on their respective social work courses. Whilst the participants in my research did not testify to their attendance at the conference, their experiences suggested that racist and institutionalised practises undermining positive experiences of 'black' students on social work courses were perhaps more endemic than infrequent.

In conclusion Robinson (1995) adds that despite the emergence of CCETSW's Paper 30 there remained a failure in the social work profession, to recognise the role played by Eurocentric universality in underpinning social work knowledge and values.

Robinson (1995) also argued that social work training post Paper 30 continued to reflect the educational expectations of the individuals and cultures responsible for its conception and maintenance. And, further, that 'black' people had to become 'white' before their talents and cognitive realities were permitted full and free expression.

Anti-racist perspectives were not helped by the myopia of race relations and anti-racist advocates concerning the political right backlash against the anti-racist agenda (Penketh, 1998; 2000). The strength of anti-racist perspectives was also undermined by the lack of a strong political 'left' challenge. Instead, the challenge back-pedalled for seemingly safer options like multiculturalism, in the face of an increasingly vociferous and negatively entrenched political 'right' (Penketh, 1998). Anti-racist organisations were equated to the Nazi movement, seen to be encouraging 'black' people's use of guerrilla tactics to overthrow, dominate and oppress the white majority. Whilst a guilt-by-association link, was made between anti racism and 'black' people accused of demonstrating a hatred for white society through 'rioting' and exploitation of traditional British tolerance (Gordon, 1990; Honyford, 1983; Murray, 1986; and Seidel 1987). The assault on anti-racism generally, extended itself to the work of CCETSW and its anti-racist social work development programme, not least with accusations from then government ministers about anti-racism being nothing more than politically correct nonsense, stifling a return to traditional social work values (Penketh, 1998).

The extent of the assault on anti-racism is such that despite the passage of some fifteen years, CCETSW and social work continue to remain under pressure to divorce themselves from anti-racism and its obsession with politically correct attitudes on 'race'. This has left anti-racism in the position of being seen as the problem standing in the way of modernising the profession (Trew, 1999). In 1999 the University of Leeds hosted a conference on 'Anti-Racism and Anti-Oppressive Practice' where the conference accepted that CCETSW and the anti-racist movement had made mistakes, making the job of the political 'right' easier in relation to the attack on anti-racism. It was also accepted that the mistakes contributed to the disintegration of anti-racism and CCETSW's significant shift away from the need for anti-racism in social work training (see also Penketh, 2000).

Whilst anti-racism and the 'right' remained entrenched in a war over position (Trew, 1999), social work agencies reverted to measuring anti-racist competencies by attending to issues of cross-cultural efficacy, at the expense of addressing contextual and ideological influences in the manifestations and practices of institutional racism (Alease-Ferguson,

1996). White social work practitioners remained secure in passing themselves off as unaffected by racism and unconnected to the Eurocentrism on which the tenets of social work sit (Graham, 1999). Further, the silencing of calls to remove anti-racism from Eurocentric authorship left the anti anti-racism backlash able to steal the moral highground. It left white people able to link anti-racism to authoritarianship, reverse-discrimination, and able to label any anti-racist achievement as unjust, invalid and morally illegitimate (Karenga, 1993). Consequently, the effect has been one of slow change in the profession. Clearly, black perspectives and anti-racism satisfied developmental needs at a particular point in the history of struggle against racism and ethnic differentiation. However, the failure of both perspectives lay in omitting to dislodge them from the hegemonic influence of Eurocentrism. This failure underpinned and insistence that the Afrikan-Origined community transcend the limitations of equality perspectives and speak for themselves.

The Response of Afrikan-Origined Communities and the Afrikan-Origined Voluntary Sector

The serious inadequacies of social work provision reinforced the sense of powerlessness Afrikan-Origined people felt at being prevented from participating in decision-making processes about their needs. Such a level of exclusion, argues Bryant-Soloman (1976), attacked the self-effectiveness, social functioning and self-determining role of Afrikan-Origined communities and created a sense of dependency and paralysis. Whilst, the failure of local authorities to provide services, was evidence of the wish to see those communities live marginal existences (John, 1981). That failure also demonstrated a preparedness on the part of local authorities to promote self-help marginal institutions, in a bid to maintain the status quo of white domination in both service provision and take-up. Research undertaken by Workers Against Racism (WAR, 1985) leaves readers in no doubt about the British obsession with 'race' as leading amongst other things to

> the proliferation of restrictions and regulations governing the lives
> of black people in Britain (WAR, 1985, p6).

A reaction to the lack of appropriate provision and exclusion faced by 'black' communities, was commented on, by the Commission for Racial Equality (CRE) in their report on 'Black Self Help'. The report made specific reference to the Afrikan-Origined community in noting the increase in 'black' self- help projects as more than just culture and heritage vehicles (CRE, 1981). Rather, activist responses and the setting up of community organisations mirrored the history of 'black' resistance, and had merely moved on to seek to reflect Afrikan-Origined agency priorities in a service industry that was intent on universalising its own priorities and responses (Sivanandan, 1974). 'Black' communities challenged the effects of Eurocentrism and racism in three distinct ways, indeed, reflecting the differences that existed and continue to exist amongst Afrikan-Origined people with regard to responses to Eurocentrism and racism.

There was the challenge to institutionalised structures from within existing social work services. This was typically reflected by Afrikan-Origined workers, remaining within local authority structures, to attempt change from within by playing the system. However, without a healthy identity and sense of self, Afrikan-Origined workers were likely to find that once in post, the strengths of Eurocentric hegemonic practices reflected in practitioner and agency cultures, were likely to impact in such a way as to coerce Afrikan-Origined workers to subsume their identities if only as a survival mechanism (see pages 177 and 190 for a discussion on this issue). Ujamaa, a participant in my research had experiences that were of a similar nature, providing excellent insight into what goes through the minds of Afrikan-Origined workers in practitioner environments (see page 133). Similarly, strategies based on retaining a strong Afrikan identity and sense of self and choosing to remain within social welfare services did not come without its price. Afrikan-Origined workers were labelled as radical, disloyal and unprofessional because of their insistence on identifying with Afrikan-Origined communities (Rooney, 1987). Consequently, it was not unusual to see Afrikan-Origined workers deciding that their stance was incompatible with that of their practising organisation. Umoja, another participant in my research, was confronted by such a reality, the effects of which were so great as to force her to seek alternative employment in an authority that was more willing to accommodate her idea of appropriate practice with Afrikan-Origined communities (see pages 102-3). Choosing to stay and challenge institutional practices from within agencies has been an option for Afrikan-Origined workers and their communities, and one which has yielded some positive results. However, the inability of this approach to dislodge

Eurocentric tenets underpinning institutionally racist practices, I believe, is a contributing factor to its untenablility as a viable response, on its own.

Afrikan-Origined resistance to Eurocentric hegemony also came in challenges from outside traditional social welfare agencies. Community organisations already had a history of organising against racism, in a bid to prioritise the demands of 'black' people (Moore, 1975; Morrison, 1976; Sivanandan, 1981/2; Ramdin, 1999). Afrikan-Origined communities then began creating their own institutions and associations aimed at supporting themselves, reflecting their agency priorities (Loney, 1981) and challenging local authorities for resources (National Council of Voluntary Organisations (NCVO), 1980). Indeed, research on the responses of Afrikan-Origined communities to racism and hostility, concluded that the existence of a strong 'black' voluntary sector was the surest way of making demands to central and local government about the issue of power sharing and the importance of appropriate representation in policy and resource areas (Benyon et al, 1996; NCVO, 1980). Afrikan-Origined communities established parallel services to those of welfare organisations, within the community where it was felt the freedom to pay attention to the importance of relevant responses was available.

The development of parallel services alongside traditional Eurocentric welfare services provision, developed through the (Afrikan and Afrikan-Origined (Caribbean)) church and can not, therefore, be overlooked in terms of their contribution to the struggle against racism and oppression. Becher (1995) notes that the expectations of Afrikan-Origined people with regard to the church were very much informed by their experiences of white British colonial society and their experiences of the influences of British churches in their homelands. However, Betcher concludes, that the racial hostility Afrikan-Origined people faced during their arrival and settlement in Britain heightened the need for churches to live up to Afrikan expectations of being places of community, refuge, support and strength. Kalilombe (1997) concludes that the church had two aims. The first was that of self-defence and the need through the church, to pursue the cause of liberation through resistance and struggle. The second aim was that of self-empowerment through the use of church resources to maintain and promote life chances. Kalilombe makes it clear that

Black Christianity in Britain is best understood as the response
of black Christians to the situation of an ethnic minority which,
in Britain, has been imposed on black people in general. .... that
black people have given a religious interpretation to their experience

of racial discrimination in Britain, and that consequently their quest

for liberation through resistance and struggle has taken a religious form.

For those among them who were Christians this response has taken the

shape of Black Christianity (Kalilombe,1997, p321).

However, the strength of Eurocentric control of resources has served to keep the Afrikan-Origined community and it's voluntary sector services under-resourced and therefore insecure. That insecurity has now fostered a climate based on securing resources to keep services open rather than on the task of building the necessary capacity to ensure the long term development and survival of services. So, whilst the size and capacity of the entire Afrikan-Origined voluntary sector reflects the viability of parallel services as a successful response to Eurocentrism and racism, the issue of who controls resources remains firmly on the agenda.

Afrikan-Centredness as a Parallel Discourse

The influential combination of Afrikan-Origined people in community activism and academia has seen a positive shift in efforts to develop parallel discourses that offer more appropriate contextual paradigms and analytical perspectives that can operate from within and outside existing social welfare structures. Afrikan-Centredness is a worldview that has emerged from those influences. It locates itself in a contextual paradigm that is relevant to the interests of Afrikan people (Asante, 1987; Graham, 1999), given the substantial and detrimental effect Eurocentrism, has had on the lives of Afrikan people (Ani, 1994; Asante, 1999; Welsing, 1991). That form of dominance is what Scheurich & Young (1997) term 'civilisational racism' and what Afrikan scholars (e.g. Ani, 1994; Kambon, 1996; Schiele, 1996) term worldview. Worldview, better explains the need to inject meaning into life as a way of determining which experiences and events are meaningful and which are not (Tchet Shesh Am Neter, 1995).

Molefi Kete Asante is considered the creator of modern day Afrikan-Centredness with respect to its development as an epistemological and analytical paradigm. Whilst its presence in British social work texts was a rather late one, the presence of Afrikan-Centredness in the social sciences texts is well established. Indeed, examination of the writings of authors like Edward W. Blyden (1994); HIM Emperor Haile Selassie I (1994); Marcus Garvey / Amy Jacques-Garvey, 1986; Martin, 1976); Carter G. Woodson (1990)

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and a host of historical, 19th and 20th Century activists recorded by Boyd & Allen (1995) and Busby (1993) demonstrate that although Afrikan-Centredness was not the collective name given to the early calls for self determination, the sentiments were clearly those of the need for Afrikan-Origined people to develop paradigms that would tell their story. That story asserts that the origins of Afrikan-Centredness predate European and Arab influences, locating themselves in traditional Afrika. It is a location which survived colonisation and modification to maintain an Afrikan philosophical integrity and ensure Afrikan representation via the survival of cultural vestiges among Continental and Diasporian Afrikans (Schiele, 1996).

Asante's work directly challenged the omission of Afrikan voice in intellectual and academic arenas of contemporary epistemologies. Afrikan-Centredness challenged the whitewashing of academia and more general forms of knowing that had removed of all trace of Afrikan contributions to humanity (Ani, 1994; Blaut, 1993; Van Dyk, 1995). Afrikan-Centredness is defined not just in terms of what it is but also what it does as a paradigm. Its location is in the role of Afrikan people as much as it is found written in text (i.e. the Afrikan as subject and object). So, to do and be Afrikan-Centred, is to place Afrikans and Afrikan interests at the centre of any approach to knowing and prescriptive problem solving in order to appreciate in an active sense, the interrelatedness of 'feeling', 'knowing' and 'acting', as indicators of human phenomena. Additionally, the Afrikan in effect becomes both the helper and the helped simultaneously (Asante, 1987; Woodward, 1995). The Afrikan-Centred paradigm therefore becomes instructional both in an academic sense, asserting a cultural pluralist stance as an alternative to Eurocentric universalistic representations (Van Dyk, 1995), and in a practice sense, defining the way in which Afrikan people should be serviced (Schiele, 2000). The 'way of life' representativeness of Afrikan-Centredness also supports the development of voice and agency in Afrikan-Origined communities (Bishop, 1996; Garland, 1995; Semmes, 1981). Afrikan-Centredness advocates the need to further intercultural communication of Afrikan interests across all areas (Wonkeryor, 1996). And, Afrikan-Centred communication recognises the importance of reflecting the flow and rhythm of Afrikan natures of being - an absence of which would make Afrikan people a-rhythmic and a-functional (Maxime, 1993).

Whilst my support for the benefits gained from using the Afrikan-Centred paradigm for the purposes of undertaking research with Afrikan-Origined people, is unequivocal - the Afrikan-Centred paradigm is not without its critics. Gilroy (1993) argues that modern day representations of 'Afrikanisms' are voguish and anti-modern, rendering them ineffectual in the search for better theories of racism and 'black' political culture. Similarly, Hall (1996), Mercer (1994) and Solomos (1996) make particular reference to Afrikan-Centredness as having set itself up to compete with Eurocentricity at the expense of paradigms which focus on unifying the processing of difference as a route to achieving a higher quality of life for all. Afrikan-Centredness has also been likened to narrow 'race'-based theories that presume a cultural homogeneity, which is conceptually limiting in other critical respects such as class stratification, and poverty and affluence. Advocates of Afrikan-Centredness are accused of wrongly rooting racial identity on false paradigms of superiority and competitive models of group empowerment, via parallel frames of reference - completely overlooking the need to construct responses to racism within existing multicultural and pluralistic epistemologies (D'Souza, 1995; Steele, 1990; Lamelle, 1993; Manning, 1993). Additionally, Lamelle (1993), Rattansi (1995) and Sivanandan (1987) suggest that the narrow 'race'-based views of Afrikan-Centredness prevent white allies from sharing in 'black' peoples struggles for equality and the eradication of racism, by turning identity into a nationalistic indulgence.

Dickerson (1995) as a supporter of Afrikan-Centredness is also critical of the paradigm, focusing on the 'Kemetic connection' in Afrikan-Centredness and questioning its relevance in today's world of 'arrested consciousness'. She suggests that unless Afrikan-Centredness grounds itself appropriately in history it could be left reading as an erroneous and exaggerated personal wish list, little short of "ethnic cheerleading" (Dickerson, 1995, p205). But, despite the criticisms, Dickerson believes that a properly grounded Afrikan-Centred educational system has a role to play in strengthening experiences, particularly since the Afrikan essence as espoused by Afrikan-Centredness, has been an objective reality on the Afrikan continent and amongst Diasporian Afrikans for hundreds and in some cases thousands of years (Ekwe-Ekwe & Nzegwu, 1994). Ekwe-Ekwe & Nzegwu (1994), therefore, refute attempts by authors like Gilroy, D'Souza and Hall, to blame Afrikans for their own oppression. They criticise the secrecy of what they term "Euroassimilationists" and "Africophobists " (p18/19), whom they argue, by the very

nature of their desire to be accepted and valued by Eurocentric societal tenets, have no option but to reject substantive Afrikan cultural attributes in Afrikan people.

I tend to agree with Ekwe-Ekwe & Nzegwu (1994) about the iconoclastic way Afrikan-Centredness is treated in relation to Eurocentrism, whilst accepting that the contemporary application of Afrikan-Centredness can sometimes appear smothered in the push to ensure the importance of Afrikan-Centredness to history is understood. Afrikan-Centredness is as much related to contemporary Afrika as it is to historical Afrika. This is because Afrikan-Centredness prioritises the importance of past, present and potential experiences and contributions simultaneously, meaning that who Afrikan people are tomorrow is just as important as who Afrikan people were, since tomorrow is the beginning of history. This makes Afrikan-Centredness flexible in relation to its ability to incorporate and respond to the contexts in which Afrikan people are placed, and in the ability of Afrikan-Centredness to represent and reflect the values by which Afrikan people view themselves and their place in their time and space (Asante, 1999; Wa Thiong'o, 1993). I, therefore, see Afrikan-Centredness as having the ability to answer the need for Afrikan-Origined people to have access to historical and contemporary fields of inquiry and response focused on Afrikan interests. The theoretical and prescriptive relevance of Afrikan-Centredness makes it a credible successor to the routes carved out by both black and anti-racist perspectives.

Conclusion

Early social work responses were created in the spirit of Eurocentric priorities that had influenced the development of European and British culture and identity. Therefore, the emergence of colour-blind and assimilationist-type responses to Afrikan-Origined need served merely to demonstrate the extent to which white social work practitioners were themselves reflective of Eurocentric contexts and analytical perspectives. Social work texts written during the various attempts to accommodate the needs of Afrikan-Origined people did little more than reflect white practitioner responses which mimicked Eurocentric expectations of 'others', thereby doing nothing to dislodge the privileging of whiteness and the ideological constraints of Eurocentrism. Practitioners and their organisations were firm in their expectations that Afrikan-Origined people would learn to have no separate expectations of social work provision.

In view of this, there was a definite policy position which advocated the disregarding of any specificity, in favour of an expectation that Afrikan-Origined people would adapt their modes of transmitting need if they were ever to be in a position to access social work services (Humphrey & John, 1972). This position was further entrenched by social policy and political positions, which served to legitimise attacks from the media and the political right, on any prioritisation of Afrikan-Origined need above the needs of white people. Publication of the Barclay Report (1982) criticising the inappropriateness of social work provision to 'black' people, advocated for a social work service that was open and creative, as the best route to creating appropriate practice models for 'black' communities. Consequently, the 1980's and 1990's reflect the emergence of a range of equality initiatives. However, neither legislative, theoretical or practice approaches delivered the kind of practitioner approaches capable of elevating Afrikan-Origined people to positions associated with social agency and wellbeing.

Afrikan-Origined communities responded with their own challenges to Eurocentric hegemony and racism, manifesting three district responses, challenging welfare services from within, from outside via the development of independent parallel services and through the development of parallel epistemologies and discourses. But, apart from the work of Graham (1999) and John-Baptiste (2001), British literature has been slow to reflect the need for social work practitioners to begin to look at the role and influence of contextual frameworks and worldviews, on their practice. Consequently, social work epistemologies remain problematic in their assumptions about Afrikan-Origined people. For example, the assumption that Afrikan-Origined people see, internalise experiences and externalise need in the same way as other racially distinct groups and in the same way as white people, remains a dominant belief of white social practitioners . As a belief, it belies the existence of even the possibility that Afrikan people might feel and want to communicate their needs in different ways (e.g. via relevant culture, language, religious and other cues), to those that have become the acceptable and expected cues to accessing social work services.

It is this continued stranglehold by white social work practitioners on the way social work is practised which I believe, has forced into the open the whole issue of relevance. It has also forced onto the social work negotiating table, the right and determination of other lived realities to represent their respective truths. Afrikan-Centredness represents one such lived reality, intent on speaking for the experiences of

Afrikan-Origined people.

In terms of my research, Afrikan-Centredness extends its opinion to examine the way in which Afrikan-Origined people continue to experience social work. Given my support for the usefulness of Afrikan-Centredness, the following chapters detail my path of its use in explaining the experiences of the participants in this study, beginning with the need to remove Afrikan-Centredness from Eurocentrically defined positions of essentialism.

The Role of Culture in Informing the Appropriateness of Social Work Practice with Communities of African Origin

Introduction

The previous chapter challenges the view in social work literature (See ABSWAP, 1983; Graham, 1999; Robinson, 1995; Schiele, 2000), that the process of helping remains free from the influence of cultural bias. It challenges that social work theory and practice is not influenced by the worldviews of social worker practitioners. The chapter challenges the belief that the role of culture is unconnected to the culture of white practitioners, unconnected to the social work profession and unconnected to practitioner perceptions of Afrikan-Origined people. And, further challenges that white social workers, in their rush to eliminate anything but basic and tangible references to cultural specificity (e.g. language, skin and hair care and religion), have clung to the concept of cultural hybridity as best representing the interaction that takes place between different cultures.

Hybridity has therefore been elevated to a position of preference, as a better definition of culture formation for social work purposes (Graham, 1999). Yet the debate takes place within the rigid, negative essentialist construct that is Eurocentrism (John-Baptiste, 2001), negating the importance of culture as indicating a total worldview, responsible for underpinning ways of teaching, knowing and doing. Hybridity also ignores the role of culture as a guide to relationships and actions between and amongst people. It is this definition of culture, as essential to the historical, traditional and present day image of white people, which has informed the specificity of focus, of social work with Afrikan-Origined people. Yet, simultaneously, there is general concern about Afrikan people's struggle to define their culture in ways that are specific to Afrikan priorities. The concerns are reflected in the struggle taking place around academic views on 'essentialist' and 'non-essentialist' positions on culture (Contrast Asante, 1980, 1987, 2000 and Jackson II, 1999 with D'Souza, 1995; Gilroy, 1995, 2000 and Hall, 1996). Whilst Gilroy and others overlook the essentialist aspects of Eurocentric culture and the essentialism present in the rigid views of Europeans, on their respective cultures prior to their contact with other cultures - Gilroy and others argue that all cultures are authored by the contact of people with each other. Therefore, culture should be viewed as a non-essentialist, fluid and hybrid

phenomenon. Culture should therefore, not be bound by rigid categorical givens or foundational positions - which speak against the realities of the multiple cultural positionings that better reflect the experience and movement of culture today Gilroy, 1995).

But the latter position does not solely represent how Afrikan people see culture in its role as a transmitter of their patterns and realities. Neither does it address the general issue of Eurocentrism as a dominant cultural force initiating systems of thinking, structures of knowing and ways of being in the lives of Afrikan people (Asante, 2001). There are deep structural aspects of culture which Afrikan-Origined people experience as fundamental to the living of their lives and their expression of the design and pattern of their lived experiences and realities (Akbar, 1976; Nobles, 1991; James Myers, 1998). The previous chapter raised concerns about the ability of white social workers to incorporate expectations of Afrikan-Origined people's need to have a social work service that recognises Afrikan-Origined people's right to express need in their own cultural terms. This chapter suggests that an undermining of culture in social work practice could obscure perceptions of helping that are fundamental to the success of healing processes (Graham, 1999; John-Baptiste, 2001; Schiele, 1997).

Eurocentric Positions on Essentialism

Eurocentric views of culture as essentialist, refer primarily to rigid representations of culture as fixed and bounded. To view culture in this way is seen as illogical and unworkable for generating answers to today's reality of multiple cultures, identities and localities (Hall, 1996), and as romanticised and misrepresentative of the demands and aspirations of oppressed groups (Gilroy, 1993). Further, essentialism is seen to:

> impute a fundamental basic, absolutely necessary constructive
> quality to a person, social category, ethnic group, religious community,
> or nation. It is to post falsely a timeless continuity, a discreteness or
> boundedness in space and organic unity. It is to imply an internal
> sameness and external difference or otherness ... to any form of analysis
> which may be said to obscure the relational aspects of group culture or
> identity and to valorise instead and subject on itself, as autonomous and
> separate, as if such a subject could be demarcated out of context, unrelated

to an external other or discursive purpose (Webner, 1996, p 228).

Essentialism disguises and distorts reality by viewing culture in narrow terms, and although given agency via the process of representation - through that representation, an essentialist culture simultaneously mutes the voices of oppressed people (Hall, 1991), and:

> identities are never unified [but are instead] increasingly
> fragmented and fractured; never singular but multiply constructed
> across different, often intersecting and antagonistic, discourses,
> practices and positions. They are subject to radical historicization,
> and are constantly in the process of change and transformation
> (Hall, 1996, p4).

Attempts to specify culture have also been linked to notions of 'race' purity, said to represent the kinds of positions with which the 'far right' have come to be preoccupied. Rather, 'race' should be seen as a non-scientific category and a socially constructed medium through which non-essentialist categories of 'black' and white have evolved, via historical and political struggles over their meanings (Solomos, 1996). Essentialist definitions of culture would therefore, lead to the notion of fixed hierarchies of oppression, and a failure to recognise commonalties between struggles as being linked to the devaluing of difference (Mercer, 1994). Therefore, to support essentialism risks shaping culture like past English colonialist and nationalistic positions and various other forms of religious and cultural fundamentalist positions. Instead, authors like D'Souza (1995) argue for rejecting all aspects of relativism and specificity in favour of all aspects of universalisation, unless cultures are being studied with what he terms " *the Western lens of cultural relativism*" (D'Souza, 1995, p384, my italics).

Hybridity as an Expression of Cultural Reality

Hybridity as an expression of culture arose as a critique of essentialist notions of culture, which are dismissed in favour of fluid notions of culture that move away from the marginalised positions represented by positions on exclusivity of experiences. Instead, preference is for definitions of cultures that unify cultures and experiences across time and

space (Brah, 1996; Giddens, 1991; Modood, 1998). Cultural hybridity can represent the continuities and discontinuities of cultures that make cultures fluid, moving culture away from any pre-given realities, to better reflect the way culture is formed and legitimise its use in the fight against discriminations (Brah, 1996). If there is to be a recourse to history, it should only be to strengthen the role of mutation, hybridity and intermixture on route to better theories of anti-racism (Gilroy, 1993). Additionally, issues of culture, identity, gender and class would be of more practical use in human struggles if couched within liberationary paradigms, where the struggle to destroy white oppression becomes an anti-racist movement that welcomes the participation of committed whites (Lamelle, 1993).

Many academics have sought to locate the cultural hybridity debate firmly in the field of post-modernism, seen as better representing the realities of diversity and difference, and better able to deal with the decadence modernity has allowed into debates on 'race' relations (Modood, 1998). The limitations of Western modernity's attempts to de-centre and de-essentialise the concepts of 'race', racism and ethnicity are overcome in post-modernity's fluid definitions of 'race', racism and ethnicity (Rattansi, 1994). Post-modernist views on hybridity incorporate the fluidity needed to provide for the possibility and necessity of creating new cultures with new social actors and new political agendas (Mercer, 1994). This ensures that identity becomes global, mobile, changing and limitless (Brah, 1996; Modood, 1998).

However, hybridity positions disguise an expectation that Afrikan people should define themselves in Eurocentrically acceptable terms. That, in a sense, makes hybridity strategically essentialist, although I accept this is not what Hekman et al (1997) meant when they applied the term in their work. I am using the term to demonstrate how, in dictating to Afrikan people what representations of their identity will be accepted, Eurocentric representatives are behaving in a strategically essentialist way. Able to do so, because hybridity does not challenge the hegemonic ways in which power is used to deny 'others' the right self-define, and have their self-definition accepted in meaningful ways.

Indeed, Blaut (1993), Cambridge (1996), Hilliard (1978; 1991), Joseph, Reddy & Searle-Chatterjee (1990), Ngugi (1993) and Sivanandan (1998), all voice opposition to the way that the fluidity-hybridity debate has sought to control media, academic and social opinion. They also oppose the way in which 'race' has become an abstraction no longer lodged in a history and process of struggle and transformation. This is emphasised by the

way in which terms borne out of struggle, like 'black' or 'racism', have been so easily replaced by a preoccupation with language surrounding the racialisation process. In effect, racism has become no longer what is done to people, but rather, has been reduced to the position of a discourse.

Eurocentrism can do this for hybridity because as discussed on pages 14-15 of my thesis, Eurocentrism has the ability to universally project its worldview on all people, realities and opinions, thereby giving the impression that Eurocentrism and in this case, its manifestation of hybridity, is non-essentialist in its effects. However, the essentialism in positions of hybridity comes out of the submergence of Eurocentrism in its own ontology, which normalises hegemonic relationships with 'cultural others'. Eurocentric hegemony then influences acceptance or rejection of other worldviews on culture. This makes Eurocentrism itself, a rigid essentialist construct posing as a universalist vision - when it is not. This universalist stance then imposes culture and conduct on all other groups, stripping other cultures of their self-determinatory values in the process (Blaut, 1993).

Common-sense presentations of culture as needing to be fluid and boundless, merely demonstrate that the argument is somewhat more complicated than this. That, whilst Eurocentrism and hybridity suggest boundlessness, the expectation and expression is one of monocultural loyalties. This is what Afrikan-Origined people experienced during initial and equality focused responses of white social workers. When the issue of monocultural loyalties is examined via 'race' debates currently circulating in the media, racist discourses demonstrate that Eurocentrism and hybridity are portrayed as non-essentialist representations of culture. For example, the paralysis in the refusal of William Haigh, ex-leader of the Conservative Party, to act against the comments of John Townend MP who accused the Labour Party of trying to turn Britain into a mongrel race, is example of the protection such views enjoy, at the highest level. Bill Morris (General Secretary of the Transport and General Workers Union) commented on that paralysis at the 2001 Trades Union Council's Black Workers Conference. He noted that if members of the establishment refused to deal with racists in suits and were able to treat a leading figure like Sir William McPherson Q. C. (author of the Stephen Lawrence Inquiry Report), as if he had betrayed his 'race' - that the ordinary 'black' man and woman in the street stood no chance. Eurocentrism, therefore, remains a reflector of all that is essential and, therefore, indisputable about the superiority of Western (i.e. white) culture, whilst hybridity attempts

to determine the routes of expression for other cultural realities (Nederveen Pieterse, 1994).

Afrikan Centred Representations of Culture

My support for Afrikan-Centredness rests in the paradigmatic embedding of the right of Afrikan people to assert truth in Afrikan priorities and interests. Afrikan-Centredness accepts that some representations of Afrikan culture (manifest in language, rituals, beliefs, icons, priorities etc) that underpin feeling, knowing and acting indicators of human phenomena, are innate and therefore fundamental to the lived experiences of Afrikan people. Afrikan-Centredness as the worldview within which those fundamental aspects of culture are preserved, further ensures the transgenerational passage of underpinning aspects of Afrikan culture from one Afrikan generation to another.

Afrikan-Centredness is not concerned with attempting to squeeze itself into inappropriate Eurocentric definitions of culture in a bid to escape labels of essentialism. Or, with trying to appeal to positions of hybridity to court acceptability. In the Afrikan-Centred worldview, culture has aspects that are innate and therefore transgenerational in relation to their continuity in changing conditions; as well as having aspects of culture that are constantly fluid. The dispute arises at the insistence of Eurocentric advocates, that the whole of culture must be fluid 'or else' and, in the refusal of Eurocentric advocates, to recognise the ability of other cultural statements to assemble behaviours, symbols, customs, motifs, moods and icons etc into a single comprehensive affirming presence. Simultaneously, however, Eurocentric essentialism expresses the universal existence and superior status of its traditional concepts in relation to all life-activity areas and contacts with other cultures (Silavwe, 1995).

Because of the sharpness of the attack against the place of Afrika in relation to its primacy, history and value to other cultures, we find that dialogue on Afrika in relation to other worlds tends to take on a reactionary stance. The result is that of making Afrika a 'world' that can only be grasped as of value, when in comparison to other worlds and worldviews (Soyinka, 1990). Despite this, however, Afrikan Centredness is intent on speaking for Afrikan people irrespective of Eurocentric manifestations of supremacy and seniority (Asante, 1999). Afrikan-Centredness stands on its acceptance that Afrikan

people are informed by some similar fundamental stimuli irrespective of whether the response to that stimuli is at a micro or broad-based level (Asante, 1980; Azibo, 1996a).

Afrikan-Centredness goes beyond the non-essentialist yet essentialist positions of Eurocentrism, viewing culture in a fundamentally contributive way, and seeing culture as substantive in its contribution and influence in the lives of Afrikan-Origined people (James Myers, 1998). Afrikan culture is transmitted across time and space, making it a significant factor when considering the Afrikan-Centred principle of transubstantive error - that is, the measuring of Afrikan norms, values and realities by the norms, values and realities of a different culture (Ani, 1994; James Myers, 1998). Therefore, the importance of Afrikan-Centredness as a worldview specific to Afrikan people, is the assurance that Afrikan people will be represented by a relevant cultural paradigm and analytical perspectives that evolve from that paradigm.

Afrikan-Centredness acknowledges that culture is the glue that unifies and orders experience in such a way as to allow its members to experience a sense of organisation, consistency and system, whilst orientating its members around conceptions of reality via its worldview. Culture gives its members group identification, creating a sense of collective cultural identity, which supports Afrikan people to build on shared historical, traditional and contemporary experiences (Ani, 1994). Culture orders the life of members via shared historiographies and prescriptive authority, and members share in the creation of values formed through shared experiences, re-presenting the values systematically as a set of ideas and single coherent statements. Culture provides the basis for the creation of shared symbols and meanings, making culture the primary creative force of collective consciousness and the constructor of national consciousness (Scheurich & Young, 1997; Semmes, 1981; Sesh Am Neter,1995). Ani (1994) adds further, that culture is the instrument that makes co-operation a natural phenomenon, stressing the importance of worldview in culture as functional in presenting a perceived order to its members by supplying definitions of reality which they can use to meaningfully organise their experiences and surroundings. The deep structure and logic of culture she states " ... has a most powerful influence on the shape of the culture and the thought patterns of its members... " (Ani, 1994, p4), teaching:

> 'logic' and worldview to the ordinary participants who then assimilate
> it, assume it, and push it beneath the surface, from where it influences

their collective behaviour and responses (Ani, 1994, p4).

Cultural responses will therefore speak to the distinct 'peoplehood' of a people, and not solely to cultural indicators based on the types of superficial communities represented in current geopolitical definitions of community. Cultures can therefore be represented as culturally-specific paradigms which speak to the cultural reality of a people and the right, therefore, of a people to be interpreted from that cultural standpoint. This is important, particularly since Afrikan cultures have survived transgenerationally, in enough form to be clearly visible as having replicated themselves in various 'Diasporic' cultures wherever Afrikan people are located (Asante, 1999; Azibo, 1996a; Daly, Jennings, Beckett and Leashore, 1995). Afrikan-Centredness therefore, best represents the realities of Afrikan experiences, interests and expectations.

Afrikan-Centredness is the primary academic, practical and conceptual framework upon which any meaningful study of the cultural background and the cultural reality of Afrikan people should be grounded (Asante, 1980; James Myers, 1998). It is unapologetic in its primary relevance to Afrikan- Origined people (i.e. Afrikan-Afrikan, Afrikan Caribbean, Afrikan American, Black-British, West Indian etc., Schiele; 1990), its primary focal points being those of cultural specificity and consciousness-raising based on traditional Afrikan communal systems of interrelatedness and collectivity (Ekwe-Ekwe & Nzegwu; 1994). Its intention is to establish a firm footing upon which the re-establishment of Afrikan principles of group self-determination and self-representation are firmly rooted in Afrikan cultural, psychological and conceptual strengths (Addae, 1996a; Ani, 1994; Asante, 1980 & 1990; Azibo, 1996b; Jacques-Garvey, 1986; James Myers, 1991; Nobles, 1991; Schiele, 1990; Wonkeryor, 1995). The Afrikan-Centred worldview is therefore the functional representative of the interconnectivity of Afrikan people with all things that make up the universe and influence their nature of 'beingness' (Akbar, 1976). Afrikan people are viewed as the holding and serving vessel through which the Afrikan worldview can be realised and actualised (Maxime, 1993).

The prioritising of aspects of Afrikan culture by Afrikan people could be seen as a form of strategic essentialism similar to the essentialism in Eurocentrism, and necessary to perform specific objectives in culture such as, ensuring Afrikan culture transcends geographical locations. Here again, strategic essentialism could be viewed as a positive aspect of culture (Hekman et al, 1997). But, any strategic essentialist position must

separate itself from the representations of essentialism in Eurocentrism. It is the unchecked power in Eurocentric essentialism positions that has led to the development of insecure positions on 'race' and culture, more traditionally reflected in 'far right' positions. That insecurity questions Afrikan-Centred positioning on culture and Afrikan-Origined people's reasons for projecting certain aspects of their culture for their own purposes, despite Eurocentrism being the powerful cultural statement that it is. Yet Afrikan-Centredness does not advocate hatred of anyone and does not attempt to speak for any other people, unlike Eurocentrism. Neither does Afrikan-Centredness state that it represents all that culture could / should ever be.

On reflection, the concerns about cultural formation and expression should be discussed in relation to Eurocentric views of culture as either threatening or non-threatening. It seems acceptable that Afrikan-Origined people have culture, as long as their culture does not make any demands which stand outside dominant Eurocentric cultural realities and priorities. Indeed, Eurocentric support for fluid and hybrid expressions of culture demonstrates a belief that Afrikan-Origined people no longer need to make reference to 'who they were' or 'where they came from' - the emphasis instead, being on 'what they might become'. However, this culture priority is likely to be damaging to Afrikan-Origined people because its absence in a past, present and potential positional statement, focusing merely on future potential, runs in direct contradiction to Afrikan culture where past, present and potential operate simultaneously and at all times (Ngugi, 1993). Further, it is the past, present and potential expressions of Afrikan culture that is linked to the transgenerational nature of some aspects of Afrikan culture, thereby informing the historical and contemporary relevance of Afrikan culture to Afrikan / Afrikan-Origined people. The Eurocentric fluidity / hybridity debate does a great disservice to Afrikan culture, by taking up polarity positions which emphasise the cultural choice as being either 'roots or routes' (i.e. subject or object); 'race' purist or 'race' pluralist.

There is a need to be clear here. There is no support for those who would seek to portray or use the specificity of Afrikan-Centredness as a diversion for activating beliefs in the right to translate power into a tool of hatred, domination or murder of the cultural 'other'. Having said that, however, it is accepted that the Afrikan-Centred paradigm often presents as having difficulty talking about the benefits of Afrikan-Centred thinking without focusing on the disadvantages of Eurocentric thought and practice. This can present as a

window of opportunity to those intent on smearing the intentions of Afrikan-Centredness (Dickerson, 1995).

In the struggle over culture as a means of interpreting identity, hybridity positions add a certain degree of romanticism and actualisation to the idea of people being totally 'fluid' in nature. However, the continued human and social positioning (or rather dispositioning) of Afrikan-Origined people belies this utopian view of the world. It does sweeten the imagination to see the future in hybrid contexts as long as we are not blinded by an optimism which prevents us from seeing the realities of Eurocentric institutionalised failures to deal with wealth and power sharing issues.

Implications for Social Work Practice

Chapter one highlighted the anomaly in social work, that Afrikan-Origined people see, internalise experience and externalise need in the same way as other racially distinct groups and in the same way as the dominant community. This view ignored the existence of differing definitions and structures of cultural thought and practice and aspects of culture that Afrikan-Origined people relied upon to express and explain their needs. Chapter one also demonstrated the difficulties white social workers faced in attempting to practice against the backdrop of racism. The chapter highlighted a failure to consider the question of cross- cultural influences in practitioner processes of cultural interpretations, assessments and interventions. The chapter concluded that white social workers' beliefs, that aspects of inter-personal behaviour were informed by the same causal processes cross-culturally, thereby carrying the same cultural meaning in different contexts, was also now being challenged (Joseph, Reddy and Searle-Chatterjee, 1990).

However, white social workers continue to measure and judge all people from the same cultural standpoint, suggesting that there was nothing specific in any culture, which should be of significance in deciding priorities and predicting outcomes (Banks, 1997; Ellison Williams and Ellison, 1996). Afrikan-Origined people's experiences, therefore, have remain misinterpreted and trapped in a rift between who / what Afrikan-Origined people are and who / what they are expected to be if they expect to get a social work service. This concern points to the issue of the labelling of phenomena which to some extent is a function of, and influenced by the assumptions of the culture which holds the power to label and interpret (Turner, 1991). The work of Azibo (1996a; 1996b) and James

Myers (1998), therefore, strengthens the requirement of social work to take into account both the deep structural levels of culture responsible for holding cultural philosophical assumptions, and the surface structures of culture which is the part of culture that is subject to relatively rapid change - when looking at an appropriate social work service for Afrikan-Origined people.

The cultural statement of Afrikan-Origined people as expressed to some extent by the life stories of the participants in my research, demonstrate that Eurocentric social work knowledge and practitioner ideologies could never be seen to have universal application in explaining human behaviour in all people and in every culture. This is because Eurocentric positions (which incorporate expectations of hybridity), infer that Afrikan-Origined communities bring into the consulting room only those most scant and peripheral of cultural givens - which in themselves are so well rehearsed by anti-discriminatory social work practice, as to have little bearing on the emphasis of social work practice. Culturally constrained, Afrikan-Origined people also lose their originating ground and strengths associated with their natural forms of cultural expression. Imani, another participant in my research experienced white social workers' practice in such an alarming way that it implanted a view in Imani's mind that social work was only for white people. Imani also felt that her originating cultural ground became submerged in the power of the presenting cultural statements of white social work practitioners (see pages 159-162).

Both Graham (1999) and Saleebey (1994) contend that the social work profession chooses to ignore the cultural statements of Afrikan-Origined people. Current expressions of social work practice present to Afrikan-Origined people as culturally sympathetic practice. However it appeals to remedies, changes in behaviour, outcomes and assimilations that amount to support for the collective interests of the dominant culture (e.g. the location of social work services, content and method of intervention, values, access issues, few Afrikan-Origined managers and even fewer senior managers making policy etc). There seems little in current social work practice to suggest that social work seeks to take on board the importance of cultural specificities as functional aspects which might contribute to the onset, expression and alleviation of distress and need. Ellison-Williams and Ellison (1996) highlight studies in social work practice, where social workers indicated, they did not need to ask about cultural appropriateness in order to effectively provide services. And, if they did ask, were unsure how to value the effectiveness of culture in relation to their practice intervention methods. Ellison-Williams and Ellison's

work demonstrates the vacuum that exists in social work practitioners' insistence on retaining practitioner models that do not recognise the need for support, understanding or nurturing of emotional, spiritual and developmental needs as core components in social work practice with 'cultural other' groups (Graham, 1999). Forte (1999) suggests that in order to be effective, social work and its practitioners must communicate with clients from various cultures, having taken time to become 'variedly-cultured', and invested in becoming aware of as many forms of cultural communication as possible in order to relate to as many cultural maps as possible. It is possible for social workers to learn that differences between white groups and Afrikan-Origined people may be better explained by an awareness and sensitivity of culture expressed or construed as negative interpretations of difference. This would allow all social workers to be open to the possibility that differences may be better explained by differences in worldview (Daly et al: 1995).

Conclusion

White social workers face an uphill struggle if they continue to mask cultural hybridity in the language and practice of monocultural essentialism, whilst simultaneously dismissing the importance of aspects of cultural specificity that speak for Afrikan-Origined people. There has been a general acceptance of equality positions in the profession which has enabled Afrikan-Origined practitioners, clients and communities to begin the process of expressing views and exploring social work possibilities. However, without a relevant positioning of Afrikan culture to Afrikan-Origined people in the inquiry process, investigative and outcome specific procedures can never be said to truly represent successful social work inquiry.

Afrikan-Centredness has moved the debate on, relating to the acceptance of difference, to incorporate the importance of Afrikan-Origined people's need to retain their cultures for reasons which do not need to be approved by Eurocentrism, generally and social work, with particular reference to this study. However, Eurocentric values decide what, if any weight, will be given to the place of Afrikan-Origined culture in the interpretation need. That weighting then informs a social work service that not only operates 'colour-blind' but is also 'culture-coloured'. Advocates of Afrikan-Centredness assert that white social workers as majority representatives of the social work profession, should include interventions based on aspects of cultural specificity which assist in

understanding different presentations of distress and well-being. Practitioners must be prepared to look at the power bases that inform definitions of worth and value, and examine root influences of cultural statements in order to avoid generalising out a whole range of culturally specific people who simply will not fit in. Simply put:

> The African-centred worldview challenges social work to
> expand its philosophical and intellectual base to embrace humanity;
> to release the domination of the Eurocentric worldview over the
> psyche of African peoples, and open the way for the transformation,
> creativity and unlimited potential that is embedded within authenticity
> (Graham: 1999;pg253).

My use of Afrikan-Centredness as an analytical perspective in this research was about providing a supportive route that would demonstrate the importance Afrikan culture plays in the lives of Afrikan-Origined people, and must therefore play in the practice of social work. I used Afrikan-Centredness to ensure the theoretical importance of recognising authentic statements of Afrikan-Origined people was extended to the life stories of the participants in my research. I extended my use of Afrikan-Centredness to explore the ways the participants in my research as Afrikan-Origined practitioners, explained the milestones and barriers in their lives, linked to the hegemony of Eurocentrism. This I felt was a useful route to examine the consequences of not situating Afrikan-Origined people in a relevant cultural milieu. The outcomes of my pursuits are explored in the remaining chapters, beginning with the need to establish an appropriate methodology, to which I now turn.

The Agwamba Model - 'The Culture of a People': Methodological Approaches in Afrikan Centred Research with Communities of Afrikan Origin

Introduction

Having established my intention to use Afrikan -Centredness as an underpinning worldview in my research, my attention turned to my research question. My research question focused on establishing how the impact of Eurocentric approaches to culture had disempowered Afrikan-Origined people; and, examining what effect disempowerment had on the ability of Afrikan-Origined people to undertake social work training and become qualified social workers. I explored the questions using an Afrikan-Centred methodology to examine the life histories of seven Afrikan-Origined social work practitioners, tracing the impact of Eurocentrism on their development from childhood to them having reached practitioner status.

Part one of this chapter charts my route to establishing my Afrikan-Centred methodology via an examination of the literature, by first exploring the usefulness of reforms that have taken place in traditional epistemologies. Those reforms have attempted to make traditional methodologies more sensitive, accountable and representative of difference for both participants and researchers and therefore, invited the prospect of adapting traditional methods of inquiry to suite my methodological requirements. It was a possibility I went on to reject. Secondly, I looked at the possibility of adapting black perspectives into a suitable methodology given its role in struggles to establish appropriate paradigms of study of / for 'black' people in social work. I found that the priorities of black perspectives were not suited to the transformatory and liberationary agency priorities of Afrikan-Centredness, which I had established through the literature review, and therefore rejected their use in the research. And, thirdly, having identified a break with traditional methodologies and black perspectives in the literature review, I established the usefulness of Afrikan-Centredness as a methodological paradigm, and its suitability to traditional methods of human inquiry. The chapter also details how Afrikan-Centredness informed the arrangements for conducting my research, highlighting the piloting of the methodology, interview questions used with participants, how the participants were sampled and interviewed, collection and analyses of the research data.

Part two of this chapter focuses on my establishment of my Afrikan-Centred methodological model, which I named the Agwamba model (see glossary for working definition), its priority being that of representing and reflecting the principles and expectations of Afrikan-Centred research and researchers. The chapter identifies how the Agwamba model allowed the uniqueness as Afrikan-Origined people, of both the participants' and my own environment, to be reflected in the methodological inquiry that underpinned my research. I detail how the Agwamba model incorporated my need to locate myself within the research process, in accordance with Afrikan-Centred expectations of myself as the researcher, whilst supporting me to have sufficient regard to the guidance I felt I needed with my role, throughout the research. Flexibility was built into the Agwamba model, enough to represent the experiences and priorities identified by each participant as well as allowing for interpretations from the participants' experiences. The Agwamba model had to recognise the importance of ethical practice as a general requirement throughout the research, and ethical regard had to extend to the participants' right to self-determined silences and my respect of the participants' self-determinatory actions. The Agwamba model also had to incorporate the necessity for regard to be given to my responsibilities to the immediate and the long-term consequences of the research.

Part 1: Establishing an Afrikan-Centred Research Paradigm

The Impact of Eurocentric Methodologies on Research

Eurocentric methodologies are underpinned by a 'race' bias in the interests of Europeans (Nobles, 1976), to the extent that without an inquiring mind and the interplay of difference of lived experiences, it could be assumed that there is one ideology underpinning all research inquiry in the social sciences. Indeed, Afrikan-Origined scholars have long argued that both the root and use of traditional methodologies founded on Eurocentric ideologies and priorities, are based on racially biased ways of knowing (Addae, 1996; Akbar, 1994; 1997; Ani, 1994; Asante, 1988; 1990; Azibo, 1996; Browder, 1989; Chinweizu, 1987; Hill Collins, 1990; Karenga, 1993; Madhubuti, 1978; Small, 1994; Welsing, 1991; Wilson, 1993; and Woodson, 1990), and as such, that "the uniqueness of one's environment determines the parameters of one's experience" (Ani, 1994; pg55). The

bias of traditional methodological inquiry is commented upon by Scheurich & Young (1997) who by their own admission, are white authors, prepared to commit to academic record that, the concerns expressed by Afrikan and Asian-Origined people have raised little more than mild interest compared to debates around qualitative versus quantitative procedures and objectivity versus subjectivity stances. They attribute this to white scholars' ignorance of racial issues, and a lack of understanding of 'race' as a critical significant in research methodologies.

The history of the development of European methodologies highlights the prioritisation of positivist stances in methodological theories because of the traditional place they have in scientific enquiry. (see Karl Popper's 'inductivism' (Blalock, (1964) and Erlandson et al, (1993) for contrasting discussions on the role and purpose of positivism). The development of post-positivisms, e.g., quantitative or hypothetico-deductive methods, (see Cicourel, 1964; Robson, 1993), incorporated a range of methods aimed at countering problematic concerns within positivism. Interpretivisms and constructivisms e.g., ethnography, actor orientated, participant observation (see Long, 1992), reflected the changes in methodologies which sought to prioritised concerns about the role of the complex world of lived experiences in the research process. Critical tradition methodologies prioritised the experiences of marginalised and oppressed groups, e.g., feminism, anti-discriminatory and participatory and action orientated types of method, (see Ife, 1995; Zuber-Skerritt, 1996). Whilst post-modernisms /post-structuralisms rejected the role of structure and control in knowledge creation (see Feyerbend, 1993 (3rd Ed) for a useful discussion on the nature of knowledge). However, Scheurich and Young (1997) in their overview of European methodologies suggest, that irrespective of research methods used, all are founded on 'civilisational racism' (more aptly termed 'worldview', by Afrikan-Origined scholars), which is an intrinsic form of control of knowledge creation (see Ani, 1994; Asante, 1980).

Asante (1987) locates the historical roots of European empiricism in Greek philosophy, which gave birth to foundational methodologies focusing on inductive approaches to data collection techniques, later developing into verification by logical-deductive approaches. The influence of early European thinking Asante concludes, motivated the modern behaviourist school to call for real sciences to be free from psychological concepts and subjective methods. McNeil (1990), alternatively, focuses on the mechanical nature within which methodological schools of thought evolved. McNeil

sites the history of modern sociology and sociological enquiry as having emerged from the work of classical sociologists like Marx, Weber, and Durkheim - noted particularly, for their theoretical approaches to analysing their changing European societies. McNeil (1990) then charts several splits in the history of sociological enquiry from the development of scientific comparative research methods; anthropological research methods; the development of mass and participant observation methods; developments in the theory and techniques of data collection; the move towards acceptance of conceptual and methodological data collection techniques; and, the influence of all the above on new and recent developments in the field of critical theory – all of which occurred in late 18th Century Europe, moving through to influence 19th and 20th century research, thought and practice. Scheurich and Young (1997) concur with Asante and McNeil's positions, but incorporate the role of white supremacy in Eurocentrism as having influenced the development and application of research methodologies. They identify the modernist period as the point at which 18th century Europe applied the first substantial racial divisions of humankind as a critical exclusionary category. The same rationales were also central to the foundations of all western civilisations (including America), and given that "... White supremacy was interlaced within the founding assumptions of Western civilisations..." (Scheurich and Young, 1997, p7), the consequence was to be the significant domination over other groups for hundreds of years.

There have been challenges to attempt via foundational methodologies, to make traditional methodologies relative to the role of research participants and researchers. Changes occurred in the range of methodologies available (see Burgess, 1991; de Vaus 1993; Denzin & Lincoln, 1994; Hakim, 1987; Robson, 1993). My interest however, was in identifying methodological developments that were likely to support my research priorities, in terms of my need to incorporate Afrikan-Centred research and researcher priorities in my study.

Developments in Eurocentric Methodology

'Positivist' methodologies dominate research (Ani, 1994), and refer to the collective representation of research methodologies characterised by their masculinist and objectifying principles of application (McTaggart, 1991). Positivist methodologies

prioritise 'pure' and 'applied' definitions of reality via the pursuit of knowledge in single realities made up of consistent knowable pieces, which can be divided in any number of ways and then resembled (Erlandson Et al, 1993). Key to positivist principles, is the limiting and controlling of outside interference and the isolating of causality (Blalock, 1964). There is a general acceptance of the role of values in the research process (Selltiz, 1963), but, generally, values are seen as external pre-research considerations which scientific research organisation helps to eliminate or control. Positivist paradigms have difficulty in parting with the myth of the positionless speaker / researcher as representative of the most valuable truth. Additionally, speaking as 'man' usually means speaking for women (Davis, 1992).

Reform of positivist methodologies recognised the convergence and coalescence of theoretical and practical traditions in research and the affect of research processes and outcomes on people's lives. Reform also fuelled calls for methods of human inquiry to be grounded in relative contexts (Benson Et al, 1996; Dugan, 1993; McTaggart, 1991). This included the modification of research designs if they became influenced by observations, field data or theoretical perspectives, or pressured into changes by the broadening or narrowing of the research theme (Babbie, 1979). There was acceptance that the role of research participants could be broadened to recognise participants' expertise and special knowledge of importance to the research field (Mann, 1985). And, qualitative methods accepted the seeing and recording of all research data as important - without such recordings undermining the credibility of the research, or somehow weakening the methodology or questioning the objectivity of researcher (de Vries, 1992).

The introduction of interpretative methodologies such as 'actor-oriented' approaches prioritised the deconstruction of conventional notions of planned intervention, in favour of transformational processes in which, different research interests could be represented. This opened up research processes, facilitating the negotiation and joint creation of knowledge through various types of social encounter and understandings of the dynamics of power (Long, 1992). The use of conventional research apparatus used for example, in interviewing methodologies, was abandoned, in favour of maintaining a naturalness of the research process in the lives of the researched (Abrams & McCullock, 1976). Consequently, interpretative qualitative methodologies now privilege naturalistic methods which place less emphasis on pure discovery, focusing instead on the value of interconnectedness between the processes of verification and discovery, whilst

simultaneously removing the researcher from the paradigmatic rigidities of earlier methodologies (Erlandson et al, 1993). There is interest in methodologies which are more social-anthropological in nature, inviting study by 'immersive' observation (May, 1993). There is also recognition of the value of the human agency (i.e. knowledgeability and capability) of research participants, as contributing as much value to the research process as other aspects of research (Long, 1992b).

Methodological developments have also focused on the role of research reliability and research generalisability, with a counter - that lone-researchers can still produce good research results, the value of which should not be measured by pure rigour alone (McNeil, 1990). Reliability and generalisability are now recognised as having value in being linked to the purposes of involvement and expectations of research participants, rather than being solely concerned with furthering scientific inquiry. Consequently, more attention has been paid to the likelihood of obtaining skewed data because of the exclusion of subjectivity from research methodologies. Subjectivity was now seen as having the effect of providing valuable information about the relationship between the researched and the(ir) environment (Ellis & Flaherty, 1992). This direction of change influenced the development of critical / radical approaches to research, which aimed to locate research purposes and outcomes in the interests and expectations of participants' interests (McNeil, 1990).

Ife (1995) details such an approach in his use of 'community development' as a methodological route to highlighting concerns about the erosion of self-determinatory rights of oppressed communities. He links ecological priorities with class issues as a route to delivering outcomes responsive to issues of exploitation of indigenous peoples of New Zealand. Ife's role for the researcher is community action focused, where effectiveness depends on acceptance of the indivisible link between work and non-work. This prioritises the creation and maintenance of the type of credible, flexible, reflexive, understanding, uniting and trusting environment Ife says, is necessary to create meaningful change with belief and acceptance of ownership. Ife's (1995) work introduces innovative approaches to problem solving which move away from linear and sequential methods of inquiry. He prioritises 'wholistic' methods inquiry and social delivery, which Ife (1995) argues, accentuate aspects of relativity, representativeness of the research and the interdependence, integration and synthesis between thoughts and actions.

Despite Ife's (1995) use of ecology as the 'culture' upon which his views are centred, I still found his position useful particularly in relation to his interests like my own, of working in a relative way with a related oppressed community. My only uncertainty with Ife was that of the privileging of his position as an 'outsider' in the research, highlighted by the absence of clarity regarding his status to the research and his long-term consequential positioning to his research outcomes. I felt that Ife's (1995) commitment as the researcher was that of solely conducting research - which did not suit my research emphasis on long-term commitment to my research consequences and the need to be accountable to Afrikan-Origined people. My views were further strengthened by the research of Abrams & McCullock (1976), conducted some twenty years earlier, highlighting the consequences of being committed outsiders in the research process. They concluded that the positioning of themselves as outsiders quite rightly kept them away from the inner life of the commune they had studied, making them question how much of the real truth they had been excluded from. Abrams & McCullock (1976) highlighted the importance of the role, power, accountability and commitment of researchers conducting 'insider' type research.

The two research positions clarified for me that my intention to incorporate Afrikan-Centred research priorities in my research meant that I needed to be a committed insider in my research. I needed to ensure that my role in the research was interrelated with the participants, the community in which my research was taking place and related to the any consequences that might arise as a result of my having conducted my research. Ife's uncertainty about his long-term commitments to his research contrasted with Abrams & McCullock's stance as outsiders in their research converge in my research stance, to suggest that in addition to incorporating Afrikan-Centred researcher priorities and responsibilities in my research, I might need to reform both positions in order that they fit in with my use of Afrikan-Centredness.

Critical / radical methods of inquiry had enhanced debates on traditional methodologies, but not enough to take account of the role of consequence of conducting research, issues of power and control and the importance of having a relevant worldview / context underpinning research with Afrikan-Origined people. I found, that despite clear developments in traditional methodologies, changes in expected roles of research participants and researchers and a broadening of ideas about the purpose of conducting research - Eurocentrism as the worldview instructing methodology, researcher and research

participants, remained largely intact. Traditional methodologies still preference the need for researchers to establish different identities, roles and priorities from that of the research participants – a position that was antithetical to the principles of human inquiry I intended to adopt.

Black Perspectives in Research

Black perspectives are credited with advancing the debate, regarding the need for specific (i.e. Afrikan and Asian-focused) responses to issues affecting 'black' people, and on that platform, 'black' people were united in the common approaches in black perspectives, to problem theorising and problem solving (Robinson, 1995). However, there appears to be little written about what black perspectives mean to 'black' people in terms of their methodological application (e.g. a prescriptive black perspective of social work with Afrikan-Origined people). Instead, the focus is on what black perspectives should mean. Indeed, far from acting definitively for 'black' people, black perspectives acts as

> a catalyst for white people to begin to reconstruct their own sense
> of history and identity as a basis for engaging in more equal non
> oppressive relationships with 'the other' (Singh, 1996, p43).

by association, implying, that black perspectives are already doing this for 'black' people.

Bryant-Soloman (1976) notes the absence of black perspectives in research because of a refusal of science to relinquish its grip on the right to determine the rules of knowledge making. Whilst Small (1994) argues that the main thrust of black perspectives should be geared to outcomes prioritising equality via the achievement of equivalence and parity. Small (1994) at least begins to entertain the possibility that the effectiveness of black perspectives might lie outside traditional academic paradigms and Eurocentric equality debates.

Patricia Hill Collins (1990) does move towards prescription, in her black perspective feminist methodology, using some principles of Afrikan-Centredness to reflect the interests of Afrikan-Origined people in research and practice. Hill Collins identifies the key components of her methodology as:

- Recognising and valuing concrete and experiential encounters as criteria of meaning, valued in both actual and symbolic form (this is a common criteria in feminist positions).

- The use of Afrikan-Centred dialogue frameworks to analyse various types of Afrikan speech.

- The ethic of caring incorporating the importance of uniqueness of individuals alongside collectivist community positions, and the appropriateness of emotions in ascribing belief to experience alongside the capacity to be empathetic.

- The ethic of personal accountability which impresses on the individual, not only the need to develop their knowledge claims through dialogue in such a way as to be probative of research concerns and ideas but, also, that the individual is expected to be accountable for their knowledge claims. An assessment of such claims acts as a testament to a researcher's character, integrity, values and ethics.

- The uplifting of Afrikan-Origined people as a fundamental principle of every action.

Hill Collins' (1990) methodology makes some worthwhile Afrikan-Centred connections to traditional feminism positions, which unite the struggles of all women against sexism. By incorporating both the general and particular positions of feminism, her methodology also allows for the acknowledgement that 'black' women have addressed general and particular issues on sexism in their own way. Hill Collins (1990) shows Afrikan-Origined people moving from a general stance on feminism to one which addresses particular key issues in a specific way. However, my priority for conducting my research was not that of amending the feminist standpoint to incorporate the stories of the Afrikan-Origined women in my research - as reflected in Hill Collins' methodology. Neither did I wish to get into the polemical debate surrounding the role of 'black' men in sexist encounters with 'black' women, as prioritised by Williams (1995). Williams (1995) similarly attempts to reform feminist thinking to incorporate Afrikan women's stories, but posits a position of fundamental and irreconcilable differences between the struggles of Afrikan-Origined women and men. Williams argues for separation of male and female

issues, basing her position on suggestions that the dominant nature of all men's experiences make them incompatible to the liberationary spaces women need to create for themselves.

As human beings we may share similarities which are characteristic of the human experience - for Hill Collins (1990) and Williams (1995), it is femaleness. However, there is little scope to extend such similarities to the point where we can say that cross-racial or cross-cultural experiences are by definition similar because of gender-sameness. Power and its role in defining and imposing reality also makes this position problematic, allowing Eurocentric definitions and priorities over Afrikan experiences, to presume roles of importance in methodology. This implies convergence of Afrikan-Origined and white women's self-determinatory priorities much too soon, and convergence of Afrikan-Centred paradigmatic expectations to a Eurocentric standpoint, too quickly. The issue of power and its use in defining acceptable epistemologies has yet to deal with concerns surrounding the appropriation of 'black' voices in academic knowledge creation and validation. I am not questioning research processes traditionally viewed as Eurocentric, being used in Afrikan-Centred research. Methods of human inquiry do not belong exclusively to any one worldview. However, there is a fundamental difference between applying a research method such as interviewing, which can be adapted according to the purpose of its usage; and applying a standpoint like feminism, which comes ready packaged with contexts, beliefs and standards of allegiance. There are other options for Afrikan-Centred practitioners and researchers to those of change existing Eurocentric paradigms and standpoints to suit the experiences of Afrikan people. Indeed, Afrikan-Centred practitioners are charged with the responsibility of creating our own frames of reference suited to the capacity of Afrikan people to take action in their own interests. Whilst Hill Collins (1990) offered this possibility in her methodology, the role of the feminist standpoint on matters of 'race' and ideology were not matters that I prioritised in my research. I therefore discounted the use of a black perspective feminist methodology.

Overall, I found black perspectives and black feminist perspectives prescriptively limiting in their ability to achieve real and meaningful change for Afrikan-Origined people. The work of Small (1994) and Hill-Collins (1990) are exceptions to a standpoint which seems happy to operate within Eurocentric frameworks, creating theoretical comfort zones for white practitioners as routes to developing appropriate services for Afrikan-Origined people. Black perspectives as an approach that argues that service providers can be anyone and believe anything as long as they add in a black perspective (see Ahmad, 1990), is

myopic in nature, doing little more than attempting to 'blackenize' Eurocentric studies (Azibo, 1996). Black perspectives have not truly liberated themselves from their 'birth-mother' perspectives, and in effect, because of their origins, are unable to do so even if that separation is implied. Additionally, I felt I would have to reform black perspectives in order to make them relevant to my research, and did not see reformatory work as useful application of my time. There are already in existence, other (i.e. Afrikan-Centred) contexts, epistemologies and analytical perspectives that would lend themselves to my research tasks.

Further, I felt that my approach to my research required a methodology capable of underpinning the specific and embedded nature of Afrikan culture as fundamental in the lives of Afrikan people and therefore in the participants' life stories - mirroring the role culture played in the Afrikan-Centred paradigm. I also needed a methodology that would enable me to prioritise solutions for Afrikan-Origined people without needing to prioritise solutions for everyone else. Afrikan-Centredness is concerned with the interests of Afrikan people first. Additionally, the congruity of Afrikan-Centredness with human concerns (Schiele, 2000), is reflected in its support for the pluralistic existence of all peoples' agency priorities. Afrikan-Centredness is also committed to the values of pluralism without hierarchy, as a facilitator of the development of human personality (Asante, 1999). From this ideological stance, I felt that my development of an Afrikan-Centred methodology suited to my research, would address the priorities for Afrikan-Origined people whilst embracing the importance of establishing learning opportunities for all people.

The Influence of the Afrikan-Centred Paradigm in Research

Because of the extension of Afrikan-Centred research outcomes to the pluralistic development of human potential, developing new methodologies is an integral and vital part of the purpose of Afrikan-Centredness, as is its use to assess the usefulness of methods of human inquiry (Schiele, 2000). Indeed, Johnson (1995) identifies a number of research tools, which have a place in Afrikan-Centred research although they have traditional links with Eurocentric methods of human inquiry (e.g. triangulation, in-depth interviewing, interaction-type methods, researcher introspection and cultural immersion and use of historical and documentary sources). The dualistic use of Afrikan-Centredness and

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traditional methods of human inquiry would support the need to focus on providing research that is ultimately verifiable in actual human experiences (Dickerson, 1995). It would also support the need for the relevant cultural knowledge base to play a major role in the structuring of methodologies (Akbar, 1994). Additionally, emphasis would be on research outcomes contributing to the development, practice and sustainability of defensive, protective and assertive agencies for Afrikan communities (Nobles, 1991).

Schiele (1990) maintains that Afrikan people must be understood within an appropriate framework which, whilst not rejecting the uniqueness of individuals, works on the principle of connectivity with others through community experiences. For such frameworks to function appropriately, they must be set realistically within an appropriate worldview, and against the effects of an inappropriate worldview. Asante (1987) also stresses that the place of the researcher in the research is fundamental to the process of change, arguing that no Afrikan should see themselves outside this process of change. Afrikan-Centred researchers must, therefore, demonstrate their commitment to their role in the change process by both demonstrating and practising their appreciation of 'place' in the research process. This position concurs with the belief that no Afrikan is exempt from giving or learning - without which the balance of researcher-contributor the research, would not be wholly credible.

I concluded, that I could successfully incorporate in-depth interviewing and biographical methods of human inquiry into my Agwamba methodology, because both were suited to the principles of Afrikan-Centred research and did not undermine the Afrikan-Centred principle of problem-solving. Both, also allowed space for my need to examine my own role in the research, how I analysed responses, and the intended immediate and long-term outcomes and consequences of my research. Both methods of inquiry also allowed for the necessity for me to be reflexive about all the above matters. Afrikan-Centredness also places responsibilities on practitioners to immerse themselves in its principles, by particularising outcome-based approaches that address the liberationary needs of Afrikan people. Practitioners, therefore, have to be universalistic in their concern for the spiritual and moral development of humankind - widening the appeal of Afrikan-Centredness as a paradigm benefiting all people, without undermining its specific role in the lives of Afrikan people (Schiele, 2000). These were principles that were well suited to my Agwamba model, through which I wanted to trace the disempowering effects of Eurocentrism as well as create the potential for the research to yield answers to that

disempowerment. The transformatory and liberationary approaches to problem solving as a fundamental principle of Afrikan-Centredness, ensured that both objectives remained possibilities throughout the research process.

In-Depth Interviewing and Biographical Methods in Afrikan-Centred Research

I have already noted the return of academic embracing of the usefulness of interpretative methodologies - although with specific reference to storytelling-type methodologies. The introductory chapter by Chamberlayne, Bornat and Wengraf (2000) notes some of the influential and historical factors giving rise to the turn towards the usefulness of storytelling. Coffey and Atkinson (1996) and Robson (1993) note the usefulness of interviewing to the practicalities of conducting various types of interview and the analysis of interview data. Whilst the contributions of Rubin and Rubin (1995) and Silverman (1993) refer to the task of analysing interview data. In-depth interviewing was also useful in making sense of experience (Chase, 1995), acting as an evaluative tool capable of exploring meaning (Chase, 1996) and conveying time and space relationships of life events (Gubrium & Holstein, 1998). In-depth interviewing also embraced the role of key players in the field particularly with regard to the handling of sensitive information (Silvermann, 1993). It also allowed for the temporal, causal and sequential relaying of data and was able to accommodate the relaying of data in experiential forms (e.g. ancestral, allegorical, etc)

In-depth interviewing was flexible enough to allow me to consider how the participants ordered and told their experiences and the prompts which guided them to remember certain experiences in a particular way. The benefit of this flexibility was the ability to analyse experiences alongside meanings and motives (Coffey and Atkinson, 1996). Through the use of semi-structured in-depth interviews I was able to explore causal and sequential issues in a themed way, in a bid to establish whether as a consequence of the participants' historical experiences, they made particular choices in their lives and careers as social workers. In-depth interviewing lent itself to opportunities for the participants to develop their ideas about their experiences and speak more widely on issues of importance to themselves - able to tell their stories within a method that allowed them to talk in ways that suited them. For example, Nia, a participant in my

research, developed an interest in the experiences of 'black' children in care, from his own personal life experiences, and continued to pursue his interest long after it ceased to be a physical reality in his own life. In-depth interviewing gave him the time, space, freedom and flexibility to incorporate the dynamics of his interest, in the research interview. Given the subject of the interviews, participants had to be able to express themselves in ways that did not make them feel as if they had betrayed the seriousness of their experiences by relaying their experiences in story-like fashion. The method was, therefore, not intrusive, in the sense that it embraced mutual opportunities for participants to freely talk about their experiences or not, as was their choice.

For myself as the researcher, in-depth interviewing allowed me to be 'real'. That is, I was a community member, social work practitioner and post-graduate researcher known to the research participants; and, lived and worked in the same geographical area as the community I was part of. I did not want any obscuring of my identity to infer any sinister purposes to my wanting to undertake research. In-depth interviewing was flexible enough to allow me to incorporate the responsibility I was expected to carry with the participants, and for any consequences linked to my identity and status, which might arise as a result of conducting the research.

In-depth interviewing also proved a good fit to my methodology because of its suitability to the biographical method I had chosen to analyse my participants' life stories. I chose to focus on a particular aspect of the participants' lives, namely the life experiences they felt had influenced their choice and route into social work practice. Presenting the data biographically did not hinder my ability to make conclusions about the general issue of the disempowering impact of Eurocentricity in the lives of Afrikan-Origined people. Biographical methods were also suited to the analyses of research data, chronologically (Robson, 1993). Chronological analysis I felt, best evidenced any causal relationships between the participants and their environments / relationships and their life experiences; and, shared themes in the participants' life stories - whilst not infringing on alternative Afrikan-Centred explanations which emerged from the literature. One of the benefits of telling the participants' stories in this way was the usefulness of biographical methods in expressing meaning and communicating the importance of recognising meaning and personal truths as a fundamental part of experience (Plumber, 1993; Reason, 1988). As the participants' stories tell, Umoja, a research participant, goes to great lengths to detail her experiences of living in a coercive environment during her childhood and demonstrates

through the telling of her story, how those early childhood experiences served to impute meaning into her future experiences, primarily through the values she internalised. Similarly, Nia, another participant, reflects on the struggles he went through trying to make sense of his experiences of growing up in Care - only to finally begin to put the experiences of his life together once the meanings surrounding his identity became clear to him.

Both in-depth interviewing and biographical analysis were significant in their suitability to the illumination of key coping strategies against Eurocentric hegemony, that emerged in different stages of my research participants' life experiences. Holloway & Jefferson (2000) comment on the interpretative advantages of biographical methods being suited to recognising that participants are closer to the truth of their selfhood than researchers could ever be. They suggest that truth is much easier to access (in the case of my research for example) via the same-race research relationship that is part of the research process. This relationship Holloway & Jefferson argue, is beneficial in transcending the kind of social relationships that have traditionally obscured the authentic voice of 'black' people through the dynamics of oppression and power. Creating the space to hear that authentic voice was something to which both in-depth interviewing and biographical presentations of the data were particularly well suited to, and through which, the general idea of the fundamental necessity of Afrikan-Centredness in the lives of Afrikan people (Asante, 1999) could be realised.

My use of Afrikan-Centredness as an underpinning paradigm in the research I felt, was well suited to answering my research questions. My view was further strengthened by my own social work practitioner experience which extended to practising in a culturally-relevant practitioner, client and community based service, in a community social work unit, where the services provided were specific to the district's Afrikan-Origined community. The staff at the unit - myself and another worker were also Afrikan-Origined. I had spent eight years working in several traditional social work offices prior to taking up my present post which I have held for ten years. My contrasting experiences of traditional white practitioner approaches to social work with Afrikan-Origined clients, informed my view that racially and culturally-relevant services had made a significant difference to the social work experiences of Afrikan-Origined clients. My findings were further supported by the community social work unit having been identified as a model of good social work practice by the district council, to the Social Services Inspectorate (see appendix 2).

Arrangements for Conducting the Research

Piloting the Research Question and Methods of Inquiry

Having established the research question and my chosen methods of inquiry, I still had some concerns relating to small size of my research sample given how few Afrikan-Origined social workers were employed by the district council. I was concerned whether numbers would influence the participants' freedom to disclose sensitive information because of concerns about their anonymity. I also wondered whether demographic information about the district of study might infringe on the identification of the research district. Given those concerns, I chose not to go straight to interview, but rather, to pilot my research question, methodology, concerns and researcher responsibilities in a wider setting that was reflective of the local community.

I decided to pilot my concerns via a group discussion with the district council's social services Black Workers Support Group (BWSG), consisting of approximately seventy 'black' workers of Afrikan and Asian origin. Of the seven Afrikan-Origined practitioners who eventually took part in the research, two were present in the BWSG (Ujima and Nia) and both had been contacted by me and had already agreed to take part in the research. This fact was not disclosed at the BWSG. The presence of two of my participants did not affect the suitability of the BWSG as a pilot group because my main reason for choosing BWSG was because of its membership of Afrikan-Origined employees from a range of social services professions. The group also contained Afrikan-Origined workers from voluntary sector services who were either employed by Afrikan-Origined community services, were volunteers on community projects or were themselves dependant on community based resources in some aspect of their lives. As such, I felt that the BWSG fulfilled the necessary requirements of being reflective of a range of Afrikan-Origined opinion. Additionally, the Asian members in the group introduced dimensions of support and breadth, to the task of identifying concerns about provision of social work services to Afrikan-Origined people.

The pilot process was via a two hour session consisting of a fifty minute presentation of my reasons for undertaking the research, my research design and the processes I intended to use - with the remainder of the time devoted to a question and

answer session. I did not pilot the questions I intended to use during the interviews with the research participants, as the small size of the research sample and intimacy of the areas my research participants and I were likely to visit during the interviews, suggested the possibility that I might have only one attempt at good quality interviews and answers. I did not therefore, want to risk any cross-consultation on the research interview questions by introducing them in the BWSG thereby pre-empting the chance of any further discussion with participants who were likely to be in the research sample. I piloted the overall research area of interest amongst the seventy-two workers who were at the BWSG meeting. The discussions were not recorded because of concerns people had about being identified, or comments being attributed to any particular individual. Although I gave assurances about where the research would be submitted and, that conversations would be written up in such a way as to ensure complete anonymity to group members, the group did not want the conversations recorded in any way. My comments on the discussion are taken from field notes recorded in my research journal, once I had left the building.

The discussion yielded a number of concerns, which the BWSG felt my research should focus on, most of the concerns corresponding with issues raised in the first two chapters of my thesis. Out of respect for the contribution of the BWSG to the research, I felt it necessary to include their concerns, because the discussion did serve to reaffirm the importance of finding answers to the problem of irrelevant social work provision, and also required me to revisit the arrangements I had made to protect the anonymity of the research participants and the district of my study. The BWSG's concerns were:

☞ White practitioners' insistence on treating everyone as if they were the same, and in the process, treated 'black' (i.e. Afrikan and Asian origined) clients as if they were white.

☞ White practitioners had a tendency to focus on language issues (for Asian-Origined communities) as if language were the sole representation of 'black' culture, and yet it was ignored in other 'black' groups.

☞ The issue of culture was dealt with as if it played a peripheral / non-existent role in the theory, and practice of social work services to 'black' communities. White social workers did not recognise, that alongside the capacity of 'black' communities to take action in their

own interests, the culture of white practitioners often acted against the agency priorities of Afrikan and Asian-Origined communities.

☞ There were concerns that Afrikan-Origined social workers - particularly men, were not being recruited by the district council. It was felt that the district council had a very poor record of treatment of its 'black' employees and perhaps this may have become a contributory factor in the district council's poor retention of highly qualified and experienced 'black' staff.

☞ Community social work units based in local community centres - the district's unit established primarily, to service the Afrikan-Origined community, was the model best suited to the personal and social needs of 'black' communities. It was felt this model should be rolled out to Asian communities.

The Black Workers Support Group (BWSG) was happy with the research idea and the areas of contextual significance I had built into the research. The feeling, was, that the degree of specificity identified in the framework of the research was beneficial in adding weight to the importance of focusing on 'black' people's need for perspectives that strengthened the telling of their stories. There was a suggestion that personal experiences of racism followed a sequential pattern from childhood, to adulthood, to social work training and finally, the experiences of 'black' people as social work practitioners. The use of in-depth interviewing and biographical analysis methods were seen as the best methods for encouraging participants to tell their stories, because the methods were flexible enough to enable participants to tell their stories in their own way, with minimum rigidity. Consequently, I structured the interview questions sequentially in order to incorporate the BWSG's comments, whilst deciding to conduct the interviews on a one-to-one basis rather than group interviews, in a bid to ensure anonymity for the participants. It was not that I felt a group interview would not have been useful, particularly as I worked with a small number of my research participants as work colleagues. However, I felt individual interviews would keep the question of anonymity within the control of the participants, who would then hold the right to disclose their identity to each other if that was their choice.

The BWSG said they did not understand why I needed to build in my long-term responsibilities to the research, feeling instead that a blanket of anonymity for the participants' identity, would encourage participants to tell their stories. The BWSG also felt that strengthening confidentiality via anonymity of the district of study would limit the likelihood of the geographical location of the research and its inference on the identity of the research participants, from affecting the research. This, the BWSG felt, would reduce the likelihood of any consequences. My reputation as a community activist and a person known for offering confidential support, also added strength to the BWSG's views about the adequacy of the support available to my research participants and, therefore, my freedom to pull away from long-term responsibilities. Given the fundamental role that I wanted my long-term responsibility to my research to play, the BWSG's position made me mindful of my responsibility to ensure that both conceptually and practically, I gave the research participants a full explanation of the reasons for its presence in the research.

The Interview Questions

I decided to explore the participants' experiences via the use of a series of questions, which were arranged in themes, to ease the participants through the interviews (see appendix 1 for a list of questions and briefing notes). I also made the questions short in structure, drafting briefing notes to the questions, both of which were given to the participants prior to beginning their interview. This gave the participants opportunities to ask any questions about the questions, my motives for asking the questions or the process I was using. The questions and briefing, notes outlined the direction of the interviews and was a way for me to demonstrate honesty and openness of my research process. The questions were open questions, to allow the participants full opportunity to express their answers in their own way and in their own time. The same questions were asked to participants, although the nature of the discussions and responses received did mean that the questions were not always asked in the same format of words. Each interview was scheduled to last approximately one and a half, hours, although the interviews did not end until the participants had said all they wanted to say.

The Research Participants

The Afrikan-Centred principles and my research question defined the criteria for selecting research participants. That is, the participants needed to be Afrikan-Origined; qualified social workers; employed by the district council; and, practising within the district of my research. The use of purposively selected Afrikan-Origined social workers as participants, allowed me as the researcher, to breath life into my research question and to be quite deliberate in linking my intuitive feel for the research (Robson, 1993), to the participants I was able to canvass to take part in my research. Babbie (1979) justifies such purpose in research sampling, arguing that for the researcher, it brings into play, an "...intuitive feel for the subject from extended observation and reflection ...likely to result in more effective intuitive sampling" (Babbie, 1979, p215).

Having a purposive sample would ordinarily allow researchers to select participants in order to ensure a healthy cross-sectional representation of the population / group being researched. However, the small number of Afrikan-Origined social workers employed by the district council influenced the size of the sample in ways that were out of my control. I identified twelve Afrikan-Origined social workers (excluding myself) as the total number of Afrikan-Origined social workers employed by the district council and selected all twelve to be part of the research. I compiled the list from my knowledge of the social services department, information from other colleagues and the ease of identifying Afrikan-Origined practitioners. Beginning with twelve qualified Afrikan-Origined social workers, one worker decided not to be involved in the research due to concerns about anonymity; two workers were on long-term sick leave; and two workers did not return my messages regarding my need to contact them. This eliminated five workers from the original list of twelve leaving me with seven practitioners who agreed to take part in the research. The final group of seven participants was made up of one male and six female social workers. I was able to telephone the seven research participants and arrange interviews with them at times and venues of their choice. Six participants chose to give their interviews at the community social work unit, and one participant asked to be interviewed at her place of work. The participants were in the twenties to forties age range and were located in mental health, fostering, children and families and family support services - with the majority located in children and families services. All the participants had undertaken either CQSW or DipSW social work training. They had between them a total of twenty-five years post

qualification practice, meaning they were quite young in their practice experience and signifying the likelihood of being able to link the participants' historical experiences to their current views of the social work profession.

The Interview Process

I began each interview by re-introducing the participants to the purpose of the research and the steps taken to anonymise their involvement. I also asked the participants about their ideas regarding how the findings of the research should be disseminated and any other issues the participants wished to discuss, given that at the time of conducting the interviews, several months had passed since they had agreed to participate in the research. I agreed not to make any record of these discussions since I regarded the time as personal time, which the participants and I shared as part of the process of ensuring that the participants still wished to be involved in the interviews. I did not, therefore, record field notes about the outcomes of these discussions - suffice to say that all the participants were happy to continue with their interviews. Whilst the participants stressed that they wanted any dissemination to occur without identifying them, none wished to see their statements prior to their use in the research, although three of the participants - Nia, Kuumba and Imani - asked for the findings to be shared with them individually. I did not ask the reasons why but guessed at issues of anonymity.

A combination of themed questions and the semi-structured nature of the interviews served to support the participants' telling of their stories in a sequential way, which also yielded biographical data linked to my research areas of interest. The sequential nature of the interviews also made the interviews easier for the participants to follow and anticipate, evidenced by the richness of information the participants seemed to have ease in sharing. Given my roles of enquirer and listener, the interviews created a shared learning and development space which proved a useful way of balancing out the power of my role as a state sponsored professional, with the participants' right to engage or disengage throughout their interviews. This I felt, was validated by the length of time each interview took, and the determination of the participants - aware that I needed the information, to have me listen to their stories. The participants told their stories the way they wanted to tell them, with as much humour and pain as they felt necessary to inject.

The research process did not necessitate secret aims or secret questions. So,

although not a stage-managed affair noted by Cicourel (1964) as the preferred clinical and objective practice of interview methodologies, the interviews were still able to yield results. The interviews were open and flexible enough to allow room for simultaneous thought and speech, the framing of any supplementary questions that might assist participants to share their experiences and the development of space for shared learning. Shared learning is a live experience, when the researcher locates themselves alongside the researched, ensuring that the research process and its effects and consequences are a shared experience (Williams, 1995). Comments about the research process made by Ujamaa, a participant in the research, demonstrated that process in action:

> *It has made me think about my past which is something I do*
> *not do. No-one really asks you what you were like when you*
> *were little. It has made me think about all that I have been*
> *through up until now.*

Her comments demonstrate that as well as the research process holding an expectation that she would attend the interview to share her story, Ujamaa expected the interview process to be open and free enough for her to learn from the experience, and be able to say so.

Collection and Analysis of Interview Data

At the time of re-introducing the participants to the research, I asked whether they had any objections to my use of a tape recorder to record their interviews. All the participants were happy with that arrangement. All interviews except one, took place at the community social work unit based off site away from all other social services offices. The benefit of this arrangement was in our knowing, as participants and researcher, that we were not likely to be interrupted, and the interviews could not be heard by any of the work colleagues of the participants. One interview took place on site in a participant's workplace, and although I wondered about my being able to hear her colleagues and whether they could hear us, the participant seemed unaffected by their presence in the building.

The participants and I negotiated away the need for me to take field notes during the interviews, since our prior knowledge of each other (i.e. we all knew of each other as

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practitioners, but two participants were known to me personally), meant that any concerns were discussed before conducting the interviews. The interview recordings were transcribed by the community social work unit's administrative assistant - on agreement with my manager. This was an arrangement that suited the participants as well as myself, as my colleague was already part of the community social work team and trusted by the community with regard to issues of confidentiality and discretion. The arrangement also ensured that little information such as words influenced by cultural nuances - would be lost during the transcription process.

I have detailed my use of biographical analysis as my method of analysis of the participant's experiences, suffice to say, that it worked well as a method. Biographical analysis was particularly suited to allowing space for my use of alternative sources such as Afrikan-Centred literature and the Agwamba model, to analyse silences that were incorporated by participants as valid responses to certain questions. My analysis of the data did not focus on the issue of gender, despite there being only one man involved in the research. It was never my intention to focus on gender issues as part of the research, since the issues I wished to study transcended the issue of gender. I felt that the focus of my research meant that effects of racism and cultural hegemony would not discriminate against the participants on the basis of gender and this was indeed borne out in the data in that no gender issues were spontaneously raised by the participants.

Part 2: The Agwamba Model as an Afrikan Centred Methodology

The Agwamba Model

My search for a methodology primarily via social sciences literature, led to the emergence of my methodology from the literature. I had established the need to use Afrikan-Centredness as the paradigm of analysis in my research, and had incorporated the use of in-depth interviewing and biographical methods within my Afrikan-Centred priorities. However, my methodology remained incomplete without a research method that governed my role as the researcher. This led to my development of the Agwamba model as representing a complete Afrikan-Centred methodology.

I named my methodology the Agwamba model. 'Agwamba' is a West Afrikan Igbo name meaning 'The Custom of a People', chosen, in reference to the commitment the model has to the upliftment of Afrikan agency, founded on Afrikan antiquity and historical, ancestral and contemporary contributions to upliftment of Afrikan people. The development of the model also allowed me to conduct research in an Afrikan-Centred way.

The Agwamba model has as its definitive features:

➤ The grounding of my research in Afrikan-Centredness, a relevant paradigm for the analysis of the experiences of my research participants. The route to its establishment as a suitable research paradigm is detailed in part 1 of this chapter.

➤ The use of Afrikan-Centred appropriate methods of human inquiry and analysis - i.e. interviewing and life story / biographical approaches to gathering and analysing life experiences. Both methods are detailed in part 1 of this chapter.

➤ The development of ethical principles specific to Afrikan-Centredness, the methodology and the research participants.

The Agwamba model had its own ethical principles, which I compiled with the support of the Centring Group, (defined in greater detail later in this chapter). As part of my research training I had familiarised myself with the standard British Sociological Association's 'Statement of Ethical Practice' (1992), but felt these standards did not fully address the kind of ethical considerations I needed to govern my research. The field note recorded in my journal references the Centring Group meeting on 21 May 1997 where I noted the requirement that my ethical standards 'should reflect Afrikan-Centred responsibilities of researchers conducting Afrikan-Centred research'. After meeting with the Centring Group, the ethical standards I devised were as follows:

▪ Discussion of research with the Afrikan-Origined community / community representatives prior to the commencement of the research, to allow people time to prepare for or decline to be involved in the research.

- Approaches to research participants to be made in ways which are appropriate to the needs of research participants, in terms of anonymity, trust and confidentiality - in order to demonstrate the emphasis placed on protecting participants and their contributions should they or I as the researcher require this.

- Informed consent will be practised with the research participants at all times in order to enshrine the right of participants to amend their contributions and influence or withdraw from the research process at any time, should they feel it necessary to do so.

- Undertake research in environments that facilitate full contributions from Afrikan-Origined participants, since the research should be about advancing knowledge about experiences and practice, for the benefit of Afrikan people.

- I (the researcher) was not a blank sheet of blotting paper during the research process, expecting to soak up participants' experiences. I was expected to share in the research process but in a responsible way which allowed me to respond to whatever need the participants had during and after the research process. My responsibility also extended to having regard to the importance of not interfering with the participants' space or any emotional response participants may derive from the research process.

- Consulting the research participants about the research outcomes and usefulness of the research outcomes for themselves and Afrikan-Origined people.

- My responsibilities for the research and any consequences resulting from the research having been undertaken and publicised, would continue after the research process ended .

The ethical principles were developed prior to the commencement of the research, were specific to the research, ran constantly throughout the research and did not need any further adaptation. Their constancy and suitability endorsed the process through which the ethical principles had been determined.

➤ The placing of myself as the researcher, in a position relative to my responsibilities as a community member, agent of change and a professional practitioner.

Use of an Afrikan-Centred methodology changed my role as the researcher in the interviewing process. Afrikan-Centred researchers should expect to be activists in research situations and to be prescriptive rather than descriptive (Asante, 1987). That is, researchers are expected to practice what they have learned within their communities and not merely state practice for everyone else. The literature did not fully account for the type of role identified by Asante (1987). Rather, positivist paradigms expect researchers to guard against the possibility of inciting participants to construct stories that fit in with the purposes of the researcher (e.g. researcher justification to funders) rather than the purposes of the research (Gubrium and Holstein, 1998). Lieblich (1994) and Wetherell & Potter (1994) also cautioned against the tendencies of researchers to use participants' stories to retell their own interests. Whilst Alderfer (1988) suggested, that it was not possible to legislate against all effects of the researcher, preferring instead to control the role of the researcher by identifying a strict and objective role. Hertz's (1997) focus was more in line with bringing the researcher to life much as Asante (1987) espoused. She saw researchers as 'situated actors' who were real in the research process - bringing their own histories and drawing on the richness of their own experiences particularly if their experiences were the same as their research participants. Similarly, Reinharz (1997) noted researchers as bringing several selves into the research space, informing on the researcher's identity as a researcher with a researcher's agenda and responsibilities; as a personal person with a personal identity and history; and, as a situationally created person moulded by, for example, professional influences. In noting the self as the key fieldwork tool, Reinharz (1997) argued that the way the self corresponded to the research was largely dependent on the meaning these various selves had to the research process. Lieblich (1996) advanced this position in her location of her various selves (i.e. purposeful, sporadic) in the type of contact she had with her research community, and the defining of her research roles, based on what her research community asked of her (i.e. witness, therapist, expert, etc). I support Lieblich's accounting of the researcher's 'self' in research, with particular regard to the power to determine researcher roles, resting with both the researcher and the community. However, Lieblich's definitions of self were derived within a community where she determined her place in that community and opted in and out at leisure or when the

community made too many demands on her. Overall, I found some affinity with the stance of all three authors (Lieblich, 1996; Reinharz, 1997 and Hertz, 1997) although their positions made me mindful that stressing my various selves might lead me to over-focus on my 'self' in the research.

Because I was a well-known member of the community and an accepted social work practitioner amongst my peers, I felt that my various selves were available for the participants to question at any time during the research. No such questions arose, suggesting that the participants were not concerned about my 'selves' during their interviews. The pre-interview work I did with each participant also allowed them to ask any questions of me, prior to agreeing to be part of the research. This allowed me to focused instead, on ensuring that I did not infringe on the participants' purpose for being involved in the research, via constant reference to my own broader problem-solving and liberationary research purposes.

I placed a strong emphasis on my role as both subject and object in the research. I felt this best responded to a blurring of the roles and boundaries of the researcher as community member, with regard to the expectation that no one could think themselves above the process of consequences, contribution and change in the research process. The founding of my role on Afrikan-Centred priorities ensured that my researcher role was a prescriptive one that was more relevant to the need for Afrikan-Origined people and communities to have live examples of change agents. My commitment to being an agent of change was in my obligation to be tied to the long-term consequences of the research. This was a form of researcher accountability which was uniquely different to anything I had studied in the academic texts highlighted above. These texts prioritised long-term consequences to which researchers were not tied, in a live or community way, after the completion of the research. Afrikan-Centred literature (Asante, 1987) expresses this requirement as a fundamental aspect of research conducted with Afrikan-Origined people, since researchers are also expected to contribute to the agency priorities of their researched communities.

My feelings about the stance I adopted in the research were good - and indeed they were somewhat confirmed by Imani's response to her contact with me when she stated:

You did not intimidate me in the sense that I had to be careful in
what I divulged to you... you never queried me into the sense of

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➢ My development of the role of 'consequential-affectiveness' in the research process, which effectively tied me to the immediate and long-term consequences of the research, for the participants and the Afrikan-Origined community.

I developed the principle of consequential-affectiveness in recognition of myself as the researcher having a live influence in the research, because of my personal-practitioner status within the community. This status meant that I both lived and worked within the researched community. I was an initiator of the process whereby the participants were able to tell their stories and might well have been an influence in the participants' decision to engage in the research and which stories they told. Having such an influence, I felt, placed me in an affective role, tying me to whatever consequences might arise as a result of the telling of participants' stories, my presence in the research and any consequences which might arise as result of the research having been conducted and / or publicised.

Examination of the research literature highlighted methodologies that attempted to incorporate degrees of researcher responsibility in their methodological processes. Duggan (1993), McTaggart (1991) and Zuber-Skerritt's (1996) action research and participatory action-type methodologies focus on issues like motives for conducting research with specific groups or communities (e.g. single parents, HIV and AIDS and men's groups and geographical, issue specific, racial or cultural, religious communities etc). The authors mentioned above reflect developments in ethical considerations that suggest research participants, groups and communities should be left with measurable outcomes which they can utilise to sustain and prolong the outcomes and benefits of the research. There was also some focus on how research findings should be disseminated. However, I felt that Duggan (1993), McTaGgart (1991) and Zuber-Skerritt (1996) work left me unhappy with the responsibilities of the researcher to the research and the researched, which seem to end permanently for example, when the research was completed. I did not consider action approaches, typified by the disappearance and discharging of researcher responsibilities on completion of the research, as methods that suited the expectations of Afrikan-Centred researchers (Asante, 1987) or the principles I had incorporated into my research.

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My role in the theoretical formulations and conclusions of my research, as a statement and practice of intent and commitment to the participants and the community I am part of (Ani, 1994), tied me to a responsibility to be accountable to the collective. That role is an expression of the interconnectedness Afrikan people share, where the least element (maybe a child) cannot be affected or effective without making the whole (maybe the family or local community) vibrate and vice versa. Such is the nature and importance of interdependence that no one part is greater than the whole sum (Akbar, 1976). It is how we use our power to act in our own interests as individuals and as a collective that will decide the contributions to the Afrikan community, we make as Afrikan people. To be Afrikan or not to be Afrikan according to the principles and manifestations of Afrikan-Centredness (of which the Agwamba model is one), then becomes the question Afrikan people have to answer, to determine their stance within or outside of the Afrikan-Centred paradigm.

The methodology I developed, therefore, committed me to long term consequences of the research in terms of my effective / affective responsibilities to that research. That commitment is enshrined in an honesty that sits in a fundamental position within the principles of Afrikan-Centredness to ensure that when things go wrong, honesty can underpin the importance of the learning that will inevitably take place from that experience. The participants' statements of preference for culturally-specific and separate services for Afrikan-Origined people, demonstrated what kind of future commitment I might be expected to have towards service development issues. Therefore, should the Agwamba model have raised their expectations about my ability or intent on delivering such a service, my responsibility would be that of honesty about what I can realistically achieve. The consequential-affectiveness aspect of the Agwamba model addresses the issue of power between Afrikan-Origined people involved in its usage, by removing the barriers of position, since the model seeks to unify Afrikan-Origined people on agency priorities of Afrikan-Origined people as individuals (incorporating the researcher) and community members.

➤ Establishment of a Centring Group represented by a group of Afrikan-Centred practitioners whose responsibility was that of ensuring the research was paradigmatically grounded, accountable to and ethically focused on the interests of Afrikan-Origined people.

Much of the literature dealing with the role of groups in research, centres on researchers as interviewers of focus groups (Denning & Verschelden, 1993; Kitzinger, 1994; Stewart & Shamdasani, 1990). My Centring Group, whose role was to support me with the accuracy and application of my research methodology and to provide support, via reflection on issues that might arise in the research, is a characteristic that current research literature does not account for. Neither does traditional groupwork literature account for the existence of support forums (groups, communities, extended families, rituals, etc) as fundamental expressions of aspects of Afrikan culture. However, such groups provide collective opportunities to offer support and are experienced as positive contributions to the socialisation process, both in present life and in transgenerational terms (Ani, 1994). The Centring Group was not established as a focus group, and my contact with the group did not involve my having to interview group members at any time. The Centring Group was established as a support group.

I established an Afrikan-Centred Centring Group made up of four Afrikan-Origined practitioners from communities around the region, but outside the district of the research. The Centring Group members identified themselves as Afrikan-Centred through their Afrikan-Centred practice in their respective Afrikan-Origined communities. Their practice ranged from community education courses to communal and social opportunities, which they had arranged over a number of years. The purpose of the group lay in my naming of the group - which was my requirement to have a space of support where I could check that I was appropriately Afrikan-Centred in my research practices. I wanted the Centring Group to replicate as far as possible, the role played by elders in the Afrikan-Origined community. The elders who had previously provided me with instruction lived several districts away, which posed issues about accessibility. At the suggestion of those elders I agreed the use of Afrikan-Centred practitioners.

The Centring Group members came from the fields of community development, teaching and psychiatry. They were all Afrikan-Centred specialists and current practitioners in their respective fields and had all undertaken extensive Afrikan-Centred practice in the region surrounding the district of the study. Three of the four group members had also extended their practice learning and development by undertaking work in other countries. The Centring Group members were active in their respective communities and remained in practice positions in their respective fields throughout their

involvement with the research. The Centring Group members were not paid for their contributions to the research and we agreed that their identities would remain anonymous in order to support the confidentiality of the research.

I made my approaches to potential members in 1996 and the Centring Group' held its first meeting in April 1997, where I set out the expected role of group members and secured members' agreements to those roles. I expected the Centring Group to act as a control group for the purposes of the reflecting on the design, analysis and findings of the research, given that none of its four members were residents or practitioners in the research district. This added dimension and depth to the research, in that the Centring Group took on a type of generalisability-strengthening role. Because my research was eventually undertaken using a small sample which literature suggested would frustrate aspects of research generalisability (see Black, 1993), the practice experience and geographical inferences Centring Group members brought with them, therefore, strengthened opportunities to generalise about the research findings.

Meetings between the Centring Group and myself were arranged at my request, generally, when I needed to reflect on how a particular aspect of the research had progressed. I asked the Centring Group to provide the reflective space and guidance I felt I needed, to ensure that I undertook the research in accordance with Afrikan-Centred paradigmatic expectations. In fulfilment of this requirement for example, I presented my initial methodology concerns to a Centring Group meeting which I called on 15 July 1997, when I needed to make the decision to either adapt a traditional Eurocentric methodology or to design a methodology outright. The fieldnote I recorded in my journal said:

> 'Methodology presentation: said had difficulty in finding
> methodology from existing methods. Advised to study literature
> and make firm commitment to creating methodology or adapting
> from existing methods'

I wrote about myself:

> 'Crisis in confidence Asher! Why?'

I remember questioning myself at the time of that meeting, particularly about whether I felt confident enough to step outside of Eurocentric academic tradition and

develop my own methodology. I thought about the credibility of my work, and whether and for what reason I was experiencing a crisis in my confidence, particularly since the Centring Group merely confirmed what I knew I had to do. I associated my block with a time when I experienced similar blocks related to my research area, largely because of my own insecurities. I was sure I wanted to explore the importance of the relevance of culture in social work with Afrikan-Origined communities. However, I still experienced an inner constraint within myself, because I worried about the consequences of asserting my right to see things from my worldview and provide research opportunities for people to do the same. My eventual stance was, as it was then - to assert my right through my experience, and with the support of literature and develop my own methodology.

The Centring Group provided that invaluable reflective space where I could talk to group members and myself about my work. The expertise in the group meant that I did not have to force issues, given our mutual interest via Afrikan-Centredness, to see the research yield answers. The Centring Group was more than a research support group in that the group mimicked the role of Afrikan-Origined elders who would have been there to ensure that my research was indeed Afrikan-Centred. In compliance with this role the centring group challenged me although the group did not present issues of struggle to me during the research. If struggle had featured in our encounters, my having been instructed by elders to chose the group members because of their commitment to Afrikan-Centredness in their own current practice I believe, would have ensured their commitment to reaching consensual ground on issues of struggle. Reaching consensual ground would also have been a priority for the Centring Group since I believed group members would see themselves as being tied to the consequences of that struggle and the consequences of our encounters. That commitment to reach a consensus on struggle, to some extent, I saw as another strand of 'consequential-affectiveness' in practice.

The Centring Group's presence also kept me in touch with the accountability aspect of my role in a reflective way, always challenging me to look at the accountability I had established with the participants via the research process, to be sure that it was real to them. The reflexive responses in me always had me checking how much was happening in the research because of the participants' or my own influence - a process which in itself, always kept me in touch with the potential power dynamic of my role and place in the research. I wanted to be aware of role dynamics, such as that of supporting the participants through the sharing of their experiences without assuming the role of practitioner during

the sharing process. There were also occasions where participants like Kujichagulia and Ujamaa had chosen to remain silent about parts of their life experience. Here, the reflexive learning space reminded me that I was not a practitioner at that special moment and the participants had not come for social work support to get over their silences. The space also encouraged me to look for learning in the participants' silences with the support of Afrikan-Centred literature, in a bid to highlight learning from the experience and not focus on filling the silent space with my interpretation. Overall, the reflective space provided by the Centring Group was invaluable and yielded a rich source of information about myself which I might otherwise have overlooked (see conclusions chapter, 'Echoes of the heart'). Knowing this level of authority was present did much to inspire me to live up to the Afrikan-Centred principles I had gone to great pains to outline and establish. I found the literature on reflective practice useful (see Burgess, 1992 and Gould & Taylor, 1997), but also found the literature a little sterile in its focus on reflective learning through practice, because it tended to objectify the learning space away from the role and influence played by 'the personal' in reflective and reflexive learning.

The Centring Group's role in providing reflective support and some degree of supportive supervision made analysis of their role a different experience to that traditionally expected in the literature on group analysis (See Stewart & Shamdasani, 1990), groups as the researched (see Dey, 1993), or groups as co-researchers conducting co-operative inquiry (see Reason, 1998). Analysis of my interactions with the Centring Group came after I had approached the group for support regarding my research occurrences like participant 'silences' and my feelings on hearing the participants' experiences. Again, despite finding literature evidence on practices like cause and effect content analysis (Stewart & Shamdasani, 1990) and the analysis of group discourse in social work teams (Housley, 2000), the literature did not account for the Centring Group's role. Neither the Centring Group nor I found this problematic. Group members were happy with their role and I was happy with the support and guidance they provided. The Centring Group held its last meeting in September 1998 several months after I had completed my final interview and had completed initial analysis work on the interview data.

As a total methodology, the Agwamba model is a model that emerged from reading through the omissions and supportive elements of vast amounts of literature interlaced with my own expectations. I came into social work sixteen years ago, undertaking my

Certificate if Qualification in Social Work in a city in the region of my district, but undertook all my social work practice in the district of my research. As a member of a vibrant and active Afrikan-Origined community, I developed a keen interest in social work service development issues. I spent time consulting with social work managers responsible for commissioning services, resulting in the establishment of a community social work unit. I undertook further academic training, culminating in my completion of both undergraduate and post-graduate degrees in social sciences, 'race' relations and community development areas; and undertook a two year course in Communal Afrikan History and Psychology in preparation for post-graduate research. Much of my practitioner life has been spent under the guidance of community elders, which supported my decision to conduct research and nurtured the feeling of responsibility to community, that was part of my identity.

The model focuses on the importance of shared responsibility and accountability of the researcher and Afrikan-Origined people allowing integration of individual / personal, professional and collective experiences, contributions and responsibilities. The Agwamba model is also located in the experiences and priorities of Afrikan-Origined people in a bid to represent the capacity of Afrikan-Origined people to take action on their own behalf - making it both situational and developmental in its functioning. Because of the Afrikan-Centred underpinning of the Agwamba model, the choice for future users of the model then becomes one of whether to use the model to achieve outcomes prioritised by Afrikan-Origined people. Neither Afrikan-Centredness nor the Agwamba model suggest exclusivity over all Afrikan problem-solving. Rather, the focus is on emphasising the responsibilities users of the paradigm and model are expected to respect, when looking at their motives for conducting research. Should Afrikan users of the model choose different motives to those laid down in Afrikan-Centredness and in the Agwamba model, then clearly they are talking about a different model - and I have no quarrel with that.

Conclusion

Establishing an appropriate research methodology was just as important as establishing my interest in Afrikan-Centredness as the paradigm within which I would situate my research. My route to finalising my methodology led me to address a range of

Eurocentric methodologies in order to assess and eliminate them as unsuitable to Afrikan-Centred research. Despite strengths in black perspectives, their lack of prescription in transformatory and liberationary areas and their intent on reforming Eurocentric methodologies made them unsuitable for Afrikan-Centred research. I decided that Afrikan-Centredness was an appropriate analytical perspective through which I could conceptualise, conduct and analyse the research data, and developed a suitable methodology. The Agwamba model represented the final methodological model. The model was grounded in and emerged from the Afrikan-Centred paradigm and accommodated appropriate methods of human inquiry, ethical principles for conducting the research, researcher accountability expectations and practices and support group assistance. Together, the defining features of the Agwamba model allowed me to conduct research that I could call Afrikan-Centred.

Looking at the data that emerged from the research, I felt that the innovative aspects of my research in the principle of 'consequential-affectiveness' and the presence of a 'Centring Group' were strong enough to ensure that my role and purpose in the research was both transparent and accountable. Transparency and accountability also extended to my responsibilities to the participants as interviewees and community members; and in terms of commitments to the agency and self-determinatory principles which as a community member, I had a responsibility to develop and make a contribution to. Knowing about my accountability throughout the research project, I believe, encouraged the participants to share their experiences and influenced the content and quality of the experiences they shared.

The Agwamba model was not just for the purposes of conducting research - but also contributed to the potential health and wellbeing of my community by engaging Afrikan-Origined professionals in discussions about the context and shape of future social work services. The model facilitated the exploration of influences in the historical, present and potential contributions of Afrikan-Origined social workers currently practising social work for the district council. It also established priorities aimed at underpinning appropriate conduct of researchers intent on conducting research with Afrikan-Origined people and communities.

Life Stories: An Afrikan-Centred Analysis

Introduction

This chapter deals with the analysis of the participants' experiences, from their childhood through to their employment as social workers. The analysis of the participants' life stories followed several themes founded on the structure of the interview questions which were intended to reflect key milestones in the participants' lives. The themes were a) childhood experiences; b) influences towards careers in social work; c) experiences of social work education; d) post-qualification practice; e) and preferred models of social work practice. The theme of racism emerged from the data as a constant influence throughout the participants' experiences. Its main effects occurred in the participants' childhood experiences of racism in their lived environments; the racism they encountered whilst training to become social workers; the impact of racism and racist barriers on their life choices and, the strategies the participants developed in order to overcome the racism they experienced.

The participants' life-stories are presented as individual accounts of the participants' experiences. However, the participants' life stories are also analysed comparatively in a bid to demonstrate shared experiences in the participants' lives. The comparative analysis highlighted the existence of minor patterns that were present in each of their life-stories. Whilst these minor patterns were relevant to the research and commented on when they arose, it is the dominant and recurring patterns internal to each participants' experience of racism, to which most analytical attention is paid. The dominant patterns demonstrated the participants' key responses to racism, highlighting each response as the one most frequently used by a particular participant to respond to and cope with experiences of unremitting racism in their lives. The participants' key responses were also utilised by them as a strategy for surviving racist encounters, appearing as an influencer of key life decisions for the participants and persisting as a key response throughout each participant's life experiences as defined in their life-stories. The findings gave rise to the development of figure 5.1 (page 176), identifying the key coping strategy of each participant.

In addition to these themes, several themes came out of Afrikan-Centred literature, supported to some degree, by some participant experiences or the Agwamba model. The main theme referencing the Agwamba model was the importance of 'consequential-affectiveness' as an enhancer of the helper / helped and researcher / participant relationship. The model highlighted the importance of flexibility of the Agwamba model as a way of incorporating the coping strategies the participants brought with them to their interviews. Both Afrikan-Centred literature (Akbar, 1994; James Myers, 1998) and the participants' experiences highlighted that a key model of success for Afrikan-Origined people was the development of a congruent identity made up of racial (i.e. psychological, core) and external (i.e. personal, peripheral) indicators. There were also numerous occasions when the research data demonstrated that recognition of the importance of Afrikan identity strengths led to changes in the participants' reactions to racism.

Although 'Afrikan-Origined' is my preferred term in this study, it is not the term used by all participants. In order, therefore, to retain the authenticity of the participants' contributions I have used the participant's stated terms as they are cited. Use of participants' terms however, does not detract from the focus on Afrikan-Origined people as one people for the purposes of this study. Afrikan-Origined people were the people in mind when the participants told their stories, unless otherwise stated. In that sense, use of different terms are intended to merely reflect the personal preferences of the participants and as such, do not refer to separate or different categories of Afrikan-Origined people, unless otherwise stated. Each participant's life story is analysed in full, with an overall analysis of the interviews from all the life-stories, appearing at the end of the analysis chapter.

Umoja: Rising Above Conformity

Umoja's story centred on the theme of conformity, which assumed a prominent place throughout her life experiences. It first appeared in Umoja's childhood encounters with Eurocentric education, where the expectation of conformity underpinned Umoja's experiences of education / educationalists, as erasers or neglecters of her racial identity. Eurocentric cultural bias underpins the power of educationalists to determine which identity Afrikan-Origined people are permitted to acknowledge, resulting in a situation in which Afrikan-Origined people are constantly being expected to deny their identity, sometimes unaware of this expectation until they find themselves in particular environments (Ani, 1994). For Umoja, her permitted childhood identity was experienced via a contrast between freedom and conformity:

> *I remember my early childhood years ...just being very free with*
> *no concerns or cares, playing with my friends and brothers and sisters*
> *and just being very happy and then going into school, starting off in*
> *school. I remember when I think back now how much of a conformist*
> *I was.*

For Umoja, identity symbolised freedom and unconcern, as represented by family life; and the contrasting identity was represented by school. For Umoja, school was a contrast to home to the extent that conformity at school became a survival strategy. Submerging identity as a means of surviving racism, was noted in chapter one, as a strategy employed by Afrikan-Origined practitioners who attempted to change institutional social work practices from inside the institution. Here, Umoja reflects on her attempts to survive the damaging impact of Eurocentric cultural expressions of accepted identity, by finding a way to go beyond the imposed limitations in order to be herself. For Umoja, memories of herself as a child before encountering racism, became her defence against the racism of conformity. Afrikan-Centred advocates would argue that had Umoja received support that strengthened her view of herself as an Afrikan Origined person, she would have been enabled to express her identity of choice (Akbar, 1994; Asante, 1999).

Dickerson, 1995; Tchet Sesh Am Neter, 1995; Vora 1995; and Yekwai, 1988, support Umoja's experiences, noting the ability of education to subordinate Afrikan identities and influence patterns of thinking by washing Afrikan minds with Eurocentric

intellectual detergents. Whilst Afrikan-Centredness recognises the individual and collective quest for Afrikan authenticity wherever Afrikan people are (Calloway-Thamas, 1995). However, Eurocentrism manifest through racist educational practices is intent on ignoring the impact of suffocated authenticity, in the quest to define reality universally - with adverse consequential effects for Afrikan people (Kambon, 1996).

The tendency to live in fear of white supremacy whilst living within its conceptual confinements results in the development of a profound sense of vulnerability and worrying (Welsing, 1991), so the emergence and re-emergence of this throughout the research data, was not surprising. There was a similar consequence theme for Umoja, who noted:

I had this fear of going into a children's home as well and
Though that something was going to happen to my parents and
I would end up going there

For Umoja, family was the major influence in her life and provided a place where she felt safe. Away from that place of safety, Umoja had to prepare herself for the worst. Her experience of education exemplified those fears. Here, she feared the destruction of everything she had taken for granted. She expresses this in her fear of loosing her parents and ending up in Care. The literature relating to early social work responses to Afrikan-Origined people would suggest that Umoja had good reason to be fearful, given the impact of Eurocentric opinion about Afrikan-Origined family life and the resultant effect of the disproportionate numbers of Afrikan-Origined children in Care (ABSWAP, 1983; Pennie & Best, 1990).

Expressions of grave concern about the educational underachievement of Afrikan-Origined children, their disproportionate levels of exclusion from school and the links of both, to internalised oppression, are well documented (Young, Gifted & in Crisis Conference Report, 1999). Umoja's experiences are instructive in their suggestion of the importance of white educational social workers needing to become variedly-cultured via appropriate education and training, to at least begin to understand what might be happening to Afrikan-Origined children in schools. More significantly, however, the success of Afrikan-Origined mentoring support programmes taking place in schools with Afrikan-Origined children pupils, lies in the ability of such programmes to support Afrikan-Origined children to remain in school. This demonstrates how educationalists' recognitions of racism and its effects could be extended to accept that there is a vital role to

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be played by culturally specific approaches to education / educational support and Afrikan-Origined educational social workers - cultural specificity being a fundamental principle of Afrikan-Centredness (Asante, 1980; 1999). In a similar way to Imani, another participant in my research, Umoja internalises the experience of her educational environment and then restates the consequences of those experiences in terms of vulnerability and then defence. This suggests that as well as being a consequence of her earlier encounters, Umoja's actions of conforming to Eurocentric expectations about her family life, also represented the centrality of her defence against unremitting racism. Umoja's experiences raised the question of whether the data would reveal constant effects of Umoja's childhood experiences of conformity, throughout her life story and life choices.

The next milestone in Umoja's life was marked by experiences that influenced her choice of social work as a profession. She gave the following account of her route into social work education:

> *I did not want my head to be in the clouds. I did not want to be*
> *naïve about life, so I thought ... the first job that I ever thought of*
> *doing was being a prison officer because the thought of prisons*
> *really frightened me and kind of disturbed me. Eventually I did*
> *work in a children's' home because of that. ...I started my roots*
> *from there really...*

The influence of conformity is still present, evident in the types of employment Umoja considers for herself. Umoja's employment choices take her further into her vulnerabilities about life being the antithesis of that which she had lived, choosing prison and then Care as employment choices - both known to represent the harshest racialised realities on the life chances Afrikan-Origined people (ADSS/CRE, 1978; Baldwin & McConville, 1982; Pryce, 1979). Yet, in the safety of the interview space, reflecting on these historical experiences from a position of professionalism, Umoja never referenced racism as part of her history. Thomas & Sillen (1972) argued that as a consequence of racism, Afrikan people preferred to present themselves as normal, in the sense that they were needful of white approval of their normality, even if normal had developed as a consequence of racism. It could certainly be argued that this was the case for Ujamaa another participant in my research, who kept her head down in the workplace for fear of being labelled as a trouble-maker like 'black' workers who had preceded her.

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But Umoja's dispensing of any need to name her oppression was different, and linked I felt, to the research environment underpinned by the congruence of our positions as mutual searchers of truth. The 'consequential affectiveness' aspect of the research underpinned that position and facilitated a perception of support, shared experiences and shared research consequences. That perception made the interview a warm and familiar experience in which Umoja was able to share her experiences knowing that for once, she did not have to name her oppression. Instead, taking for granted that it was already known to, and understood by both of us, allowed Umoja to focus elsewhere. Indeed, Schiele (1996) states:

> This perception of caring provides the foundation for the [helping]
> relationship to be viewed and practised as a sacred and special one
> - a unique point where people meet to advance human transformation
> (Schiele, 1996, p292).

The interview environment being accordant with human transformation is an important finding, because it substantiates the position of Afrikan-Centredness, about the benefits of using an Afrikan-Centred analytical perspective as the route to finding contentment of Afrikan subject, active agent place (Asante, 1999). Seeking that place is a fundamental objective of conducting Afrikan-Centred research and one which Asante, (1993) and Schiele (1996) state is transferable to all aspects of Afrikan peoples lives, particularly with regard to helper / helped situations.

For Umoja, her route to contentment was the success of her survival strategy, and her ability to begin to identify life choices for herself, starting with her decision to face her vulnerabilities by working in Care services. Umoja's identification of her life chances and roots also suggests that the processes Umoja utilised to defend against racism had not prevented her from wanting to plan a future for herself in social work:

> So I started work there [children's home] with young people
> which was good. I thought, well I'm on the path still...I always
> had a qualification in mind. I had prepared myself for it and because
> I wasn't in any position to allow myself to fail. I fought hard within
> myself, did my reading and managed to get on a DipSW ....

Despite choosing residential care as a career, Umoja remained focused on qualifying as a field social worker. Ani (1994) argues that Afrikans have always displayed a sense of strength and determination to survive that so typifies Umoja's stance. That, wherever Afrikans have encountered Eurocentric hegemony and disempowerment, it has not interfered with a strength of character that strives to step out of the consequences of Eurocentrism to establish a self-defined path of action. For Umoja, stepping out meant stepping into social work, a profession that defined itself as a helping profession (Barclay, 1982). I wondered, whether there was enough suggestion in the research data to establish whether as a consequence of Eurocentric disempowerment, there was a desire in Afrikan-Origined people to opt for a career in the helping professions, as a way of mitigating against the memories and consequences of racialised experiences. Further, whether involvement in helping professions led to an achievement of satisfaction from rebuilding and reinstating quality and value into personal identity - and wanting to support others to do the same. There is an Afrikan-Centred responsibility to be part of societies and lives we are changing in the process of changing ourselves (Nyerere, 1974). But, what I am illuminating here is something different and particular to Afrikan-Origined people in Britain as opposed to Afrikan-Origined people in America who had the civil rights movement as a multi-dimensional (e.g. legislative, economical, educational etc) influence on their right to equality and to quality of life chances. Small's work on 'Racialised Barriers' (1994) goes some way towards suggesting that Afrikan-Origined people in Britain have a response to Eurocentric disempowerment that is unique to their experiences of racialised oppression. What I am suggesting however, is that the juxtapositions of disempowerment and the Afrikan cultural logic of striving for selfhood may create a response located in a preference for careers in helping professions, that is particular to the healing responses of the British Afrikan-Origined respondents of my research. This was a key theme that was explored throughout the analyses of the participants' stories.

The next milestone Umoja identified in her life story was her attendance on a social work course. Entering Academia does not mean that Afrikan-Origined people should have to downplay or ignore their identity, although this happens regularly (Robinson, 1995). Indeed, a failure to respect and validate Afrikan-Origined identity increases the likelihood that Afrikan-Origined students will take steps to protect and assert their identity themselves (Amer & Bryan, 1996). Umoja's experiences of her social work course concurred with Amer & Bryan (1996) and Robinson's (1995) findings of a learning environment for 'black'

students, that was highly racialised although not anti-racist. Umoja noted how the issue of 'race' was dealt with on her course:

> *... we found that that was at the time when race was on the*
> *agenda and so that ran through the whole course ... and there*
> *were a lot of* [white] *people there who got quite upset about it.*
> *They would cry. I noticed there were a lot from* [perceived as a
> white middle class area] *and they don't seem to have a race policy*
> *and ... so that caused a lot of ruptions and I found the more stronger*
> *and more vocal black students were that would ... cause them a lot of*
> *upset.*

For Umoja, her social work course failed her and the other students by not dealing with their identity needs. Social work courses are supposed to recognise the needs of individual students and prepare students for practice. Yet, Umoja's course also failed white students by promoting an environment that allowed white students to scapegoat 'black' students for having caused upset, thereby locating themselves in the roles of victims when it came to discussions about 'race'. In effect, this allowed white students to certify their status as the culturally dominant group, where whiteness is further privileged by the power in its encounters with 'others' (Nakayama, 1999), facilitating the ability to then rank priority and primacy, in white interests (Wander et al, 1999). Therefore, the opportunity for white students to learn about 'race' in a positive and constructive way was undermined. The course also failed 'black' students by placing them in a position of having to use collective expression to challenge situations that attempted to justify and certify their position as a powerless group, thereby, permitting a learning environment that marginalised the experiences of 'black' students. Consequently, the outcome was one of a denial of opportunity for all students to develop approaches to critiquing frames of reference that justify Eurocentric hegemony, racism and oppression (Swigonski, 1996). For Umoja, being a part of this learning environment resurrected memories of conformity, and the routes she had taken to revive her identity and belief in her own value. Her own identity had grown stronger, demonstrated by her recognition of the benefits of being supported by other 'black' students on the course, who also needed support. However, the inference of a return to conformity, in the behaviour of the white students on the course, placed Umoja in the position of recognising the implications for herself. For Umoja, there

was the choice of conforming to the environment by subordinating her identity as she had done in the past, or there was the choice to continue to grow. Umoja chose to grow:

> *It was really good to be on the course because there were about eight black students and they all had varied perspectives, but were very strong as well ... I think if it wasn't for the support of the other black students, I would be probably talking about a whole different thing altogether. I felt as though I had moved on so much during that time. ... I was able to see other perspectives. Someone would say something totally different and I would say 'gosh I never thought of that I never thought of it like that'. It allowed me to grow and identify with myself as well because I felt that I had had blinkers on for so many years.*

Umoja's experiences highlight how social work courses become battlegrounds to learning, suggesting to 'black' students that racism in social work education and training merely reflects the racism 'black' people experience in wider society. Umoja's childhood experiences of racism in expectations of conformity to white norms and values forced her to make a choice in order to survive - the same kinds of choices she was now expected to make if she wished to become a social worker. This time, however, Umoja had support from other 'black' students, utilising that support in order to turn the threat of conformity into a resistance against the racism she experienced and the development of a sense of pride in her identity. In effect, the support she received enabled her to overcome the powerlessness she had learned from her earlier experiences.

The Centring Group aspect of the Agwamba model typifies the importance of support and reflexive learning opportunities in Afrikan-Origined support groups. The student support group seemed to offer the same type of experience for Umoja, as the Centring Group had for me. Support from other 'black' students became a gateway to Umoja's experiencing of positive possibilities about her identity. For Umoja, the opportunity to contrast the two worlds she now had experience of, in the context of what she had missed out on through having *'blinkers on for so many years'*, replicated similar contrasts in her feelings. She said:

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The realisation is just becoming so overwhelming and I find
frightening as well because I know that as I'm allowing more and
more things into my life that are positive and good and reflect who
I am, it's making me, I guess feel angry but also confident... I just
feel as though once I have enlightened and know myself one hundred
per cent... I'm not gonna care what people think at the end of the day.
...I always cared what other people think. Put my own feeling second
you know, just to be accepted...

The significance of Umoja's experiences of support groups is that of alerting the social work profession to the important role they play in moving Afrikan-Origined people on from survival strategies to self-empowerment positions by resurrecting and supporting Afrikan-Origined self-determination interests. The impact of the disempowerment caused by the manifestation of Eurocentricity as the accepted culture of expression, is the prevention of the remembrance, construction and articulation of Afrikan realities. Consequently, this requires Afrikan people to subsume their own identities in favour of European cultural designs on the way Afrikan people should live (Ani, 1994), the seriousness of which is noted as the destruction of psychological wellbeing and potential (Asante, 1987). Asante (1987) also argues that a disabling of the interconnectedness between racial (i.e. core, psychological, internal) and personal (i.e. peripheral, external) identities of Afrikan people must be overturned in order that both selves be maximised for congruential outcomes. The significance and value of opportunities to develop Afrikan identities across all dimensions of human expression cannot therefore, be underestimated. For Umoja, the recognition of identity in potential and wellbeing terms, had supported her to reach a point of growth through knowing herself. The support of other students and Umoja's commitment and determination to grow inspired her to reach a point of growth, despite the systematic blocks she encountered. The social work profession can ensure that the vital role played by Afrikan-Origined support groups (e.g. Community groups, extended families, interest-specific groups) in the lives of Afrikan-Origined people, is recognised as significant in the helping and healing process. This would be achieved via a recognition from white practitioners that they may not be the best people to offer helping and healing services to Afrikan-Origined people, whilst simultaneously recognising the usefulness of facilitating and resourcing the inclusion of Afrikan-Origined practitioners and services in social work services.

Facilitating the necessity for students of Afrikan-Origin to use identity as an influential factor in social and academic experiences Schiele (1996) states, is the job of educators, but cannot be done unless educators are relatively and appropriately oriented by accepting Afrikan-Centred definitions of reality. Alternatively, not having the ability to be ourselves, to be Afrikan, in the academic learning environment will be a barrier to the development of 'Afrikanness' as a natural part of Afrikan life. Not knowing how to be ourselves because of the process of internalisation, would be another barrier that Afrikan-Origined people would have to find their way out of.

Umoja then went on to discuss her experience of professional social work practice. Whilst on the course, Umoja had clearly not been willing to sacrifice her developments in personal growth and reconnection of her identity. The model of success that emerges from Afrikan-Centred literature (Asante, 1987; Azibo, 1996; James Myers, 1998; Maxime, 1994) and Umoja's experiences, identifies a balanced racial (i.e. internal) and personal (i.e. external) identity as being necessary to maximise potential and wellbeing. The question was, therefore, whether Umoja's social work course had adequately prepared Umoja for the realities of professional practice and for any challenges she may face about her identity. Or, whether Umoja would again be expected to submerge her identity in order to fit in with expected white practitioner norms and values about practice. For Umoja, practice did not measure up to her social work course expectations - not least in relation to the client groups Umoja was expected to work with:

> *Oh I got a shock, my whole system was shocked cause I found*
> *Child Protection. I found working on estates ... the white estates*
> *... yet I've only ever worked with two black families ... I felt totally*
> *de-skilled by it all and very insecure ... luckily there was a large black*
> *workers team, there were five of us which again was a great source of*
> *strength and I didn't have to explain myself*

Umoja's social work course had failed to prepare her for the realities of social work practice, to the extent that she found her agency's expectations so different to her own ideas about social work practice, that she was left feeling de-skilled and insecure. Umoja's life experiences informed her preference for wanting to work with 'black' families, and her belief that something was missing in her current practice. Yet she had difficulty in having her preferences acknowledged. Similarly, however, the existence of a 'black' workers team

made her practitioner experiences bearable. For Umoja, the 'black' team proved to be a source of strength and a vehicle via which she could express her frustrations without having to justify them. The strength she gained from the team supported Umoja to express her feelings:

> *I am not happy ... I think it must have been about six months*
> *into the work and I was feeling there's something missing here.*
> *I felt very frustrated... because what I was doing wasn't what I*
> *expected to be doing ... I expected to work with black families ... I'm*
> *just not getting the hands on work, I'm not working with the client*
> *group that I want to work with.*

An almost all white practice environment equated to something missing in Umoja's expectations about her role in social work practice. She wanted and expected to work with 'black' families with a strength of feeling that suggests it meant more to her than her educators and fellow practitioners realised. And, that possibly, the value of Umoja's desire to work with 'black' families was located in the reasons which made her choose social work as a career. There is no doubt that thus far her career choice of social work had presented Umoja with positive identity experiences which had been beneficial to the path of growth she had decided upon. Her strength of desire to work with 'black' families, therefore, brings me back to an impact I identified earlier. That, Afrikan-Origined people's interest in helping professions was possibly linked to the potential of the helping relationship / process, in mitigating against the consequences of Eurocentric disempowerment and supporting a mutual development and growth of a healthy identity for both Afrikan-Origined practitioners and clients. In the context of what social work practice with Afrikan-Origined people can support them to do for self and others, Umoja's strength of feeling is better understood, as is her recognition of the importance of there being a group of 'black' workers to provide support for each other. Coming from academic experiences where a strong 'black' group had nurtured and supported her through her course, it is understandable that this would be the place where Umoja felt able to express herself without having to justify herself.

Like similar experiences Umoja had encountered on her social work course, Umoja was alerted to tensions which existed between 'black' and white workers, when 'black' workers came together to support each other. Umoja faced the expectations of white

workers one of which was her manager, who felt that Umoja should align herself with the white workers:

> *There were white colleagues who had different ideas and I think*
> *wanted to mould me into that, especially my manager. And when*
> *she noticed I was tearing away from her and getting my support*
> *from the black workers group, I think it caused her a lot of anxiety*
> *and a lot of fear as well ... the biggest threat was that I had been*
> *taken away; was that I would turn into a clone or something*

Umoja makes a powerful statement about the pressure to conform, which highlights the power of Eurocentrism, manifest in the unremitting nature of racism - not least in its ability to shift shape and form and reappear in a different time and place. Having first confronted this issue in her early childhood, Umoja now has to revisit the issue as an adult, facing an expectation that she should again choose to deny aspects of herself and conform to an accepted identity defined by her white colleagues. For Umoja, experiences of valuing her identity and how she wanted those experiences to inform her practice experience, were now incompatible with the values and expectations of her white colleagues.

Afrikan-Centred literature supports Umoja's position in not accepting that social workers can be objectively detached from their racial and cultural identity - suggesting that this places social workers in a position of being out of balance with themselves (Maxime, 1994; Schiele, 1996). Umoja recognises her practitioner role as presenting her with the same dilemma of either choosing to subordinate her identity in order to defend against racism, or to assert her right to practice her identity - a dilemma she had faced on two previous occasions in her life. For the second time, Umoja chose to defend her identity and vision of social work practice, this time, by securing alternative employment with a district authority that offered opportunities to develop social work practice with 'black' families. Here Umoja comments on her reasons for leaving her job:

> *The fact is I am constantly in conflict with the demands of the agency*
> *and where I've come from, as well and where I'm going, and as I say,*
> *this journey that I'm going on is going to make life worse for me in the*
> *long term, in the field of social work.*
> *I'm going to be battling, I feel as though I'm going to be battling all*

the time...I am batting against an institution that is covertly racist in

a lot of ways. I'm battling against the fact that I don't feel equal to

my white colleagues, I feel like second rate, very much second rate,

and I think I always will be no matter where I am in terms of experience

Umoja felt that she was in constant conflict with the demands of the agency and her preference for wanting to work with 'black' families. For Umoja, wanting to identify as 'black' and work 'black' was incompatible with enjoying an equal status to her white colleagues unless she wanted to spend her practitioner life subordinating her identity and practice aspirations, given the influence of the attitudes of her colleagues. Indeed, it was the constant act of having to conform to expectations of assimilation and unrepresentative definitions of equality similar to those outlined in chapter one, which eventually drove Umoja out of the department. Consequently, the district's services have lost a sensitive caring social worker with a vision of good practice that did not conform to the majority view of the service because, the cost of staying with the agency and attempting to take on the service from within, was not a worthwhile choice for Umoja.

Although going to another job was a refreshing opportunity to develop her practice interests Umoja still felt she was having to pay the high price of being separated from her family, friends, community and support networks she had developed over time. It was a price she felt her white colleagues did not have to pay:

Do they [white workers] *have to do that? They don't even have to*

think about that, they are just functioning.

Umoja's experiences give rise to a need for the profession to think about how Afrikan-Origined social workers see themselves and experience themselves within practitioner roles that do not allow different identities to flourish. It does not follow that Afrikan-Origined practitioners see themselves as clinical practitioners in terms of an emotionless detachment from the clients they service. Afrikan-Origined social workers come from a cultural history that prioritises their individuality whilst recognising an interconnected identity linked to a concern for collective welfare. It is the interplay of Eurocentrism which causes a breakdown of this principle and directly influences self worth to be practised in a restricted existence (Schiele, 1997). Having had direct experience of that restricted existence, Umoja decided to move to an agency with a better opportunity to practice

according to the values she had rediscovered about herself and her purpose, and, where she would not have to fracture her identity in the process.

The presence of Afrikan-Centredness as a working worldview within social work practice could have acted as a counter-balance to the existing practitioner relationships and models of social work practice Umoja was confronted with. Afrikan-Centredness could have ensured a focus, which was not that of exclusively positioning practice on deficiencies and problems with Afrikan people. The presence of Afrikan-Centredness as a working worldview could have acted as a standpoint from which to develop proactive stances which emphasised strengths and facilitate clear understandings of the affects of racism and its privileging of white people, over the realities of Afrikan people (Swigonski, 1996). Without an environment that facilitates that understanding, Afrikan-Origined workers like Umoja will preference environments that support Afrikan self and group-determinatory priorities (Silavwe, 1995).

The effects of the practice environment on Umoja led her to preference a social work service for Afrikan-Origined clients, as lying in the provision of a racial / culturally-relevant social work service.

> *I thought that, that was the only way forward for black workers*
>
> *who were conscious enough to know what they needed to do and*
>
> *... I always seem to be stuck on that idea; that, that was the only*
>
> *way forward for me, to take that angle*

For Umoja, such a service represented one that would be beneficial to the identity and self-determinatory aspirations of Afrikan-Origined clients - a service that had been missing for her. There is a focus on the need for workers in such a service to be able to practice in ways that demonstrated Afrikan-Origined workers had a balanced identity, and were able to articulate identity as part of the social work service. Umoja measures the importance of a culturally-specific service in terms of the benefits she would enjoy from such a service - probably informed by her experiences of what she was not getting in her current practitioner role:

> *It would give me ...peace of mind, I wouldn't have to struggle.*
>
> *I don't think I'd have to struggle with my responsibilities, feelings,*
>
> *my obligations as well, ...I wouldn't have to get caught up in a lot*

of the professionalism that I think is just there to keep social work

there to a certain extent ...I'd get tons of job satisfaction I feel,

although that's not to say that the job holds perfection either

... there are problems I'm sure, many problems ... I feel in order to

give all of yourself, this is all we've got in this work, it's the only way.

For Umoja, the benefits of a racially / culturally-specific service is in its emphasis on the positive experiences gained from working with clients that want to work with Afrikan-Origined practitioners on the basis of a shared identity. However, to achieve the kind of service Umoja talks of, social services would have to change their ways of working. For example, the emphasis for defining the realities of and responses to 'race' would only be seen as appropriate if they were grounded in Afrikan-Centredness, which supports the right of Afrikan people to self-determination and supports their right to take action in their own interests (Schiele, 2000). Afrikan-Centredness would, therefore, not concern itself with white practitioner attempts to make Afrikan people feel better about themselves - Afrikan people can do that for themselves (Asante, 1999). Part of that self-determinatory process would, therefore, function in the expectation of Afrikan people to define their own responses to their needs. Umoja begins that process by identifying what the community would gain if the social work service were reflective of Afrikan-Origined cultural priorities.

... it would drop down a barrier anyway ... it would drop that

barrier that will always exist as long as we are functioning the

way we are now. We would be more accessible. I feel that the

service users would be able to relate to black workers as community

based workers - more leisurely, and we would be able to avoid the

more restrictive and oppressive measures.

Umoja's comments support the view that were the Afrikan-Centred definition of servicing for success a fundamental statement in social work provision and practitioner approaches, the service would work in the interest of Afrikan-Origined problem-solving and success. Evidence of that success would be identified in the fulfilment of obligations and responsibilities to family and community (Daly et al, 1995).

Summary

Umoja had the theme of conformity and its causes and consequences, throughout the recounting of her experiences. An important theme that came up for consideration from Umoja's experiences, was the possibility that as a consequence of subordinating identity as a defence against racism, Afrikan-Origined people chose helping professions as a way to redress the personal costs of their experiences and project aspects of that learning into their practice. Another theme suggested that the influence of a re-connected identity in the type of social work Afrikan-Origined practitioners wanted to practice was certainly important enough for Afrikan-Origined practitioners to base their choice of a future in the profession, in practitioner roles that facilitated the prioritisation of 'race' in social work practice. Umoja's experiences illuminate the importance of having a balanced Afrikan identity as a foundational influence in ensuring congruence between a racial and personal Afrikan identity in all areas of human activity. Umoja starts small, taking on dimensions of identity as they fit with her experiences, ending with a large but manageable decision to leave the district council in search of practice opportunities that would support her personal growth aspirations.

Umoja's story highlighted the impact of Eurocentric disempowerment when imposed via conformity that was allowed to reign unchecked. Additionally, Umoja highlighted the long-term effects disempowerment can have on the ability of Afrikan-Origined people step up to their purpose and responsibilities. However, such experiences can be turned around. Umoja's story is testament to that. The importance of Afrikan-Centredness as a relevant social milieu in Umoja's case is that its presence in her early childhood would have supported Umoja to express her identity in a positive and supportive way. Afrikan-Centred principles in Umoja's education, social work training and practice would also have underpinned Umoja's right to define the quality of life she expected rather than the situation of having these aspects of life determined by white practitioners and an inappropriate worldview. Having said this, Umoja's story also celebrates the importance of personal and community togetherness, as a route to strength and a platform from which, the fear of facing who Afrikan-Origined people are, can be rationalised and overcome via support and individual and collective choices about taking action.

Kujichagulia: Avoid Turning 'Race' into a Burden

Kujichagulia's experiences focused on wanting to avoid turning 'race' in her work due to the expectations of fellow practitioners, into a professional burden, because she had worked in jobs where 'race' had been a focus of contention. 'Race' was not a burden, however, in terms of her views on 'race' as a fundamental aspect of her identity, and views of the lived reality of Afrikan-Origined people in the district. Indeed, was where she introduced herself:

> *from the age of 19 I went into youth work which was very much*
> *a black community* [thing], *but before that I was very much into*
> *people.*

Kujichagulia said nothing about her childhood experiences, seemingly having decided that aged nineteen, was where she wanted to begin her life story. I had known of Kujichagulia through a relative connection between our extended families but Kujichagulia had obviously not seen this as a barrier to her participation in the research. Consequently, I had thought she would begin the interview at the same point as Umoja, focusing on childhood experiences. But Kujichagulia's insistence at beginning her life story at nineteen indicated that some other influence was at play.

Kujichagulia's silence was the first test of the fit of the Agwamba model with regard to dealing with participant silences. I reflected back on the model, which I had intended as a model that enabled the research process. Thinking about the likely consequence of pursuing an answer from Kujichagulia, I recognised that through the Agwamba model I did not need to force a response to the question and, that even silence had its answer. I decided to pursue the interpretation of that silence through the Centring Group as it was a consideration that I, and not Kujichagulia had to account for. The outcome of my discussions with the Centring Group entitled 'Echoes of the Heart', are noted in chapter 5.

Having begun her life story at nineteen, indicating her interest in working with people, Kujichagulia then spoke about the experiences that informed her decision to go into social work. She said:

At the age of twenty-three I dearly wanted to foster. It was a thing
about me to foster or adopt someone else's child - another black child.
My partner was in social work and he actually said rather than adopt
or foster someone else's child, work in it first because he had a lot of
anxieties about me taking somebody in, who he had worked with... I
quickly got involved with the help of my partner who steered me in the
direction of residential social work and I started from there...

Given that Kujichagulia had said nothing about her childhood influences, it was too much of an inference to suggest that her strength of interest in the helping professions was linked to the childhood impacts of Eurocentric disempowerment, as had been the suggestion in Umoja's story. That said, Kujichagulia's desire to support the 'black' community and generally help people, had informed her choices about the professional career she pursued, locating herself in residential services as a way to gain experience of caring for 'black' children in Care. I thought about the fit of the emerging theme of helping professions as career choices - as a particular response to racism. I decided that the information Kujichagulia had given was not enough to make the same inferences I had made with Umoja, although in a similar way to Umoja, Kujichagulia's experiences were beginning to influence the data, regarding the effect of strong racial and personal identity on employment experiences. That strength of identity appeared in Kujichagulia's employment in residential social work, where Kujichagulia began to question the reasons for her appointment to her post, and the seriousness with which 'race' was dealt with in the service:

I noticed I was being used because there were two black workers
drafted in at one point ... This was the first time that we realised
that we were not taken on purely because we were good at our jobs,
but simply because we were black. It became quite evident that we
were resources to spread around and make better use of. I moved
on from this particular home... By the time I left [the next home]
we had [several] black workers in there that were not afraid of backing
me up in the way of support... The support that was received enabled
me to get certain things passed on behalf of black people ... the young
people in the home never again got away with using racist remarks
against another black person or staff. This was not enough for me ... I

*had to get out but did not want to leave social work. I wanted to get the
qualification to do something else.*

For Kujichagulia, the thought of having been drafted into the service because of her
'race' rather than her expertise as a practised youth and community worker, was the
inference she utilised to challenge the way 'black' workers were treated in the service. The
strength of conviction that underpinned her actions is supported by Kujichagulia's firm
understanding of how she and her fellow 'black' colleagues should expect to be treated.
The success with which she was able to achieve change in her workplace suggested that
she was confident in her concerns, and in the legitimacy of her suggestions for remedy.
Kujichagulia's experiences are supported by Rooney (1981) as reported in chapter one of
my thesis, where the practice of recruiting 'black' workers for organisational ends was
equated to the negative messages 'black' staff received about how they were valued as a
resource. Rooney (1981) also suggested that the recruitment of staff in this way was racist
and tokenistic in its creation of an organisational impression of change, whilst
simultaneously using 'black' staff to consolidate a resistance to organisational change.
Reflecting on Kujichagulia's experiences using the Agwamba model's stance on
Eurocentrism brought a sense of inevitability to the existence of the racism Kujichagulia
experienced because of my feeling that white practitioners in her service had established
and justified their vision of residential social work based on Eurocentric priorities.
Because of the propensity for disempowerment in Eurocentric priorities, the potential
existed, for white practitioners to inflict strategies aimed at deliberate suppression of the
power and potential of Afrikan people by legitimising and institutionalising inhumane and
person-limiting values and actions (Schiele, 1996), as was Kujichagulia's experience.

Chapter one references the views of authors whose stance was that 'black' staff
could play a positive role in social work. However, despite this position there was little
evidence coming from 'black' staff about positive experiences in social work. Although
Kujichagulia was able to achieve some positive change in her service the slow pace of
change was not enough for her, influencing her decision to leave the service for something
better. Kujichagulia's decision to leave, fits with the Afrikan-Centred analysis aspect of
the Agwamba model which suggests that in order for Afrikan people to free themselves
from the oppressed and marginalised positions they are expected to occupy, they first have
to conceive of themselves as having the right to do this. They must then begin to
reconstruct themselves independently of Eurocentric determinants (Nobles, 1976). The

strength of identity Kujichagulia brought with her into residential services I believe, determined her ability to think independently of her service's priorities. The emphasis of her actions to determine the position she felt 'black' staff should occupy evidences that far from Kujichagulia needing to reconstruct her identity, the strength of her identity informed changes in the service. Like Umoja, Kujichagulia references the important role played by the support of other 'black' colleagues, principally in the force they added to her desire for change. Umoja only accessed this type of support when she entered social work education. Indicative, perhaps, of the differences in identity strengths between Kujichagulia and Umoja - influencing their beliefs surrounding the role identity strength can have in determining how Afrikan-Origined people are able to be assertive or are oppressed into limiting their potential (Ani, 1994).

The significance of 'black' social workers providing support for / to each other in the agency does much to inform the necessity of white practitioners and managers to challenge their own assumptions and stereotypes about the presence of 'black' workers in numbers and implied effects on the practice environment (Rooney, 1981). Similarly, Eurocentric individualised, specialised, task-centred approaches to problem-solving, serve to further isolate Afrikan-Origined social workers from more relevant approaches to healing. Ani (1994) argues that the power of the racial and personal identity of white people in white institutions was such, that its ability to impose acceptance on others was a major determinant of life chances. Additionally, the strength and support of Afrikan identity that Afrikan people had, prior to and during contact with white institutions, would influence the degree of trauma experienced via Eurocentric disempowerment. Contrasting Umoja and Kujichagulia's experience gives us an insight into the basis of Ani's concerns. Umoja presenting as having to subsume her identity in a self-limiting way; whilst Kujichagulia's strength of identity informed her desire to work with and protect the interests of Afrikan-Origined people as if it were a right. Kujichagulia, further using her identity strength to underpin her expectations of right conduct on 'race', and the pace at which change should occur. Despite these differences, it is clear that Umoja and Kujichagulia's experiences of the importance of identity in their lives were more similar than dissimilar. What affected the difference in outcomes for them however, was the support they received to enable them to step fully into the validity and right to be Afrikan-Origined. The literature referenced in chapter one of my thesis, did not account for the need for white social workers to recognise the importance of supporting the right to

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Afrikan-Origined identities as defined by Afrikan-Origined people. Rather, attempts to develop a social work service inclusive of Afrikan-Origined identity, instead promoted priorities set by white people and therefore, delivered outcomes that were not beneficial to Afrikan-Origined people.

The next milestone in Kujichagulia's life was her entry into social work education. I wanted to explore whether Kujichagulia's strength of identity would inform the quality of the learning environment she expected, and if not, what steps she took to remedy the situation. Here, Kujichagulia talks about the environment she met when she began her social work training:

> *When I went onto the course there were five other black workers*
> *which I already knew. We had a lot of power from that course but*
> *what we did not know was* [it was] *not enough to force white people*
> *to listen to us...*

For Kujichagulia, the immediate stance is to see the potential for achieving change with the support of 'black' students on the course. Given Kujichagulia's employment history, it was not surprising that Kujichagulia was concerned about the limitations of achieving change in an academic institution dominated by white people. Whilst Umoja's experience of having a 'black' support group on her course was one of revitalising her towards reclaiming her identity, Kujichagulia came to social work academia already clear about her racial and personal identity. This she evidenced, by her statements regarding her expectations about the handling of 'race' issues on her course. Kujichagulia was also aware that the strength of shared experiences on 'race' issues, with other 'black' students, was not enough however, to 'force' white people to listen to 'black' people's concerns, as a step to achieving change.

Nakayama & Krizek (1999) suggest that the situation of 'black' people needing to force white people to listen to them is one explained by the notion of position and how the life experiences of white people have served to exert force on everyone else. Nakayama & Krizek suggest that it has been the ability of white people to control the power that resides in their discursive space which has lead to white people being able to maintain that position over a period of time. Further, Afrikan people need to deal with the intellectual colonialism that has lead to the incarceration of Afrikan minds, perhaps facilitating a reliance by Afrikan people, on the same restrictors of their place, for self-determinatory

opportunities (Karenga, 1993). Karenga (1993) adds that the liberation of a congruent Afrikan identity is unthinkable unless Afrikan people can express liberation not just as an intellectual possibility but also as a social situation and practice, concluding that Afrikan people are unlikely to achieve what they are unable to perceive. In an environment where white privilege is institutionalised and taken for granted, strategies that do not demand that white people dismantle the structures of that privilege will serve to further entrench experiences of inferiority felt by 'black' people (Stage, 1999). As noted in chapter two, such structures would serve to further essentialise the primacy, priority and culture represented by Eurocentrism.

However, Afrikan people cannot wait for the dismantling of Eurocentrism as a liberationary strategy argues Ani (1994), suggesting that the focus must be on approaches that prioritise the interests of Afrikan people. Similarly, Afrikan-Centredness could do much to support white social work practitioners and educators to examine the dynamics of their approach to social work, by providing the frameworks for white practitioners to examine the impact of difference as expressed and translated into social work responses, via worldview. Additionally, Afrikan-Centred practitioners' are expected to focus on interpreting difference as a positive learning experience and prioritisation of pluralism without hierarchy, as a contributor to healthy human development would be the model outcome of such examination (Asante, 1999; Schiele, 1999).

Stage's (1999) position also suggests that Kujichagulia's dependence on forcing white people to listen to 'black' students as a transformatory strategy would merely serve to further empower the white students on the course. On Umoja's social work course for example, white students cried and got angry. Similarly, on Kujichagulia's course, white students were able to assume the place of 'victims' or 'survivors' of 'race':

> *First experience of knowing that we were on a course with people*
> *who were blatant racists was that ... they* [white students] *stated*
> *that they were frightened of us. ... in terms of adding on racism -*
> *what they tried to do was to incorporate it into the structure but*
> *they could not do a lot with it because people were frightened.*
> *Any time it came to a head people was scared. They kept saying*
> *'we feel this' 'we feel that' - threatened by what we were saying*
> *and 'you are coming across aggressive' We got all those on the*
> *course but at the end of the day, we did not care. They had to listen*

*to it and hear it and some students did not turn up for compulsory
sessions*

For Kujichagulia, wanting to pursue a path of having her identity validated on a
social work course led to her being labelled as aggressive, and to the creation of an
environment that supported white students to opt out of learning about 'race'. Amer &
Bryan (1996), Dominelli (1988) and 'black' students at the 'Black Students Voice' (1992)
conference noted the frustrations 'black' students faced in their attempts to complete social
work training courses. Also noted was the non-existence of mechanisms aimed at
supporting 'black' students as a group offering each other support to deal with the racism
they face. Support groups, therefore, perform the important task of legitimising the right of
Afrikan-Origined students to align themselves to their racial identity first rather than to a
social work identity - this process in itself acting as a defence against racism (Amer &
Bryan, 1996; Dominelli, 1988). From an Afrikan-Centred perspective, the importance of
racial identity is vital to the need to link education to the aspirations and agendas of
Afrikan-Origined communities (Mooijiman, 1995). This would ensure education was
relevant, and would strengthen the role of education in the creation and unification of
liberationary agendas. Mooijiman's (1995) Afrikan-Centred model of education would not
prioritise strategies that need to force white people to listen to Afrikan-Origined people's
concerns since the intention of education would be to establish integral links between
educational purposes and the priorities of Afrikan-Origined communities. For
Kujichagulia, it may have been better to seek change in a way that prioritised the role of
the Afrikan-Origined community in demanding that change. Never-the less, Kujichagulia's
identity strengths, her focus on community and on transforming her learning environment,
do infer an Afrikan-Centred impetus to Kujichagulia's thoughts and actions. Further, the
personal and phenomenological benefits of identity strength can be clearly contrasted with
the experiences of Umoja, for whom, the social work course opened up for the first time,
the potential of a balanced Afrikan identity to underpin a different experience of 'race' in
the learning environment.

Kujichagulia' for example, extended her thinking to look at the behaviour of
lecturers towards her work:

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I found that any time I wrote about race or chose the subject

race, my assignments were down-marked every time. Every time

I raised it as an issue the reply would be that I did not qualify it.

... It did not matter what tool I used to prove a point I would never

prove a point to get my marks up. When the assignment was on

anything else but race my marks were fine.

For Kujichagulia, her experiences on her social work course suggested that she was different, particularly with regard to the way she was treated. She noted that her 'race' was a barrier to her achievement of academic excellence and fair treatment, not least in the way she was not given academic credit on her own knowledge. Instead, her 'race' was used as a tool to infer underachievement which, once again, could have turned 'race' into a burden for Kujichagulia, were it not for her strength of identity. Kujichagulia's experiences also infer that lecturers had a key role in determining the values, students took away from social work education. It is concerning that Afrikan-Origined students should think that 'race' infers difference of treatment in academia. But, of further concern, is how the effects of perceptions of unfair practice could 'colour' students' expectations of social work courses and students' beliefs about their expected contributions to future social work practice. Such effects could mean the failure of lecturers and courses to adequately prepare students for practice, as was the inference in Umoja's case. This makes Azibo's (1996) position on challenging the paradox of Afrikan students being trained in a profession whose centric ideologies reflect Eurocentric priorities, an important one. Kujichagulia gave an example of the consequences of this paradox in action when she said:

I can remember quite clearly ... There was one subject on the

'Poor Law' and I knew that it was not ... [my] specialist subject

and got forty-five per cent and could not believe it... and asked

myself why I was expecting more than that. And it hit me strongly,

was that they said that I was dyslexic. I started to act as I was dyslexic

- so the consequence of that resulted in my next assignment was down

as well. I quickly acted on that and took it back to college and got

someone who was experienced in English to look over it. They told me

there was nothing wrong with my assignments and that the marks were

too low and that they should not have marked you like that because there

is nothing wrong with you. I honestly thought the tutors were experienced

in that sort of thing - coming into contact with dyslexics all the time and that
I must be wrong. The so-called dyslexic was just typing errors! So
I'm sure that people use those standards tools to actually make you
think you have something wrong with you.

For Kujichagulia, the expectation was that she would be challenged on 'race' and she was ready for that. However, the powerlessness Kujichagulia experienced came via a challenge to her ability and academic performance. Kujichagulia was tested for dyslexia without being fully informed about the process, and was totally unprepared for being labelled 'dyslexic'. The impact of this led her to begin to act as if the label were real and that somehow, discounting her successful pre-academic experiences, she had become a student with learning difficulties. In what seems an appalling abuse of power and status, social work lecturers undermined Kujichagulia's power through the use of ability-measurement tools. This would certainly fall within the range of racialised responses students could expect to experience on social work courses because of the way anti-racist perspectives had failed to dislodge the power of Eurocentrism to impose values and place, on 'black' students (Penketh, 1998). Further consequences of this paradox in action would suggest a need for Afrikan-Origined students to establish support mechanisms that would do more than just allow them to survive their experiences of academic institutions. Let us not be under any misunderstanding over this matter. There is nothing deficient or inadequate about being dyslexic. However, the way a person is introduced to the possibility that they might have a learning difficulty, surely must have a bearing on how they embrace their future potential learning abilities. Social work educators charged with the responsibility of promoting anti-discriminatory practice as a route to good social work practice, send out the wrong message in actions typified by Kujichagulia's experiences. 'Black' people already face the power of white privilege extending to the power to name and label 'other' and define 'other's' realities. Further, white privilege abdicates responsibility for the perpetuation of tenets and actions that underpin racism and racist practices, such as the imposition of racist stereotypes, on the realities of Afrikan-Origined people (Marty, 1999). Had it not been for the identity strength Kujichagulia carried with her into her social work training, 'race' could have become negatively internalised, with debilitating effects on Kujichagulia's academic experiences and life-chances.

Kujichagulia's experiences raised an issue that had not previously appeared in the literature regarding the direct action of social work educators to undermine the confidence

and ability of 'Afrikan-Origined students. The literature had referenced approaches such as colour-blind and assimilationist practices, which although had the outcome of reinforcing racial and cultural differences, did not appear from the literature, to have been direct action policies. What Kujichagulia referenced, however, was a direct attempt by social work educators, to use 'standards tools' to infer that Kujichagulia was a student with problems. Wander et al (1999) argue that in an environment where the emphasis is on 'race' and not on whiteness, white privilege can enjoy dynamic functions because of the power to impose identity on 'cultural others', without having to identify themselves as racist. Clearly, then, white educators need to focus on strategies that address the bases from which the power to label emerges as a response to an unethical refusal to know 'cultural others' on their cultural terms (Marty, 1999). Social work educators must also focus on enhancing positive potential in all students by moving away from individualised and pathologically orientated responses, which are condemned by Afrikan-Centredness in favour of approaches that are congruent to the interpretative life of Afrikan people (Asante, 1999; Schiele, 1996). This is what the Agwamba model attempts to do, albeit with a narrow focus on research. The approach to doing research extends to the inclusion of 'consequential-affectiveness' as a representation of a responsibility to ensure that practice with research participants is ethical, transparent and accountable. It is a responsibility that extends far beyond the immediate, and can extend further than its 'race' and culturally-specific use in the Agwamba model. 'Consequential-affectiveness' in the practice of social work educators would improve the likelihood that educators would practice with a degree of conscience about the consequences of their actions. My belief is, that if practitioners have nothing to hide they have nothing to fear from 'consequential-affectiveness' as a tool to achieving the human harmony Afrikan-Centredness espouses (Asante, 1999, 1980; Schiele, 2000).

Kujichagulia then moved to describing her return from her social work course into employment. Having harnessed her identity strengths in both her employment and academic experiences, I was particularly interested in how Kujichagulia's experiences inferred on her stance in employment. Kujichagulia not surprisingly, had a direct way of referencing who she was in relation to the job she was currently doing, describing her practice position in the following way:

> ... as a black worker I felt quite powerful and it was the first time
> I realised how powerful I was because I was in a position where I

was the specialist worker in that post but a black specialist - which
was a really good position to be in... I realised it was more than just
me ... and how I got what I wanted and moved services on for black
people and how I could actually input to make a difference for black people...

Kujichagulia returned to a job with a similar need for developing 'race' matters, to
the job she had done prior to attending her social work course - except that she now had a
legitimate right to pursue positive 'race' outcomes as part of her job. For Kujichagulia, the
need to justify herself as had been her past experiences was replaced by the 'power' to
legitimately effect change and make a difference in the lives of Afrikan-Origined people.
The power to effect meaningful change for Afrikan-Origined people added meaning to
Kujichagulia's practitioner experiences. This was in contrasted to the lack of meaning
Umoja experienced in her practice, and the effect on Umoja, resulting in her termination of
employment. Kujichagulia showed no effect from her encounters with her previous
managers where her 'race' was undermined for organisational purposes; or in terms of her
academic experiences where her 'race' was associated with threat, pathological labelling
and unfair academic treatment. Rather, Kujichagulia's experiences highlighted I believe,
the difference in experiences that accompany states of consciousness linked to identity.
Umoja's experiences for example, changed, when her consciousness about the importance
of her Afrikan-Origined identity changed from a state of unawareness to one of intuitive
awareness. Kujichagulia's identity was one of intuitive awareness informed by principles
that were Afrikan-Centred although she did not label them as such. Kujichagulia clearly
demonstrated the importance her culture and identity had in defining her realities and
ordering her priorities, in a similar way to Ani's (1994) expressions in chapter two. The
strength of Kujichagulia's identity expressed through the power and legitimacy of her
actions served to limit the effect on Kujichagulia because of the strength of her
psychological (i.e. racial) 'blackness'. Azibo (1996a) and Semaj (1996) see psychological
identity strengths as manifest through 'race'-specific attributes that play a major role in the
personal self-maintenance and self-preservation orientations of Afrikan-Origined people. It
is Kujichagulia's strength throughout her racialised encounters which it is argued,
contributed to her determination to practice self-sufficiency and agency on both an
individual and collective level (Addae, 1996). Kujichagulia's stance also fit with that
expected of myself as the researcher as expressed through the Agwamba model. My
emphasis has been on demonstrating the outcomes of identity strengths and the role of

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consciousness in action as reinforcing the importance of relevance in the lives of Afrikan-Origined people.

Kujichagulia's experiences of the priority of 'race' similarly informed her views about the quality of the district's social work services for the Afrikan-Origined community. Given her identity strength, I was interested in how Kujichagulia would construct relevance into her vision of social work services. For Kujichagulia, social work provision for the Afrikan-Origined community was inappropriate. She made the following observations in support of her opinion:

> *... to a lot of our black service users we are not offering the*
> *service we should be... Our black community do not trust us*
> *because they think we have adopted white Eurocentric ways*
> *of working...*

If Afrikan-Origined workers are all that is needed to promote an image of an appropriate social work service then Kujichagulia's inferences, that having Afrikan-Origined workers is not enough, should be noted. Rooney (1981) makes similar assertions, concluding that it is simply not enough to recruit 'black' workers to work with the 'black' community unless they are from the community in question, where they would have demonstrated the ability to act in ways that supported their community's calls for agency. The workers would then have sufficient calibre to take on the contradictions in their social work service - able to reference such contradictions alongside the interests of their communities. Additionally, Kujichagulia's inference of services needing to be representative of the Afrikan-Origined community might come to fruition if Afrikan-Origined workers were not expected to prioritise Eurocentric cultural expressions of linear logic in social work. It is a logic that examines Afrikan-Origined people as individuals who function differently to the cultural expressions of their communities (Schiele, 1997). Kujichagulia's inferences had a bearing on her vision of an appropriate social work service for Afrikan-Origined people:

> *First, I would take away my post because having a post like mine*
> *makes it easy for the authority to say at any big meeting - that we*
> *have an advisor advising ... so we are actually used as something*
> *on a pedestal ... We are the people yet the service that our people*

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are needing takes more than me to serve ... I need to be replaced by

a team of professional / specialist black workers. I would love to see

something where a black client can go and deal with housing and deal

with all aspects of social care. I do not want that to be separate from the

mainstream service and that's the problem.

For Kujichagulia, her original concerns about her being used for the organisation's purposes, resurface as a backdrop to her ideas about appropriate social work provision. Kujichagulia sees the development of a professional / specialist team of 'black' workers as adequately representing her service expectations for the community. Such a service Kujichagulia states would allow the community to access relevant services from one site. Kujichagulia then suggests additional factors, which arbitrate in favour of the social work service being housed within current area office provision:

We need to be part and parcel of a service that we need to be

inputting... meetings that happen weekly, we need to have a

management structure that inputs directly at social services managers

... You have the Elderly, Disabilities, Mental Health divisions - where

is the black division? We do not have a black service and could easily

take over one of those areas. When we go and get qualified, we get

qualified to work with white people, so if we set up a service for black

people we can also service white. It might be that white people might

choose to come into a black service, we are not saying we are exclusive

to black people because that would be very dangerous - by that I mean

about resources and monies. Social services is exclusive for white people

... they are the ones who get the money. What we would be saying is that

we would be the first port of call for any black person, then if they decide

to go somewhere else, that is their choice.

Kujichagulia's belief is that whilst a culturally-specific service is the most relevant service, the service would not be viable unless it was part of existing traditional provision where currently all credibility, recognition, resources, theoretical and managerial expertise is located. By locating the services in a traditional site, Kujichagulia also suggests that a specialist group of 'black' workers would have to provide services to white people to ensure that professional lifelines would not be severed by practitioners and managers in

traditional social work services. To be credible it seems, any culturally-specific service for the Afrikan-Origined community would also have to extend itself to servicing white people or run the risk of being marginalised and under-resourced. It is a valid concern given the resourcing issues I raised on page 34 of my thesis. Surprisingly, it is at the point of defining a service for the Afrikan-Origined community that Kujichagulia begins to doubt the Afrikan potential to command professional respect, enough to ensure fairness in treatment. She starts from a point of saying quite rightly, that social work providers can not rely on singular Afrikan-Origined people to provide major social work services to Afrikan-Origined communities. Kujichagulia then outlines her vision of how the service should be constructed in order to be relevant to the needs of the community. However, she then goes on to give a number of reasons for the placing of services within mainstream provision, by implication, giving the impression that she does not see the survival of her vision outside of boundaries determined by white practitioners and managers.

Kujichagulia's vision can represent the limitations within which Afrikan people can conceive of agency, when the extent to which Eurocentrism dominates the agency landscape is not fully understood and explored. However, this does not detract from the self-determinatory vision Kujichagulia expresses in her comments. Such is the power of strength and projection that underpins Eurocentrism that it assumes authority over all things giving the impression that little can function outside of its control (Ani, 1994). Whilst Eurocentrism does not make this known explicitly, neither does Eurocentrism encourage 'other' priorities unless they occur within its boundaries (Asante, 1999). So, it is understandable that Kujichagulia sees Afrikan-Origined social work advances taking place within the boundaries of Eurocentric advances. However, Afrikan-Centred approaches in areas like social work, can militate against responses that promote limited agency of Afrikan people (Asante, 1993; Schiele, 1997). This can be achieved by ensuring the cultural values of Afrikan people have sufficient inclusion as valid theoretical bases, enough to develop social work practice models. Simultaneously, Afrikan people's responses must move on from reactions to oppression which serve to alienate Afrikan people from essential parts of themselves, to responses that reflect liberation and agency as Afrikan possibilities and lived Afrikan realities (Asante, 1993).

Summary

Kujichagulia had identity strengths that contributed to her experiences of racism not becoming a burden on her life experiences. Kujichagulia's experiences highlighted the benefits of a congruent racial and personal identity in the struggle to rise above racist experiences. The value of identity strength can be seen in the differing effects identity can have on the way in which Afrikan people are affected by racist experiences - visible in a small way, when we compare Kujichagulia's life-story with Umoja's life-story. Kujichagulia's strength of identity also demonstrated that Afrikan-Centred literature's focus on Afrikan consciousness as an influence on Afrikan agency, is a focus that can be validated experientially. Kujichagulia's experiences of racism in her employment and whilst on her social work course also served to highlight the ability of Eurocentrism to adapt itself to challenging Afrikan aspirations of independence and agency. However, her use of identity as a defence ensured that Kujichagulia was able to challenge the consequences of those racial experiences. Kujichagulia was also able to express a combination of identity strength and positive racial beliefs in her vision of appropriate service provision for the Afrikan-Origined community.

The ability of white educational and fieldwork practitioners to adapt Eurocentrism is reason enough, why identity strength is fundamentally important as a both a defence and challenge and, also, as an initiator of self-determinatory action. Here, Afrikan-Centredness is not antagonistic towards Eurocentrism, suggesting instead that social work educators, practitioners and managers would benefit greatly from Afrikan-Centred pluralistic approaches to valuing difference. Additionally, the profession would benefit from its representatives' exploration of their expressions of value systems, via their lived experiences of worldviews.

Ujima: A Problem Shared is a Heartache Spared

Ujima's story has a title that speaks to some extent, to the stance she took during the research process. From the outset Ujima made it clear that she wished to be involved in the research process but did not wish her views to be recorded in any way. When I asked if she could give me a reason for this, she replied that the racism she had suffered made it very difficult for her to trust anyone. And, whilst she was not insinuating that the research process or myself as the researcher, had or would breach confidentiality in any way, she did not wish to leave any concrete evidence of her views with anyone. Ujima had also taken the decision to leave the district council such was her strength of feeling, citing this as further reason not to have her comments recorded.

Ujima took the time to come to the research interview because she had a contribution to make, albeit not in the way I had expected. Out of respect for her contribution I wanted to give readers a flavour of her concerns - on the basis that the experiences I noted on Ujima's behalf are understood as my words and not hers. Ujima's experiences were also useful in illuminating how the Afrikan-Centred paradigm can be applied to situations where experiences have been internalised in such a way as to pose a detriment to the wellbeing of Afrikan people. I had already experienced having to ensure that the Agwamba model was flexible enough to account for Kujichagulia's self-imposed silences. The Centring Group had given advice on accounting for silence using the literature and / or my understanding as the researcher. Given the role of 'consequential-affectiveness', I felt this advice was enough to allow me to express the sentiment emanating from Ujima's stance. Ujima, not having given a full interview or permission for her views to be recorded in full is reflected in the length of her interview, and the absence of in-depth analysis of Ujima's experiences. My record of Ujima's views are taken from field notes I recorded after her interview.

Ujima said nothing about her childhood experiences insisting that she had come to the interview with something specific to say. Like Umoja, she too was leaving the district council for alternative employment, citing her disillusion with her post and the way the district council's social services department dealt with racism. Ujima provided the following information:

She felt very disillusioned. She felt she had given several years
of very good social work practice in an attempt to spearhead service
development for Afrikan-Origined clients, and had been thwarted at
every turn. She stated that she had come into social work after hearing
that the district council was one which supported Afrikan-Origined
social workers who wanted to work with Afrikan-Origined clients. But,
soon after arrival, she felt that the social services department in general,
was against any development of such services. And, further, that because
of her insistence on pushing her desire to work with Afrikan-Origined clients,
and in her opinion, being seen by white colleagues and managers as being too
radical, she felt she had been penalised when applying for promotion to
managerial positions. As a consequence of her experiences she had decided to
leave the district council having been offered a double promotion with another
social services department. She was not sorry to be leaving her post.

It was hard not to be affected by Ujima' s distress, particularly since she seemed so
angry and bitter about her experiences. It was somewhat of a comfort to Ujima that she
had managed to get a position that seemed to validate her belief that she had indeed been
good enough to be a manager in social work. I found myself wondering, however, how her
experiences might have shaped and influenced her ability to be open to the possibilities of
her new employment challenges. Unlike Umoja, Ujima did not strike me as leaving her
post on good terms with herself. Umoja had reconnected with herself and sought the kind
of employment opportunity which would further her journey of rediscovery of herself and
her identity. Ujima, however, seemed angry and bitter, giving very little away about the
purpose of acquiring alternative employment, except to talk about the move in promotional
terms. Yet, it seemed from her stance, Ujima had been denied something so fundamental
that it had caused her to feel the need to test out her personal value and worth via the route
of seeking alternative employment.

From Ujima's position, her employment experience did not validate who she was
and did not make her feel valued as a person. Given Ujima's belief in her own ability and
her experiences, it is understandable that she reached the 'race' conclusion in terms of
identifying reasons for her difference in treatment. Rejection can be one of the most
painful things to deal with; but treatment informed by racism is additionally painful and

distressing, since racism is brutal and strikes at the heart of Afrikan people's validity as human beings.

The ability of Afrikan-Centredness to translate a shared unity of origin and culture brings strength to the struggle of Afrikan people. Commonality of struggle inspires a congruence in identity strengths that provide strong identity-validation experiences (Asante, 1990). An Afrikan-Centred paradigm would have supported Ujima to validate her right to be herself, and to be accepted as herself without judgement on the basis of her 'race'. Feeling like she belonged, or, that her concerns were understood from a relevant framework, may have served as a great support for Ujima. It is understandable that Ujima should think that judgements were being made about her professional abilities given how her professional practice had soured. She therefore sought to vindicate herself by obtaining the kind of employment that would send out a clear message about her abilities. That she should do this, is in itself not solely the issue. But, that she should do it at such potential cost to herself, is the real burden. The power of Eurocentrism to define Afrikan reality contributed to Ujima's assumption that validation and recognition of her professional expertise lay in seeking alternative employment. Again, like Umoja, Ujima's vision of a social work service did not fit in with the aspirations of her fellow practitioners and as such, Ujima's loss to the district council, further denied the district's social work service of expertise. Unlike Umoja, however, Ujima made no reference to whether she had received support of any kind, raising the question of whether support from other 'Afrikan-Origined' colleagues, would have turned Ujima's resistance to the racism she felt she experienced, into a positive experience that illuminated the priority she gave to her identity.

Chapter one, made reference to the difficulties 'black' workers experienced when working in social work departments. Suffice to say, that white social work practitioners need to examine their own attitudes surrounding their expectations of Afrikan-Origined social workers in order to ensure that practitioner expectations and practice environments do not suffocate the potential of Afrikan-Origined workers. The priority of Afrikan-Centredness, whilst prioritising answers to concerns about Afrikan people, still focuses on the importance of seeking solutions that promote the development of human potential in all people. It is also a model that would assist white practitioners with the task of re-evaluating their attitudes.

Ujamaa: To Be Self or Not - What is The Cost?

Ujamaa approached the interview very much in the same way as Kujichagulia had done, saying very little about her childhood experiences. Having encountered the issue of silence in Kujichagulia's interview, I merely added Ujamaa's silence and my role perhaps as a contributor to that silence, to my discussions with the Centring Group. Interestingly, Ujamaa like Kujichagulia, was another participant with whom I had a distant relative connection, who chose to begin her interview away from detailing specific childhood experiences. That the use of silence should have appeared again, made me consider whether my familiarity with participants' lives was something that I had not fully accounted for in my methodology. In fact, Ujamaa's responses to the interview questions were quite short and crisp, and although she answered the remaining questions, she quite firmly drew the line in respect of how much information she intended to give.

I had ensured the Agwamba model was flexible enough to incorporate participant silences - but this was something else. Clearly, Ujamaa and Kujichagulia, wanted to take part in the research - both had turned up and had given interviews. My piloting of the research with the Black Workers Support Group, plus the pre-interview work I had done with the participants had also contributed to Kujichagulia and Ujamaa's participation in the research. This I felt, validated the Agwamba Model. Yet, both had decided to keep aspects of their life story out of the interview - and that I felt, said something about the issue of trust with regard to my being the researcher. That, perhaps, both participants may have chosen to share their childhood experiences had I not been the researcher. There was nothing statutory about the research I was conducting. I could not enforce responses from Kujichagulia and Ujamaa. Therefore their silences were just as valid a response as all other responses in the research. I did feel, however, that I needed to revisit the Afrikan-Centred paradigm to explore how to better deal with the dynamics of trust that may arise in researcher-participant relationships. Similar concerns regarding the dynamics of trust may also infer on social worker-client relationships amongst Afrikan people. Both were issues I felt the literature on Afrikan-Centredness did not take full account of.

That said, Ujamaa began her interview citing her enjoyment of working with people, as a contributory experience to her choice of career:

I always thought that there was a need to work with people.
I enjoy being around people and always felt as the eldest in the
family, that I took care of my brothers and sister. I felt I had the
gift of helping people and did well.

Ujamaa said nothing about her childhood experiences which might have illuminated her reasons for wanting to helping people, outside of her responsibilities for her siblings - so it was difficult to attribute her beginnings to anything in her interview without my assertions being seen as speculatory. Here, Ujamaa takes us through her route into social work training:

I ended up working in a housing office... because at the time it was
difficult to find jobs. Whilst I was there undertaking clerical duties an
advertisement came through for social services. This was a mass
recruitment for house-parents ... I decided that my needs were best
working with the younger end of the scale i.e. young children ranging
from 5-10 years old ... I did this for three years and then decided that
I could do better than that, that I was worth more than that ... I became
interested in another residential role in a larger establishment where
the ages of the children were mixed... I went for it and got the job as a
senior... I did this role for three years and then decided to move on again
because I thought I needed to keep moving... An independent unit was
setting up for a hostel for young people aged 16-21years old... I was
very pleased with myself as I got the job. Even though I moved from
one place to another, I did various individual training and courses
... Whilst at [the hostel] *I decided to undertake the DipSW course which*
for me was about expanding my knowledge and getting into academic subjects
to develop myself further.

Ujamaa's route into social work was methodical in that she took a stepping-stone approach to fulfilling her need to work with people. Again, it was difficult to comment on other factors that might have influenced the methodical route Ujamaa took. Ujamaa had a gift of helping people and chose employment opportunities that enabled her to practice her gift. That gift of helping people continued to play a role in the practice environments Ujamaa chose as her route into social work, although, again, it would have been

speculatory to suggest that this was by means of compensating for oppressive treatment Ujamaa may have encountered earlier in her life experiences.

It would seem that Ujamaa was able to progress freely through employment choices, receiving whatever learning opportunities available to her, appearing open to everything available. But, in a similar way to Kujichagulia, Ujamaa encountered difficulties during her employment:

> *I started on a very low grade and worked extremely hard to*
> *prove myself, and to prove yourself you had to fit in ... I found*
> *myself working like the white workers to ensure that I was not*
> *left out or isolated, because I found that black colleagues that*
> *had done that at the very early stages of joining social services,*
> *had found themselves 'outcasts' and not getting very far up the ladder*
> *... I did not rock the boat too much either. I sort of*
> *fitted in nicely.*

For Ujamaa the need to prove herself meant that she did not want to focus on her identity or on anything that would make her difference a focus of attention. That need to seek acceptance meant that, like Umoja's strategy of survival via conformity, Ujamaa developed a survival strategy that erased her identity to make herself acceptable to her white colleagues. Ujamaa notes her reasons for not focusing on self, as a decision to guard against doing anything that would bring negative attention to herself as a result of prioritising her identity. She would have had plenty of reason to believe this, given the treatment of Afrikan-Origined people's struggles against racism and oppression, discussed in chapter one of this thesis. Afrikan-Centred literature (Ani, 1994; Addae, 1995; Asante, 1980) and social work literature (Amer & Bryan, 1996; Dominelli, 1988; John-Baptiste, 2000; Schiele, 2000) notes that it is not unusual to find Afrikan people who believe that subsuming their identity into white identity is a survival strategy that offers the best chance of advancement. This is because racialised identities are inextricably entwined with feelings of expectation, anticipation and betrayal from any number of competing attendants (Small, 1994). When the social work profession via its representatives and gatekeepers (practitioners and managers), requests loyalty from Afrikan-Origined people, there are likely to be two responses. Firstly, to fight against it and suffer the costs and consequences - as Kujichagulia had done. Or, to conform as Umoja had done previously, and Ujamaa

was now doing - choosing to 'fit in' rather than risk being an 'outcast'. Ujamaa believed
her whole self was not welcome at work, demonstrated by her choice to eject the parts of
her identity that would be unacceptable in the workplace. And, only bringing to work,
those aspects of herself that she believed would continue to 'fit in' with the expectations of
her white colleagues. The importance of fitting in was associated with doing well and
being able to have a career. The link between assimilation of identity and receipt of social
work services was established in chapter one (Banks, 1997; Cheetham, 1981; Deakin,
1970; Proctor & Davis, 1994). In similar ways to that described by Ujamaa, Afrikan-
Origined people did make changes based on racist stereotypes about themselves (Family
Welfare Association, 1960), by subsuming their identities and minimising their
Afrikanness as an essential aspect of their lives (Ani, 1994; Graham, 1999; Mitchel &
Mitchel-Martin, 1999), in a bid to acquire statuses of acceptability.

Afrikan-Centred literature suggests that Afrikan people and their culture face
constant cues to adapt and cope with powerful Eurocentric cultural cues which define rules
of engagement and validation (Akbar, 1984). Consequently, as long as Afrikan people do
not operate from their centric value base, those with the power to impose norms and values
on Afrikan people will also have the power to determine how Afrikan people speak, when
they speak, how they dress, think and act - for the priorities of others and against
themselves (Azibo, 1996). Again, this demands that white social workers examine the
value base upon which they assume all social workers will practice and all clients will fit
into.

I had already noted the presence of conformity as a key coping strategy in Umoja's
life experiences. Given the similar conformity stance taken by Ujamaa' in her employment,
I wanted to explore whether the theme of conformity remained present in Ujamaa's life
experiences and whether conformity influenced Ujamaa to take on an identity other than
her own. Ujamaa noted the next milestone in her life as her attendance on a social work
course:

> *For me, the idea behind doing the DipSW was getting this*
> *qualification because I knew the way social services is heading*
> *will result in jobs requesting some sort of qualification. The idea*
> *was not to be left behind - be up there with everybody else!*

A pattern of subsuming identity in order to succeed had begun to emerge in Ujamaa's experiences. For Ujamaa, the importance of doing social work remained that of being alongside her white colleagues, via qualities not determined by herself, but by qualities she felt, would be valued by her white colleagues who were above her. Unlike Umoja, however, who was affected by the consequences of conformity, Ujamaa presented as being totally unaffected by her internalised expectation of their being no room for her 'race' in her professional identity. Ujamaa responded as if issues of 'race' had not featured in her experiences at all, continuing to represent her practitioner experiences through a lens of white approval. However, the consequences of Eurocentric cues and values continued to influence Ujamaa's positioning of herself as having to work like her white colleagues in order to be accepted, whilst not drawing any 'race' attention to herself by rocking the 'race' boat. The literature showed that like Kujichagulia, Ujamaa had worked out a definition of success for herself, which was very much located within Eurocentric boundaries of acceptability of cultural and racial 'others'. Such a definition of success, Ani (1994) and Blaut (1993) argue, consequently results in those defined as cultural 'others', perceiving themselves to be more acceptable, the more they are perceived to have accepted European value systems and to have allowed those systems to become firmly rooted in their everyday lives. Not having due regard for the culture of others and its role in presenting distress of Afrikan-Origined people, white social workers need to ask whether they encourage the totality of Afrikan-Origined people's identity to be present in the social work relationship. Whether the priorities and ethical stance of Afrikan-Centredness, can support white practitioners to positively address the issue of how best to service Afrikan-Origined need.

Ujamaa spoke about her time on her social work course, continuing to suggest that she was unaffected by the issue of 'race'. Here she talks about how 'race' issues were dealt with on her social work course:

> *The black perspective was mentioned quite a bit in certain modules,*
> *not all. I do not think that they knew what they were talking about.*
> *I just thought that they had to say it because it was the now word*
> *or the way to go. Because the college was aware of black students*
> *in the room, they felt the need to give the impression that they knew*
> *what they were talking about. And when they were talking to you it*
> *was from a book, not from genuine knowledge.*

For Ujamaa, conformity extends to suggesting unconcern about 'race' as a personal issue on her social work course. Clearly, however, the issue is of some concern to Ujamaa. She notes the approach taken by college lecturers as running counter to her expectations of someone personally affected by the issue as she was. But, Ujamaa continues to distance herself from the issue in line with the survival strategy she first adopted in her workplace. Such is the level of distance of 'race' from herself Ujamaa attempts to portray, it could easily be assumed that she was a concerned white student and not one of the 'black' students affected by the experiences she recounts in the above passage. It seemed, showing she was not 'hung up on 'race' as 'black' people are often accused of being, had assumed prominent place as Ujamaa's public face.

Indeed, it seemed that the longer the interview went on to discuss Afrikan-Origined social work issues as an objective rather than personal concern for Ujamaa, the more freely she was able to comment. Ujamaa still held her position of distance as defence. The following comment demonstrates the point:

Being a black person qualified and what I could do in the event

of a black person coming to me for help, I could help them with

the knowledge. I would not go looking for them, they would need

to know I am about or be in a situation where they could come to me.

Ujamaa's survival strategy of not focusing on 'race' extends to her practitioner work with the Afrikan-Origined community. She would be prepared to offer assistance if Afrikan-Origined people came to her for help. She would not, however, go looking for 'them' as this might suggest to her colleagues that she was over-identifying with 'them' racially. Justification about contact would be much easier to explain, despite Ujamaa's stance typifying the effects felt by Afrikan-Origined social workers in environments that restrict freedom for Afrikan people to come into social work as themselves (Martin & Mitchel-Martin 1995). Martin & Mitchel-Martin (1995) argue that via such restrictions, agencies frustrate the space needed for Afrikan people to take the lead in creating relevant services and service delivery approaches that would facilitate development of culturally-relevant types of helping and healing.

Ujamaa's survival strategy did not reference any use of support groups as Umoja and Kujichagulia had done. Instead, Ujamaa's strategy seemed to result in a kind of compromise of self much in the same way that Ujima had referenced. Indeed, of the seven

participants who engaged in my research, five evidenced the usefulness of 'Afrikan-Origined' support groups, as strengthening their identity and supporting their achievements. Further, Nia the only man in my research cited no differences in the importance he placed on support for himself as an Afrikan-Origined man. Afrikan-Centred literature accounts for Ujamaa and Ujima's stances, as consequences of them working in environments that promote person-limiting values such as individualism, fragmentation, materialism and inordinate competition as the root to acceptance, credibility and professional advancement (Ani, 1994). Consequently, however, Afrikan people suffer a kind of alienation from essential parts of themselves, relative to their worth and sense of self. These aspects of self then become fragile in the face of materialistic emphasis on things like physical appearance, wealth, possessions and education as measures or worth, leading to an increased and pervasive Europeanisation of human consciousness and culture (Schiele, 1996).

What I am not saying here, is that Ujamaa is unhappy. Clearly she found a way to be happy by carving out a survival strategy for herself that did not bring her into conflict with her white colleagues. What I am saying however, is that the Afrikan-Centred paradigm illuminates how powerlessness can impact on the personal lives of Afrikan-Origined people who then prioritise survival against their empowerment priorities. Survivalist tendencies were distinguished by the kind of Eurocentric person-limiting effects highlighted by Ujima and Ujamaa, Ujamaa extending her wish to not practice in traditional front line social work services should they bring her into conflict with the expectations of her white colleagues - suggesting that:

The DipSW for me was about developing my knowledge.

Ujamaa had stuck to her line on 'race' throughout her experiences, and for her it was the right decision - seemingly having resulted in Ujamaa obtaining the kind of practitioner role she was happy with. Surprisingly, however, Ujamaa was prepared to consider what kind of service should be in place for the Afrikan-Origined community, indicating that her professional survival stance had not undermined her wider collective responsibility of concern for the community. Whilst Ujamaa did not think her colleagues would approve of her having an all 'black' caseload suggesting her expertise on 'race', she did comment on the importance of the community having a culturally-specific service which was accessible and private so that:

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people do not necessarily need to know why you are there

Ujamaa raised similar concerns to Kujichagulia, regarding the development of appropriate services for the Afrikan-Origined communities. Both thought it likely that the absence of Afrikan-Origined social workers and community perceptions of cultural inappropriateness had contributed to there being a lack of trust by the Afrikan-Origined community, in current social work provision. Ujamaa made the following statement:

> *I do not think that African Caribbeans* [get] *so much of a service*
> *in social services because if they did they would be here and you*
> *would see a lot of them. I wonder about that and wonder what's*
> *that all about. I've tried putting myself in their shoes - would I knock*
> *on social services' door. Would I put forward a referral of my child?*
> *No thank you! Overall, there are not many black workers around to*
> *convince them that they would get a good deal.*

For Ujamaa, having to deny her identity did not mean that she had forgotten the role her identity played in determining the kind of social work experience she could expect to receive. For Ujamaa, conformity did not extend to her ignoring those essential aspects of herself that informed her expectations of right conduct from social work practitioners. When it came to personalising the issue on behalf of the Afrikan-Origined people Ujamaa did not feel confined by the opinions of her white colleagues. She used her own racial experience to inform her understanding of social work needs for the Afrikan-Origined community. For Ujamaa, her own experience of having to deny her identity to survive in the service as a practitioner, was such that as a client she felt she would have stood even less chance of surviving the experience of involvement from white practitioners. She suggested that only Afrikan-Origined practitioners in sufficient numbers in the service would change the experiences of Afrikan-Origined people.

The importance of white social work practitioners' recognition of the need to respect the essential aspects of culture and identity as reflected in the presenting needs of Afrikan-Origined clients is something that the authors like Gilroy (1993), Hall (1996) and Webner (1996) failed to account for. In their simple overriding of the importance of Afrikan-Origined self-defined cultural determinants, Gilroy, Hall and Webner ignore the

effects of their actions on professions like social work. In simple sweeping generalisations about the inappropriateness of Afrikan specificity as a social influence, Gilroy (993), Hall (1996) and Webner (1996) ignore the effects of institutional racism and practices informed by Eurocentric priorities underpinning social work practice, (Dominelli, 1988; Graham, 1999; Robinson, 1995; Williams, 1989). As I argued in chapter two of my thesis, measuring the value of cultural differences via their present and potential contributions to hybrid cultural realities, does nothing to validate the historical and transgenerational aspects of culture that contribute to Afrikan people's roots and routes to authenticity and self-determination (Ani, 1994; Graham, 1999). Neither, I believe, does the romanticism of hybridity erode specific cultural cues. Note Ujamaa's reliance on Afrikan-Origined positive expressions of culture as an influence in practitioner responses, when she recounts her views on an ideal social work service:

> *I would put more black people in place. I would be showing them*
> *that it is alright to come to talk to us by just making it more welcoming*
> *to them to come through the door or even going out into the community*
> *and visiting them and telling them what is on offer because if you do not*
> *knock on the door you will never know what is on offer. How are they*
> [white workers] *going to tell people what their problems are when people*
> *are not coming from the same angle as them?*

Despite her own personal sacrifices, Ujamaa was still not prepared to concede the same ground on the importance of Afrikan culture and identity when speaking for the Afrikan-Origined community, even including herself as a resource. Ujamaa's stance reminded me of a saying my elders often reminded me of, during my reasoning sessions with them. They would often note that it was never safe to assume that Afrikan people who appeared to have been devoured by Eurocentrism were lost to themselves or the community. It was the elders' belief that Eurocentrism and white people may have been able to take Afrikan people out of Afrika; but they could never take Afrika out of Afrikan people. I saw Ujamaa's defence of the importance of Afrikan culture and identity in social work practice, as evidence of this, much in the same way that Ujima's move out of the department was about resistance via defiance.

I have already noted the stance of Afrikan-Centred literature on the importance of culturally relevant services for Afrikan people (Graham, 1999; Everett et al, 1991; John-

Baptiste, 2001; Schiele, 1996, 1997, 2000). Such services are known to be preferred by Afrikan people because of the consequences of insistence on both practitioners and clients immersing themselves in culture as a fundamental part of the helping-healing process (Nobles, 1976; Graham, 1999; John-Baptiste, 2001; Schiele, 2000). Such an approach ensures that both practitioner and client speak with an authentic voice - using aspects like language, attitude and location to inform on the 'place' of practitioners and clients and the role of 'place' in helping and healing processes (Woodward, 1995). Holding on to the importance of cultural relevance in any social work service aimed at Afrikan-Origined people, Ujamaa infers that the importance of having Afrikan-Origined workers would be that of ensuring that Afrikan-Origined people had appropriate and relevant cultural responses to their problems.

Summary

The way Ujamaa decided to tell her story raised an interesting point about a gap in Afrikan Centred literature that did not fully account for the way 'trust' issues might affect the sharing process. Afrikan-Centred literature in its absence on this issue, assumes trust to be in place and therefore its constitution is not firmly expressed. However, Ujamaa's experiences illuminate the necessity to ensure that building trust between Afrikan-Origined social workers and clients is in itself, a fundamental part of the helping-healing process, and not something that is assumed to be in place because of same-race / cultural allegiances. Ujamaa demonstrated that trust may affect the way people decide to tell their stories - and any inhibiting factor may undermine the helping healing process.

Despite this concern however, Ujamaa's experiences still yielded information that supported the need for culturally-relevant social work services for Afrikan-Origined people. Ujamaa's experiences were extremely useful in highlighting the personal costs and consequences of internalising Eurocentric priorities as a means of gaining acceptance from white practitioners. Ujima's experiences also gave us an insight into Ujamaa's denial of herself as a racial and cultural person in social services provision and social work practice. This was extremely useful in the sense that it highlighted the consequences of internalising racial difference in a way that suggested a distancing from 'race' as a reality in Afrikan-Origined people's lives. In Ujamaa's experience, challenging racism or being seen as a 'black' radical came at a price she did not feel able to pay - a position which informed her

opinion about how she needed to present herself at work in order to fit in and get on. Abandoning or limiting part of your core self - your identity, was an added dimension to professionalism that Umoja's experiences highlighted, as was the refusal of white social workers to recognise its consequences.

I commented in chapter 2 about the importance of social workers recognising the role of cultural relevance in social work provision. Ujamaa's experiences demonstrate the power of white social workers through expressions of personal, professional and agency culture, to control the space of Afrikan expression via the inference of personal and practice standards. Therefore, the challenges laid down by Graham (1999) at the end of chapter two regarding the need for white social workers to overhaul their hegemonic practices in order to recognise and value the authenticity Afrikan social workers and clients bring into the service, are particularly apt here.

Nia: Standing on the Shoulders of Identity

Nia was the only male participant in my research. He was brought up in Care all his life, an experience that featured overwhelmingly in everything that he did, and the importance he gave to identity, as a crucial factor in his life and in the lives of 'black' children in Care. His childhood experiences were dominated by his search for his identity, reflected in the prominence he gave to identity issues during his interview. Unlike Umoja, Ujima and Ujamaa, Nia did not have a choice about subordinating his identity for strategic reasons. His identity was kept from him by the district's social workers, who assumed parental responsibility for him. For Nia, identity informed other experiences in his life, and was influential in how Nia chose to mark time:

> *As my background goes, I was within the care system in the old*
> *children's department and was brought up in the nurseries and*
> *children's homes up until I was 17 years old and that had some*
> *impact on me choosing social work ... when I was young I also*
> *helped out in a youth centre and started to get asked who I was*
> *... [I] think it was then that I started to get strong, passionate*
> *feelings about my black identity and other young people who was*
> *in the same situation. So I felt that someone had to speak up and*
> *be involved and help and support black people.*

For Nia, the undermining of the relevance of identity in his own life had an effect on how he saw himself as a person, an effect that went on to influence his decision to go into social work and to support other 'black' children in Care. Black and In Care (1984) and Pennie & Best (1990) noted that the institution of Care did not replace the institution of family / family life. They concluded that the absence of a 'black' family could be detrimental to the shaping of ideas about identity, and to the development of identity indicators and supportive systems in the lives of 'black' people. For Nia, Care had not prepared him for his identity as a 'black' person, and Nia did not want other 'black' children to struggle with identity as he had done. The potential for serious consequences for 'black' children denied their identity, are discussed by Maxime (1993) who notes that Afrikan-Origined children develop serious aspects of self-hatred and identity crisis as they fumble about without direction, attempting to determine what their ideal-self should be. Maxime

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(1993) and Banks & Grambs (1972) also note that an absence of identity influences in the lives of 'black' children was likely to result in 'black' children seeing the ideal self as being synonymous with a caucasian, middle class white identity, with 'black' identity correlating to a status of inferiority. For Nia, being asked about his identity, raised passionate feelings reflected in his support of other 'black' children in Care, through which he continued to reflect on his own feelings:

> *When they realised that they had a black parent, it raise[d] a lot*
> *of other issues for them. It posed the question that 'why didn't social*
> *services tell me that I was black or why didn't foster parents bring me*
> *up to have some recognition of my identity? Of who I was?'*

Nia's concerns about the shortfalls in white social workers' handling of identity issues informs on the obligation of white social workers to recognise how Eurocentrism influences social work to undermine the racial identities of service users (Graham, 1999). That undermining transpires because of a failure of white social work practitioners to incorporate relevant models of helping which in Nia's case, led to him having to spend time discovering an identity he did not know or value the significance of. The report from the 1984 Black and In Care Conference raised similar concerns. The young 'black' people who attended the conference felt their isolation from the Afrikan-Origined community because of the ignorance of practitioners working in the Care system, meant it was additionally difficult for young Afrikan-Origined people to live independently once they had left Care. There was a question of where they belonged, who they were attached to and where their families were. Nia also alluded to these effects when he questioned the absence of input of 'black' identity information in his life.

The early history of social services' responses to Afrikan-Origined people negated the consequences of expecting Afrikan-Origined people to subsume their identities into the dominant white British identity (Williams, 1989). Pennie & Best (1990) argue that this stance resulted in the promotion of whiteness as a ranker of priority in Care services. Consequently, white social workers acting as parental representatives, must recognise the role they play in transmitting beliefs that project the naturalising of whiteness and the subordination of the cultural 'other', in order to deify and protect white privilege and identity. White practitioners also need to look at the games that serve white domination. The tactics of compliance and coercion that facilitate the boosting, stroking and silencing

of white domination. White social workers must examine the power in the solidarity of whiteness and its role in underpinning individual and group identity (Johnson, 1999). Afrikan-Origined children in Care have little if any defence against the issues identified by Nia and Johson (1999), increasing the likelihood that they will take on the identity of the significant people in their lives. For Nia, the process of resituating himself in his own identity meant that he spent time clarifying issues that should have been part of the responsibility of the 'parents' in his life.

Interestingly, Nia was clear, that the undermining of his racial identity had a direct correlation to his wanting to take on a social work post in order to contribute towards ensuring that 'black' children in Care did not suffer what he had endured. I had noted my interest in whether Umoja's choice of profession was directly linked to her response to racism and her attempts to ensure that she contributed to bettering the life experiences of Afrikan-Origined people. Here, Nia was openly stating this to be the case in his choice of career. It raised an interesting point for me in that, if Afrikan-Origined workers were choosing helping professions as a response to racist experiences, it was even more important that the Afrikan-Centred paradigm form part of Afrikan-Origined practitioners' theoretical knowledge base. Knowledge of Afrikan-Centredness would support Afrikan-Origined workers to appropriately contextualise their life experiences, and would also support the right of Afrikan-Origined practitioners to locate themselves in a paradigm that is unapologetic in its justification of Afrikan self-interest first. Afrikan-Origined social workers would also benefit from being grounded in a paradigm that prioritised Afrikan authenticity as a route to self-determination. Similarly, as stated previously, heuristic elements of Afrikan-Centredness would encourage white practitioners to investigate their own practice influences in ways that would support variedly-cultured and pluralistic approaches to personal and social problem-solving approaches.

I was interested in whether Nia's strength of focus on identity ran as a theme throughout his life experiences. I looked at the next milestone in Nia's life, focusing on his route into social work. Here Nia highlights the experiences that eventually awakened his interest:

> *As a development worker I started to speak up more for young*
> *people which became a confrontation because it seemed that*
> *[I w] as a black worker who only dealt with black children -*
> *but it was not like that. It was just that the issues that had*

*never been raised were genuine issues for people in terms of
leaving care issues ... There were some new issues in terms of
how people were seen and treated, and racism - that was going
on in the Care system.*

*When I started in social services I was a residential worker and
got on the in-service course and from there I completed various
day courses. In 1992 I eventually got seconded to go on the DipSW
course which was a two year course. Even though my educational
background was not very good I thought I could do it. This was down
to my previous history of moving around within the childrens' department*

For Nia, the strength of feeling about the failings of social work practitioners influenced his position on 'race' and identity and his stance of making both a prominent part of his employment practice. Practitioners' failings also fuelled Nia's interest in learning more about the issues surrounding young Afrikan-Origined people in Care. The profile on 'race', Nia's experiences highlight, are in stark contrast to both Umoja and Ujamaa's profiles on 'race' matters. Nia's feelings about the failures of white social workers fuelled his intention to keep 'race' as part of his identity and practice as opposed to feeling that he needed to subordinate his identity as a defence against racism, as Umoja and Ujamaa had done. Nia gave no indication during his interviews that his stance was in any way related to him being a man. Rather, his stance was related to the importance of 'race' and identity in the lives of Afrikan-Origined people, confirming the similar position I had identified as part of the Agwamba model.

The self-determinatory benefits of situating self in an Afrikan identity is a point which Afrikan-Centred literature goes to great lengths to express (Ani, 1994; Asante, 1980). Additionally, identity and culture play a much more fundamental role than suggested in the Eurocentric essentialist and hybridity positions discussed in chapter two. Nia's stance inferred a direct correlation between the denial of his identity and his discovery of the importance of his identity - influencing his development of an activist role on "black' and Care' issues, validating the position expressed in Afrikan-Centred literature.

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The next milestone in Nia's life was his attendance on a social work course. Here he talks about the learning environment he met on his social work course:

I was quite fortunate. There was a fairly large group of us, of black workers / black people. Some were black workers and some were black people from the community who got on the course ... It was not that we were seen as the 'black experts' but it was difficult. We had a black support group that ran quite well within the social work course which I thought was helpful.

For Nia, the opportunity to have the support of other 'black' students was a valuable experience. It ensured that Nia would have the support to assert his identity and express himself in a group where he could feel understood and where 'race' difficulties would be shared by the support group. Like Umoja and Kujichagulia, Nia came to the social work course from experiences that facilitated his interest in 'race' and identity issues. All three participants undertook their social work training at different times, yet the influence of their experiences and respective supportive environments was such that they sought to take immediate advantage of similar supportive environments once arriving on their respective social work courses. Nia, Kujichagulia and Umoja identified the significance of there being other 'black' students on their courses, and how the ability to come together as a 'black' support group positively shaped their time on the course. The impact of the support from other 'black' students was significant whether it came in the form of formal support groups as noted in the experiences of Nia, or the mere presence of 'black' students on the courses attended by Umoja and Kujichagulia. 'Black' support groups validated experiences and provided a forum whereby commonalities of purpose could be established in a bid to project the interests of the collective. This is evidenced by the way in which 'black' support groups helped all three participants to assert their interests as Afrikan-Origined students. The focus on collective support, responsibility and action amongst Afrikan people is a fundamental principle in Afrikan-Centredness, because of the prominence collectivity has, in cementing unity amongst Afrikan people (Asante, 1980; Graham, 1999). It was an influence that I tried to account for in the Agwamba model by introducing the Centring Group and the principle of 'consequential-affectiveness'. Both elements were intended to bind me as the researcher to the responsibilities of conducting Afrikan-Centred

research and demonstrated the Afrikan-Centred principle of collective responsibility between the participants and myself as the researcher. The importance of collectivity was also linked to the influence it exerted on Eurocentric forces that undermined the ability of Afrikan people's right to take action in their own interests (Ani, 1994). And, the importance of 'black' groups (as the participants described them) as supportive experiences in the lives of Nia, Umoja and Kujichagulia emerged as a prominent theme in the research, supporting the prominence of its positioning in the Afrikan-Centred paradigm and in the Agwamba model.

In similar ways again, to Umoja and Kujichagulia, Nia noted the presence of 'black' students in significant numbers on his social work course as having a direct bearing on the way 'race' was handled:

> *There were times when we were linked with* [perceived as an
> all white middle class area] *people, where people from that area*
> *were white and there were issues in terms of their practices ... where*
> *they could not understand some of the* ['race'] *issues... Some became*
> *interested and some became quite defensive in feeling that 'all you*
> *black people telling us all these things, we have been used to this and*
> *this has been our practice for years and we do not want to change it'.*
> *... in terms of the tutor, they were quite good but they did not help challenge*
> *the issues enough throughout the course.*

Again, white students on the course redefined themselves as the victims of 'race' issues, by scapegoating 'black' students as the cause of their distress. This issue was also raised in Umoja's interview, where I noted the failure of social work educators to appropriately deal with the issue of 'race' on social work courses. The unmindful behaviour of lecturers led to a failure to prepare Afrikan-Origined and white students for social work practice and by default, thereby inflicting ill-prepared practitioners onto Afrikan-Origined and white communities. Nia's experiences were strikingly similar to Umoja's, which must be of concern when addressing how social work educators can positively take on a 'race' agenda for today's variedly-cultured population.

Nia was the first participant however, to suggest that discussions on 'race' had consequential effects when the dynamics of a 'black' group came into play:

One of the good things were the issues around race came into a
lot of the course programmes and were mentioned the majority
of the time. I thought that was partly due to the dynamics of the
group - a large proportion of black people. They were mainly
African-Caribbean. we tended to be quite challenging at times
From what I remember, the following year saw a decline in
African-Caribbean people and saw a different culture and it was
very difficult for black students.

For Nia, the assertiveness of the 'black' students had the consequential effect of reducing the numbers of 'Afrikan-Caribbean' students the following academic year. Afrikan-Origined students were seen as being responsible for agitating the learning environment, resulting in admission procedures being used to reduce their numbers. For Nia, that reduction was a direct attempt to change the culture of the academic institution, in a bid to re-establish lecturer control and a healthy learning environment for white students. Razak (1999) makes a useful observation about such teaching environments, arguing that the teaching of anti-discriminatory agendas can be greatly frustrated if the classroom is not a place where there is a measure of respect and community spirit amongst all therein. Additionally, the attitudes of teaching staff can be further complicated by the effects of whiteness no longer being the norm in the teaching space, creating tensions around teaching anti-discriminatory practice. For Nia's, the effects of whiteness no longer being the norm directly correlated to the reduction of Afrikan-Origined students on the course.

Interestingly, Kujichagulia's noting of the use of 'standard tools' to label her as dyslexic because of her stance, on 'race', led to my assertion that white lecturers had used direct action against her as an Afrikan-Origined student. Nia's belief that lecturers had used admission procedures to reduce Afrikan-Origined numbers was another incidence of direct action being taken as a result of the stance of Afrikan-Origined students on 'race'. I said in Kujichagulia's case, that this was an issue that white social work literature did not account for. Afrikan-Centred literature, however, suggests that white people feel threatened by any challenge to Eurocentric values and measurements of well-being (Graham, 1999), from which responses of the direct action-type detailed by Kujichagulia and Nia, can emanate as reactions to change interpreted as a threat (Ani, 1994). I certainly find it concerning that social work should be suggesting the use direct action to punish or

exclude Afrikan-Origined people - a practice more traditionally reflective of other state services (Gates JR, 2000).

The next milestone Nia detailed in his life story was his interest in the importance of 'race' and identity to personal development, to the extent of him wanting to continue his interest in providing services to young 'black' people in his post qualification employment. The importance of his desire to work in his interest area is captured in the following statement:

> *... the area that I was in... was difficult in terms of the very*
> *few black young people who came into the home. The staff*
> *was mainly white and one other black worker including myself*
> *... I found myself asking "what am I doing here?" and I did not*
> *feel as though I was getting anywhere...*

For Nia, the lack of opportunity to work in his desired area was frustrating. Nia had maintained his purpose of working on behalf of 'black' children in care, through several milestones in his life and had expected to continue working in that area once he had qualified as a social work practitioner. It was the same kind of frustration Umoja had referenced as contributing to her decision to leave the district council. Johnson (2001) argues that having resurrected the importance and purpose of a congruent identity, Afrikan people then recognise the responsibility they carry for the survival and maintenance of the integrity of the Afrikan community, as surety that the community continues on its primary purpose path of growth and upliftment of the individual. Similarly, upliftment in their social and academic environments was something which both Umoja and Nia had experienced, and which now directly correlated (following Johnson's (2001) argument) to their desires to actively practice social work with the Afrikan-Origined community.

Again, like Umoja, Nia's linking of the importance of identity to success, coupled with his inability to practice social work as he desired, informed his views about the kind of social work service he wanted to see in place for the Afrikan-Origined community. Asked the question in his interview, Nia commented as follows:

> *In an area office the only thing that families will get is the*
> *stereotypical treatment associated with an area office service*
> *operated by white workers hostile cold shoulder treatment,*

the feeling of exclusion and treatment of not being made welcome,
being shown no respect. I feel that it is a good thing to have black
social workers involved but also to have black conscious workers
rather than the 'token black worker' who is there for a specific
purpose: to look good on the employers work record

For Nia, his experience of the failings of white social work practitioners' provision of services to Afrikan-Origined people informed his belief that having 'black' workers was not the sole requirement for good social work services. That indeed, 'black' workers needed to have a consciousness about their own identity in order to have the strength to value and challenge the pressures from white social workers to subordinate the interests of Afrikan-Origined people. The successful and well-balanced adult life that comes from the development of a congruent Afrikan identity, is a characteristic that Afrikan-Centred literature identifies as being fundamental to the development of self and group respect and self-worth (Ekwe-Ekwe & Nzegwu, 1994). For Nia, the quality of services currently available to the Afrikan-Origined community would not facilitate the development of personal and communal values akin to the necessary balanced and healthy existence, the like of which was noted in Graham (1999) and Ekwe-Ekwe & Nzegwu's (1994) work. On that basis, Nia's idea of an appropriate social work service focused on the importance of being able to present oneself in ones own cultural terms, as a key requirement in making social work services appropriate to Afrikan-Origined people:

...I believe unless you have more workers you are not going to
achieve very much to the extent that maybe there should be a
separate area office or unit where there is a group or team of
black workers who just deal with black families and support
them because then there would be a better relationship. ... there
should be a separate division or unit that houses specifically
trained black staff who works specifically in areas working with
black families so that black families feel that they are being listened
to and being made to feel as though they are people rather than a
number and are respected and valued.

Nia's views are again consistent with those of Umoja in noting the kind of service the Afrikan-Origined community would use. For Nia, the compromising of his identity in his life influenced his desire to see social work practice models that were able to provide safe environments where personal and social needs could be expressed. Safe practice environments would allow for the expression of need surrounding identity - developed or otherwise, and, where Afrikan-Origined people could be nurtured. To some extent, the service Nia describes is akin to the role that an Afrikan family / community (as support groups) would take. His views again reflect the importance of collective responsibility for the wellbeing of Afrikan people as expressed through Afrikan-Centred literature and the Agwamba model, which recognise that family / community are naturally occurring phenomenon. Recognition that, family and community are settings unique in cultural experiences, and shaped by traditional Afrikan values, history and the social realities of Afrikan people. Recognition that, family / community are shaped by self-determining adaptations Afrikan people had to make to contemporary environments. And, that family / community is characterised by cultural values that are distinct form the values of white people (Wilson, 1991). The bearing and rearing of children, should therefore take place in this resilient, protective and self-determining environment (Nobles et al, 1987). This is the same resilience, protection and self-determination Nia makes reference to in his vision of social work services being run by 'black' people. She adds, that the appeal of a racial / culturally-relevant service would lie in its establishment as a separate service, housed in a place that is accessible and welcoming to Afrikan-Origined people. Nia never wavered from his initial statement of the importance of being able to have identity as a part of ones life, extending his view to incorporate an expectation that social workers should have a role in facilitating identity congruence via the provision of a relative social work service. Such a service would be consistent with the maintaining of the personalisation of the professional and client relationship which are essential to the helping and healing process (Schiele, 1996).

Summary

Nia began his interview noting identity as an important factor that had been missing in his life. The extent of that loss was felt in the degree to which Nia addressed his world via identity cues. Nia's experiences, like the experiences of previous participants, spoke to

the importance of 'black' people in numbers as a source of strength and support translatable into the importance of communal support as a source of strength. Although the only man in the research, Nia's experiences demonstrated that gender was no barrier to the use of racist practices to elevate whiteness, or, to the consequences of this action, and the importance of support in cushioning Afrikan-Origined people from the consequences of racism. Nia found assertive and supportive environments much earlier in his life than Umoja, which illuminated the importance Afrikan identity can play if present early in Afrikan-Origined life experiences much earlier, and in specific ways. This finding directly correlated to Nia's expression of the importance of a racially / culturally relevant social work service as a nurturer of identity, and a facilitator of the expression of identity in self-determinatory ways.

Nia, typified the participants that I interviewed in that he was unhappy in a practice post that did not allow him to reflect his identity and culture, views informed by the absence of relevant social work practitioner support in his childhood years. What he subsequently learned about himself and his identity informed Nia's ability to stand on the shoulders of the importance of identity to define the kind of service that would value his community's cultural statement and not mitigate against Afrikan-Origined peoples right to self-determination. His experiences also illuminated the importance of white social workers needing to prioritise the importance of variedly-cultured approaches as relevant models of social work practice. Nia used his beliefs about the importance of a congruent Afrikan identity as his basis for success, to suggest that social work services would do well to mimic the collective, resilient, protective, healing and nurturing environments provided by family / community.

Kuumba: From Racial Prison to Culture College

Kuumba came at the interview as if it were a cathartic experience, bursting through the office door with a smile on her face and eager to start. When she began her story it was easy to see why the opportunity to tell her story was so important to her. She began in dramatic fashion:

> *We lived in an all white area and we were the only black family*
> *there besides our extended family and three other families. The*
> *children of those families had to deal with a lot of racism. We*
> *went to school with people that represented and supported the*
> *'National Front' who were not afraid to share their views in*
> *front of us. They were not afraid to attack us and abuse us - we*
> *felt vulnerable and hurt - we did not know how to fight back*
> *because we did not know our history. I knew what effects it had*
> *on me*

For Kuumba, the area she lived in and the school she went to, were openly hostile environments which diminished her identity. The overt nature of the racial attacks also suggested that school was an environment that supported this course of action against her. Kuumba talks about the powerlessness she felt in the face of such overwhelming and overt expressions of white superiority - yet she had to remain there, given the requirement that she attend school. In a similar way to the experiences Umoja shared about her school life, Kuumba would have experienced the learning environment as expecting her to conform to a definition of her identity that was both constructed and imposed, for the benefit of the white children and teachers. Additionally, her family was unable to protect her or itself, or receive protection from racial attacks, thereby undermining Kuumba's view of the strengths of her family and creating further feelings of vulnerability. For Kuumba, the benefits of a racially / culturally-relevant supportive environment linked to a historical knowledge of self, would have minimised the effects of the hurt and vulnerability Kuumba talked about. Kuumba comments on this in the context of what happened to her in the absence of that supportive environment:

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I was never seen as equal at school... I was never encouraged.
I was always picked on by the teacher for my homework and I
remember especially at upper school particularly, R. E. lessons
were just a nightmare because the teacher would always pick the
session to talk about the National Front and the boys who supported
the National Front made statements such as 'black people never
got washed' 'black people came to this country and took our parents'
jobs' ... I would hear all these negative things about black people and
most of the time I just sit there and just cried... I lost count of the amount
of times they tried to set dogs on me. Education wise, I never tried.

Kuumba's educational experiences present as a powerful piece of text one cannot fail to be moved by. For Kuumba, her school experiences further entrenched her in feelings of vulnerability resulting from her treatment at school. Further, the racism was culturally authoritative, thereby legitimising the racist behaviour she experienced. I made reference to New Right influences on discussions about 'race' in chapter one of this thesis, where the general feeling was that 'black' people were living at odds with the English way of life (John-Baptiste, 1995). Kuumba's experiences demonstrate the reality of these views in action, and the consequences they had on her as a child. For Kuumba, these events acted, not only as a barrier to the development of her identity, but also contributed to a loss of her educational self-belief. Kuumba's experiences demonstrate the power of Eurocentrism when manifest through racism. Her experiences also demonstrate what Ani (1994) argues, is the expression of white authenticity in racist terms, strengthened by the ability of white people to have their views verified by the logic of white cultural expressions. For example, white teachers and pupils in Kuumba's school, expressed their National Front views - able to stand on the shoulders of anti-'black' feeling, being fused into Eurocentric representations of white cultural views on immigration. Pupils and teachers could then view themselves as justified in expressing their views in cultural terms (Fryer, 1984; Hiro, 1973). From such a standpoint, Blaut (1993) argues, beliefs about 'black' people remained unquestioned and unnoticed, and were strengthened by contrasting implicit beliefs about non-Europe / Europeans, with explicit beliefs about the superiority of Europe / Europeans.

Afrikan-Centredness in Kuumba's educational experience would have acted as a transmitter of Afrikan identity, culture and strength, and offered to Kuumba, would have benefited her by giving Kuumba contextual location and supporting the development of her identity strengths. My development of the principle of 'consequential-affectiveness' demonstrates how important it is to have an ethical responsibility to the people we come into contact with in life changing ways. 'Consequential-affectiveness' also ensures that the effects of our interactions with each other would be founded on the importance of shared responsibility for outcomes. For Kuumba, this would have placed some focus on ensuring outcomes were beneficial to the development of human potential in both herself and white school pupils. Without accountability in her educational environment, Kuumba was left to find her own way to redress the balance:

> *It had so much effect on me that I needed to find out more about*
> *being black in a white society. I knew what effects it had on me but*
> *I needed to have the knowledge to be able to have some ammunition*
> *not just for myself but for my own children. To have that history and*
> *to be proud of who I am, where I came from and that we are here for*
> *some sort of reason or purpose.*

For Kuumba, her response did not suggest a subordination of her identity as a defence against racism as had been the case for Umoja. Rather, Kuumba looked for responses that would foster the dual outcome of strengthening her identity as well as empowering her with the knowledge and information to support the development of identity strengths in her children. For Kuumba, seeking opportunities to challenge the consequences of her childhood experiences, provided a route of action aimed at strengthening and not creating her identity. Small (1994) argues, that to find such resistance to racialised hostility is a natural response in 'black' people, concluding that whatever the response chosen the intention has always highlighted that 'black' people have sought to reach beyond a simple struggle for survival to strive for success. It does not naturally follow however, that Afrikan-Origined people who are living with the effects and consequences of racism, will levitate towards experiences and opportunities that give them positive cultural self-images and identities. Kuumba for example, could have internalised the racism she suffered and developed aspects of self-hatred and crisis with her identity. Ujamaa, however, decided that the subordination of her identity was the best way to show

her white colleagues that they should not feel threatened by her 'race'. Previously, my participants have demonstrated, the influence that seems to determine whether they accepted or challenged the racism they experienced, was the important role played by Afrikan-Origined and 'black' support groups. Support groups nurtured positive expressions of identity and expressions of identity outside the safety of the group. They challenged white social workers and educators' opinions about 'black' experiences, which came from their (white) consciousness of experience, of what it meant to feel positive about being 'black'. Indeed, the importance of support groups highlighted that white educators and social work educators and practitioners have not developed practice models aimed at promoting cultural practice and ethnic agency. Further, white educators have promoted practice that reflects white institutionalised patterns of interactions (Iglehart & Becerra, 1996).

The next milestone in Kuumba 's life highlighted her route beyond the limitations implied by her childhood experiences:

for me to be a worthwhile human being, I need to be needed by
somebody and I think that is why I have chosen the vocations that
I have through life ... I understand what people are going through,
not necessarily having to go through what they have gone through,
I can put myself in other people's situations and have an understanding
of how they may feel ... I was helping people, getting in touch with people
from the community, people from the same background as me, their parents
from the same place as my parents and we shared a common interest.

For Kuumba, the path to restoring her belief in her self-value was to explore vocational routes that would provide her with opportunities to make an effective difference in people's lives. She saw this opportunity as existing in vocational professions that extended the benefits of helping and healing out into the Afrikan-Origined community. For Kuumba, the Afrikan-Origined community was the 'root' to overcoming the distress she had suffered, as well as a 'route' to restoring her quality of life and supporting the kind of contribution she wanted to make in other peoples lives. Applying herself in a helping / communal way also allowed Kuumba to repair her own confidence and strengthen her identity by submerging herself in the strength of familiarity, community gave her. Kuumba's reflections took me back to a point I first raised in response to Umoja's

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experiences. That is, the suggestion that the participants in my research were demonstrating a particular response to racism in their choice of careers in helping professions. Additionally, the participants' career choices symbolised a route to redressing their experiences of racism, by providing opportunities for the participant's contributions to be valued. Vocational careers also reinstated quality and value into the participants' core (personal) identities, and, helped others avoid being placed in similar circumstances to themselves. Kuumba directly referenced the role of empathy as a link between her experiences and the experiences of Afrikan-Origined people, as a prompt in her choice of career. This strengthened my belief in a link between Afrikan-Origined people's resistance to racism and their choice of employment.

My suggestion surrounding the participants' reasons for choosing to express their healing through helping professions is supported in part by research conducted by Welsing (1991). Welsing concluded that Afrikan people (Continental and Diasporian) who are subjected to Eurocentric hegemony in its various manifestations, look at relevant ways of dealing with the effects of racism. This would ensure Afrikan people avoided the likelihood of becoming trapped within conceptual prisons that could only support the development of further vulnerabilities. Kuumba's identification of community as having a healing role accords with the view of the Afrikan community as the place where moral supports, identity formers, motivators and directors, pain comforters, and where spiritual support and self-realising opportunities, have their foundational home. All are reflected in the culture of Afrikan people as vested in the Afrikan community (Cambridge, 1996).

It is understandable that there are times when Afrikan-Origined people reach out to opportunities to 'come back home' (Akbar, 1996). Kuumba wanted to be at home, to express her need to belong in a valid way. The Afrikan-Origined community represented an opportunity for her to be in a relevant physical, psychological, spiritual and perceptual environment, with accompanying opportunities to develop positive, strong and symbolic relationships that would appropriately reflect her identity. This is not an experience Eurocentrism could provide, and indeed, the literature demonstrates that Eurocentrism in all its manifestations, prioritised against the interests of Afrikan-Origined people (Blaut, 1993, Graham, 1999).

The need to be needed; to feel that you have a part to play in quality of life issues for the community is also an Afrikan-Centred position on community. That position validates community as a reciprocal experience and therefore extends to asking what a

community member intends to do to uplift themselves in order to be a regenerative force within their community (Asante, 1980). This position lead me to the next milestone in Kuumba's life, exploring Kuumba's influences towards social work training:

> *I did the Mature Students Certificate in Black Studies and I absolutely*
> *loved it. I was always there, never missed a session ... I learned so*
> *much and felt myself grow... When I got on this course, it was just like*
> *a new world had opened to me... The first time in my life I felt a*
> *recognition of where I came from and could relate to it... The tutors*
> [both of Afrikan origin] *were brilliant ... They gave me a lot of*
> *encouragement, boosted my confidence, boosted my self esteem*
> *- felt like a worthwhile person... People told me that I would make a*
> *good social worker and that I should go and do the course... That's*
> *how I got onto social work - because I was so determined to do the*
> *social work course.*

For Kuumba, the Black Studies course addressed her need to reconnect to her origins and identity. This supported the Afrikan-Centred model of success that first emerged in Umoja's experiences. The model that emerged from the literature linked success to the development of a congruent psychological and external Afrikan identity. For Kuumba, the course challenged her feelings of vulnerability by addressing her desire to have ''ammunition'' to challenge racism, and white people who relied on racism as part of their identity. The 'Black Studies' course located Kuumba's origin and identity within the historical and ancestral contributions of Afrikan-Origined people, making Afrikan history real and relevant. The Afrikan-Origined tutors further cemented Kuumba's feeling of cultural arrival, boosted her confidence and created a learning environment that encouraged Kuumba to develop positive feelings and beliefs in her identity, value and contributions she could make. It was the combination of transformatory experiences from Kuumba's community and educational experience that led me to equate the two environments as likened to a 'culture college'. That is, both an experience and place that freed Kuumba from the imprisonment of Eurocentric manifestations of racism. Kuumba, in effect demonstrated how culturally-specific education could have benefited both her and Umoja, had its importance been valued and utilised by their school teachers. Afrikan-Centred literature suggests that the theory and practice enshrined in culturally-specific

education is successful, because it is based on tradition and reason, and rooted in practice, to ensure its beneficial content to Afrikan people (Johnson, 2001). And, Afrikan-Centredness infused into educational curricula, would result in courses which fashion solutions that help Afrikan people to reconnect with themselves, because such courses:

1. Assist students in developing the necessary intellectual, moral, and emotional skills for accomplishing a productive, affirming life in this society.

2. Provide such educational instruction as to deconstruct established hegemonic pillars and to safeguard against the construction of new ones.

3. Provide students of African descent with educational instruction that uses techniques that are in accord with their learning styles.

4. Assist students of African descent in maintaining a positive self-concept, with the goal of achieving a sense of collective accountability

5. Serve as a model for ... 'Transformation' and 'Social Action' approaches to multicultural education (Giddings, 2001, p463).

Giddings (2001) and Johnson (2001) offer the challenge of Afrikan-Centredness in education, as a valid response to the priorities of Afrikan people.

Robinson (1995) argues that low self esteem, self-hatred and a negative racial identity have all been characteristics which have frustrated the path towards the development of positive identities in Afrikan-Origined people. However, Umoja, Nia and Kuumba, demonstrate how racist experiences can be turned around by the influence of Afrikan-Origined people in relevant positions of professionalism that have power enough to authenticate and standardise appropriate mechanisms for Afrikan-Origined people. Whilst Ujima and Ujamaa's absence of reference to such experiences could be seen to account for the differences in the effects of racism highlighted in their life-stories. Azibo (1996) suggests that such supportive environments do much to facilitate self-worth and increased self-love - both of which contribute to the development of healthy psychological

and external Afrikan identities. Asante (1980) argues that a congruent Afrikan identity is a strong contributor to the community regenerative (i.e. putting something back in) process. This again, validates the role of 'consequential-affectiveness' as a useful representative of community regenerative processes. Although specific to my research in its current usage, I do see scope for the extension of the 'consequential-affective' principle to other Afrikan-Origined settings that prioritise the need for mutual learning from helper / helped exchanges.

Morrell (1996) suggests that social workers' need to recognise the strength and place of consciousness-raising activities within the social work profession. Morrell sees consciousness-raising activities very much as a route to making connections between personal problems and social issues - and the helping process, as an overall route to building social competence. However, white practitioners would have to move away from their traditional role of 'white objection' to racialised problem-solving approaches to social work. And, they would have to be prepared to distance themselves from their belief that Afrikan-Origined professionals or community progress would come at the expense of white people (Small, 1994). Further, white social workers could use Afrikan-Centred perspectives as a route into defining appropriate intervention approaches with Afrikan-Origined communities, supporting the use of support groups which suggest more preventative approaches to problem-solving.

Kuumba next attended a social work course, where the strength of her racialised experiences continued to inform her learning experiences. Commenting on the environment she met on her arrival, Kuumba said:

> *The experience was not very good. The environment at [University] was frightening from day one especially for me because it brought back the memories from my school years. From the time of being eighteen years old I have always lived in a black community and always felt safe there. And to go back to an all white area to do my studying just brought back all the bad memories flooding back. On the first day I was very nervous, quiet, shy, timid, lacked in confidence.*

For Kuumba, the learning environment resurrected memories of her childhood educational environment, and was in danger of rooting her to past experiences, threatening

to paralyse her into the same inability to learn, she first faced in her childhood. Stepping out of the healthy Afrikan-Origined learning environment and the Afrikan-Origined community that had restored her identity, was an experience Kuumba found frightening when again confronted by a white educational environment and white lecturers. For Kuumba, the depth of the impact of her childhood experiences once again undermined her self-belief and erased her confidence. However, as with her experience of formal education, Kuumba had to choose what her response would be. This time, she decided to challenge:

> *all the black students stuck together, supported each other because we were not getting any support from the other students, they were keeping all the books to themselves, they were showing each other draft copies of their assignments, they were getting extra tutorials from lecturers - and we were not getting that as black students and we decided ... to stick together because none of us were getting the service our white counterparts were getting on the course and that we had to find our other support networks outside college*

For Kuumba, the importance of the support she received from other 'black' students on the course was in its replication of the support she received in her earlier life experiences, and the feelings of belonging and shared purpose she had experienced in her earlier communal and educational encounters. For Kuumba, the support encouraged her to extend herself beyond her initial insecurities about the learning environment, to challenge the detrimental way 'black' students were being treated on her course. For Kuumba, her experience of the racial prison of her childhood, and her personal development through the 'culture college', informed her ability to appreciate what 'black' students on her course needed to do in order to come through the educational process. Kuumba's activist route was not too dissimilar from actions taken by the Afrikan-Origined community, who used community action route as a route to securing relevant services from service providers (Moore, 1975; Morrison, 1976; Ramdin, 1999 and Sivanandan, 1981 / 2). And, again, the importance of 'black' support groups is referenced as a positive experience, the significance of which, I commented on in Umoja, Kujichagulia and Nia's experiences.

Kuumba alluded to several of the consequences of Eurocentric hegemonic control of the academic space when she noted the response of white students, to 'black issues' being on the agenda:

> *They* [lecturers] *touched the surface of black issues. ... They had a*
> *handful of lecturers who dealt with specifically ethnicity and racism*
> *and when it came to those lectures the black students were there and*
> *about five or six white students. Those who really wanted to understand*
> *were there.*

For Kuumba, the power of white students was demonstrated via their healthy disregard for the importance of attending lectures dealing with 'race'. For Kuumba, her social work course was the place where the consequences of undermining the learning agenda on 'race' was ignored, particularly with regard to its failure to prepare 'black' and white students for the realities of 'race' in social work practice. Kuumba made no reference to sanctions being employed against white students, inferring support from lecturers for the students' behaviour. Kuumba alluded to further instances of lecturers' support for white students on her course:

> *There was one black female lecturer who was frightened. This was*
> *apparent when she spoke. She was harder on black students than*
> *white students, but then you would need to think about the environment*
> *that she is in as well, being the only black lecturer in a team of lecturers.*
> *She would probably have to justify herself more about her marking - and*
> *we just left it at that. All out assignments that she marked were marked*
> *very low and the white students were getting quite high marks in ethnicity*
> *and racism. We put it down to - that she did not want to be seen showing*
> *favouritism to black students.*

For Kuumba, the 'black' lecturer on her course had internalised Eurocentric expectations of her loyalty to the values of her white colleagues and the agency. This resulted in the 'black' lecturer treating 'black' students more harshly than white students. It was not Kuumba, but rather, the 'black' lecturer who had submerged her identity as a response to the academic environment. For Kuumba, this was emphasised in the way

lecturers supported the values of the academic institution when making judgements about the extent to which focuses on 'race' should feature in social work course content. Afrikan-Centred advocates would not see this as an environment where a healthy discussion of 'race' could take place (Graham, 1999; Schiele, 1996). This, highlights further, the important role social work educators play, as gateways to appropriate professional practice. Social work educators could provide one of the few opportunities to introduce trainee social workers to healthy discussions on difference. Incorporating the significance of the applicability of other worldviews that speak for the experiences of people other than white Europeans, into the social work profession (i.e. education and practice), would introduce different positions about personal and social problem-solving. Eurocentric social work models could no longer be projected as universal problem-solvers for all people, in all settings and for all experiences - a model which, I argued in chapter one, has failed to capture the essence of Afrikan-Origined people.

Given Kuumba's suggestions that 'race' was stifled on her social work course, I then examined whether Kuumba had taken the opportunity to pursue a 'race' agenda in her post-qualification practice. Kuumba did not state a preference for how she saw herself as a practitioner, preferring instead, to look at her practice in terms of cultural priorities:

> *My* [cultural] *priorities would be different to theirs* [white workers] *because theirs would be from a eurocentric point of view whereas mine is from a black perspective because that is where I am coming from. I do not see myself the same as a white colleague at work who is doing the same type of tasks and duties ... I think I have more of a black perspective that is always in the fore when I am practising.*

For Kuumba, her definition of self was expressed through the strength of her black perspectives practice position rather than through a 'race' or culturally-specific post like Kujichagulia. The way Kuumba practised she felt, would be expressed via her worldview expression, which she saw as inherently different to the expression of her white colleagues. Kuumba was in a social work post where black perspectives informed her social work practice. Having taken such an active role on 'race' issues and dealt with the smothering of the issue whilst on her social work course, Kuumba was able to merge her new found confidence in articulating the issues, with the realities she faced in her role as a social worker. She had not been constrained by her historical racialised experiences but, rather,

had been able to harness those experiences in order to speak for herself. The refining of her views to incorporate an opinion on Eurocentrism demonstrates that Kuumba, in harnessing her experiences, was able to go beyond barriers that had once overwhelmed her view of life. If experiencing ones self through the lens of cultural relevance can produce fundamentally positive outcomes such as those Kuumba discusses, it can do the same for Afrikan-Origined people. The community social work unit I work in has been commended for doing just that. For white practitioners to distance themselves from the benefits of Afrikan-Centredness and culturally-relevant practice, suggests that they are intent on promoting their own priorities in their definitions of wellbeing of Afrikan-Origined people. This is not what the profession claims to promote.

Using her experiences as a backdrop, Kuumba sets out her vision of an appropriate social work service for the district's Afrikan-Origined community. Unlike Ujamaa, however, she was not convinced that a mere increase in the numbers of Afrikan-Origined workers in visible front-line positions would improve the community's impression of the kind of service they were likely to receive. Neither did she agree with Kujichagulia's view of a social work service for the Afrikan-Origined community, existing entirely within a traditional social work setting. Rather, in a similar way to Umoja, Kuumba preferences a community social work unit in a location that the community would be happy to access. Here, she set out her reasons:

> They are more likely to access this service than go anywhere else.
> They know they do not have to explain all their cultural issues whereas
> if they go to an area office they come across barriers and time gets
> wasted having to explain their culture and how they do things and why
> they do the things they do and having to justify as well.

> What I see for us black people is for us to have that resource, to have our
> own building and service our people in our own building to provide a
> range of services for the cross section of the community. It would be
> common knowledge among the community - where to go to seek advice
> of help, whereas there is a barrier of going into an area office to ask a
> white person for information or advice.

For Kuumba, the necessity of Afrikan-Origined people's need to present themselves in their own cultural stances was seen as an important requirement of a relevant social work service. That degree of relevance, she felt, facilitated access, made the issue of familiarity a positive aspect in social work practice and delivery and removed barriers through the promotion of cultural relevance. Kuumba believed such services would only be able to assist Afrikan-Origined people towards their self-determinatory potential, if they were provided from a separate site. Afrikan-Centred practitioners would see Kuumba's position as reflecting the unsuitability of Eurocentric methods of problem solving (Graham, 1999; John-Baptiste, 2001; Schiele, 1996), from the establishment of Afrikan-Centred services would require a leap of faith from social services managers and resource holders

Summary

Kuumba came to the interview having suffered appalling racism, the consequences of which threatened to incarcerate her in a belief system that would have affected Kuumba's appreciation of her life choices. Kuumba's experiences are different to the other participants however, in that she sought support and direction from the local Afrikan-Origined community from where she re-established her right to her identity and to determine her own future. That support nurtured Kuumba's need to develop a healthy sense of who she was and how much she was valued, via the development of a congruent racial and personal identity (for an account of the effects of and the consequences on Afrikan-Origined internalisation of racism, read 'A West Indian / British Male' (Husband, 1982)).

Community and academic support led to the suggestion in Kuumba's experiences, that she had a preference for working in the helping professions where she was more likely to encounter experiences that supported her need to re-connect to her identity. Helping professions would also allow her to support others with similar experiences to herself as well as contribute to the elimination of racist practices. Kuumba also expressed her belief in the importance of relevant social work services, in her vision of an appropriate social work service. Her views inferred that current social work provision was woefully inadequate to cope with the self-determinatory and agency expectations of the Afrikan-Origined community. They also reflect the deficit-focused models of practice and

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intervention, responsible for creating and replicating experiences of exclusion and marginalisation.

Imani: The Struggle to Overcome Internalised Inferiority

Imani, like Nia, had previous contact with social workers both as a child in terms of her family accessing the service, and then as an adult client in her own right. Memories of that initial social work intervention in her family life, however, coloured Imani's childhood experiences:

> *It all started from my background and growing up in a single*
> *parent environment ... a lot* [of] *it was recollection of violence*
> *in the home with my stepfather towards my mum... I still could*
> *not understand ... why no external agencies were involved.*
> *I remember social service and courts writing to my mum regarding*
> *maintenance... That is when I started to realise that you do not go*
> *outside the home for help, she* [mother] *said no - as much* [as] *he has*
> *money I do not want no part ... the letters went in the bin. And, that*
> *is where I had learned that social services was there but not to cater*
> *for black people, it is for white people ... I truly believed that it would*
> *not provide a service for black people and as I grew older and had a*
> *child* [I began] *reflecting on the same type of image* [as] *my mum ... .*

For Imani, social workers were white people, who were supposed to come into her life to offer support. Instead, the image she took away was that of social workers having no responsibilities for Afrikan-Origined people - there, only to work for white people. Imani strengthened her views on the back of her mother's reaction to having white social workers in her family's affairs. That intervention taught Imani that not going outside the home was about keeping business within the family - within the culture, where it would be appropriately understood and responded too.

The misconception by white social workers, that they and their interventions remain free from cultural bias, leads white practitioners to ignore the impact that Eurocentric cultural presentations have on the way in which Afrikan-Origined people are social worked (John-Baptiste, 2001; Schiele, 1997). White practitioners ignore the expectations they bring into social work relationships, of all values being like their own, or inferior. Consequently, 'others' will be made to 'fit' into white social worker models of practice if they intend to access social work services. (Graham, 1999). In response,

Afrikan-Centred social workers are correct in their assertions that practitioners who are ignorant about the dynamics of difference in worldviews and analytical perspectives ignore the importance of having relevant models of intervention for Afrikan-Origined people (Graham, 1999; John-Baptiste, 2001; Schiele, 2000).

Imani talks about the consequences of inappropriate social work intervention. She gives an indication of having internalised beliefs attributed to her early childhood experiences and their contribution to her development of identity and racial suitability for social work support. Consequently, Imani's response was to take the view that her mother had taken. She disassociated herself from social work support, preferring to see white people as the natural beneficiaries of white social workers' support. However, seeing 'whiteness' as privileged, deified and empowered leads cultural others to subordinate their own cultural status in order to justify their discriminatory treatment and perhaps reflect racial gaze away from themselves as the racial subject (Johnson, 1999). Imani seeing herself as powerless lead Imani to devalue her social role (Bryant-Soloman, 1976). Bryant-Soloman notes the consequences of powerlessness:

> as varying degrees of alienation from, and mistrust of, societal
> institutions, lowered self-esteem, fatalism - all of them obstacles
> to a successful helping encounter (Bryant-Soloman, 1976, p25),

Bryant-Soloman (1976) further suggests, that any social work responses to powerlessness need to be culturally specific. White social workers intent on supporting Afrikan-Origined people to overcome the powerlessness of internalised inferiority must, therefore, prioritise models of intervention that are founded on the cultural priorities of Afrikan-Origined people. Simultaneously, there must be new models of social work success which reward practice-evidence of relinquished Eurocentric control over ideological priorities. Without this, white social workers will continue to effect negative consequences via their interventions into Afrikan-Origined peoples' lives.

The influence of Imani's mother as a woman who coped with her life's adversities after the effects of white social workers, influenced Imani's views about her own ability to cope with social distress, leading to a contradiction for Imani. Did she have a right to act in her own interests or did her right extend to merely accepting services she felt would be inappropriate? Commenting on the consequences of this contradiction Imani said:

I then had a flat where it became unbearable. I became depressed,
suicidal going from window to window seeing that was my life ...
Basically it was a struggle and felt because my mum could conquer,
my mum will always be my role model   She could conquer her adversities:
I felt I could do the same ... but I felt I needed some form of help and
assistance ... [but] *being influenced by white people and trying to grasp*
your identity... I was slowly going downhill

For Imani, the value system she had internalised was used as a backdrop to illuminate the disastrous consequences of racism in her in her life. She talked about the way in which white people influenced her life, in terms of the effect white people had on her identity strength. The consequences of internalising her place as inferior led to crises for Imani regarding her identity, creating a paralysis in her value system. Akbar, Saafir and Granberry (1996) argue that such crises indirectly influence how Afrikan people would receive information about themselves. The paralysis would also influence which values Afrikan-Origined people prioritise over others.   Akbar, Saafir and Granberry (1996) also suggest that the kind of environmental pressures that underpin identity crises can then go on to shape life by defining realms of possibility. Environmental pressures can also determine conditions and access to information, informed by expectations of human potential. Environmental pressures can also shape perceptions and knowledge by influencing what we see and the conclusions we make about our world. For Imani, the conclusions she made about her world suggested to her that any form of assistance from white people would either go against the coping tendencies she inherited from her mother, or assistance would further reinforce her subordination, in line with the image of herself held by white people.

I went on to examine whether the subordination of Imani's values about herself had a bearing on Imani's life choices. Speaking about her life, Imani said:

I always felt that black people could never ever become social
workers because this would mean going to college - university ,
and that did not happen. I never knew anyone ... until I needed
social workers as a client and realised that there were black social
workers.

It was always in my mind that social work was a job for white people,

not black people... I felt that they [white social workers] *could not do*

anything, we needed that little bit more, someone to recognise our

needs. It was washed away because white people knew better so

anything you wanted - white people you knew - white teachers,

white doctors and nurses so why not white social workers. So I

never dreamed that I could achieve being a black social worker.

For Imani, the consequences of believing that white people had the power to determine her life choices meant that she never saw herself as having the right to access the same opportunities to status as white people. She never dreamed of herself as a professional, - being respected, having power and authority. Although Imani was able to use her experiences to recognise that Afrikan-Origined people needed an authentic response to their needs, she never saw herself or Afrikan-Origined people in positions where they could provide services and take action in their own interests. I remember sitting and listening to Imani recount her experiences, chronicling her movement through the space and time of her childhood encounters with white social workers. That to me was quite something. Here we were, at the time in 1998, and there was a woman sitting in front of me who was so traumatised by her initial contact with white social workers that she related everything in her social environment to that contact. The trauma of that initial encounter 'coloured' her consciousness to such an extent that it left her unable to see a place for herself, other than one of subordination, that she believed would ordinarily have been assigned to her as an Afrikan-Origined person. Subordination meant that Imani would not be questioned about her worthiness. When Imani talks about wanting to have her needs recognised in a relative way, but had reconciled herself to that being 'washed away' because white people knew better - this is a profound statement. It says that white privilege or rights to determine what Afrikan-Origined people should stand omnipotent, irrespective of the consequences on Afrikan-Origined people. Having relegated herself to a status that she believed was her place, Imani had no recognition that her words and patterns of thinking were in themselves contributing albeit unwittingly, to the reproduction of the same pattern of internalising values of whiteness. Woodson (1990) sums up this issue in the following way:

If you make a man [sic] feel that he is inferior, you do not have to

compel him to accept inferior status, for he will seek it himself. If

you make a man think that he is justly an outcast, you do not have to

order him to the back door. He will go without being told: and if there

is no back door, his very nature will demand one (Woodson, 1990, p56).

Imani's response to the racism she suffered, although in stark contrast to Kuumba's experiences of racism in the classroom, demonstrates how the consequences of Eurocentrism can have a devastating impact, no matter how fleeting the contact with white people. It is the power of Eurocentrism to determine life chances and choices that reminds us that fleeting or not, the consequences of contact with white people who are racist or unaware of the racial and cultural priorities of 'black' people can have a serious, long-term and debilitating impact on Afrikan-Origined people. Bryant-Soloman (1976) argues that when we are looking at the cause of human problems whether of an individual or community nature - it is powerlessness whether actual or perceived, which holds a significant place in any debate. That powerlessness was real for Imani, to the extent that it coloured her views about the outcomes of her experiences, irrespective of whether the experiences were actual or imagined:

go[ing] *to social services and just the building alone was daunting*

enough. I have never experienced prison but can imagine it like that.

I felt that as soon as I walked into the building I felt that my child

would be taken away because they would see me as this unfit black

mother...

Bryant-Soloman's assertions regarding any attempts to work with such experiences are particularly apt here in suggesting that:

Assessment of the effects of power blocks on the aetiology of

problems and the capacity for solving them require knowledge of the

nature and dynamics of growing up black (Bryant-Soloman, 1976, p.18).

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Afrikan-Centred approaches to social work can intervene in distress situations, to include more than an assessment of availability of essential services and materials - to look at what role white practitioners or inappropriate social work services might have played in the destruction of human potential (Akbar, Saafir and Granberry, 1996). Afrikan-Centred approaches to problem-solving also recognise the pain and trauma suffered by Afrikan people and allow for the expression of pain and suffering in its own terms. Pain and suffering can also be expressed in relevant terms, without presenting behaviour being misinterpreted and, therefore, mistreated. This is an important factor set against a current situation where Afrikans' distortion of their reality, their identity, their value and status etc, is viewed as normal by beneficiaries of Eurocentrism who projects themselves through Eurocentric universal models of excellence (Addae, 1996).

For Imani, the projection of Eurocentric culture into the helping relationship led her to believe that there were positions of power and responsibility that would not be open to her or her 'race', despite her belief that there would be benefits for Afrikan-Origined people, accessing Afrikan-Origined professionals. For Imani, contact with white social workers would merely replicate her experience of feeling inferior and receiving an inferior service. However, Imani's childhood and adult experiences also had to be examined in relation to social work practitioners and the responsibilities they must carry for their practice and outcomes they leave in peoples lives. The power of white social workers to determine personal and social realities and for Afrikan-Origined people to interpret and accept that reality as if it were there own, is akin to Afrikan-Origined people accepting a false reality (James-Myers, 1998). The seriousness of accepting a false reality is borne out in Imani's experiences. The inferences and opinions taken on by Imani, informed her opinions about how she framed her own future. Making the point that values gained from racist and irrelevant contacts can directly correlate to an individual's belief in their ability to lead successful and well-balanced adult lives (Ekwe Ekwe (1994).

Imani continued to be affected by her early life experiences, to the extent that they played a strong determining role in her belief in her life chances. Yet, Imani is a fully qualified social worker, who completed her social work diploma. This suggests that something happened to change the way she felt about herself and the choices she could make with her life. Here, she recounts what it was that changed her opinions:

It was not until I started meeting people like [Afrikan-Origined
social workers] *and thinking 'what social worker?', that can not
happen. I think you* [AJB] *were the only black social worker that
I had ever met who actually got this qualification, not a residential
social worker but a social worker. That blew me away ... and having
this inspiration from you to educate myself and thought that there might
be hope ... wanted people to be proud of me ... It was encouragement of
other people who had been on courses, that I undertook the Mature
Students Certificate course.*

For Imani, it was the contact with someone she saw as a real (i.e. qualified) Afrikan-Origined social worker, which finally opened up the doors to the barriers in her mind. For Imani, the pride she experienced at meeting a genuine Afrikan-Origined social worker, was a pride she wanted others to feel about her. Like Kuumba, who undertook a Black Studies course, Imani undertook further education as an aid to restoring her confidence in herself. For Imani, the importance of having Afrikan-Origined role models served to reaffirm the reality that Afrikan-Origined people could retain all their identity, be themselves and still be professional:

*when black people are talking to you, they are talking from the
heart - its professional but it is from the heart. You do not have to
say anything to them but they know, they know what you are feeling,
they know what you are experiencing or if they do not know, they will
find out ... I think you* [AJB] *understood or you accepted that what I
was feeling was genuine, you showed me you cared. And it is just the
same feeling that I get from my mum all the time. You help me aspire
that I could do and achieve more, I can grow more*

For Imani, meeting Afrikan-Origined social workers provided the opportunity to immediately tap into the relatedness of Afrikan-Origined social workers' centric positionings. The encounters also legitimised Imani's desire to see herself through an appropriate cultural and racial lens, and to begin to visualise the effects appropriate positioning could have on her own value system and life-choices. For Imani, the opportunity of redefining her perception of an appropriate role model for herself resulted in her freeing herself from the position of inferiority she had assigned to herself.

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These experiences speak to the importance of Afrikan-Centredness as an authentic cultural statement for Afrikan-Origined people. Afrikan-Centredness is founded on its unapologetic and primary relevance to Afrikan people, and not the justifying Eurocentric positions of primacy or authority. Therefore, the power Afrikan-Centredness has in its construction and translation of Afrikan reality and truth, is the kind of powerful and unapologetic statement that I believe is beneficial to health and well-being of Afrikan-Origined people. The development of 'consequential-affectiveness' could be extended to social work practice. It could, at least, commit white practitioners to recognising the importance of ensuring the availability of practitioners and environments that enable Afrikan-Origined people to share their experiences whilst simultaneously informing on the quality of the healing that would occur. 'Consequential-affectiveness' would also value the importance of promoting the regenerative aspects of helper / helped relationships, thereby encouraging trust in helping relationships. It is as much a skill for white social workers to be genuine in their recognition that they may not be the best people to explore the kind of issues raised by the participants in my research. However, my expectation would be that white practitioners would support Afrikan-Centred practice by challenging for rights and resources to facilitate opportunities for Afrikan-Centred practice to take place with Afrikan-Origined clients. Imani talked about the benefits of being able to submerge herself in culturally-relevant experiences, and the power such experiences had in freeing herself from her earlier life experiences. However, it was not an easy route for Imani, who continued to be plagued by her feelings of inferiority and insecurity. She said:

> *getting through to the DipSW, I did not want to do it. My course*
> *tutor physically drove me to sign up because I said that I could not*
> *do this, this is for white people and again the environment, white,*
> *white, white!*

For Imani, the fear of being in a white institution where white people controlled the priorities, threatened to push her back towards the inferiority status she had internalised about herself, which informed Imani's views about her worthiness to be on a social work course. Her struggle was not helped by the behaviour of a particular lecturer:

It was the worst two years that I had ever had. It was frightening

but something said to me, in order to see that other people like me

could progress in life without being stigmatised in any way as a bad

person or being black - you would be underclass and that would be

it. I had to do something and not give up. So starting this course was

one of the hardest things that I had ever done ... I felt, 'why am I here?',

and the language - I could not understand, I felt I was out of my league

and this was a big mistake. This is not your place, this is for them ...

... one of the lecturers, which I will never forget this man, turned round

and read out of this text book that you [Imani] *will come under the*

category of underclass. You are categorised as underclass because

you are a single parent, black and you are on benefit' I replied 'not

for long' 'But this is how you are interpreted' and I said 'that will

soon change' That made me even more determined

For Imani, the experience of having her fears of subordination reinforced by yet another white person with power and authority, again, reminded her of the unremitting nature of racism, reinforcing her view that she would not be able to progress in life without being stigmatised about her 'race'. But, again, in a similar way to Kuumba's feelings about her social work course, Imani saw two choices - to either leave or challenge. For Imani, her identity-strengthening experiences encouraged alternative images about her identity, value and potential, which she had not had during her early years. Imani decided to challenge by becoming more determined to succeed. Imani's decision to challenge the social work lecturer's identification of herself as inferior, is a testament to the positive effects gained from opportunities for Afrikan people to experience appropriate role models or discuss their pain in culturally-relevant environments. Time past, such an incident would have paralysed Imani within the boundaries of inferiority she had set for herself. However, whilst Imani indicates that she was affected by the incident, her response differed. Instead, Imani had positive experiences and visions of being herself, which she was able to use to announce her right to self- determination. Imani demonstrates this in the following extract:

I went back to college and they were discussing race and I thought

here we go. The lecturer ... kept looking at me as if to say, 'say

something' I thought no. I'm not here to entertain you, I'm here

to improve myself. I know my culture, I know my history, I know
what I need to do for my people, I am not here for you or your
entertainment.

For Imani, the expectation that she should provide the answers to 'race' questions, was not helped when Imani's determination to challenge was seemingly responded to with a lecturer's view that she was on the wrong course; and then a test for dyslexia. The test was negative, but it was yet another incident Imani believed, was aimed at her 'race'. For Imani, the need was to focus on her reasons for being on the course and not allow herself to be drawn into the roles lecturers hoped she would play. It would have been easy for Imani to suspect that labelling her dyslexic was an attempt to undermine her place on the course. Imani's experiences again, raise interesting questions about the influence of Eurocentrism in social work education and its use by educational practitioners to impose racist identities on Afrikan-Origined students. It also raises issues about the accuracy, legitimacy or relevance of the profession's education and post qualification expectations of students who will be practising in personal and social need environments that are racially and culturally specific.

Umoja's course failed to utilise the opportunity of having 'race' on the agenda, to ensure that 'black' and white students were adequately prepared for post-qualification practice. Kujichagulia, Nia and Kuumba's courses allowed white students to assume the role of victim when 'race' was being discussed. And, Imani's, course expected sessions on 'race' to be conducted by the 'black' students on the course. The challenge will be for social work educators to re-establish the commitment to support all students to examine their values and attitudes and development of self-awareness (Carrillo, 1993). Educators also have to re-establish the importance of examining personal values in a real way, exploring the belief that personal values are different from professional values, when actually there are difficulties in separating the two (Chand, Dole & Yee, 1999). So, in Imani's case, if social work educators' personal belief is that the role of Afrikan-Origined people is to provide answers to practitioner / educator questions on 'race', then it is likely from Chand, Dole & Yee's position, that this expectation will be conveyed in practice settings. Social work educators must actively pursue their responsibility to ensure they turn out practitioners who have an appreciation of the different contextual lenses through which their fellow practitioners and potential clients of different cultures and worldviews, might choose to refract their needs and proposed solutions.

Turning now to Imani's proposed solutions, my interest was in whether Imani continued to carry the positive racialised and cultural experiences she had achieved, into her post-qualification practice. After completing her course, Imani took up a post in the voluntary sector, focusing on child and family services. Her choice of practice was greatly influenced by her own contrasting experiences as a client, although her views had altered during her practice:

> *...I chose to go into the voluntary sector rather than the statutory*
> *body because I felt that you were limited and social workers use*
> *the excuse that because of the guidelines you could not go any further*
> *- so I opted for the voluntary sector thinking that you could speak to*
> *people as people and use your practice to your way of working. But I*
> *am finding that isn't the case ... It is not how I imagined and I am still*
> *finding that now*

For Imani, the opportunity to practice in the voluntary sector gave her the flexibility to extend her practice to understand needs that were not so easily presented or understood from white practitioner positionings. But in similar ways to Umoja and Nia who were both unhappy in their practitioner roles, social work did not live up to Imani's expectation that practice would be less formal and more accessible. Given Imani's concerns, I asked her to contrast her sector service with the community social work service that she had had contact with some fifteen years previous, as a client. Imani noted the benefits of community based racially / culturally-specific services, stating:

> *...I think it is one of the best methods to work with our people, to*
> *gain trust and respectability both ways and eventually to get to the*
> *root of the cause of the problem that person might have.*

> *You want someone who is genuine, who recognises who you are, what*
> *you are and that you are an individual. You have a cultural*
> *background or a religious background that they need to recognise*
> *and respect and even more importantly if they are from the same*
> *background... They are there for you. They are respecting you regardless...*

For Imani, the recognition and inclusion of her identity and culture in the social work relationship, was relevant to her healing and self-determinatory goals. Community based racially / culturally-specific service would, therefore, provide opportunities for Afrikan-Origined people to experience social work as genuine helping experience. Imani highlights the importance of the Afrikan-Origined community being able to access Afrikan-Origined professionals on personal as well as social issues, suggesting that the role of the Afrikan-Origined professional is a wider one than that defined in current Eurocentric expressions of professionalism. It is a point which Small (1994) comments on, noting that the Afrikan community is full of ordinary people for whom competition with whites may not be the priority in their lives. For those people Small argues, there may need to be more than just the language of anti-racism or its service representations, to make a difference in their lives.

Therefore, a social work service that understands the needs of Afrikan people and the way in which people (as individuals, client groups or as a community) choose to express need, offers more of an opportunity for Afrikan-Origined people to be specific in their search for remedies to their distress. Such a service could support Afrikan-Origined workers to provide something beneficial via the Afrikan-to-Afrikan helping relationship (Schiele, 1996). Schiele locates that benefit within the Afrikan-Centred worldview of cultural relativism in social work, which he states, is represented by:

the personalisation of the professional relationship and reciprocity
within professional relationships [which] are essential components
of the helping or healing process (Schiele,1996, p291).

The role played by the practitioner is also important in that it represents in action:

The demonstration of positive feelings by the helper [which] cues the
person being helped that the helper does indeed care about his or her life.
This perception of caring provided the foundation for the relationship to
be viewed and practised as a sacred and special one - a unique point where
people meet to advance human transformation (Schiele, 1996,p292).

Summary

Imani came to the interview having experienced the effects of white social worker intervention as a child, as well as having had direct experience of white social worker intervention as a client in her own right. Her experiences of social work contact were such that they left Imani struggling to find some meaning with regard to the personal and social needs she had, whilst attempting to account for the consequences of white practitioner involvement as having inferred inferior status on her. Imani's experiences changed when she came into contact with Afrikan-Origined social workers, who operated from a centric viewpoint that resonated with Imani's need to see herself in positive ways and begin to determine a future for herself. Those experiences served to support Imani to challenge the values she had internalised about herself and her identity and replace them with beliefs about her potential. However, Imani's multiple experiences of meeting white people who sought to infer racial subordination on her, served to highlight the unremitting nature of racism, in its ability to move through time and space and reappear in issues that Imani felt she had already addressed.

Imani's experiences are significant in understanding the importance of Afrikan-Centred practice / practitioners' contact with Afrikan people in personal and social distress. Imani's life-story demonstrates that there is a role for Afrikan-Centred approaches, just because Afrikan people ask for them. If the emphasis is on social work being a helping profession, then social work practitioners need to accept that they might not be the best people to deliver particular social work responses. Worse still, to not recognise the importance of offering choice to Afrikan-Origined people threatens to create the kinds of effects Imani revealed - informing the kinds of feelings about white practitioners that, although may reference the practice of the few, may serve to influence views on the practices of the many.

Echoes From the Heart: Reflections

Introduction

This chapter is intended to draw together the themes that emerged from the analysis of the participants' life stories and the issues that came up for me as the researcher conducting the research. I decided to separate the conclusions since I wanted to be sure that readers of my thesis would be clear about authorship of conclusions that emerged from the research. I developed a set of ethical procedures for the Agwamba model, which held me to a responsibility to address issues that came up during the research. The participants have their own voice and as such the issues that emerged via their voices are reflected in the analysis chapters. When linking conclusions to participants, I have listed the participants (if I am referring to more than one participant), in the order in which their stories were analysed - that order being, Umoja, Kujichagulia, Ujima, Ujamaa, Nia, Kuumba and Imani. Listing in this way I hope will make it easier for readers who wish to trace the findings back to particular analysis chapters. I had my own issues to address about my research, not least in relation to my concerns about silences which Kujichagulia and Ujamaa introduced into the telling of their stories. The reflections from my voice make up the second part of this chapter.

Reflections on Participant Experiences

What was striking about the early childhood experiences of the participants, was their experiences having consequences that spoke across time. Their experiences of racism and failures to have their needs met by white people like teachers, classmates, neighbours etc, went on to affect the participants lives right through to their interest, entry and practitioner statuses as social workers. The participant's experiences and consequences of not being white highlighted effects on themselves as children, regarding the consequences of not being white, as well as noting that the effects of those consequences (e.g. internalisation of racist expectations of identity and behaviour), reappeared years later, at different times and milestones in the participants' lives. Umoja, Kuumba and Imani for example, demonstrated how the racism they encountered as children at school, in their

lived environments and in Imani's case, from social workers, had a devastating effect on the images they internalised about themselves. The consequences of those effects went on to influence how the participants saw themselves, the life choices they believed they were entitled to and the roles they expected to play.

Umoja, Kuumba and Imani eventually came into contact with identity strengthening opportunities, people and experiences. However, a finding from the data evidenced that all three participants continued to be affected by the unremitting nature of the racism they first experienced as children. The data also highlighted the ability of white teachers, social work lecturers and practitioners, to harness racism as a tool in their dealings with Afrikan-Origined people and in the process, replicate anger and fears in the adult lives of the participants, feelings which the participants had first experienced as children. This finding seemed to support Akbar's (1994) finding, that actual racist encounters in themselves might fade from the memory, but the consequences and effects of those encounters stay buried deep in the psychological racial personalities of Afrikan-Origined people - able to reappear when similar experiences trigger memories of past experiences. It is this domination by memory that leaves Afrikan people unable to grow and trapped in the chambers of past experiences.

There was also an additional consequence to the pressures and effects of the behaviour of white practitioners, working in social services and schools. It was overwhelmingly the case, that after contact with white practitioners the feeling of the participants (i.e. Umoja, Nia, Kuumba and Imani) was, that life was not the same. Further, the participants felt they were not the same or had not been treated the same as a real or imaginary white comparator. Imani for example, remembered a racist encounter with a white social worker during her childhood, which led her to feel that white people were only interested in helping white people, or, that Afrikan-Origined people would always be denied racially / culturally-relevant services because only white people were entitled to jobs as practitioners. Similarly, Akbar (1996) concluded that the lives of individuals were shaped by environmental pressures, and the power of environment, in shaping an individual's self-concept.

The participants' experiences highlighted a need for white social workers to grasp the enormous implications of inappropriate educational and social work practice environments on Afrikan-Origined people and, that consequences manifest across the life-times of Afrikan-Origined people. To create an educational environment that exacted an

oppressively conforming experience on a child, as was Umoja's experience; or, too racially abuse and attack an Afrikan-Origined child in school because of her 'race' and culture, as happened to Kuumba - I argue, are particular examples of how failing to meet the needs of Afrikan-Origined people was already acceptable practice for white people. Further, the welfare and helping ethic surrounding the social work profession did not prevent white social workers from perpetuating racist practices in their dealings with Afrikan-Origined people, as Nia and Kuumba's experiences highlight. The power of Eurocentric cultural justification as highlighted in chapter two of my thesis, acts to bind white people together on a power and privilege platform. Consequently, their behaviour towards Afrikan-Origined people whether in general societal terms or in particular social work terms, remains one informed by racism and oppression. It was understandable, therefore, that the participants should find themselves confronted by similar racist experiences first encountered in their childhood, once they entered social work.

The participants' childhood experiences led to another finding from the data which suggested that as a result of the racism the participants had experienced, they went on to prefer careers in the helping professions. Such responses, I felt, were linked to the belief that helping professions helped to redress the consequences of the participants' racist experiences. Additionally, working in helping professions seemed to reinforce the participants' personal need for healing approaches to practice. Also, helping professions ensured that the participants could express their empathetic concerns by contributing to eliminating racist practices towards Afrikan-Origined people. Both Umoja's experience of conformity and Nia's experience of growing up in Care seemed to generate interests in them wanting to work in helping professions. However, Kuumba clearly stated that she wanted a profession in vocational work because she had a need to be needed and felt she was best placed to understand and resolve experiences of racism because she had experienced them herself. This is a finding, however, that I feel needs further research to fully explore its substructural formation within the experiences of Afrikan-Origined people.

The experiences of racism in the participants' childhood led to findings on survival and strategic responses developed by the participants, which they carried with them into their adult lives. There was the strategy of conforming to racist expectations of limited personal potential, via the participants' subordination of their Afrikan-Origined identities as a defence against racism (see Umoja and Ujamaa's experiences, although Ujamaa's

response surfaced in her employment experiences). Kuumba submerged herself in the Afrikan-Origined community and took on a Black Studies Course as a means of building identity strength. Whilst Nia and Imani drew support from positive Afrikan-Origined practitioner role models and community members, as routes to building their identity strengths.

Fig 5.1: Research participants' key coping strategies against

Eurocentric hegemony in their life experiences

Umoja	Challenged conformity to reclaim Afrikan identity
Kujichagulia	Used Afrikan identity strengths to challenge racism
Ujima	Subordinated Afrikan identity as a survival strategy
Ujamaa	Afrikan identity strengths were frustrated by racism
Nia	Reclaimed Afrikan identity to challenge racism
Kuumba	Submerged self in Afrikan identity and culture to rise above racism
Imani	Used role modelling to re-define positive sense of self

Figure 5.1 above, demonstrates the key coping strategies used by the participants to deal with their unremitting experiences of racism. The research data also highlighted that although the participants were able to draw on other general responses to racism it was their key coping strategies to which they consistently turned. This suggested the participants believed that use of their key coping strategies would produce responses in themselves which they understood and could rely on to survive and challenge the racist encounters they were confronted with.

Applying an Afrikan-Centred analyses to these events indicated that the participants' distress had been prolonged and unremitting, because they had attempted to understand the events in their lives using the same frameworks that had justified the initial acts of racism and oppression perpetrated against them. The research data showed the

participants believed that what had happened to them had occurred because of racism. However, even with the benefit of hindsight to reflect on their life experiences, the participants rarely stepped outside traditional Eurocentric frameworks of analysis to explain their pain (e.g. self-blame, self-devaluation; self-limiting approaches to life choices). Consequently, the participants' explanations about the causes of their experiences were typically one-dimensional explanations which rarely led them to opinions outside of the Eurocentric paradigm.

An Afrikan-Centred analysis demonstrated that such explanations fell short of doing little more than producing a 'logging of events' type of record. So, for example, when Kuumba talked about her childhood experiences of racial abuse and attack, the explanation ended with racism as the cause. However, an Afrikan-Centred analysis took the explanation further to not only look at what sustained the ability of white people to racially abuse and oppress Afrikan-Origined people but also, what underpinned and legitimated white people's ability to do this. Use of an Afrikan-Centred analysis takes explanations beyond Eurocentric frameworks and places them within frameworks that operate from the social milieu of Afrikan people. That social milieu would then demand that explanations go that step further and look at transformatory and liberationary responses and strategies as part of that explanation.

Use of Eurocentric frameworks of explanation also served to individualise the events in the participants lives leading to responses that focused on individual remedies. This point was evidenced by the participants' tendencies to internalise the racism they experienced in victim-blaming type responses which individualised events and consequences and served to further entrench the participants' beliefs in their own inferiority. The participants carried the consequences of their racialised oppression into adult situations like employment and further education - limiting the benefits they were able to get out of those situations. It was not until the participants encountered Afrikan-Origined support groups, educational or role-modelling experiences, that they encountered experiences that suggested their life experiences were not unique. This brought a further finding from the data, suggesting that the participants' experiences informed their beliefs about the need and importance of Afrikan identity and culture. Umoja, Nia, Kuumba and Imani came from childhood and young adult experiences of having their 'race' and identity undermined via contact with white people. Consequently, the participants prioritised contacts with Afrikan-Origined people who supported their need to reconnect with their

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psychological identities. For example, the participants gained in confidence from the benefits of unity and identity strength that emerged from being amongst 'black' student groups, which served to ground the participants in an almost communal like experience that spoke to their need to be understood in relevant terms. Additionally, as mentioned earlier, other identity strength relationships were also prioritised to represent the importance these relationships had in the building of core and external racial identities. This finding is borne out by Afrikan-Centred literature which concludes that Afrikan people recognise differences between the two levels of Afrikan identity, i.e. core (internal, psychological) and peripheral (external), from racial / culturally significant relationships. This is because meaningful relationships infer an interconnectivity between Afrikan people which supports the development of interconnectivity between the two levels of identity which must both be maximised for congruent outcomes (Asante, 1987).

The participants' experiences on social work courses highlighted that social work educators through course programmes, merely replicated society's treatment of 'race', (see chapter one for a full discussion), in some instances continuing where the participants' childhood socialisation processes ended. 'Race' and culture were treated as constant caricatures in a teaching environment where Afrikan-Origined students were left feeling that their presence on social work courses made them targets for abuse and unfair treatment. Importantly, however, where participants had come into social work training confronted by immediate reminders of their past racialised encounters, they chose to stand their ground, in often openly hostile and derogatory environments. The issue of hostile treatment even extended to the testing of two of the participants, Kujichagulia and Imani, for dyslexia, without their knowledge. Both tests were negative, but served to undermine Kujichagulia and Imani's confidence in their own abilities. The participants' understanding of 'race' from Eurocentric discursive positions, typical of social work courses (Graham, 1999; Robinson, 1995), undermined their ability to challenge the way they were treated and the way 'race' was discussed. There was also a lack of commitment and direction surrounding the handling and teaching of 'race' as highlighted by Umoja, Kujichagulia, Nia and Kuumba's experiences of the behaviour of lecturers and white students. This determined how 'race' was handled as an issue, and demonstrated the ability of course lecturers to stand in the power of Eurocentrism, to justify white academic perspectives on 'race'. The emphasising of 'race' away from its Eurocentric origins and manifestations to a rootless discursive, whilst still facilitating opportunities for the participants to share their

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experiences, left the participants totally unprepared for the claiming of 'race' as an oppressive and discriminatory experience for white students. It was this redefinition potential of anti-racism that Karenga (1993) concluded, made anti-racism unsuitable as a liberation strategy for Afrikan people.

The benefits of using Afrikan-Centredness as a basis for contextualising the issue of 'race', was unavailable to the participants. Use of Afrikan-Centredness would, however, have demonstrated the potential role of universality in Eurocentrism, and its purpose of imposing definitions of reality and truth on all cultural others (Ani, 1994). It would then have been easier for the participants to see positions on 'race' that focused on reforming peripheral areas white people defined, as those traditionally thought to make 'black' people feel better about themselves. The participants would have seen that such positions on 'race' simultaneously create a victim status for white students and lecturers. Consequentially, the hostile treatment of 'race' by both lecturers and white students, causing 'black' students to group together as a way of surviving their experiences would have been an expectation rather than a surprise, to the participants.

The data were instructive in highlighting a pattern in the way 'race' influenced the supportive practices of 'black' students on social work courses. However, the data also highlighted an inference whether perceived or real, of a direct correlation between the number of 'black' students on a social work course and the threat 'black' students felt they were seen as posing to the manageability of courses and the quality of learning environment of white students. Too many 'black' students (in Nia's case, five in a total year group, was the maximum number on any of the courses), and 'race' was too difficult a subject for white students to cope with without feeling threatened and victimised. The data on the threat 'race' posed to the academic learning environment also seemed to facilitate support from lecturers, to allow white students to treat the subject as optional. Lecturers themselves, used 'race' to undermine 'black' students' beliefs in their own abilities (I have previously noted the use of dyslexic tests on Kujichagulia and Imani). Overall, the data suggested that little may have changed for 'black' students on social work courses since the publication of the Black Students Voice Conference Report (1992), despite the passing of time on policies and competency requirements on 'race' and anti-discriminatory procedures and practice in social work.

The importance of situating Afrikan-Origined people in a relevant social milieu with regard to social work education and training, preferenced black perspectives models, which as noted in chapter one, prioritised convergence of 'black' and white opinions on 'race' and political responses to racism. However, Afrikan-Origined students must be seen as active agents who have the right to make choices and take action to ensure that they have control over what happens to them in the academic learning environment (Amer & Bryan, 1996). Further, white students must be encouraged to see how racial dynamics critically affect helping relationships (Davis & Gelsomino, 1994). What is then taught and learned on social work courses will not be vastly different to what is real. Introduction of an Afrikan-Centred context into social work education would assist in centring Afrikan students in their own cultural information, thereby increasing motivation and achievement through relevancy (Nobles, 1990).

Despite the participants expressing creative interests in social work services for Afrikan-Origined people, the participants left academia, finding few practice opportunities that matched their practice priorities. As a practitioner, Umoja continued to face pressures on her to conform, just as she had done in her childhood. Those pressures came from expectations of her white practitioner colleagues that she should align herself with their stance on 'race', and white practitioners' expectations of social work practice, that did not value any specificity Umoja expressed about working with Afrikan-Origined families. Frustration led Umoja to tender her resignation. Ujima had also tendered her resignation after she said she had been targeted because of her position on 'race'. Ujima believed this had affected her ability to progress in the organisation and had decided to leave, feeling very angry and frustrated. Nia was also frustrated with his post because he wanted to continue to practice with Afrikan-Origined children in Care, yet found himself placed in an unit where his interests were rarely served. Imani worked in the voluntary sector, choosing it as a practice base because of her experience of local authority social workers, whom she had found rigid, threatening and racist. However, Imani found that voluntary sector status did not equate to better working practices. Kujichagulia and Ujamaa were the only participants who were happy with their post. Ujamaa had made a conscious decision to subordinate her identity, as a strategy she believed would demonstrate to white workers that 'race' was not her priority. Ujamaa carried the same priority into her post qualification practice and was happy that 'race' was not a practice priority. Kujichagulia came back to a 'race'-specific post. Kujichagulia was the only participant who had secured a practice

position with any direct responsibility for servicing Afrikan-Origined clients. She saw herself as able to use the power in her position to push through 'race' priorities, however, she remained concerned that as a lone practitioner, she was ineffective at changing the culture of the organisation. Afrikan-Centred perspectives in social work practice had not entered any of the participants' practitioner experiences.

To a greater degree the participants were able to go some way towards translating their racialised experiences into their visions of relevant social work services to Afrikan-Origined communities. The participants prioritised self-determinatory elements like relevant cultural locations, Afrikan-Origined workers needing to be involved in running social work services, the importance of congruent identities of Afrikan-Origined practitioners and the need to feel empathetically understood in Afrikan-Origined modes of expression - as important principles in any racial / culturally-specific social work provision. Ujima and Ujamaa, for example, both felt Afrikan-Origined workers had a role to play in running services, believing they would make clients feel understood, although Ujamaa did not see a direct role for herself in the running of such services. Umoja, Kujichagulia Nia, Kuumba and Imani specified the same services, although they referenced the importance of Afrikan-Origined workers needing to have a congruent Afrikan identity.

The participants noted the benefits of their practitioner and service ideals in ways that seemed to symbolise the kinds of benefits they would have enjoyed, had such services been in place during their own childhood. Umoja believed that racially and culturally specific services would remove barriers, increase accessibility and would not have restrictive and oppressive practices - making services much better at communicating benefits to Afrikan-Origined people. Kujichagulia felt that any service, whilst being a separate and specific service, should be attached to mainstream local authority in order to take a one-stop approach to providing a range of services for Afrikan-Origined people. Interestingly, Kujichagulia was the only participant who expressed, that Afrikan-Origined services would be better able to offer services to white people. This fitted in with Kujichagulia's 'race' specific post, which gave Kujichagulia the opportunity to use her power to influence the practice of white people. Kujichagulia's views suggested that she felt, that 'race' and culturally-specific services could do the same for white clients. Nia felt that all Afrikan-Origined workers providing racially and culturally-specific community based services should have a congruent identity. He felt that identity was a crucial aspect

of Afrikan-Origined wellbeing and should be part of any assessment of Afrikan-Origined distress and practitioner response. Kuumba and Imani believed that 'race' and culturally-specific services allowed Afrikan-Origined people to experience trust and respectability during assessment of their distress. 'Race' and culturally-specific services would get to the root of problems because of the benefits of relevant accessibility and familiarity indicators. And, such services would be more successful at helping because of practitioners' ability to convey genuineness.

In the process of sculpting appropriate services for Afrikan-Origined people, the participants identified models of practice that mimicked their expectations of helping environments being nurturing environments, not just for Afrikan-Origined people, but also for themselves. The general feeling was that practitioner environments should allow Afrikan-Origined practitioners to project themselves into their practice, because this brought practitioners less conflict about issues of conformity and allegiance. However, the participants also noted that culturally-specific services would bring them more job satisfaction because they would not have to compromise their identity and could extend their practice to ensure that outcomes prioritised actions and remedies that prioritised self-determinatory outcomes.

The findings on participants' views in this area also highlighted close links to the 'consequential-affectiveness' principle of the Agwamba model. My analysis of the data revealed that the participants prioritised similar qualities they felt needed to be in the helping relationship, that I had reflected in the role of the principle of 'consequential-affectiveness'. These included the benefits of creating a helping environment that supported sharing. The importance of both client and practitioner, being concerned about the outcomes of practitioner involvement. The participants expressed notions of reciprocity in their expectations, believing reciprocal expectations encouraged practitioners to approach helping relationships with the intention of putting something back in to the regeneration of wellbeing in clients, and ultimately, their communities.

Overall, I believe my use of an Afrikan-Centred paradigm to conduct my research revealed a rich source of information, which is of great benefit to the social work profession. The participants' experiences highlighted theoretical and practice trends that concerned Afrikan-Origined people and their supporters enough, to provide the wealth of literature to which I referred in the first three chapters of my thesis. The themes and findings from my research supported the emphasis of Afrikan-Centred literature, which

argued that Afrikan-Origined people, were not separate to their 'race' and culture. Additionally, Afrikan-Origined people believed themselves to have better health, wellbeing and an ability to take action in their own interests when their 'race' and culture were included as fundamental aspects of any helping relationship.

The research also highlighted that the participants were not familiar with the language of Afrikan-Centredness as expressed in the writings of authors like Ani (1994) Asante (1980, 1987) and Schiele (2000). However, through the detailing of their experiences, the participants were clearly identifying criteria linked to their interpretations of health and wellbeing, which fell within the definitions of Afrikan-Centred expectations of Afrikan agency and self-determination. Kujichagulia, for example, was able to confront her experiences because of the identity strengths she brought with her into her adult life. Although Kujichagulia she still had racist experiences that challenged her, Kujichagulia's strength of identity informed her tendency to communicate the importance of 'race' and culture in everything that she did. My analysis of the data also showed the varying degrees and experiences of paralysis in the remaining participants' experiences of coping with the racism they experienced, albeit that their ability to cope increased as they came into contact with positive identity strength-nurturing people, and experiences. That said, I did feel that the participants' unfamiliarity with the language, concept and applicability of Afrikan-Centredness prolonged the distress the participants experienced in their childhood and early adult lives. I also felt, that their distress was prolonged because the participants did not have the language to conceptualise the kinds of appropriate healing environments they needed, and would go on to identify as being vital in any service provision for the Afrikan-Origined community.

The Afrikan-Origined community is fortunate that our district council has already accepted the arguments surrounding the necessity of a culturally informed social work service for the community, driven in part by the district council's appreciation that the size of the community has implications for effective access to social work services. The district currently has an Afrikan-Origined specific social work service and one senior service advice post. If anything, the research continues to support the original representations made to the district council twelve years ago, regarding the importance of 'race' and culturally-specific social work services. This view is also supported by the majority of the district's Afrikan-Origined social workers, represented by the social workers who took part in my research. However, despite the lack of relevant local authority practice commitments

on 'race' issues, as highlighted by the Social Services Inspectorate Report (2000), the likelihood of racially / culturally appropriate services making an appearance across Britain seem a slim one at this time.

Reflections on My Role as the Researcher

At the time of finalising my research design, I was very well aware that as an Afrikan-Centred researcher I was bound by different expectations of my role, to that of traditional researcher expectations (see chapter three of this thesis for discussions on this issue). I had incorporated an emphasis on the responsibilities attached to my role as both subject (i.e. Afrikan person and live community member and activist); and object (i.e. researcher with power) in the research process. This was in accordance with the need for a healthy blurring of my two roles in a bid to 'live' the Afrikan-Centred expectation that I was not above the process of contribution and change during the lifetime of the research (Asante, 1993). In particular, I developed the principle of 'consequential-affectiveness' in the Agwamba model, which placed an expectation on me, that the research process and outcomes would not be valid as Afrikan-Centred research unless I was a part of the consequences of the research process and its outcomes. This meant, that having initiated the research and encouraged the participants to share their life experiences I had to expect to be part of the actioning of any consequences that might arise as a result of the participants' telling of their stories. My responsibilities also extended to consequences that occurred as a result of putting the research out into the community or public domain. 'Consequential-affectiveness' therefore required that I know about the importance of being a part of the research. I had to both share and practice that affirmation in everything and with everyone involved in the research, in accordance with the Afrikan-Centred principle of interconnectivity of all people and all actions (Asante, 1980, Schiele, 2000).

I believe that my explanation of this principle to the participants, greatly enhanced the richness of the experiences they shared with me. The research participants were happy with the commitment I gave, and believed it to be a good thing. I never had to think about whether I met the requirements in a specific sense because I always felt I would be there (i.e. continue to live and work the same patch) for the participants after I completed my research. However, on reflection, I felt I met this responsibility in a more direct way with one of the participants. For Kuumba, the interviews had raised issues of a personal nature,

which for reasons of confidentiality, I did not include as sample comments in the research analysis. However, having resurrected these issues within the context of Afrikan-Centred research, Kuumba's request for a subsequent meeting to 'put the issues back' was a request I was duty bound to honour. That meeting took place several weeks after the interview with a proviso that Kuumba contact me should she need further support with any matters related or not, to her interview disclosures. I found myself wondering what would have happened to Kuumba within traditional models of research. In all likelihood, Kuumba, having served someone's research purpose, would have been left with what could have been serious personal consequences to herself. That was reason enough to be thankful that I had incorporated a principle of real and transparent accountability in my research.

At the opposite end of the scale, during interviews with Kujichagulia and Ujamaa I discovered that it was not as easy to sit with the consequences of my dual role as researcher and community member because of the effect I convinced myself, I was having on the participants. Both Kujichagulia and Ujamaa were known to me for relatively long periods of my childhood, and in my role as a community activist. Given that both participants began their interviews well into their adult lives I began to think that our shared pasts might have affected their ability to share information with me. I guessed further, that our shared pasts might have influenced feelings in Kujichagulia and Ujamaa, about what they might have thought I already knew about them or their views might have resurrected feelings in them about how I might have viewed them, should they have revealed anything outside the ideal-type picture of family life. Ujima also adopted silences in her interview. Ujima stated that no part of her interview should be recorded in any way because of concerns she felt about trusting people at that particular time. She was equally definite in beginning her interview at her post as a practitioner, which suggested to me that she had her reasons for not wanting to share any personal information. Ujima answered questions she felt were relevant to the story she wanted to tell. Unlike Kujichagulia and Ujamaa however, Ujima was not known to me at all and certainly therefore, did not fit into my pattern of thought regarding her reasons for wanting her interview to reflect only certain parts of her life. I surmised that she could however have had feelings about how I might have viewed her, should she have revealed things of a personal nature. I will never know, but neither did I feel a compulsion or right to know. Instead, I chose to take my experience of Kujichagulia, Ujima and Ujamaa to the Centring Group, again on the understanding that if my research depended on their full participation I would have had to

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establish their terms for answering all questions without silences, prior to conducting interviews. On reflection, I felt that I had been specific enough in the questions I had asked Kujichagulia, Ujima, and Ujamaa regarding my interest in childhood and background contributory factors in their lives - enough to feel that they had made a decision not to give details during their interviews. I believed their decisions were either due to my influence, and them, not entirely trusting the research process; or due to them having nothing of relevance to say. To that end, I felt that I had fulfilled my commitment towards ensuring that an honest and balanced approach had been adopted with both questions and silences.

In noting where Kujichagulia, Ujima and Ujamaa had begun their interviews I was glad that I had decided not to press them for responses and felt much better about deciding not to invade an obvious silence that the participants had chosen. I raised the matter with the Centring Group (their responses appear at the end of my reflections on my findings), in recognition of these matters reflecting opinions regarding my concerns about me as the researcher and not about the participants. Writing up my reflections with the benefit of hindsight, I wondered whether I would still have made the same decision to respect the participants' silences. I felt that I would, believing that the alternative would have been to rearrange a new research process that would place the participants' fears within an appropriate research setting in order to account for the participants' fears before they answered the research questions.

Another difficulty I experienced throughout the research was the effect of having to listen to certain parts of the participants' responses and to then revisit my feelings during the analysis of their responses. At times, the whole process left me feeling angry for them, because I could identify with their experiences. Listening to Kuumba's experiences of racism and feeling the effects on both Kuumba and Imani as they talked about the consequences of their experiences on their lives, was truly moving and at times hard to take. I found myself wondering if they could see how affected I was and whether this would affect their willingness to contribute in earnest throughout the full interview. There were times when I felt it necessary to make supportive comments in order to assist Kuumba and Imani with their interviews, by way of showing them that I was there with them, supporting them. There were also times when the strength they showed at overcoming the adversities in their lives, was supportive to me in terms of my belief in the power of Afrikan relevance in transforming Afrikan lives.

It was also difficult to sit and listen to particular accounts about the participants' experiences on social work courses, which brought back memories of my own torrid time on my social work course. There were times when it felt like I had been through them yesterday. It was also astonishing and yet extremely worrying that time had changed little, for Afrikan-Origined students on social work courses. Imani for example, had qualified only two years prior to giving her research interview. This whole experience of 'feeling' as a researcher during the research, I felt, was consistent with my role as researcher and community member, which I had gone to great pains to establish as part of my Agwamba model. However, I still felt that I needed to raise my experiences with the Centring Group, because my feelings were real for me and, therefore, real in my research.

Overall, I was happy with the way the interviews had gone, but felt a little worn, by the depth of feeling some of the experiences had raised within me. To date, participant-specific consequences relating to my having conducted the research have been rare, and centre on some participants continuing to use my office as a sanctuary for their views on professional practice and as a source for culturally-relevant information. Following on from my research, I expect to use the research findings to support the need for strengthening the district council's policies on social work service delivery to 'black' communities. I have already begun the process of looking at an appropriate Afrikan-Centred model of practice that will attempt to bridge the gap between traditional social work services and their impending attachment to health care services. This I believe will ensure that whatever model exists, the Afrikan-Origined community at least stands a chance of being able to plug into the model in a relative way.

Centring Group Response

The first matter I explored with the Centring Group was that of the participants' silences. The Centring Group stated that I had the answers to the questions I had asked, in the answers the participants had chosen to leave unsaid. The Centring Group also noted that what I had uncovered, might merely have been the stance of the participants in relation to the intimacy of the research process. Further, that perhaps my focus at the time, may have been too much on what the participants were thinking of me, and my potential to do something with the information they gave me. Instead, I might have felt more at ease with the situation, if I had brought back into the interview space my commitment to Afrikan-

Centred research and my place as a researcher in that research. In particular, the Centring Group reminded me of the principle of 'consequential-affectiveness' in Afrikan-Centred research, making me both personal and professional in the research. Additionally, in an information-gathering role, I cannot forget that the principle expects that I <u>always</u> remember my indefinite ties to the consequences of what I do, whether this is expected of me or not and whether that is made explicit by community members or not. I was reminded that I had been open and honest with the participants about my research and my research methods. It may just have been, that Kujichagulia, Ujima and Ujamaa had decided they did not want to get that personal with me, for reasons which may have been associated with their chosen way of dealing with their childhood stories. In short, they may not have wanted me or anyone else to be locked into that part of them, and that was their choice.

My responsibility was to be there for them in whatever form they chose to tell their stories. The responses of the participants were therefore valid because they demonstrated that even in a situation of researcher and participant where the question of power and who holds it is continuously live, the participants felt powerful enough to set and maintain the terms of their involvement. My reputation and role as an Afrikan-Centred practitioner and researcher did not overpower the participants and prevent them from exercising their choices about what they wished to share with me. Further, their choice about what to share, was not affected by what a part-connection with two participants, might have suggested I already knew.

I also raised the issue of my feelings towards the experiences of the participants. I said that, although I expected to feel some affinity with both their experiences and their post-experiential views, I was taken aback by the intensity of the effects on me , at seeing the pain in the participants eyes and the body language of several of the participants as they recounted their experiences. I noted in the meeting that although I had made supportive comments throughout some of the difficult interviews I had deliberately ensured that I had not interjected any of my experiences into the interviews, as a way of ensuring my experiences did not assume precedence over the participants' experiences. The Centring Group stated that whilst they understood my reasons for not wanting to divert attention away from the participants' time and space, my having shut off a natural outlet in an Afrikan-Centred sharing process meant that I had shut off a source of my route to sharing. The Centring Group said that in my urge to be noble, I had perhaps overlooked the

importance of the sharing process being a sharing process for all involved. Having explained my research process to the participants before the interviews took place, I should have allowed sharing to take place as a way of demonstrating my humanness in the research, the humanness of the situation and also the ability of the participants to be supportive to me. I was reminded that interviews were opportunities to share, within the principle of 'consequential-affectiveness. The participants had already demonstrated their commitment by supporting the context within which the research process was taking place and, involving themselves in the research process. I needed, therefore, to step out of the role of therapist, concerned with not showing effects to clients, and into the role of person.

Overall, the Agwamba model presented me with a research process that I found extremely interesting and rewarding. It lasted six years of my life and covered much personal-experience ground. Because of my insistence in following an Afrikan-Centred path throughout the research, the consequences of the research and my responsibility to it and to the participants, may yet be to come.

Afrikan-Centred Social Work: The Importance of Relevant Social Work Practice

As an Afrikan-Origined person, the experiences of racism or the consequences of having your culture eroded, both warrant recognition in relation to how those consequences impact on the servicing of personal and social distress needs in social work practice (Graham, 1999; Schiele, 2000). My research focused on that impact using an Afrikan-Centred paradigm to situate my research process. The importance of this was to make the act of conducting research as important, in terms of its need for an Afrikan-Centred underpinning, as the need to apply Afrikan-Centredness to the investigation and analysis of Afrikan-Origined personal and social distress. I believe Afrikan-Centredness enhanced the richness of the experiences the participants shared and the quality of the data that emerged from those experiences. Afrikan-Centredness also served as a useful tool to reflect the general practice of racism at societal levels and the particular effect of racism in social work practice. Afrikan-Centredness was useful in its ability to provide a backdrop against which I could establish that Eurocentric supremacy practised by white people at a general social level, was no different in outcome, to the racist priorities that particularised white social workers' practice. Both failed to meet Afrikan-Origined people's need. Additionally, general and particular expectations, assessments and interventions etc, into the lives of Afrikan-Origined people, also failed to meet the needs of Afrikan-Origined people.

One of the most salient findings to emerge from my research was that initial contacts with welfare institutions and helping agencies played a major contributory role in the development of a healthy congruent Afrikan identity. I defined this earlier, as represented by a healthy balance between core and external aspects of self. My research showed the participants carried the consequences and effects of racist lived and educational experiences and white social worker contact with them, throughout their formal education years; into their practice-learning opportunities; onto their various social work courses; and, then into their practitioner roles. Yet, the participants' educational, further education and social work training needs suggested missed opportunities by social work educators, to introduce appropriate paradigms that would support the participants to gain broader understandings of their own racialised histories, experiences and potential. Such opportunities would also have encouraged the views, support and services of some white colleagues - with whom racism holds no home.

Despite missed opportunities, the participants have all qualified as social workers. They are all established as recognised and respected social work professionals. Additionally, all have had opportunities by virtue of their professional and remunerated status, to replace their earlier experiences with the benefits they enjoy today. Yet, the participants define a healthy social work service for Afrikan-Origined people, as one that is racially / culturally specific to Afrikan-Origined people - a service that none of the participants experienced or can identify as having contributed to their success. This outcome is profound, because it challenges the myth that only Afrikan-Origined people who are considered by white people to be radical, are by virtue of their characters, likely to want radical services for themselves and their communities. There was nothing radical about the participants' lives. Further, the research data did not suggest that the participants believed that racially / culturally-specific services were not already available to Afrikan-Origined people. What the data pointed to was a belief the participants held, that as a matter of course, racially / culturally specific services for the Afrikan-Origined community should be part of the district council's repertoire of service provision.

A second finding to emerge from the research therefore is, that experiences of racism, oppression and discrimination impact long term, on the reactions, expectations and personal development of Afrikan-Origined people. Further, that the extent of the consequences of such experiences can inform Afrikan-Origined people's opinion about the kind of social work response Afrikan-Origined people need in order to express and address their personal pain and social distress. Being an Afrikan-Origined practitioner in social work does not change this. Clearly, the participants demonstrated that experiences of distress and wellbeing are founded on personal experiences and not necessarily on professional experiences. The participants' definitions of appropriate social work services for Afrikan-Origined people demonstrate their belief that such services hold the key to positive whole life experiences in personal and social areas.

Another finding supported by the research literature and data suggested that the quality of consciousness of Afrikan people (as measured by a congruence between core and peripheral identity) had a direct bearing on the consequences of absorption, internalisation and survival of racist encounters (contrast Kujichagulia and Imani's experiences; and comments by Azibo, 1995, Nobles, 1976). Further, that the ability of Afrikan-Origined people to respond, challenge and rise from their experiences of racism to become self-determining, was influenced by the strength of anchorage Afrikan people had

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to their history, culture, language and to other Afrikan people. All of which, contributed to identity-strength development (Ani, 1994, Addae, 1996; Asante, 1980). Indeed, Umoja, Nia, Kuumba and Imani's childhood experiences had prolonging effects because of the absence of that anchorage in their lives. However, when participants' experiences highlighted a connection with identity-strength experiences, like Umoja's experience of 'black' student support groups; or, Kuumba's experience of learning about her history and eventually being reconnected to her community; or, Imani's opportunity to meet a role model who understood her language of pain and fear - their responses changed. The important role anchorage plays, was also evidenced in the data relating to the participants' positive experiences of 'black' students' support groups on their social work courses. Indeed, several of the participants talked about the likelihood of them not making it through their courses were it not for their shared experiences with other 'black' students. Additionally, the nature of the participants' responses to issues of 'race' on their respective social work courses was much more present and dynamic as a result of their experiences of fellowship.

Overall, the findings in my research prioritise the importance of racial / culturally-specific investigation, assessment and intervention social work strategies. My research highlights a need, therefore, for both white social workers and non-Afrikan-Centred 'black' social workers (hereafter referred to as conventional practitioners, in relation to their observance of the importance or customary place of Eurocentric social work), to view the Afrikan-Centred paradigm as a route to offering and practising effective social work with Afrikan-Origined people. Afrikan-Centredness offers conventional practitioners the opportunity to think about how cultural-specificity might inform the way they view and interpret Afrikan-Origined people's distress. Afrikan-Centredness also supports conventional practitioners, to see the importance of recognising and assessing Afrikan-Origined people from their culturally-relevant identities, as a practitioner skill. Conventional practitioners would need to value the importance of recognising that even at the point of statutory or crisis driven intervention, there are still opportunities to ensure that social work tasks are not completely overtaken by Eurocentric methods of practice. Conventional practitioners can still separate out social work tasks such as assessment reports or the formulation of care plans, that would yield more appropriate information leading to better support services, were Afrikan-Centred priorities applied to information-gathering requirements. Such skills would also need to be accompanied by commitments

from conventional practitioners, to support referrals to Afrikan-Centred practitioners or services approved by the Afrikan-Origined community. This would ensure that relevant information would be obtained and the full participation of Afrikan-Origined clients was more likely.

Support from conventional practitioners would also have to extend to ensuring availability of resources and supporting the recognition of culturally-specific approaches, as equally legitimate forms of professional practice. Conventional practitioners adopting such a stance could, therefore, demonstrate support for Afrikan-Centred positions in social work without having to replace their allegiances to Eurocentrism. Afrikan-Centredness would also support conventional practitioners to recognise the links between the unremitting nature of racism, its role in timeless and unboundaried manifestations of personal and social distress, and the importance racially / culturally-specific services play in offering relevant social work responses to Afrikan-Origined clients - factors which have been established via my review of relevant literature and the experiences of the participants in my research. Recognition of the importance of Afrikan-Centredness as needing to stand alongside other paradigms informing social work practice, would support conventional practitioners to become variedly-cultured (Forte, 1999). Conventional practitioners could also adopt practice positions that would support the development of preventative approaches to social work practice via a recognition of the importance of racial / cultural-specificity as a healing principle. Umoja, Nia, Kuumba and Imani's experiences testify to the benefits racial / cultural-specificity played in arresting and positively turning around their experiences of racism. Early introduction of relevance and specificity principles, therefore, suggests earlier development of strategies to challenge the pain and distress of racism.

There are however, separate issues which need to be addressed by both white and Afrikan-Origined social workers in relation to the role and success of Afrikan-Centredness in social work practice. White social workers need to have a greater understanding of how Eurocentrism (as a representation of their worldview upon which white vested interests and power are defined) prevents Afrikan people from asserting their right to be themselves or, forces them to adopt defensive stances against racism and oppression. The end of the twentieth century was marked by the primacy given to white skin and, therefore, an understanding of the privileging of whiteness must be undertaken, before beliefs underpinning primacy and superiority can be undone (Nakayama, 1999). White social

workers therefore need to understand the racial privilege underpinning their communal and individual positions rather than accept the simple, taken-for-granted status of their power as social workers. Stage (1999) suggests, it is the power of being white, which assumes in all its bearers, the right to privilege. On that basis, being anything other than white will be detrimental to life choices.

White social workers are also white people. As such, their fears about Afrikan-Origined people are just as likely to impact negatively at a general social level, as they are in social work responses. This point is borne out by the literature searches and analysis of the participants experiences, which establish the link between societal and social work racism, typified by white people as people, educationalists and social workers, failing to recognise and / or meet the general and specific needs of Afrikan-Origined people. White social workers, as the initiators of professionalism in the social work profession, are therefore in the position of gatekeepers to the profession, and as such, hold the potential to positively affect the life chances, choices, healing and long-term wellbeing of Afrikan-Origined people. White social workers, therefore, have to explore what makes them fearful of challenges to their positions of power, fears which I believe, are expressed when Afrikan-Origined people assert rights to identity, culture, and self-determination via agency. Further, white social workers need to explore their history and historiography by way of exploring their origins and what was perpetrated in their name, as a way of securing and sustaining power and privilege. Coming from an informed knowledge base will add support to the need for white practitioners to challenge institutional conceptual systems of domination. Such a challenge would then support white social workers to be open enough to consider how to make their practice with Afrikan-Origined people more appropriate through for example, real partnership approaches or, the purchasing / equitable resourcing of relevant services and social work responses. White social workers would also be in a conceptual position to free themselves from practice positions that specify order and place of 'other' approaches. By acquiring self-knowledge encompassing knowledge of their history, values, beliefs and conceptual systems, white social workers will have a truer understanding of themselves through self-recognition and self-acceptance without the need for 'self-aggrandizement' via the need to oppress the 'other' (Morikawa, 2001, p. 432). Without this, the confusion of white social work practitioner roles in Afrikan-Origined lives will remain problematic. Umoja commented on this, when asked whether there was a role for white social workers to work more effectively with Afrikan-Origined clients:

No [laughs] *... definitely not, NO, because they are too caught*

up in their own ... their own racist denial. I must not generalise

... but I will ... their agenda's are totally different based on ... their

own ends ... it's a means to an end in a lot of ways, their own ends,

their own professionalism ... I really don't feel that a white person

can get into a black person's shoes, life, experiences, history - the

whole lot. They can not live and breathe those experiences. I think

they've got to feel it. They've got to feel the pain. Never mind all the

head business, they intellectualise everything.

Umoja's position was supported by Kuumba and Imani, who expressed similar, views about the limitations white workers brought to social work relationships with Afrikan-Origined people. All three were aligned to a stance that argued for a change in white consciousness, as a route to discarding old perspectives, ideologies and solutions born out of very different eras. Their views are supported by Jefferies (1994), who argues that a change in white consciousness would enable more equal people power, allowing Afrikan-Origined people to put forward and own their own action for change.

And a change is needed. The Social Services Inspectorate Report (SSIR)(2000) concluded that 'black' families face many issues, which have little if any relevance to the white population. Additionally, most councils did not have strategies in place to deliver appropriate services to 'black' families, resulting in the offering of inappropriate and insensitive services. Consequentially, issues about the inappropriateness of access to services continued to plague councils, particularly when English was not the first language of particular communities. The SSIR (2000) further noted that social services workers had varying levels of understanding of situations facing 'black' families often relying on the expertise of 'black' resource teams. Only one council had a track record of taking 'race' equality issues seriously. Such findings make the question of a change in consciousness and social work practice, a pressing one. In all probability, Afrikan-Origined people are unlikely to have access to Afrikan-Centred practitioners. This makes the importance of white social workers' need to be aware of their position in Eurocentrism, much more urgent

For Afrikan-Origined social workers who do not subscribe to the Afrikan-Centred paradigm, the questions they need to ask of themselves are the same as those explored in the Agwamba model, given my belief that a person cannot teach what they do not know.

An Afrikan-Origined social worker would not be able to deliver an Afrikan-Centred social work model such as the one I have devised, without having looked at the importance of relevance and the principles of racial / cultural-specificity, in social work relationships. A failure to address this issue, reduces Afrikan-Origined social work practice to that of representing conventional practitioner priorities. However, if Afrikan-Origined social workers look at the distress of Afrikan people through Eurocentric social work priorities, then they may as well be white workers and should recognise that they also, may not be the best people to work with Afrikan-Origined clients. Indeed, Imani highlighted this point when she said:

> *You could get an Afrikan-Caribbean social worker who probably has*
> *not got (should have!), but has sold out their identity and become*
> *acclimatised* [to the] *stereotypical way of social services as a whole*
> *and has totally forgotten how to speak or how to acknowledge a client*
> *by their own race*

Imani was the child whose mother was a former client, whom herself, was a client in her own right, a social work student and now a qualified social work practitioner. Whilst my voice might be seen as the voice of idealism, Imani's voice is the voice of experience. Afrikan-Origined social workers like white social workers, are likely to reflect conventional social work priorities in their practice, and as such, there is little I can do or say to encourage Afrikan-Origined workers to prioritise the findings of my research en route to the development of relevant practice with Afrikan-Origined people. The findings of my research speak for themselves and readers either accept them and forfeit a defence of ignorance of alternative approaches to improve their practice. Or, readers reject them and continue down the path of failures, most recently highlighted in the SSIR (2000).

Being able to conduct life-story analysis research from an Afrikan-Centred foundation meant that the Agwamba model of Afrikan Centredness I used, reflected strategies from the literature, for becoming successful, as being linked to the benefit of developing identity strengths from meaningful contacts. The research findings confirmed the definition of success, in that findings suggested that the participants found identity values in their Afrikan-Origins and identity via 'Black Studies' courses, community contacts, support groups, role models and social work experiences. From these encounters they were able to take back their right to self-determination. The participants also

demonstrated an aspect of their identity strength in their visualisation of appropriate social work services for Afrikan-Origined people, such services needing to prioritise self-determinatory elements.

The Agwamba model also provided a relevant backdrop to demonstrating my commitment as both a community member and researcher to the participants. In particular, I developed the principle of 'consequential-affectiveness' as a way of making sure I could fulfil the criteria of being active in my research in order to ensure that my research was Afrikan-Centred. Being 'consequentially-affective' in my research also demonstrated to the participants that I intended to stay connected to my research and remain accountable for its consequences. This is an innovative and key factor in my model. The principle of 'consequential-affectiveness' in any research would ensure that in order for researchers to be agents of change they would need to have active long-term responsibilities to any consequences arising out of conducting research. 'Consequential-affectiveness' was therefore decisive, I believe, in creating the kind of environment that was key to accessing the kind of life-story information the participants wanted to share, because the participants knew that consequentially I would be there after the research was completed.

The Agwamba model also gave rise to the emergence of the Centring Group. The Centring Group provided reflective and reflexive opportunities for me to ensure that I held true to the Afrikan-Centred priorities I had preferenced in my research. The Centring group was pivotal to me because the practitioners in the group supported me to challenge and reach within myself to have the courage to stand by my convictions during the research. The Centring Group also facilitated opportunities for me to experience 'consequential-affectiveness' in action since I felt that as Afrikan-Centred practitioners, the Centring Group members never made me feel they were not available to be part of the consequences of their support for me. And, indeed, group members have remained accessible since the completion of the research.

The significant place of relevance and identity in the Agwamba model led to biographical information from the participants which illuminated the tenacious and unremitting nature of Eurocentrism and racism as one of its major manifestations. Eurocentrism and racism have to be negotiated by Afrikan-Origined people every second of every day of our lives, to the extent that Umoja, Ujima and Ujamma's experiences demonstrate that professional success can come at a high price and is no protection against the effects of racism. The Agwamba model showed its adaptability via its representation

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of the variety of experiences the participants brought to the research. Also, that it was flexible enough to reflect simultaneously, the kind of changes needed at both the macro level represented by Eurocentrism and micro level changes represented by individual experiences of racism. As such, the Agwamba model of research was instructive in its applicability to the lives of Afrikan-Origined people and their need to survive individual experiences of racism and deal with the macro effects of Eurocentric hegemony.

The Agwamba model does have a relevance to white people working with Afrikan-Origined people, in that through the model, white people can recognise the significant roles specificity and relevance play in determining outcomes for Afrikan-Origined people. I am suggesting through the Agwamba model, that white workers need to be honest about their motives for working with Afrikan-Origined people as well as the outcomes they expect and their commitment as white people to those outcomes. White workers would, therefore, have to be prepared to see that there may be occasions when the sensitivity of the work that needs to be done requires input from a suitably experienced Afrikan-Origined worker. Alternatively, because Afrikan-Origined people may feel varying degrees of reticence within the methods of white workers, that white workers may not be the best people to work with Afrikan-Origined people.

The Agwamba model is also relevant to white workers in that it challenges white workers to address their relationship to Afrikan people by looking at Europe's history of proselytization, hegemony, enslavement, colonialism, imperialism and racism. White workers then need to examine how their history has influenced the development of the Eurocentric paradigm which prioritises the privileging of whiteness and a culture and identity that requires the domination of 'others' as a fundamental part of the beingness of its members. The Agwamba model therefore challenges white workers to begin the process of defining a sense of identity for themselves that embraces the importance of pluralism without hierarchy as a value best able to prioritise the development of all human personality and agency.

The same stance on relevance would apply to 'black' non-Afrikan-Centred workers wishing to use the Agwamba model, in that they too would need to apply the principles of racial / cultural-specificity listed on page 179. This would be important in helping non-Afrikan-Centred workers decide whether they are the right people or the model is the right route to working with Afrikan-Origined people. Consequentially, finding someone who is best placed to undertake the work and appropriately rewarding those people is, therefore,

just as critical a demonstration of good practice as any other competency measurement currently circulating in academia and professional practice.

However, social work is my interest, and presenting my Agwamba model as the appropriate model for social work with Afrikan-origined people prioritises the importance of identity congruence and, therefore, by association, the consequences and impact of the collisions Afrikan-Origined people have with Eurocentrism. 'Black' and white social workers (conventional practitioners), therefore, have to make identity issues a fundamental aspect of their servicing repertoire. I am not suggesting that Afrikan-Origined people are not affected by the kinds of personal and social issues, typical of life in Britain (e.g. poverty, unemployment, educational disenfranchisement, family breakdown etc). What I am suggesting, however, is that conventional practitioners, must take on board the pivotal significance of Eurocentrism and racism as identity and cultural asset strippers of self-determination and agency priorities of Afrikan-Origined people. To omit such a recognition from social work practice means that conventional practitioners fail to recognise the significance of the underlying causes of personal and social distress in Afrikan-Origined people.

Conventional practitioners need to see Afrikan-Origined people as valuing identity congruence, consciousness and experiencing Afrikan identity as a positive, legitimate, valued, worthwhile and respected 'fact' (i.e. demonstrated in the Afrikan-Centred worldview). I believe this to be a route for all people in general and conventional practitioners in particular, to support the growth, health and wellbeing of Afrikan-Origined people. Such a practice stance would recognise the importance of identity differentiation and its inferential importance on the development of relevant social work models. This would then support the right of Afrikan-Origined people to practice agency in their own interests, as well as promote the importance of Afrikan-Origined agency requirements needing to be equitably resourced.

In putting forward the Agwamba model, I recognise that my role in its evolution and application could be seen as pivotal to the outcomes of the research and the generalisability of its findings on both a regional and national scale. However I see myself as actual and not contrived in the research process. From the start, my role was that of community member and activist and researcher. I also spoke from the position of being an Afrikan-Centred practitioner who has (by Imani's account) positively influenced lives. On that basis I feel I can speak from the positions of relevance and specificity, the

participants prioritised in their experiences. Even without having an identical researcher to conduct the research, the findings of the research can still be generalised on both a regional and national level. Evidence of the effects of inappropriate social work practice with Afrikan-Origined communities is not new, and should already be significant enough to generalise about likely experiences in other cities and local authorities. To that end, I am unsure about what could be gained from white researchers attempting to repeat the research in its exact form. Or, indeed, whether Afrikan-Origined workers viewed by Afrikan-Origined people or the community as 'unconscious', would achieve the same kind of access if they conducted similar research. Instead, it comes down to a question of whether my research findings about the long-term and consequential effects of inappropriate and racist social environments, educational environments, social work intervention methods, social work education and training or practice positions, are believed. Further, whether my research participants' visions of appropriate social work services are respected and valued. It is also a question of whether my findings are respected enough, to finally inspire the kind of changes needed to take place, for both white and Afrikan-Origined social workers to bring about changes in the social work experiences of Afrikan-Origined people.

The purpose of the research was that of identifying the benefits of situating Afrikan-Origined people in their relevant social milieu in social work practice - and I believe my research has provided a unique insight into the consequences of this not happening. To that end, I did not identify a position on the same research conducted under different researcher conditions. Afrikan-Origined people have their real stories to tell and experience has taught me that there are varying levels at which Afrikan-Origined people will pitch the telling of their stories (John-Baptiste, 2001). If it is necessary to hear those stories regionally or nationally then Afrikan-Origined people will have an input into the conditions under which they will tell their stories and to whom they will tell their stories. In as much as I have conducted this kind of Afrikan-Centred research in my district, I am not saying I would be able to transpose myself or my good intentions on other Afrikan-Origined communities in Britain. There would be a need for me to serve an appropriate apprenticeship in those communities as decided by the significant people in those Afrikan-Origined communities. It is, therefore, much better that the model be used by people in their respective communities for the telling of stories that need or want to be told. In effect, therefore, it is the research model which is generalisable and, which can be

adapted and used in any Afrikan community. The Agwamba model has demonstrated its credibility within the Afrikan-Origined community of my district not least, by demonstrating that the community has some say about my responsibility to their stories. Any researcher using the model and calling their research Afrikan-Centred will have to think long and hard about the transparency and accountability elements of their role.

The Agwamba model and its prioritisation of Afrikan-Centredness in relation to my research elucidates the importance of the differentiation of identity as relevant in helping / healing approaches for contemporary Diasporan Afrikans. Because the Agwamba model is adaptive to the situations, social or otherwise, that Afrikan communities find themselves in, the model is also relevant to contemporary Afrika and Continental Afrikans. The adaptive nature of the Agwamba model prioritises parallel and pluralistic developments of agency and it is this priority that ensures the Agwamba model can always be rooted in the continuities and adaptations of Afrikan people wherever they are born. For myself as the researcher and the Diasporan Afrikans in my research the emerging priorities were Afrikan antiquity, history and socio-political environments. This impacted on the Agwamba model in context-driven and biographically-driven ways. Opponents of Afrikan-Centredness believe that Afrikan-Centredness is anti-modern because of its prioritisation of Afrikan history as the transgenerational route to problem solving (D'Souza, 1995; Gilroy, 1993). However, the Agwamba model as a representation of Afrikan-Centredness in action demonstrates that Afrikan people can develop routes to problem-solving that are located in both historical and contemporary priorities whilst respecting differences that emerge via the dynamics of location (e.g. social, geographical, religious, cultural etc). Indeed, both Nia and Kuumba, two participants in my research, studied Black History courses which underpinned their views about the importance of a balanced identity, including the importance of history to the development of an Afrikan consciousness, as a necessity for Afrikan-Origined social workers working with Afrikan-Origined communities. Simultaneously, however, both participants locate their vision of appropriate social work services for Afrikan-Origined people in settings that are very much part of contemporary ideas about servicing 'black' communities (see Graham, 1999 and John-Baptiste, 2001). This suggests that differing priorities and differences in location would inform the need to adapt the Agwamba model; but, it is the ability to adapt the Agwamba model that ensures its suitability to being driven by the priorities of Afrikan people wherever they may be located.

On a final note, my use of Afrikan- Centredness as a priority worldview in my research was about my wanting to take social work into a new world where the importance of relevance and specificity is respected. The need for social work to be relevant, challenges the profession to accept Afrikan- Centredness as the 'root' and 'route' to building on the best of cultures and traditions without undermining 'other', that is, those with differing identities. This is because of its focus on respect and equality between all people and its determination to create a social order which reflects that. Like it or not, the development of Afrikan- Centredness reflects the fact that Afrikan people intend to speak for themselves and are setting in place structures and organisations that will assist us in that task. It is white people who are resisting change and who, instead, push for conversion theories that ignore actual change located in our agency, preferring instead to attempt to turn Afrikan experiences into a dialogue of experiences. This suggests that issues raised by Afrikan people can be theorised and not self-determined into resolution - and this is not a position Afrikan people will accept. Neither will it be accepted that the freedom of Afrikan people to self-define and self-determine is equated to rampant Afrikan fanaticism or the erasure of white identities and priorities.

That said, it is my hope that social workers will take note of the stories of the participants in my research. Stories which I feel, speak volumes, in support of the 'roots' and 'routes' of Afrikan-Origined distress and healing - sending a clear message to the social work profession regarding the direction in which social work with Afrikan-Origined people should be developing. My research assists in the codifying of that message, contributing a methodology that is relevant to the telling of Afrikan-Origined people's stories. Future research surrounding my work, I hope, will focus on the methodology in action with a view to reporting the outcomes of Afrikan-Centred social work intervention, and its contribution to developing a path towards healing and agency for Afrikan-Origined people.

APPENDIX 1

Interview Questions and Schedule

The interview questions are written in bold.

Background and Education:

- **Can you say something about your background and childhood, looking particularly at events or influences you believe, contributed in guiding you towards social work as a profession.**

  This question is intended to settle the participant into providing information of a reminiscent nature. The latter part of the question is intended to explore the part played by parental and / or community influences and expectations, about the roles young African people are expected to fulfil.

- **Can you say something about your educational history, again pointing to any educational indicators as possible influences in the choosing of social work as a career?**

  This question has a similar purpose to the preceding question. Additionally however, the question will held to shed some light on the expectations of educators. Asking supplementary questions here may also assist in establishing how the participant perceives (d) or experiences (d) the Eurocentric and / or Africentric paradigm as an influence in their education.

- **Are there any other influences in your life that may have spearheaded your desire to move into the social work profession?**

This question is intended to be a 'sweep-up' question on the subject of influential indicators.

- **Can you talk about your experience of professional social work training?**

The intention is to focus more critically on the role and place of Eurocentric and Africentric paradigms in social work training.

Employment

- **Can you talk about your post-qualification employment, and in particular whether any contradictions existed between your pre-qualification and employment expectations as well any factors that influenced your long-term career plans.**

This question is intended to focus on possible changes in participants between the pre and post-qualifying period and influences in the choice / direction of the participants' social work profession, including the role played by paradigmatic influences.

- **Can you say something about what may have contributed to any discrepancies or contradictions you have identified?**

The intention of this question is to open up the participant to their subjective experiences of their social work post / profession / expectations

Service Delivery

- **Can you say something about your perception of social work service delivery to Afrikan-Origined clients, and how you believe clients perceive the services on offer to them.**

  The question is intended to gauge participants' awareness of differences between actual and perceived service delivery, from both a personal and perceptual vantage-point.

- **Thinking about the previous question, if I gave you a magic wand, what kind of social work service would you create for Afrikan-Origined clients?**

  Question nine builds on the previous question by concentrating the participant on paradigmatic differences as they might impact on the participant's professional practice. Participants are being asked to think in terms of practice comparisons.

Conclusions

- **What are your views on how constituency services would need to change or adapt in order to offer an appropriate service to Afrikan-Origined clients. What role are white social work practitioners expected to play?**

  The purpose of this question is to establish how participants views the future of social work provision and in particular, whether Africentric practice can be merged with Eurocentric practice or whether co-existence can be considered as a viable option.

- **This is an opportunity for you to mention anything about being involved in the**

research or whether it has altered your views about social work services.

This question is here in recognition of the interview process needing to accommodate anything participants may wish to say on both the subject matter and their involvement in or expectations about the research.

Good Practice:

A Senior Practitioner works exclusively with members of the African Caribbean community and provides a direct service not only for children and young people but for African Caribbean adults as well. Community development projects for this community are also a feature of the work, along with advice and consultation to other staff.

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GLOSSARY

Afrikan-Origined My preferred term of identification of all people of Afrikan decent outside Afrika. In relation to this study I am referring particularly to people of Afrikan origin with Diasporian and Caribbean roots, some of whom are born in Britain.

The emergence of Afrikan-Centredness as an appropriate paradigm of study of Afrikan people has supported a reclamation of a clearer Afrikan identity (than previously expressed in descriptions such as Afro / Afrikan Caribbean, West Indian, Black, ethnic minority), by legitimising the right of Afrikan people to practice self-determination in their own interests. This includes the right to name our own identity.

Afrikan-Centred / ness An ideological paradigm (also termed worldview) which advocates the placing of Afrikan and Afrikan interests at the centre of any approach to explanations of Afrikan behaviour and problem solving. The paradigm's modern day founder is Molefi K. Asante and further insight into his work can be gained from his *Africentricity*,(1980); *The Afrocentric Idea*,(1987); *Kemet Afrocentricity and Knowledge*, (1990) and *The Painful Demise of Eurocentrism*, (1999) publications.

When referencing authors I have remained within authors' spellings of Afrikan, determined by their use of a 'c' instead of a 'k'. Where I make my own specific reference to Afrikans, I use the letter 'k' which is the traditional way Afrikans announce themselves - there having been no letter 'c' in the Kemetic alphabet.

Afrikan-Centred Social Work	A method of social work practice which has at its core, a reliance on traditional Afrikan philosophical assumptions to explain and to solve human and societal problems. That reliance underpins a belief that Afrikan people have held onto some of the values, psychobehavioural patterns and ethos' of traditional Afrikan culture (Schiele, 997).

Agwamba Model   Afrikan (Igbo) name of the research model, named as such to signify the reality of the methodology and its intention to be purposeful. 'Agwamba' translates to mean 'the custom of a people'.

The model represents the grounding of my research in an Afrikan-Centred worldview, and the use of a method of inquiry that is appropriate to Afrikan- Centredness. This means placing myself in a position relative to my responsibilities as a professional and community member, contributor and agent of change. The Agwamba model also recognises my role as a consequential-affective person in the research process, effectively tying me to the consequences of the research, for the participants and the community. These characteristics of the Agwamba model converge in a 'wholistic' way to determine my method as an Afrikan-Centred methodology.

Black People   Conyers' seminar, *Justification: Transforming the Mind from Negro to Nubian*, 1996, defined 'black' people as people"... who are defined as non-white by the people who define themselves as white; who act like non-white in regards to people who define themselves as white; who act like non-white with people who are defined as non-white; those are the non-white people"

Conyers' definition focuses our attention on what 'black' people would never be in the eyes of white people, without taking anything away from all that 'black' people saw themselves to be, espoused by the Afrikan (American) Civil Rights and Black Power movements

'Black' was used as a unifying term in recognition of the politicisation of the accompanying experiences of being and belonging to racially distinct communities. 'Black' is placed in inverts in my research however, to signify that there is currently a debate taking place as to its continued acceptance and use as a unifying term for Afrikan-Origined and Asian-Origined experiences of racism and oppression.

Black Perspectives in Social Work   Represents a uniformity of views in the social work profession, on the commonalities of Afrikan-Origined and Asian-Origined priorities for social work theory and practice with 'black' communities. Uniformity in this instance removes the anomalies surrounding the use of 'black', hence the removal of the inverts.

Care   The capitalisation of Care denotes reference to the local authority care system as opposed to any other form of care which people might experience. Capitalisation further emphasises the need to bare in mind the experience of care within that system, particularly in relation to Afrikan-Origined people.

Centring Group   A group made up of self defined Afrikan people who are practising Afrikan-Centred specialists. The Centring Group oversees the use of the Afrikan-Centred paradigm, the representativeness and application of my research methodology, and provides reflective support on issues which might arise in the research.

Centrism	'The groundedness of observation and behaviour in one's own historical experiences which shape the concepts, paradigms, theories and methods of inquiry.' (Asante, *Kemet Afrocentricity and Knowledge*,1990, p12).
Consequential-Affectiveness	The principle of mutual responsibility for any consequences which might arise as a result of conducting research. The principle exists between the researcher, the research participants and the Afrikan-Origined community within which the research is conducted.
Culture	The collective representation of ordered behaviour created and shared by a group rather than an individual.
Culturally-relevant	A specific culture takes central place in whatever service is being provided. The relevance of culture comes in the form of an ideological / contextual approach, the provision of culturally-specific services and is combined with racially / culturally specific workers in front line service positions.
Eurocentricity / centrism	Refers to more than just a reflection of attitudes or prejudices that can be eliminated from the modern mindset. Eurocentricity / Eurocentrism is a definer of Western (particularly Britain and America) experiences of whiteness, representing truth for white people on matters of science, scholarship, and informed opinion. It represents a core set of beliefs and statements about empirical reality, presented or re-presented as truth. Generally speaking this truth presumes all that there is and all, therefore, that needs to be considered when establishing who and what is of real value.
Transubstantive Error	"where meanings, beliefs, values and behaviours of one culture are erroneously compared, evaluated and interpreted by the values of another culture..." (Banks, 1997, p.32) For a more in-depth discussion refer to Azibo's chapters in , *African Psychology*, 1996.

White   As a racial designation, came to mean and represent an explicit

assertion of superiority (See Nakayama & Martin, (Eds.) *Whiteness:*

The Communication of Social Identity, 1999).

White People   Conyers' seminar, *Justification: Transforming the Mind from Negro*

to Nubian, (1996) defines white people as "... those people who

define themselves as white; who act like white with other people

who define themselves as white; who are accepted as white by other

people who define themselves as white; and who act like white with

everybody they define as non-white; that's white people."

It is recognised that white people / Europeans are not a homogenous

group, however the purpose of this study does not require a focus on

differences between white people.

White Supremacy   Fuller JR's, *The United Independent Compensatory*

Code/System/Concept, (1984), defines white supremacy (which he

interchanges with racism, as being representative of its functional

form), as the sum total of all speech and or action by white people

who seek to dominate 'non-white' people; who seek to continue the

practice of racism at all times in one or more areas of life-activity;

who help to promote an increase in the number of 'non-white'

persons oppressed by white supremacy; and who practice white

supremacy in a manner that refines the methods that help to make

the practice of white supremacy more efficient, and/or more

acceptable to the victims of white supremacy. Fuller classifies life-

activity into the major areas of economics, entertainment, labour,

law, politics, religion, sex and war.

Whiteness   Refers to a historical systematic structural race-based superiority.

Worldview   "... the way in which people perceive their relationship to nature, institutions, other people and things ... Worldview constitutes our psychological orientation in life and can determine how we think, behave, make decisions, and define events." (Sue, 1978, p3)

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