Considering (auto)biography in teaching and learning about race and racism in a diverse university

Dr Demelza Jones
School of Languages and Social Sciences, Aston University

d.jones4@aston.ac.uk

Abstract

The 'sociological imagination' – the recognition of the relationship between 'private troubles' and 'public issues' (Mills [1959] 2000: 8) – is central to the discipline of sociology. This article reports findings of a 2014 study which investigated students' views on whether the development of the sociological imagination could be more explicitly embedded in a module on Race and Racisms through an (auto)biographical approach from teachers and the module's racially diverse students. After reviewing benefits and challenges to an (auto)biographical approach, the article presents findings from a student focus group, concluding that students would welcome (auto)biographical approaches to the topic of race and racism, with the caveat that this is handled sensitively with steps taken to minimise the risk of emotional harm.

Keywords: autobiography, biography, race, sensitive issues

Introduction

The 'sociological imagination' is a central concept in sociology, describing an ability to recognise the interconnected relationship between 'private troubles': 'hav[ing] to do with [the individual] self and with those limited areas of social life of which [s]he is directly and personally aware', and 'public issues': 'matters that transcend the individual and the range of his [/her] inner life… [and] form the larger structure of social and historical life' (Mills [1959] 2000: 8). This article reports findings of a 2014 study which explored students' views on if and how recognition of the relationship between private troubles and public issues could be more intentionally embedded in teaching, learning and assessment in an undergraduate sociology module I convene at Aston University, through the introduction of (auto)biographical approaches. The module, Race and Racisms, explores the processes by which race[1] is constructed; the intersections between race and other social identities; and the ways in which race becomes meaningful and racisms manifest in the social world.

Initially, reflection on my positionality as a teacher drove this project, which was undertaken as part of a Postgraduate Certificate in Learning and Teaching in Higher Education [PGCert]. Teaching is an embodied practice (hooks 2003), through which instructors' identities impact upon the learning environment and 'affect how students view us and how they respond to issues that we present them with' (Bhopal 2002: 113-114). While the instructor may be able to choose to disclose to students the relationship between certain facets of their identity and the course material (for example, their sexuality, or, in some cases, religion or disability), other aspects of identity (gender and race or ethnicity) are more usually discernible

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through an instructor's physical presence in the classroom. As such, the instructor's control over disclosure of their relationship to the course material (or students' *perception*s of that relationship) is removed (Lowe 2015: 121). This is the case with my identity as a white British woman.

Race is a challenging and potentially sensitive topic, which 'can evoke particular forms of classroom dynamics which in some cases may result in conflict, anger and distress' (Gill and Worley 2010: 6). However, as Jacobs (2006: 344) notes, 'the types of challenge' posed may 'vary a good deal according to whether institutions are mainly 'white'/ethnicity majority or whether a number of EM [Ethnic Minority] students are enrolled'. Nearly three quarters of the students enrolled on the Race and Racisms module in 2013/14 and 2014/15 were from Black and Minority Ethnic [BME] backgrounds, and while teaching I have often been struck by an intellectual discomfort that I, a white British academic, am lecturing a class largely comprised of BME students about racism. This anxiety has been compounded by research such as Bhopal's (2002), which found that while some students taking a module on race, class and gender did not consider the instructor's race relevant, others felt that Bhopal's South Asian ethnicity had enhanced her 'credibility'. As one Black student commented, 'if a white woman taught us about what it means to be Black in British society, I would be thinking, what does she know…?' (115; see also Gill and Worley 2010: 11). The discomfort evoked by such accounts about 'who is authentic for the role of lecturer and who can legitimately teach particular topics' (11) has prompted me to reflect on my white privilege in never having been subject to racial discrimination or disadvantage and to contrast this to the greater likelihood that this *has* been part of the lived experience of many of my students. This has led to moments of dilemma in the classroom. For example, when planning to read aloud to the class an eye-witness account of the 1981 Brixton Riots, I was struck with uncertainty over whether to say the word "nigger", which appears as the author quotes verbal abuse levelled at young Black men by police officers. Of course, I cannot say whether or not I would have experienced this uncertainty had I been from a BME background (indeed, BME instructors' perspectives on this will vary), but I *can* reflect that my whiteness played a central role in the anxiety I experienced. Did I have any right to use this word (even quoting somebody else)? Would students be offended or upset? Might I be reported to my Head of School? After some reflection, I decided to read the author's words as they stood as I did not wish to sanitise the account, but prior to reading the text, I warned students that it contained offensive language, and in subsequent small group discussions shared my anxieties about this. This became a 'teachable moment'; prompting a debate over whether the word was ever acceptable, and, if so, which actors can legitimately use it.

Given the demographics of the Race and Racisms cohort it is perhaps unsurprising that the relating of the autobiographical to the socio-historical, as per Mills' ([1959] 2000) model, has sometimes emerged organically in class. In a session on Islamophobia for instance, a British Muslim student recounted his sense of helplessness when an unseen hand tried to yank the *hijab* from his friend's head at a crowded street market, while in a discussion about institutional racism, a student who had been the sole Afro-Caribbean at her secondary school described one teacher's thinly-veiled surprise that she was a bright and articulate pupil. The student explained how she had attributed this to individual prejudice, but following the development of her sociological knowledge, saw that a critical race theory perspective situated her experience within a pattern of low expectations of Black children in the British education system (Gillborn 2008); an illustration 'that autobiography – critically considered – can provide a way for students to interpret their remembered lives in a broader context' (Powers 1998: 198). While these exchanges emerged in an impromptu manner, there was, at the time of the research, no formalised expectation that students engage in (auto)biographical work within the module. My interest in this study was therefore to explore students' views on whether (auto)biography may be usefully utilised in a more intentional manner in teaching, learning and assessment, as a means of exercising the sociological imagination. In what follows, I address some of the issues that need to be considered in adopting (auto)biographical approaches. I then analyse findings from a focus group with present and past students of the module, concluding that students would welcome (auto)biographical approaches if handled sensitively, with steps taken to minimise the risk of emotional harm.

Context and literature

Much of the literature on (auto)biography in the higher education classroom focuses on pedagogical benefits, sharing hooks' (1994: 84-85) assessment that 'we all bring to the classroom experiential knowledge that can indeed enhance our learning experience'. Grauerholz and Copenhaver (1994: 319-320) for instance, write: 'these exercises can be powerful and effective means of teaching by involving students personally in the subject matter'. This literature also highlights how (auto)biography is of pedagogical benefit not only through encouraging critical reflection on students' own life experiences, but in developing understanding of the experiences of others whose social identities differ (Powers 1998: 200-201). Pike et al. (2007) and Kubal et al. (2003) review a range of empirical studies which illustrate benefits of students sharing experiences with peers of different ethnic backgrounds, while Phillips' (1988: 292) reflects on the use of (auto)biographies in a course on domestic violence, which challenged the perspectives of those students who did not have personal experience of the issue: '[before the course] the nonvictim students tend to see family violence as a general social problem. They perceive that it exists "out there" in the real world, but have minimal understanding of the personal experience and the private reality'.

Additionally, exercising the sociological imagination through (auto)biographical approaches can help realize sociology as a critical, public discipline 'engaged in social change' (Ghamari-Tabrizi 2005: 361), and, in relation to teaching and learning, a 'pedagogy of critical hope' (Sutton 2015, after hooks 2003). Returning to Phillips' (1988: 292) example, for those students who had experienced domestic violence, the development of the sociological imagination could be transformative and empowering: 'putting their experience in a larger context enable[d] them to see that the violence was not their fault and that they [were] not alone in their experience'. This transformative potential may too extend to students without personal experience of issues, with Johnson and Bhatt (2003) recounting how (auto)biographical approaches encouraged majority students to interrogate their complicity in structures of privilege and become more effective 'allies' in equality struggles (see also Tilley and Taylor 2013).

Challenges and risks

However, the literature also identifies risks and challenges, most significantly the danger of causing emotional harm to students by encouraging them to reflect on traumatic experiences: 'if we encourage students to think about the connections between their personal lives and the world around them – a major goal of sociological teaching – we are putting some students at risk' (Grauerholz and Copenhaver 1994: 321). Related concerns are the pressures placed on instructors to whom students disclose traumatic experiences (Hayes-Smith et al 2010), and students' emotional responses to disclosures from their peers (Lowe 2015: 127-128). Problems with treating personal narratives as assessment artefacts for judgement are also identified, with suggested remedies include marking on a pass/fail basis rather than awarding a grade, and providing assessment criteria that clearly establish that it is the 'skill of analysis from a sociological perspective' which is the focus of assessment, not the autobiographical narrative per se (Grauerholz and Copenhaver 1994: 320).

A further risk lies in the essentialising of students or instructors as either 'getting' or 'not getting' particular issues on the basis of identity. This is explored by Johnson and Bhatt (2003) through analysis of critical autobiographical narratives which problematize the ways in which instructors' social identities and biographies (or students' and colleagues' *assumptions* around their identities and biographies) influence the presentation and interpretation of course material. A South Asian academic, for example, recounts:

> I am the primary text in the classroom. Deconstructing me, analyzing me, talking about my culture makes the classroom conversations "interesting," "exotic," "fascinating." I place myself in the Orientalist gaze as a way to legitimate myself—as a scholar and as a person. I tell myself that it is a lesson for the students, never delving too deep into the fear and hurt that Orientalism often causes me. In many ways,

my utilizing this Orientalist gaze mirrors the neo-liberal stance of many of my colleagues. In my coloredness or foreignness, I am seen as an authority on culture. This stance both empowers me by creating a space from which I can engage my voice and trivializes me because my legitimacy as a scholar is couched in my presence, my body, not in my learning. (234)

This instructor's powerful relating of her classroom experience to Said's (1979) concept of 'Orientalism' – the reduction of the Eastern world and its peoples to a romanticised construct of the Western imagination – and the 'fear and hurt' which she acknowledges her self- conscious positioning within this framework of meaning causes her, offers a note of caution. While (auto)biography can 'de-centre dominance… creating speaking space for students who are traditionally silenced' within racialised power structures (Johnson and Bhatt 2003: 240), it simultaneously risks positioning these students (and instructors) as the exoticised subject of the white gaze; thus reproducing structures of power and privilege. As such, the use of (auto)biography must avoid placing the 'burden of "educating others" [on] students who are marginalized' (240; see also Simpson et al. 2007: 41).

In searching for a path through these challenges, Johnson and Bhatt (2003) evoke Che Guevara's assertion that 'solidarity means running the same risks' (230; quoted from Boal 1995: 3) – requiring all students and instructors to 'make themselves vulnerable' through sharing and reflecting on personal experience, as opposed to an unequal expectation that only those from minoritized backgrounds will share their biographies for the consumption of the majority other (240; see also Housee 2006: 38). This expectation also serves a pedagogical purpose in teaching about race and racism, by challenging the normalisation of whiteness and its prevalent 'invisibility' as an identity for which racialized societal structures hold relevance, thus encouraging majority students and instructors to interrogate their own identity and privilege and consider that 'just as Blackness or being Black shapes Black women's [or men's] lives, so too does being white shape white women's [or men's] experiences, practices and views of self and others' (Bhopal 2002: 111). However, Pitt and Packard's (2012) research suggests that achieving equitable participation may prove challenging, as 'Black students will be more likely to speak to their lived experience – particularly in discussions of race – while their white peers will tend to engage these issues from a distance, rendering less self-reflective "perspectives" on the topics' (300).

The study

In order to access students' perspectives on the use of (auto)biography, I held a focus group with present and past Race and Racisms students. The following section describes the planning and conduct of this focus group in November 2014, with particular attention paid to ethical issues posed by the research and the sample of student participants.

Ethical considerations

Approval for the study was obtained from the ethical review board of Aston University's Centre for Learning Innovation and Professional Practice. This project posed specific ethical challenges arising from the use of students as research participants, the limitations to confidentiality imposed by the focus group method, and the potential sensitivity of the research topic. Reflecting on their experience as lecturers conducting research with their students, Clark and McCann (2005) identify specific ethical concerns, including the potential power differential between lecturer and student which may impede students' ability to decline to participate, or encourage them to participate under an assumption that doing so will achieve favouritism from their lecturer. I sought to minimise these risks through inviting participation by mass email, so that students who did not wish to participate could simply not reply, rather than having to say 'no'. The information sheet accompanying the invitation email also clearly stated that participation was voluntary and that the decision whether to participate had no bearing on students' relationship with me as

a lecturer and assessor. Ideally, this separation of my roles as researcher and lecturer would have been consolidated by undertaking the study once the module and associated assessment had been completed. Unfortunately, the deadline imposed by the PGCert meant that the research had to take place before assessment was complete. However, the system of anonymised assessment used at Aston meant that participation in the research would not affect the participants' grades; and students were made aware of this. The limitation to confidentiality inherent to the focus group method was also flagged to potential participants in the information sheet, which explained that, unlike in an interview situation, confidentiality cannot be guaranteed as it is outside the researcher's control if participants do not abide by requests to maintain confidentiality.

The use of (auto)biography in relation to race and racism is a potentially sensitive topic which may cause distress. This was acknowledged in the information sheet, which stated that while participants should feel free to discuss personal experiences if they wished, there was no obligation to do so and that a useful contribution could be made by speaking in more 'abstract' terms. A de-briefing sheet listing the contact details of relevant support organisations inside and outside the university was also provided. Researching such issues raises the possibility that informants will disclose information that suggests they may be at risk of harm, and the Economic and Social Research Council's ethical guidelines recognise that in such circumstances there may be limitations to confidentiality.[2] While this was not ultimately an issue in this research, it was highlighted to potential participants in the information sheet.

The focus group method and the sample

Focus groups allow for meanings to be constructed through interactions between participants, while disagreements and negotiations within the group illuminate 'how accounts are articulated, censured, opposed, and changed through social interaction' (Kitzinger 2005: 58). This characteristic of the method is particularly relevant to this research, with its concern with how comfortable students may feel with (auto)biography being utilised as an approach for teaching (and potentially group discussion). Focus groups are additionally an 'inviting method for researchers who are working from "power-sensitive" perspectives', with the involvement of multiple participants 'reduc[ing] the imbalance in power relationships between the researcher and participants' (Liamputtong 2011: 4), and thus helping to address concerns of a power imbalance between lecturer-researcher and student-participants (Clarke and McCann 2005).

Eleven students responded positively to the invitation email, and six were ultimately available to attend a focus group. Of these, five were second year students enrolled on the 2014/15 iteration of the module, while the sixth had taken the module in 2013/14. Five were female and one male, which is broadly representative of the module's cohort. Four participants were from white ethnic backgrounds (white British and Irish), one was of a dual heritage background, and one was British Pakistani. As such, the final sample was unrepresentative of the module cohort as a whole, with white students overrepresented.[3] The implications of this will be discussed later in the article. The following sections outline the students' discussion of the potential use of (auto)biographical approaches in the Race and Racisms module. All names are pseudonyms, and other potentially identifying details have been altered in a manner which does not affect interpretation of the data.

Students' perspectives

Value and challenges of an (auto)biographical approach

Students were initially asked whether (auto)biography could be a useful approach for teaching and learning, with Leila opening the responses: 'I think it's very useful to use personal experiences. The theory side is absolutely valid, but the personal experience adds something to it and adds layers you might not

have thought of before'. The students concurred with the literature in recognising the potential of (auto)biographical approaches for developing the sociological imagination. Zak, for example, posited: 'if you decide to do sociology, you'll be aware that people are drawn to those subjects because they have certain experiences or certain questions that they need to answer'. Katrina additionally highlighted the value of the approach in developing students' capacity as reflexive scholars, which she identified as integral to the discipline:

> It's really beneficial because it involves personal reflection… If you're trying to do sociology that's what you're trying to do - to be reflexive and to learn where you stand on your own issues. There's no point looking at outside issues if you can't look at yourself.

This reflexive capability is central to the hermeneutic approach, which recognises that 'people, unlike things in the natural world, are conscious, purposive actors. We have ideas about the world we live in, we attach meaning to events, institutions and actions, and we act on the basis of these ideas and meanings' (O'Connell Davidson and Layder 1994: 31); a condition that applies not only to those human subjects of social research, but to those humans who are doing the researching or interpreting the research of others. Katrina went on to discuss how this reflexive approach was essential to students' success in their final year dissertation project, where students must account reflexively for their positionality in relation to their data collection and analysis. She felt that having more opportunities to engage with (auto)biographical approaches throughout the degree programme would enable students to 'get used' to this, so that by their final year it was something they felt 'comfortable' with.

The question of whether the use of (auto)biography would encourage or inhibit class participation provoked a mixed response. Some students talked about how the topics which had generated the most class discussion during the module were those which reflected topical events, but also students' lived experience – for example, a session on Islamophobia had generated a high level of participation, including from students who were not normally known for speaking in class. It followed, they argued, that the inclusion of (auto)biography was a natural extension of this process: 'I can't see it hindering [participation]. Surely it should be helping because we'll feel more comfortable that other people have similar, if not the same, biographies as ours'. The students also reflected, however, that there was risk that the use of (auto)biography could 'make some students feel vulnerable' or 'under attack', echoing concerns articulated by Grauerholz and Copenhaver (1994). The students recounted how, in a seminar for another module, a disagreement between two students over Muslim women wearing the *hijab* had become very heated, illustrating a potential pitfall of an (auto)biographical approach to certain issues. Leila described her surprise that more of the many *hijab*-wearing students in the class had not contributed to the subsequent discussion, but felt this may be attributable to a feeling of vulnerability or scrutiny: 'If we introduce personal biographies does that make them feel under attack? They might take it personally because rather than Islam being the concept under discussion, it's like, "are you just attacking me because I'm Muslim"?' This reflects concerns about problematic positioning of the minoritized student as the subject of the majority gaze, unfairly burdened to 'justify' their identity or beliefs to critical or sceptical 'others' (Johnson and Bhatt 2003: 240; Simpson et al. 2007: 41).

Sophie felt that the inclusion of personal experiences in discussions could also inhibit willingness to contribute by students who did not share those experiences or identities, through fear that they may cause offence: 'when someone's so passionate about something it can make it intimidating for other people to talk about it'. Zak, however, offered a different perspective, acknowledging that personal experiences might inject further 'heat' into already contentious topics, but arguing: 'isn't that the beauty of sociology? That you will have constructive arguments to try and achieve a different way of thinking?' Zak is from a BME background and said he would be willing to discuss his experiences in class regardless of the reaction they might provoke: 'I might hear some stuff that's hard to hear, but at least I'd have that level of engagement… That's principally why I'm studying this course - to get that level of engagement'. Zak's

narrative may be situated in discussions of a 'pedagogy of discomfort', entailing not only cognitive but emotional labour by 'asking students to radically reevaluate their worldviews' (Boler and Zembylas 2003: 107-108). Zak's openness to this approach reflects Lowe's findings that sociology students 'desired intellectual engagement even when it was uncomfortable' (2015: 127). However, comments such as Sophie's indicate that there may be limitations to students' willingness to engage with this mode of pedagogy if they fear risk of emotional harm to themselves or peers, or the emergence of tensions which may negatively impact on their relationships inside and outside the classroom. After some further discussion, consensus was reached that the group saw value in the use of (auto)biographical approaches and felt that this was something they would welcome in the Race and Racisms module with appropriate safeguards in place to mitigate the concerns raised. Central to this was the establishment of a classroom environment where students could feel secure in voicing their experiences and discussing the experiences of others: a reflection of Johnson and Bhatt's (2003: 240) argument that instructors must 'work with students so that they develop the skills to address such issues safely'. In common with Lowe's (2015) respondents, participants welcomed advance notice of topics so they could speak to the lecturer about any concerns, and appreciated the list of sources of support provided in the module handbook, feeling that it would be useful to 're-flag' this to the class prior to any discussion of personal experiences.

Several of the focus group's white participants talked about the value of hearing the personal experiences of their peers from BME backgrounds. Beth, for example, described how prior to taking the module she had not realised how much of an issue racism was in the UK, and that hearing the narratives of peers 'made it seem more real'. Mindful of the risks of inequitable sharing of (auto)biographies, I asked the group how they felt white students could contribute to these discussions. Sophie talked about how, while she had not directly experienced racism, she had observed it 'on the bus or on the internet'. Others agreed that majority students' reflections on observing such incidents, and their reaction (or inaction), could be a useful point of discussion. The participants also picked up (without prompting) the issue of problematic essentialism, which assumes that some instructors or students will 'get' racism, and others will not on the basis of a homogenised understanding of identities (Johnson and Bhatt 2003). Zak, for instance, expressed his surprise that a fellow student from a BME background had told him she had never experienced racism, to which Katrina responded, 'isn't that interesting? That you assumed!' A white student recounted how her English relatives mocked and stereotyped her 'Irish side', while another described her inter-racial relationship and her discomfort at the ways that her partner's family talked about her and her children. The latter disclosure prompted Sara – a British Pakistani - to comment, 'see, looking at you, I would never have thought you would have experienced racism' – an illustration of the intellectual benefit of questioning essentialised ideas that only BME students and instructors have anything of value to say about this topic.

Practical suggestions

The students offered a number of suggestions for how (auto)biography could be incorporated into teaching and assessment. It was agreed that it would be important to establish students' confidence in discussing personal experiences. Key to this would be reassuring students that they were not alone in their experiences, and that, even if others in the class did not have the same biographies, there were nonetheless parallel points of solidarity and empathy. Sophie suggested that an anonymous survey was conducted early in the module and the results presented in class:

> Then you could say, 70% of people in this class have seen a racist incident on a bus, or 50% were called a racist name at school… I think that would be quite a wake up for some people, and for other people, it would tell them that they weren't alone and that these are things they can discuss with the people in the room because a lot of them will understand.

It was suggested that this could be followed up with small group discussions of (auto)biographies, and that discussions with the whole class could be led by students such as Zak, who wished to do this, as a stimulus

to debate: 'you need to have one or two brave students talk, and then other people will think "that happened to me", or "I've got an opinion on that", and then you've got a good discussion going'. It was also suggested that allowing students to present their reflections collectively as a small group could be effective in allowing a 'less personal' recounting of narratives. The students were open to the idea of reflexive (auto)biographical work within the module's assessment package, with the same caveat as raised in the literature, that the relation of the experience to sociological learning was the object of assessment, not the experience in itself. Students felt that, as well as offering intellectual stimulation, this would be a useful exercise in developing skills as reflexive writers in preparation for their final year dissertation project.

Implications

The findings of the study have implications both in terms of my development of future iterations of the Race and Racisms module, as well as more generally for the use of (auto)biography in teaching and learning about potentially sensitive topics. I will be incorporating the students' idea of an initial anonymous survey, which in itself becomes a teachable artefact but is also a means of 'taking the temperature' of the cohort, and establishing the classroom as a space where empathy and solidarity are possible. As the module progresses, I will introduce short reflection periods within the sessions, when students are expected to exercise their sociological imaginations by relating the topics under discussion to their own experiences of the social world. Students will be asked to take turns, in small groups, to present these reflections to the class as a stimulus to discussion. The assessment portfolio will also be altered to include a piece of short (auto)biographical writing alongside the more traditional academic essay, with an assessment criteria will developed which clearly reassures students that it is their ability to exercise the sociological imagination, rather their experiential narrative per se, which is being assessed.

There are limitations to this study; chiefly the focus group sample which was small and over-representative of students from white ethnic backgrounds. The latter point has particular implications given my concern to avoid creating a classroom space where BME students become subject to an othering gaze, and an unequal expectation that they educate their white peers or legitimise my authority as a white instructor through a co-option of their narratives. In attempting to navigate this latter risk, I will be ensuring that, as per Housee's (2006) urging, I 'walk the walk' of (auto)biographical narration in more openly sharing my anxieties and intellectual conflicts (and exercising my sociological imagination) about this topic with the class; encouraged by students' positive response to sharing my anxieties about reading aloud the Brixton Riots account. Secondly, while students offered a range of practical suggestions for incorporating (auto)biographical approaches, these suggestions were naturally somewhat limited by their imaginations, and their exposure to particular classroom settings and teaching techniques. As such, I will continue to review the relevant pedagogical literature to identify additional approaches.

The focus group responses have given me some reassurance that students from white, as well as BME backgrounds, would actively participate in (auto)biographical approaches. However, the fact that several of the white focus group participants acknowledged that they had no direct personal experience of racism, but would contribute their observations of racism towards others, supports Pitt and Packard's (2012: 300) finding that white students (and instructors) 'tend to engage these issues from a distance' in contrast to Black [and other BME] students 'speak[ing] to their lived experience' and therefore incurring greater emotional risk. Nonetheless, the sometimes surprising disclosures from some white participants about their experiences led to interesting discussions within the focus group about the complex nature of racisms and our sometimes problematic assumptions about identities in racialised contexts – all valuable points of discussion within the module. Given both these important limitations and interesting points of teaching and learning potential, it will be crucial to monitor how any shift towards a more (auto)biographical approach to teaching, learning and assessment in a future iteration of the module is received by students - particularly those from BME backgrounds. As such, it will be clearly communicated to students that this is a new

pedagogical approach, and they will be encouraged to critically comment throughout the module's progress.

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Notes

1. My use of 'race' reflects my understanding of the term as a fictive social construct which nevertheless has tangible impacts in the social world.

2. See: http://www.ethicsguidebook.ac.uk/

3. A more representative sample would have been achieved if all eleven students who were interested in participating had been able to attend. Under other circumstances I would have been more flexible with timings or offered a second focus group to enable wider attendance, but unfortunately the timescale imposed by the PGCert, alongside other research and teaching commitments, meant this was not possible.

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