365 Days of Belonging, Activism and Change: Examining the perception of minorities in the UK in the wake of the Black Lives Matter Summer

"Submitted to Swansea University in fulfilment of the requirements for the Degree of Social Theory and Space, MSc by Research"

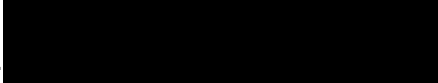Ethan Mills, BA

Swansea University, 2021

Summary Abstract

This research examines the perception of racial and ethnic minorities within the UK, in response to the Black Lives Matter protests that occurred over the summer of 2020, focusing upon the south Wales region. Explored through themes of the everyday, activism and change, the research addresses the historic place of minorities within society. These ideas are then developed in connection with a number of case studies that detail examples of how the perception of minorities has changed over time, and as a direct result of the Black Lives Matter movement. Alongside this, qualitative data collected from interviews with minorities of varying ages and backgrounds allows for a focus on their own thoughts and feelings, thus creating a new dialogue that juxtaposes a more traditional, academic view on issues of race, racism and social justice. It is through these discussions that many of the key themes of the research are addressed and subsequently developed in order to gain a better understanding of how racial and ethnic minorities' lived experiences and place within modern society impacts the wider perception and education around issues of race and racism. This research project aims to develop tools and educational avenues through which a better understanding of race and racism, and those affected by it, can be developed, in the hope of advancing attitudes and understandings of anti-racism and its newfound significance in an ever increasing multi-racial and multi-ethnic world.
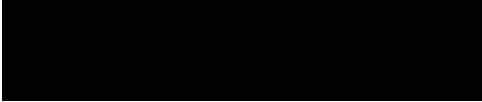
Declaration

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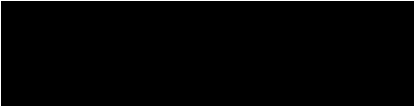
This thesis is the result of my own investigations, except where otherwise stated. Other sources are acknowledged by footnotes giving explicit references. A bibliography is appended.

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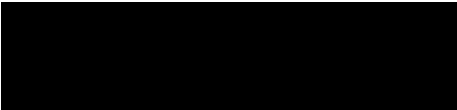Date ....08/02/2022...

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Definitions and Abbreviations

Black Lives Matter – seen throughout as BLM

BLM Summer – the period at which, during the course of the Summer of 2020, protests and demonstrations in support of the Black Lives Matter movement were at their peak.

'Minority experience' – the way in which those defined as a minority on the basis of their race or ethnicity experience reactions and interactions to this identity on a daily basis.

<u>Participant Profiles</u>

Participant 1:

A middle-aged woman, with Bangladeshi heritage, raised in London during the 1970s 'Paki bashing' era, now living in south Wales.

Participant 2:

A middle-aged Black man, raised in London, now living in south Wales, worked extensively in the field of positive action, especially within a Police background.

Participant 3:

A middle-aged woman, born in Africa and grew up during the Apartheid system, now living in south Wales.

Participant 4:

A young man, of African heritage, son of Participant 3, also living in south Wales.

Participant 5:

A young woman, of African heritage, living in south Wales and a student in Swansea University, has worked in the field of diversity and inclusivity, within the University setting.

Participant 6:

A middle-aged Black man, living in south Wales, worked extensively in positive action also within the police background and wider community.

Participant 7:

A young woman of Asian heritage, currently enrolled within University, born and grew up within south Wales.

Participant 8:

A young woman of Asian heritage, living in England, but born and grew up within south Wales.

Participant 9:

A young Black man from the Seychelles, raised in London and currently enrolled within Swansea University.

Participant 10:

A young woman of Asian heritage, currently enrolled within University, born and grew up in south Wales.

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Introduction

The Events of 2020

An already historic year, 2020 will remain in the memory of many for a number of reasons. The Covid-19 Pandemic will be the defining feature for most; however, the death of George Floyd in Minneapolis is arguably one of the most significant singular events of the year. A victim of police brutality, George Floyd was killed during an arrest on the 25th of May 2020, after his neck was knelt on for eight minutes and forty-six seconds by police officer Derek Chauvin. Captured on a mobile phone and posted to the internet, the footage of Floyd's death went viral within days and sparked a global movement for social justice the likes of which echoed that of the Civil Rights era of the 1960s.

Under the banner of Black Lives Matter (BLM), this global movement marked a major turning point in the discussion of social justice, racism and the treatment of racialised and ethnic minorities within society. Across the world, people took to the streets and the impact of activism reverberated through every vein of conversation from the arena of state politics to daytime television, social media and education establishments. Topics that had for a long time been ignored were given the spotlight and histories that had been forgotten were revitalised and given a new role in developing understanding of the world in which these actions and discussions were taking place.

At its height, BLM protests occurred almost every day over the summer of 2020, ranging from tens of people on street corners to thousands marching through cities across the globe, from Minneapolis, L.A. and New York, to London, Swansea, Paris, Mumbai and Sydney.

> this is not a moment, it's the movement (Hamilton: An American Musical, 2015).

More than simply a 'trend' (despite some of its popularity coming from those simply showing their support via a social media post or hashtag), this was the point at which tenuous race relations and racism were challenged first-hand. Both by those who have been born a victim of racist systems as well as those with the power to

make serious change when it comes to the systems that have used the power of systemic and institutionalised racism, to advance their own standing against those to whom it is applied.

However, where there is call for change, there is also resistance. Despite BLM's sheer scale and support across the world, there were a number of counter-movements that sought to combat its agenda and calls for anti-racism and progressive equality for those underrepresented and mistreated. Most notable, the All Lives Matter movement provided the greatest pushback against BLM, claiming that it felt BLM was restrictive and attempted to surmount other races through a dialogue of black power and black supremacy. This raised a number of issues, most notably the fact that many All Lives Matter protests were attended by known white supremacist groups as well as those with ties to far-right activist movements. As a result of this, despite BLM's strength and global support, it increasingly became the centre of numerous violent clashes against All Lives Matter, resulting in the message of BLM being often misconstrued in various arenas. Yet this did not subtract from the efforts of BLM protestors nor the efforts of what came to be known as 'allies': those who whilst not identifying as racial or ethnic minorities, supported the agenda and work of the movement either through self-education or by starting discussions within their own homes, social groups and workplaces.

This thesis addresses these political events by examining the everyday experiences of minorities. It also enquires into how racialised minorities are perceived by and constructed against a racially 'white majority' population, through media and preconceptions, and how this impacts their daily lives. Specifically, the thesis asks the following research questions:

1. In light of the BLM Summer, how do we better understand the roles that race and racism continue to play in shaping society today?
2. How did individuals and organisations make positive contributions towards change in different spheres of everyday life during the summer of 2020?

3. How do ordinary people experience race and racism in society today, in south Wales and what are their impressions of the changes witnessed during the BLM Summer?

4. In light of questions 1-3, what can be done to bring about change?

It does so by drawing on literatures in Geography and related academic fields, such as critical race theory and race studies, as well as personal accounts and experiences of race, racism, and being a minority in modern society. In addition to this, work on activism and protest is consulted in order to better understand the impact of these processes, given the revitalised power they have had over the course of 2020. The aims of the thesis overall are to bring together conceptual and theoretical work, with personal narratives, to advance knowledge and understanding of how racism operates and impacts people in their everyday lives today, and to open up questions about what might be done to combat racism, through discursive education.

Furthermore, by talking to people about their everyday experiences of race and racism in south Wales, the research and presentation of their experiences aimed to reveal the narrative of struggle that still exists, whilst also highlighting the impact of recent events. Moreover, by focusing upon the impacts and the potential for change in the future, these discussions allowed for those who will be most impacted by change to voice their desires and beliefs for the best ways in which to move forward, facilitating the continuation of the activism conducted over the last twelve months.

The action of global protests and calls for legislative change can lead to a level of upheaval which threatens to halt actual calls for progress by shrouding them in the body of mass crowds and the noise of chants. It is as a result of this that "we cannot forget how comforting it is to have order because it produces rules which, in turn, help us get things done" (Lisle 2017:421). It is this notion of using 'rules' to 'get things done' that the BLM protests highlighted, most notably in the form of using 'rules' (laws) to gain justice for those wrongfully killed as a result of racism.

When considering the way in which BLM captivated and divided the world we can actively theorize why this is, however, this brings to the forefront a varying degree of possibilities. Within this research I will follow a number of central viewpoints when examining the specific events of 2020 as well as the key conceptual framework around which the research is constructed. This framework centres on the experiences of race and racism within everyday life alongside processes of collective will, thought and notions of community. Turning to the work of Sara Ahmed, it should be noted that, in relation to a collective such as BLM:

> At the same time, a collective will can only be realized through individuals who are willing to push back in order not to be pushed into obedience (2014:143).

This central theme of 'push back' is one that has informed much of the response to the events analysed within this research and is equally a part of how "Diversity work is an experience of coming against something that does not, and seemingly, will not move" (Ahmed 2014:145). With this in mind, the way in which acts of protest and thoughts of diversity and equality manifest and evolve, ultimately comes down to a position of wilfulness, which "could be thought of as a political art, a practical craft that is acquired through involvement in political struggle, whether that struggle is a struggle to exist or to transform an existence" (Ahmed 2014:133). This I believe is not only central to the way in which the actions of a group such as BLM is conducted but is also central to understanding and analysing the impact of this type of socio-political activism.

Moving onward from what I shall be referring to as the 'BLM Summer', the point at which the movement was at its peak in terms of size and action, the impact of this is still very apparent. The case studies outlined in the later section of this introduction are an example of how the movement continues to inform many features of society whilst also generating a conversation that highlights the ongoing need for the work that is carried out by the BLM movement. In addition, this research in its entirety is designed to be a tool that not only examines the current state of the conversation regarding race and belonging, but also asks where the conversation moves next and what can be done to invoke change, not necessarily at

a state level but within day-to-day interactions. This focus is reflected in my chosen title for this thesis - that highlights the key themes of the research and the concepts that shall be focused upon throughout.

Ultimately, the events of 2020 will be remembered for a host of reasons, but I do not think it is unreasonable or indeed unfounded to suggest that this singular year marked a changing point in the world. Globally, the pandemic forced the world to change the way in which it operated at nearly every level of society. Socially and culturally, the death of George Floyd and the BLM Summer forced us to ask questions that have been avoided and have conversations that even if difficult, are beginning to have a revolutionary effect on the way in which people who have long been subjugated and oppressed are being recognised and valued for what they are: human beings.

Positionality and Background

> In Britain, issues of identity have always clustered around otherness (Sardar 2004:9).

I grew up with a mixed-race grandfather who came to the UK from South Africa in 1947. From a young age, I always thought it was strange when people were surprised to find I had a black grandfather, because to me, the colour of his skin didn't really mean much, he looked as he did, and I looked as I did. Now the naivety or innocence of a child to ignore the features of race and their long-established meanings is by no means a phenomenon, however the reason I mention these details at all is because they have, in the wake of the BLM Summer completely changed my perspective as well as served as the inspiration for this research.

I am a white, educated, middle class male, a cliché that has, in recent years become the centre of continued debate in regard to features such as opportunities afforded and power over others. Yet on the basis of these features and these features alone, I was more likely to finish school, more likely to be employed and more likely to avoid criminal activities. I have never had a negative experience with the police, nor have I ever had a negative racially charged experience. I have been given opportunities or avoided sentences based purely on features outside of my control.

To recognise this is to recognise the power of 'white privilege'. A term that can often be misconstrued, 'white privilege' is not the belief that you are better than any other race, *because* you are white, 'white privilege' is the above features afforded to oneself *because* they are white, and this is the pivotal distinction that I have come to understand.

Whilst I am white, I have mixed-race heritage, my father is mixed-race although on first appearance you would probably identify him as a white man. He faced racial discrimination when he was younger as did my grandfather and this is something I will most likely never experience. I exist as the result of a mixed-race South African immigrant, a fact that some would claim means I am not British and would further suggest that as a result of this heritage, I could never truly belong. To some, this might represent 'otherness', and Ziauddin Sardar describes that:

> What is alien represents otherness; the repository of fears and anxieties (Sardar 2004:10).

Fear, anxiety, difference, all of these have marked the discussion around race, racism and minorities for decades, yet it is these features which I shall look to argue against. One of the most important aspects of this research which I identified in its construction was that as a white man, my experience of race is wholly unique as it exists in my life, but it is not something I had ever really engaged with, up until the BLM Summer. In addition to this, in wanting to explore questions of belonging and race my positionality as a white researcher is one that historically has meant those involved in the research are fetishized or made to be something observable yet not human.

This research addresses that by drawing on not only my own heritage and background, but by going beyond the simple identification of race to examine what it means to be a racialised minority in the UK today. How everyday life is framed by this and how the changing discussion is potentially leading to a more understanding society that recognises minorities for the individuals they are, not the characteristics they are assumed to be.

As a result of this, it should be highlighted that:

> Just as racial identity is not the only type of identity in our society, racial oppression is not the only form of oppression in our society. Racial privilege is not the only form of privilege in our society (Oluo 2019:72).

It is this combination of features which has ultimately led to the complex understanding and positioning of race alongside other identity features, not only for minorities, but also the majority counterpart.

The Discussion

These ideas will be examined through a number of case studies that have been selected to understand the impact of the BLM movement as well as how things are viewed in its aftermath and are becoming informed by the ideas that it raises and seeks to use as a form of education. Central throughout the discussion, is the way in which ideas and features of race are realised and acted upon within everyday life, from participants own experiences and actions, to those of others with whom they have interacted.

With participants, each case study was discussed at length in order to address a number of features including how they reacted to them in terms of the content and how the images and depiction of minorities was enacted, to the wider backlash and reaction within the public sphere. In addition to this, participants offered their own experiences where they felt it was relevant to highlight the features of the case studies that both myself and other (white majorities) might have overlooked, simply due to a lack of lived experience.

This was done in order to show how, by recognising and listening to the lived experiences of minorities, it is possible to develop an understanding of the way in which their labelling and identification as a minority impacts their life in a way that the (white) majority doesn't have to think about. Furthermore, it is the hope that by sharing these discussions, they can be used to show the way in which developing an understanding of minority experiences with race, even at a basic level can aid in acknowledging features of daily life which in turn when acted upon can aid in the promotion of anti-racism and education.

Case Studies

Sainsbury's Christmas Advert 2020 – 'Gravy Song'

One of the leading supermarket brands in the UK, this Christmas advert depicted an exploration of home and belonging in the context of the everyday and the image of the domestic family. The advert triggered significant discussion following its debut in late 2020.

Diversity's Britain's Got Talent Performance

Examining memorialisation and activism through acts of representation and performance, as a moment of television that (at the time) received the highest number of Ofcom complaints in history, this performance reignited the discussion around race and the BLM movement at the end of the summer in September 2020.

Colin Kaepernick 'taking the knee'

The moment that ignited the BLM movement in 2016 for the first time globally, Colin Kaepernick's sacrifice for change is outlined as revolution and recognition before looking forward at the way in which it inspired a new wave of change across the world in the wake of the BLM summer. As an act that has become divisively political, the action of 'taking the knee' shall be examined to determine whether it is a political statement or has adopted a new meaning in the years gone by.

Ultimately, all of these cases place a racialised minority figure(s) at the centre of their narrative and have sparked significant reactions and discussions following their enactment. The result of this has been a reconsideration of the way in which minorities are perceived. Subsequently systems of racism that still exist within society have been revealed, which in some cases have become more vocal following the BLM Summer.

These cases differ in their focus and the scale of activism they align to. Sainsbury's advert stands most distinctly from the others, due to the way it was not an inherently political advert, nor did it contain any agenda or imagery that was designed to show support of a political view. Diversity and Kaepernick on the other

hand, were both provocative acts of protest, designed to make a statement that would inevitably draw the type of reaction that they did, but did so knowingly.

Research Questions

The aim of this research is to develop an understanding of the perception of racialised and ethnic minorities following the BLM Summer. Given the complex and multi-faceted nature of the topics within this research, as well as the wider discussion around them, specific aspects of both the perception of minorities as well as the mediums through which they are represented were highlighted in order to achieve the clearest understanding of how they were impacted and impact the understanding of the experiences of minorities.

The questions asked by the project were designed to consider the various forms of recognition that have been popularised in recent years when dealing with minorities. Each question is explored through not only the case studies but discussions with participants who identified as minorities within the population of the UK, either on the basis of race or ethnicity.

As stated earlier, there are three main questions with which the research deals, the first of which explores in light of the BLM Summer, how do we better understand the roles that race and racism continue to play in shaping society today? This is addressed primarily through the employment of a variety of conceptual discussions and their analysis in relation to features such as participants' experiences as well as existing academic literature and schools of thought. Alongside this, the thesis asks: how did individuals and organisations make positive contributions towards changes in different spheres of everyday life during the summer of 2020? This is addressed through the case studies found within each empirical chapter, each of which examines a different body and example of the impact of the BLM Summer on a wider audience within society. In addition to this, the contributions of these examples are discussed in order to better understand their effectiveness. Furthermore, the thesis asks: how do ordinary people experience race and racism in society today, in south Wales specifically, and what are their impressions of the changes witnessed during the BLM Summer? In placing participants' experiences at

the heart of the research, this question seeks to develop notions of education and understanding as tools to ultimately address and propose what can be done to bring about change.

By researching these areas, it is my hope that a new line of conversation can be started that seeks to build upon the new foundations of understanding about the place and experiences of racialised and ethnic minorities. Offering an insight into the way in which attitudes can be changed in order to promote anti-racist thinking and aid in the progress of equality that continues to be fought for. As it stands, the conversation around race is still gathering momentum. It is the aspiration that through work such as this, the already beneficial effects of the dialogue being had within not only the BLM community, but those beginning to echo it can be extended further. To those who are willing to engage with the ideas at hand, and subsequently develop their understanding of these pertinent issues in order to affect real change across socio-cultural and socio-political levels.

The divide and categorisation of 'white' vs 'black' has dominated the discourse around race for many years, yet looking forward, the place of those of a mixed-race identity is incredibly significant. Mixed-race people represent a defiance of this potentially outdated view of racial categorisation. The mixed-race identity is something that this research did overlook, due to a focus upon the more distinct break between 'white' and the defined 'other'. However, the growing prevalence and potential demographic increase of mixed-race people is something that research should potentially turn to focus on, with regards to understanding how this bridge between racial identities can again completely redefine one's place in society. If one is of mixed-race heritage, can they choose which side they prefer, or could their physical appearance, much like us all, make this decision for them, depending on their pigment or physical features?

Outline of the thesis

Literature Review:

This section introduces the place of racial and ethnic minorities within society and the ways in which they have become structured as a result of historic oppression and discrimination. Outlining the role of race in both identifying and categorising people on the basis of difference, the review draws from conceptual bases such as critical race theory and political geography. From this, the role of 'the people' and populism is examined in relation to its impact in recent political arenas and activist movements. Lastly, the process of representation and its significance to discussions surrounding minorities is developed to form a basis of understanding which is later employed within the discussion and analysis of the case studies.

Methodology:

Research into work with minorities is examined, to better understand some of the fragile and sensitive natures involved with exploring topics such as racism and belonging within certain communities. From this, a number of approaches that are used throughout the research are detailed, before the research design is presented, showing the methods of data collection as well as their reasoning for use.

Chapter 1: The Look of Ordinary: Belonging, Banality and the Everyday

This chapter examines the place of minorities in relation to features of the nation, nationalism and nativism. Structured by these, the chapter addresses how racialised minorities are perceived to belong and not belong to the nation, and the features one must subscribe to in order to either 'belong', or else risk being outcasted as an 'other'. These notions are presented in the first case study, Sainsbury's Christmas Advert and examined through the guise of the domestic family, looking at the way in which representations of minorities can impact their perception and understanding of their everyday experiences.

Chapter 2: Beyond Representation

Building upon the notion of representation and its importance to the debate around minorities in recent years, this chapter examines this relationship further before going beyond a superficial understanding of it, to examine the impact that acts of representation have. Developed through the Diversity performance case study, the way in which acts of representation can highlight features of lived experience in a format that is accessible and more importantly portrays minorities from the minorities point of view, is central to the understanding of acts of representation as tools for education and the promotion of anti-racism thought and action.

Chapter 3: "The times they are a changin" (Bob Dylan, 1964)

Drawing from the role and impact of activism seen in the previous chapter, this final chapter looks back to the inception of the BLM movement and one of the most contentious forms of protest in recent memory. The action of 'taking the knee' is examined to determine its status as a political gesture alongside the way in which its meaning has changed over recent years. From this, the future of the impacts already seen is highlighted through discussion with participants and their view on what needs to be done next, in order to ensure that positive change can continue to occur.

Conclusion:

The chapters are summarised in relation to the research questions to provide an overall recap of the main points that have been found and discussed. Following this, the possible improvements or changes that could be made should this research be replicated are examined. Following this, the closing section of the thesis examines what can be done with this research within a wider context and how as a tool for education, it might be employed to advance anti-racist thinking and progressive social action.

Literature Review

The Structing of Minorities and 'the people'

Society, as it has come to be understood, has been characterized by a number of features, however I argue that none have been as polarizing as difference. From individuals to groups, ideologies to beliefs, the "concept of difference allows the social creation of categories of people subordinate to a dominant norm" (Kobayashi 1997:3) to exist. Through this 'social creation of categories', societies across the world have structured themselves on several foundational and identifying features, most notably race, ethnicity and religion. This is a notion that Arjun Appadurai (2006) recognises, in his seminal work *Fear of Small Numbers,* in which he states, "No modern nation…is free of the idea that its national sovereignty is built on some sort of ethnic genius" (2006:3). It is this notion, contested against Kobayashi's observation that has led to much of the hostility as well as clash of ideology within modern society when it comes to understanding the relationship between majorities and minorities.

The research focuses upon better understanding the structure of minorities within society and the way in which their categorisation (resulting from this clash of difference and underlying thought of ethnic genius) often leads to individuals and groups within the category becoming subjugated and relegated by the majority within society. In addition to this, once the structure of minorities has been explored and analysed, the focus will move to examine the concept of 'the people' within democratic society. As a keystone concept, yet one that is continually being contested and debated, 'the people' forms one of the most interesting and diverse political categories within modern society and plays a major role in further understanding not only the place of minorities, but attitudes towards them.

Minorities in Society

When considering the place of minorities, it would be remiss to not acknowledge the role of colonialism in shaping democratic society and providing the inception of minorities into its social framework. It was the colonial period that resulted in a restructuring of society on a scale previously unseen and not replicated since. Not only did the world become divided into the territories, states and nations with which we are familiar today, but the cultural foundations of global society shifted dramatically as groups that were once disconnected, became occupants of the same towns, cities and nations. While the long-term impacts of colonialism have been brought to the forefront of discussions recently (Rao 2016), the work of academics has been tackling some of the discourses surrounding minorities and their more specific struggles for many years. The work of Jenny Edkins (2019) highlights the "endless longing of the underprivileged that history (and life) be different from what it has been and still is" (John Berger 1986), an idea that has taken remarkable shape once again in the recent BLM movements discussed in the introduction. Alongside this, Edkins (2019) notes that "However we make sense of our place in the world, and however we mistreat each other, we are connected, complicit even" (2019:6). This notion is one that, especially in the context of race has always fascinated me and I believe becomes apparently clear within the exploration of the texts.

One of the most engaging works to deal with notions of race is Theo Goldberg's *The Threat of Race* (2009). Tracing the history of racism as well as the way in which minorities can breed a sense of fear, subsequently being viewed as a threat by the majority, he notes how "Race acquired a more formal codification and consequently socio-intellectual authority from the eighteenth century onwards" (2009:3). This period aligns with that of colonialism moving into the post-colonial which as mentioned, completely reshaped the structure of society and placed race as one of the determining features of the new world. However, as expanded by Goldberg (2009), "racism necessarily requires a belief in intrinsic or unchangeable inferiority" (2009:5) and this is where the most obvious attitudes towards minorities come into play. Constructed and labelled by the majority as being inferior based on features

such as race and ethnicity, large numbers of individuals and groups suddenly found themselves being placed into categories and positions which limited their access to basic resources, social advancement and civil rights. All of these restrictions only further fuelled much of the animosity between majorities and minorities when either attempted to pushback or change some aspect of the emancipation in place. While the argument can be made that this stark structuring of minorities in this era was merely due to power dynamics or some sense of right. Rao (2016b) establishes the fact that:

> Critical race theory, especially as it has been absorbed and appropriated by postcolonialism, has tended to understand 'race', quite literally in black and white terms. In part this has been prompted by the inescapable imperative of constructing a necessary political blackness across 'races' (Rao 2016b).

The rigid divide that can still be seen today between 'white' and 'black' when it comes to discussions of race, is simply one facet of a much larger generalisation of the conflict between races. A divide that extends into literature, academics such as Will Kymlicka, Étienne Balibar and Immanuel Wallerstein (all explored later) have worked to highlight the struggle of specific minority groups, yet the majority choose to focus on the general, more biblical struggle between 'white' and 'black'. This is used as a steppingstone to more astute ideological and cultural analyses that are able to subsequently address issues in relation to the case studies, as opposed to simply commenting on the hostility as a whole, a hostility that shows no signs of reaching a stalemate or conclusion in the near future.

The work of Will Kymlicka in relation to minority rights as well as minorities within a wider context has been invaluable in shaping not only the perceptions of minorities, but aids in better understanding the way in which they interact within a political sphere and thus gain access to bases of power which can be used in their continued fight for equality. One such work is *The Rights of Minority Cultures* (1995) which examines and analyses the variety of rights afforded to minorities as well as the politics behind them. Noting that "membership of political communities is typically taken as settled within liberal-democratic theory" (1995:2), Kymlicka raises an interesting point and one that in the context of minorities can be a source of struggle. When considering this statement, there are several component aspects

which should be analysed. Perhaps the most important is that of 'political communities' being as they are what allows people within a democratic society the right to speak out and inform the way in which they live within a wider social and cultural community. Kymlicka's observation of membership being 'settled' acknowledges the position of the majority and the way in which upbringing can play a role in political allegiance yet overlooks the place of minorities and the way in which their allegiance to political communities is often far more complex. This is due, in part, to the socio-cultural differences which frame the thoughts of minorities and thus impacts the politics which they choose to support in order to ensure that they are represented and given the rights which they expect to be afforded to all members of the community.

However, this can lead to conflict within both the political sphere and wider socio-cultural environments due to the way in which:

> In the absence of accepted principles, these conflicts are often decided on the basis of brute power – that is, whether the majority has the power to subdue the aspirations of minority cultures, or whether the minority has the power to upset the status quo, and wring political concessions for itself (Kymlicka 1995:2).

In many cases, this is often the reason that minorities are denied access to certain rights or find themselves being oppressed through a variety of political mediums, but also makes it difficult for them to speak up, without their actions being seen or portrayed as radical and revolutionary. Furthermore, "the neglect of minority cultures is not a new phenomenon, but has deep roots in the Western political tradition" (Kymlicka 1995:4). This is one of the key aspects that the research seeks to understand and highlight, especially regarding the ideology behind the politics and action that fuels the neglect of minorities and their culture, and as a result, Kymlicka's work is foundational in aiding the understanding of the link between political thinking and minority culture. Furthermore, it is noted that "in very few countries can the citizens be said to share the same language, or belong to the same ethno-national groups" (Kymlicka 1995:4) and this leads into the work carried out by William Connolly on the link between identity and difference as well as the role of identity politics.

Similar to the argument made by Kymlicka regarding the ways in which power plays a major role in determining the position and ability of minorities, Connolly highlights "'The politics of identity'. It is often named today, sometimes to bestow dignity or authority on a minority, more often to subtract authority from minorities who neglect something said to be necessary to a larger society" (2002:xiii). It is this aspect of a feature being deemed 'necessary' to the larger society (the majority) that as discussed has meant that minorities are restricted in their abilities.

However, where Connolly's work becomes especially observant is in the role of identity and how this plays a major part in the position of both minorities as well as the majority. For example, it is noted that "When 'identity politics' is attacked as impervious to the larger whole upon which it depends, a majority identity is implicitly invoked to characterize the whole" (Connolly 2002:xiii). This dynamic is one that is evident throughout the texts both in this section as well as in the following section on 'the people' and forms one of the primary lines of questioning throughout the research. Additionally, Connolly's notion is one that not only applies to the vast face of identity and its link within the minority/majority discourse but also works to develop an understanding of how this relationship came to be. Finally, Connolly acknowledges the way in which "identity requires difference in order to be, and it converts difference into otherness in order to secure its own self-certainty" (2002:64). Linking to Kobayashi's (1997) statement within the opening, this highlights, considering all of the features discussed, the way in which the identity label and categorisation of 'minority' has structurally cemented itself as an opposing social actor to that of an established socio-political order, which further supports its strength and status, by continually dampening the place and power of minorities, within the societal framework it has constructed.

'The People' and Populism

Having examined viewpoints on the position and structure of minorities, I move now to examine the concept of 'the people' and its partnership with populism. As one of the most prominent political systems in action today, the notion of 'the people' has found itself elevated and enacted through populism. This relationship has led to a growth in analysis of both concepts, yet it is populism that primarily garners a varied response when brought to the forefront, due to its highly contentious nature. I believe one of the best summaries on the position of populism is offered by Nicholas De Genova in his analysis of recent political movements that have employed such processes to great effect:

> It is somehow similar to the old problem of those who seek to litigate and censor pornography but can never quite manage to define with any precision what constitutes the offense. As with pornography, it seems, so with populism: you know it when you see it" (2018:357).

In order to understand what constitutes 'the people' we can look to De Genova's *Rebordering "the People": Notes on Theorizing Populism* (2018). Within its opening, it is noted that there is a "vexed ambivalence around the relation between democracy and "the people"" (De Genova 2018:359) and while it has been argued that this is the case, there is plenty of discussion that has attempted to clarify the aspects of this relationship. As a result, De Genova (2018) asserts, in an attempt to outline on his part, the complex nature and relationship of populism and 'the people':

> Who then or indeed, *what* is 'the people' after all? How are we to distinguish this populist figure of 'the people' that periodically but persistently asserts itself in contemporary politics from that presumably more venerable (if ever elusive) figure of 'the People' which we apparently owe the origins of modern (bourgeois) democracy itself? (De Genova 2018:359).

> For 'the people' to exist, there must be something against which it is created

and categorised (Panizza 2005, Appadurai 2006, Badiou 2016, De Genova 2018). Within most of society, "the racialised triad of people, nation and state so central in the constitution of the modern world system" (Bosteels 2016:2) has resulted in notions such as nativism becoming domineering within social ideology, especially

when partnered with ideas of national identity (Cowie 1998). As a result of this, minorities become the 'other categories' within society and when then attempting to find their place among 'the people' are met with hostility and difficulty. In part, this hostility is only emphasised through the "relation of antagonism" (Panizza 2005:3) around which 'the people' has been constructed.

This antagonism is seen clearly in the clash between crowds of Trump supporters and the rallies of Black Lives Matter, where the diversity of the relationship between populism and 'the people' is on full display. Subsequently, it is through this display that an equally important aspect is uncovered, that being the link of 'the people' to the state and sovereignty. De Genova (2018) expresses that:

> No modern state power is figured as an expression of the sovereignty of all people (the entire human race) but rather such power is figured only as the territorially delimited and bounded manifestation of a particular People, a 'nation' to which it is presumed to correspond as if by some natural (birthright) filiation (2018:362).

It is this notion of 'natural filiation' that has become so central to discussions of 'the people' and their organisation that in relation to the role of minorities, it becomes clear to understand why they often struggle with such difficulty to assimilate and become part of a community that is constructed upon a shared sense of identity, that they simply do not and will not truly have in the eyes of the already established members. This notion is outlined within the paper, stating "nativism equips the nation-state with a 'national identity' in the image of which to produce its People" (De Genova 2018:364). The ultimate knock-on effect of this is that "Populism is therefore always implicated in a project of reinstating or reinforcing the frontiers of the Nation by rebordering the People" (De Genova 2018:364).

When considering the position of the state, notions of sovereignty and the role of national identity, the work of Judith Butler offers an interesting albeit challenging outlook. Featuring in a collection of essays entitled *What is a People?* (2016)*,* Butler focuses upon the "assembly of bodies on the street" (2016:49), the image that is now synonymous with not only 'the people' but populism as well. Through this, Butler seeks to highlight the way in which 'the people' "is a phrase that establishes political authority at the same time that it declares a form of

popular sovereignty bound by no one political authority" (2016:53). Whilst contradictory in itself, the idea that Butler argues towards is one that has gained growing significance amongst the discourse surrounding 'the people' and their relationship not only to political authority, but with sovereignty and the power of the state. Specifically, in regard to the state, it is the notion that 'the people' can only be created and assigned through the political sphere and alignment to a political party or authority which gives them principles and policies which can in turn be played against their 'other'. Furthermore, Butler notes that "assembling is already a performative political enactment even if it is prior to, and apart from, any particular speech act" (2016:54). It is from this, that we are able to identify a sort of origin for why populism has found so much strength in being performative. It is through this performance alone, the 'assembly of bodies' that makes as much of a political statement as any speech or manifesto. Ultimately, "survival is a precondition of politics, but not its aim" (2016:60) and Butler, while perhaps taking a convoluted approach, is able to establish and expand upon this notion throughout her chapter, grappling with the very fundamental ideologies of the people and their relationship to the established systems with which they interact and challenge.

The above leads to the socio-cultural structure present within much of Western society today and is responsible for the impact on minorities. Primarily it regards the way in which they find themselves situated within society and their place within 'the people' that they come not to represent, but in some cases wish to join, yet are unable to, due to a number of political and social barriers enforced upon them.

To summarise, the place of minorities within society is one that has been constructed as a result of various, social, political and cultural actions. As a result of these, minorities have become structured and labelled as a negative group, defined against a majority from a politically subjective viewpoint. The result of this, is minorities becoming viewed as a potential threat to the established order within society, however, the majority of their agendas and political aims seek to gain the most basic equal rights and access where it is at times still denied. Operating alongside this, the body of 'the people' is denied to minorities on the basis of nativism and perceived national identity that does not align with that of the states.

As one of the most complex and divisive concepts in action today, 'the people' offers minorities a potential chance to change their circumstances, however, also acts as one of the main barriers to this progress by denying them a voice and ability to act against the established powers of the state authority.

Representing Minorities

Having explored the way in which minorities came to be such a central part of society and how their categorisation and labelling impacted their perception, I shall now move to examine one of the most prominent forms of observation connected with minorities in recent years.

Representation has become a major talking point in recent years due to the impact it has had in relation to understanding and equality by creating examples, often of a popular nature that people have been able to discuss and use as a reference in relation to things such as the 'minority experience'. With this being said, it can at times be difficult to understand what exactly counts as an act of representation. One of the clearest definitions, offered by Derek Gregory (2009) follows as:

> At its minimum, representation is conventionally defined as a symbol or image, or as the process of rendering something (an object, event, idea or perception) intelligible and identifiable (2009:645).

From this, it is worth noting the way in which this process has impacted the community that it so often now comes to serve. As observed, there is weight in "the significant role that the field of cultural production plays in shaping everyday society and culture, how ethnic minority people see themselves and are seen by others and in how the nation, literally narrates itself. The field of cultural production and representation, therefore, has real social effects" (Byrne et al 2020:168). These 'real social effects' can be seen in numerous examples, which are used throughout the empirical chapters of this thesis, as case studies around which discussion with participants was based. With this being said, there is a potential problem that arises from acts of representation and cultural production. This is because:

anniversaries bracket particular individuals, events, places and times from the broader, more banal, flow of 'everyday' encounters, exclusion, violence or solidarities, focusing on the spectacular rather than its context, or the 'movement' rather than its causes and consequences (Byrne et al 2020:3).

One of the greatest impacts of this process of bracketing is (as stated) the way in which some acts of representation can simply become 'spectacle' and as a result lose some of their intended meaning and impact by becoming a talking point for a moment before being forgotten and replaced by the next 'big thing' on everyone's mind. Whilst this appears to be a continuous issue for representation, it has resulted in "culture wars [that] have been reignited by student campaigns around decolonising the curriculum, and by furious claims and counterclaims of academic censorship and political correctness" (Byrne et al 2020:4).

This mixture of rapid response and calls for more recognition leads to an interesting dichotomy resulting from "The rise of ethnicity as a primary framework for identity from the mid-1980s onwards reflected not only the resurgence of 'culture' as the basis for political action, but also increasing divergence in the social and economic experiences" (Byrne et al 2020:6). This divergence could most easily be understood and perceived as the divide between majority and minority populations and to an extent this is reinforced by the way in which "they [racisms] operate as part of wider processes of racialisation in which racial/ethnic collectives are constituted and given meaning, status and value within particular societies" (Byrne et al 2020:205). It is this status and these values that when linked to representation highlights the way in which, to one community (i.e. minorities) representation is central to how they are able to operate within society and form a major part of the culture they enact and interact with daily. For a majority, representation can be viewed more so as something to be examined and in some cases disregarded as performance and subsequently critiqued before moving on to the next triggered talking point, without truly appreciating the wider implications that these performances can create.

Moving from the definition and perception of representation, I shall now examine the role of politics in relation to representation as well as how identification by race has impacted the contextual background within which

representation and its impacts are received. Representation is an inherently political action, and "Politics, whether that is 'everyday' parliamentary politics, acts of resistance or even revolutions, cannot proceed without representation" (Hamilton 2017:82). This is partly because at any and every level of politics, employing people or acting, represents the wider ideology and action behind it. Form this, it should be noted that "the race relations paradigm is ambivalent about racial identification because it normalizes and legitimizes racial categories as ascriptive identities" (Hampshire 2012:41). It is the impact that this preconception of someone's identity as a result of racialisation that acts of representation try to combat.

As is so often the case when exploring the basis for notions such as 'ascriptive identity' and its parochial connotations, looking to recent history can reveal exactly why these ideas became so founded and continue to impact people of these communities today. For example, within the UK one needs only look at the post-war decades to understand how and why minorities became such a segregated yet combined part of the national psyche and framework. Terri Givens and Rahsaan Maxwell identify that "most non-white immigrants who arrived in Europe during the 1950s, 1960s and 1970s were temporary workers. They were not expected to stay, so most governments did not plan for their integration" (2012:3). The result of this was the hostility and isolation that many minority communities had to face to which Givens and Maxwell note "Today, in the first part of the twenty-first century, race has gained acceptance as a legitimate, if still controversial, social and political issue in Europe" (2012:4). Despite this observation, there is still significant hesitation and conflict that can arise between the majority and minority voices, and this is in part due to "the growing reliance on majoritarian rhetoric among political actors" (Bybee 2002:56). As well as this, "individual political identity is never solely defined by membership in a single group" (Bybee 2002:65) and this notion is one that can be found at the heart of representation. Whilst it is often about trying to create an image of community, it is never about saying that all individuals within that community are the same, they simply share culture in the same way as anyone within the majority might.

This sort of idea links back to that of the 'us' and 'them' divide introduced by Appadurai (2006) yet seen in an earlier form in the work of Edward Said (1997) who noted:

> In other words, this universal practise of designating in one's mind a familiar space which is 'ours' and an unfamiliar space beyond 'ours' which is 'theirs', is a way of making geographical distinctions that *can* be entirely arbitrary (1997:167).

This notion can be developed upon by reviewing the work of Bonnie Honig and her identification that "many of the most multiculturally minded contributors to diversity treat foreignness as a necessary evil and assume that we would be better off if only there were enough land for every group to have its own nation-state" (2009:12). Furthermore, the notion that "foreignness is a threat to the stability and identity of established regimes" (Honig 2009:13) is one that is evident throughout discussions that follow representation and can often be found in the backlash of any performance that seeks to be even marginally representative.

It is clear to see the way in which representation is not only affected by the cultural context it finds itself being delivered to, but also the political thinking that perceives it and assigns its meaning based on race relations and assumed identity characteristics. The result of this is a continually contentious debate around why representation is necessary, but also whether it should be something that is widely distributed as opposed to being strictly shared within the community that would already understand the culture and so would therefore gain more from the performative element of it. With this being said, it is this type of disengagement as well as disregard that has led to people attempting to curtail the efforts of representation and the progressive message and agenda that it often tries to push through its actions and subsequent debate that is inevitably created.

Conclusion

Having introduced and outlined the way in which race (and racism in its various forms) and the concept of nativism and 'the people' have been central in the construction of minorities and their place within society, these themes act as the driving force for the narrative of this project. These ideas are addressed and

developed via three key themes and case studies that acknowledge not only the impact but the evolution of these notions and how they have resulted in the cultivation and advancement of discussions regarding the minority experience and what it means to live as a minority, how acting can lead to change and how the evolution of understanding is advancing the progress towards equality.

Methodology

Researching Minorities

> Researching race and racism, as any other topic, forces all researchers, implicitly or explicitly, to pose questions about the nature of the reality that is being examined (Bulmer & Solomos 2004:3).

The history of this type of research has often lent itself to view and study minorities in a way where they "have been dismembered, objectified and problematised via Western scientific rationality and reason" (Louis 2007:131). As a result, given the focus of the research on socio-cultural and socio-political contentious ideas and perceptions, I held a degree of responsibility when it came to the discussion around race, racism, belonging, identity and the 'minority experience'. Throughout this research, when talking about the 'minority experience', I mean this to be the way in which those defined as a minority on the basis of their race or ethnicity, experience the impact that comes from this categorisation. This is in relation to their experiences and interactions with others as well as how they themselves see and understand their identity in relation to the world around them. The implication of this is in relation to developing understanding for those such as myself, is to create an awareness of just how central race is and can be to those who have a much more active relationship with it and experience it consciously through reactions and interactions in their daily life.

At no point did the research aim to address any individual with a negative connotation because of their race or beliefs nor expect them to bring to the discussion any experience or memory of discomfort. With this in mind, as a researcher dealing directly with these ideas, it was essential "to recognise the discursive practices through which race is created, powered, transformed, controlled, and governed" (Kobayashi 2014:1102), whilst also acknowledging that there is a preconceived image of detachment via privilege from these civil issues. Subsequently, the challenge of the research design came from ensuring that when conducted, the work did not further objectify people or communities in the wake of recent events and simply view them once again as a 'thing' to be studied and

observed. As a discourse that has been debated for decades, the work of Peter Hopkins on intersectionality demonstrates the need for caution and action to ensure "that matters of race, racism and racialisation are not displaced" (Hopkins 2019:942) by researchers when conducting work with individuals of this nature.

Racialised minorities have experienced hardship and difficulties based on their appearance and culture, this isn't a revelation and research into why this is would ultimately reveal ideologies and structures that we already know exist. As a result of this, the research aimed itself at a larger question, one potentially more difficult to answer in the wake of recent events and fuelled by the events of the past. Ultimately, the question that arose is one identified within the field of race and minority research as "Should the core concern be to study the relations between racial and ethnic groups in specific social environments? Or should the focus be on the impact of processes of discrimination and exclusion, and their impact on minority communities" (Bulmer & Solomos 2004:3). The result of this question is really that one section can't exist without the other, inherently the study of relations between any group within society will lead to the examination of wider processes and in the case of minorities, it is impossible to not encounter discrimination or systems of hate.

With this in mind, drawing from the work of Claire Alexander in *The Asian Gang* (2000)*,* the notion of positionality is crucial in the overall outlook with which any research is conducted. As is stated by Alexander on her positionality in relation to the research she conducted "my backgrounds, origins, age, appearance, education, employment, marital status and other vital statistics were of inescapable significance" (2000:37). Whilst not all of these applied to me, as a white, educated, male, my position within society and experience compared against minorities was inescapable. This was why so much consideration was taken when contacting minority groups and individuals to make the point that it was *their* experiences and *their* voice that was the heart of the project, not my experiences or my voice. With this in mind, it must be noted that all of these interactions were conducted from my position as a researcher and this ultimately shaped them differently from if they were a casual conversation or conversation amongst minorities themselves, and this

is a feature that, while I cannot avoid I make central to the understanding of these interactions and the details gained from them.

<u>Representation</u>

One of the primary concepts within the research, representation had become a major talking point in relation to minorities in recent years, as discussed within the literature review. As a result, several case studies were created in order to catalyse discussions with participants and highlight the role of representation in the 'minority experience'. Whilst there has been disagreement over exactly how it can be defined, turning once again to the definition offered by Gregory (2009) gives the clearest understanding, I believe of the component features most commonly viewed as being representational:

> At its minimum, representation is conventionally defined as a symbol or image, or as the process of rendering something (an object, event, idea or perception) intelligible and identifiable (2009:645).

From this, it was possible to find examples of representation that highlighted these features and craft them into case studies that were presented to participants. These included adverts and moments from television (listed below) that aligned with Ruth Gilmore's observation that "The political geography of race entails investigating space, place and location as simultaneously shaped by gender, class and scale" (2002:22) features that were central to these cases as well as the participants responses to them:

- Sainsbury's Christmas Advert 'Gravy Song', 2020
- Diversity's BLM Britain's Got Talent Performance, 2020
- Colin Kaepernick's Protest 'Taking a Knee', 2016

It should be noted that "False representations propagate a false consciousness" (Louis 2007:132) and it was because of this, the participants were presented with these case studies in order to understand how effective they were in terms of representing minorities. Paired with Gregory's (2009) summation that "Alongside questions of *who* and *what* it is that 'represents'…attention also has to be paid to the restrictions of the representational model: to not only what it excludes, but also

what it inhibits in accessing the perceptual practices of our sensory and somatic lives" (2009:645). The case studies allowed questions to be raised about the wider impact of their representation and how they influenced audiences not only physically, but emotionally and in relation to their perception and understandings of minority cultures and experiences.

<div align="center">Non-Representational Theory</div>

Acts of representation are important in understanding how minorities are perceived and understood, however, there are certain aspects of representational acts that cannot necessarily be seen or qualified. It is at this point that the notion and work of non-representational theory is employed:

> Theoretically, non-representational theory stands as a synthesising effort to amalgamate diverse but interrelated theoretical perspectives (Vannini 2015:3).

What non-representational theory allows access to, is the features and aspects of research that cannot be gathered from a discussion or a superficial image analysis. This includes things such as the background context in which actions take place and the atmosphere of a movement or experience, as is expanded upon, "life is movement – geographic and existential kinesis" (Vannini 2015:3). This type of thought drives the understanding that non-representational theory strives for and recognises the way in which "Events – their sites, actors, stakes, consequences, politics, and temporalities – reveal old and new potentialities" (Vannini 2015:7). It is these 'new potentialities' that the discussions hoped to reach and use to develop wider understanding through a sense of experience or feeling that could be more easily perceived and explored.

Furthermore, drawing from the work of Vilém Flusser (2014) as well as Gillian Rose and Divya Tolia-Kelly (2016), the impact of gestures, movements and memorialisation, all of which play a key role in the case studies presented to participants is essential in understanding the impacts of acts of representation and how their perception can be directly related to not only the initial act, but the context in which they are subsequently enacted. This school of thought is examined and expanded upon in the first and second empirical chapter and forms a part of

the basis from which the use of non-representational theory is employed throughout the analysis of this project.

Backgrounds and Atmospheres

> Backgrounds are the sites that fall outside of common awareness, the atmospheres we take for granted, the places in which habitual dispositions regularly unfold (Vannini 2015:9).

While they might fall outside of 'common awareness' this is one of the main issues when it comes to the perception of minorities and the way in which they are addressed. It is a common discourse that if someone cannot see discrimination happening or does not actively engage in it, then they are not a part of the 'problem' or more dangerously, the 'problem' does not exist. It is this type of thought that has allowed the divide between the category of majority and minority to exist for so long and as noted "the background is not an inert, natural backdrop but a collectively lived and shaped condition" (Anderson & Ash 2015:36).

Ben Anderson & James Ash's (2015) work on background and atmospheres can be applied to this structure of discrimination and those who 'cannot see' (or perhaps refuse to see) it in action. An atmosphere, something which cannot be physically handled as an object but can be experienced within the body [corporeally tangible] and remembered reflexively, is equal to the notion of 'lived experience'. As something that is individual yet can create connections within a community who have similar lived experiences, whilst the work of Anderson & Ash was not developed with concepts of race and racism in mind, it in turn provides material for the understanding of these concepts to be developed within the context of the everyday.

In addition to this, an "atmosphere appears to have a quasi-autonomous existence, shaping actions that are themselves part of how an atmosphere settles and shifts a little, but continues to stay a while" (Anderson & Ash 2015:46). This staying of an atmosphere, in relation to the structure of discrimination is precisely what has allowed it to continue. Furthermore, "methodologically this means that atmospheric change can be understood as a matter of affects meeting one another in ways that produce (or fail to produce) new relations between the entities within

that atmosphere" (Anderson & Ash 2015:46). The BLM protests of 2020 highlight this, showing the way in which, an atmosphere can cause established atmospheres and their impact to be changed.

Finally, "greatest unity is found in an insistence on expanding our once comfortable understanding" (Lorimer 2005:84) and partnered with the understanding that "each person has numerous events in their lifetime that shape their perceptions and bias" (Louis 2007:135) it is hoped that through the discussions and the explanation of the methods that follow, combined with the concepts and factors explored above that, this will be achieved.

The impact of Covid-19

Due to the Covid-19 pandemic, various aspects of the project had to be adapted to accommodate the regulations and changes that were implemented. The primary change was the shift to conducting all fieldwork virtually with discussions being held over systems such as Zoom and Microsoft Teams. In addition to this, not being able to travel to any study areas or attend relevant events such as panels or symposiums meant that once again, these were attended virtually from a home setting. Outside of these changes, the vast majority of the work was able to be carried out without issue or hinderance as a result of the pandemic, with resources such as libraries being accessed virtually, and welfare and progress checks also being carried out online.

Participant Recruitment and Ethical Considerations

Due to the nature of the research and content, specific consideration regarding participant recruitment, cultivation of discussion and collection of data needed to be considered. First and foremost, the potential sensitivities that the discussions around race, identity and belonging could provoke. As well as this, "Respectful (re)presentation requires the research to "consider how you represent yourself, your research and the people, events, phenomena you are researching"" (Absolon & Willet 2004:15 in Louis 2007). It is because of this that careful consideration was

taken when identifying participants in order to ensure that no aspect of the research would lead to offense or objectification of those involved.

To ensure that these issues were addressed as best they could be, participants were identified through groups and communities where there was likely shared experience and cultural understanding. These groups included:

- Swansea University BAME Student Community
- Gwent Police
- Asian Women's Group

Furthermore, several positive action workers were contacted for their experience in dealing with minorities within different organisations, as well as identifying as minorities themselves. Positive action is defined by the Equality and Human Rights Commission (2019) as "taking specific steps to improve equality in your workplace". It is due to the nature of their work, that they were included as they had first-hand experience in dealing with minorities as well as the way in which, most often, majorities interact with them in different environments. The way in which their interactions with minorities are framed around the workplace and legislations aimed towards improving features such as diversity and inclusivity, meant that their experiences offered an additional layer to how minorities are perceived from a more political background as opposed to solely social or public.

Once these groups had been identified, they were contacted and provided with a brief outline of the research alongside the requirements for those who would be interested in participating. Following this, participants interested in taking part in a discussion were sent a more detailed document (see appendices) that covered the three key themes of the project that would be covered in the discussion.

These themes were presented as follows:

- How identifying as a minority impacts your everyday experiences
- The representation of minorities
- How the perception of minorities is changing

This was done in order for them to understand what would be addressed within the discussion as well as give them time to corroborate any thoughts or details they might find relevant or want to raise.

This document also highlighted that participation was entirely voluntary and that participants could withdraw from the study at any point. Additionally, participants were provided a consent form outlining that they understood the nature of the topics that were being discussed and that as a result they were happy to partake but were able to withdraw should they want.

Data Collection

The use of Zoom for data collection

As mentioned in the Covid-19 disclaimer, all field work transitioned to a virtual arena and was conducted through online systems. Zoom offered the most effective channel of communication as well as a number of helpful features when carrying out discussions with participants.

Firstly, it allowed discussions to be had from any location and so this was incredibly beneficial with regards to the restrictions such as social distancing. In addition to this, within a zoom call, the ability to record the discussion made the analysis considerably easier with both an audio as well as video recording to refer to. As well as this, the ability to screen share (show a participant the contents of your device) made the photo elicitation section very effective as participants could be presented with the images in a slideshow capacity and ask to navigate through them as they liked. This feature also meant that they could react to them for the first time in the call, rather than having to be provided with them in advance and then recall their reactions or feelings.

Furthermore, being able to create personal links to each call as well as control aspects such as who is entered into each call meant that there were no concerns regarding details being sent to the wrong participants or data being mixed. This simply ensured that agreed ethical guidelines and procedures regarding anonymity and GDPR were upheld throughout this stage of the research.

Focus groups

The primary purpose of the focus groups was to catalyse a discussion founded in shared experience amongst the members present. This was to develop an understanding of the 'minority experience' within the context of community and highlight any potential similarities that arose from having a shared racial identity, as well as the potential differences created by individual identity and experience.

I was only able to conduct a single focus group due to scheduling difficulties amongst participants, however the group that was convened was centred around a parent/child relationship and this allowed a viewpoint across a generational space to be examined which prompted further questions based upon the different types of experiences the individuals had dealt with in relation to certain things such as hate groups and events on social media.

Participants were approached through the groups listed at the start of this section and provided an information sheet about the research topic and their involvement should the wish to engage. The focus group lasted for one hour in a format where questions were posed to the pair as a way to begin the discussion, however it was very much open directionally as to what experiences people wanted to share. This decision was chosen as it allowed people to agree but also raise the way their experiences could have been different, thus providing the opening for expansion and further questioning and engagement.

In addition to this, with the difference in generation, participants often took it in turn to examine the similarities and differences of their experiences, a feature that fitted the format of the discussion and the questions effectively. As well as this, research has tended to focus on specific groups as a whole, (Alexander 2000;Gilroy 2004;Fanon 2008;Goldberg 2009) rather than examining difference through a cross-generational format. As a result, I found that the discussion cultivated from this more unique system offered a more revealing picture of the way in which people's experiences have not only been distinct because of the society they were enacted in, but also how certain features of experience transcend generations, whilst taking

on new forms, especially in connection with systems such as social media, an idea that is expanded upon within the empirical chapters.

<u>Interviews</u>

Due to the substantial discussion-based format of the project, interviews presented themselves as one of the most appropriate forms of data collection. A total of ten interviews were conducted between March and May 2021. Participants for these interviews were gained in the same way as the focus group, via an information sheet outlining the goals of the research and the involvement required of those who wanted to engage.

As a means of exploratory conversation that reaches a level of understanding with an individual participant, "the reflexivity of qualitative interviews and their basis in shared human competencies of communication…make them particularly valuable tools in research on human behaviour" (Kelly 2012:307), and in the context of the discussion and themes of race, identity and belonging. The space created by an interview allowed for a degree of comfort as well as safe space in which participants would not feel pressured to share details with which they were uncomfortable or simply give details that they thought I might want to hear. Conducted alongside the focus groups, the same question format was employed, however rather than simply being used as a rough frame for the discussion as in the focus groups, the questions were used to drive the discussion and each was addressed in-depth and expanded upon when possible, depending on the features raised by the participants' response.

Beyond the structural features of the interviews, when speaking to positive action workers, this method was particularly effective. As individuals that have dealt exclusively with the place, perception, and treatment of minorities within different environments, most often when they are interacting with majorities in circumstances where either party has limited experience in relation to the culture or understanding of the other, these workers offered an insight into a facet of the 'minority experience'. The result of this was that by enabling a comprehensive discussion, their insight was most effectively gathered and reflected.

Photo Elicitation

> The use of visual methods, such as photos, may make it easier in interviews to discuss sensitive or uncomfortable subjects that can be difficult to articulate and uncover through written or talk-based methods (Allen 2011:488).

The aforementioned case studies were composed of visual elements, such as screenshots from adverts and television. These images were presented to participants during the discussion, and they were asked to react and respond with how the images made them feel as well as what they thought the impact of the wider cases were. This was in relation to aspects such as whether the images were emotional, shocking, strange, and how effective they thought the acts of representation were in developing people's understanding of the experience's minorities have to deal with. Moreover, whether the wider response to the examples was something they expected or if this also took them by surprise and elicited a particularly strong response.

The images that were chosen were not necessarily provocative or shocking yet were chosen because they had garnered an intense reaction within the public sphere when they were first displayed. Specific questions were not assigned to each image nor asked, as it was simply more about how each individual reacted and from their reaction the conversation was then built. In turn, this meant that the respondents were often happy to share specific details about the images and indeed how they related to them personally.

Problems encountered within each method and the solutions employed

In terms of the methods that were used in this project, there were no major issues in relation to choosing what would be employed for the data collection stage. The only contrary to this was the initial plan to use a survey for the data collection. The survey was omitted from the data collection process due to the way in which it became clear that the format was not appropriate for accessing the points of research that the project aimed to address. As mentioned, due to the political and sensitive nature of the topics, a more qualitative and discursive approach was suitable, thus leading to the removal of the survey format in questioning. From this,

the discussion-based format of the focus groups and interviews became the primary method for data collection.

Within the questions posed to participants during discussions, it was found that there were some of the initial questions that were not entirely clear in terms of understanding. Most notably:

"How aware are you of your identification in your day-to-day life?"

It was found that some respondents were unsure about what exactly 'identification' related to and so to present this question more clearly, the parameters of gender, race and ethnicity were included into the question. This gave the participants a framework to move through, should they so wish and subsequently reduced any confusion that was created by the asking of the question. Where it was necessary, this type of change was made to other questions, mainly in the final section of questions, regarding the way in which perceptions towards minorities have changed and what participants thought needed to happen in order for change to continue to occur.

The following section turns to the empirical materials and discussion, supported by the first case study. As a holistic view on some of the central concepts that run throughout the empirical chapters, this chapter looks to establish a foundation from which the key ideas and understandings can be explored, developed and understood.

Chapter One: The Look of Ordinary: Belonging, Banality and the Everyday

Racialised and ethnic minorities have become a central part of society in today's world. Forming part of the demographic framework, states and nations are no longer solely constructed by a native population but are increasingly diverse, multi-cultural, multi-ethnic and multi-racial. It is from this, that diverse communities have come to co-exist, and although not always peacefully, minorities are now finding themselves belonging in spaces of their own, whilst equally struggling to be accepted in certain wider communities and spaces, because of preconceptions held against their identity or beliefs about what certain cultural characteristics represent.

The impact of this is undeniable, however, when examining the place of minorities and their experiences and interactions in everyday life, we cannot ignore the role that ideas of the nation, nativism and 'the people' play when it comes to defining who and what 'belongs'. By what rights they are accepted or indeed perceived to be allowed to exist within the borders of a defined territory, have often been determined on the basis of appearance, outlined by a (white) majority.

This chapter will explore the role of nations, nationality and nativism in the context of the UK and in relation to the place of minorities in the everyday and the way in which their experiences are framed as a result of their identity and what it means against the perceived characteristics needed to 'belong'. In addition to this, the complex political system of 'the people' will be further developed before linking into the first case study that examines these ideas through the idea of the domestic family.

The first section 'A Question of Nation and Place' draws from the work of Rene Grotenhuis (2016) on the notion of nation building and the features by which nations have come to define their identity. This is partnered with the observations of Étienne Balibar and Immanuel Wallerstein (1991) on the connection between race, nation and ethnicity, a central narrative throughout this thesis. The second section 'The People', applies the complex political concept at a more focused community level, in order to understand how the day-to-day experiences of

participants relates to a wider understanding of their identity and place within society. Taking note of seminal work by Arjun Appadurai (2006) as well as Ziauddin Sardar (2004), this understanding of a more local level of being, aids in developing a more intimate account of the way in which minorities manoeuvre through their interactions and experiences with an established majority. Finally, 'Black Christmas? Sainsbury's 'Gravy Song' Christmas Advert (2020)', presents the culmination of these sections and concepts. Using the work of Sara Ahmed (2010) on the concept of happiness as a feeling and commodity alongside the work of Paul Gilroy (2002) on the 'black family' and the 'black British' identity, these features are highlighted to show how the perception of minorities within the UK is influenced by the notions explored within the previous sections of this chapter, before reintroducing the concept of representation that is further expanded upon in the following chapter.

A Question of Nation and Place

Nations and nationality have shaped the world in a way that few other features have, defining territory, creating conflicts and perhaps most significantly of all, creating communities. Nationality as a product of nationalism is the "feelings of belonging, solidarity and identification between national citizens and the territory imagined as their collective national homeland" (Gregory 2009:488) and it is through this connection that notions of who can belong or should belong are filtered. Yet, "There is no international agreement that unambiguously defines the concept of the nation" (Grotenhuis 2016:25), as a result of this, we can ask, who and what makes a nation and its identity?

In order to address this, it should firstly be understood "that the nation is a construct, built and altered by people to define the identity of a political community in ever-changing circumstances" (Grotenhuis 2016:26) through the guise of political subjectivity (Pandian 2009). This construction of the nation according to 'people' and their political community highlights why nationality is a complex framework for determining who and what can belong on a basis of identity, given that "Nationhood is becoming problematic given the diversity of people and cultures that find themselves within the borders of one nation-state" (Grotenhuis 2016:29).

It is because of this and the way in which diversity is not only enacted but now ingrained within almost every aspect of society, that ideas of nationality are becoming increasingly parochial when considering the multi-faceted nature of national identities and the way in which a shared identity can be defined and characterised in a variety of ways by different people, within the same nation. The impact of this is that nationality/national identity is presented as a system of identification that, whilst secure and confident in its own understanding should not be the method of identification that is used to solely define membership of people as an absolute. This is due to the fact that there are other forms of identity (i.e. race and ethnicity), that can carry significantly more weight and meaning when it comes to characteristics of identity and notions of belonging.

Turning to racial and ethnic identification it is noted that "No modern nation possess a given 'ethnic' basis" (Balibar 1990:346). This is due to the fact that "Any nation, if you look at the different groups and communities that it is supposed to include, is multi-ethnic and multi-cultural from the outset" (Salmon 2019; Appadurai 2006). The notion of a 'given ethnic basis' across much of Western society is that it is white, and this is expanded upon within a Eurocentric view often meaning that anything else is therefore an ethnic or racial minority, in the eyes of the 'given ethnic' white population. The prioritisation and sense of dominance that has been created by the white population, reinforces the notion of other ethnic groups and races as an abject 'other', an idea seen later in this chapter. Demographically, whilst many areas of south Wales and the UK are concentrated around a white majority, diversity in the form of mixed-race people as well as other minorities within a number of urban centres is unmistakable and contests the notion that 'white' is the default. It is because of this, that when using the term 'white majority' and when talking about the 'majority', the focus within this work is upon the systems of power and control that are associated with this racial background.

It is as a result of these systems of power that the divide between 'white' and 'black' has become so ingrained within discourses of race, a discourse that is used to frame this research and the discussions throughout. With this in mind, these categories when examined holistically, from a superficial viewpoint consider the objective differences that exist. However, there are numerous complex components that go into individuals' experiences of racial and ethnic identity. It is this complexity which the discussion seeks to address.

For example, in the UK, White British is established as the dominant majority ethnicity, and this is what has led to many of the issues and tensions with any ethnicity that differs from this. Yet what is a 'White British' ethnicity when it comes to nationality, given that British, English, Scottish, Welsh and Northern Irish are all potential categories?

This complexity of different ethnicities bundled within a shared nation simply shows that when ethnicities from outside the bounds of the nation are also introduced, that have the potential to claim a share of the 'British' identity, there is inevitably going to be conflict.

It is as a result of this, that the role of nationalism, the embodiment of nationality comes into play as a major and defining factor. As identified:

Nationalism…creates a political and cultural outside (Fuchs 2020:235).
This 'political and cultural outside' in relation to nationality is almost always exclusively defined on the basis of race or ethnicity, and more so the way in which, appearance (colour) plays a part in defining the 'look' of a nationality and subsequently the nation. As features that can be identified and contrasted, it is through these that those who find themselves on the outside attempt to rally against in an effort to co-exist yet are simultaneously aware of the inescapable nature of these features. As a result of which, either the preconceived notions or ascribed characteristics are so well established, there is often little one can do to change the perception with which they are viewed.

This is highlighted by Paul Gilroy who notes that "problems have multiplied where the idea of culture has been abused by being simplified, instrumentalized, or

trivialized, and particularly through being coupled with notions of identity and belonging that are overly fixed" (2004:6). It is these processes that have ultimately been responsible for the continued conflict that exists between racial and ethnic minorities against the majority due to cultural differences that clash. Subsequently, these cultural differences refuse to be recognised as a part of the 'established national identity', defined by the majority due to the way in which they do not align with their perceived cultural characteristics that form the agreed upon national identity. Whilst this clash is by no means a modern antagonism, "ethnic and cultural diversity is today's reality" (Grotenhuis 2016:39) and reinforced by the fact that within today's reality there is "the broad spectrum of variation in the social organisation and political expression of ethnicity, race and nation" (Brubaker 2009:23). These features, when faced against the organisation of a national identity and its performance, find themselves at odds which struggle to be resolved. This is in part, due to the juxtaposing recognition and subsequent dismissal of minority races and ethnicities in relation to belonging within a national identity and the majority people of a nation.

This relationship between race, ethnicity and nation might be tenuous, however, this is partly because of the perceived construction of each component and the way in which their co-existence has never occurred without conflict and a sense of superiority that continually reshapes and reorganises race and ethnicity, (primarily those of the minority) as an agent intent on polluting the nation and changing it into something chaotic. As a result of this, we must examine these components in more detail and those who have experienced the impact of this relationship first-hand in order to better understand not only how the nation informs race/ethnicity but is equally informed by them.

Belonging in the Everyday

To understand the idea above, we can turn to Etienne Balibar and Immanuel Wallerstein (1991) and their understanding of what characteristics amount to a 'race', 'nation' and 'ethnic group'.

> A 'race' is supposed to be a genetic category, which has a visible physical form…A 'nation' is supposed to be a socio-political category, linked somehow to the actual or potential boundaries of a state. An 'ethnic group' is supposed to be a cultural category, of which there are said to be certain continuing behaviours that are passed on from generation to generation and that are **not** normally linked in theory to state boundaries (1991:77).

Building upon this dialogue from Balibar & Wallerstein, by drawing from my own discussions with participants for this research, many highlighted the significance of their racial and ethnic identification within their daily lives, noting how this played a far more definitive role in their experiences of identification than that of nationality. One participant explained that "My experiences, it's difficult to differentiate between my religion and my ethnicity because if you look at me, the first thing people will see will be my religion, because I wear a scarf" (Participant 1). What I believe this embodies is the way in which the visual identifier of a feature such as religion, race and ethnicity, when paired with the perception of Islam and Muslims, completely overrides any other identifying features. As these characteristics carry a stronger bearing and illicit a stronger reaction, given their established preconceptions, the presence of nationality in this situation, is not obvious enough to be used as the first instance of identifying oneself, or in being identified.

However, it should be acknowledged that in relation to the Muslim identity which has been viewed as a singular collective in recent years, despite its own diverse community, is largely perceived through its construction by the media, all of which have been framed in a distinct way post 9/11 (Sardar 2004). This notion was expanded upon by Participant 1 stating "They [the media] target all Muslims with the same brush and the media is really very pivotal in this because of the way they choose to portray the news", the impact of this being regardless of race or ethnicity in this situation, the perception of an entire cohort of people is defined through the guise of an organisation that is undoubtedly coloured by the attitudes, characteristics and perceptions of a ruling sector of the majority that holds and exercises influence within the nation that it serves.

This aspect of the way in which identity is perceived forms a fundamental part of this research and the discussion that was had with participants. When dealing with

identification on an everyday basis, within Western society, the (white) majority most likely do not have to recognise or think about their race or ethnicity in the way that minorities do. Across discussions, participants noted that:

> *"In terms of my skin colour, being a black male, I'm probably more aware of that" (Participant 2)*
>
> *"I am constantly aware of my race" (Participant 5)*
>
> *"I was very aware I was a brown person growing up" (Participant 10)*

Perhaps the most important point made by a participant was that within the everyday it was a case of "Just being more aware that you are a minority" (Participant 6) a fundamental distinction, which I believe exists between the majority and the minority and needs to be recognised. White people very rarely have to acknowledge their race and indeed are most commonly forced to do so when dealing directly with minorities. However, for minorities, being aware of race is a much more vital part of their everyday lives, because it is what is used to not only structure them within society, but also determines how people will react to them, based on their understanding and belief of what their racial or ethnic characteristics embody and present.

Looking back to the work of Balibar & Wallerstein (1991) by examining racial and ethnic identities as well as the way in which they inform minorities day-to-day lives:

> We may use these categories to explain why things are the way there are and shouldn't be changed, or why things are the way they are and cannot be changed. Or conversely, we may use them to explain why the present structures should indeed be superseded in the name of deeper and more ancient, ergo more legitimate, social realities (1991:78).

This highlights the way in which, when referring to their previous dialogue, there *is* in fact a link between ethnicity and the state boundaries which form the nation. As a result of this, due to the 'more legitimate, social realities' upon which the nation is constructed and uses to build and project its image of national identity, race and ethnicity that aligns to anything other than the established and majority held understanding is not accepted as being 'legitimate' within a national understanding and so subsequently is placed on the fringes in order to ensure that the 'ancient' heart of a nation remains untouched and unchanged.

Being in the Everyday

Having examined the way in which race and ethnicity is used to structure and perceive people within the boundary of the nation, I shall now explore how the use of critical race theory and the 'black' vs 'white' discourse is used to actively oppress and discourage individuals from belonging within the framework of the nation and its people.

Firstly, critical race theory is an essential tool in analysing the relationship between the majority and minority, however, "critical race theory, especially as it has been absorbed and appropriated by postcolonialism, [tends] to understand 'race', quite literally in black and white terms" (Rao 2016b). This somewhat biblical divide between black and white has been at the centre of discussions around race for decades, however, offers an interesting perspective on the discourse as a whole.

Drawing from the work of Marion Young (1990) on forms of oppression, she highlights marginalisation as one of the most dangerous forms due to the way in which it can lead to social expulsion from nearly every aspect of society. Having been seen throughout history, within today's society, minorities whilst not being marginalised to the extent seen during the most violent eras of segregation, still face a number of challenges when it comes to being accepted across society.

Within discussions some participants detailed these challenges, most notably in the form of explicitly racist experiences they have had, and interactions founded in this process of marginalisation that appears to focus purely on their difference of appearance and nothing more.

> *"I was told why don't you eff off back to where you come from, don't come and tell us in our tongue what we should and shouldn't do" (Participant 3)*

The type of interaction that has become very familiar when addressing minorities, this style of language and comment draws from the notion of what and who belongs within the nation yet also reveals to an extent a sense of vulnerability when it comes to those who feel threatened by the sheer presence of someone who is seemingly trying to take away some pregiven right or enforce a new type of structure onto people. A somewhat ironic fear when considering the history of

Western Eurocentric civilizations. As the dominant creators and definers of territory, Western European countries have been responsible for structuring much of the society that we exist in today, including its diverse nature and so for members of these nations, to rebel so strongly against an 'other' simply reveals an odd point of view through which some individuals choose to look.

Building upon this is the racist actions that present a more direct threat in relation to the physical treatment of minorities. Continuing their discussion, Participant 3 when talking about their child noted that "He had peanuts thrown at him by a family member who is white. So those are the sorts of racist things we've dealt with". This really showed the way in which perception can fuel action when a belief is felt strongly enough to justify. Furthermore, it was noted how this kind of action and belief exists as a "Consistent undercurrent, all the time" (Participant 4) an aspect many participants recognised across the discussion but came as somewhat of a surprise to myself and I think would to the vast number of majorities.

One of the shared experiences that many participants highlighted builds upon this notion of the consistent awareness that they must have of the way in which their identity can trigger a strong reaction. A participant from the older generation noted that "Someone's bad experience when engaging with you, they're going to refer, when they recall it, it's a reality that they will refer to things that are abundantly clear at first sight" (Participant 6). This plays into the notion of people assigning labels to aspects of race and using it to inform their decision when recalling a person. This was expanded upon by another, who stated "Being a six-foot black man, that I need to be aware of what I say, how I say it, how I present myself" (Participant 9) in order for them to not be recognised as falling into the 'angry black man' stereotype that so often leads to cases of violence and harassment. As well as this, they explained that "I've always been taught to realise that one, I am different and two, I need to be aware that sometimes that will be used against me" (Participant 9). This was a point which resonated across discussions and formed a very central part of every individual's narrative with regards to how they conducted themselves and saw the impact of their identity in the everyday.

Finally, I believe, that this notion can be summarised as follows "race, ethnicity and nation are ways of making sense of the world. They are ways of understanding and identifying oneself" (Brubaker 2009:34) and it is from this that I believe we can draw the most understanding perspective of why it is so important to recognise the racial and ethnic identity of individuals above national identity. It is ultimately this that is used to define who they are and in the eyes of the majority, as opposed to any sense of nationality or defined national characteristic, which if they did belong to, would theoretically negate these and offer them a place within the nation.

'The People'

Having introduced the concept of 'the people' and its organisation within the literature review, this section shall expand upon the concept and explore the way in which the place of minorities leads to notions of belonging within certain communities whilst also simultaneously having to navigate against the established communities they find themselves in at a level more personal than the nation.

Firstly, it is understood that "the three commonest terms are 'race', 'nation' and 'ethnic group', all presumably varieties of 'peoples' in the modern world" (Balibar & Wallerstein 1991:77). From this as we have seen, people, especially minorities are subsequently categorised into a variety of different groups once again, despite being labelled with the same unifying term. The result of this is that "the category of the people is always overtly or covertly opposed to a series of other categories in political thought that by the same token we are invited to discard, criticise or overcome" (Bosteels 2016:1). From this we can see how the formation of antagonism between different sections of 'the people' is formed. Building upon this, due to the fact that "race acquired a more formal codification and consequently socio-intellectual authority from the eighteenth century onwards" (Goldberg 2009:3) the way in which minorities became a part of 'the people' was, from the outset structured around their difference and perceived inferiority from a white perspective.

From this, the perspective that "Geographies of race and racism in Britain today, are rooted in our understanding of race and racism in Britain yesterday, last year, last

century and before" (Bressey 2008:38), raises a number of points as to why continually, "today they [minorities] activate new worries about rights (human and otherwise) about citizenship, about belonging and autochthony, and about entitlements from the state" (Appadurai 2006:42). Drawing from the work of Claire Dwyer and Caroline Bressey on the historic importance of race in the UK, their work seeks to "make visible the black presence in British history and to challenge historical memories that imagine Britain as 'multicultural' only after the arrival of the Windrush in 1948" (Dwyer & Bressey 2008:1). The concerns highlighted by Appadurai and the work of Dwyer & Bressey culminate in the rigid divide that exists between the majority and minority when it comes to dialogues of access to resources as well as processes of naturalisation and inclusion. As well as this it is clear that "one will find the rhetoric around minorities as being one about protection, whilst that of a people as being one about emancipation or empowerment" (Menon 2017:260). This raises an interesting point when considering how these notions of 'protection' and 'emancipation' link together.

As a section of 'the people' minorities perception as a threat due to foreign influence and the way they supposedly change the culture of the community that they enter juxtaposed against those who rally for diversity and multiculturalism by including them as one of 'the people' creates an odd dichotomy wherein minorities become seemingly accepted and rejected simultaneously. This is a feature identified by Sardar who discusses the way in which "By lumping these diverse communities in one monolithic category [minority], we make them invisible" (2004:11), something that offers an interesting perspective when considering the way in which minorities are often highlighted within bodies such as the media. Furthermore, by simply grouping and labelling these people, as discussed earlier in relation to the 'White British' ethnic group, a simplification of 'us' and 'them' (Appadurai 2006) creates a situation in which this continued acceptance and rejection is enacted, purely on the basis of superficial identification that fits the narrative of a 'White British' 'us' and non-white foreigner 'them'. Yet, what can be focused on is the way in which Sardar's observation reveals that the simple label of minority does not take into account the wide and diverse cultures of minorities from African to Asian to African-

American and South-East Asian, as well as the hundreds of others that populate communities not only across the world, but across the UK.

From this, several participants noted that within the areas that they lived in, they were acutely aware either of their own distinction or that of the limited number of minorities within the area. They noted:

> *"within the place where I live there is actually a couple of black men I've seen living on the street which is quite unusual for parts of Wales"* (Participant 2)
>
> *"I'm aware that I'm one of the few black people that live on the street"* (Participant 6)
>
> *"There are no Asians really around me, there is actually one I know, but that's it"* (Participant 7)

Seeing the way in which participants recognised their difference and distinct lack of shared community in the majority of cases, highlights the fact that "Being the norm does not mean being tolerated or accepted, the norm is an agreed standard" (Hos 2004:5). These comments, I find, show how whilst they can find a place within a nation (albeit in a fragile context at times), minorities are still being denied the opportunity to feel like they belong as their very presence is either limited and therefore made to feel abject or isolated which as a result subjects them to a sense of unfamiliarity and distance from those around them.

This leads to the how from an identity standpoint, minorities perception as a threat is acted upon by the majority in an attempt to protect certain features of identity. Minorities presented as "examples of inner enemies" (Fuchs 2020:239) echoes Appadurai's (2006) concept of 'predatory identities' those being identities which have to actively supplant others that are viewed as a threat to their existence. One of the most developed works that expands on this concept, Grotenhuis (2016) examines the relationship between different perspectives of racism and nationalism that are used to justify the removal of 'other' identities which are deemed to pose a threat.

> In biological racism and nationalism, biological differences are proclaimed. In cultural nationalism and racism, it is claimed that foreigners have a culture that is alien to national culture. It is then often concluded that because of

biological or cultural differences, cultures should remain separate or that immigrants and refugees should be kept or put out (2016:244).

However, it is an unmistakable fact that, despite these feelings and the actions that some may take to ensure their implementation, "All those categories by which Britain defined and measured itself – the 'evil Orientals', the 'fanatic Muslims', the 'inferior races of the colonies', the Irish, the immigrants, the refugees, the gypsies – are now an integral part of Britain" (Sardar 2004:17). This simply shows that due to minorities now being established within the national framework, they are an integral part of 'the people' whether the majority agrees with that or not. They form a community of their own that has the potential to merge with that of others, should the majority merely allow them the opportunity to do such. From this, the first case study highlights exactly how central multiculturalism has become as well as the degree to which, despite being a part of 'the people', majorities still perceive and treat minorities as being abject others that should be removed and distanced from the notions and features of the national identity and established culture.

Black Christmas? Sainsbury's 'Gravy Song' Christmas Advert (2020)

On the 14th of November 2020, British supermarket giant Sainsbury's released a series of adverts depicting Britain, celebrating Christmas. Entitled 'Gravy Song', one advert centred on the conversation between a father and daughter regarding whether she would be able to make it home in time for the family's Christmas celebrations. The efforts of the father to entice her by singing his 'gravy song' that accompanied his famous gravy, leads to the pair laughing as they relish in this moment. Their conversation is overlaid on images and home videos showing the family preparing for a meal, exchanging gifts, dancing and finally coming together around the dinner table (see Figures 1-4).

Figure 1: Screenshot taken from Sainsbury's Advert showing gifts being exchanged by members of a family.

Figure 2: Screenshot taken from Sainsbury's Advert showing someone preparing a meal.

Figure 3: Screenshot taken from Sainsbury's Advert showing family sat at a dinner table being served.

Figure 4: Screenshot taken from Sainsbury's Advert, closing image of the advert shows family gathered round table celebrating.

Posted to YouTube ([Gravy Song | Sainsbury's | Christmas 2020 | Part 1 of 3 - YouTube](#)) on the day of its debut, the advert has been viewed 2.7 million times, has 32 thousand likes and 4.5 thousand dislikes (as of the 10th June 2021). Whilst these figures could be used to indicate that the advert was overall quite successful, the backlash this advert received from the public highlights the exact need for further discussion about minorities and their treatment, especially in the wake of the BLM Summer.

Soon after the advert was aired, comments began emerging on Twitter with responses such as:

> *"Christmas in Nigeria"*

> *"When is the UK version coming out?"*

> *"Britain is 95% white, what about them?"*

> *"White Lives Matter"*

And the ever popular:

> *"All Lives Matter"*

Many of the responses shared this vein and revealed that despite much of the progressive discussions that had taken place over the summer, "Race remains the self-evident force of nature in society" (Gilroy 2004:9) and this advert became an avenue through which that force was not only employed but wielded as a weapon against Sainsbury's and its 'woke' agenda. It became obvious that the primary issue people had with the advert was not the products being sold or their prices, it was the black family. An aspect that many would have overlooked or indeed celebrated, the race of the family become pivotal for many and represented, as discussed earlier within this chapter, a threat to the very notion of British identity and its 'look'.

What became clear from viewing these responses was that "Without the idea of race, there is little left for English identity to hold on to" (Sardar 2004:17) and with the prospect of Black not only representing British (English) culture, but being

celebrated and normalised, a large vocal minority simply presented their disbelief. This notion was identified by Paul Gilroy in the early 2000's noting that "around British racism, the sad sources, unhappy contents and depressing vehicles of that racism have not altered beyond recognition" (2002:xvii), which in relation to the advert, acted as the only source of anger and disgust. With this being said, it is interesting to examine the way in which beyond race, there is nothing that anyone found abhorrent or offensive about the advert. The anger and backlash are entirely manifested by those who simply cannot fathom the concept of Black people enacting an idea of 'Britishness' and choosing to voice their belief that if you are not white, you should not be celebrating Christmas. The culmination of these ideas and beliefs I believe, is summarised by Gilroy who notes how these types of outburst clearly render the "national crisis intelligible" (2002:42), in this case, the pollution and 'blackening' of Christmas by an outsider 'other'. In response to this backlash, Sainsbury's themselves came out in defence of the advert, stating that as part of its series of three adverts depicting Britain as it is today, they simply wanted to highlight that the population of the country is diverse and that those who are not white, still have as much a place in the identity of the UK as anyone else.

As one of the main points of discussion with participants, their response to this advert as well as its backlash provided an interesting look into the way in which they felt the advert portrayed not only Black British people, but the sort of experiences they have had around celebrating 'national' events as a racial or ethnic minority. It was noted by older participants that "You would have white programmes and you would have black programmes, like the Cosby show, when I was growing up" (Participant 1) and that in many cases, these black programmes were "horrible comedies that lampooned black people" (Participant 2), subsequently informing many of the attitudes that non-people of colour would develop towards minorities.

One of the most important features of the advert that participants highlighted was its role as a piece of representation, a major talking point in the discourse around minorities in recent years. By showing a black family, purely being nothing more than a family, the advert sought to show the way in which there was nothing

'exotic' or 'foreign' about the family and the way in which they celebrated Christmas. The nature of the advert was designed to create that sense of family and connection that is felt universally around this time of year, and this was noticed by participants in their response and analysis. It should be noted that there is also the potential for the advert to highlight processes of assimilation, that being the way in which people over time come to adopt cultural characteristics different from their own, into their lives.

> *"There's a belief that this doesn't really represent Britain, but it does represent a part of Britain" (Participant 6)*

That part of Britain that is being represented, for the minority is themselves, their everyday and their families and that is what resonated so deeply for many of the participants who found the advert to be not only touching but a positive celebration of those who looked like them, being accepted within this national framework. In discussion, they explained how it was "Nice to see people of colour celebrating Christmas" (Participant 1) as well as how it "feels like home to me" (Participant 5) alongside the fact that "It's not a racially charged scene or their race isn't at the forefront, they just happen to be Black while having Christmas" (Participant 5). While a sore point for some, for others this championed the notion that the advert really addressed "What holidays should be about which is spending time with family" (Participant 5). These positive responses to the advert and its imagery reveal the way in which by having this sort of example to which people can look, relate and connect, there is a sense of acceptance that is felt in being included in a moment of joy without having to feel like they are included purely because they are black or simply 'fill a quota' or 'tick a box'.

However, whilst the positives of the advert were felt, there was also the response to the backlash and the ideas and beliefs that it perpetuated. One participant, a young Pakistani woman who has grown up in the UK, explained:

> *"From my personal opinions and beliefs on how I fit into this country, it enforces that feeling that as a person whose non-white in this country you're not fully accepted" (Participant 10)*

Perhaps the most notable response to the backlash, this type of feeling was felt by a number of participants not only when dealing with this advert, but when dealing with issues of racism and xenophobia across their lives. As well as this, it was noted by one participant how ridiculous some of the backlash was in terms of its content and ideology and this was perfectly summarised by them in their response: "It makes me incredibly sad, but my answer to it was, we eat your Yorkshire puddings what else do you want?" (Participant 3). To an extent this revealed the fragility of the argument made by those who claim that minorities either can't integrate or refuse to accept aspects of British culture. The result of this, is the notion of assimilation once again coming into play, however, in this case, it is used as a defence against those that would claim minorities are abhorrent to British culture and have not genuinely joined into the population and accepted certain cultural practices. Thus, they are still deemed as being a polluting feature of the population that simply masquerades as being a part of the nation, by engaging in acceptable cultural practices at the appropriate moment.

Despite the backlash, overall, participants found the advert to be a great step forward in terms of progressive acts of representation and recognition of minorities within the UK, given the way in which "I see that as progress as we're accepting that British can also mean Black" (Participant 5) a sentiment shared by another who highlighted that "This is fully what British culture also is" (Participant 9). At its heart, this was the intended purpose of the advert, even if those who rebelled against it see the population of Britain as being something else.

'The Promise of Happiness'

Turing to the work of Sara Ahmed (2010) on the concept of happiness and its dissemination through objects and acts, it is possible to view the advert through the guise which she develops. It is noted that "happiness is both produced and consumed…accumulating value as a form of capital" (2010:3). Within the purpose of an advert, especially at Christmas, this is a large percentage of what the advert hopes to achieve, subsequently meaning that any negative response is usually constructed from the way in which the advert is received. In addition to this, Ahmed

explains how the context within which happiness is received contributes to its significance with a wider audience, stating:

> Happiness and unhappiness become newsworthy when they challenge ideas about the social status of specific individuals, groups, and nations, often confirming status through the language of disbelief (2010:3).

In relation to the image of the black family, this is precisely why some viewers were so happy and others so angry, because the inclusion and interpretation of racial factors when combined with people's understanding of what these 'mean' resulted in the narrative of the advert acquiring a new meaning. However, one participant provided an explanation of why they thought the advert was, overall a positive piece of media and in reality didn't need to be assigned a racial narrative in order to be effective.

> *"I think that's nonsense, it's so frustrating because for so long, in media, there has been such a massive lack of representation for people of colour in a way that is just not focusing on their colour but just daily life and this is a perfect example of wow, this is just Christmas" (Participant 5)*

This type of response is a prime example of the way in which the advert and positive representation can be used to progressively inform opinions and beliefs, as well as recognise from those being represented the type of human connection as opposed to detached observation with which minorities are normally treated.

Moreover, Ahmed notes that "an object can be affective by virtue of its own location…and the timing of its appearance" (2010:25) a notion I believe is clear when it comes to the advert and the way in which an increased recognition of racialisation as well as assigned politics impacted the way in which the advert was received by the general public, much more so than it might have been had the BLM Summer not occurred. Furthermore, the way in which "happiness as a feeling appears very precarious, easily displaced not only by other feelings but even by happiness itself, by the how of its arrival" (Ahmed 2010:26) is clearly resonated through the advert and its backlash. Ultimately, the advert and its response highlight the way in which "A sense of national identity then is not a once and for all thing, but is dynamic" (Edensor 2002:12), a notion that looking at participants responses to Black also being British, I believe exemplifies this.

'The Black Family'

The variety of features brought to the forefront by the advert and its fallout reveals an interesting understanding of 'the black family'. A socio-political body that for some time has connoted a certain model or way of being, it has ultimately been responsible in shaping the way in which Black people and Black British culture is perceived and understood.

Within an academic framework, "the black family is presented as incomplete, deviant and ruptured" (Gilroy 2002:65) a viewpoint which has subsequently informed many social views on the black domestic image. These views are challenged by the Sainsbury's advert, showing how these notions have become largely outdated. In addition to this, the work of Franz Fanon deals with he calls 'disalienation', "by which he meant the unmaking of racialized bodies and their restoration to properly human modes of being in this world" (Gilroy 2004:45) an aspect of minority representation and recognition that has been responsible for the way in which they are perceived as being less than human or invaluable as individuals and communities. Furthermore, despite becoming an established part of the British population and society, it was identified long ago that "though Britain is a multi-racial society, it is still a long way from being a multi-racial nation" (Worsthorne 1982). The response to this advert simply reinforces this viewpoint by showing the way in which Black families are not accepted as being a natural or indeed wanted part of the national identity and society so therefore, are violently protested against.

What this leads to is the fact that "the briefest look around confirms that the multicultural society has not actually expired. The noisy announcement of its demise is itself a political gesture, an act of wishful thinking" (Gilroy 2004:1), a notion that is extended throughout this thesis by those who see the spotlighting of minorities and recognition of multi-racialism as a regressive move within society. Ultimately, this leads to the realisation that "insecurity is a politically and socially constructed phenomenon" (Huysmans 2006:2) and is only perpetuated by those

who feel threatened by something as innocent and non-violent as a family celebrating Christmas.

Conclusion

Having examined the way in which nations and national identity play a key role in not only structuring minorities, but impacting the way in which they belong, to exploring the relationship they have within the socio-political concept of 'the people', before seeing how these ideas are enacted within a real-world example, it is clear to see the way in which "from a cognitive perspective, ethnicity, race and nationhood are not things in the world, but perspectives on the world" (Brubaker 2009:32). For racial and ethnic minorities, this plays an absolutely vital role in their everyday existence. Beyond this, "race differences are displayed in culture which is reproduced in educational institutions and, above all, in family life" (Gilroy 2002:42), subsequently meaning that "families are therefore not only the nation in microcosm, its key components, but act as the means to turn social processes into natural, instinctive ones" (Gilroy 2002:42). Exemplified by the advert and also in the conversations that it triggered, it is clear that "Nationalism can only be effective by being communicated in public. The communication of nationalism requires specific events, practices, symbols and communication systems" (Fuchs 2020:252). Through not only the advert, but the examples in the following chapter, the impact of these events upon notions of identity and belonging is clear. In closing, the banality of everyday events shows that "however we make sense of our place in the world, and however we mistreat each other, we are connected, complicit even" (Edkins 2019:6) and that:

> In a sense, then, taking not the idea of 'race' but the power of racisms more seriously means accepting that there may be a degree of tension between the professional obligations to recover and to remain faithful to the past and the moral and political imperative to act against the injustices of racial hierarchy as we encounter them today (Gilroy 2004:33).

Chapter Two: Beyond Representation

Depicting people and culture through art, be that images, dance, music or film has been central to the organisation of communities for thousands of years. It is through these mediums of storytelling that we, as people, are able to share not only information, but form connections through shared experience. In relation to racial and ethnic minorities, the process of representation has played a major role in recent years in informing people about the history of minority groups, as well as creating examples which give greater understanding of minorities lived experiences. This has subsequently been used to highlight features, often of their struggles against oppression and violence (Fanon 2008; Moten 2008).

This chapter will explore one such example by first examining the relationship between minorities and representation, before presenting the second case study that explores an act of representation as activism and its impact within the minority community and the wider public with regards to education of minority experiences. Finally, the dialogue shall look at the way in which by going beyond the superficial features of representation, it is possible to see the way in which education and understanding can be catalysed from such events, ultimately leading to more recognition and better understanding.

The opening section 'Minorities and Representation' explores the relationship that has been developed over recent years as well as the way in which acts of representation have come to define the perception of minorities. Drawing from the work of Franz Fanon (2008) and others on notions of symbols, their link to culture and the concept of 'blackness', by examining these features, the impact of representation is founded and subsequently built upon. The second case study, 'Diversity's Britain's Got Talent Performance', analyses the way in which acts of representation have a major impact upon cultural understandings and the perception of minorities lived experiences. Primarily featuring responses from participants, this section also features work by Susan Sontag (2005) on the impact of imagery and its ability to develop meaning and capture memory. Lastly, 'Going beyond representation' examines the impact of acting and asks questions about

how social movements and activism has actively impacted the perception of minorities, especially in relation to BLM. In addition to this, the work of Karen Wells (2016) on the concept of melancholic memorialisation is explored, to better understand how certain forms of activism have the potential to promote change through processes such as anti-racism.

Minorities and Representation

As one of the main guises through which minorities are perceived in today's society, acts of representation create corporeal sights against which we can identify relatable characteristics or experiences as well as identify outdated or offensive stereotypical representations. As well as this, recognising that "the history of representation is the study of constant mutations reflecting the increasing sophistication of artistic execution in relation to the changing appearances of the world" (Gregory 2009:645) allows us to understand the way in which acts of representation can and are key in ensuring that as ideas and notions within society change, the way in which as a global population we consume images and information in relation to these 'changing appearances of the world' impacts our understanding of them. Moreover, drawing from the narrative of 'the people' and political subjectivity in the previous chapter, the notion that "political representation provides citizens with images of themselves, or partisan groupings thereof, upon which to reflect" (Hamilton 2017:84) is perhaps one of the most fundamental features of representation and brings to the fore, the angle through which I shall be examining this concept and its specific relationship with minorities.

As noted, symbols are a major part of the process of representing something and symbols in this context "are the cultural ciphers through which meanings are assigned to phenomena and attachments made between people and things" (Fox & Miller-Idriss, 2008:545). This process of assigned meanings is responsible for the way in which certain images or representations have become established within society and have subsequently been so pivotal in informing people's viewpoints about different racial or ethnic minorities. In addition to this, "their impact on the national sensibilities of the ordinary people who engage in them can be more

durable" (Fox & Miller-Idriss, 2008:545) and it is this durability that has resulted in certain racist or xenophobic ideas becoming so powerful within public discourse and opinion, even if some of these notions have been relegated to a small vocal cohort with extreme views within the population of a country such as the UK.

With this being said, the history of racism within Britain as well as the struggles for inclusion and equality continually faced by minorities (Alexander & Byrne, 2020) are framed by these durable established notions, which have made it so challenging for minorities to see themselves fairly represented by the majority within the population. This comes in part because "the demographic composition of Britain's ethnic minority population continues to be significantly shaped by Britain's past imperial history and colonialism in different parts of the world" (Shankley et al 2020:16). An impact which within the population of the country has resulted in minorities continuing to be perceived as the 'other', that which is 'welcomed' by virtue of being included in the national history but not accepted, oddly because of the same virtue which acts as a reminder of their 'rightful' place. This was identified by participants who acknowledged that "People in the UK, generally don't think that they're racist" (Participant 3). Alongside this it was noted that "Britain just doesn't like to talk about its issues" (Participant 10). These are a revealing combination of thoughts that with regard to the continued plight of minorities within the country and the lack of facets through which they are seen, recognised and subsequently understood at a level beyond that of their superficial label and perceived features.

On 'Blackness'

Building upon this notion of the UK's history of refusing to see racial issues and the impact this has had upon minorities perception; I move to examine the work of Franz Fanon (2008) among others on the subject of 'blackness'. I will explore what it is that can be learned from this perspective that highlights the importance of representation and its effective promotion of the 'minority experience'. As noted before, this being the everyday experiences and interactions that minorities have to deal with, as a result of being objectively different from the (white) majority in the UK. It should be noted that whilst Fanon's work is passionate and founded from his

own experiences as a black man, much of his writing was done during the 1950s and 1960s, a period when the subjugation of minorities was not only at its height but was also being contested by force in the form of the civil rights movement. As the leading social justice movement in history, many of Fanon's ideas can be reflected in the anti-racist movements of today, especially as violence towards minorities continues, if not at the same socially institutionalised level of segregation, but in continued displays of racism and xenophobia.

Firstly, the grouping of minorities under a singular common term has, for a long period been responsible for their misunderstanding due to the way this grouping does not recognise the diversity of the cultures and people included. In addition to this, "One mechanism for the criminalisation of Black, Mixed, Asian and other minority ethnic communities is the notion and utilisation of the racialised term 'gang'" (Shankley & Williams 2020:66). This image of the 'black gang' or the 'Asian gang' has become synonymous with these groups and their fracture from the majority subsequently resulting in this image becoming the default assumption for many. The result of this is of course the notion that groups of these individuals are all threatening criminals intent on causing harm, a stereotype that has been detrimental for wider members of these communities and those who are mis-identified.

This is where the work of Fanon comes into play, in helping understand the perception of minorities, from their perspective. Writing in a more speech like fashion, akin to the words of activist figures such as Martin Luther King Jr, he notes "For not only must the black man be black; he must be black in relation to the white man" (2008:82) a perspective we could consider to be that of fulfilling the role ascribed to minorities by the majority through such things as colonial history and social subjugation. As well as this, he continues, noting that "I was responsible at the same time for my body, for my race, for my ancestors" (2008:84), a feature of the minority experience I believe is crucial for the majority to be enlightened to, to understand that (in the case of Fanon) being black is so much more than simply being an individual, it means carrying the weight and expectations of not only the

shared racial community, but the weight placed upon it by the oppressive history of those whom have worked against it.

Furthermore, "I am the slave not of the 'idea' that others have of me but of my own appearance" (Fanon 2008:87), a concept that I believe could be debated as it is the appearance that fuels the ideas people now hold against racial and ethnic minorities and that have been central in their formation. The result of this, is the construction and conception that "blackness is always in some sense visual or visualised in dialectical relation to an imagined whiteness" (Mirzoeff 2017:43) the result of which leads into the vicious cycle of the 'black' vs 'white' discourse that has been at the centre of this debate for decades. Within this debate, is the notion that the black man and the black race is attempting to overthrow society as it has come to be. However, this reveals an interesting thought "that they [white race] are being persecuted *unless* they are thoroughly in power" (Connolly 2005:873). It is through this power that representations of minorities have been established to ensure that they are withheld from accessing the positions of power they need to effectively promote notions of equality, thus raising the question:

> Is ethnic diversity an end in itself, or does it need to be linked to substantive representation of interests and points of view, to be valuable (Sobolewska & Shankley 2020:195).

On Representation: Participants' discussion

Through participant discussion of their experiences of the ways in which the identification of race and impact of its label has affected them and the wider understanding of racial identity, it is clear that the way non-people of colour (primarily the white majority) overlook this factor, is continually impacting the perception and understanding of minorities' places and experiences. It was highlighted that "Non-People of colour have the privilege of thinking about race when they're talking about it" (Participant 5) and this I think encapsulates the main aspect with which minorities have to contend in relation to their identity. The way in which their race is instantly used to not only identify but inform others in relation to conceptions or beliefs they have, is ultimately what makes representation such a powerful and essential tool in ensuring that anti-racist thinking can be instilled. It is

inevitable that "wherever there are different people of a different race there is room for racism" (Participant 5), however, coupled with this is the reality that for minorities "How you see me versus how I see myself can be life or death for me, that's the extreme" (Participant 5). An extreme that seems to be still all too real, the violence towards minorities as a result of misinformation and malicious representation was described as being "a collective trauma" (Participant 10) which communities went through, especially in instances of wider media coverage. From this, "it is on that other being, on recognition by that other being, that his own human worth and reality depend" (Fanon 2008:169) that through representation and the majority coming to recognise the features of the minority experience, this is the way in which the relationship between minorities and representation can be, and I find should, be viewed. One such example of this was offered by Participant 5 in the form of a short poem that they wrote, entitled *Chasm,* which explored the feelings of being perceived as a minority and the divide that exists between understanding and existing alongside one another:

> *"We're living in an age of loaded awareness and little action,*
> *a time where the blackness of my skin triggers a preconceived reaction to*
> *code me with the blood of our forefather's past.*
>
> *We're living in a time where despite all the time that has passed*
> *I live deep inside the chasm sided by my two lives:*
> *who I am and who you see me to be,*
> *a living embodiment of the imbalance that I feel between bondage and being*
> *me.*
>
> *Pity.*
>
> *You've never had to live like me and choose between realities.*
>
> *Shocking.*
>
> *You've never understood the chasm between where we are and being free."*

This work captures the feeling of oppression and desire for recognition that has become central to acts of representation and highlights the feeling of helplessness that is felt by minorities in a time when despite their action, they are still struggling to see the change they desire for equality. This feeling was however challenged recently, in a major moment of representation for Black British people and culture that would not only divide the people of the UK, but cement itself as an historic moment in the battle for representation and recognition of minorities across the country.

Diversity's Britain's Got Talent Performance

As mentioned in the introduction to this chapter, art has been a central part of communication for thousands of years and this is still the case today. Visual art has gained new prominence thanks to television and digital media that allows for millions of people to view, in real time, or increasingly through social media archivally, a huge variety of displays. In relation to representation, visual art has become fundamental in creating images that unify communities and allow them to see themselves in a positive or inspirational light, by highlighting shared experiences and knowledge. This section examines one such instance, in which through dance, Black British culture and its people were represented in an empowering light, in the wake of the BLM Summer and catalysed a discussion around the place of Black British people as well as continuing the debate around the place and treatment of racial and ethnic minorities.

On the 5th of September 2020, dance troupe Diversity performed in the semi-final of Britain's Got Talent. As previous winners of the reality/entertainment show and having made several appearances over the years, they have become a fan favourite and icons of the show. Their performance was billed as a 'recap of the historic events of 2020' - from the Covid-19 pandemic to the death of George Floyd and the Black Lives Matter protests that occurred across the globe. Their performance covered what are now iconic (and infamous) moments in human history. Throughout the performance, the leader of the group Ashley Banjo narrated the

actions as a story to a young child, with the ultimate message being about perseverance, hope and change.

Despite this message, the performance would go on to receive nearly 25,000 Ofcom complaints, subsequently making it the highest registered moment (which has since been overtaken) in British TV history ([Britain's Got Talent: Ofcom will not investigate Diversity performance - BBC News](#)). The majority of complaints focused upon a singular aspect of the performance, the BLM protests and imagery, with many claiming that the death of George Floyd, as well as the BLM movement, was a distinctly American issue and that Britain's Got Talent was not a suitable place for this type of political statement to be made, as the programme should be a form of entertainment and escapism from these issues. In addition to this, those who espoused that the death of George Floyd and BLM was an isolated American issue, insinuated (and in some cases stated outright) that police brutality and racism were not an issue in the UK and that as a result, BLM protests in Britain were equally unnecessary. Following the performance, leader Ashley Banjo praised those who complained and sent both him and the group racially charged messages and threats as they highlighted exactly why they decided to cover these issues as well as the fact, that racism is continually problematic within the UK and is not a 'distinctly American issue'.

By examining this performance, several features can be revealed that aid in developing the understanding of minority perception as well as how anti-racist activism can have a real social impact. Furthermore, the basis for this section's analysis, comes from the work of Sarita Malik & William Shankley which outlines:

> the significant role that the field of cultural production plays in shaping everyday society and culture, how ethnic minority people see themselves and are seen by others and in how the nation, literally narrates itself. The field of cultural production and representation, therefore, has real social effects (2020:168).

It is the impact of these effects that I hope to address in order to show the ways positive acts of representation have the ability to make genuine change in people's lives, especially in a context where it means that the stereotypical features and characteristics with which they are portrayed, are abandoned and replaced with a

more inspirational and accurate understanding. Moreover, through Diversity's performance and participant's discussion of it, it became clear that "this is everyday life characterised not by its banality, but rather by the ordinary individuals who people it" (Fox & Miller-Idriss 2008:545). This sense of exceptional ordinariness is key to understanding exactly why representation is so important as a tool for both activism and change.

The visuals of the dance were designed to highlight a number of different aspects of the minority experience, specifically the violence seen at the hands of police brutality as well as the clash between protestors and police forces, echoing images from the BLM Summer. Set to music that features lyrics centred around activism and themes of equality, the powerful performance was effectively a protest in its own right, ensuring that the momentum seen during the BLM Summer was not forgotten, nor the message of the movement ignored. In its response to the complaints, government body Ofcom published a report detailing precisely why it believed that Diversity was not in breach of any guidelines or broadcast regulations, ([Ofcom complaint assessment - Britain's Got Talent, ITV)](#) which equally marked a major turning point in the way in which acts of representation are perceived.

When considering the impact of Diversity's performance, exploring exactly how it is they connect with the audience through a medium such as dance is vital in developing the background for the effectiveness of representational acts. In this instance, beyond the performance, their racial identity as young Black British individuals partnered with the message of the BLM movement formed a major part of the narrative of their routine. The result of this was that "these shared experiences unite them in a spatially dispersed community virtually connected through television" (Fox & Miller-Idriss 2008:548), where the power of their control over their narrative, through the lens of representation shines through, linking those with a shared identity and shared experiences, therefore making them feel seen and heard. Despite not being in the same physical space, by broadcasting the performance, anyone was able to share that 'space' with Diversity in the moment and as a result, a response was evoked by the transcendence of their emotions and lived experiences as they laid it out for the world to see.

In addition to the emotive components of the performance, the physical presence of the troupe raises the point that "to appear is to matter, in the sense of Black Lives Matter, to be grievable, to be a person that counts for something" (Mirzoeff 2017:17) a notion which has gained increasing traction in recent years. Focusing upon who and what is considered 'grievable', the agenda of BLM seeks to enforce the idea that beyond simply recognising that 'black lives matter', it should be recognised that minorities, as individuals and communities are still people, not merely the amalgamation of preconceptions and assigned characteristics. Furthermore, it has been raised that "it is not representation, either in the political or cultural sense, but the very possibility of appearing directly" (Mirzoeff 2017:20) that is important when it comes to activism and representation.

This action of simply being, showing up and existing is used to highlight the human nature behind the label as well as challenge the stereotypes of racial groups all 'looking the same' or certain ethnicities having to behave in certain ways. Ultimately, when appearing not only in person, but as a unified front, a physical presence reflects the notion that "complaints of structural racism and calls for curriculum reform don't draw public attention like the toppling of a statue" (Amia Srinivasan in Rao 2016a) and in the case of Diversity, their ability to captivate through broadcast dance ensures that they attract attention before they even necessarily then project a certain narrative. When using their unique style mixed with that of infamous protest imagery, they were simply able to highlight issues of racism and race equality (or lack thereof) in a significantly more distinctive way than if they'd made a statement on Twitter or called for reform change with a petition.

Through their performance, the troupe also drew from and contributed to recent examples of prominent Black British artists making a stand against racism and racial inequality. Most notably, UK 'Godfather of Grime' Stormzy and his headlining of Glastonbury 2019 which redefined Black British art and set a new precedent for representation of minorities in the UK ([All hail Stormzy for historic Glastonbury performance | Stormzy | The Guardian](#)). As the first solo Black British artist to headline the historic festival, Stormzy incorporated several political aspects into his performance, including a speech from Labour MP David Lammy on the

criminalisation of young Black British people and the disproportionate numbers of them currently incarcerated. Beyond this, in a similar fashion to the previously mentioned physical impact of simply appearing, Stormzy's solitary presence on the stage, clad in a stab resistant vest emblazoned with a white Union Jack (see Fig. 5) paved the way for Diversity to appear on mass clad in similarly tactical apparel (see Fig. 6), an increasingly popular choice among black activists, mimicking the tactical clothing often worn by the police and government forces with which they clash.

Figure 5: Stormzy performing during Glastonbury Festival 2019

Figure 6: Diversity during their 2020 Britain's Got Talent appearance, clothed in tactical vests and cargo trousers

The impact of this type of appearance within the entertainment industry at events as historic and global as Glastonbury and as culturally central as Britain's Got Talent, highlights the extent to which the place of Black British culture has transformed the perception of those who inhabit and enact it. No longer a sub or counter-culture confined to the periphery of the mainstream, acts such as these "Really told the story of truth, told the story of our reality" (Participant 9), a reality which is now impossible to ignore and as a result can only continue to be revealed and experienced through mediums such as these. Moreover, it was noted that in relation to Diversity's performance that "it's interesting that people can't watch it for maybe two three minutes, but then not realising that people live that everyday" (Participant 9), ultimately reinforcing not only the significance of these performances, but the way in which their wider impact can have a profound impact for those willing to listen to and recognise the message attached to them. Finally, in discussion I believe the most important response to come out was that "I was proud to be black when watching that" (Participant 9) a feature that exemplifies not only the power of representation but also its need for the development of anti-racism to ensure that those who have for so long felt ashamed or dehumanised by their identity, no longer have to.

The impact of acting

> *"These sorts of things come along not very often when there is a huge visceral, emotive response to what's going on and they were just a part of that. They were probably better able to do it than some because it wasn't something they were suddenly woke to or something they were you know, catching on to, it was something they felt and that all black people feel"* (Participant 2)

That representation of minorities comes from minorities is one of the major reasons it has become such a talking point in recent years but is also such an effective tool for the promotion of positive images that accurately represent what it is that minorities have to experience and have experienced for some time. In the wake of the BLM Summer, participants noted that "It was a long time coming" (Participant 10) for a display such as this because "it's a reflection of what's going on in the UK today and I don't see anything wrong with that, it was portrayed in the way in

happens" (Participant 6), a sentiment shared across discussions that resonated with participants, especially in relation to the inspiration they drew from seeing such a positive representation of those they shared an identity with and could actively say were dealing with the same feelings during such a turbulent time.

Building upon this, the expression of representation through art, in this case dance, drew some criticism from watchers. However, participants noted that "Dance is an art and they're just expressing something that's happened in the community through their art" (Participant 6), furthermore "that's the thing about art, it's an expression it's a form for you to feel something and they are trying to evoke the same feelings our community felt when that actually happens to our people" (Participant 5). As the central narrative to the performance as well as the discourse around representation, seeing this response from participants cemented the understanding that Diversity's performance was ultimately an incredibly impactful method of addressing this topic in a way that whilst political did not lose its focus in speeches, agendas or addresses, but rather captivated by using spectacle and subsequently creating a moment and space that could be lived in, experienced and shared.

This creation of space and the way in which it is experienced is pivotal in the case of representation for the way in which it allows an audience, understanding or not, to be involved in the consumption of practice and as a result, draw something from the space which in turn impacts them. It is noted that "what is happening in spaces of appearance is not simple, which is why it is powerful" (Mirzoeff 2017:34), in the case of Diversity, tackling issues of race and racism in an environment and time when these ideas are heightened and people are hyperaware of them, lent itself to the success of the performance for progressive discussion. Additionally, being a Black British dance group, taking to the stage and not only recreating images of protest, but through dance staging their own, the subsequent response brought to the forefront the notion that "black radicalism is animated by the question, what's wrong with black folk?" (Moten 2008:177). A double-edged sword at the best of times, the backlash highlighted this question of whether it was the politics of the performance, or the emphasis of black figures and faces on TV, being

British on a show about British entertainment that people took issue with. Furthermore, the aftermath of the performance showed the "strife between normativity and the deconstruction of norms" (Moten 2008:178) through the way in which by using art as medium for politics, Diversity was able to not only catalyse conversations about race based violence towards minorities in the UK, but expose the large numbers of people who still find it acceptable to express racist views to official bodies, without expecting it to be seen as taboo or outdated.

On the power of images

On the subject of space and experience, outside the realm of the performance, the imagery of black people and especially in the context of protest and activism has been crucial in forming the way in which they are perceived, as seen in the above comment on 'black radicalism'. As a result of this, the work of Susan Sontag on images and photography provides a helpful insight into the "predatory side of photography" (2005:49) that has often been used to document minorities and the minority experience. Describing the way in which "photography is the inventory of morality" (2005:54), by capturing images of minorities through a guise of *their* creation, as opposed to that of an oppressor, Diversity was able to transform scenes of violence into scenes of power (See fig 7&8) thus influencing the narrative to reflect the reality of the situation as it happens for so many across the world and happened over the course of the summer of 2020. In addition to this, Sontag notes that "in the real world, something *is* happening, and no one knows what is *going* to happen. In the image-world, it *has* happened, and it *will* forever happen in that way" (2005:131), the result of this being that forever there will now be footage of their performance to look back on and see inspirational images of Black British people living their truth, unafraid of the consequences and empowering a whole community through their example.

Figure 7: Ashley Banjo recreating the situation in which George Floyd was killed

Figure 8: Diversity 'taking the knee' in protest to police brutality, violence and racism against minorities

On Feeling: Participant's reaction to Diversity's performance

> Socrates in Plato's Republic asks, "isn't it the sharing of feelings of pleasure and distress which binds a community together – when (in so far as it is feasible) the whole citizen body feels more or less the same pleasure or distress at the same gains and losses" (Plato 1998:176 in Ahmed 2010).

This notion above was reflected by a participant in one of the most emotive discussions I had during the research and which I believe, not only encapsulates but emphasises *exactly* why acts of representation are so important to developing an understanding of minorities and their experiences. Speaking about the images featured above (Fig 7&8), the participant explained that:

> *"With this picture and the one before hand, it was a black person who looks like me which is why I was inspired similarly with George Floyd it was a black person that looks like me who got killed, this is why I was hurt" (Participant 9)*

This impact of images, from George Floyd's death recorded on video to Diversity's performance captured on television are images that bind a community together through tragedy and hope. It is these images that inform and educate, that allows us to understand the way in which by simply showing that black can be British or doesn't have to be a threat or that minorities are simply people, we can move towards a better understanding of equality and a world where representation doesn't have to be used as a tool to spark controversy or be spectacular to make the point that Black lives matter.

Beyond the spectacle and the backlash, I spoke with participants about their reaction to this performance in relation to what they initially thought upon seeing the act and one participant explained that they were "shocked they made this kind of statement, but I was also incredibly proud to say that these are young British people, making this statement" (Participant 3) and in support of this, another stated "these are the kinds of platforms that this kind of thing needs to be shown on" (Participant 8) in order for them to reach that wider audience and make an impact. Undeniably, the impact of this moment was recognised in an incredibly significant way, at the 2021 British Film and Television Awards (BAFTA) where Diversity's performance was nominated for 'Television's must-see moment', the only category

that is voted for by the public. Taking home the win, front man Ashley Banjo accepted the award with a speech that acknowledged the now famous backlash the performance received:

> "*In a way, I have to say thank you to the people who complained, to the people that did put all of that abuse out there online, because you showed the truth. You showed exactly why this performance and this moment was necessary" (Ashley Banjo, 2021).*

As discussed within this chapter, the reaction to the performance showed the need for it and the reason why representation is still such a crucial point in the movement for progress and positive action towards minorities. Furthermore, Banjo explained that "For me, this is about not representing the minority, it felt like we weren't at the time and standing here now, this represents the majority" (Ashley Banjo 2021). From this, it could be suggested that this provided a glimpse into a future where the term minority is obsolete, and we no longer have to categorise people as such. Whilst it is unlikely that this will change in the near future, it does provide hope that one day, the divide and antagonism between majority and minority might be reduced and instead, different racial and ethnic communities will be recognised and celebrated for their difference and the diversity they bring to society, as opposed to shunned and outcast for their differences and beliefs. Ultimately, "this is what change looks like" (Ashley Banjo 2021) and "to be nominated is proof of that already" (Ashley Banjo 2021) and when it comes to those who rebelled against the performance, as noted by a participant "I think often, people who are bothered about that, like why are you showing it on my screen, they are quite privileged in the way that they don't have to see it or they don't have to put up with it" (Participant 7) and Diversity's award winning performance is proof, that despite all those who want to look away and ignore it, there is a larger number who want to watch, who have watched and have voted to highlight that they agree, others should do the same.

Going Beyond Representation

"Their shared experiences, their lived experiences are getting listened to"
(Participant 6)

Having established this as one of the main features of representation that has been responsible for its success, it cannot be ignored that the timing and context within which an event occurs, is fundamental to its impact. As a result of this, this section shall move beyond examples of representation and look at the way in which their impact is not only altered by features of the time within which they occur, but equally have been enhanced by certain features of the environments in which they are received and consumed. It has been noted that:

> anniversaries bracket particular individuals, events, places and times from the broader, more banal flow of 'everyday' encounters, exclusion violence or solidarities, focusing on the spectacular rather than its context, or the 'moment' rather than its causes and consequences (Alexander & Byrne 2020:3).

The way in which events can become 'moments' especially in today's age of viral trends and social media, has often led to certain movements or events becoming lost as they simply become forgotten by the masses as interest moves to the next 'big thing' or the next popular hashtag. With that being said, the revival of discussion around an event such as Diversity's performance, when triggered by the public, highlights the way in which in the wake of the BLM Summer, certain topics as well as their relationship with people have gained a new level of heightened awareness and understanding, and as a result are not simply forgotten. Instead, they acquire new meaning and develop a prolonged life span through discussion and interpretation that allow them to exist beyond the realm of their initial enactment and catalyse a level of development as people take the initial impact and use it to further the causes and agendas presented.

Whilst the immediate impact and then subsequent development of ideas is clear to see, it should be understood that "history also matters in the context of understanding inequalities in Britain because those inequalities are not *randomly* patterned" (Khan 2020:229). The response to many of the events explored in this research as well as within discussions with participants reflects this. Additionally,

when discussing the response to racist backlash as well as racism within the public sphere, it was noted that "it actually, probably outs people and it makes clear that you can't just be 'oh I don't see colour', you need to be anti-racist and for me that's the issue, you can't be neutral on these things" (Participant 2). A sentiment that is shared by the growing number of people who are recognising the impact that understanding minorities is having and the way in which representation and its impacts is central in ensuring that anti-racist ideas can be perpetuated and shared in a format that is not exclusive or needlessly difficult to understand.

The way in which anti-racism is not only presented through events and symbols, but is subsequently reproduced allows for the observation that "people are not just consumers of national meanings; they are simultaneously their contingent producers" (Fox & Miller-Idriss 2008:546). This is an aspect of anti-racism that is imperative to its success and a feature that, in the wake of the BLM Summer, through discussions and the response of the British public to issues regarding race, representation and the place of minorities within society, has been clear to see. Perhaps most notable, is the way in which "Black Lives Matter has been able to make white supremacy newly visible through the ubiquitous distribution of digital images via social media and traditional media" (Mirzoeff 2017:28) which as seen in a number of instances within discussions as well as the examples has resulted in the revealing of systems of racism that have previously been able to operate with relative anonymity or in some cases has been ignored altogether in order for them to not have to be dealt with as a problem.

Activism and Memorialisation

Recent social movements have redefined the way in which activism is employed and impacts understanding of events and features with BLM leading the way as a multi-faceted movement capable of making real change in a relatively short amount of time. However, this is due to the fact that "the social movement process is about finding ways for people to learn how to treat each other equally in circumstances where they are not equal, whether in material terms, or those of relative privilege" (Mirzoeff 2017:18). Bodies in the street demanding justice are very quickly

dispersed, yet where BLM makes a real change, is in conversations on social media, the news, discussion panels, in schools, homes and workplaces, at this level is where a social movement operates best. With this in mind, while a discursive action is perhaps most effective, "the senses, memory, body and history are part of the analytical process" (Rose & Tolia-Kelly 2016:3). Having seen this in the previous case study, this notion is expanded upon in the work of Karen Wells (2016) on the concept of melancholic memorialisation and its link with representation and reaction. Viewing memorialisation as the grieving of life, Wells notes that there is an intrinsic relationship between "tragedy, memorialisation and politics" (2016:154) which "in the liminal space of what might be called melancholic memorialisation loss is opened up to the world and makes political claims upon it" (2016:155), this I believe, is the reason for the success of the BLM Summer and its continued hold on such a global level. The outpouring of grief for the death of George Floyd, not only from the black community, but from people of all races transformed into a recognition of the grief felt across minority communities for the continued plight that many have to deal with.

Detailing the sometimes complex nature of memorialisation, due to the way in which certain figures become the centre of a contentious 'celebration', Wells observers that:

> One of the expressions of this contestation is in whether the victim deserves to be honoured, or even, possibly whether they were in some way culpable in their own death. The refusal to move on, and instead to maintain the presence of the dead in public spaces, is more easily accepted as a legitimate (if still contested) demand when the dead person can in no way be deemed culpable in his/her own death" (2016:163).

This plays a significant role in understanding exactly why the process of activism and its impact have had such a profound effect upon so many, because of the desire to keep the memory of people alive in the hope that others will understand the pain caused as a result of death at the hands of prejudice. In addition, when partnered with the fact that "what they [activism movements] are intended to signify is so obvious that it becomes literally un-remarkable" (Wells 2016:166), the sheer scale of a movement such as BLM reveals the fact that the death of someone such as

George Floyd has become unremarkable in its frequency. Yet by giving its reaction such attention and by bringing these feelings to the forefront of the public mind, without giving people the choice to look away, a fervour is catalysed that for the longest time had only been felt by members of the affected communities. The result of this is that "notions of community and collective action as fundamental in any reimagination of the nation" (Benwell et al 2021:28) become central to the way in which activism and anti-racism progress ultimately pave the way for real change within communities and socio-cultural understandings that have, previously been disconnected from the wider discourse of struggle experienced by those around them.

Conclusion

Whilst acts of representation have advanced an understanding of the minority experience and the activism that has occurred as a result has triggered a new wave of recognition and development in anti-racist progress, participants noted that the catalyst of this was "another name in a long list of names that I shouldn't know" (Participant 10). As a particularly poignant statement within the discussion, I think this reveals the extent to which while it is necessary, this level of activism and call for change should not be necessary in the first place. However, it is the fate of things that "Floyd is going to happen again and its tragic, but it's going to happen again" (Participant 1) and sadly has. With this in mind, by understanding the way in which events affect different bodies and in turn foreground the feeling of national sentiments (Merriman & Jones 2017), it is clear to see that representation and activism are not only tools for change, but having spoken to minorities as well as seen extensive examples of their experiences, representation is a major force for good when it comes to developing their position within society and as a result, must be paired with systems of diversity to effectively create change. Understanding this and why it is necessary for the experiences of minorities within any community to be understood and recognised, ultimately ensures that the continued violence and oppression they face can be undone and countered, in the hopes of creating a more equal world.

Chapter Three: "The times they are a changin" (Bob Dylan, 1964)

The title of this chapter, taken from the song of the same name, I found to be not only appropriate for the direction of the research, (reflecting the period in which ideas were developed), but also as the hope for the research and the way it aims to interact with the wider issues with which it has dealt. In the wake of the BLM Summer, it is clear to see how the perception of minorities has indeed changed, in most cases positively as conversations regarding experiences of race as well as the overdue recognition of many race based issues that still need to be addressed, has led to a greater understanding of minorities experiences. With this in mind, the battle for equality is by no means over and there are still violent barriers to its achievement. Equally, it is fundamental to understand exactly what 'change' is and how it can be perceived and utilised for continued progress to overcome the barriers that still exist.

As a rather broad concept, it would be easiest to understand 'change' as simply the transition of things from one form to another, however, this leaves a number of questions about the specifics, especially in relation to social and political systems of being. Over the course of the 21st century and especially over the last twelve months there has been a shift in what Back & Solomos identified at the time and termed the "new context of racial politics" (1995:204) in which "broader debates about the impact of multiculturalism on contemporary politics, the role of minorities in political life and the limits of democratic institutions" (Back & Solomos 1995:202) have all been questioned. The impact of this is that "the growing political influence of racist movements, combined with attempts to mobilise anti-racist movements, has given added weight to the need to understand the dynamics of racialised political processes at both macro and micro levels" (Back & Solomos 1995:202). From this, understanding change as itself a continually evolving process allows us to examine recent events with an understanding of the way in which they are not only malleable, but extremely open to rapid and diverse forms of evolution and transition.

This chapter addresses Colin Kaepernick, former National Football League (NFL) Quarterback, examining his action of 'taking the knee', a moment that re-ignited the BLM movement, bringing it to the centre of the world stage and kick started a modern activist revolution across the world. In addition to this, the systems and features in place that still hinder the march for progressive thinking and action are explored, in order to understand how they might be overcome through continued activism and why in some cases, prove hard to change at all. Finally, drawing from the discussion with participants the research looks forward to what needs to be done to ensure that the momentum of the BLM Summer is continued, even if not at the same scale. Ideas on how the beneficial impacts that have already been seen and felt can be developed are further explored to envisage the ways in which change can in fact continue to occur for those who still seek and desire it.

'Colin Kaepernick and the start of a revolution' explores the former athletes 2016 action of 'taking the knee' in protest to the treatment of racial and ethnic minorities in the US. An action that would spark a global protest, one that is still being seen today, participant reactions to this moment and its wider impact as well as the observations of Simon Weffer et al. (2018) on the framing of the action are used to develop an understanding of the significance of this moment and precisely why it proved so divisive. The following section, 'Barriers to Progress' draws from work on the concept of understanding and ways in which breaks in understanding, within communities can lead to conflict. Partnered with an examination of the rise of far-right political discourse in the 21st Century, this section examines the continuing challenges to the anti-racist activism seen over the last year, despite its already proved effort and efficiency. In closing, 'What comes next?' draws primarily from participant discussions to pose the question of the section title, by observing what people believe must happen in order to ensure that the changes that have occurred already can not only mean something, but also continue to happen in order to improve the perception, place and understanding of minorities in the future and for all.

Colin Kaepernick and the start of a revolution

On the 1st of September 2016, during one of the first games of the NFL season, star Quarterback of the San Francisco 49ers Colin Kaepernick took a knee during the playing of the US national anthem (see Fig 9). He did so to protest the treatment of racial and ethnic minorities in the US, primarily in response to and focusing upon aspects of police brutality and the deaths of young black men such as Trayvon Martin and Tamir Rice, as a result of racial profiling.

Reid, Kaepernick and Boyer (left) prior to the game against the San Diego Chargers at Qualcomm Stadium on September 1, 2016

Figure 9: Colin Kaepernick taking the knee during the playing of the national anthem.

Not a violent or dramatic action, Kaepernick's protest split the opinion of the United States and ended his career in the NFL. Labelled by some as a traitor to his team and nation, the action of 'taking the knee' was perceived as being incredibly disrespectful and the protest as something that had no place in the world of sport. However, teams and players across the NFL soon joined Kaepernick in his protest, and the action of 'taking the knee' became normal at the start of every Sunday football game, one of the most consistently viewed sporting events in the world.

The protest echoing that of Tommy Smith and John Carols' black power salute at the 1968 Summer Olympics (see Fig 10.), "started one of the most visible protests for social justice in modern sport history" (Weffer et al 2018:66) and the subsequent global impact of this protest, ultimately gave it a newfound sense of significance. Beyond simply highlighting the unjust treatment of minorities, the protest represented a stand against such actions and acted as a call to arms for people to recognise the injustice that racial and ethnic minorities still had to endure and realise that it was still a major social issue.

It should be noted that "as familiar as this moment is, there is also something importantly different about it" (Williams & Parker 2020:136). Seen through the response to the protest, I believe the reaction highlights the ongoing issue that people have with acts of protest as well as the way in which calls for social justice, trigger feelings of conflict.

Figure 10: Tommy Smith and John Carlos' black power salute at the 1968 Summer Olympics

the more things change, the more they stay the same (Williams & Parker 2020:136).

This observation from Dana Williams and Kendra Parker reveals and recognises the way in which, in the immediate aftermath of Kaepernick's protest, whilst there were calls for change and an acceptance that police brutality and racial profiling were major issues, it took four more years and many more deaths before any real change actually occurred. Even with the powerful impact that the protest had at the time there was very little change made at a social or institutional level and as a result of this, it is possible to understand the difficulty that protests can have in making change, even if they are highly effective at raising awareness. With this in mind, Kaepernick's protest was wholly different in regard to the level of awareness it raised, and this was developed upon within the participant discussions.

Participants observed that "you don't know what's going to spark something" (Participant 10) and that in the case of Kaepernick and the action of 'taking the knee', there was no way to know that it would gain as much significance as it has, shining a light on not only the politics, but its expansive role within arenas such as sports. In addition to this, the framing of events, especially protests, as seen in the previous chapter is vital to the way in which wider audiences perceive and interact with the action and its message. In the case of 'taking the knee', the way in which "reframing the act of kneeling or raising a fist as dishonourable conduct rather than nonviolent protest" (Weffer et al 2018:67) creates an environment in which people are able to disregard these actions or take offence to them on the basis of that dishonour, be that against the nation or the meaning of an anthem, rather than the call for social justice or their perception and attitude towards minorities. Looking at the evolution of taking the knee, a participant shared an image they had seen in the wake of George Floyd's death (see Fig.11) that brought to the fore, some of the inconsistencies behind what it was that people took issue with regarding the action.

Figure 11: Comparison picture of George Floyd's death and Colin Kaepernick's protest.

The context of Kaepernick taking the knee and Derek Chauvin (above left) taking the knee could not be simultaneously more disparate yet related. Kaepernick's protest was intended to highlight the unnecessary deaths of those at the hands of police brutality and his action, one inspired by US army Veteran, Nate Boyer, has historically been taken as a mark of respect, commemoration and love was violently mirrored in Chauvin's action, one that the world equally watched and was forced to contemplate. The result of this is a reconsideration of Kaepernick's protest and the way in which "people like to label protestors as violent" (Participant 7) as well as the action of taking the knee in the wake of Floyd's death, to recognise the significance of the message that Kaepernick was trying to convey and the need for these issues to not only be recognised as serious but addressed with a corresponding degree of care to ensure that images such as the above, need not exist. This manoeuvre around the perception of action when performed within a non-political and racialised context, alongside the relation between action and impact highlights the way in which "both the BLM and Kaepernick situations represent apparent breaks in understanding" (Anderson 2017:2) and this is because to an extent, one cannot exist without the other and so to ignore one is to ignore the other as well, therefore devaluing the protest as a whole.

Taking the knee…for how long?

> *"The movement has taken hold because there is strength in unity"*
> *(Participant 1)*

One of the most notable features of the 'taking the knee' protest and its link to the wider BLM movement, this notion of unity and strength is central to any form of activism, that all those involved are wanting to achieve the same collective goal. However, one of the aspects of 'taking the knee' that has become contentious is exactly what the symbolism of it represents. Having become an image that now sparks a reaction whenever and wherever it is enacted, in part because of the contrast seen in figure 11, participants noted that "The longer the knee thing goes on, the less it's seen as a symbol, and it will just be something that's done at the start of a game" (Participant 6). A sentiment already being witnessed in the European football arena, where, in the UK players taking the knee have been booed by fans. This response highlights the notion that, whilst initially done as a protest, the meaning and iconography of the action has changed from being a protest to a statement of support or a different type of activism, one based more in the periphery than the frontline, concerned with raising awareness rather than calling for change. As well as this, it was observed that "it went from a minute to thirty seconds and now it's literally fifteen seconds and it'll get to the point where the knee is coming back up by the time it touches the grass" (Participant 6) an aspect that reveals the way in which over time, the meaning of this action has adopted a new stance and as a result, potentially has lost its impact and will continue to do so if used in this somewhat passing fashion.

Looking back to the inception of the protest, "a big part of the game then, was who else would kneel, during the anthem, who will kneel?" (Participant 4) and this raised a number of questions about not only those who did kneel alongside Kaepernick, but also about the wider impact of this, in relation to notions of protest, activism and the relationship with the nation. This is in part due to the way in which "there is such a different perspective to national pride that if you fail to understand why someone has pride and chip on their shoulder then you won't understand why Colin Kaepernick is such a symbol now" (Participant 5). This notion of the balance

between pride and the desire to stand against a nation to which you belong when it has become clear that the nation's interests and your own do not align is one of the powerful driving forces behind this resurgence of the BLM movement and why Kaepernick's action has become so prominent in wider protests and activist movements. In addition to this, the participant who raised this point of 'national pride' explained that "I'm not someone who understands why you have to respect a flag, sing a national anthem whenever it comes on, why you owe that loyalty to your country" (Participant 8) and in the case of minorities, in the case of Kaepernick, the continual mistreatment of minorities at the hands of the police, (one of the most notable embodiments of a nation's domestic power) highlights this juxtaposition between having pride in a nation that simultaneously does not treat you with the same admiration. This notion was developed by the participant who expressed:

> *"Is that respect the country has for you reciprocated? Does your country deserve to be respected by you in the same way you are not treated by society as well as you should be?" (Participant 8)*

Thinking of this, I believe that through Kaepernick's protest it is clear to see that he was prepared to challenge the ideas of his nation and its (white) majority when it came to the place and treatment of racial and ethnic minorities and that those who joined him in protest, equally felt the same. Additionally, following his protest and alienation from the NFL, Kaepernick partnered with sportswear retailer Nike in a campaign that emphasised his message and objective (see Fig.12).

Figure 12: Advert campaign run by Nike and Colin Kaepernick

This slogan not only encapsulated the protest that came to define a generation of sport and those influenced by it, but equally the wider continued struggle of those that were protesting for minority rights and equality and willing to sacrifice aspects of their life, by speaking up for those who cannot necessarily speak for themselves or are continually not heard. When shown during discussions, one participant, a young Black man from the Seychelles raised in the UK noted that "I can see myself there, my whole family there, my whole life there" (Participant 9) and this extension of Kaepernick's message through the advert and beyond the initial protest, highlights the impact of his action and its subsequent longevity, that has ultimately resulted in it gaining a position far greater than he had ever intended. Yet, one that still ensures his original meaning and intention is upheld in the fundamental iconography when people across the world take a knee and show their support for his protest, his belief and his goal for the wider community that he hoped to serve. Whilst Kaepernick is still central to this advert, in the same vein as the Sainsbury's advert seen in Chapter one, the role of the company and the advert itself is pivotal in understanding the impact of change. As noted by Yasmin Nair in her analysis of the campaign "a whole new mode of quasi-politicized corporate discourse, in which major advertisers are no longer simply *making* advertisements: they are attempting to actually *remake themselves* as agents of change in the world" (2019:20) is a direct impact of the changing perception of activism and its role in promoting change.

Barriers to Progress

Despite the impact of Kaepernick's protest and the advancement of the BLM movement as a result, there are still a number of features within society that halt the progress of social justice and anti-racist activist movements. Many of these barriers exist as a result of the established systems that operate at the highest levels of control within nations and societies across the world, that still exercise a level of power over the ability of minorities to gain access to the equality and equal treatment they so desire. As well as this, in response to the anti-racist movements of recent years, equally vocal and powerful counter groups have risen to combat the efforts of those they see as being exclusive or threatening to their ways of life.

> the age of empire is over; apartheid and Jim Crow have been ended: and a significant consensus exists among scientists (natural and social), and humanists as well, that the concept of race lacks an objective basis. Yet the concept persists, as ideas, as practise, as identity, and as social structure. Racism perseveres in these same ways (Winant 2006:987; Ash 2010:2)

As seen throughout the chapters, the idea of race still holding an objective weight within society as well as racism being produced from this is one of the main barriers that stands in the way of anti-racist thinking and activism. A cyclical battle between the systems of racism and anti-racism, an equal actor in this conflict is those who remain 'neutral' believing that this means they are not responsible for the arguably negative side that promotes racism and its beliefs. However, it is noted that "people who attempt to absolve themselves from the very real problem created by out all-too-real constructions of race are complicit with the structures of racism of our past that continues to shape our present" (Alexis 2019:87) and as a result, ultimately continue to halt the ability of anti-racist activism to make real changes, by not allowing them to access avenues through which they can develop or by not questioning systems and beliefs which work in opposition to these movements. Furthermore, as has become clear "we cannot simply disregard skin colour, it affects how we interact with the world and how the world interacts with us" (Alexis 2019:88), therefore so long as people continue to not understand this or actively disregard it, then anti-racism will never truly be able to grasp the power it needs to make real, effective change.

Whilst systems that support racist beliefs and allow them to continue are a major barrier to the advancement of anti-racist activist movements, it is the lack of understanding that still exists around the goals of groups such as BLM and indeed wider anti-racist movements (such as stop anti-Asian hate), that acts as one of the greatest hurdles that needs to be overcome. As seen in the introduction, the All Lives Matter counter-movement that emerged to combat BLM and its agenda was one of the main antagonists and continues to be. This is partly because of the perception and subsequent way in which they report and present BLM and anti-racist movements as being exclusive and based in ideas of superiority and supremacy, an action identified by Luvell Anderson:

Counter chants of 'All lives matter' are offered as a rebuke to what some understand to be a claim of exclusivity, i.e. only Black lives matter. Despite explanation that the phrase is meant inclusively, i.e. Black lives matter, too, opposition persists (2017:2).

This continued rebuking of information and unwillingness to understand the central message at the heart of the movement, is developed upon by Anderson through the concept of hermeneutical impasses. Defined by Anderson, "Hermeneutical impasses are instances in which agents engaged in communicative exchanges are unable to achieve understanding due to a gap in shared hermeneutical resources" (2017:3). It is this gap in knowledge, the gap in lived experience through the filter of race that continually fuels the divide between understanding and therefore results in continual ideological (and physical) conflict. For those that have not witnessed injustice within their lives or their communities, it is easy to assume that it does not exist and so when confronted with the reality that it is happening all around them, it can be difficult to comprehend and as a result, believe. Equally, for those who are not being directly affected, it is much easier to ignore or avoid the problem, which simply adds to this system of ignoring and choosing to believe that there is not a problem, because for the unaffected, there isn't. Anderson furthers this discussion by examining the way in which "willful impasses are breaks in understanding typically caused by refusals to engage with sources or situations that would lead to challenging encounters with unfamiliar hermeneutical resources" (2017:5). Ultimately highlighting that these 'breaks' in understanding are responsible for the breakdown of conversation, and therefore the chance to develop and share experiences and idea that would aid in cultivating an environment of education in which anti-racist ideas could be understood, rather than instantly disregarded as revolutionary or exclusive.

On the basis of information being key to understanding, with the political framework of activism ultimately being central to any discussion, the rise of far-right and politically extreme views has had a major impact in recent years on the ability of social justice movements to gain traction at levels where real change can be implemented. Building upon the concepts of national identity seen in the first chapter, within the 21st Century and especially post 9/11, it is noted that

"everywhere people seemed to be becoming more aware of their nationality. In many places it was only a short step from this to outright racism and xenophobia" (Roxburgh 2002:24) and this raises an interesting point when considering the way in which the enactment of political views through the guise of national identity, is equally contested by Angus Roxburgh himself. Writing in the early 2000's Roxburgh notes that "the fuzzy frontiers of an increasingly globalised world, and the implied erosion of national identities, were yet another factor for the populists to exploit" (2002:29), recognising how, notions of multi-racial and multi-ethnic societies, to many were a source of anxiety and fear, marking the beginning of the end for national identities and their significance to the vocal (white) majority that so often stepped up to defend them. Moreover, it was through this fear that the political extreme of far-right populism was able to exert its control and as a result:

> the success of the far-right in recent years can largely be attributed to its exploitation of contemporary anxieties over such things as crime, [racially profiled], immigration, unemployment, and remote, corrupt or insensitive government (Roxburgh 2002:31).

The impact of this is the demonisation of minorities and subsequent 'rationalisation' of ensuring that they remain subjugated within society so that there is no 'threat' to those in power and the people they represent politically. Attitudes of protection or the dialogue around minorities in relation to not actively using racist language meant that "while above ground, political correctness held sway, below the surface frustration was growing at the inability to speak out" (Roxburgh 2002:275). The vocal nature of BLM and the extent to which they were allowed to voice their agenda triggered a response based in the notion that 'if they're allowed to say it, then why can't I?'. As a result of this, the "inability to speak out quickly became a very vocal counter-attack fuelled by this long time feeling of repression and political sensitivity that was not being seen equally across the political spectrum and in the political arenas of debate and activism. What has become clear in this period of activism and counter-activism is that "race and its mobilizations become a social given until unmasked and challenged" (Ash 2010:6) resulting in the displays that have been seen over the summer of 2020 and equally in some of the events that have followed, examined in the previous chapters.

Furthermore, it is through this unmasking and challenge, that the barriers to progress are also revealed and that the role of non-people of colour and their relationship with race informs the decisions they make as well as the politics with which their 'activism' is guided, ultimately to ensure that there is as little change as possible to their now established ways of life and identity, with which they are content.

What comes next?

Responding to Quote

Within the final section of discussion with participants, I asked for their response and thoughts to the following quote:

> Indeed, majorities need minorities in order to exist (Appadurai 2006:50)

Written by Arjun Appadurai in the context of the identity of (white) majorities having been contingent on the labelling of minorities and the subsequent divide and conflict created as a result of this. I found this quote to be an interesting antithesis to much of the speech and ideology held by the (white) majority in relation to many of the violent, racist and xenophobic notions seen throughout this thesis. As a result of this, to gain the perspectives of minorities on their view of this relationship was (and is) fundamental to not only understanding their perspective in a holistic nature but highlighting points which can be developed to hopefully promote anti-racist thinking and notions of equality within a social context.

Participant's responses were not only varied, but also revealed a complex framework of perceptions from attitudes that could be expected (those seen as stereotypical or 'traditional' when considering attitudes to race) based upon their experiences, to perceptions that as a white male, I had never considered, but now cannot help but recognise.

Firstly, there were those who acknowledged that whilst the majority did depend upon minorities, there exists still a divide in terms of attitudes towards belonging and the way in which they are made to feel by (white) majorities. Highlighting this divide at a structural level, Participant 1 explained that "the majority has the money

and the wealth and the power so although the minority are probably in excess of population, they don't have the power or the money or the wealth" (Participant 1). As a concept that has come to frame the lives of minorities, to see this idea of restricted access to resources still being perpetuated highlights a major failing within society that must be addressed to ensure that this now historic fiscal divide is not continued, especially when there have been so many conversations and changes within economic fields to allow minorities increased opportunities. Additionally, there was the recognition of what is now a standard feature of the relationship between majorities and minorities, that being the active dislike and perceived 'lesser position' that minorities appear to hold. Highlighted by participants 3 & 4, they noted their feeling that "For me, you want us to do the jobs and the things that you don't want to do" (Participant 3) and this was coupled with the observation that "People don't want us; they would be happy to survive without us. They'll keep their curry houses and stuff as long as Pat from next door does it instead" (Participant 4). This continued notion of majorities wanting to exist without minorities has also led to a change in the way in which some minorities perceive the attitudes and actions of those around them. This was explained by one participant who noted that "things that I think are wrong my family in India wouldn't think they're wrong" (Participant 8), coming from a context based in a different cultural understanding, belief in social structures such as the caste system in much of India, whilst aligning itself with a different viewpoint, does echo some of the racist and xenophobic guises with which minorities are treated in the UK. The results of these observations are a continued addressing of the negative perception towards minorities and the way in which, despite being able to co-exist within shared spaces, there is still a strong disconnect between the experiences and treatment of minorities, against the 'controlling' (white) majority that defines so many aspects of their everyday lives.

There were also those responses that presented themselves as partially indifferent with regards to the position of the quote and its context. This is not to say that they disagreed, more so that they simply acknowledged the truth of the quote. This was made apparent within the discussion through statements such as "the majority

does need the minority around so that they can co-exist and thrive" (Participant 6), an aspect that many would reject yet is a key feature in the push for equality and an anti-racist society. This observation simply lends itself to recognising the human element within the collective labels of 'majority' and 'minority', that being the way in which by combining cultures and ways of living, we as a global people can ultimately benefit. In addition to this, one individual offered a response that I had not considered, the fact that "we're all a minority in some area or the other" (Participant 2), highlighting that myself as a student, am a minority within the population, those with disabilities are minorities and that the term minority can be applied to so many more groups within society, beyond the racial and ethnic categorisation that we have come to understand and indeed focus upon.

Lastly, there were those participants who recognised the importance of minorities, not necessarily for their relation to the majority within society, but simply in their own right. Discussing the impact that minorities and minority culture has had, it was noted that "even for daily life, it would be so different if there wasn't black people and people of colour in the UK" (Participant 7). The impact of this has been seen not only throughout this thesis, but can be seen across the UK, from food to music and fashion to literature, the impact of Black British culture is undeniable and has created a platform entirely of its own that has the potential to continue to tell these stories and highlight the experiences of those who cultivate and embrace this culture. Furthermore, "being part of the minority in a way is kind of nice but difficult in the respect that everything is a challenge" (Participant 9), this I believe is one of the many hurdles that needs to be overcome, so that minorities can feel proud of their culture and identity, without having to constantly be aware that these features place them in dangerous and difficult positions. Ultimately, "difference makes life a bit more interesting" (Participant 10) and it is with this in mind, that this section looks to address the wider impact of the 2020 BLM Summer and what it is that needs to be done in order to ensure the momentum and changes that have already been impactful can continue to be so in order to promote real change. As a result, ensuring that the way in which minorities are perceived and treated is finally

addressed with progressive thought, rather than dismissed by outdated notions and regressive social thinking, it is the hope that change can equally be catalysed.

What needs to be done?

The question of 'what comes next?' might seem rather broad and while to an extent this is true, there are some features, raised by the BLM Summer that give us the opportunity to examine, more specifically, what needs to be done next, in relation to the continuation of activism and social justice to ensure that the work that has already been achieved, is not simply wasted or forgotten. One of the questions asked in the wake of activism in recent years "How will you change after today? Will you remember? Will you forget?" (Alexis 2019:86) is central to not only the BLM Summer, but wider notions of change. Being caught up in the 'moment' can be positive if it means that people are made aware of different ideas, topics or discussions, but it is the action of ensuring that these ideas, topics and discussions continue that is central to being able to formulate any sort of change and create an environment where better understanding is cultivated.

> From everyday people swarming to the site of the latest incident of police murder, to Colin Kaepernick's protest during the national anthem, the BLM effect is empowering a new generation to challenge the racist practices and institutions (Arnold 2017:8).

This empowering of a new generation is the key to change and in a world where information can be shared not only rapidly, but practically freely across a variety of social media platforms, it is the younger generations and the next generations that have the power and potential to enforce change for the better. Growing up in a world where conversations of race are becoming more frequent and the lived experiences of minorities is being recognised not as something to be exclusive to the community to which they belong, but as a tool for opening the discussion to others, the way in which "BLM has grown from a hashtag into a fully-fledged, yet oft-misconstrued movement" (Arnold 2017:9) has undeniably marked the start of a new age in anti-racism and the fight for equality. Perhaps the best way to understand this impact is to recognise that "BLM may be many things to many people, but one thing it has consistently been is a wake-up call" (Arnold 2017:15).

Whether one has agreed with the message and agenda of the movement or not, this 'wake-up call' has been the long needed catalyst for change, change which participants have seen and felt over their time in the UK and equally over the last year.

> *"I do see that there has been a change, from when I was young to now, I do feel that there is more inclusivity, I do feel that there is more acceptance, I do feel that there is more integration" (Participant 1)*

This point on the growing link between communities and the acceptance of minorities was supported by the participants belief that "I think the way forward is education" (Participant 1) and through the work such as this, it is the hope that by educating people on the experiences of minorities as well as the systems in place that often meant that the (white) majority has simply been restricted in developing an understanding, that this notion of inclusivity and acceptance can continually develop. In addition to this, "Minorities I think, are starting to get a rightful place and I think the buzzword at the moment is inclusivity" (Participant 2), certainly seen through the case studies, minorities, despite still receiving racially aggravated messages and comments are not being completely pushed out of appearing as they choose and as they do. Their identity, culture and feelings are being heard and seen, the impact of which is the process of humanizing what has been twisted and presented as deviant and threatening.

With this being said, change is not a universal process, it is gradual and uneven when applied to anything, especially something as complex as the racial and ethnic frameworks that exist within today's global societies. For some, change has been difficult, especially when it has not been seen in the same ways as others and the challenges of living as a minority have continued. The participant that spoke about the racism that they and their child had experienced (see Chapter one, pp.44) noted that "I've considered going back home for good, you know within the last year. I just wondered what the hell is the point, but then I also think, that's giving up, because we've had years of trying to build things" (Participant 3) and now, in this period, these efforts are beginning to bear fruit. The feeling of being an outcast is still unfortunately felt, however there are those that are starting to ensure that

minorities are not left alone to deal with these feelings, something the conversation of BLM seeks to emphasize, within its community, no one is alone. On this point of belonging and the way in which the effort of those who have fought for so long cannot and should not be stopped in vain, it was noted that "I'm not sure the perception has changed; I think the language has changed" (Participant 10) and this was explained as being in both a positive and negative light.

The participant noted that, blatant racism or offensive language was not used in public as much as it once was, but that now this type of language was found frequently over the internet and social media, where the anonymity of profile pictures and virtual keyboards can protect an individual while they espouse their beliefs, be them good, bad or radically extreme. Building upon this idea of those that continue to use racist or offensive language to push their belief and agenda, the argument often comes from these people and groups that they want to return to the 'good old days', for example where Britain was dominantly white and everyone spoke English. However, it cannot be ignored that "You're never going to go back to those days the good old days, because from a minority perspective they weren't the good old days" (Participant 6) and this conflict between the world that was and the world that wants to be, is one of the continued struggles against which processes of change are having to tackle. This is partially because "No one wants to give up their power especially when they've had it for so long" (Participant 10), and so for those situated amongst the (white) majority who refuse to acknowledge or accept the changing position of minorities, there still exists an active counter-movement to notions or anti-racism. Fundamentally, when it comes to understanding the way in which processes of change can be recognised, the outlook of one participant who has worked in the field of positive action for many years, observed that "until you get to a point, where race or ethnicity within your organisation is looked on at the same level as your basic health and safety, then there is still plenty of work to do" (Participant 6).

The primary feature of change is of course the effect that it has on people and in the case of BLM and the wider social justice movements, this has been apparent. On the basis of simply identifying as a minority and the wide array of

perceptions this can bring, one participant noted that "For myself as a person of colour, I don't feel scared anymore to talk about issues of race" (Participant 5) and this marks a major turning point for not only those minorities who feel the same, but for the (white) majority that is now accepting a role in this conversation and for recognising the place of race on both sides of the conversation. With this in mind, this notion of education and discussion is central to ensuring progress is maintained due to the way in which "There can't be a massive movement every single day, but it's just about educating" (Participant 7) and educating both 'sides' minorities and majority to ensure that everyone has an understanding of the lived experiences of those who have been discriminated against as well as the position of those with power and platforms to ensure that the messages of change are portrayed accurately to a wider audience.

This raises the point that "You can't protest or raise awareness with the oppressor in mind" (Participant 10), that being, when it comes to the protest, the ideas and agenda has to be one that will break boundaries and force a change, as opposed to one that will accommodate the views and desires of those who are responsible for subjugating and oppressing those different to themselves. For those that would continue to disregard or refuse to accept that change is happening or indeed possible, "the evidence is being built up and it can't be ignored anymore" (Participant 9) and beyond the lived experience of minorities, beyond the statistics, beyond the racial and ethnic slurs, beyond the violence, there is a singular fact which cannot be ignored or disregarded anymore, a point which when raised by the participant struck a chord which I think is the beating heart of the change needed for the future and that is quite simply "We are normal people" (Participant 7). Not a label, or force intent on destroying society for its own gain, just people, wanting to live a happy and peaceful life, the most basic thing that any human being can and should hope for.

Conclusion

> Anti-racist politics – in Western Europe at least – has switched from a mid-20th century stance that sought to address the structural, institutional and symbolic sources of racial discrimination and violence, to one increasingly concerned with cultural identities and practices (Ash 2010:15)

This transition of anti-racist political activism from attempting to tackle issues at a structural and institutional level, to a more domestic and widespread social level has ultimately been responsible for its effectiveness and momentum in recent years. In addition to this, by focusing more upon cultural identities and practices of the everyday, goals for change become considerably more achievable and so in the long term, addressing larger state level or policy changes will inevitably be a much more feasible notion. As well as this, the impact of this work focused on developing the understanding of identity is something that is accessible to a much wider audience and as a result, further supports the momentum and possibilities for change by ensuring that work can be carried out by anyone and everyone, not just those within a political arena. There are still changes that need to be made, and "part of the work we have to do now is to make sure that the changes we have seen have meaning and the changes being called for are enacted. That is work that we must all do together" (Williams & Parker 2020:137). This call to arms has undeniably been at the heart of activism and social justice movements seen both during and in the wake of the BLM Summer and through the continuation of this work, it is entirely possible that these changes will not only be realised, but will forever shape the lives of racialised and ethnic minorities in the future, creating a world where they are perceived and treated as equal human beings by the small yet still powerful (white) majority and not defined by a label, but rather by their character and individual identities.

Conclusion: 'All Lives Matter when…'

Black Lives Matter. That foundational idea that spurred a change across the world and inspired millions of people, including myself to reflect not only our place within society, but also our ability to make, advocate and enact change. Conversations regarding race, racism, ethnicity, violence and all its associated components became the keystone of global discussions and as a result, forever changed the way in which these topics were seen and addressed. Through my own discussions with racial and ethnic minorities, those with lived experience and who have dealt, first-hand with the injustices the world has to offer, I was able to see the impact of these discussions in the wake of the largest social justice movement in human history.

Empirical discussion and relation to research questions

Before dealing with the aftermath of the BLM Summer, it was pivotal to understand how and why racial and ethnic minorities had become structured within society, in a way that so often led to their subjugation and overall detrimental access to equal resources and rights. By tracing a line through the history of colonialism to the employment of nationalism, national identities and the way in which nations themselves come to define their identity, this allowed for a holistic understanding of how minorities perception by a majority, white, Western Eurocentric civilization and population, ultimately impacted them on an everyday basis. As one of the central narratives of the first empirical chapter, this conceptual understanding of the way in which identity is both formed and then subsequently informs reactions to diversity both culturally and politically within a 'people', the notion of belonging became a key part of the discussion with participants and addressing the research questions. Done so through a number of case studies, the first, a Christmas advert from leading British supermarket Sainsbury's, dealt with this notion of belonging and the way in which the perception of different racial features, informs response when paired with a wider national identity and its 'established' characteristics and features. It was through this case study that the concept of representation was also introduced and as a result, sought to address the research question regarding, how

do individuals and organisations make positive contributions towards change in different spheres of everyday life during the summer of 2020?

Through work regarding the 'black family' and the way in which racial constructions have impacted understanding of certain cultures and their performance, this case study alongside participants reaction and analysis to it, revealed a system of being in which many minorities felt a connection, due to the way in which the narrative of the advert did not focus on or make exceptional the race of the people featured, instead choosing to simply focus on their humanity and normality.

With these ideas in mind, the second empirical chapter sought to develop upon the role and impact of representation in order to not only understand why it has become such an essential tool in debates around minorities in recent years but is also a key part of the modern activism movement, catalysed through bodies such as BLM. Once again using participant discussions, the significance of positive examples of minorities being created as well as the way in which acts of representation can be used as activism to highlight the lived experiences of minorities was explored, through a case study centred on an act of representation as activism, in the form of Diversity's Britain's Got Talent performance. As a programme designed as entertainment and one that usually acts as escapism from issues within the world, the political stance taken by the dance troupe Diversity marked a major turning point in the conversation following the BLM Summer and showed the importance of ensuring that these moments are not forgotten or swept over. Addressing the first research question, in light of the BLM Summer, how do we better understand the roles that race, and racism continue to play in shaping society today? the response to Diversity's performance and the impact it had highlighted the way in which, if anything the platform of television catapulted not only these issues but also their continued relevance to new levels within the public sphere. When also partnered with other examples of minorities dominating the modern cultural 'scene' and bringing to the forefront their experiences and the experiences of those within their communities, the long lasting and indeed essential need for representation by minorities for minorities became clear.

From this, the way in which acts of representation as activism have become a major part of the progressive work of social justice campaigns was examined, focusing upon how through representation and the way in which it can be used as a tool for education, the perception of minorities was invaluable when shaped by examples of lived experience and the real-world feelings of those affected by these issues of race, racism, belonging and representation.

The final empirical chapter looked back in time to 2016 and the first moments in which the BLM movement took to the world stage. In response to Colin Kaepernick and the action of 'taking the knee', his protest against police brutality towards racial and ethnic minorities in the United States of America transformed into a global protest and one of the largest social justice movements in history. Examining the way in which the action of 'taking the knee' has been reframed following the death of George Floyd, participant's response to this action and the wider meanings of the way in which it has been employed, revealed a number of interesting points about how this protest and movement has impacted the lives of minorities in recent years and especially over the last 12 months. From this, some of the barriers to progressive thinking and anti-racist action were explored, primarily in the form of far-right groups and their counter-movements based around notions of racism and xenophobia, exacerbated by political thought and policy. Ultimately, the final section of discussion with participants questioned 'what comes next?' as a result of not only the BLM Summer, but the fallout and changes that came from the calls for equality and recognition towards minorities. It was how these ordinary people experience race and racism in society today, within south Wales and how their impressions of the changes witnessed during the BLM Summer ultimately informed the closing thoughts of the research and the discussion. Overall, participants had seen changes, and many believed that things were beginning to become more positive and that this could and should continue through processes of education and conversation, so that people who are unaware and unfamiliar with the experiences that minorities have can be enlightened and as a result, work to ensure that the systems of racism and discrimination that have been in place for so long, are slowly dismantled.

Analysis of the discussion and research

Given the nature of this research and many of the topics featured within, the role of participants should be highlighted for its undeniable impact. Through the discussions that were had with racial and ethnic minorities themselves, their lived experiences not only informed the narrative of the research but ensured that at all times they were included in the design and execution of the research, therefore placing them at the heart of the discussion. The result of this was a dialogue that sought not to simply address minorities for their superficial features, those which have for so long defined them, but instead develop their feelings and thoughts on the rapidly changing racial structure within society as a result of George Floyd's death and the BLM protests that followed. By using these raw emotions and thoughts that have for so long been supressed or ignored, it allowed for a very open and real discussion to be had, that ultimately was defined by the participants themselves, giving them the opportunity to state their thoughts and feelings, unfiltered. Through these conversations, it was revealed that current systems of being within society are beginning to change and minorities are starting to be recognised beyond the colour of their skin or the assumed characteristics these bring, and that both their individuality as well as experiences are informing the un (and mis) informed of the reality that racial and ethnic minorities have to deal with on an everyday basis.

If this research was to be developed or replicated in a similar fashion, discussions with minorities of any denomination, be that racial, ethnic, religious, gender, sexuality or any area of study, should be, I recommend at the heart of the project. This is to ensure that in any case, those who have first-hand experience dealing with the complex frameworks of features such as identity are not continually objectified from an academic viewpoint, but are instead involved in the process and its evolution by including their knowledge and unique stance. In addition to this, by actively engaging with minorities, it is ensured that they do not simply become another 'piece' of the research puzzle or become side lined in favour of what is deemed more appropriate or relevant information. As human beings and individuals who are invaluable in shaping culture and society across the world, in

exactly the same way and other person can or might do, they form an essential keystone in ensuring that this type of political and cultural based research is not only effective, but progressive, rather than simply reflective.

Looking Forward

I believe, that having explored a number of varied issues and through discussions, I have been enlightened to a variety of features which will inevitably shape my judgement moving forward. This research as a tool for education in relation to the experiences of racial and ethnic minorities could prove useful in helping people understand some of the minor changes they can make in their day-to-day lives when dealing with minorities. With that being said, there is no ultimate question which this research addresses nor does it really 'answer' the question of racism or the place of minorities, as these are not things that one could ever really answer. What is offered, is a modern wide reaching exploration of the political, cultural and social systems with which minorities must contend in the wake of a period of change the likes of which many have never seen. As a result of this, I would like to use this closing section to suggest some of the ways in which, from this research, progressive anti-racist thoughts and acts could potentially continue to evolve in order to ensure that the momentum of change already seen, is continued.

Firstly, those difficult conversations about race, have them, whether you're a minority or not, understand that while your racial identity is out of your control, what it means and how it affects your place in the world is not, you have the ability to use your voice to advocate for change. Take the opportunity to 'check your privilege' (Eddo-Lodge 2018) and in so doing, educate yourself on topics you're unsure of, there are more than enough books and resources available to do so and as seen, the real change comes with better understanding. Listen to the stories of those who have been discriminated against, recognise and realise their struggle and understand that it can be different. Then engage in the change that is happening and together, across the world, the benefits of addressing injustice that have already been seen, will only continue to grow and as a result, the perception and

treatment of racialised and ethnic minorities might just one day no longer be a prominent social issue.

This research was inspired by change, driven by change and hopes to add to its continuation, even if only within one individual, it has been seen through discussions that this can be enough. Change on the smallest scale can lead to change at the largest and most powerful levels and so by looking to the future, it is through this route that research such as this can play a crucial role and that I hope continues to impact those willing to read it and take what they can from the message of all those involved.

<u>Participant Information</u>

Project Title:

The structure and perception of minorities.

Contact Details:

███████████████

I am a Masters student at Swansea University conducting research into the experience of minorities and their perceptions within society. I am inviting you to take part in a discussion on these topics and share your thoughts.

If you were born between 1960-1970 or 1996-20003, please consider reading the following details.

The aim of the research is to understand the experiences of minorities within the UK. From simple interactions in everyday life to the role of representation across a range of mediums, the way in which this plays into the wider perception and understanding of these experiences has once again become a crucial talking point, especially in the wake of the Black Lives Matter protests of summer 2020 and the subsequent discussions it raised.

You have been chosen as an individual whom I believe would be a valuable voice and aid in developing and achieving the goals of the project**. Please note that your participation is entirely voluntary and that you can withdraw at any point without consequence or explanation.**

If you take part in this research, I will ask you to take part in an informal discussion to expand upon some of the main features of the research. This includes aspects such as:

- How identifying as a minority impacts your everyday life.
- The representation of minorities
- How the perception of minorities is changing

The research will explore some potentially sensitive subject matters, so if you would not like to discuss these or believe that they may impact you in a negative way, please carefully consider your involvement.

The benefits that the project hopes to achieve is a real development of the position and perception of minorities within society by directly amplifying the voice and thoughts of those who have been and are continually affected by the topics the project addresses in order to positively progress public understanding of minorities experiences and cultures.

All participation in the study will be completely confidential and inclusion in the final paper will be anonymised. All data that is stored will be done so anonymously and will not be shared with any other persons.

Thank you for taking the time to read and consider, if you have any additional questions please don't hesitate to use the contact information found above.

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