Race, Culture, and Gender

Black Female Experiences of Violence and Abuse

Ava Kanyeredzi

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Introduction

This chapter presents an overview of the prevalence of violence and abuse, and with reference to Black women, definitions of key terms and concepts used throughout, and themes from previous research.

Prevalence of Violence Against Women and Children

Violence against women and children are worldwide issues of concern and are underreported as crimes (Radford et al. 2011). Global prevalence surveys estimate that over a third (35.6%) of women experience violence or sexual assault from a partner or non-partner (WHO 2013). The annual Crime Survey of England and Wales (CSEW) (ONS 2017) estimates that just under 1 in 5 (20%) and just over 1 in 10 men (9%) experience violence from a partner, with 1 in 5 women (20%) and just over 1 in 25 (4%) men experiencing sexual assault or rape, and this figure includes attempts. Eighty-six per cent of those who report rape are female, and just under a quarter (23%) of rapes are committed against children under the age of 16. Women are more likely to experience vio-

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lence in the home than are men, and while men are more likely to be killed by another male acquaintance or stranger, women are more likely to be killed by a partner or ex-partner; this is the case for over half of the female homicides (ONS 2017). Women between the ages of 16 and 34 are more likely to experience stalking and physical violence from a partner or ex-partner (ONS 2017).

Violence tends to increase post separation, where women are more likely to be murdered (ONS 2017; Thiara 2013). In the USA, African American, Native American, and non-White Hispanic women experience higher rates of violence from partners and sexual violence from non-partners and are more likely to be killed by a partner than are White American women (Breiding et al. 2014). If a woman or a man has a disability or long-term illness, he/she is more likely to be a victim of violence and abuse from a partner (ONS 2017; Nixon and Humphreys 2010). Few studies explore how living at the intersections of a range of social locations which include being racialised as Black presents, opportunities and limitations for women who experience violence and abuse.

Child sexual abuse and the umbrella term 'child maltreatment' are also widespread phenomena. It may be impossible to know the full prevalence of child sexual abuse as definitions of abuse vary by country and statistical measurement and individuals rarely disclose abuse experiences (Finkelhor et al. 2014; Lalor and McElvaney 2009), and when they do, they wait between 10 and 20 years (Lamb and Edgar-Smith 1994). The implementation of policies and preventive measures are also inconsistent across middle- and high-income countries, more so in low-income countries exacerbated by fewer resources (Dubowitz 2017; Wekerle and Black 2017).

In the USA, between 1 in 4 (25%) and just over a third of women and between 1 in 10 (10%) and 1 in 4 (25%) men report sexual abuse. Between 1 in 10 (10%) and 1 in 4 (25%) men and women report physical abuse in childhood (Briere and Jordan 2009; Finkelhor et al. 1990). One German study (Allgroggen et al. 2017) reported an elevated risk of sexual abuse of almost 1 in 2 (47%) for girls and 1 in 50 for boys (8%) among children in institutional care. These statistics reveal similar prevalence rates of child sexual abuse across racial groups (Bolen 2001; London et al. 2005).

However, subsequent research has found that African American women are more likely to be estranged from their children's fathers, increasing the risk of abuse from mothers' boyfriends and stepfathers, especially for African American girls (Abney and Priest 1995; Amodeo et al. 2006; Finkelhor et al. 1990). Amodeo et al. (2006) found that when compared with White American women, African American women had more incidences and multiple perpetrators of child sexual abuse and this was associated with family structure; they are more likely to live in the same household with uncles, cousins, and parents' friends. Similarly, Basile et al. (2016), in a study with a community sample of 168 low-income African American women, found that nearly half (44%) had experienced sexual abuse from a family member and over half (53%) suffered sexual violence as adults. Bolen (2001), in a review of studies on child sexual abuse, found that abuse from peers is far more prevalent than abuse from fathers or carers. Children live with increasing forms of violence and abuse both inside and outside of the home (Finkelhor et al. 2009), and more exposure to multiple caregivers increases the risk of maltreatment and being 'polyvictims' of violence and abuse (Finkelhor 2008). Bentovim et al. (2009) found delinquency and 'acting out' or disruptive behaviour to be associated with witnessing violence between parents.

In the UK, there are no comparable representative statistics by race for violence and abuse. The Sexual Abuse and Violence in Ireland (SAVI) report (McGee et al. 2002) and the CSEW (ONS 2017) for England and Wales have found similar prevalence rates as in the USA (see also Lalor and McElvaney [2009] for a systematic review). The Cawson Report (Cawson 2000) was a random probability sample of 2869 18–24-year-olds exploring their experiences of childhood maltreatment, with 92% White and 8% minority (mostly South Asian heritage) respondents. While 77% of those surveyed described coming from warm, loving families with people to support them, between 21% and 59% reported physical discipline, being infrequently slapped on the arm, hand, or bottom. Physical abuse was associated with lower socio-economic status, with 6% of the sample reporting going without food and wearing dirty clothes. Thirty-four per cent of the respondents described being sometimes terrified of their father or stepfathers.

> Parents who tell their children that they wish the child was dead or had never been born, for example, may be reacting to stress or an immediate family crisis rather than expressing a genuinely held long term view, but it is hard to imagine a more hurtful thing to say to a child. (Cawson 2000, p. 15)

Girls were slightly more likely to be physically abused than boys, and women were also involved in physical and emotional maltreatment of children. Most of the sexual abuse was carried out by siblings, peers, and non-relatives. The updated study (Radford et al. 2011) also found between 12% and 23.7% of respondents reporting exposure to, or witnessing, violence mostly from males to their mothers. Radford et al. (2011) also found that a section of their respondents could be classified as polyvictims. This was associated with being within the lowest socio-economic groups, or a parent who lives with mental distress or learning difficulties, physical violence by peers or siblings, witnessing family and community violence, and scoring higher on measurements for mental distress.

Research findings consistently report a high prevalence of violence against women and girls across historical and social contexts and countries (Guedes et al. 2016; Walby 2009). However, in Western countries, poverty, less citizenship rights, living with disabilities, and health challenges may mean Black women, non-White Hispanic women, native American women, South Asian women, or impoverished White working-class women and children are disproportionately represented as victims (Breiding et al. 2014; Finkelhor et al. 1990; Moosa and Woodruffe 2009; Radford et al. 2011; Richie 2012; Thiara and Gill 2010; Walby 2004).

There are few research studies about Black British African and Caribbean heritage women and fewer still on the subject of violence and abuse. In the UK, public attention to cases of child maltreatment occurs periodically (Rush 1980; Radford et al. 2011). Recent cases involving men such as Jimmy Saville who sexually abused children in institutional care and men who sexually exploited girls in Rotherham, Rochdale, Greater Manchester, have contributed to media attention and an increase in police reports (Bentley et al. 2017). Some of the most high-profile cases of child maltreatment and infanticide that have come to public attention

have also been those involving African and Caribbean heritage children (Barn 2007; Bernard and Gupta 2008). This creates a complex political terrain for speaking and seeking support and legal sanctions.

About This Book

This book presents an in-depth account of nine Black British women's experiences of violence and abuse and how they felt silenced as children, women, Black women, and victim-survivors. Being silenced or staying silent about experiences of violence and abuse were key influences in how and when women accessed help and support, illuminating missed opportunities to assist women.

The book builds on a growing body of research carried out in the USA and the UK that explores socio-economic status, culture, ethnicity, and race in community/service responses to women seeking support for experiences of violence and abuse.

This book is a useful resource for victim-survivors, students, researchers, clinical psychologists, counsellors, health professionals, social workers, educators, and specialised violence support organisations. What professionals might face in the process of supporting Black women who access services is explored through women's descriptions of how they felt supported, listened to, yet 'unheard'. The book aims to contribute to work that examines challenges faced by minoritised women in attempts to live well in the UK context. The book also includes images created as part of the project.

Background to the Project

I interviewed 15 women for a research project (2010–2014): six as experts who worked in violence support, research, and health services, and nine as victim-survivors, who participated in a two- or three-stage life history interview process. Prior to their interviews, the expert interviewees were provided with three case studies that included possible issues for African and Caribbean heritage women. During life history interviews, nine

women were invited to bring along personal photographs to assist with speaking about past experiences of violence and abuse. They drew maps of their routes to seeking help, annotated diagrams of how they have related to their bodies over the years, and produced photographs of spaces, places, and objects of current importance to them.

Of the nine women, six had been sexually abused as children; one was malnourished and severely beaten as a child; and five had had experiences of violence in the context of intimate partner relationships. Women sexually abused as children described experiencing severe neglect and feelings of abandonment. One woman had experienced multiple forms of violence and abuse across her life course, and seven of the nine women also recounted experiences of racism.

Language and Black Women in the UK

The terms 'Black', 'Black women', 'African and Caribbean heritage women', 'African heritage', 'Caribbean heritage', and 'Black British', and, where a parent is from another racial background, terms such as 'White English' or 'Asian' and 'dual heritage', are used here to reflect the variety of ways women self-identify and are identified, geographically, socially, and politically. African American is used when referring specifically to literature from the USA. Self-identifying as Black for individual women may be nuanced, complex, and related to particular contexts (Hall 1991). For example, the term 'Black women' is descriptive of skin colour (Fernando 2009), postcolonial legacies of slavery, racist treatment, political activism, and migration histories (Boyce-Davies 1994; Brice-Baker 1994; Phoenix 2009; Reynolds 2005). Yet a racial category may not be the most salient aspect of individual women's identities (Fernando 2009).

Nigerian author Chimamanda Adichie (2009) outlines the danger of telling 'a single story' as the only point of reference whenever we are making accounts of lived experiences. In social science research in the UK, the narratives of African and Caribbean heritage women are so few that those that do exist inadvertently represent a limited repertoire of voices despite rich and polyvocal experiences (Henry-Waring 2004). Black women have a longer history of residence in the UK than their counterparts in the

USA, yet there is little historical or any other research on their presence and lived experiences (Dabydeen et al. 2010; Henry-Waring 2004; Reynolds 2005). This is not to say that there are no positive representations of Black women in the media or in other social and cultural spaces, nor that some Black women are not professionally successful in the UK. It is to say that in social science the range of representations is somewhat restricted (Haaken 1999; Phoenix and Hussain 2007).

Legal and Policy Framework

The UK has been described by John Yates, a previous assistant commissioner of the Metropolitan police and a rape lead as 'policy rich and implementation poor' (cited in Brown et al. 2010, p. 5). There are many legal and policy initiatives, the most recent being the Serious Crime Act (2015), which includes penalties for controlling behaviours in intimate relationships, and the Modern Slavery Act (2015), which includes penalties for sexual exploitation and trafficking of children nationally or internationally. Many services exist for women who experience violence and abuse, but they are inconsistently implemented and under-resourced (Brown et al. 2010). This results in a postcode lottery of services and interventions which focus on criminal justice responses to violence from intimate partners, less on prevention (Coy et al. 2009). Statutory services come into contact with a minority of women who experience violence and abuse (Coy et al. 2009), and there are fewer service provisions for women who have experienced forced marriage, female genital mutilation (FGM), or insecure immigration status (Coy et al. 2009; Brown et al. 2010).

Becoming victimised is also associated with stigma and shame (Enander 2010; Kelly 2012), thus many women do not seek legal sanctions. Limited society-wide challenges to men's practices of violence and abuse prevail (Brown and Walklate 2012; Walby 2009). Women observe, and are silenced by, how they are responded to by the criminal justice system (Stern 2010) or simply by policy initiatives such as the 2011 UK government budgetary cuts in funding for specialised support services (Brown and Walklate 2012; Jordan 2012).

This process has also resulted in a loss of the specialised gender focus of such services, and many smaller services, especially Black and Minority Ethnic (BME) services, that work with a sensitivity to women's ethnicity, cultural heritage, religious practices and racism, as well as violence and abuse, have disappeared (Coy et al. 2009; Towers and Walby 2012). One study suggested that minoritised women make 17 contacts with agencies before accessing support, whereas White women make 11 (Brittain 2005). However, figures for London show the opposite (Smee 2013).

Perhaps more significantly, while there may be statutory, voluntary, and specialised support services, this may reveal little about their use by African and Caribbean heritage women. As explained above, this study was carried out in London and of the nine women only two accessed specialised support services, despite London having a higher population of African and Caribbean heritage people and more specialised services for BME women (see Coy et al. 2009).

Key Concepts

Race, Racism, Culture, and Ethnicity

Race, although a defunct scientific category, still plays a role not only in how individuals self-identify but also in how they are identified and responded to by others (Ahmed 2007; Howarth 2011; Song 2011). Racism is defined as treating someone inequitably on the basis of their assumed race, imparting a lesser social value based on their physical characteristics (Miles 1989): skin tone, hair texture, body shape.

Ethnicity is defined as an individual's heritage, location of birth, and culture, meaning both aesthetic and historical practices associated with groups of individuals (Fernando 2009). Suman Fernando (2009) argues that racism, culture, and ethnicity are often conflated to associate groups of individuals with types of discourses differentiating 'them' from 'us'. Culture and ethnicity or cultural relativism can be used to both hide and justify practices of abuse whereby women's experiences

of injustice are accepted as part of 'their' culture and practitioners feel uncomfortable to intervene (Ahmed et al. 2009; Burman et al. 2004; Gupta 2003).

Phoenix and Bhavnani (1994) pluralise identities and racisms as shifting with the sociopolitical climate, such as, for example, post-9/11 and July 2007 London bombings, women wearing Hijabs have come under increased surveillance in public spaces.

Racialised/Racialisation

Racialised/Racialisation describes knowledge associated with members of assumed racial groups (Banton 2009). To racialise an individual is to make an assumption and then treat him/her in a manner befitting that assumption based on their observed racial category. These assumptions may be based on long-held stereotypes that, for example, all Black men are violent to their partners, are rapists, and abandon their children (see also Amos and Parmar 2006/1986; Soothill and Walby 1991) and all Black women who have children are single parents (see Reynolds 2005; Phoenix 1991).

Minoritised/Minoritisation

Minoritised/Minoritisation describes processes and practices experienced by people from non-White or 'minority' groups relative in population ratio to the majority of White UK citizens (Burman et al. 2004). However, minority is not only in reference to the racial population ratios (Brah 1996). Individuals whose racial and ethnic backgrounds are in the minority are assumed to have associated behaviours, characteristics, and social status based on stereotypes and may be regarded and treated not as individuals, but as representative members of their minority groups where their needs are presumed to be already known. For example, when women approach agencies for assistance, South Asian women are often perceived as passive and need interpreters, Black women as aggressive, and Jewish women as dependent on their husbands (Ahmed et al. 2009; Amos and

Parmar 2006/1986; Burman et al. 2004; Mama 2000). Minoritisation homogenises members of assumed racial minorities and majorities.

Violence and Abuse

'Violence' and 'abuse' are terms used throughout this book to reflect experiences women define as violent and those described as abusive. However, these terms may not be clearly demarcated in women's lived experiences. Violence and abuse are included in the United Nations General Assembly (1993) definition of violence against women and girls (VAWG), UK Home Office definitions of domestic abuse and violence, and World Health Organisation (WHO) definitions of child sexual abuse/maltreatment outlined below:

> Any act of gender-based violence that results in, or is likely to result in, physical, sexual or psychological harm or suffering to women, including threats of such acts, coercion or arbitrary deprivation *of liberty, whether occurring in public or in private life…* occurring in the family, including battering, sexual abuse … marital rape, female genital mutilation … non-spousal violence and violence related to exploitation … within the general community, including rape … sexual harassment and intimidation at work, in educational institutions. (UN 1993, Article 48/104, emphasis in original)

The current UK definition of domestic violence and abuse also includes patterns of controlling behaviours:

> any incident or pattern of incidents of controlling, coercive, threatening behaviour, violence or abuse between those aged 16 or over who are, or have been, intimate partners or family members regardless of gender or sexuality. The abuse can encompass, but is not limited to: psychological, physical, sexual, financial, emotional. (Home Office 2016)

The World Health Organisation defines child sexual abuse as follows:

> All forms of physical and/or emotional ill-treatment, sexual abuse, neglect or negligent treatment or commercial or other exploitation, resulting in

> actual or potential harm to the child's health, survival, development or dignity in the context of a relationship of responsibility, trust or power. (Butchart et al. 2006, cited in Radford et al. 2011, p. 21)

Child sexual abuse has also been included within the term 'child maltreatment', which encompasses a wider range of abusive behaviours that may not always be of a sexual nature, such as hitting, letting children know they are unloved or unwanted, and inappropriate expectations, such as caring for younger siblings and neglect (Radford et al. 2011). Women interviewed for this book situated experiences of child sexual abuse within wider contexts of child maltreatment (see also Bernard 2016; Guedes et al. 2016).

Continuum of Violence

Feminist academic Liz Kelly (1988) analysed violence by men towards women on a continuum of behaviours ranging from sexual harassment to name calling, sexual banter, non-consensual sexual touching, rape, and physical assault. These behaviours can occur to the same woman over her lifetime, or to different women, and are defined variously as everyday annoyances to life-threatening ones: some women, for example, might minimise an offensive and/or abusive behaviour by saying 'nothing really happened' (Kelly and Radford 1990). The sexual violence continuum also reflects women's descriptions of how forms of violence and abuse shade into one another whereby being sexually harassed on the street may make women fear being raped and thus alter their use of, and behaviour in, public spaces (Kelly 1988). Violence and abuse are not limited to the specific domains of the home or public spaces and are viewed as part of women's everyday relationships with men they know and those they do not, albeit that violence and abuse are most often committed by men they know (Kelly 1988; Stanko 1988).

Violence is gendered behaviour located within everyday human relations and occurs through processes of devaluation and justification of unequal treatment through indifference and desensitisation to human suffering occurring during peacetime, and augmented and reformulated

as barbaric in times of war and conflict (Scheper-Hughes and Bourgois 2004). Thus, there exist material inequalities between men and women inflected by the marginalisation that may also result from racism and poverty. Locating experiences of violence and abuse in women's everyday life contexts enables not only an understanding of the forms, but the meaning of these behaviours for individual women (Briere and Jordan 2009; Long and Ullman 2013; Sokoloff and Dupont 2005; Thiara et al. 2015) and the complex terrain of choices, opportunities, and limitations women negotiate. The concept of a continuum as used here foregrounds normative practices of heterosexual masculinity by men in women's lives (Gavey 2005; Kelly 1988) and, beyond this, more systematic and less-visible behaviours such as racism, sexism, and ableism (Scheper-Hughes and Bourgois 2004).

Victim-Survivors

The term 'victim-survivors' refers to women's experiences of both surviving and of being victimised by perpetrators of violence and abuse. Processes of victimisation and survival are not a linear progression from the former to the latter, but for many women, a vacillation between the two (Brown et al. 2010; Kelly et al. n.d.). Black women may be denied recognition of their victimisation (Kennedy 1992; Jeremiah et al. 2017; Washington 2001). Thus, this term opens a space to consider and recognise the messiness, conflicting shifts in insight, identification, and disavowal that may reflect living with past experiences of violence and abuse.

Intersectionality

Kimberle Crenshaw (1991) used the term 'intersectionality' to illustrate how women's social characteristics—race, gender, class—may combine in complex ways to limit or privilege access to help and support for violence and abuse. For example, poor African American women who have limited access to suitable housing and social support and are underemployed remain with partners who are violent. Further, decisions made by Black

women (or those which they are encouraged to make) to not report violence and abuse by minoritised men because of fear of police racism, prioritises race over gender. Black feminist theoretical insights have historically attempted to make visible the many ways in which Black women may experience oppression (see for example Brah and Phoenix 2004). However, Black women may not be equally marginalised because of differences in socio-economic status (Basile et al. 2016; Cramer and Plummer 2009; Hill Collins 1990; hooks 1984; Nash 2008). There is also limited scholarship on the intersections between race, class, sexuality, sexual identity, and disability (Taylor 2009).

Help-Seeking

Seeking help is defined as the point where an individual reaches out and asks for assistance either from people they know (their informal network) or from more formal sources such as the police, a general medical practitioner (GP), voluntary sector, or specialised services (Foster 2000; Nadler 1997; Ullman 2007). Help-seeking is one of the many strategies women use to end violence and abuse within their intimate relationships (Dutton et al. 2000) or to move on with their lives after having had experiences of violence and abuse as children or as adults.

Controlling Images, Violence, and Abuse

Violence and abuse marked Black women's historical entry point into Western societies (Davis 1981; West and Johnson 2013). This history includes colonial and pseudo-scientific endeavours in Europe to measure Black women's presumed lesser bodily value (Fausto-Sterling 2002; Gilman 1985; Roberts 1992; Schiebinger 1999; Spillers 2000) and animalistic sexuality (Collins 2002; hooks 1992; Kapsalis 2002; Roberts 1992). Such efforts were offered as justifications for the institutionalised rape of Black women during the slave era (Hill Collins 1990) and the control of their reproduction after slavery and in postcolonial USA and UK (Amos and Parmar 2006; Hammonds 2002; Kapsalis 2002). Black

women's purported animalistic or hypersexy sexuality as represented in forms of contemporary popular culture, the arts, and pornography is also rooted in this colonial legacy (Collins 2002; hooks 1992; Hill Collins 1990; Miller-Young 2010).

Sociologist Patricia Hill Collins (1990) describes such representations as 'controlling images' that reinforce existing relationships of dominance/domination. Controlling images of African American women that have survived the slave era include: the 'Mammy', a woman who is primarily a caretaker of others, is overweight, and overeats to cope with the stresses of life; 'Sapphire', a dark-skinned woman who is angry and aggressive and emasculates Black men; and 'Jezebel', a light-skinned woman who is easily sexually aroused and promiscuous (see also Wallace 1990/1979). The controlling image of 'Sapphire' (see Moynihan 1965) obscured the role of poverty, lack of resources, and racism in the lives of poor African American women in the 1960s (Hill Collins 1990). After resistance to this stereotype, contemporary media stories and popular culture have reformulated Sapphire as the angry Black woman, 'gold-digga', and benefit cheat (Hill Collins 2005; West 1995, 2006). Hill Collins (2009) further argues that the power of these controlling images lies in the way in which they fix minoritised people at the bottom echelons of Western societies. This book explores the extent to which controlling images influence Black women's lived experiences of violence and abuse and their seeking help in the aftermath, within the UK.

It is understandable that Black women may wish to distance themselves from experiences of violence and abuse to resist being further stigmatised (Bell and Mattis 2000; Brice-Baker 1994), and those who identify with controlling images may fare worse. For example, African American women who have internalised the 'Jezebel' image are more likely to blame themselves for being raped and may suffer more mental distress (West 1995; see also Hill Collins 2005). Gail Wyatt (1992), in her study of the aftermath of child sexual abuse for African American, Hispanic, and White American women, noted that African American women drew on racialised stereotypes and the stories of rape handed down from family members to conclude that rape was part of the experience of being Black and female. This was also a theme in Patricia Washington's (2001) study. Neville et al. (2004), in their study with

African American and White American university students who were victim-survivors of rape, found that among the African American participants more cultural rationalisations were offered, and most presumed they were raped because they were perceived as Jezebels and were thus deemed blameworthy. Experiencing racism and having awareness of sexual stereotypes may be distressing for Black women, who then experience violence and abuse (Bryant-Davis and Ocampo n.d.). One of the underlying tenets within the narratives presented is how women made sense of different forms of abuse and intrusion such as racialisation, racism, violence, and abuse and the similarity of impact in terms of feelings left after incidences.

Internalising stereotypes and controlling images is a complex process (Blackman 2008) and few studies investigate how racialisation is experienced and whether there are moderating factors (Thomas et al. 2004). For example Thompson and Keith (2001) explored associations between skin complexion and attributions of personal worth with African American women. They found that among the darker-skinned women, the more educational and employment success they achieved, the fewer associations they made between skin complexion and personal ability or potential. Therefore, women's social capital or material circumstances may weaken the hold of controlling images. Conversely, however, feeling inferior as Black women because of hair and skin tone may also extend across socio-economic differences (Nelson 1997; Tate 2009; Williams 2013).

How women evaluate their skin and hair is both complex and nuanced, and in their choice of hairstyles women could both be reflecting resistance to discourses or simply engaging in cultural aesthetics and therapeutic encounters with hairdressers that bear little or no outward reflection to inner psychological states (Mercer 1987). Black women's hairstyles could also reflect a process of concealment of a legacy of slavery and colonial associations of Black hair with being wild and untamed (Dickerson 2011). Dickerson (2011) found the women in her study were more concerned about how other Black women would appraise their hairstyles. Holding concepts of women as women, as racialised women, as victim-survivors of violence and abuse are key to understanding the challenges involved in speaking and seeking help and support. The women interviewed introduced hair and hairstyles as ways in which they

felt silenced, devalued, and powerless, but also how they resisted negative associations through hairstyles. Their recollections of how they became aware of their bodily appearance were profoundly interleaved with experiences of violence and abuse where hair and hairstyles were sites for intrusion, or markers of neglect or nurturance.

Silence and the Strong Black Woman

African American women might embrace a persona of strength or resilience to counteract feelings of inferiority or fake confidence in order to enable everyday survival from adversities (Donovan and Williams 2002; Hill Collins 1990). This is not without conflict as women claim independence, yet are oppressed by family expectations and racism (Thornton-Dill 1998), and thus may paradoxically admire, yet resist, the construct (Nelson et al. 2016; Noble 2016). The ambivalent resilience might reflect the normalisation of coping with extraordinary burdens and a sense of personal achievement for this skill, whilst masking distress and harm. Tamara Beauboeuf-Lafontant (2008, 2009) carried out interviews with African American women experiencing mental distress and overeating, finding that they referred to themselves using the term 'strong Black woman', which she linked to Black female exploitation in domestic work during and after slavery. She also argues that many women coped with sexual violence, the pressures of the emotion work (Hochschild 1983) from looking after other women's children in rich White households in the Southern states in America for limited financial rewards, by adopting a 'self-imposed invisibility', or a closing down of the self for protection (Clark-Hine 1989). For Beauboeuf-Lafontant, the strong Black woman is another 'controlling image'.

Self-identifying as a 'strong Black woman' holds at bay recognition of the desperation an individual may feel about her situation (Beauboeuf-Lafontant 2008). The more a woman self-identifies as a strong Black woman, the less likely she is to ask for help (Hill Collins 1990). Patricia Washington (2001) posits a connection between the strong Black woman construct and delayed disclosure and help-seeking. The double bind of being expected to be strong and resilient while experiencing distress

results in no space to express feelings as exemplified by the participant below.

> There are these strange coping skills that help you sort of get through your life, and then all of a sudden, one day, you just can't do it anymore. You can't get out of bed. You can't look at anything without crying. The whole world's falling apart … and you just think you're losing your mind. (Washington 2001, p. 1271)

Hillary Potter (2008), in her life history study with 40 African American victim-survivors, found that all the women identified as strong Black women, and this was taught, observed, and internalised through watching their mothers and female caregivers or 'othermothers' (Hill Collins 1990; Joseph 1993) resist abuse and violence from their fathers or father figures while growing up. Strength was also associated with the expectation that African American women cannot rely on their male partners for childcare (see also Beauboeuf-Lafontant 2007). Becoming a strong Black woman enabled the women to manage these demands and expectations. Potter (2008) concluded that the strong Black woman construct is both a lived reality and a controlling image for African American women across socio-economic and educational differences.

Washington (2001) also found that the image of strong Black woman influenced practitioners' perceptions of Black women as being more resilient, a finding echoed in later studies (Garfield 2005; Gillum 2008, 2009; Potter 2008), with one making connections between experiences of violence, mental distress, and notions of inner strength (Nicolaidis et al. 2010). In the UK, Dawn Edge (2005, 2007, 2008) has consistently found Black women of Caribbean heritage score highest on measurements for perinatal and postnatal depression. However, the women felt unable to admit to feeling distressed, here the discourse of strong Black woman makes it appear that to do so would be a threat to their identity (see also Brown et al. 2011). The strong Black woman persona literally appeared without introduction or probe in the interviews. Women vacillated between admiration and identification or eschewal because identifying as a strong Black woman foreclosed the possibilities for discussions about feelings and emotions left after experiencing violence and abuse.

Community, Service, and Family Responses to Violence and Abuse

There are ethnic/racial variations in seeking help for violence and abuse. This has been theorised as the complex association between ethnicity and low socio-economic status that Barrett and St Pierre (2011) term 'the feminization and racialization of poverty' (p. 49). Women from minoritised groups and especially when they are recent migrants and speak English as a second language, are more likely to live in structurally constrained physical environments, experience multiple forms of violence, abuse and marginalisation, and a lack of resources: inadequate street lighting and transportation; access to a local refuge; disposable income; and friends and family who are able to support them by offering temporary places to stay (Flicker et al. 2011).

In studies on help-seeking carried out in the USA, comparisons are often made between women from different racial categories such as White, Hispanic, Asian, and African American or, simply, White and Minority. The large quantitative studies on help-seeking show that although African American women do seek help from a range of services, they stay longer in relationships with partners who are violent to them (Bell et al. 2009; Breiding et al. 2014; Fugate et al. 2005; Lipsky et al. 2006). Women from all racial backgrounds with experience of sexual assault find medical and legal professionals the least helpful especially when asked about previous sexual history (Campbell et al. 2001; Campbell 2005) or during court proceedings when it is suggested that women are to blame for experiencing rape because of their attire at the time. African American women have been also found to stay silent for longer about experiences of sexual violence because of internalised concepts of female strength: since disclosing or showing distress runs counter to this discourse, some women choose self-help, including using substances, to cope (Campbell et al. 2001; Nicolaidis et al. 2010; Ullman 2007). African American women are thus found to be less likely to seek help from counselling or mental health services in the aftermath of sexual violence, unless they are severely distressed (Amstadter et al. 2008; Nicolaidis et al. 2010). Women from all racial backgrounds are less likely

to report rape to the police if they know the person (Kaukinen 2004) or if they have consumed alcohol (Horvath and Brown 2009), and people who are marginalised or victimised are generally distrustful of the police (Kaukinen 2004).

However, African American women seek help particularly from the police for violence from partners as much as, or even more, than White women, but less than women from Hispanic backgrounds (Bachman and Coker 1995; Few 2005; Lipsky et al. 2006). The explanation offered for this pattern is twofold: African American women seek less help from all services and are more likely to return to partners who are violent or abusive to them. Thus, calling the police when in crisis may be the only option. Secondly, in the intersection between violence and abuse, poverty and racial category, African American women are heavily concentrated in the lower socio-economic strata, which often results in over-surveillance from social services and women fearing that their children will be taken from them; thus, they delay seeking support and rely more on police intervention when violence is especially dangerous (Bent-Goodley 2004; Fugate et al. 2005; Nicolaidis et al. 2010; Richie 1996, 2012; Taft et al. 2009).

Low socio-economic status is a chronic challenge where women are more distrustful of social service intervention for fear that their children will be taken into local authority care or state guardianship (Flicker et al. 2011). Reasons for patterns of help-seeking may also include the stigma associated with divorce (Liang et al. 2005) and that what happens in the family should stay within the family (Lipsky et al. 2006; Wilson 1993). African American women are less likely to access mental health services, and South Asian American women often have fewer sources of help (West et al. 1998). Women of high socio-economic status may be less likely to define experiences as abusive because of the perception that abuse only happens in families of lower socio-economic status (Bennet Cattaneo 2010).

In her study of violence and abuse with 113 women of African, Caribbean, and South and far East Asian heritage living in the UK, Mama (1989) found that African and Caribbean heritage women were often criminalised by police when enquiries about immigration issues were prioritised over the investigation of the violence. If women had insecure

immigration status, their partners may collude with the police to get them deported (Mama 1989). Subsequent research, primarily with South Asian women (Thiara and Gill 2010), has noted how men who are abusive to their partners use immigration status as a form of control (see also Burman et al. 2004). Reflecting on the findings of her 1989 study, Mama (2000) argued that Black women's experiences of violence are compounded by poor treatment by statutory agency staff who prioritise child protection issues and/or bounce the women from agency to agency for a number of years. Because many Black women are suspicious of social service involvement in their lives (Barn 2007; Bernard and Gupta 2008), they are more likely to opt to manage child contact out of court (Thiara 2013). Minoritised women in the UK who have experienced sexual violence access fewer services especially in less racially diverse or rural areas and experience poor responses from statutory, police, and social services where ethnicity can be conflated with recent migration and poverty (Thiara et al. 2015).

Ethnicity, Culture, Violence, and Abuse

Ethnicity and culture are also associated with the meaning women may give to experiences of abuse, discourses surrounding coping, which may intersect with structural barriers such as being a recent migrant, having limited knowledge of citizenship or legal rights, and experiencing racism (Crenshaw 1991; Dasgupta 2005; Fontes and Plummer 2010). For example, Smita Tyagi (2001) explored child sexual abuse with 12 mostly Caribbean heritage women in Canada; culture or religion were used as justifications for abuse and to convince women when they were girls that abuse was an acceptable and natural practice (see also Browne and Bassuk 1997; Wilson 1993).

Interestingly, Tyagi (2001) also found that many of the perpetrators remained in close proximity to the women and their families throughout their lives and, in some cases, continued to harass them. Loyalty to family to protect them from shame, community-wide silences around the issues of sexual abuse, and wanting to prevent news about incest getting back to

'the islands' were also common themes. This links with Avtar Brah's (1996) analysis that Black British concepts of home are located somewhere between historical countries of origin and the UK, which she terms 'diaspora space'. Diaspora space can also be thought of as the space wherein African and Caribbean heritage women experience violence and abuse; both 'back home' and in the UK. It is also the imaginary space where women negotiate how speaking about their experiences of abuse/violence will impact on their family relationships in the UK and 'back home'.

Notions of home and belonging are contextual and spatially related. In their decisions to seek help, women can be restricted by cultural expectations from families tied into racialised notions of respectability from their countries of origin. In their study of violence with 15 African heritage women living in America, Ting and Panchanadeswaran (2009) found women recalled cultural and homophobic discourses that associated women who marry later in life with being prostitutes or lesbians, and being divorced or single reduced their status. Marriage was constructed as 'suffering' for women, with abuse/violence preferable to the stigma attached to being single. Similar to studies with middle-class African American women (Garfield 2005; Nash 2005; Nash and Hesterberg 2009; Potter 2008), women's families had encouraged them to stay in their marriages despite abuse, sometimes drawing on religious doctrine. Interestingly, the women concealed the abuse from people outside of their communities to resist negative discourses about African American men, making distinctions between African and African American men.

> They did not want U.S. police or judges to think that immigrant African men are abusive like the stereotypical African American men, despite their own clear acknowledgement that abuse of women is commonplace and accepted in African cultures. (ibid, p. 824)

Jeremiah et al. (2017) carried out life history interviews with nine women in Grenada as part of an evaluative study of an intimate partner violence perpetrator programme. Themes included past experiences of child sexual abuse and rape that were perpetrated by male relatives living

in the home, or where girls were in the care of relatives because a parent had migrated to the USA. Jeremiah et al. (2017) reasoned that the culture of silence was a result of a legacy of colonial violence/slavery and male propriety where abuse/rape were not spoken about because women felt they would be blamed. In this project, a culture of silencing also prevailed in family responses to women when they attempted to speak about sexual abuse when they were children.

In summary, there may appear to be more reasons to stay silent about violence and abuse than to speak. The women's narratives of responses to speaking provide an understandable rationale for staying silent. Laura Serrant-Green (2011) terms the complexities surrounding speaking or engaging with minoritised people on issues that urgently need exploration, yet people find it difficult to speak, as 'screaming silences'. Additionally, women's experiences of racialisation occur in encounters where no words are exchanged, just subtle feelings of being different to or 'less than', or in silent reflection of past experiences.

Exploiting Poverty and Drowning Voices

African Americans are disproportionately represented as residents of poor communities with high rates of all forms of violence (Jenkins 2002), and this has been associated with experiencing multiple forms of violence and abuse (Bryant-Davis et al. 2010; Lewin et al. 2011). In a study on victim-survivors of rape with African American and White American women, Wyatt (1992) found that African American women attributed experiences of rape to having to walk in poorly lit and unsafe neighbourhoods at night, because they could not afford transportation (see also Basile et al. 2016).

Community exposure to violence and the proliferation of illicit substances, such as crack and cocaine, increases the probability of African American women experiencing violence (Hampton et al. 2003). Experiencing abuse and violence in the home could prompt women to escape, making them effectively homeless, and men who perpetrate vio-

lence and abuse may be especially sensitised to fear of homelessness as a vulnerability that can be exploited (Bryant-Davis et al. 2010; Greco and Dawgert 2007; West and Johnson 2013).

In a literature review examining the relationship between poverty, gender, violence, mental distress, and welfare policies, Belle and Doucet (2003) found that poor and often African American women were treated with contempt by service professionals and policy initiatives individualised women's poverty. The outcome of this was that African American women could not afford counselling and lacked access to many support services that could offer them help. One of the examples used by Crenshaw (1991) in her explication of intersectionality was of poor African American women seeking help for violence in the context of intimate relationships. She cites many structural barriers—being unemployed, not having a refuge in the neighbourhood, facing the prospect of losing housing if resident in a refuge—as factors specific to poor African American women's social locations. These barriers are also experienced by poor, non-White Hispanic and Native American women (Dasgupta 2005). Crenshaw (1991) also contends that White victim-survivors had comparatively more financial and emotional support from their family and friends.

Using case histories from incarcerated women, Beth Richie (2012) found that extreme poverty intersects with violence and abuse in the home and in public spaces, and racist police responses, such that African American women have fewer options for protection. This, coupled with being restricted in geographical space, means that when compared to their male counterparts, they are more likely to be arrested and incarcerated for retaliatory violence than are White American women.

African and Caribbean heritage men's comparatively low socio-economic status within the UK (Catney and Sabater 2015) means that African and Caribbean heritage women are less likely to be financially dependent on their partners; however, partners still do attempt to control Black women's finances (Burman et al. 2004; Thiara 2013). Men who are abusive can also increase violence towards their partners post separation and use child contact negotiations to further control women

(Bernard 2016; Mama 1989; Thiara 2013). Therefore, managing the threat of violence and safety of their children are barriers to seeking support lengthening the number of years in relationships with men who are abusive.

African and Caribbean heritage women's lived experiences of poverty and the intersections with violence and abuse is under-explored in the UK. People from White British/Irish backgrounds are more active and affluent participants in the UK labour market with employment rates of 81% than those who are minoritised, except for people who are from Indian, dual-heritage White-Indian, or Chinese backgrounds who are more likely to be in highly skilled jobs such as managers or self-employment (Catney and Sabater 2015). Bangladeshi and Arab women, dual-heritage White-Caribbean, Pakistani, and African (20–25%) men and White Gypsy/Irish Traveller men and women experience higher unemployment rates (15–18%) than White British/Irish men and women (Catney and Sabater 2015; Moosa and Woodruffe 2009). Conversely, Caribbean heritage women have high employment rates (83–88%) in both high- and low-skilled jobs (Catney and Sabater 2015) and are also disproportionately represented within the working poor, individuals who do not earn enough to meet basic living requirements (Moosa and Woodruffe 2009). Caribbean heritage women are also more likely to be caring for children on a single income, while African heritage women might form part of the population of women on state welfare benefits (Moosa and Woodruffe 2009). Not having citizenship status, and the associated dependency this may create on partners, has been cited as a reason why some African and Caribbean heritage women become trapped in relationships with men who are violent to them (Mama 1989; Thiara 2013). Even less is known about African and Caribbean heritage women's experiences of homelessness, violence, and abuse. Growing up in circumstances of extreme poverty and malnutrition was a feature in the narratives of the women who were abused as children. This illuminated how race and poverty can intersect with experiences of violence and abuse and how the physical environment and people around them silenced the desire to speak or complain.

Racial Loyalty, Body Devaluation and Decisions to Stay Silent

The socialisation of Black women within their families of origin can contribute to how they respond to violence from partners. Beth Richie (1996) conducted life history interviews with 37 African American and White American women at Rikers Island Prison in New York. Richie identified a process of 'gender entrapment' for African American women that begins with socialisation into a femininity in which women are expected to service the men and boys in their homes, accentuated through a sensitivity to the location of Black men in US society. Women who become gender entrapped aspire to middle-class status in the form of a partner and children. The antithesis to this was to be a 'battered single mother', or single woman, 'a poor woman, an unsuccessful woman, and a bad mother' (Richie 1996, p. 139). Being in a committed relationship elevated their own status within their families of origin, gained them admiration from peers, which in turn meant they were more likely to excuse their abusers, which in some cases led to them serving prison sentences for crimes committed by their partners.

In contrast, although the White and Black women who were not gender entrapped felt loyalty to their families and communities, they did not share a philosophical alignment with their male partners. Gender entrapment devalues Black girlhood/womanhood and overvalues Black boyhood/manhood (see also Wallace 1990/1979 for an early version of this thesis). One direct consequence was to limit Black women's disclosure of violence and abuse, which contributed to remaining longer in violent relationships. Internal barriers such as gender entrapment (Richie 1996) and racial loyalty (Crenshaw 1994; Hill Collins 1990)—the belief that protecting Black men from police racism supersedes their own protection—may also be shaming for African American women who experience violence (West and Johnson 2013).

Help-seeking may be further complicated if a systematic bodily/self-devaluation forms part of Black women lived experience. Gail Garfield (2005), in her study with nine African American women, found that the devaluation of Black women begins in early childhood and may be

reinforced in peer groups, school, and later on in employment. Black girls may be socialised to feel 'less than' because of the texture of their hair, the tone of their skin, and the shape of their bodies, and gradually the devaluation of these putative characteristics may have an enduring impact on women's sense of self-worth. If violence is a part of their lived experience, it may be appraised as confirming existing bodily/self-devaluation. Hence, the women in Garfield's study felt that they must continue to fight metaphorically, politically, and physically to resist violence and to re-establish their self-worth as women. Potter (2008) conceptualised this fight as 'dynamic resistance' to describe the multiple battles which include, but are not restricted to, violence and abuse in the home or by someone they know.

Charlotte Pierce-Baker (2000), in her study of the aftermath of rape for seven African American women and their male partners, also found an acceptance of devalued girlhood/womanhood. Even counsellors seemed to hold the view that Black girls are used to being sexually assaulted and Black women live in loveless families. She offers that some Black women may unwittingly 'sacrifice their own souls' on the altar of racial pride (Pierce-Baker 2000, p. 84; see also Crenshaw 1991; Few and Bell-Scott 2002; Taylor 2002).

Long and Ullman (2013) carried out narrative case studies with nine African American women from very impoverished communities, who had experienced multiple forms of abuse and violence in childhood and as adults. Most of the women used substances to manage the distress and some had lengthy stays in psychiatric institutions. While the authors note that this was a particularly marginalised group of Black women, they argue for research to focus on the sociocultural contexts of Black women's lives (see also Basile et al. 2016). This book does examine sociocultural contexts of African and Caribbean heritage victim-survivors living in the UK.

Devalued womanhood may not be restricted to Black women, but may intersect with experiencing multiple forms of violence and abuse in childhood and as adults. Thomas and Hall (2008) carried out three-stage life history interviews with mostly White American women who had experienced multiple forms of abuse/violence in childhood and as adults. The women reported growing up in 'houses of horror' (Thomas and Hall

2008, p. 153), with most identifying their mothers as neglectful. Consistent with narratives of adult victim-survivors of child sexual abuse (Herman and Hirschman 2005; Wilson 1993), some thought they played the mother role and that their mothers knew or contributed to their abuse. Others were made 'the family scape goat', performing the lion's share of the household chores, and often called 'whore' (Thomas and Hall 2008, p. 154). Some received little support from within or outside of families and most experienced negative repercussions from speaking about abuse. The women shared 'redemption narratives', gaining access to counselling, finding loving relationships and educational success, or, through self-determination, helping other women and girls within their families. The experiences of child sexual abuse from this study demonstrate how forms of violence can shade into each other (Kelly 1988) whilst the bodily devaluation was not racialised; the accounts shared many similarities with bodily devaluation described in the studies with African American women.

The association between devalued girlhood/womanhood and help-seeking and how that may intersect with Black women's decision-making in the aftermath of sexual violence requires exploration in the UK context, as it has implications not only for how organisations might seek to encourage help-seeking, but also the issues women might be struggling with in its aftermath. Studies in the UK show some support for the finding that Black women protect their minoritised Black partners by not reporting them to the police, to counter discourses of pathology among Black people (Humphreys and Thiara 2003; Mama 1989; Parmar et al. 2005, Wilson 1993), or in the words of a Jamaican victim-survivor of violence from her husband: 'I did not want to perpetuate stereotypes of being a Black single mother' (Parmar et al. 2005, p. 4). However, Jane Mooney (1999) found Black women to be more likely to report intimate partner violence to the police than White women. Sue Lees (2002) found Black female students were more likely to call the police for violence from a partner, because they believed the police would take action against Black men. This finding possibly reflects a strategic use of police racism (Grewal et al. 1998; Mama 1989; Rai and Thiara 1997) by some to escape men who are violent to them.

Research suggests middle-class African American women who experience violence and abuse by their partners may be encouraged to stay to counter the image of Black families in crisis and also to maintain their middle-class status (Nash 2005; Nash and Hesterberg 2009; Potter 2007, 2008). Overvaluing of Black boyhood/manhood may influence some Black women's decisions to report violence in the UK. Little research has been carried out on how Black women, whose partners are not Black, or male, disclose and seek help (see also Nixon and Humphreys 2010). The women interviewed discussed feelings of devaluation and offered gendered reflections on how their male siblings were treated and comparative differences in family expectations and life trajectories. Feelings of devaluation were never openly discussed or discussed to any depth within families or social circles. Limited spaces for discussion of difficult issues were themes throughout women's narratives.

Finding a Voice and Seeking Support

Much of the empirical research on violence and seeking help and support has also been carried out in the USA. Disclosure, as the first step to seeking help, has been defined as telling family and friends about personal experiences of violence and abuse or telling more formal support providers (Tillman et al. 2010). Some researchers make a distinction between disclosure as speaking about violence and abuse and help-seeking as asking for assistance from formal sources. The intimate nature of the violence and abuse can be experienced as an assault on women's personhood most usually by someone she knows (WHO 2002) and may act as a barrier to disclosure regardless of ethnicity, or socio-economic status (Kaukinen and DeMaris 2009). Social support is defined as assistance provided by family and friends ranging from non-judgemental listening, assistance with childcare, temporary accommodation or money, or a referral to more formal support services, have all been found to be beneficial to victim-survivors (Thompson et al. 2000).

White, Hispanic, and African American women most commonly disclose violence from partners to family and friends (Kaukinen 2004; Lipsky et al. 2006); this is even more the case for sexual violence (Kaukinen

2002), especially for African American women (Kaukinen and DeMaris 2009). White American women are more likely than African American or Hispanic women to access more formal and informal sources (Amstadter et al. 2008; Lipsky et al. 2006; Kaukinen 2004; Kaukinen and DeMaris 2009). Although most women find friends and family supportive, the way in which friends respond to disclosures, especially of sexual violence, can influence further disclosure and help-seeking (Ahrens 2006; Ahrens et al. 2007). If friends are supportive and non-judgemental, women are more likely to pursue allegations further, while if friends blame or become distressed by the disclosure, victim-survivors may also bear the responsibility for burdening friends, or disclosures alter relationships, thus women may seek no further help (Ahrens and Campbell 2000). A neutral and supportive response is preferable to having the listener verbalise thoughts of revenge (Ahrens 2006; Campbell et al. 2001; Starzynski et al. 2005; Ullman and Filipas 2001). Listed in order of preference, women prefer to speak about abuse/violence experiences, and if they are not supportive, women may choose to stop speaking (Ahrens 2006; Ullman and Filipas 2001). Additionally, friends and counsellors, but not intimate partners, have been found to provide good emotional support for women after a rape (Ahrens et al. 2007).

Long et al. (2007) examined social support, experiences of rape, and blame among 497 African American women. While most of the women in Long et al.'s (2007) study attributed most of the blame to the rapist, women with less education were more likely to blame themselves and less likely to have spoken. Ullman and Filipas (2001) found in their study of 323 women who had experienced sexual assault that among the women from minoritised backgrounds they had received more negative social reactions from family and friends than White women, and these reactions impacted on their mental well-being. This was in contrast to the findings by Abney and Priest (1995), who concluded that Black girls disclosed to their families more readily because they felt they would not be rejected. In their study of violence and abuse across the life course, Hood and Carter (2008) theorise that marginalised African American women could develop concepts of an unjust world as a matter of course because of the violence in their everyday lives. What may also enable them to cope is living within tight-knit or more socially cohesive communities with multiple sources of

support. The findings on Black women's disclosures and responses to them are therefore mixed, and focused almost entirely in the context of the USA.

Informal support may give women the confidence to access more formal support (Kaukinen 2002; Kaukinen and DeMaris 2009). Once women tell their informal network about, for example, a violent partner, it might become difficult to justify his/her behaviour after subsequent assaults (Kaukinen 2002; Kearney 2001; Towns and Adams 2000). For women with experience of child sexual abuse, a supportive carer, for example, the non-abusing parent (usually the mother), may lessen the emotional impact (Elliot and Briere 1994). In a review of studies on disclosure, London et al. (2005) found child sexual abuse is mostly disclosed in adulthood, and children do not speak about sexual abuse unless that are certain they will be supported; in addition, adults often choose not to ask children whether they have been sexually abused. Harvey and Herman (1994) note that memories of child sexual abuse may be discontinuous, linked to both the encoding of traumatic memory and efforts to suppress trauma in order to get on with their lives. Focal life events, such as the death of the abuser, the birth of a child, a new sexual relationship, or her child reaching the age the woman was when she was abused, can recall past experiences into present reflection (Harvey and Herman 1994). Adult survivors of child sexual abuse are the most poorly served in the UK by especially statutory services (Sen and Kelly 2007). Recent usage statistics for Rape Crisis England and Wales (RCEW) reveal nearly 70,000 people accessed support and just over 200,000 called the helpline. Twenty-five per cent of service users are living with a disability and 20% identified as Black or minority ethnic (RCEW 2017). Over 90% of service users are women, three-quarters were victim-survivors of recent sexual assault, and 42% were adult victim-survivors of child sexual abuse.

African American women rely more on informal support (West and Johnson 2013) because many experience community service agencies as hostile and racist. Because of the many barriers faced in accessing support, African American victim-survivors may self-manage via talking to informal networks and engaging in social activism and spirituality (Bryant-Davis 2005; Garfield 2005). For example, middle-class African American women may use 'sister-circles' to cope with mental distress

(Neal-Barnett and Crowther 2000). However, informal support may also be less available due to lack of resources among women of lower socioeconomic status (Goodman et al. 2009; Thompson et al. 2000). Most of the women interviewed here were abused in childhood, and their experiences bore much in similarity to findings from previous research. A sympathetic and believing audience was an ongoing challenge for the women interviewed. This book offers suggestions as to how family, friends, and practitioners can create spaces to hear women's voices.

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2

Silenced Through Fear, Threats, and Betrayal: A Continuum of Oppression

This chapter describes experiences of violence and abuse of the nine African and Caribbean heritage women, their mothers, and their older female relatives and the impacts on their male siblings. During interviews, women shared experiences of racism, migration, intergenerational trauma and abuse, displacement through migration, and displacement through space, by the men who abused them and, for three women, the women who abused them. Experiencing multiple forms of abuse and violence kept women silent for up to 20 years in some cases, but this was not without attempts to speak.

Consistent with Kelly's (1988) definition of the sexual violence continuum, the women who participated in this project experienced one or multiple forms of violence or abuse at one point, or over their life course. These forms of violence and abuse shaded into each other in terms of their impact where women described feelings of fear, confusion, intrusion, displacement, and alteration in how they negotiated public, private, and relational spaces (Kelly 1988). Echoing findings from previous research (Garfield 2005; Kalathil et al. 2011; Kelly 1988; Potter 2008; Roy 2008) women identified many forms of violence and abuse and relayed narratives

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in the context of wider, collective, and familial accounts of trauma and oppression, mostly of their female relatives. Women carried these accounts with them and used them as a means through which they evaluated their own experiences of violence, abuse, and oppression. Some forms within what is termed here 'a continuum of oppression', such as racism and sexism, may be discussed to an extent among relatives and friends, but most forms did not appear to be discussed by the women outside of this project. Experiencing a continuum of oppression may already be associated with notions of what can be spoken about and to whom, and what sorts of help are available and from whom.

Experiences of racism and discrimination also formed part of the narratives. Sara Ahmed (2012) uses the visual imagery of 'a brick wall' to illustrate how people feel after experiences of discrimination. Racism can also be thought of as ways in which aspects of social relations have become so ingrained as to feel solidified, hard, and impenetrable to its victims (Ahmed 2004; Galtung 1969). Women interpreted experiences of racisms as indicative of their positions at the bottom of a hierarchy of power and value. This hierarchy included cultural expectations communicated through encounters within their homes and in public spaces.

The table below summarises a continuum of oppression in the lives of the women interviewed for this book, beginning with women abused in childhood, and then ordered alphabetically (Table 2.1).

Racism in Lived Experiences

Racism remains a persisting inequality in Western societies (Hill Collins 2005, 2009). The impact of racism on an individual can be complex and may be buffered by their social support and education (Mirza 1997, 2009; Mirza and Reay 2000) or individual resilience. Racism can be so socially entrenched in lived experiences that it remains a constant background issue (Essed 1991). Galtung (1990) conceptualised racism as a form of structural violence that can be so normalised that it becomes invisible. Racism can also be viewed on a continuum from everyday 'micro-aggressions' (DeAngelis 2009), such as from being ignored by a waiter/waitress in a restaurant, to more overt verbal and physical abuse.

Table 2.1 A continuum of oppression

	Migration, intergenerational trauma and oppression	Violence and abuse	Race/racism
Ellen	Mother was thrown out of home when she was pregnant with Ellen. Female relatives in the Caribbean have also been abused. Her brother is in prison	Sexually abused by stepfather and witnessed her stepfather assaulting her mother as a child. A relative was shot. Slapped by ex-partner; was in a mutually violent relationship with ex-boyfriend. Has experienced multiple burglaries	Racial discrimination in public spaces and at work. Ostracised by Black acquaintances for choosing to work for the criminal justice system. Witnessed racism at her church
Evelyn	Thinks her mother worked in the sex industry and struggled with childcare	Sexually abused by different men including her father and was possibly raped. Physical violence from ex-partner; felt emotionally abused by his infidelities. Emotionally abandoned by mother	Made to feel ugly because she had short hair. Told she would not succeed professionally because she had dreadlocks
Farah	Her sisters were sexually abused and raped by her uncle	Sexually abused and raped by uncle, sexually exploited by mother's boyfriend. Treated as the 'Black sheep' of the family	In three attempts to cut her hair, hairdressers explained the value of her long hair as a Black woman. Feels 'not Black enough'

(*continued*)

Table 2.1 (continued)

	Migration, intergenerational trauma and oppression	Violence and abuse	Race/racism
Jacinta	Sensed that her mother struggled with childcare. She has beaten and emotionally abused her own son, who was taken into local authority care. Has been arrested twice for harassing a woman who did not pay her for babysitting and for cutting up an ex-partner's clothes. The charges were dropped on both occasions	Beaten and sexually abused by foster carers. Raped as a child and again at age 18 at knifepoint by multiple male strangers. Verbally and physically abused by mother. Taken by ex-husband at gunpoint to a police station to be a witness for him; strangled by ex-husband. Sexually harassed in the street; sexually exploited in intimate relationships	Racism from Caribbean heritage people. Teased at school because of her African name. Feels 'not Black enough'
Norma	Mother possibly sexually exploited and her brothers are in prison. Lots of friends growing up experienced violence and abuse	Emotionally abused, neglected, and malnourished as a child	Reminded of race in public, excluded from Caribbean friendship networks at work, experienced 'racism and sexism'
Patricia	Mother frequently suffered from low moods. She describes her brother as a perpetrator	Sexually abused by grandfather	Feels pathologised in professional spaces, being the only Black person 'when all the heads around me are White'. Feels read as aggressive

(*continued*)

Table 2.1 (continued)

	Migration, intergenerational trauma and oppression	Violence and abuse	Race/racism
Rebecca	Mother was possibly sexually exploited; mother was sexually abused as a child. Grandmother was kicked by an ex-partner. Her sister is in a relationship with a violent partner. Knows women with experiences of abuse and being prostituted	Sexually abused by family friend; sexually exploited by older man. Told she should be 'chopped up and fed to pigs' as a child by stepfather who left pornographic materials lying around. Told she would be taken away and raped when she disclosed sexual abuse	Feels racially excluded and judged in social spaces
Debbie	Knows lots of women with experiences of violence and abuse, who will not talk	Slapped and emotionally abused by ex-partner, who was controlling and unfaithful. Witnessed ex-partner being really aggressive to others	Expected to work harder at work than White colleagues
Isabelle	Witnessed her father being racially abused as a child. Racism has polarised her family	Beaten by ex-partner and ex-husband; both controlled her money. Witness to the aftermath of her partner's suicide, which contributed to an overdose	Witnessed lots of racism growing up; had health difficulties. Attributed her inability to read until the age of 12 to racism. Experienced racism from police officers, social workers, and neighbours

All of the women interviewed introduced the topic of racism when asked about their ethnicity or racial background and what being a Black woman meant to them. For some, racism had had a particular and pernicious impact on their lives through experiencing or witnessing forms of racial discrimination, mostly in public spaces and at work.

Isabelle: [M]y … [child's] father's Black and my husband was White so I saw aa:lot of discrimination
Ava: That's interesting
Isabelle: It was bad
Ava: So how was it different with …
Isabelle: I've seen it with my mum and dad, my mother's White, my dad's Black … My mum used to have to … in those days it used to be 'no Blacks, no Irish, no dogs' but my mum used to go … when we needed somewhere to live, to rent.

When in public spaces, it was Isabelle's mother who was recognised as the authority over family negotiations (see also Lewis 2012). Isabelle also had racist graffiti sprayed on the walls of her home and excrement on her car. She was the oldest participant in the study and also witnessed as a child her parents being racially abused. She had had a lot of physical challenges as a child and was referred to an 'open air' school where more emphasis was placed on outdoor physical exercise.

Isabelle: [I]t was because of disability … and they looked beyond the colour, that's how I felt. They didn't see colour then, because you had disability, everybody had their own individual disability … so that's when I started to learn how to read when I was twelve.

Isabelle also attributed her inability to read to a combination of her health challenges and racism. Her experiences of racism had profoundly impacted her ability to learn and hers and her siblings' life choices.

Isabelle: We're all mixed race. One of my [siblings] only stuck with White people and don't get me wrong, they're not prejudiced and [this

sibling] married White [partners] and only sticks to the White side, [sibling] gets on very well with the White side. Whereas my other [sibling] completely doesn't like White people and is absolutely for the Black side, so it's really funny … and then there's me. It doesn't matter what nationality you are … I'm just accepting of all nationalities … I can see that I am more of the Black side.

Ava: Do you think it's down to your individual experiences of living in the UK or living London?

Isabelle: I think it's down to our own experiences, personal experiences, of living … how we've been treated … how we we're responded from others … how we respond to others and our relationships, why we are what we are today, why we are on this side or that side or not at all … I feel very, at the moment, free to be what I want to be at the moment and I like that feeling … I don't feel judged and if I am being judged, I'm not in the company of people judging me, I'm doing exactly what I want to be doing.

Ava: [W]hen you were younger, did you feel more judged?

Isabelle: Yeah very much so, I felt very judged … either you're on the Black side or you're on the White side. I found that very hard and that's why I was a loner … I loved both my parents and I wanted the war to stop [laughs] … but my [siblings] they divided one way or the other.

Isabelle's dual heritage had polarised the racial alliances in her family, where she cites racist treatment from both Black and White people in social encounters, as reasons for this. Elsewhere in her narrative, she describes having to identify with a race as limiting where categories are 'put on you' especially during childhood. A similar observation about the limitations of structural challenges and racialised social encounters was offered by Norma.

Norma: I always look at people coming over here from the West Indies … it was really hard on our grandparents, parents. I know that, but then it also put us on a backward step … maybe if my life was in the West Indies, I'd be a totally different person. Instead of being a [healthcare professional], I'd

> probably be a doctor, or a scientist, just because of geography. I think when our parents and our grandparents they look at us and they think oh they have these expectations of you, but the fact is, we fight a lot in this country, we still fight, there's a lot of racism, a lot of sexism and … you are constantly battling against these things.

Norma discusses the impact of migration on her generation of Caribbean heritage women, the challenges or the 'fight', as an intersection of geographic, racialised, gendered, and spatiotemporal limitations on educational and professional possibilities. Norma and Isabelle's extracts are examples of how the women made connections between past and present intergenerational struggles (Fig. 2.1).

Norma took the photo given in Fig. 2.1, which had a dual meaning; her life is an open book where there are no more secrets, and at this point

Fig. 2.1 Open Green

she tells the story of her birth how she was 'a dirty dark secret' which for her is worse than being a 'bastard' or a 'mistake'. The life that she leads now is one where she wants openness and is open to discuss the secrets in her past. Her use of the words 'dirty' and 'dark' reflect both historical associations with Black skin as dirty and how the women after experiences, especially of child sexual abuse, described their bodies. The second meaning of the open space is freedom, being free of the burden of self-definition, where she further elucidated: 'even defining yourself and one of your questions was, how do you feel as a Black woman and even that can actually stagnate you and make you … in chains, so it's just being free, you know, I'm [Norma] first'.

The brick wall in the foreground and in Ahmed's (2012) analogy of how racism feels could also be read as the fight (James 1999) and the obstacle (Deleuze and Guattari 2004/1988; Tamboukou 2004) created by a continuum of oppression. The photo could also be read as hope in looking beyond oppression for the possibilities to come.

Migration, Intergenerational Trauma and Oppression

The nine women had made multiple migrations across and within national borders and experiences of violence and abuse were located within these wider contexts. A prominent theme in accounts of child sexual abuse was the structural violence of poverty and how that impacted the parenting they received; women also offered intergenerational narratives of trauma and oppression. 'Intergenerational trauma' has been defined as 'race-based trauma, sexism, racism, classism, heterosexism, historical trauma, insidious trauma, cultural violence, political and racial terror, and oppression' (Bryant-Davis et al. 2009, p. 331). This all-encompassing term captures some of the complexity of the nine women's narratives. The women's parents and their parents before them had made journeys across international and domestic borders.

Making journeys, being separated from biological parents, being privately fostered, and then experiencing abuse from carers are

recurrent themes in Black British literary narratives of abuse and violence (see Boyce-Davies 1994; Mason-John 2005; Riley 1985; Williams 2011; and Campbell et al.'s (2017) study in Grenada). Common threads through the literary narratives are racialised, sexualised abuse, domestic chores inappropriate for girls' age, and threats of breaking up the family encouraging silence about abuse and violence. This left a fragmented sense of belonging for all protagonists, which is worsened still by experiences of racism and minoritisation: being caught between the cultures of 'home' and here (Brah 1996) and differences in social-economic status between African heritage mothers and White foster parents. The themes of race and cultural differences in parental disciplinary styles between 'English' foster parents/teachers and 'West Indian' or African parents also recur across the literary narratives (see also Barn 2007; Bernard and Gupta 2008). The protagonists then appear caught between apparent differences in cultures, where in *Precious* (Williams 2011) for example, child abuse becomes associated with African culture or Black mothering (see also Bogle 1988; Phoenix 1991; Reynolds 2005).

Multiple foster placements are further exacerbated by the abuse and violence, leaving feelings of negation. Boyce-Davies (1994) cited the return of the dead Black girl in Toni Morrison's (1999) *Beloved* as a method to foreground the lived experiences of Black women and girls. The lived experiences of the girls in the literary narratives can also be viewed as resurrecting the dead Black girl by illustrating the worthlessness of Black girlhood (Garfield 2005; Potter 2008; Richie 1996) among members of their families of origin: how through abuse and violence they were almost killed or attempted to take their own lives. The narratives also position Black girls as bearers of the public image of the family, where speaking about abuse and violence brings shame, thus silences these experiences.

The nine women interviewed for this book were not asked about migration. However, discussions began from the question: *Can you tell me a bit about yourself?* or when women recounted experiences of abuse and violence. Accounts of violence and abuse were contextually embedded within dominant narratives of social exclusion, overcrowding, and overt racism that were a regular feature in the lives of those who came to

the UK from the Caribbean/Africa to the UK during the 1950s/1960s. These family histories had been recovered through conversations with grandmothers and elder relatives as part of women meaning-making for what had happened to them. They presented the context of their parents' lives as conditions that made abuse possible. Caribbean heritage women described experiences of overt racism shortly after their parents migrated to the UK.

Norma: [W]hen our parents and grandparents came here they just expected to get through each day, because life was so tough, it was freezing cold all the time, there was racism, they couldn't find anywhere to live, they were living … five families in a three-four bedroomed house, everybody was sleeping with everybody else. … There was so much going on, their kids were like second place … then you got a teenage mother, like my mother was, and everyone's like 'well how did that happen?'

Ava: And just on your relationship with your mother, have you … come to a point where, you understand her better, you've left the relationship a long time.

Norma: I'm quite indifferent to my mother … my family think that I h:ate her, they don't wanna even mention her, at the end of the day she is my mother, she gave birth to me. … Having children, you sort of like appreciate wah a woman really goes through, when they have a child and when my mum had me she was nineteen and she wasn't a worldly nineteen, like I was at nineteen. She was a baby nineteen, because she had come from the West Indies. She'd been cotton-gloved by West Indian parents … and then in the big, open, outside world. … I have a new found respect for her, because she brought four of us into the world, which wouldn't have been easy, but I'm just quite indifferent to her. I don't love her, I don't hate her. … I used to feel sorry for her, but now I don't as much, because I think she's made choices. … [M]y mother was easily led and al:ways looking for love, 'cos she neva had it, just ae:ny man woulda made her happy. … Even though she was a single

> parent, her relationship choices were al:ways bad. … [E]ven the fact that we're alive, came out of a ba:d relationship … I knew mentally that my mother wasn't very strong, she didn't pay bills, she didn't tidy up the house, she didn't feed [us].

Descriptions of parents' lives reflect some of the features common to narratives from the Windrush era in the UK during the 1950s/1960s (see also Mead 2009), but were extended to include how migration provided a gendered context for the sexual exploitation of their mothers by much older and often married men and how this then structured their childhoods around poverty and marginalisation. Their parents', especially their mothers', ability to make choices despite the many constraints of racism, poverty, and isolation and the insecurity of being recent migrants featured strongly in the women's accounts. In the above extract, Norma's empathy can be observed where she imagines how isolated her mother must have felt due to the overcrowded accommodation and being a recent migrant. This empathy appeared to have crystallised into a complex emotional ambivalence over the years as she refers to her mother's poor relationship 'choices'. Norma describes her mother's low moods as 'weakness', further interpreted as an inability to be discerning in the choice of an intimate partner. Norma's association between low mood and weakness is consistent with research with Black women viewing having mental or emotional distress as indicative of a lack of strength (Beauboeuf-Lafontant 2007, 2008; Edge 2007). In attempting to understand the poverty that characterised her upbringing, Norma blames her mother: in her appraisal, neither low mood and naiveté nor racism was sufficient reason as to why she lived in poor accommodation with the threat of homelessness. Norma appears torn between empathy for her mother through partial recognition of the violence of racism and marginalisation and ambivalence surrounding her mother's constrained choices.

After her mother became pregnant with Ellen, she was asked to leave home by Ellen's grandfather.

> Ellen: [K]eeping up with the Joneses … I'm not making excuses for 'em, but maybe at that point [1950s/1960s] … they hadn't been in this country that long … they still felt very much under

> that spotlight. They were still the immigrants. … Everyone now are complaining about the Eastern Europeans and the Polish, but back then it was the Blacks coming over. So I think that must've been another thing for them, another wrong reason for them to stand out.

Ellen draws attention to how aspects of threat and unsafety had already been a feature of her life before she was born. She imagines how abandoned her mother felt in a hostile and racist society. However, the experiences of overt racism had changed by the time Ellen was a girl. A similar account of the challenges presented by recent migration for young Caribbean heritage women was also offered by Rebecca, who thinks her mother was 'taken advantage of' or sexually exploited.

Rebecca: [M]y mother … she didn't have the best upbringing in life … because when she was three years old her mother left her and came over here to work and so she was living with her grandmother and then her grandmother died and she didn't have a good experience … she hasn't been able to read and write and … she's had a lot of issues in her life. So she had me when she was nineteen … it wasn't a completely good circumstance either, it was more like she was taken advantage of by someone older, much older sort of thing [giggles] … happens ... you know it was consensual.

Looking back, reimagining their mothers' lives, enabled the women some recognition of the extraordinary circumstances (see Scheper-Hughes and Bourgois 2004), of recent migration when they were born. Roy (2008) and Wallace (1990/1979) argue that extraordinary circumstances, including times of war or conflict, create opportunities for men who wish to exploit access to women's bodies. Offering accounts of their young, scared, naive mothers involved with men who later became the women's fathers or father figures makes visible the contexts that were exploited by their abusers. Poverty can create vulnerabilities, such as homelessness, in women's lives, which are

exploited by men who are abusive (Greco and Dawgert 2007). The sexual exploitation of the women's young mothers was precursory to their experiences of abuse and neglect.

A continuum of oppression was also evidenced by multiple narratives of abuse of friends and relatives (see also Kelly 1988) shared by the women. Haaken (2003) notes that in telling one narrative, another may be 'smuggled in'. The women smuggled in accounts of abuse of their siblings, friends, and family members, expanding the reach of the continuum of oppression. One woman also shared that both her grandmother and sister had experienced violence from their partners. In her sister's case the account involved both parties using violence, albeit that her sister appeared so physically beaten at times that she could barely walk. Another also discussed her sisters' psychoses, which she connected to the abuse they experienced from her uncle (see Scott et al. 2013). In offering these accounts of abuse and violence experienced by relatives and friends, the women can be viewed as illustrating how a continuum of oppression is a phenomena requiring attention, is ongoing, and is not limited to their particular lived experiences. Through these accounts, they were exposing both the perpetration of violence and abuse and its impact on their relationships with their siblings and friends, perhaps seeking recognition for those who are not yet able to speak about past experiences. The unremarkable and everydayness of violence and abuse in women's lives can also be read from these multiple accounts.

The limited space for either reflection or speaking appeared to have continued across generations, even to the time of the interviews where women shared accounts of female relatives and friends who were unable to speak about experiences of violence and abuse. Kimberle Crenshaw (1994) argues that Black women's everyday burdens can become so overwhelming that it relegates their experiences to near unspeakable. Serrant-Green (2011) conceptualises this peculiar silence in a manner similar to Michael Taussig's (2004) 'public secret', but with a focus on minoritised people in the UK. For Serrant-Green (2011) 'screaming silences' are issues that members of minoritised communities know should be addressed, yet fear being overexposed to negative stereotypes and, so, keep silent. Community members then need a process or a space that enables discussion. Life history interviews provided an enabling space for

the nine women to account for the many forms of violence and abuse they had experienced and heard about from within their families and among their friends.

Feeling Displaced by Migration

Liminality has been defined as an in-between identity, not being quite this or that, 'occupying a position at, or on both sides of, a boundary or threshold' (OED 2010). Having a sense of belonging has been theorised as an important feature of human development and interpersonal relationships, creating a sense of self and security (Hagerty et al. 1992). When individuals move homes through migration, they may create a sense of home through imagination of what home was like when they left and their current conceptions of home (Brah 1996). The nine women made many domestic and international migrations either as children or as adults, and this had displaced their sense of belonging. For two African heritage women, private fostering was the context for the violence and abuse they experienced. Bernard and Gupta (2008) describe private fostering as a common practice among families in countries in Africa based on cultural practices of an extended network of caretakers for children. Similar childcare practices have been found among African American women and termed 'othermothering' (Collins 2002; Joseph 1993; Reynolds 2005). Private or informal fostering can become the context in which African heritage children are abused and then taken into local authority care in the UK (Bernard 2016; Bernard and Gupta 2008). Three of the Caribbean heritage women were sexually abused in the context of being looked after by caregivers (see also Jeremiah et al. 2017). One woman went to live with her grandmother who effectively became her othermother after the sexual abuse was reported.

Jacinta: I'm not sure if I was privately fostered, but I remember when I was much younger. … I don't know how long I was living in [country name] for, but I know I was born here, I don't remember what age I was in [country name]. I came back to

> … England when I was about, maybe eight … and then I remember my mum left me with a nanny, it was a White nanny. … She looked after me for maybe two or three years, somewhere in the countryside in a nice beautiful countryside. … Then again I was living with my mum's friend, they were Black people. I don't know them, but my mum did, my mum seemed to know them.

Jacinta's uncertainty about childhood homes illustrates feeling displaced, or not belonging anywhere, as described by those women who were moved through regional, national, and international borders, and was further augmented by feelings of isolation after experiencing sexual abuse (see also Mason-John 2005; Riley 1985; Williams 2011). In the above extract Jacinta describes not having a sense of home and elsewhere in her narrative being abused by foster carers, further dislodging her sense of home.

Jacinta: [I]t's been like a rollercoaster really, I have lived with a lot of strangers … so I still feel like I'm African, but I'm British, I feel British, but African I know English and I still have questions as to where do I belong? So I would say that I'm African, Black African British [laughs]

Ava: And do you think that … the traveling around as well, had a lot to do with you feeling that you don't belong?

Jacinta: I think that if I had a proper upbringing, I think I would have been a better person and I would have loved myself a bit more and maybe people would have appreciated me and I wouldn't feel like I'm an alien. I feel sometimes as if I'm an alien … all my brothers and sisters were more cared for, were looked after a bit more, were treated more like a king and a queen. I've always felt like, where do I belong? Do I belong here, or there, or where?

In Jacinta's narrative, with every move or displacement, she becomes more alienated from her family. Women also lost family support through migration. Debbie migrated to the UK as an adult from the Caribbean

Fig. 2.2 Library

and lived close to her sister, who subsequently migrated to another country, when she was looking after her children and in a relationship with an unsupportive partner. Patricia remembered as a child being moved between her mother's and father's homes as they had separated. Her mother also suffered from low mood, which meant that at times she was unable to care for her. Below Norma describes her weekly journeys with her siblings.

Norma: I used to go to this lady's house, another West Indian lady's house, she knew my dad … and I used to go to her house every weekend; Friday evening, when I finished [school], well I pick up my brothers … I travel on the bus at the age of seven or eight. She [Norma's mother] only took me for a couple of weeks, then I had to go alone … I'd get to her [family friend] house, and the I'd stay there, Friday night, Saturday night, Sunday night and I'd leave and go back to primary school Monday morning … So at least I was taken care of, and actually, going there did show me a different side of life … I knew I would have food. Sometimes, we didn't even have food in

> our cupboards, so it was like … so who's bringing our food? Of course we're going crazy, because we we're hungry.

Elsewhere in her narrative Norma describes the family friend complaining that she had not taken a bath. This was a clear example for Norma that she was being neglected, leaving her feeling helpless with that awareness. The movement from unsafety and starvation to being fed and experiencing care and support, but not quite able to feel a sense of belonging, further evidences displacement.

Displacement Through Space

Related to the theme of poverty was marginality communicated spatially through the physical environments where five of the women lived as children. Paula Reavey (2010) writes that spatial anchors for recollections of child sexual abuse become focal points for victim-survivors. The women described not having enough food in the cupboards, or the paint peeling off the walls and finding temporary spaces of safety, as Rebecca did in a local library (Fig. 2.2).

> Rebecca: [I]n the past, it's where I used to go as a safe haven away from a lot of the insanity that was happening … I used to leave my house early in the morning … I used to stay in the library and just read books … and wait until five o'clock … I would then leave from there and stay outside my grandmother's house and wait for her to come back from work, because she used to do evenings and she used to do Saturday shifts as well.

Rebecca discusses both the safety of the library and the window or space of unsafety where she would wait for her grandmother. Two women who made many domestic migrations also described having poor recall for periods when they were abused. This could be related to coping with experiences of abuse (Harvey and Herman 1994). One woman who had experienced multiple burglaries experienced a sense of spatial

displacement in her home as it had been disconnected from notions of safety (see Frohman 2005). While this was experienced within physical spaces, marginality in the home could also be experienced emotionally. Debbie reflected on the period that she was living with her partner where even though she was physically expanding by 'eating lots of biscuits and drinking lots of tea', she felt emotionally reduced. Her partner at the time used silence as a form of control, and when he spoke, it was only to berate her.

Ava: What was it like living with him here?
Debbie: Aw [sighs], strange … because he preferred to sleep here [in the living room] and I slept this side.
Ava: So he didn't sleep in the same room as you?
Debbie: But he had to sleep … he'd have enough rest …
Ava: Really strange behaviour.
Debbie: Yes … I know I snore, but I've snored since from young, but I didn't have any problem.
Ava: But then you slept in the same bed before on the weekends when you met with him.
Debbie: Yep, yep strange.
Ava: What did your space feel like with somebody here, but not really here?
Debbie: I couldn't … it was suffocating me, because this is a person who doesn't talk as well.
Ava: Not at all?
Debbie: Oh he just said a few things and then that's it … I mean that part of my life has gone, but I don't know how I did it. I just switched off as well and it's only because the kids' there, he'd talk with the kids, but with somebody in the house like that … it would send me mad, mental.

Debbie describes her ex-partner's silence as colonising her space and ultimately her body/breath in that it was 'suffocating'. Towards the end of the extract Debbie imagines she would have experienced mental distress had she continued to live with her ex-partner.

Women's descriptions of the journeys they made as children, being moved from place to place, also appeared to occur without prior discussion, where they had little control over where they went and to whom. Multiple migrations left them with feelings of not belonging; this could also be experienced through the features of the physical spaces of their homes and emotional reduction from partners. The following sections describe how the above-mentioned contexts were manipulated by those who perpetrated violence and abuse.

Feeling Unsafe and Silenced by Male Abusers

A common finding in studies on child sexual abuse across racial and socio-economic differences is that men who chose to abuse children orchestrated opportunities to gain sexual access to them (Cotton and Vanstone 1996; Finkelhor 1999; Finkelhor and Browne 1985; Finkelhor et al. 1990).

> I got her to a position where she trusted me implicitly and consummated the relationship … The things I was telling myself – she won't tell; nobody would believe her because she is a known liar – a troublemaker; she's had it before, it's not going to hurt her. (Cotton and Vanstone 1996, p. 11)

The women's intimate partners, and the men who abused them, were aware of the contexts of their lives and had access to their bodies. For example, Patricia's mother suffered from low mood and had separated from Patricia's father, which meant that Patricia lived with her mother and, at times, with her father. Her paternal grandfather helped her mother by taking her to church once a week. He also sexually abused Patricia. While looking at a photograph of herself and one of a Bible, Patricia described her experience of sexual abuse.

Patricia: No [crying] … I picked that one and the other one is a Bible, it's just kind of … [crying] it shows the church [crying] because he was in the church as well [crying] and everybody used to like him. He was in the church so [sobs] I was in the

> church as well so it just reminds me [crying] of that bit of my life so that bit of my life that goes around in my head sometimes, that's why I chose the Bible to take a picture.

Three women brought in similar photos. Ellen commented that her primary school photo showed her innocence before experiencing sexual abuse. At the end of her first interview, she drew focus to the fact that all of her childhood photos with her mother had been torn into two by her stepfather and were now held together with sellotape as an illustration of his attempts to destroy her relationship with her mother. After the interview Ellen placed the photograph of herself as a small child on her wall of photographs in her home as a topic for future discussion with her child. She also held this personal photograph in parallel to a future discussion with her child about the television series *Roots*, based on the book of the same name where the author Alex Haley (1991/1977) attempts to assemble his family torn apart during the Oceanic slave era. This is a visual example of the women's awareness of a continuum of oppression.

After the breakdown of his marriage, Farah's father migrated to another country and brought his brother to look after Farah and her siblings.

> Farah: That was the worst ev:er move my father could have done, but he was thinking, it's his brother, he can stay with his children … so his brother … how can I describe him? A crazy, psychopath … paedophile … He started gradually … oh he wanted to know everything … he would do to you, to your head that much … He knew that I was the black sheep and how can I say, I was also his type … [H]e started to say it was cultural … I didn't know about my culture as much, when I was that age … [holding a pen and tensely wringing her hands around it] … he was saying I need to know if you are a virgin or not and that was … whew … hurt … what I know is … I remember… [hands Ava the pen] I don't wanna break it.

Farah's uncle sexually abused and then raped her. He called the sexual abuse 'just checking to see if you are still a virgin' and threatened to do worse to Farah's sisters if Farah did not comply. Despite her compliance,

Farah later discovered that her uncle had also sexually abused her sisters who Farah thinks now live with psychosis as a result of not talking about the abuse. Tajfel and Billig (1974) noted the term 'black sheep' is used as a means of scapegoating and to justify acts of violence (see also Gilfus 1993; Scheper-Hughes and Bourgois 2004). Farah's uncle exploited and perverted notions of 'culture' to legitimate his abusive practices.

Experiencing child sexual abuse in the context of being looked after by a male caregiver is a common finding in the literature on child sexual abuse (see Bolen 2001), where men are able to orchestrate the environment (Kelly 2007). The participants also reported that their abusers controlled and influenced their mothers/parents. Ann Morris (2009) draws on Raewyn Connell's (2009) concept of a 'gender regime' in her conceptualisation of an 'abusive household gender regime', the systematic and calculating tactics used by men who abuse members of their family (see also Bentley et al. 2017; Bernard 2016). Five of the nine women interviewed were sexually abused by male caregivers. While Rebecca was being looked after by the man who had sexually abused her, she also observed him taking girls into his bedroom and giggling. Below Evelyn describes her abuser's tactics.

Evelyn: I got home and she [her mother] was going to work and I went to sleep, but when I woke up she wasn't there … [M]aybe a week or two later … I was at my auntie's house and then I just started crying, crying, crying, it was as if I didn't try, but the tears were just coming … [S]he got worried then and she was thinking of sending me to a counsellor, but that [uncle who abused her] had talked her out of it [laughs] … She looked up to him, because she thought he was educated and wise, but he was just a master manipulator.

Rebecca: He [her stepfather] didn't have a very good opinion of women … he referred to women as whores … sometimes if he saw women on television, he used to make comments about them, he was definitely involved in a lot of pornography, he would read a lot and have out a lot of pornographic magazines … He didn't have a healthy attitude towards women … that was reflected in the way … he treated me and … other

> people … There were times when he was nice and he could be, nice, nice, nice and considerate, but he wasn't really … a children's person … I remember the time he said to me, I was about seven or eight; … 'I hate children, but I like you', and then other times, he would just be totally nasty … he would put me down … He would tell me that I am worthless, that I should be chopped up and fed to pigs.

Rebecca illustrates ways in which her stepfather set the spatial and bodily boundaries where objects (the pornographic magazines) also played a role in the violence behind the words 'chopped up and fed to pigs', the 'put-downs', and the abuse that came afterwards (see also Briscoe 2009; Riley 1985). The women who experienced/witnessed violence by a partner or mother's partner provided narratives where control, emotional abuse, and a regime of terror were in place within the household (Bentley et al. 2016; Bernard 2016; Morris 2009). For example, Ellen described how she and her mother were 'terrorised' by her stepfather.

Evan Stark (2007) devised the term 'coercive control' to describe how men through subtle and escalating tactics, such as monitoring their partners' movements and relationships with other men, gradually isolate women from their friends and family to increase their control over their lives. Consistent with research on violence from intimate partners, the women described ex-partners as controlling, or who attempted to control their finances and contraception and became more controlling and violent during their pregnancies.

> Isabelle: He used to slap you and-and, he wasn't a good person … going out of a night and arguments and then he would slap you and one time when I was pregnant he hit me with my shoes [on her head] when I was walking down the stairs and I begged him to come home with me, because I wasn't feeling very well … he's not coming, he's playing dominoes and I remember going home on my own and my waters burst, so I had to jump in the bath quickly and I had to go and get on the bus … it was so embarrassing, because them times you didn't have mobile phones.

Ava: So you had to get on the bus to go to the hospital?
Isabelle: I didn't know what to do, I went down to my doctor and the doctor it was the summer time as well, it was very embarrassing … I walked to my doctor, and they called the ambulance, they took me to hospital, so I had [her child] on my own.

Debbie: He was still controlling.
Ava: Was he always controlling all the way through the relationship?
Debbie: I think he was controlling, but I wasn't seeing it. Until things happened, when I started, perhaps asking for more, wanting more, putting pressure on him to decide what you want to do … I think that's when it started and his whole moods and stuff started changing.

Marriage or a desire for a heterosexual, committed relationship (see Ting and Panchanadeswaran 2009) that then became a form of control from intimate partners was also a theme. Here the construct of 'the good Black man' becomes a key rationale. According to bell hooks (1981, see also Mama 1995; Potter 2008), during the Oceanic slave era, cultural discourses constructed Black men as being sexually desirable to both White women and Black women, whereas Black women were deemed to be desirable only to Black men. Black female heterosexual desire and notions of Black male scarcity can both conceal and reveal forms of abuse.

Control through marriage for citizenship status (Mama 1989; Thiara 2013) was also a present for one of the women. The women recognised forms of control as a result of receiving support and through the interview discussions, or though gaining new knowledge about their ex-partners. For example during an altercation, Ellen's ex-partner slapped her. They had previously separated because of his constant accusations of her infidelity (see also Stark 2007). After she ended the relationship, Ellen later discovered said that he had been violent in a previous relationship.

Men's control and manipulation of the women, and their mothers' marginality, demonstrates the intersectional contexts of poverty, racism,

and migration. However, in the women's narratives of experiencing violence and abuse, male propriety and power plays a much larger role. This may illustrate that irrespective of women's ethnicity, or race, it is mostly the men closest to them who are able to exploit contextual vulnerabilities in the perpetration of violence and abuse. The contextual vulnerabilities were recent migration, lack of support for childcare, and needing to do paid work, poverty, and the desire for a committed heterosexual relationship, with control and violence escalating after having children.

Strategically Observing Abusers' Patterns

Observing the patterns of abusers is a coping strategy that is well documented in the findings from research with both women and children (Dobash and Dobash 1992; Mullender et al. 2005; Stark 2007). The desire to stop abuse and violence is a common reason why victim-survivors of child sexual abuse speak out or seek help (Finkelhor 1999). For two of the women who were abused as children, the fear of being raped compelled them to speak, and for another, being unable to cope with the rape and abuse she had experienced prompted her to seek support. After observing her mother's boyfriend gaining more control of the household and learning he had got a girl pregnant, Norma decided to leave home.

Norma: Even though I was re:ally tough, even though I was re:ally mouthy and I was re:ally feisty and I think I could handle myself, but I just remember thinking, if your m:other is gonna side with him, and he is li:ving in your house … [I]t's different if someone is not living in your house, you can pick up a knife and do wah you goh-a do, but when they're living in your house, you can't even sleep at night … knowing wah he'd done with this sixteen-year old girl … I just remember thinking I won't be able to handle this situation, this is a little bit bigger than me … that's basically what was the final straw … [I]t was heart-wrenching because I had to leave my

> brothers … 'cos that's really what kept me in the house with my mother … I was like, you've goh-a look after number one and I'm the only girl in the house.

Sue Lees (2002), in her study of African, Caribbean, and Dual heritage young women in local authority care, found that a combination of neglect, maltreatment and physical and sexual abuse, overwork at home, looking after younger siblings while their mothers were at work, as well as simultaneously attempting to fulfil formal educational qualifications were the precipitating factors prompting help seeking. Voluntarily entering local authority care, as Norma did, was also a common finding in Lee's (2002) study. Below Ellen describes how she could read the signals that she was about to be abused by her stepfather.

Ellen: [T]he sexual abuse started maybe when I was about thirteen, by my stepdad … I realised over the years if I didn't say something, or do something, he would've raped me because it was progressing … the abuse had got to a level where it never did before and I thought no, I can't have this … [H]e would always send my little brother out to play … 'cos where we lived across the road one side, it was the green and then behind that was a leisure centre … I used to be petrified being in the house with him, by myself, because it always happened when we were off school … I remember one day, I kept ringing on the phone to my friends asking, come round, come round, come round, we can do this and we can do that. And he was listening to me and when I put the phone down and he said 'I know wah you're doing'. He was very calculating. This particular day [afterwards] … I remember crying … couldn't stop crying and we saw one of his friends and he stopped, he pulled up and his friend must've said '[says her name] what's the matter with you?', and he [her stepdad] turned round and said, 'oh she just got licks' [was smacked], just to disguise what was really going on.

Ellen had observed her stepfather's patterns as a child and the rhythms and routines of abuse: making sure there was no one else in the house or sending her brother out to play, so that he could be alone with Ellen. In recalling her attempts to divert his abuse by inviting her friends over, Ellen also depicts the surroundings where she lived. The spatial anchoring of the recollection (Reavey 2010) also reveals Ellen's observations of the role of the physical environment in the facilitation of abuse: 'the green' that could hold her brother's attention and her stepfather eavesdropping on her phone calls. Not only were the patterns consistent, but the abuse was escalating where Ellen on one occasion was 'crying uncontrollably' hoping, yet failing, to alert her mother and a family friend.

Ellen's stepfather used the disciplinary method, 'she got licks [was smacked]', to divert his friend's attention from Ellen's distress and a possible opportunity to speak. It may not be deemed acceptable yet unremarkable to see a young girl crying uncontrollably after being disciplined. Lees (2002) found that conflicts in the home regarding physical discipline accounted for 60 per cent of the reasons why African and Caribbean young women self-referred into social service care. African and Caribbean cases of childhood maltreatment as are among the most severe that have come to public attention. Bernard and Gupta (2008) query acceptable notions of disciplining among African Caribbean communities. Therefore, knowledge and awareness of these forms of discipline, more than the prevalence of smacking, might mean that individuals in African and Caribbean communities dismiss possible signs of abuse among their social networks as normative disciplinary practices.

Despite the women's efforts to alert their non-abusing family members, those who abused them were considered more influential and trustworthy (Finkelhor and Browne 1985; Lamb 1999). This brings focus to the worthlessness of Black girlhood, discussed earlier in the chapter, within families, especially where there are intersections with childhood sexual abuse. Women also described reaching to a point where they had to get help, because of the level of emotional distress they were experiencing. Below Farah explains how she came to the decision to leave home, after a long period of looking after her siblings and experiencing sexual violence and abuse from her uncle.

Farah: [Voluntary organisation] helped me and I was in a room in a police station and my sister was having an episode [psychosis] in the street, so they took her into the police station and I was introduced to counselling and I knew that I was gonna get a break … by then I was so tired. I wasn't sleeping well … I was waiting for [siblings] to be okay and … to grow up so … This [was] my way out … I could escape, I felt like I did everything. I waited for so long for them to be mature enough, I was not needed any more and I needed a break so, I took it.

Two women waited for opportunities to leave homes where they experienced abuse, and where, in the above extract for example, looking after younger siblings could no longer be prioritised over the self, and this altered, and in some cases severed, those relationships. Four women took many years before they could speak about what had happened to them. In some cases they literally could not and, in others, they decided it was best not to speak.

Staying Silent for Safety

A central tenet throughout the women's narratives was the role of silence, and experiencing a continuum oppression that stays outside of testimony was also a theme.

Jacinta: I feel guilty … I could've really, I wanted to, but the reason why I didn't tell anyone in the end was the guys said that they would kill me, because … they kn[e]w where I lived, they could get me … I couldn't really tell anyone, but one time I was so confused with my life, I was just bathing and bathing and bathing, trying to clean off all these … I was living in a hostel at that time … the guys that did this to me, they pulled a knife on me, they said they were gonna pull out a gun to me … I could have knocked on somebody's door because there were loads of flats, but I was so scared I didn't do it and then

> I met my social worker and the police came round and someone told them and they tried to interview me and I still couldn't tell. … [T]he hostel where I was staying, one of the young ladies there, got beaten up because she said that somebody was looking for [says her name] … I was too scared to tell the police … somehow I should have, but I feel totally stupid up to this day, for not doing anything.

The fear of the rape remains current, as Jacinta is taken back to those memories when she goes past the spaces where they occurred (see also Reavey 2010). Common responses to sexual abuse and violence, and also shared by the women interviewed for this book, are to stay silent and/or view their bodies as dirty (Brison 1997; Coy 2009; Jordan 2008). This silence could also be viewed as Jacinta's internalisation of shame, that she might receive negative judgements had she spoken (see Lamb 1999). The theme of being judged was also prominent across the women's narratives, and given that they bore their burdens in silence, it may have appeared logical for them to persist in this strategy. Arguably Jacinta's silence is also about how she views the boys who raped her as more powerful than the police, calling to mind Raewyn Connell's (2009) notion of a gender order, where, in this case, Black masculinity as expressed through the rape, beatings, and threats of rape in the space of the hostel where Jacinta was staying is ultimately more of a threat than either police racism or police authority.

Speaking out and coming to voice is not universal among women, and some are more able to speak about their experiences than others (Scharff 2010). Speaking is not just about the voice of the one who speaks, but the capacity and willingness for listeners to hear (Ahmed 2000). Gayatri Spivak argues for 'testimonial ethics', which 'is not simply about speaking, but about *the conditions of possibility of hearing*' (cited in Ahmed 2000, p. 157, emphasis in original). Ahmed (2010b) writes that silence is a powerful act where to speak would risk further injury to self.

> Sometimes silence can be a tool of oppression; when you are silenced, whether by explicit force or by persuasion, it is not simply that you do not

> speak but that you are barred from participation in a conversation which nevertheless involves you. Sometimes silence is a strategic response to oppression; one that allows subjects to persist in their own way; one that acknowledges that, under certain circumstances, speech might not be empowering, let alone sensible. Sometimes you might speak out to announce a disagreement with what is being said, sometimes not, as to speak can mean to agree to participate in a conversation that you don't agree with. (Ahmed 2010b, p. xvi)

Using silence strategically for long periods, or being silenced, was a powerful theme in all of the women's narratives. Reflexively, recruiting women to be interviewed was challenging: I witnessed the shame in potential participants handing back fliers or saying that while the topic is an important one, many women will not speak. Women who were interviewed recounted abuse and violence narratives for family members and friends (see also Kelly 1988) sharing that while many women should speak, many will not. The women who self-selected into the study could be viewed as going against the grain of family, cultural, and community norms by speaking about violence and abuse (see also Hammonds 1997; Hill Collins 1990; Jeremiah et al. 2017; Wilson 1993). All the women chose to speak because they believed that by offering their narratives they might help women in similar situations (see also Campbell et al. 2009).

Physical and Emotional Abuse from Mothers

Mothers as abusers of their children, was also a prominent theme. All but one of the nine women described mothering using societal constructs of mothers as 'all seeing, all-caring, all nurturing' (Agana in Wilson 1993, p. 142; see also Chodorow 1978; Herman and Hirschman 2005; Hill Collins 1990). One described having a closer relationship to her father. Of the nine, four did not report abuse by their mothers, but five women did experience emotional abuse from their mothers, and three of them physical abuse. For some, experiencing abuse, neglect, and physical violence from their mothers unsettled their assumptions about mothers and mothering. Reflections on their own experience of being mothered were

especially potent when they became parents. Six of the women were parents and described becoming mothers as transformative, for some it enabled them to relive a lost childhood through parenting, while finding it difficult to reconcile that this process had not had a similar influence on their mothers. When reflecting on their childhoods, especially for four of the women who became othermothers to their siblings (see Gilford and Reynolds 2011), they expressed feelings of abandonment. These feelings created a profound ambivalence in their relationship to their parents, most specifically to their mothers. Below Norma describes her relationship with her mother.

Norma: It was emotionally void of any emotion.
Ava: No emotion?
Norma: No, it was just like being … well you just need to b:e a child … don't speak unless I speak to you, don't have a voice … unless I tell you to have a voice … physically it was quite abusive … because we got beaten for anything …
Ava: When you say beaten, was it very severe beatings?
Norma: [S]evere beatings that led us into care … At that point I realised that my mother doesn't really care about us that much, we just happened to be here, but she's not really that interested in us.

Harsh parental physical discipline has been cited as the primary reason for African American children being placed in foster care (Smetana 2000, cited in Barn 2001). Barn (2001) argues the reason why this may also be the case in the UK is that Black parents may be more likely to admit to using physical punishment as a form of discipline. Additionally, marginality may intersect with poverty placing extra pressures on the resources for many African and Caribbean families in the UK (Berthould 1998, cited in Lees 2002), as highlighted earlier in the chapter.

> Black daughters raised by mothers grappling with hostile environments have to come to terms with their feelings about the difference between the idealized versions of maternal love extant in popular culture and the strict and often troubled mothers in their lives. For a daughter, growing up

> means developing a better understanding that even though she may desire more affection and greater freedom, her mother's physical care and protection are acts of maternal love. (Hill Collins 1990, p. 127)

Hill Collins (1990) recognises structural pressures on the emotional proximity of Black mothers to their daughters; thus migration and intergenerational trauma might have affected the mothers of the women who were abused by them as children. However, the participants abused by their mothers both acknowledged this wider context and sought to name and have recognised the abuse they experienced. Haaken (1998) notes that dominant narratives of child abuse tend to overlook women's experiences of physical beatings and emotional abuse. This was not the case among the women interviewed. Jacinta made distinctions between feeling love from her father, even though he also physically disciplined her, and being abused by her mother. Women abused as children found it difficult to reconcile their experiences of mothering with their perception of the ideal (Hill Collins 1990), where they felt blamed for existing or felt relationally distant from their mothers. These themes were also evident in the literary narratives discussed earlier.

Jacinta: She [her mother] would say things to me like, 'this happened because of you', or you know 'my marriage went wrong because of you', or 'I didn't want to finish with your dad, because it was your fault'. Or she would say to me 'I wish you were dead'.

Women drew attention to how the intensity of the physical discipline combined with the absence of emotional reassurance led them to infer that the behaviour of their mothers towards them was abusive. This was the case for women born both outside and within the UK. That women should have the ability to parent and protect their children, irrespective of their life constraints and adversities, is a commonly accepted assumption (Phoenix 2009). What the narratives of abuse from mothers illuminated was a complex recognition of a continuum of oppression in their mothers' lives through migration, poverty, racism, youth, and naiveté, which was exploited by intimate partners/men. They were profoundly ambivalent in their attempts to rationalise why the abuse had come from

their mothers and were seeking recognition for the injustice of abuse for their childhood selves and those of their siblings.

Earlier Norma described how she was told by her mother: 'don't speak until I speak to you … don't have a voice', a patterning of silencing that was very effective. Women and girls are strategic in weighing up the costs and benefits from speaking, because choosing to speak might risk too much: personal safety and loss of family relationships (Ahmed 2010b; Moore 2010; Parpart 2010), as was the case with four of the women.

Telling in My Own Way

When women experience 'unspectacular' and everyday forms of violence, including rape and sexual abuse, they frequently adopt 'normative codes of gender, class and sexuality that demand female silencing of sexual wrongs in the name of honour and respectability' (Roy 2008, p. 323). Srila Roy (2008) further argues that while women may stay silent, bodies have ways of revealing experiences of violence and abuse (see also Rothchilds 2000). One woman 'did something' (which she did not disclose) to her body in order to be hospitalised so that the abuse would stop. In this example her body would evidence that something was wrong.

It was in the context of 'acting out' that Norma met with a psychologist as a last-stage intervention to keep her in school (see also Bentovim et al. 2009). While she attended the session, she still could not talk about the physical and emotional neglect she was experiencing.

Ava: Did you feel able to talk about what happened?

Norma: No, I probably couldn't really talk … a lot of the times you act out, don't you? So your behaviour says what your mind really wants to say and at that age you're not really able to communicate what's going on. But I really didn't start talking and telling people properly until I was about twenty-three, when I thought oh, this is really killing me, all this internal anger and hatred and upset … [E]ven … my extended family who probably thought perhaps that it wasn't really that bad, but they didn't live in our house, so they didn't know.

Ava: And when you were telling them what happened, how were they responding?
Norma: They don't really wanna know, do they?

Norma is discussing being literally unable as a child to speak, yet she acted out her rage to the extent that it kept her underweight, a problem for which she sought help from her GP. Norma eventually spoke about the abuse 20 years later in a work counselling session.

Women's behavioural testimonies also illustrate their attempts to stop the abuse. Five women described behavioural ways of communicating the abuse that they had experienced. However, their behavioural testimonies did not always raise the alarm that they were being abused. Alaggia (2004), in her study of disclosure patterns among men and women who had experienced child sexual abuse, notes that providing behavioural clues when they were children to the non-abusing parent was often unsuccessful. Thus, behavioural testimonies alone may be insufficient communications to others (Alaggia 2004). Patricia echoes this recalling that as a child she thought the messages were clear, but not recognised by her friends and family.

Patricia: I show[ed] so many signs … that I was being sexually abused. I remember writing … a magazine and it was explicit stuff … sexual stuff and when my friends would read it, they'd be looking at me and say 'what have you written [says her name]' and I'm like 'wah? What's wrong?' … I remember actually being at school … Why did I react that way when I was in maths and a teacher stuck his tongue at me and I freaked out? I absolutely freaked out … no it was happening … I didn't know why I was acting strange … I did not want to be in his class anymore … [T]here was no help. It was just actually really shit. It's only … because I'm in this field [violence against women support] … It never used to affect me when I was younger to be honest … but now I'm an adult, I can see how it's affected me.

Patricia uses this memory of her writing sexually explicit stories in the school magazine and 'acting strange' to illustrate how at the time she struggled with not being believed by her family. By going back

and getting evidence from her recollections of school, she resolves that the abuse 'was happening'. Her responses to her maths teacher sticking his tongue at her confirmed that she must have been telling the truth. Reflecting on her past after having had training as a violence support professional, Patricia can now read all the signs that appeared indecipherable to her friends and teachers at the time. However, while the women were silent, others around them also recognised abuse (see also Kelly 1993).

Norma: I think people know and when you're a child you don't really realise how many people know exactly what's going on … I suppose coming from the Caribbean, a lot of people just felt it's not excessive abuse because [smile] everybody else was in more or less the same boat, but looking back I would think it was quite a lot of physical abuse … at about the age of thirteen, fourteen, people outside of our family had actually alerted social services … Our school was aware … [W]hen you're young you tend to see things inside your house, what goes on in here stays in here.

Ava: How did you know that you had to keep it in your house?

Norma: I just think it was the way that we were raised, you don't discuss your business outside … of the house, it stays in the house, so even within your own family, extended family, nobody would really know how severe you're being neglected, or abused … [P]eople think the last thing is … you should always want to be with your parents no matter what they're doing to you. And I think it's … quite a Black thing to think well they're your parents, you should live with them, you should be obedient.

Ava: I'm interested as to how you know it's a Black thing.

Norma: I suppose it could be Black, White, Asian, everybody probably has the same thing, it's just that if you're Black, when you're growing up a lot of the times, you only know Black people, you don't know anybody else, we're all raised the same. And as you get older and you talk to your friends and you talk to other people you'll feel well everybody was going through some kind of turmoil, but nobody said because you

> keep it within … I suppose it's no different if you're sexually abused in the house and that could be any race of people, but you will know more Black people because that's the kind of ring you were hanging around with.

Looking back as adults and through the interviews enabled women to reflect on notions of culture, violence, and abuse. A mandate to be silent is a common finding in theorising and studies carried out with both African American and African and Caribbean heritage women and girls in the UK and confirmed by the women interviewed for this book. Staying silent about abuse might not necessarily be racialised, but based on assumptions individuals make because of commonly held views of 'normal' family life in any given racial group. Therefore it may not be straightforward for individuals to decouple family norms from racial group norms to identify abuse. The difficulty of naming abuse has been a consistent finding from studies where women are asked about their life experiences (Kelly 1988; Towns and Adams 2000). Later in her narrative Norma reasons that a lot of the families where she grew up had a lot of problems and were probably too overwhelmed to help her and her siblings. Goodman et al. (2009) and Richie (1996) found that in poor African American communities, while women experiencing violence in intimate partner contexts can be supported with childcare within their informal networks, their support networks can be equally limited in resources and capacity to offer emotional and financial assistance. The possible indecipherability of women's behavioural testimonies thus intersect with the perpetration of abuse and violence, poverty and a lack of resources, and extended periods of living with abuse for three of the nine women. The impact of what had happened to them could also be felt through reflection as adults.

A continuum of oppression—racism, poverty, recent migration, and intergenerational trauma manipulated by men and, to a lesser extent, by women they knew—assured the women's silence. Their attempts to show rather than speak about the abuse appeared difficult to identify for those around them. However, people around them did sense something was not quite right. This indicates the potential for neighbours, friends, and family to act to stop abuse.

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3

Silenced, Shamed, Speaking Out and the Strong Black Woman

This chapter explores how women negotiated the 'strong Black woman' persona, who carries her burdens in silence while presenting a front to friends, family, and colleagues. All of the women were more or less aware of the strong Black woman and whether or not they identified with this persona felt somewhat ashamed for having experienced violence and abuse in the first place, for not speaking about it sooner, or feeling they had inadvertently exposed their culture to stereotyping.

Previous research findings suggest when Black women are unable manage adverse experiences without displaying distress, they can be perceived by family members and friends as having failed to uphold the survival legacy handed down through the generations from slavery (Enander 2010; Beauboeuf-Lafontant 2007, 2008, 2009; Hill Collins 1990, 1998; Lorde 1980, 1984). To stop, cry, or feel unable to cope may usher in a catastrophic unravelling that might end in being detained in an institution, a fear voiced by women interviewed for this project (see also Washington 2001). Michael Taussig (2004) defined a public secret as one that everyone knows yet no one discusses. In a similar vein, Serrant-Green (2011) argues that people from marginalised groups are

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aware of pertinent topics for discussion, yet worry about how speaking publicly might affect the group. Experiencing violence and abuse as well as racist or sexist intrusions, a continuum of oppression, can be considered a public secret (Taussig 2004) or 'screaming silence' (Serrant-Green 2011) that perpetuates across generations of Black women if they adopt the persona of a strong Black woman.

A strong Black woman is a woman who resists seeking help, because this represents weakness and a loss of Black female identity (Beauboeuf-Lafontant 2008). The strong Black woman construct appeared explicitly in women's narratives either associated with the term 'Black woman' or when they were asked about whether being a Black woman had influenced where they sought help. Being strong was associated with 'not talking about your business' (see also Wilson 1993), stoically coping with innumerable burdens, not seeking help or delayed help-seeking (Kanyeredzi 2013). Three women reasoned that although all women needed to be strong, Black women had an extra quota of strength and resilience, possibly handed down from their ancestors via slavery and from witnessing their mothers who had to cope with working outside of the home and lone parenthood with little or no support. Growing up, most had observed this first-hand in their elder female relatives. Adopting a strong Black woman persona was, however, reported by women as ill-suited for living with the emotional legacies of violence and abuse. Yet, most had been encouraged by women they knew to show strength, not dwell on past abuse and violence and to ignore their emotions. Even though they resisted, they were read by others as embodying strength in the manner defined by the construct.

Adopting a strong Black woman persona might initially appear to elevate minoritised Black women but in reality it dehumanises them because it leaves little room to respond emotionally (Beauboeuf-Lafontant 2009). Within the confines of this construct, they are compelled to remedy the social injustices of marginalisation caused by poverty, migration, low socio-economic status and abuse through a veneer of strength and resilience. Identifying as a strong Black woman is therefore paradoxical (Romero 2000), both protective and stress inducing. Expectations of strength, whether or not women identify as strong Black women, can

create a complex dissonance between how a woman feels and how she thinks she ought to feel (Beauboeuf-Lafontant 2007).

West et al. (2016) carried out a study with 94 African American women at university on their perspectives of strong Black woman. Over half used terms reflecting strength, over a third used the term 'independent', and over a quarter (26%) 'caring'. Thirty-eight per cent defined strong Black woman in relation to career success or business acumen. Just under a third (29%) were well educated and just under a quarter (24%) associated strong Black woman with self-esteem and self-confidence. Of the 86 women who identified with the construct, over half (57%) thought it positively affected their mental health. However, consequences of 'fighting' negative images of Black women and 'aiming for perfection can stress you out' (West et al. 2016, p. 402), while the positive influences were a resource for educational aspiration. Similarly, Watson and Hunter (2016), in their study with African American women, found the strong Black woman persona to be both inspirational and aspirational, where women receiving support for low mood describe not being there yet, while those at university used the tome to rise to academic challenges.

The strong Black woman may be deeply embedded within the cultural landscape of African American life and experienced across the socioeconomic strata. This may explain it as a finding in studies on violence and abuse. For example, Washington (2001) found this construct described and named in interviews with African American victim-survivors of sexual violence. This cultural landscape also has contextual relevance in the UK. Kalathil et al. (2011) in interviews with African and Caribbean heritage mental health service users and Edge (2007, 2008, with MacKian 2010) with Caribbean heritage women experiencing low mood shortly after giving birth, all found strong Black woman themes, described as a contradiction between family/societal expectations and lived experiences of distress. Women interviewed for this project described how strength was learned from observation, parental guidance, and expectation, making distancing concepts of self from this controlling image (Hill Collins 1990) problematic. The overwhelming result of adopting a strong Black woman persona was to keep silent about experiences of violence and abuse.

Toughening of Self

In the interviews with women, strength was traced historically as an adaptive strategy associated with not seeking help for experiences of distress. For Norma, being strong means that Black women seek support only when they are at breaking point and this pattern of coping is also maintained by listening to advice from family and friends.

Norma: I think being a Black woman, you have a coping mechanism in your head, I don't know where it comes from, that is higher than the average woman. I wouldn't wanna say that other women aren't strong because every race of woman has to be strong… In order to survive, we're all strong. But I think being Black you sort of have a resilience that's second to none … I suppose a lot of it is because you can literally shut off things that have happened and just keep on going, probably sometimes until you end up with a nervous breakdown … I think there's a strength in us that could well have come from slavery, that just allowed us to keep on going … seeking help we probably don't do it as much as we probably should, because there's a lot that we cope with, on the way to being an adult, or being a functional human being … I'm not really sure what the answer is to that.

Ava: Do you think that those coping mechanisms act as a barrier?

Norma: A barrier yes

Ava: To seeking help?

Norma: [I]f you've got a lot of people around you who would say, 'well things that happened in your childhood, forget about it. It doesn't really make a difference'. But it does make a difference, if you listen to those voices a lot of the times, that's why a lot of us will go and go and go until you can't go any further, you are just completely finished.

Strength was also defined affectively and distinctive from the physical strength associated with men.

Ellen: [B]eing a Black woman means strength, being determined … [Y]our strength exceeds the strength of a man, but in a different way. It's not a physical strength at all … it's a mental strength … that Black women… do anything that it takes for her family ... That's a difficult one, because it's not what being a woman means, but being a Black woman and it's different, for me it is.

Ava: How does it differ from being a woman?

Ellen: I think about where I've grown up and who my grandmother is … but then I think about my social circles, with my girlfriends and all of them at some point have been single parent families. They may not be now.

For Ellen, being strong means managing the emotions and being a lone parent. Black women being considered emotionally strong as protective from societal assaults was also a finding in Potter's (2008) and Garfield's (2005) studies with African American women. Below Evelyn introduced 'this strong Black woman thing' without prompt:

Evelyn: [W]ithin my family it is all about protecting mum. Protecting this strong Black woman … we stay together and we project what we want others to think.

Ava: You mentioned this term strong Black woman.

Evelyn: My just trying to heal from it [sexual abuse], is her [mum] idea of dwelling on it and she thinks what strong people do, and what she has done, is put it behind them. That's a kind of strength, but how she's dealing with it is not dealing with it, but that's her definition. I think that within our culture we are taught to be strong, not to show weakness and to laugh at our children, to toughen and give the kids a beating.

Ava: And do you also think being strong is related to not talking about …

Evelyn: Not talking about it … not dealing with it really.

Being strong prepares women for the harshness of an unequal society, especially when they become mothers. Evelyn critiques notions of strength

among Black people. Being advised to be strong can be seen to produce a toughened self. Projecting strength and toughening children are defensive and protective acts of survival (see also Hill Collins 1990; Joseph 1993).

Women's conceptions of strength did chime with previous research on resilience among Black women facing a range of abuse, violence, and mental distress (Beauboeuf-Lafontant 2007, 2008, 2009; Edge 2007; Jackson and Greene 2000; Jones and Shorter-Gooden 2003; Kalathil et al. 2011; Washington 2001). The association between adopting a strong Black woman persona and mental distress and its connection with violence/abuse was also evident in interviews with women. African American women have been found to have had family discussions of experiences of particularly sexual violence that informed their expectations of what being strong might entail (Washington 2001; Wyatt 1992). Women interviewed for this project learned about family members' experiences of violence and abuse only after they had spoken about their own experiences. Preparatory lessons of strength were for the purposes of hardening the emotions and encouraging the adoption of silence about past abuse.

Ava: So how did you know that you were not associated with how you were expected to be as an individual?

Evelyn: Well she raised us like that, before the sexual abuse we were conditioned to not having feelings and be strong and I was the quiet shy one, so I wasn't even up for that … she might have tried to get me to toughen up and I suppose because I process through my emotions I wasn't gonna do that … [M]y siblings, they were quite tough, they were like a product of their environment. So I got that message from when I was little that you don't cry, you're strong … they rely on me for that because they support her and she has made it as a strong Black woman … [T]hey've done the same thing. So they can't reject her because to do that would be like rejecting themselves [smiles] and I suppose that that they don't want themselves to feel damaged … They all call me their favourite one [laughs] that's a contradiction.

Being 'strong' enables Evelyn's sisters to avoid 'feeling damaged'. This 'toughening' of self can be likened to the process of gaining callouses on

the feet to enable a lifetime of walking as a leisure activity (Stone 2002), and in the above extract it is seen to erode the processing of the emotions. It could be argued that mothers who perpetrated physical and emotional abuse against the five women when they were children were attempting to 'toughen' their children. A generational shift can be identified here, where 'toughening' children was viewed by women as abusive. However, while women did not agree with toughening their own children, they assumed the strong Black woman persona to manage their everyday life challenges.

Interestingly, seven of the nine women described themselves as 'quiet', 'shy', 'the good girl': simultaneously, the antithesis to projecting strength or aggression (Mama 2000), yet still expected to stoically bear their burdens in silence and support those who turn to them to offload. Richie (1996) associated 'special treatment' as children—being complimented on caring skills and household chores—described by the women she interviewed, with wanting to stay with abusive partners. Alike the women in Potter's (2008) study, the women interviewed for this project did not describe themselves as receiving special treatment. They were expected to emotionally support family members. Even those described as less than strong, and who were abused as children, were expected to look after younger siblings and continue this practice into adulthood. Potter (2008) concluded that the strong Black woman construct is both a stereotype and a lived experience for African American women.

Other permutations of strength included being Black, female, and single, feeling excluded from the range of available femininities where women risk becoming isolated either by alliances with Black men or by claiming a feminist or anti-violence and abuse stance. A failed choice (see also McRobbie [2009] for a discussion of how femininity is constructed) may result in whatever a woman takes (Crenshaw 1994; Jackson and Greene 2000).

Ava: [Do] you relate anything about being married to being a Black woman?

Debbie: I think so, too many of us don't have a partner and too many of us think oh yes we are too independent and we don't want a partner to spoil things for us … I think we need companionship in our adult lives … and not being hard and harsh, being on your own, trying to do too many things on your own, you need that support …

Ava: Do you think that's how some women in your experience construct marriage as something that holds you back?

Debbie: I don't feel that way ... yes and no. I guess if I wasn't working, it could have h[e]ld me back, because when I want to go somewhere with me and the kids, I say we're going somewhere, I buy the ticket … But if I had to depend on him [her ex-partner] … then I may not have gone anywhere. So independence helps you do, or achieve a bit more than being dependent on someone.

Tensions continued around women's positioning as Black women, 'the women have become men', or highlighted in the contradictory and limited social discourses of femininity through terms such as 'masculine sluts', conflating autonomy with masculinisation. Black women's autonomy therefore is in conflict with family/societal expectations (Hill Collins 1990, 1998; Mama 2000; Reynolds 1997). The strong Black woman can be seen to be recast as the 'too Independent' Black woman in the above-mentioned extract. In Watson and Hunter (2016), women who were married described having to unlearn independence and accept support from spouses.

The term 'Black woman' appeared laden with layers of restrictive associations. Patricia, for example, associated this term with being perceived as being aggressive at work despite her own self-perception as someone lacking in confidence (see also Alleyne 2004; Noble 2016). Whether the self has been toughened or not, Black women may still be read as tough by others.

Racialised Gendered Shame and the Strong Black Woman

Whilst women observed in others and were themselves encouraged to show strength, they simultaneously resisted and practised being strong Black woman. They described their admiration for the independence of their elder female relatives, 'getting on with' childcare and employment

responsibilities in the absence of support. They also experienced shame in failing to live up to expectations of strength or by thinking that asking for help would be perceived as 'needy'. Evelyn, who earlier dis-identified with the strong Black woman construct, recollects feeling ashamed because she was crying in her therapist's office.

Evelyn: The shame comes from the conditioning that you grew up with … maybe from being a minority and feeling judged … I used to feel like I'm being judged and maybe my lifestyle is being judged. When you do go for help, the majority is from an outsider culture ... So it might make things feel more acute, but then I've also experienced therapy from a Black woman and it still felt the same [laughs] it's still there [laughs].

Ava: What do you now think those feelings are about? Do you think those feelings are about culture?

Evelyn: I think those feelings are about a lack of emotional education, or a lack of being emotionally brave, so when you encounter that wave of feelings and emotions, you encounter it as though you are a child and then you feel embarrassed because you know you are an adult … [Y]ou have these expectations that I'm a woman and I'm supposed to know what to think and what to do and I mustn't speak my business unless I'm with Black people [laughs], you feel at a loss and you don't feel [any] power there.

The shame of feeling her emotions evokes her mother's toughening lessons described earlier and how disempowering it can be to experience 'waves of feelings' as an adult. Viveka Enander (2010) developed the concept of gendered shame in her study with Swedish women who had experienced violence from their intimate partners. Enander (2010) explores the shame women felt since they lived in a 'gender-equal' Nordic context, yet had ended up in relationships with men who were violent towards them. She draws parallels with Morrison et al.'s (2006) study with African American women who described feeling ashamed, since as Black women they should know better than be victimised by intimate partners. In both studies, cultural constructs were used selectively to

locate shame within, where women referred to themselves as 'stupid'. As a consequence, gendered shame held them in abusive situations, since they chose not to talk to their support networks, or ask for help (see also Jeremiah et al. 2017). This concept is extended here to 'racialised gendered shame' for women interviewed for this project.

Debbie: I was slapped by a partner and although I seek help, information came back to me, but I just stayed still … I did not act on that right away, but eventually and it's sort of shameful to tell anybody that that sort of thing has happened to you, and nobody could see it.

Ava: Do you think it is shameful now, or while it was happening?

Debbie: While it was happening, I felt the shame then, but I couldn't have done anything because that night it happened, I went home. I left one of the children there, because she didn't want to stay with me. So I was saying I should have taken my children home with me, but one wanted to stay.

Debbie feels ashamed for not ending the relationship sooner. Shame fulfils the function of reining behaviours back to the acceptable norm (Ahmed 2004; Hochschild 1983). This can be seen in both Debbie's and Evelyn's extracts, where they are viewing their responses in the light of how they ought to have responded: in Evelyn's case 'feeling judged' and contravening family expectations; and in Debbie's case feeling that she should have taken her children, and, elsewhere in her narrative, recommitting herself to her ex-partner by becoming more isolated from her friends.

Racialised gendered shame for Debbie and Isabelle also came from being brought up in loving families and then experiencing violence from partners. Debbie felt more ashamed after being advised by her mother to 'get strong' and leave her ex-partner. Being advised to leave a relationship was in contrast to studies finding African American women being encouraged to stay with partners to maintain their middle-class two-parent family status.

Paul Gilroy (2000), in his articulation of the Black Atlantic, charts the sharing of intellectual and cultural traditions between Black communi-

ties in the UK and in America. Ann Phoenix (2011) elaborates this connection for its importance in connecting experiences of race, gender, and class in Black feminist activism in the UK during the 1970s/1980s. The strong Black woman persona is an example of this cultural tradition. One woman made reference to the African American film *Soul Food* (1997) and the matriarch who held the family's relationships together.

The strong Black woman construct was found to delay the women's help-seeking through a linked process of racialised gendered shaming. Those who adopted the persona did so through their coping strategies and were too ashamed to seek support. Those who actively resisted the construct were also shamed through realising how embedded concepts of strength were when they attempted to talk or seek support for violence and abuse. Women were in various stages from admiring to practising or resisting the strong Black woman persona, yet still felt its regulatory and shaming effects. The shame here described as racialised gendered shame also reflects the resultant feelings from resisting the strong Black woman construct, whereas the shame found in studies with African American women and Caribbean heritage women in the UK came from adopting or aspiring to the strong Black woman persona, yet feeling emotionally distressed.

Cacophonous Responses and Being Silenced

Despite attempts at silencing, women did eventually come to a point where they felt able to speak. A common response to speaking about sexual abuse as children was for family members to accuse them of lying (see Finkelhor and Browne 1985; Lamb 1999; Wilson 1993). When Rebecca spoke about the abuse from a family friend, her stepfather responded by saying she and her siblings would be taken into care where she would be raped. He told her that perhaps she would also accuse him of rape, thereby reformulating her as a liar. Or it was communicated to women that they were dwelling on a past they should sooner escape and put behind them (see Evelyn above). Children often feel a sense of betrayal by family members who fail to respond protectively when they speak about the abuse. When family members do not believe children, they can

feel an even greater sense of betrayal (Finkelhor and Browne 1985). The responses to women when they spoke were cacophonous and theatrical whereby the men accused of abuse made their denials, or through the shouting and high-expressed emotions from members of their families. Thus the women's voices became drowned out by such responses.

'Blah-blah-blah-der-der-der-der-der' was the phrase used by three women in their descriptions of responses to them speaking about experiences of abuse. This phrase also calls to mind Debbie Tucker Green's (2003) play about child sexual abuse in a Black British family where the protagonist DAWTA begins to speak about the sexual abuse from her father, but instead of support, she becomes the problem and the focus, whereas her father is discussed by her siblings with much more sympathy (see also Ahmed 2010a).

Despite empathising with the structural constraints experienced by their mothers, seven women who were abused or raped as children also held their mothers accountable for how they responded on hearing about the sexual abuse/rape. Some victim-survivors of sexual abuse believe that their mothers colluded with their abuser. Ideals of mothering persisted in how the women wanted to make their mothers accountable for their roles as parents who abandoned them as children: the assumption being that their mothers had the power and resources to protect them from abuse. Three women reported feeling despair, emotional distress, and rage as children because they could not understand why they had no consistent parent (mother) around. Ambivalence surrounded what they saw as their mothers' complicity in the abuse, through knowing it had occurred and insufficient support in the aftermath. Four women challenged their mothers later in life. Two were successful at resolving issues and rebuilding those relationships. One concluded, 'My mother couldn't give a fuck.'

Evelyn: I confronted my mum because when I was in therapy … she was due to come back from [country] … I felt … a desire to share with her some of my discoveries, without blaming her … I put it all in a letter and I was … sure to make … the letter was about me … about feeling abandoned, abused and that she didn't love me and the way she didn't support me and how she went away a lot and … at some point in the conversation

she did cry and I remember one tear falling from one of her eyes … She didn't really have much to say … she had to do a bit of thinking … she then went back and told my sisters and then gave it a different spin. She said that I blamed her for everything, so she got all their sympathy and understanding and then I didn't get any … [T]here was another time maybe two or three years after that … But by the time I shared what I had to say about him, what I had to say about her, became kind of put back and she was thinking about him. So she left there feeling angry … within a month, they broke their relationship … but there was a month where they were friends again, for a whole year after that, he was still around the house, still around children.

Ava: Even though she'd known what he did?

Evelyn: And my children have never stayed at her house, never and she's never asked and I think she's too afraid of what the answer would be.

Claudia Bernard's (2001) study with non-abusing mothers of African and Caribbean victim-survivors of child sexual abuse found similar responses of denial and blame. As with Evelyn's extract above ideals of mothering gained from popular television programmes were at odds with lived experiences of child abuse and neglect. This could also be read as misrecognition of the continuum of oppression experienced by their mothers that may have limited their mothers' ability to hear testimonies of abuse. In one of the interviews where the woman brought in photos of her mother and sibling, I remarked on how all of the people depicted looked like siblings. She then reflected on how young her mother had been in a manner that she had not considered before. Seeing her mother's youth through the image was a shock and one she returned to in a subsequent interview. Attempts to understand mother-daughter relationships persisted in the women's current contemplations of past feelings of parental abandonment.

Farah: [M]y mother … it's just always about her … how she suffered … [S]he just thinks she has the right because she pushed. Oh

> my God, I am so sorry, but that's not the way it works for me [laughs] … we can never repay the pain that she felt … 'I had you when I was young' … I do have a lot of memories of her saying that she wanted to leave us and people would come, begging her to stay … to come back to us … it wasn't the first time she did that. Anytime that she had a row with my father, she walked out … She had a strange problem with walking out.

Black mother-daughter relationships have been discussed as preparation for the harsh realities of racism and sexism through teaching self-reliance and the importance of being educationally and financially independent. Some writers caution against discourses of mothering and Black mother-daughter relationships, because they leave women abused by their mothers torn between notions of how their relationships with their mothers should be and how it actually is/was (Boyce-Davies 1994; Hill Collins 2009; hooks 1981). There was evidence of this struggle among the women abused in childhood, who attempted to rekindle relationships with their mothers when they became mothers, with differing outcomes.

Women abused in childhood continue to be challenged by the recollections of emotional neglect (Briere 1992; Finkelhor 1999; Haaken 1999). The women's repeated attempts to rebuild relationships with their mothers could also be viewed as an attempt to remedy feelings of neglect, abandonment, and emotional abuse.

Liar-Liar: Sweep and Race It Under the Carpet

As noted in the literature on adults abused as children, the women were commonly not believed (Finkelhor 1999; Lamb 1999) or not compassionately supported when they started speaking about the abuse to family members. Farah's father listened to her account of abuse and then coerced her to recant her allegation.

> Farah: I remember when I told him I was at [tube station], we were in [place] even though I did not know the names of those sta-

> tions, [tube station] was the first station that I ever remembered … and then we went to our house and the room was black. He didn't even put on the light … I was sitting on the bed and he was sitting on a chair … He made me tell him every detail, literally … [T]hen he took the Quran and he opened it and he said, 'If you put your hand on it [the Quran] and you're lying, you're gonna go to hell' … I knew I could do that, because I knew that I was telling the truth, so I actually put my hand on it [the Quran].
>
> … I told my ex-husband that I've been sexually abused and he was sympathetic to that. Later on I had to tell him that I lied … I told my father, who made me go back to aa:ll those people and say I was lying … and I did … even though he [her father] actually knew that I wasn't … because I [swore] it to the Quran. He asked me to do it for my own dignity and for the family's dignity. He said, 'You will never understand. But people will see y:ou as the tramp, the one who let it happen … [W]e're not European, so stop being Western. We're not Western, because they will not understand … and people will judge you, so shut up and it will go away'.

Farah's vivid spatiotemporal recollections of the scene (Reavey 2010; Reavey and Brown 2009) of her secondary victimisation (Campbell and Raja 1999) from her father are powerful for the anchors of colour, space, and place that left traces on her notions of the truth for years afterwards. This had been one of many instances in Farah's narrative where culture had been used exploitatively. Her abuser exploited the practice of 'virginity-checking' to facilitate his sexual abuse (see Chap. 2), and in the extract above Farah's father makes distinctions between 'we' and 'Western culture' to facilitate a cover-up, or to silence her from speaking about the sexual abuse. Farah was expected to be the bearer of 'dignity' for both the family and their culture, where she is encouraged to 'shut up' for her own protection against being judged (see also Lucea et al. 2013; Tyagi 2001). Her father's advice to be silent could also be viewed as another example of racialised gendered shame as he is indicating how Farah ought to feel and respond. Elsewhere in her narrative, Farah reports that her father

often chides her for being 'weak', in that she was unable to fight off her abuser. All of the women abused as children reported either ongoing references to past experiences of abuse by family members or ongoing denials. These interchanges were also burdensome.

Admitting to her husband that she had lied was all the more painful, because he had been a source of support. Farah eventually believed her truth about the sexual abuse after being diagnosed with a sexually transmitted infection. Patricia's resolve, 'I know I'm telling the truth', was echoed in all the narratives of the women who were abused as children, and consequently, a fear of not being believed or being judged by services became reasons to stop speaking about past abuse for long periods afterwards (see Ahrens 2006; Jordan 2008, 2012). Some held their mothers specifically responsible for hearing their testimony and stopping the abuse. When Ellen's first attempts to talk about the abuse to her mother were unsuccessful, she persisted.

Ellen: She confronted him and he called me a liar … [M]y bedroom door was opened, the light switched on and my mum said to me … 'come here, I need to talk to you'. So I got pulled out of my bed into the bedroom … parents' bedroom … on a chair … in front of him, my mum said to me, 'Right, tell me in front of him what you told me' [crying] … I said it …. I don't believe that I was lying … I was tryin[g] [to] give my mum an example, because there was just this one occasion, where I was like, no, this has to stop … [W]hat he was doing to me … I felt as though I was being groomed … but it's almost like he wanted me to be like mum's stand-in.

The six women who experienced child sexual abuse protested the way in which their testimonies were received by their families and a theme of feeling they were 'put on trial' where they would be faced with their abusers who always responded with denials (see also Black 2012; Bolen 2001) was a common experience. Towards the end of her extract, Ellen ponders whether she was her mother's sexual substitute, a commonly accepted view of child sexual abuse (Fyfe 2007; Herman and Hirschman 2005; Wilson 1993). Melba Wilson (1993) attributed this both to men's prac-

tices of masculinity bolstered by a social discourse of the sexual agency and availability of Black girls.

The coming to voice and speak-outs from second-wave feminist activism did not sufficiently occur in Black communities either in the UK or the USA, leaving women's experiences of child sexual abuse normatively enshrouded in silence (Wilson 1993; see also Scharff 2010). The women were interviewed for this project almost 20 years after Wilson's (1993) study, and while this may not be representative of all Black victim-survivors of child sexual abuse in the UK, some of the themes resonate within the women's narratives. Ellen's mother waited a year before she left Ellen's stepfather. Ellen later found out it was because an aunt had told her mother that Ellen must have been lying. Rebecca Bolen (2001) remarks on the societal-wide denial of the commonality of child sexual abuse perpetrated by ordinary men, giving credence to this form of abuse as transcending racial and sociopolitical eras. While Campbell et al. (2017) relate the silencing to systemic and structural violence from colonialism, racism, and male propriety for women in Caribbean contexts. Patricia also explained below the response to speaking about the sexual abuse from her grandfather.

Patricia: I think people don't like to admit that … [child sexual abuse] happens quite a lot, it happened to me … especially in the church, people have gotta keep things quiet in there … I was really disappointed over the years how family members didn't believe me, I think my brother didn't believe me either, but he's a perp[etrator]. He … was like how could I sleep at his [grandfather's] house … I feel betrayed really a lot of the time.

Both familial and institutional silencing about sexual abuse occurred within the church Patricia attended with her grandfather (see also Fortune and Enger 2006). Patricia notes her brother and, elsewhere in her narrative, her father, not believing her. Supportive families enable children to cope better in the aftermath of abuse (Finkelhor 1999). One woman (Rebecca) was supported by her grandmother after speaking about the abuse. None of the other women felt supported by immediate family

members. Thus, speaking about sexual abuse placed them as outsiders, occupying the relational borders of their families for many years.

> Rebecca: I don't think people really wanted to believe it … I am sorry to say, but when it comes to Black people, they don't really want to appreciate that things can happen really bad in any of their communities and just as White … like in any other community … [S]omeone said to me 'Black people don't do those things' … I've noticed that there are many women who have suffered experiences and the same thing as well and some of it worse [giggles nervously] … but they don't want to talk about it … 'no it's not Black people, it's only happens to White people'.

Family responses to the women speaking about the abuse they experienced as children were to 'brush it under the carpet', by claiming, as mentioned earlier, that Black people do not engage in child sexual abuse. Rebecca discussed self-identifying as Black and participating in this project as a political act to illustrate how her lived experiences run counter to those claims. Silencing accounts of sexual abuse may form part of a collective defence to pathology or racialised gendered shaming enacted by members of minoritised groups. Racialised gendered shaming may also result from having a paradoxical relationship to or identification with the strong Black woman construct that may make it more difficult for Black women to think they will be believed when they speak about experiences of abuse.

Therefore protecting from the impact of one form of violence—racism—may reinforce the silencing of another: child sexual abuse, through a process of collective denial (see also Bogle 1988; Wilson 1993). Denying the existence of child sexual abuse in Black communities, means that it receives little or no political or collective attention among Black communities (Wilson 1993; see also Bolen 2001). Similarly, one woman, who has had intimate relationships with both men and women, described being silent about her sexuality as this would cut her off from her siblings. Evelyn Hammonds (Hammonds 1997, 2002) discusses the limited

avenues for Black women to discuss sexuality outside of the heterosexual norm.

Miranda Fricker (2008) describes 'testimonial justice' as how people should respond when individuals speak about experiences of violence and abuse. This requires recognition and belief as outright denial, especially before listening to accounts, is another form of violence. Speaking about violence and abuse for the women in this project came with many risks (see also Brown et al. 2011), the most profound being becoming an outsider within their families and communities. Patricia discusses how she would have preferred to be treated by her family when she told them about her experiences of sexual abuse.

Patricia: I would've preferred a better response from my mum, but she didn't know what to do at the time. I would have preferred a better response from all my family. It would've been good to have spoken to somebody … someone to tell me 'we believe you' … I just didn't feel I had enough professional support … I didn't know what the outcome was, I just remembered just knowing that he was about … I'd seen him in his car … I thought well obviously he hadn't been arrested … nothing happened, everything got brushed under the carpet … just as if it just disappeared in a puff of smoke really.

The responses to speaking were much like those reported by Ullman and Filipas (2001) in the USA, where the minoritised women had more negative social reactions. Women's first and subsequent attempts to speak about past experiences of abuse were responded to with denials and blame and resulted in occupying outsider-within positions in their families.

Wearing the Mask

Many of the women also described wearing the mask of confidence, of having everything under control, tied into adopting the persona of the strong Black woman introduced earlier in the chapter. Ellen brought a photo of her with heavy make-up in a wooden frame, wrapped in cloth,

framing her face to typify living with abuse/violence experiences. She described how using this mask, she performs motherhood for her child and is a good employee. Patricia also described faking confidence, as she hates public speaking, and would mask it by trying to make herself less visible, dressing down for group presentations at university, staying in the background, and feeling her heart bursting out of her chest, unable to maintain eye contact. Patricia thinks her mask is obviously effective, because her work colleagues read her as confident and well put together, whereas she feels otherwise. Norma, when describing her selection of past photos, remarked on her smile in all of her photos: how it masks the unhappiness and turmoil in her life (see also Spence 1991) at the time due to the abuse she was experiencing.

The mask being described is a face/persona to hide the turmoil when impacts of abuse and violence are felt, but perhaps too painful to articulate, and for self-preservation by not leaving the self too open for scrutiny. Black women may wear the mask of strength because they believe they have fewer options for public displays of vulnerability and pain. Women interviewed for this project described a variety of masks for the self: at work, as parents, as partners managing abuse, and as victim-survivors of violence and abuse. Wearing the mask is a consistent symbolic representation of the strong Black woman, also found in research with African American women (Beauboeuf-Lafontant 2008; Romero 2000; Watson and Hunter 2016; West et al. 2016). What the mask also represents is how the women were 'shadow-boxing' (James 1999) the multiple intrusions, abuses, and forms of violence: the continuum of oppression. These activities may be invisible to those whom they encounter.

When women spoke to others about experiences of violence and abuse, common responses were denial, minimisation, and accusations of confabulation. By speaking the women had broken an unspoken code or rule of intergenerational silence, making audible the public secret (Taussig 2004), the 'screaming silence' (Serrant-Green 2011) through their talking back (Hill Collins 1998; Lorde 1995), and speaking out about the violence and abuse they had experienced. This could also be read as contravening family or cultural norms for emotional displays or 'feeling rules' (Hochschild 1983).

A common finding in previous studies is that victim-survivors of child sexual abuse wait until adulthood to talk about their experiences. The women interviewed for this book did not. The silencing process may be a contributory factor to what appears as delayed help-seeking among Black women. The responses to speaking made the abuse and violence less of an issue or infringement in their families' eyes, thus incurring self-blame and shame among the women, conceptualised here as racialised gendered shame. Speaking about abuse and violence even in a safe setting, for some of the women, became shame inducing.

Speaking about abuse and violence opens up some channels for help and assistance, largely outside of families, and closes down others: the desired and hoped-for support from close relatives. The responses may also be attributed to the wider social responses of denial to childhood sexual abuse. However, when considered in line with the treatment of their male counterparts, the value of Black girlhood/womanhood appears wanting (Pierce-Baker 2000; Richie 1996), where the boys retained the patriarchal power of judgement over their sisters' accounts of abuse and are less sanctioned for their misbehaviour as children. Most of the women abused as children became the bearers of family shame and honour, especially at the time they spoke about the abuse. Calling the women liars relationally removed or marginalised them within their families, thereby upholding the honour and concealing the shame and paradoxically positioned the women as suitable listeners for relatives to offload.

Brison (1997), Fricker (2008), and Spivak (2000 cited in Ahmed 2010b) similarly argue for the audience to a testimony to hear the one who testifies. The space and audience provided by the interviews may have presented one of the few occasions where women had the opportunity to speak freely about violence/abuse.

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4

Silenced and Out of Place: Feeling Like a Nugatory Self

This chapter illuminates how women also experienced subtle and overt forms of racism and sexism. This included feeling judged in public spaces, and among family and friends feeling intruded by comments about their bodies, hair, and skin tone, intimating that they are somehow not enough. Women also narrated their resistance to negating experiences. Women shared comments made about their bodies, skin tone, hair/hairstyles, and a subtle, discomforting awareness of themselves as 'other' that occurred when in public spaces or at home as well as feelings that morphed between, for example, feeling different as in diverse and cosmopolitan, and different as in 'less-than'. *The Oxford English Dictionary* definition of nugatory is 'useless; of no value or importance' (OED 2010). Feeling like 'a nugatory self' captures how women described the impossibility of challenging assumptions associated with their physical characteristics and the intersections with violence and abuse experiences.

Sara Ahmed (2004) argues that we feel our way through the world via a series of 'emotional intensities' (p. 12), and emotions are created through interactions with others. She argues that types of emotions or affects become associated with objects. An object may be an idea or discourse

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about groups of individuals. For Black and Asian people, streets or regions of the UK may be more or less racist (Back 2005). Examining how individuals negotiate racialised geographical spaces may make visible how they resist and adapt (Back 2005) to forms of oppression. Relatedly, it has been argued that African American girls may undergo processes of 'becoming-negro' or 'becoming-colored girls' whereby they make distinctions between their objective selves, informed by negative stereotypes of Black women's bodies, hair, and skin tone and their subjective experiences of their bodies/self. This is also the context in which they understand violence and abuse (Garfield 2005). Racialised values attributed to Black women's skin tone and hair texture can also extend to their sexuality and role expectations in intimate relationships: darker-skinned women may be told by their intimate partners that they are not 'marrying material' and that the longer a woman's hair and the closer her skin tone to the European ideal, the higher the expectation for heterosexual relationship success (Few et al. 2003; Garfield 2005; Nelson 1997; Valandra 2007).

An example of this is gold medallist gymnast Gabrielle Douglas being trolled on social media by African American women, both during the London 2012 and the Rio 2016 Olympic games, about her hair's inability to be scooped into a bun because of its length. 'I read certain comments, and I'm like: 'Whoa, whoa, whoa, that is far from me and far from my personality,' Douglas said. 'And people just attacking you and your hair, blah, blah, blah. I mean, did I choose my hair texture? No. And I'm actually grateful, you know, having this hair on my head. Sometimes it's like: wow!' (*The Guardian*, August 15, 2016).

Feeling Intruded by Racialisation

A key challenge for this project was how to explore lived experiences of violence and abuse and the influence of racial categories, without seeming reductive. Descriptions provided by the nine women when asked about their racial or ethnic background were as varied as the individual women. All nine critiqued, resisted, and deconstructed their socially assigned racial categories and ethnicity, especially the terminology 'Black woman', what being a Black woman meant to them and whether it had

influenced how they sought help. Patricia describes below experiences of feeling racially different when in public spaces:

Ava: [W]hat does being a Black woman mean to you?
Patricia: It don't mean nuh'en … I look at my whole being, not just being a Black woman … when I look at everyone else around me and in the UK and being Black … I am just different … I dunno if it means anything to me … or how it means to me.
Ava: Okay, and … I guess related to that, I wanted to ask whether … if it doesn't mean anything to you, I dunno, but I'll …
Patricia: I feel like what it means to me is I feel is a pathology … just being a minority … for example at a meeting … I often have a lot of heads around me are White and I'm probably gonna be the only one there that's Black and then it feels like I'm a minority. I like being Black, I like difference and I like having my heritage that is different from everybody else's.
Ava: Would you say then that it's more of a feeling you get when you're in particular environments? Is it just in general when you leave your house, or is it just in specific environments?
Patricia: I think in professional environments, I feel different in professional environments. When I'm out, I don't feel anything really, but I enjoy being different.

Being Black, for Patricia, may not mean anything, is a part of her heritage, is looking 'different', but feels 'like a pathology' in professional spaces. Patricia's feelings of 'minority' and 'pathology' evokes Frantz Fanon's (2008/1952) triple splitting of his body schema, after being pointed out as a Black man by a White child on an early twentieth-century Paris street. Patricia is, however, not discussing being racially abused, but feeling 'different', feeling negated. Ahmed (2007) builds on Fanon's (2008/1952) phenomenology of race to argue that 'whiteness could be described as an ongoing and unfinished history, which orientates bodies in specific directions, affecting how they 'take up' space' (p. 151). Ahmed uses phenomenologist Edmund Husserl (1969) in his observations, while at his desk in his home office, of his family that are objects in the background of his work, to discuss how Whiteness orients

some objects and people as familiar and others not. Ahmed argues that bodies have a memory and racialised bodies are the outward representations of colonial histories. For non-White bodies, this is a representation of pathology and domination, and for White bodies the privilege of passing unnoticed, familiarity, and of being at home, not simply of numerical majorities. This familiar fluidity of movement within public spaces, without being stopped, stared at, or standing out (Ahmed 2007), could also mean that although White bodies may feel less comfortable within non-White spaces, this discomfort is not associated with pathology. Ahmed (2007) then uses Bourdieu (1977) to explore how Whiteness inhabits public spaces. For Bourdieu (1977), habits are the unconscious orientations of bodies that do not draw attention to their actions. For Ahmed, Bourdieu's habit body describes Whiteness and White bodies.

Institutions can also be thought of as public spaces. 'The effect of this "around whiteness" is the institutionalization of a certain "likeness", which makes non-white bodies feel uncomfortable, exposed, visible, different, when they take up this space' (Ahmed 2007, p. 175). If bodies do not pass, they become bodies that are 'out of place' (2007, p. 159), but not entirely. High socio-economic or middle-class status may enable a body to fit in more, but bodies can be also ejected from Whiteness. Ahmed cites Husserl's Jewishness that lost him his professorship, and argues that while she is able to work and theorise about Whiteness, she still bears its effects as part of the background to her encounters with White officials such as international border staff who question her surname and ethnicity.

Patricia feeling out of place could also be a result of bodily intrusion from sexual abuse. Elsewhere in her narrative she describes how she lacks confidence and fakes confidence in presentations at university and at work, where she does not want focus to be brought to her body: 'it gets right into my day'. She describes, in the past, using her clothing to fade into the background. Rebecca describes below her experiences of feeling racially judged:

Rebecca: [T]here are lots of obstacles … no matter how hard you try to sugar coat it and have a positive attitude … we are living in a society where people will look at you and judge, just on your appearance. And sometimes when I go to festivals and other

> places, and there are White faces there, plenty of White faces … I mean in some ways they're rounding me up … although I will try to overlook it … [A]s as Black woman you are caught up in this sexism and you may be caught up in this racism, which is people's opinions and people's attitudes affecting you … [T]he term brings out negative connotations. The first things you can think of; racism and sexism, babymother, single mother, strong-willed or stubborn … [T]his African American woman was doing an article on the Wedding Crashers and her major concern was that they went through every single nationality, but they never slept with any Black women [laughs] and what is it about us and why is it that we're not so desirable? [giggles]

For Rebecca, racialised epithets about Black women become associated with her body while in public spaces despite her attempts to 'overlook it'. The 'looks' she receives also leave feelings of uncertainty about the self. Sartre (1989/1956) conceptualised 'being-for-others' as the way in which individuals cannot control how others view them through 'the look'.

> I grasp the Other's look at the very center of my act as the solidification and alienation of my own possibilities … Of course I still am my possibilities … But at the same time the look alienates them from me. (Sartre 1989/1956, p. 263)

What buffers the reduction of self through the look is an individual's own self-knowledge or their 'facticity' (Sartre 1989/1956): Rebecca knows that she is none of the above constructs, yet she questions this. For Fanon (2008/1952), the 'fact of Blackness' is a racialised being-for-others whereby Black men (and women) may feel reduced to historical and stereotypical objects when looked at or pointed at in postcolonial public spaces. Being looked at when in public spaces for the women interviewed for this project was similarly objectifying. While these feelings may not qualify as 'felt' racism, they are racialised.

Ahmed (2007) also argues that negation is a visceral pressure on the body surface leaving emotional resonances. Such emotional resonances

are also within the intersubjective discomfort evidenced in my hesitance to further explore Patricia's feelings (see above). Here the affective tone of the conversation becomes tense and uncomfortable, and this was the case for all of the interviews. Discussing racialisation revealed 'feelings of structure' (Ahmed 2010) by standing out or feeling aware of being Black and female when in public spaces.

Hair as a Bodily Site for Control

During interviews, the topic of skin tone, hair/hairstyles, and racism came up in a number of ways: in response to the questions such as *How would you describe your racial heritage/ethnicity? What does being a Black woman mean to you? What do you consider your main accomplishments? Can you tell me a bit about yourself?* None of the women were asked about racism, their hair, or skin tone, yet hair and skin and how they felt racialised were deeply stitched into their narratives.

Seven of the nine women discussed their skin tone and hair/hairstyles. Of the two who spoke less about hair/hairstyles or skin tone, one remarked that she did not 'use my colour' as she observed others who have lighter skin tones do. Skin tone and hair played a role in women's thoughts about the self, incurring shame.

Hairstyles/texture can be a contested topic of debate among Black women where 'natural' hair or African heritage facial features may be negatively compared to a European ideal within women's families and among their friends. In response to this, Black women may make efforts to conceal traces of African features (Dickerson 2011). In this project, Black women's hair was also found to be commonly raised by friends and family. One woman joked that Black women's relationship with their hair was such a complex and nuanced phenomenon that it would require a separate PhD. In response to being asked to clarify the distinctions that she had made between being Black and being Black British, Norma cited hair as another of the characteristics that Black women lack.

Ava: I wanted to ask about being a Black woman, whether there are expectations laden on you …

Norma: [T]he expectations are … you don't get pregnant, you get a good job, you get an education and actually the expectations of being a Black woman and of being a Black West Indian woman I would say are a lot higher than being a Black West Indian boy … I've always found within families, and it's not just my family … oh you're a girl child, you have to do this … I'm sure there is an unsaid world isn't it … you're not pretty enough, your hair's not long enough, you're not fair enough, all these other things that sew into it … if you spoke to most West Indian families they have a lot higher expectations for their daughters, than their sons.

Norma notes the contradiction of hair and skin tone that are commented upon, and felt, but insufficiently interrogated: 'there is an unsaid world'. Hair and skin tone associations may be tacit forms of knowledge that influence Black women's relationship to their bodies and sense of control over their lives. Norma also highlights the dually positive and negative gendered focus of educational attainment in her family of origin. The encouragement to get 'a good education' was combined with advice 'You don't get pregnant', evoking discourses about Black women's purported hypersexuality. Ellen similarly described that her first experience of low mood came after being advised by her mother to not get pregnant. This coincided with being told that the man who she thought was her father was in fact not her father.

Ellen: She [her mother] drummed it into me and she gave me the same conversation at seven; 'I don't want you to do what I did, I don't want you to come home pregnant at sixteen' … I never ever forget that conversation, not so much about the [dad] part, because that was nothing that I didn't already know … it stayed there.

This parental advice could be viewed as protective and nurturing; however, women found the connection to discourses about Black single mothers negating. Ellen recalled feeling blamed for experiencing sexual abuse after the cautionary warnings. Women did not identify with the Jezebel controlling image; that Black women are hypersexual (Hill Collins

1990). However, growing up or as adults, they were made aware of this perception by men they knew. Three women—Ellen, Debbie, and Farah—were explicitly called 'whores'; Rebecca's stepfather referred to women as 'whores'; Evelyn described the men who used to visit her home while her mother was away working and sexually abuse her and her sisters as 'strangers coming in'. Jacinta relayed a dream she had after she was raped as a child as 'put in a pot and turned into money'.

Farah discussed a more explicit form of control of her body through her hair. She relayed that in her cultural background, parents, and then husbands, grant girls permission to cut their hair. Farah described how her desire to have her hair cut short became somewhat of a quest that began when she was a girl.

Farah: I love my hair now, the way my hair is now. I always wanted to cut my hair and I wasn't allowed.

Ava: You weren't allowed to cut your hair?

Farah: No. They say it's forbidden and you are unable to cut your hair until your husband says so. Now if you are a girl, you have to wait until you are married to get permission, you don't have a choice. That was the second thing that I did when I left home … tried to cut my hair. It took a long time … [T]hey [hairdressers] were just oh no, no, no, no, your hair is beautiful, don't cut it … [Y]ou are Black, you shouldn't cut your hair.

Ava: Why shouldn't you cut your hair if you're Black?

Farah: The first hairdresser told me because I was Black, that my hair was so long and thick … Then she cut it [motions to her shoulders] and I was like hell no, that was the wrong look … all of the ladies, [were] was staring at me, I want it cut. They said 'no, no, no, no, no, no, no, do you know how … much people pay for their hair?' [T]hen they convinced me to have it shorter like this [motions to her chin] I wanted it short like this [how her hair is now] … My next thing will be piercings … I'll have to be strong enough to be able to meet my father [once the piercings are done] and he will say, 'you see you are just becoming just like everybody else … you are becoming more Western'

> or 'you are wild'. In my culture I am considered to be a prostitute, because I live on my own. 'Why would you wanna live on your own, unless you just wanna prostitute yourself?' I don't understand what prostitution has got to do with that, my father is feeling so disturbed, that nobody will wanna marry me and I don't think that's [marriage] ever gonna happen.

Although Farah's hair had accrued a racialised aesthetic value in the UK, she experienced the Black women hairdressers' insistence that she leave it long as intrusive. Control is diffused from her body surface to her movement in public spaces. Despite the self-affirming way in which she views her short hair, her lifestyle, and her eschewal of marriage, Farah is acutely aware of how she is perceived by her father.

Farah's process of concealment (Dickerson 2011)—her headscarf—was worn to protect against shame and to maintain contact with her siblings. Farah's quest to have short hair reveals how hair can be used to resist and affirm selfhood in response to subtle and overt attempts to control women's bodies and how the proscription of 'oughts' (Horney 1995, cited in Beauboeuf-Lafontant 2007) can be experienced as intrusive.

A sense of self as nugatory may be inferred after encounters with family and individuals when in public spaces that Black women are not quite free to occupy their bodies from a position of acceptance and affirmation, and if they do, they may be judged against racialised and gendered cultural discourses. A nugatory self was actively resisted by the women, as demonstrated by Farah's extract.

When asked *What does being a Black woman mean to you?* Norma answered by describing how she has to think twice about her comportment in public or in work spaces. However, at work she is treated differently because of her skin colour and ethnicity. Norma also describes in the past, not being quite free to wear her hair to work in a style she desires.

> Norma: [W]hen I'm at work everybody lets you know that you're Black, because we're treated very differently … not treated as equals to our White counterparts. I think that stands out … probably living in the area that I do, which is meant to be a highly racist area, you are more aware of being Black. Where

I grew up, Black was probably the dominant factor, nothing reminded you that you were Black until you went somewhere that was predominantly White or of a different colour … You're reminded that you're Black when somebody in the England team is Black and they win a race, you're quite aware and you're quite proud, well they're one of me ... It overlaps in lots of ways … I find it really … hard to define … being Black British is itself a totally different ball game …

Ava: So you think being Black is something different ... to being a Black British woman?

Norma: Yes … there are variants … Black African ... this is an assumption … I think Black African women, they know that they're African, they know that they're Black, it goes without saying, Black Caribbean are almost the same. Black Caribbean women know that they're Black, you wake up in the morning and if you've been raised in a predominantly Black country, it's not necessarily something you would think about, being Black … If you want to go to work with a certain hairstyle, no one's gonna question it. Whereas here, you've got to think twice, could I go to work with bright blonde hair? Maybe not so much now, because it's more accepted, but years ago you'd have to think twice.

Ava: Do you think there are more complexities to being Black and British?

Norma: Yes, and … I didn't realise how much, say for instance where I work, there are a lot of Black Caribbean women and I don't fit into their group, because … I'm… in between aren't I? I'm Black, but I'm also … British.

Ava: How do you feel excluded, or not fitting in?

Norma: Oh they don't invite me to things [laughs], they invite me last minute and say [adopts a high-pitched tone in voice] 'oh you can still come' [usual tone] because they really, fundamentally don't accept me as one of them, which is really, really weird, because I'm treated the same as them … to everybody else, we're just all Black.

Norma explains both her spatiotemporal awareness of racialisation (Back 2005) and that being Black British can leave feelings of not belonging (see Riley 1985) or being 'in between'. She therefore negotiates racial and ethnic differences and similarities where she is both included and excluded among her family members, colleagues and friends, both in the UK and 'back home' (see Brah 1996). One of the features of this in-between-ness is limited aesthetic freedom with her hair. Greene (2011; see also Delgado and Stefancic 2000) outlines legal cases where African American women have taken their employers to court over allegations that their hairstyles do not fit with the corporate image when the style is either in braids or in dreadlocks. Or, that the hairstyle does not fit with their skin tone: wearing dyed blonde hair when dark skinned or being lighter in complexion and wearing dreadlocks. Greene (2011) highlights the absence of an intersectional analysis in American courts and a refusal to acknowledge that women can be dark skinned with blonde hair or light skinned with natural hair. The corporations have argued that because they employ Black women, they should not be accused of racism. Thus there are rules about race and associated behaviour that appear to be enacted on and through Black women's bodies via hairstyles and skin tone (Dickerson 2011; Greene 2011). How Norma wears her hair for work is subject to racialised scrutiny, although in articulating the spatiotemporal nature of her experience, Norma offers that it is less of a pressure now than 20 years ago.

Norma's extract also conveys that being racialised by skin colour may presume visible unity and homogeneity among minoritised individuals belying ethnic, cultural, and individual differences (Gilroy 2000; Hall 1997). Experiencing social restrictions on their bodily and relational practices compelled women to consider their intra-ethnic, interracial relationships as well as how they present themselves to White racial groups when in public spaces. This illustrates subtle and everyday negotiations with difference as a constant shifting of identities (Phoenix and Bhavnani 1994) and belonging, as well as the body/self-fragmentation this may entail. Connected, and also in resistance to feelings of negation, is that all of the women identified their education as one of their accomplishments (see also Mirza 2009). Many choose to focus on their intellectual abilities or to consider their bodies only from the neck up

(Blackman 2008) that can be dually viewed as a positive and negative motivation to succeed academically.

The women negotiated a selfhood from positions of avoiding, accepting, resisting, and subverting negation. Discourses and everyday exchanges between Black women and their family members and friends serve to perpetuate negation (Everett et al. 2010; Frost 2005; Wolf 1990). Feelings of negation were carried by women at points in their lives or currently in addition to legacies of violence and abuse experiences.

Hair Reveals and Conceals Race, Violence, and Abuse

For four women, hair was the bodily site that displayed their neglect as children or as adults in the context of intimate partner relationships. For Evelyn, her lack of hair as a child symbolised ways in which she felt excluded and alienated. Below she uses a past photo of herself as a child to discuss abuse.

Evelyn: Every time I look at this picture and I try to identify more … see if I could get a feeling of myself at that age, sometimes I do and sometimes I don't. I do at the moment, but when I've looked at this picture, one of my first impressions was … I was quite pretty really. When I was growing up the focus was on a lack of hair, so because of that I grew up thinking I was quite … ugly. But I actually had a really nice face and when I look at my eyes, sometimes I wish I could just, go back in time and give that side of me a great big hug … but in one of my eyes I can see … it's quite sad, it looks upset, like it's about to have tears. I think sometimes even when I look in the mirror today I think, there is one side that is quite a coper … then there's another side that holds the emotions … [looks at picture], but this is a little girl who … has been just left to get on with it on her own and all things considered, she has done quite well [looks at photo].

Evelyn relates feeling ugly to her lack of hair, and her reading of the sadness in the image of herself as a child symbolises a lack of emotional nurturance. Below she describes her spatiotemporal journey with her hair where she attends to the emotional resonances left by comments in childhood.

Evelyn: How you feel about your hair is about the emotions … for me that centred around my lack of hair … I could feel the impact on my psychology and my self-esteem, because my mum would say things to me about my hair and I grew up kind of not feeling like a girl … I remember when all my sisters … there used to be this girl that used to live around the corner from us where everyone would go to … she used to cane-row everybody's hair, and I couldn't take part in that because I didn't have hair to cane-row, that made me feel left out … I used to go the shop sometimes and … the shopkeeper, he used to say, 'okay sonny what do you want?' even though I had my earrings in. I used to spend ages … looking in the mirror … I guess I was just trying to find something that was … attractive about myself … because my hair just never grew. But then when I started to look back on my past, when I was in therapy, it didn't grow, because my mother didn't groom it, when she was away and she was away often, her partner used to take me to the barbers to cut it off and I used to hate going to the barbers, because I'm not a boy. It was more shocking in the mind rather than the physical ... I became … a bookworm … I was the intelligent one … even now – I know I'm attractive – I'd rather you recognise me for the inside, for my intellectual self. I feel uncomfortable being recognised [when] people or men … they go for that more than who I really am and when who I really am comes out, a lot of the times that's when the problems in the relationships start … [W]hen I became older and I took control over my hair, and I started to get it permed … it started to grow … I remember thinking no matter how hard or however I get up on the ladder, I still wanted to keep … my cultural heritage … even though I was feeling quite isolated because of my family, because of my experience, I still love my

> culture … I wanted to be an educated person, but also I wanted to be true to my culture and that was through how I wear my hair and I then I stopped perming it … I spent many … a day wondering around in my own world … you've got these dandelions and then you've got to make a wish, I used to always wish that my hair could grow [laughs], but I actually felt that my wish came true with my hair, because it grew right down into my back [laughs] and that was like an amazement and … my hair tormentor mother … was really … sceptical of me locsing my hair. I got that reception from Black people and I just put that down to Black people being ashamed of their natural hair, which they are. What about if that stops me from getting a career? What about if I change my mind? … I was alone once again in that and that's another feeling of being an outsider, but a different one and then my hair grew and then my mother, one day when my hair was very long, she looked at me and she said …'Oooh waow, who would've thought that your hair would've grown so long?'

Evelyn uses her lack of hair due to neglect, comments about her hair, and how a male shopkeeper thought that she was a boy to illustrate how she felt excluded, especially from sisterly bonding braiding sessions. Evelyn's subsequent hair practices of 'locsing' can be viewed as a response to being excluded and self-protective against negation. After her hair grew, it lost its affective symbolism. Once the constructions of stereotypes are revealed, they lose their affective power (Ahmed 2004). For Evelyn, having short hair had previously meant she was unfeminine and ugly. However, through growing her locs, she disproved her mother's prediction and those from 'Black people' that wearing 'natural hair' would mean professional failure. Evelyn could then view her hair as a symbol of beauty, and elsewhere in her narrative she recalls that she cut her hair as it no longer held such profound meanings: 'it's just hair'. Thus, hair can become a symbolic location for feelings associated with abuse and a process of reclaiming the self.

Evelyn also described preferring books and with that comes the later discomfort of still being only read as sexually attractive by men and having

her intellectual side negated. Evelyn's embrace of 'my cultural heritage' is reminiscent of how Norma was also compelled to consider how her hairstyle might affect her employment prospects (see also the women in Dickerson (2011) and Greene 2011). Many of the themes in Evelyn's extract connect cultural and family discourses and individual lived experiences as Black women, where hair becomes a site of racialised aesthetic shaming, prompting a process of concealment. Women may not be perceived by family and friends as being able to experience pleasure in their own body aesthetics. This can be experienced as painful even when resisted.

Evelyn's journey with her hair to her 'journey of recovery' from abuse and neglect mapped her practices to remedy both (see also Bartky 1990; Bordo 1993; Foucault 1984, 1994).

Shame could also be experienced by observing how Black women wear their hair in public spaces, where hair is viewed as a reflection of inner psychological states of self-hatred (see Dickerson 2011; Mercer 1987).

Jacinta: I actually think somebody should love the Black woman for who she is … a lot of Black ladies, women, they wear a lot of wigs and … I don't agree with it because they are covering their hair and it's their choice. I think they should have their hair naturally. Black people should love themselves, be who they are and if they think they are not pretty enough … that's something I still think about myself … I want men to, and I am going to use the word men, to appreciate us more, not just use us for sex. Some of them come up to me and they say 'oh excuse me, what's your name? Where are you from?' And as soon as they find out where you're from, they don't want to know you.

Ava: You mentioned about the way in which men approach you. Do you think men approach you in a particular way because you are a Black woman?

Jacinta: Yes.

Ava: How do you think they approach you differently, if you can explain?

Jacinta: I think it's very disrespectful, because everything I wear … when it's summer, sometimes I wear nice sexy clothes and

> they are only looking at your legs, or they'll go 'the way you dress is bad'. I know some of the women, maybe some of the way they dress is not good, maybe I am doing that as well, but I am doing that to feel happy. I am not doing that because I wanna be raped, but the men are looking at you like yes I want something from you and I'm gonna do this, and some Black men, I expect them to know better than the White guys and it's just the Black men they chat to you on the street, morning, noon and night.

Race becomes known when in public spaces through the symbolism of Black women's hairstyles, as expressions of self-hatred. Jacinta's experiences of sexual harassment are also racialised. Jacinta is making visible performances of Black masculinities in public spaces where she feels more targeted by Black men for sexual harassment. Here and elsewhere in her narrative, Jacinta assumes a unity based on race without note to how gender may intersect with violence and abuse (Benton-Rushing 1993; Crenshaw 1989; Mama 1989; Nelson 1997). Benton-Rushing (1993) was raped by a Black male stranger and afterwards was struck by how she could no longer view Black men as 'brothers in the struggle' (see also Pierce-Baker 2000; Roy 2008; Wallace 1990/1979).

Hairstyles could also be used to conceal bodily evidence of abuse and neglect. Although Jacinta's informal foster carers braided her hair, offering her a sense of nurturance, they also abused her. Below she described her attempt to run away because of the abuse. She brought this up in the context of being asked *Can you tell me a bit about your life?*

> Jacinta: Then again I was living with my mum's friend, they were Black people. I don't know them, but my mum did, my mum seemed to know them. I was living with her for some time now … they were very nice, they used to plait my hair and all that but, what they were doing to me, I wasn't happy. What they were doing to me; slapping me, beating me, abusing me.

Jacinta here disconnects being cared for through the hair practices of her foster carers and their perpetration of abuse. To the outside world, her

foster carers presented Jacinta as a nurtured child. In her racial descriptors of her foster carers and how they had nurtured her hair, Jacinta assumed her safety was guaranteed. Hairstyles can be read as outward expressions or evidence of neglect, abuse, and derision as well as the means through which caregivers or the women demonstrated nurturance (Dickerson 2011; Mercer 1987), but here they are being used to conceal abuse. Rebecca discussed her hair in one of her photos of herself and her cousin standing outside of a building and revealed her hair in the interview session.

Rebecca: I had shaved off all my hair … my head was totally, totally shaved off

Ava: Oh, so was it like an inch?

Rebecca: It was shaved off completely?

Ava: You were completely bald?

Rebecca: For five years I messed around with it a bit, I did all sorts, as we do you know it we always … it was plaiting it, relaxing, shaving it, dyeing it and as a consequence of that, the hair was totally [giggles], it wasn't in a good condition … and so what I did I shaved it all off, because I wanted to start afresh.

Ava: Did you do it yourself? Did you shave it off yourself?

Rebecca: I went to the hairdressers and they did it for me, I had no hair, I was a skin head and there's a photo of me in one of my diaries of me with a skin-head cut looking menacing. I was dressed … I was dressed all in Black … so I looked really gothic.

Ava: So here it looks really lush here.

Rebecca: It doesn't look like that anymore [laughs] [takes off her head scarf to reveal her hair] this is what it looks like now.

[both laugh]

Rebecca: Looking at this photograph because our [hers and her cousin pictured] have changed so much. Here she was a single career-woman and now she's gotten married, she's got two children… I looked at this picture and I thought to myself oh

my goodness I was eighteen years old then … things have just changed so much. She had graduated from university and was working … her life has moved on so much, but then again my life has moved on so much in a spiritual sense … so you can't really complain … I don't wanna do any more comparisons [laughs]

Ava: You just look well and I'm not comparing to your current situation, but it just looks so bright and … beautiful

Rebecca: [L]oads of things had happened by the time that I'd had that photograph taken, for example the old man had gone out of the picture and … I was in the church then, but … I was stuck between two worlds [laughs] … I knew about God, but I wasn't with him as such, my spiritual life wasn't going good at all. I was dabbling in witchcraft, I was trying to work out who I was. I'd also left university, regrettably I didn't get the full degree [giggles] because of a lot of things happening in the background, there was a lot of conflict between the social services and my mother. My mother had withdrawn my sister from school and social services got involved and now they were all in foster care, so I mean [giggles] there was a lot going on behind the scenes.

Hair is used by Rebecca to connect responses to her speaking about abuse experiences, and how she has managed the legacies. Through her discussion of the photo Rebecca conveys a sombre longing in her comparison of her life trajectory to that of her cousin's. A challenge for Rebecca at the time of the interviews was considering how to fit a second career, marriage to a spouse she has not yet met, and children. It all becomes too painful. As Rebecca excavates the impact of sexual abuse on her body, her haircut becomes a focus of the discussion: even though her hair looked healthy, it masked her many challenges. Her photo is also evidence of her continued attempts to make good of her spiritual and academic goals: 'trying to work out who I was'. The extract also demonstrates my embodiment as a Black hair/hairstyle collaborator; 'I did all sorts … as we do', enabled Rebecca the freedom to explore her

journey, even revealing her hair—the second reveal during the project—to demonstrate her current challenges to making sense of the past.

Ellen described a period of stress from experiencing multiple burglaries and living with legacies of past abuse which she attributed to her hair falling out. She then wore a wig.

Ellen: For a short period of time, I was wearing a wig … I used to stop off at the [shop] in [place] … from work … and the guy behind the counter, he'd be stony faced. When I wore the wig, the reception I got was com:p(hh)letly different. He smiled … [I]t makes it like the locs alone to me was like a barrier. I was like okay then, the reception that you're getting now is different, you're not gonna wear the wig forever, so how are you gonna change that? I'm conscious now, if I walk into somewhere to get something and I see people look at me like, this girl … what's she gonna be like. I smile, I make an effort, then suddenly … just sort of break down that barrier and that's not something every woman is faced with. I'm not saying that that's something that every Black woman's faced with, but it's something that I'm faced with on a daily basis. When I first moved here, I used to go to the shop just round the back, stony faced and once I start talking and they figure out that I'm just cockney, so she fits in … so she's just Black and then the reception is just totally different. With friends who are English, I sound like them, so there are certain arguments that they are not used to having in front of me, but I'm <u>not</u> like them … I said you can't ... have a conversation to me about … colour and … expect my view to be the same as … your view, because our experiences are completely different. For me there is a difference between just being a woman and being a Black woman, I definitely think that you are faced with more obstacles.

Ellen is conscious of being stereotyped because of her hairstyles and manages this as only Black women have to do. Wearing wigs and weaves may normalise the gaze in public spaces for Black women in a similar way

in which Ellen describes being more socially accepted because of her 'cockney' accent. Ellen illustrates the spatiotemporal nature of racialisation and/or a nugatory self through her comparative experiences with the shopkeeper. Managing the stress that made her hair fall out, and how she feels her hairstyle is being responded to, is burdensome and described as 'obstacles' for Black women. For the seven women who discussed their hair/hairstyles, there was an underlying theme of subtle shrinkage of self with increasing social encounters where they experienced racialisation for which hair was an important signifier. This left an intrusive restriction that was more acute especially at times when working through violence and abuse experiences.

Hair/hairstyles could have different, positive meanings, but this was also connected to abuse. Debbie described her hair as an aesthetically affirming and consolatory feature during the time when her ex-partner criticised everything about her (see Stark 2007).

Ava: [Y]ou mentioned how you felt emotionally, but how did you feel about yourself, I mean your physical self, your body throughout?

Debbie: Some days … I had doubts about myself, but yet … I think I was still younger then, I looked okay [laughs].

Ava: I think you look better than okay now.

Debbie: [laughs] So when I looked in the mirror, what reflected is you are good-looking, your hair is nice, I didn't have all this weight on, I was slimmer, so I said well, no, I am not bad in appearance I look … good so I guess that kept me go(hh)ing. If I hadn't have and looked all shaggy ... but I put a lot of emphasis on myself. I always had my hair done as good as I can, you know dressing and all that … I put a lot … into myself.

Ava: Would you say you did more for yourself ...?

Debbie: I-I guess so, you know because I still met someone else you know while [laughs] so I must have been kind of alright [laughs].

Ava: Was there any point that made you think, oh is there something about me, how I look, why he's treating me in a particular way?

Debbie: Yes, all of that, I thought of that, because he'd say some days that I didn't dress good, that I didn't look good, but I think he was just putting me down. I knew in myself, I made an effort and those days my hair was done and these marks on my face were never there, I was always … fresh-faced and all that … And I say to myself as well, I do have my profession, I drive, I'm independent, I used to travel a lot more as well, every year I'd go abroad, you know, so I had managed. He never really prevented me from doing things apart from emotionally, but yet I overcame that. I was doing my own thing. I'd book my ticket, take my children and my father use to go, 'How you travel with these young kids?' I just did it. Anyway it was courage and determination and I did it, he never prevented me from doing things, yes-yes-yes.

Debbie was not responding to negative associations with Black women's hair, but trying to restore a self that was being eroded by her ex-partner. Having the resources to holiday away from her ex-partner was beneficial (see also Walby 2004; St. Vil et al. 2017). This can be observed in Debbie's effortful commitment to her relationship and career.

Ava: You mentioned hair and when you don't feel good… I was just wondered that importance with hair, do you think that's connected with being a Black woman in any way? The kind of importance that you put on your hair and the pleasure your hair gives you?

Debbie: No, not really, that's my thing. I saw my mum who … she greyed quite quickly … she constantly dyes her hair, she doesn't like to look old … I knew my hair for what it was, big hair and I always see myself liking my hair and how it made me feel. I am just comparing my mum and myself and my sisters. All of my sisters, they don't have hair, they cut it all, their hair, they've got short hair … so I don't know how it makes them feel, but … I like my hair, I think it makes me the person who I am.

Debbie's freedom with her hair could also have reflected a conscious effort within her family of origin not to reinforce negative associations with hair and skin complexion. For Debbie, 'good hair' was about how her hair 'made me feel'. This can be seen in the way she likens herself to her hair, attending to both the symbolism and lived experience of hair as indicative of inner emotional states.

Hair could be viewed as early age constriction of Black women's spaces for self. Comments about their hair suggest that something about them is not quite right. Hair was also a site where bodily control was contested through cultural associations between hair length and texture with modes of acceptable femininity and professional success. It simultaneously exposed the impacts of abuse, violence, and racism, falling out because of stress, or not growing because of a neglect of nurturance. This also meant that well-nurtured hair could also be also used to conceal abuse.

Not Black Enough

Black women can also find themselves unwittingly transgressing a plethora of culturally mandated rules (see Mama 1995; Tate 2005). Farah replied to *What does being a Black woman mean to you?* as 'not being Black enough' by virtue of not obeying the rules for being African, Muslim, and now because she lives in the UK.

Farah: I wasn't Black enough.
Ava: Not Black enough?
Farah: Yeah … I don't like to kick my kids. I would never kick my kids and when I was growing up, they used to say' ooh, you see the lady is pretending to be a White lady' and I would think, [smiles] that is not true, it-it is not about being White, [mock confession] okay I like country songs you know [laughs]
Ava: Ahh it's all coming out now [laughs]
Farah: [laughs] I always listen to opera and classical music, so that makes me less Black and, psychology is a main thing for me, it is the basis … I wanna be a therapist and that's just the

thing yeah [slows pace of speech] oo:kaa:ay, not Black … [Y]ou know being Black has to be a set of rules and you have to get with that set. Being [country of origin] I have to get with that set of rules and I don't judge myself by any of them and being Muslim. I have to get with another set of rules and I don't like either. I've kinda been rejected by just about everybody. I think being White also comes with certain things. I don't think they will accept me either [laughs] so I would say in all honesty, I'm like whatever. So being me is just being in the middle of everything, having all my mixed cultures, and problems and just say hey, I'm on my own. Being female is really hard and being Black also ha(hh)rd and being Muslim, I'm not a terrorist … I really think the whole issue of abuse is also a bit hard.

For Farah, 'not Black enough' is related to seeking help for violence and abuse rather than accepting this as her lot. Feeling 'in the middle of everything' can be read as an in-between-ness, not belonging, especially when experiences of abuse and violence are thrown into the mix. Women found some of the expectations placed on them by friends and family members and in encounters in wider social spaces as limiting, mimetic of how their desire to give testimony to their experiences of abuse and violence was met with denials or indifference.

Rebecca: I don't really perceive myself as being … Black in such a way and I don't see myself as being White. I see myself as being a Christian woman, that's first of all and then, maybe British second and maybe Caribbean third. Because my attitude, my beliefs, everything is tied into Christianity and I think if we're getting into this area of well I see myself as a Black woman, I see myself as a White woman ... it doesn't allow for any diversity ... we start to set standards to ourselves and because of my past experiences ... where something happened to me and I was told, that doesn't happen amongst Black people and this is not what Black people do … it kind of like put me off from using that term [giggles] … If I'm going through that termi-

> nology that is sort of like saying I must behave or act a certain way and if I don't then I've betrayed my race … [T]here are some good aspects of Black culture and there are some good aspects of White culture … actually I gravitate towards Christian culture, but there's no such thing nowadays, but the things that I'm into, people would say that that is more on the European side, more on the righteous side … When they notice that I'm not really into hip-hop, I'm not really into eating Caribbean food and stuff, I'm not really into … Black culture as such. It's not to say that I am ashamed of my race, that I don't like my skin colour, it's not to say that I hate it … Apparently as a Christian I can be accepted as I am so maybe I could be White [giggles] ... that is not really my problem.

Rebecca further explains how fractious notions of race can be especially where her experience of sexual abuse is being negated as 'not Black'. While she is expressing her agency in identifying 'as a Christian first' where she may be accepted as White, she is also explaining the pressures of being charged with racial betrayal. For Rebecca, these rules are attempts to negate her experiences of abuse. Identification with a racial category for the women interviewed was complexly contingent with past experiences of racism, disavowal of gendered notions about Blackness, and Black culture when these denied recognition of experiences of violence and abuse, as well as pride in their cultural heritage (see also Hall 1991; Noble 2005; Phoenix and Bhavnani 1994). The phrase 'not Black enough' is even defined by way of negation. This would in effect make this state of being a double negation. The phenomenology of Blackness is a phenomenology of spatial restriction and negation where the 'I can' of classical phenomenology of the capacity of bodies to act and be acted upon is replaced by the 'I cannot' where Black bodies may be governed by what they are not permitted to do (Ahmed 2007, p. 161). Racialisation was also experienced as spatiotemporal control over their aesthetic tastes (see Ali 2005; Noble 2005; Tate 2005).

For Jacinta, her quiet demeanour as a child and not being of Caribbean heritage exposes her as not Black enough.

Jacinta: [M]ost of them were Black, the social services, some of them were from Africa, some of they were from England … [T]hey said [social worker] was on holiday, then you have to do all this, then you will get your house and all your dreams will come true … I did all that and I didn't get [her son back] and I dunno if it is because I am not Caribbean? Or because I am not Black enough? I think it's the way they see you.

Ava: Do you think that the Black people who were in that position, do you think they saw you as different because you are a Black person from Africa or because of your African heritage?

Jacinta: [T]here's no one beside me and they know my story … [T]hey know how to pick on me … [I]f somebody was with me all the time like a partner, or like a friend or like a sister or a mum, it would have been better, because I am from Africa, or maybe because I was born here, the way I speak or the way I am. Most people, they look at me and they know that I am vulnerable straight away

Ava: Do you think you look vulnerable? Is that how you see yourself or do you think that is how they see you?

Jacinta: I was vulnerable, because I was quiet and I was scared all the time, but as I [grew] up … I know that I've changed but, it is like you could see it and other people I've met could see it, but … my family and all those people don't see it. I still see myself as vulnerable … maybe it says on my forehead, or when you see this lady, just do wah'ever you like to her, pick on her … [I]t sounds stupid, I know … I feel like somebody has written a book about me and published it onto the web and wherever I go that person or that channel they can pick and say yes it is that one [laughs]. I feel mixed up, but I also feel like, maybe if I was different or if I become taller or if I had lots of money or was the Queen of England, they wouldn't be doing this, but obviously they are doing it for a reason and I don't know why.

Jacinta here expresses her fears that, as she had multiple foster placements and multiple experiences of violence and abuse, abused her son, and lost him to social services, everything about her is already known, not only by social services, but via the internet in ways that could be read as her experiencing mental distress. Whether or not she feels vulnerable, vulnerability is read as body stigmata 'on my forehead' and her only escape is to not be in her body, be taller or be more supported by a partner, friends or family, all of which she does not have.

Coy (2008), in her study with young women in prostitution who had experienced child sexual abuse and multiple placements in local authority care, explored women's sense of self as 'spoiled identities' (Goffman 1963). The young women thought they were invisible as individuals, marginalised and stigmatised: 'when you go out everybody can tell' (Coy 2008, p. 1416). Jacinta feels a similar stigmatisation, and this extends to her body surface. Bodily stigmatisation through multiple experiences of violence, abuse, and racialisation can contribute to feeling like a nugatory self. Jacinta also feels dismissed and stigmatised because of the way she speaks.

Being stigmatised within limited notions of Blackness and experiencing violence and abuse exacerbates everyday burdens. Once women transgress notions of Blackness, they may experience further layers of negation (see also Mason-John 2005; Riley 1985). Women described their own bodily negotiations with becoming a self. This has been analysed as observing, investigating, and testing the truisms of feeling like a nugatory self, experienced through feeling 'different', 'judged', 'like a minority', 'a pathology', looking 'vulnerable' in public spaces, and negative descriptions of their skin tone, bodies, hair, or sexuality.

Feeling like a nugatory self is a form of abuse and intrusion located within a continuum of oppression in Black women's lives. What's race got to do with it? Nothing, if race and racism are not features of women's lives, but something if they become the focus in public spaces and then something more for the women interviewed for this project who felt compelled to view their bodies, hair, and skin tone in a negative light, especially when this intersected with violence and abuse. Race and hair may be revealed to mean nothing only after they are unpacked, inspected, and deconstructed, yet this process does not entirely dissipate feeling like

a nugatory self, because women still live with memories of past encounters. Engaging in discussions about the past using childhood photos may make these feelings all the more vivid and current. Hair/hairstyles, like race, may again mean nothing and everything if focus is placed upon that site of the body either at home, at the hairdressers or in wider social spaces. Once racialised fallacies are challenged through conversations or lived body experiences of pleasure and freedom in body/hair/hairstyles, the ultimate charge for three of the women was of not being Black enough.

Black women being bodily regarded as 'less-than', or symbols of pathology, in their informal and formal spaces has been explored. The strong Black woman construct may protect from seeing or knowing a nugatory self because it positively obscures a space for personal reflection. Revealingly, every time the women had periods of reflection where they had to carry out fewer activities, they reported intense worry, low mood, or exhaustion. As strong Black women they can disengage with feeling wrong and focus on their aspirational selves as a protective strategy, but at the cost of their emotional selves, linked to past abuse. Thus, women experienced multiple shifts in their interpretive horizons (Alcoff 2006) and self-worth (Coy 2008).

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5

Feeling Through the Silences, Seeking Support, and Being 'Saved'

This chapter describes ways in which the women interviewed for this project carried the legacies of violence and abuse, for example, by regularly cycling thoughts of past experiences in order to measure how close or far they had journeyed to safety. Such legacies lasted long after the threat of violence and abuse had ended, where even though in loving intimate relationships, with successful careers, most with their own children, women described periods of feeling isolated and disconnected. They also revealed how they manage everyday challenges alongside the emotional burdens they carried, by enacting daily rituals of self-renewal.

Women received help and support from a range of services and sources enabling them to move on with their lives, gain recognition of harm, and name and reframe abuse. Routes to help were serendipitous. For example, faith or religious spaces provided access to practical support in childhood and adulthood and a means to express emotions. Religious spaces are often analysed in feminist work on violence against women as oppressive and dogmatic, especially for minoritised women (Patel 2013; Siddiqui 2013). However, women experienced such spaces as transitively supportive. Women also recounted strategies to prevent abuse of their children and younger relatives and their hopes for the future.

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Merleau-Ponty (2002/1962) describes how normative it is to not be fully aware of every minute bodily activity required, for example, to walk, talk, or type. A traumatic event can, however, compel us to be even less consciously aware of our bodies where we actively avoid thoughts about the unpleasant or intrusive experience. For Judith Herman (1994), people who experience sexual violence or abuse can suffer the impacts of trauma similar to war veterans where vivid memories intrude into victim-survivors' lives in a range of manifestations long afterwards. Thus, while they may make conscious efforts to forget, in order to feel less distressed, the body remembers (Rothchilds 2000; Roy 2008). Feeling disembodied, being separate to, or not quite in the body was conveyed by all of the women. In attempts to control recollections of abuse, they described periods where they actively forgot, felt they had temporarily lost connection to their bodies, or were floating above their bodies, similar strategies used to cope with previous bodily intrusions (see Coy 2009; Young 1992). Living as an embodied self then becomes dangerous, since, as one woman explained, 'my mind will get to know what happened to my body'.

Women experienced pleasure in their own body aesthetic, yet found relaxing in their bodies uncomfortable. This 'not lived-in' feeling is specifically related to the bodily intrusion from men who abused them and comments about their bodies. Feeling intrusion, through being looked at or commented upon in public spaces (see also Vera-Gray 2016), was experienced by all of the women. They described their bodies during and in the aftermath of sexual abuse and violence as 'dirty', 'not mine' (see also Coy 2009; Young 1992). Jacinta needs to bath after sex and describes her disgust and dislike of sex connecting her responses to multiple sexually intrusive experiences with men and annotated her body line—a diagram that women could edit how they have felt about their bodies over the years—'I hated my body', 'I really hated my body'.

Similarly, Debbie recollected that she did not care much about her body during the period where her ex-partner called her 'a long list of awful things'. Farah described being unable to take a shower without clothing long after experiencing sexual abuse and rape. Ellen described loving her body now because her first boyfriend enabled her to uncover the body she had concealed beneath layers of clothing. For Norma, being in a relationship where her spouse accepts her body with all the 'stretch

marks and everything' and being a parent brought a new respect for her body and she rarely considers her body in her day-to-day thoughts. Women abused as children also reported whenever they relax, feeling fearful that memories of past abuse may become more vivid. For example, in the past smoking cannabis and 'bingeing on [self-help] books' helped Evelyn to cope.

When asked about her body, Patricia replied: 'I don't think about my body, I don't want attention, I hide behind my clothes, I don't like compliments'. For Patricia, a compliment about her clothing from a work colleague brings her body into focus leaving feelings of discomfort that 'gets right into my day'. Rebecca brought in a photo of a room in process of decoration (see Fig. 5.1).

Fig. 5.1 Room body

Rebecca: [I]t represents the inside of my body, it's a work in progress and I'm still … working on how I feel inside … I'm okay with the physical aspects, I'm learning to love the outside of my body … the inside's got all its parts intact. Just like here [points to the photo] … I need to decorate … over the old parts … all the memories from the previous occupier are there … the nicotine on the walls, which is a lot [laughs] … I need to make it into my own, take away all the things … are not representative of me that have nothing to do with my body.

Rebecca uses the photo to provide a spatial metaphor of the body, which detaches her from her 'inside', making her body a mere surface to be painted over to describe how unsettling it feels to live within her body. Likening the work she had to undertake to decorate her flat to the work she had to undertake to feel at home in her body reflected Rebecca's struggle to come to terms with what had been done to her body by her abusers, how family members responded, which she attributed to disrespecting her body or wanting to become a glamour model elsewhere in her extract. Marginal occupancy of their bodies appeared to be connected to what was done to women's bodies and whether they had had the opportunity to move back in and gain a sense of home there. Having affirming, safe and trusting intimate relationships reinforced positive bodily appraisals for three of the participants.

Five women live with mental distress, which includes a problematic relationship with food: self-starvation; overeating; bingeing and purging; or experiencing an all-consuming rage that quickly metabolises the food; low mood; hearing voices; and intense worry (see also Cromby et al. 2013). Five women have considered ending their lives to reduce feelings of distress and two have made attempts. For two women, getting a medical diagnosis provided them with the opportunity to make sense of past abuse, 'gave names to things' and reported 'feeling validated' (see also Kelly 1988) especially as they had been silenced during attempts to speak about the abuse as children. For three women, medical diagnostic labels were resisted because of their association with stigma (Cinnirella and Lowenthal 1999; Cromby et al. 2013).

Serendipitous Routes

Women sought any way possible to access help to reduce feelings of distress about past abuse. An example of the serendipitous routes this might involve is Rebecca, who was referred to a group for victim-survivors of abuse where she had psychotherapeutic counselling. After being alienated from her family as a result of speaking about past sexual abuse, Rebecca 'dabbled with the dark arts' (witchcraft). This enabled her to form friendships with others for a period, and when this was no longer beneficial, she began attending church. Through attending churches she accessed counselling, and when she no longer felt the need to attend church, she accessed online religious sites that explain to Christian women ways of living with past abuse experiences. Farah also used the internet to access services and was eventually referred to a feminist oriented violence against women project. She was the only one out of nine participants who had long-term counselling from this type of service. Online support groups provide women the space and anonymity to talk about experiences of violence with a sense of safety and being believed, not judged, and understood and can lead to women contacting off-line support services (Berg 2014).

Patricia 'fell into' human rights and violence against women advocacy and, through this, has been able to gain new insights into her experience of sexual abuse. She also receives support from a trusted friend. Jacinta started writing poetry about her abuse experiences and performs monologues in amateur theatre. In Taylor's (2002) study with African American women, reading affirmative words and poetry and creating artworks were found to assist the women to live with past abuse. Women interviewed for this project made connections to individuals, practices, and concepts, to enable them to deal with past abuse, make decisions about ending violence, and to access the support to do so wherever they could (see also Tamboukou 2004).

Women also self-helped via engaging with popular or academic psychology literature. Four women also mentioned the role of television programmes in helping make connections with, for example, normative mother-daughter relationships as with Evelyn or intimate relationships in general. Jacinta describes below the role of African films for her:

Jacinta: [A]nd when I'm watching it [African film], some of it really gets to me, because of … the topic in the film and sometimes I have to turn it off, or forward it, or rewind it and then I'm always thinking, why do people make these films? They must have made them for a reason. So when I'm not sleeping because the neighbours are like making noise like every night, so I turn my TV up really loud … If I hear it all around me, then I'm okay and I enjoy it, it relaxes me … when I'm getting all the noise in the middle of the night, or at two o'clock … or four o'clock in the morning, once I start to watch this, I feel a little bit together again.

Turning up her television really loud to close out the noise enables Jacinta space to imagine the self she would like to become. She then describes the function of the space as making her 'feel a bit together again'. Jacinta also brought a photo of actress Whoopi Goldberg, who symbolises, for her, overcoming abuse and an acceptance that Jacinta has not yet managed. Television programmes also enabled women to be momentarily or periodically immersed in the imaginary to distract from the noise of thoughts of past abuse.

Calling the Police and Involving Social Services

Eight of the nine women at some point (six in childhood, two in adulthood) either called the police or the police were called on their behalf. This is consistent with findings from the USA that show women from all backgrounds call the police if they perceive they are in real danger (Bachman and Coker 1995; Hutchinson et al. 1994). For four of the seven women abused as children, it was unacceptable that no one had informed them that their abusers had been released without charge. Four women were referred to social services by neighbours, family members, or teachers as children, and this helped to stop the abuse: all of the women helped by social services as children described this as being 'saved'. Rebecca, Norma, and Farah expressed their relief that they, and their siblings, came to the attention of social services. Two women were raped

as children (another reported that she was not yet ready to accept or name that she was raped): no police reports were made, and their narratives documented multiple forms of abuse from multiple perpetrators. These findings are consistent with studies showing men responsible for child sexual abuse are rarely prosecuted.

Two of the five women who were physically assaulted by their partners called the police. One did not press charges as she did not have a bruise and did not consider herself a 'battered woman' at the time. Tricia Bent-Goodley (2004), in her study of perceptions of abuse within intimate relationships with African American women, found that in decisions to seek assistance women made distinctions between being 'hit' and getting a 'beating'.

Of the nine women interviewed, only two received help from specialised violence against women services. One woman's narrative bears the closest resemblance to the findings reported in Amina Mama's (1989) study. Isabelle was severely physically beaten by two ex-partners. During the period when the abuse occurred, her children were taken into local authority care. She experienced racist responses from the police: her Black ex-partner would be arrested and she would be threatened with arrest for disturbing the peace, while her White ex-husband was verbally abusive to the police officers. Like the African and Caribbean heritage women in Mama's (1989) study, Isabelle stayed for a long period (two years) in a refuge, before she was rehoused. She also experienced being bounced between statutory agencies before she was eventually assisted by a Black-run Advice Bureau. Isabelle's help-seeking was compounded by witnessing and experiencing many years of racism. Both Isabelle and Jacinta had their children taken into care; Jacinta because she physically abused her child and attempted to take her own life and Isabelle because she was experiencing violence from a partner at the time and complied with a social worker's request that she voluntarily place her children into local authority care for respite, losing her custody. She later had to negotiate with her ex-partner for access to her children (see also Thiara 2013). Farah, the youngest of the participants, also received counselling from a rape crisis centre.

Women also drew on varied sources to enable them to cope with emotional distress, including dreams, a masseuse, with most being assisted

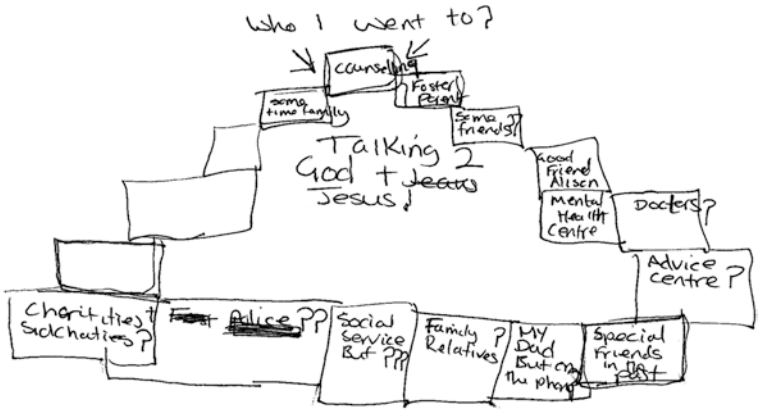

Fig. 5.2 Jacinta's dynamic and serendipitous routes to help

from churches at some point in their lives and all had accessed some form of help or support.

Eight of the nine women received a range of talking therapies, from short-term GP-referred counselling, occupational therapy, to long-term group therapy for victim-survivors of child sexual abuse, psychoanalytic psychotherapy, Christian or religious-based counselling, and feminist empowerment counselling. These were dynamic and serendipitous processes, in that while women felt distressed, they were not always explicitly seeking help. For example, Debbie went to a masseuse and in the process felt able to start speaking about past abuse, or Evelyn (see below), who was explaining someone else's abuse experience, but in that process got recognition for her own experiences. Figure 5.2 created by Jacinta is an exemplar of this.

Jacinta's question marks '??' represent sources of help that have been both supportive and obfuscating. For example, the doctors were helpful in referring her to counselling, but the counselling is always short term, which involves a constant retelling of her experiences. The extent that services, friends, and relatives have supported her is also depicted. The empty boxes can be viewed as possible future sources of help and assistance. In the middle of Jacinta's help-seeking pathway is her relationship to God/Jesus which transcends all of her other sources of help and is omnipresent, at times her only source of support (see also St. Vil et al. 2017).

Becoming a Self Through Counselling

Psychologist Carol Gilligan (1995) theorised a 'feminist ethics of care'. Individuals' sense of self is relational, and families may socialise women and girls to be selfless or care without it being reciprocated. Richie (1996) discusses the consequences of this for African American women who experience violence from partners and attempt to hold on to such relationships. Coy (2009) notes that maintaining relational attachments for the young women victim-survivors she interviewed was also not beneficial to them, as they misread any connection, whether harmful or not, as valuable. After experiencing a rape by a stranger, feminist philosopher Susan Brison (1997) theorised that sexual violence not only disrupts a women's sense of safety in the world, it also disrupts this relationally in that victim-survivors must learn anew how to trust others. African American writer Andrea Benton-Rushing (1993) also discussed her fear of African American men after experiencing a stranger raped by an African American man. Women in this project described varied ways in which they opened up to the world with assistance from counsellors. Therapy enabled them to identify experiences as abuse and to talk about them, and it assisted in preparing them for parenting; and three women cited talking therapy as preventing severe mental distress.

Sharing testimonies of abuse and violence externalises blame and foregrounds the injustice (Brison 1997; Campbell et al. 2009; Herman 1994; Jordan 2008). Through talking and connecting with women sharing similar histories, women may enter into political activism to end violence and abuse (Kelly 1988; Taylor 2002), or paid employment and volunteering. This was true for three of the nine women.

Farah: There are people out there that do really great things for free and you don't have to do anything for them. I feel like it makes me a person, a better person. At first my therapist became like a best friend or the best thing about it is I don't care about how they judge me [laughs] … I remember one of them told me I will be able one day to have that kind of relationship with a friend and be able to speak to them about this

> [sexual abuse and rape] and then it actually happened and then one told me that I'll be able to talk about my abuse without [breathes in] breaking into pieces and that happened.

Being able to talk about past abuse without feeling overwhelmed, judged or blamed was a common theme for all of the women. In the above extract the assistance Farah received enabled her to move beyond her fear of being judged by her therapist, to talk about past abuse and this extended to opening up to a trusted friend. In order to cope with legacies of violence and abuse, women reformulated experiences as inerasable features of their life histories.

When women recollect experiences of violence and abuse, especially involving multiple forms, narratives can appear almost fictional in a manner that troubles the listeners' sense of a just or safe world (Brison 1997). Jacinta explained how she can be disbelieved by counsellors who ask 'are you sure that happened?' Throughout her narrative she attempts to come to terms with feeling 'like an alien', and a 'nobody' as a result. A similar account was provided by Evelyn:

Evelyn: I think when you say really traumatic things to people … why survivors find it really difficult to share because there's the hope that people will hear and the fear that they won't and you could feel totally unheard and rejected again. When you share those kinds of experiences, that are so horrible and the human psyche … I think it's so hard for people to get their head around … [A]fter you've told, you're often left with a silence, and that silence is painful, even if it's like a warm silence, or if it is a cold silence, it's still silence [laughs]. That's how it felt, she listened, but then you got the silence.

Evelyn evokes Spivak's (2000 cited in Ahmed 2010b) testimonial ethics for hearers, to discuss the peculiar silence left after speaking about abuse. It is a silence that leaves her feeling rejected and 'is painful' prompting self-silencing. Women may encounter struggles with how their testimonies of violence and abuse are received (see also Ahmed 2010a; Roy 2008; Sisley et al. 2011). Below Evelyn describes how she felt heard on

one occasion after discussing a report of child sexual abuse that had occurred to a member of her church.

Evelyn: I was bringing it to the staff meeting … and I got that silence and it was really painful and I started crying because that was so unexpected, I just couldn't collect myself and there was another [person] who is part of our team, but is not often particularly outspoken, but at the end of the meeting, I didn't know whether he actually could tell, he came over and he put his arms around me and gave me a big hug. He said, 'I was dying to do that all through the meeting'. He got it, even though it wasn't directly about me, but he got something and he responded to me. I never did get that kind of help from all the people that I told, I got it from my therapist … they did listen to me, but I felt listened to but not heard.

For Evelyn the type of knowing that was shared between her and the church member was a rare occurrence where previously she felt 'listened to, but not heard'. Friends and counsellors, not intimate partners, have been found to provide good emotional support for women after a rape (Ahrens et al. 2007). However, self-protective measures of the listener to testimonies of violence and abuse may act as barriers to an empathic response (Ahrens 2006; Brison 1997) and this appeared to extend to counselling professionals in Evelyn and Jacinta's narratives. Bearing the silence or the shocked responses from counsellors to testimonies of abuse and violence also meant that both Evelyn and Jacinta were left with uncomfortable feelings (see also Ahmed 2010a). This was also experienced by Norma, who felt that after speaking about abuse to an occupational counsellor, that she was 'opened up' and left feeling vulnerable. I also felt and witnessed uncomfortable feelings during points in the interviews where women spoke about past abuse. They avoided eye contact, whispered, and appeared nervous and uneasy, reflecting the fear of being judged. Social denial of the high prevalence of violence and abuse influences popular opinions, which construct such behaviours as aberrant, and not everyday occurrences (Bolen 2001; Brown and Walklate 2012; Kelly 2012), thus closing off avenues for being heard and recognised.

Herman (1994) notes that therapy can mimic the secrecy that is a tactic used by men who wish to perpetrate abuse, thereby depoliticising the legal, community, and public relevance of such behaviours. Politicising and speaking about violence and abuse experiences in a more public forum can serve to alleviate some of the shame. Receiving apolitical counselling may be insufficient for women to externalise the blame for violence and abuse (Armstrong 1996; Brison 1997; Jordan 2012) such was the case for most of the women interviewed for this project.

Having a Faith

Eight of the nine women cited faith or spirituality as important to them. Seeking salvation is linked to religiosity among African and Caribbean heritage women. Churches can offer both sources of support and help as well as systems that can entrap women in violent situations (see also Fortune and Enger 2006).

All of the women used the word 'saved' in their interviews to describe being rescued from either death, rape, or sexual exploitation, by social services, mental health services, and God. Six cited their belief in God as an intrinsic source of support and assistance.

Rebecca: Getting to where I am now, changing my opinions about what I want to do with my life and who I want to be, I attribute that to God, because before God, there was psychology. I do look at psychology, try to understand why people behave the way they do and why I behaved the way that I did. I realised that certain things had happened to me and I never really knew about it [laughs]. I never really realised the effects that they had had on my life. I think that my greatest achievement at the moment is having more confidence, having a better esteem, a better value of myself. Yes, there are times where I feel, oh, I hate this world, I wanna die now, but thank God they are minimal now … In the past I was just self-destructive. I did lots of crazy stuff and now, I'm still a little

bit self-destructive, I'm not destroying myself or harming myself the way I used to harm myself.

Ava: Can you give me an example of what would that be …?

Rebecca: Well not treating my body right, just allowing different people to take advantage of me … me looking at my body as just a sex object, something that is to be used as an object by men and by other people. I didn't do anything like cutting … [W]hen I was in my twenties, people were telling me forget about relationships, just go out there have fun, screw around. [T]here was one person in particular that I did meet, I would say he took advantage of me in some ways I was stuck, kind of idle in that relationship for four years, there was no sex involved, it was just other stuff.

For Rebecca, being 'saved' meant an alternative (Christian) perspective on her life experiences where she could exercise her agency in a manner she now considers more empowering. Seven of the nine women, regardless of their beliefs, received help from churches. Neighbors et al. (1998) cite churches as first sources of help for African American women. While churches may not have been first sources of help for the women interviewed here, some received help as children through their parents' connections to churches or through their own beliefs as adults.

Rebecca elsewhere in her narrative used the term 'forgivefulness' to infer the abuse is not forgotten; she resists the urge to seek revenge although the process is challenging and enraging, yet somehow liberating (see also Smith 2005).

Spirituality was also a source drawn on to incite action. Below Debbie describes how during a relationship with her ex-partner, he had had a child while pressuring her to not get pregnant:

Ava: You mentioned … that faith keeps you going … Could you explain a little bit more about that?

Debbie: Well, I've always been a spiritual person and I've always relied on God for help. I grew up in a Christian home, so I knew that had to be my source and it has been my source, because when I had the conflict and people going on, one night I said

> 'but Lord how can this be? I am with this person, he says he loves me and yet he's not wanting to be with me' and I dreamt that night that I saw him with a woman and a child, clear as day … and I said who is this then? And he said 'this is my niece', but then he never looked at me … in my eyes … I said 'why are you not looking at me?' But that was one part of the dream and another part came when he was going to [country name] for work and in his luggage was an envelope. So I took the envelope and I kept it, because it was addressed to him … and what got my attention was, the girl's name was the name of my daughter. It was a bit mesmerising … The child was already born two months before my daughter [month] … I had all this information and I kept it in my head for a whole month.

Debbie's spirituality, God, and dreams assisted her to deduce her ex-partner's infidelities. Despite both the dreams and knowledge of her partner's child and infidelities occurring at different periods, they gradually coalesce into a known fact that she eventually acts upon.

For Ellen, a supernatural encounter that was experienced as if in a dream gave her comfort and assurance that she would be alright after experiencing multiple burglaries.

Ellen: I had a visitor here … I was in bed one night, and this is where things started turning for me. I was sleeping and I woke up and I went to use the bathroom and I went back to bed and you know when you're in that state where you're not sleeping, but you're not awake, I just felt … [someone] on my bed ... I'm like [says child's name] ... I turned round and there was nobody there and then I got really scared, so I started to kick, the weight shifted and then I turned back over and my eyes opened, and then I felt the weight come back. I felt someone and I thought, it's my guardian angel, and I just fell asleep, with someone at the bottom of my bed. It is the first visit that I can remember as an adult … and from then I

> started to feel stronger. From then I started to feel protected. From then I started to feel as though everything is gonna be alright.

Ellen's 'visitor' assured her that she would be protected, renewed her lost faith and strengthened her resolve to live through the intrusions of the burglaries. Having a faith as a companionate, supportive relationship throughout their life course was described by three women who through regular church attendance, accessed ongoing support and renewed connections to others through fellowship and to a higher being, God or the Creator. Evelyn, in Fig. 5.3, also describes the supportive presence that has kept her going.

Fig. 5.3 Grasping joy

Evelyn: When I'm okay I have to remind myself, or make a concerted effort to hold on to joy, to make things okay, but actually when I'm challenged … that's the time when I can actually feel joy [laughs] … and that's been my saving grace, it's like having that feeling in the background, I don't know where it came from, but it's been there from when I was a child. I'd probably would've been more on the mental health side … But there's been this other presence within my life that whenever things have gotten really bad … it kind of kicks in as a ray of light, kind of comes and reminds me … [W]hen, I'm feeling okay it seems as that's down to me and I have to stay positive, think positive, say positive things, but then when I'm not feeling okay, I know that it's not down to me and that kicks in.

Ava: Do you think then that … is it related to faith, is it related to the spiritual?

Evelyn: It's about the spiritual, but I try not to put conventional words on it, when I'm pensive or when I'm in a conversation, and people are grappling too much, I say it is a mystery. I don't need to conceptualise it, but it is summin that you can't grasp [laughs].

Evelyn also produced a photo of the altar at her church to relay how attending church enables a connection to self and others and the transcendent nature of her faith (see also Bell and Mattis 2000; St. Vil et al. 2017). This is in contrast to the disconnection and disembodiment that she experienced as a child.

Evelyn: I felt that I needed a place where I can to pay homage to that side of me, because there is something inside that's so strong, you know that song [?] [by Labi Siffre] … when I hear that, it always … signifies [laughs] … and it took me a little time to find the church that I go to. Any old church won't do, because I can't pay homage to the spirit if I'm in a place where there's all this hypocrisy, because then I'd rather be at home, wherever I am God is … [S]ometimes your faith can get stronger and takes on more meaning when you share it. With someone else, because something takes hold of you and I'm able to at

> the church that I found because … wherever humans are there's gonna be hypocrisy … but there's not too much of it in the church [where she goes] [laughs]. So I'm not distracted and I'm still able to have that personal relationship, individual relationship, that is not part of the collective … [T]hat's why that is important to me … The altar is powerful, to me the altar is the heart, when I go up to the altar, it's like I'm going up and doing something that it is in my heart [laughs] ... I think things are more powerful, you know that saying 'whenever one or more are gathered in my name'. I wanna make use of that power and that energy that's … I'm glad that I can have my individual space, that feeling that I don't need to really conform with what the larger society dictates.

Having a faith or being spiritual enabled women space to consider their roles or contribution to the world as individuals and expand in transcendent strength somewhat related to, but distinct from, the strong Black woman construct.

Visible Abuse Through Spiritual Readings

One of the ways in which these connections were crystallised is through women's encounters with church members who they felt could 'read' sexual abuse from their bodies. This meant that without the women telling them, church members somehow knew about their past experiences of abuse. This was a particularly powerful encounter for four of the women who thought that the abuse had gained public visibility, given their experience of being silenced when they had attempted to speak as children. Church members were viewed as able to both see and share the women's pain described by Rebecca as 'crying out in the wilderness', in a manner she thought secular counselling could not replicate.

Patricia: I was baptised … another thing related to the sexual abuse, I was having a lot of bad dreams, I was feeling like I can't breathe, got panic attacks in my dreams and feeling quite frightened a lot of the time … I went to church … I had a

friend who … used … to go and get prayed for … and someone said to me when I was in [church] …'I know what's happened to you, and I believe … we know that something has happened to you … you were sexually abused'. I was just so relieved to hear someone else believe me and that was a Christian person … I never said anything, I don't know how they knew … I do still believe in God and have that feeling that I might want to go back at some point, but the church has to have something that grabs me … I'm not gonna go if I don't enjoy it.

Ava Does that make you feel that many other people, knew what happened?

Patricia I used to think … if they said that about me, did they say that about him [her abuser], because he was in another church, because they think that he's done things like that, that's one thing that God knows wah happened, I know wah happened and he knows what he did and whether people believe or not … I think I can hold on to that.

Jacinta: I like going to church and praying … my spirit is telling me … and I can't cope with what's going on there, or the way they talk down to me or their attitude or their gossiping or their pressuring me, I just feel God, I can't cope. Lots of people say, 'oh don't let that worry you', but for me, I can't cope. I've got to look around, or I've got to go to another church. Now there's one lady … [W]hen I was younger and it was at that church near where I moved to with my foster parents, when I used to live with them … She is a spiritual lady, she has a gift from God. Now when I went to give her my testimony, she believed that things had happened to me, she said you suffered abuse as a child … she said, is it something to do with my family? ... [W]hen I saw her the other day, I just mentioned one or two things and from those two things that I told her, she was experiencing, more or less what I told her has happened so I didn't say any more words, she came to the conclusion and now she's telling me that I need to go to a church, or do something to make it go away.

While attending church can be a source of pressure, gossip, and condescension, Jacinta also gains reassurance that the abuse happened from a church member. Some of Jacinta's past experiences of abuse had been shared with the church member, but for others, abuse appeared to be known by 'spiritual' church members without explicit communication. This knowledge of abuse appeared to originate from the church members' own spiritual enlightenment and also helped to externalise the abuse. Spiritual readings of abuse were experienced as powerful and transformative for some participants. The recognition was, however, conflicting in that Patricia's abuser who was also in a church was not made accountable in that setting. Five women also felt judged and reported changing churches, or periods of attending, not attending and resuming church attendance.

Two women reported experiencing recurrent and distressing nightmares about past sexual abuse.

Rebecca: I was having some weird dreams and I said to her [psychoanalyst], 'look I'm having dreams … I'm doing this and I'm doing that to someone and we're doing [sexual] things to each other' and she'd be like, 'well that's normal' and I'm thinking well, that's not normal at all. When I went to church and they said to me [adopts a female Caribbean accent] 'that is a deeman [demon], come on leh we say to the deeman dem ged out' [usual voice] [giggles] and that's it. Or you'll tell them about a dream and they'll say, 'that's a leftover from your past and we are going to pray about it and we are going give you counselling' … you got this lady she would be like [adopts a high pitched voice] 'oh yeh, no it's normal, it's normal' [usual tone] and it wasn't normal, it was stressing the hell out of me … I mean I never felt like I was talking to her about the abuse, I was talking to her about the shyness and everything and it was like segued into discussing the abuse.

Rebecca's psychoanalyst counselled that her nightmares were a normal after-effect of sexual abuse. Church members offered an alternative perspective: that the abuse was demonic, which was validating for Rebecca

(see also Cinnirella and Lowenthal 1999). Having another person recognise the distress and offering relief through prayer freed Rebecca from the nightmares. Another interpretation is that the sexual abuse was being reformulated as a supernatural or demonic possession that absolved perpetrators' responsibility. Spiritual readings provided positive reinforcement that the abuse, previously hidden and silenced, could now be seen. Connections with the spiritual enabled women to express their emotions, and to some extent, within church spaces, this relieved feelings of being judged.

At periods in their lives, the kindness from church members and the social connections made were also common finding. Farah, who is Muslim, received practical support from a Christian support organisation.

Farah: This is also another Christian organisation who paid a little amount towards me staying in the hostel … [A] friend from church, and her husband helped, bought my fridge. They paid for the delivery, I don't even know them well enough for them to even do that. They prayed for me a lot … and I actually feel my wish came true from the prayers.

On the other hand, four women noted that church members were also judgemental and gossipy. Norma recounted that as a child she and her siblings were treated by church members with condescension and hypocrisy.

Norma: I don't think it's good within a church, to be … running other people down, when you yourself have made mistakes, actually you are not supposed to be judging in a church. You should be able to rise above that. I think a lot of this determines people's judgements, it's always good if I'm sitting in the front of church and you're in the back benches of church, I'm bigger than you … it was also a West Indian church … there was all this … sillyness … ideologies and ideas… And they spent a lot of time cussin' other people … whose daughter was pregnant, whose daughter wasn't, mistakes happen, they hap-

> pen in life. We used to have a man who used to come up and he would talk to me and he would say, 'you know you are being naughty', because my mom was always complaining about me … not thinking, well, why is she being naughty? And it wasn't hard to see why, to me, I was only a child and I could see why … they would say to my mother, 'oh let's pray with you'. I think though, God, well, the Lord helps those who help themselves, we needed practical things, we needed a hot meal … we were starving.

Church or faith spaces enabled abuse to be visible for some, which was in contrast to family responses to speaking about abuse. This enabled those women more freedom to express their emotions, which in church spaces may be linked to spiritual practices, and therefore more acceptable to display (see Hochschild 1983). St. Vil et al. (2017), in their study with 29 low-income African American women and six women from the US Virgin Islands, also found faith to be an important coping strategy for women. They concluded that a combination of faith-based and social worker interventions may be required to support women to leave abusive/violent partners earlier.

Looking Out for the Next Generation

One aspect of living with a continuum of oppression is how it reverberated women's contemplations. Women described the burdens of reflecting on violence and abuse experiences as part of their everyday activities. Norma describes below her emotional exhaustion:

> Norma: [S]ometimes when I say to my husband I am tired, I don't think he knows wah I mean, it's like I am emotionally tired … because the fi:ght has been so hard … so hard that no:body … I think my fight is the worst in the world, I know it isn't, but in my head, it's like how much more fighting, I am so:oo tired.

Attempting to gauge how far they have moved away from violence and abuse in their lives resulted in feeling exhausted. Women described periods of being physically safe, as with Norma, yet consumed by thoughts of past abuse and current actions.

Ellen: I'm in my flat … I'm living by myself now and I would just go into these dark moods … I come home from work on a Friday … I wouldn't leave the house until Monday morning to go back to work.

Ava: So you didn't go out anywhere?

Ellen: People would phone, people would knock, I wouldn't do anything, I would just cut off until it got to a point where my friends, they wouldn't see or hear from me for about a mon:th … The only person that perhaps would get in contact with me, every day I would always speak to my mum … It happened, maybe a couple of times a year I'd go through those stages and then it became more frequent … One particular Sunday the phone is ringing constantly. I was just in bed with the covers over my head, constantly and then there was a knock at the door. I'm not gonna answer the door. Knock, knock, knock until I hear my mum's voice shouting through the door, so I've gone and opened the door and see her and my [current] stepdad and they're livid! They're absolutely mad, 'we've been phoning you, we thought summin's wrong with you, you're being stupid, I told you [says her name] … you goh'a stop doing this'.

In the above extract, Ellen's withdrawal is how she responds to recollections of past sexual abuse. The exhaustion of having to carry out this activity alone, even when involved with trusted partners and relatives, makes this activity appear disconnected or positions women in an in-between, or liminal space.

Women all commented on how burdensome it can be to inspect current experiences in light of past abuse/violence in similar ways in which they watched their perpetrators for signs of impending abuse. Here they are referring to what Kelly (2009) has termed 'violence work': the work

that women do to manage memories or impacts of what has been done to them. Irrespective of how much or how little women appraise the impact of the violence and abuse in their lives, they are compelled to live with the presence of the past (Brown 2012; Brown and Reavey 2014). The women are also wary of current partners and have strategies to ensure their children are not abused. Debbie conceals her children's passports from her ex, fearing he might attempt taking them out of the country. When she is in the room and her husband, who has not been violent to her, is on the phone, she wonders whether he, like her ex-partner, will become controlling. Patricia ensures her child does not sit on any adult's lap.

Patricia: Every morning I walk up this road and there's this man that comes out the house and always has a cigarette, but I always check as I'm walking past to see if he's still looking at my son, or if my son is looking at him and I'll always watch him … This is a catchin' out … I'm just not sure with people … life is like that and it can be like that. I think it's got better though … no one would know what I was feeling, but I would not … let him [her son] sit on anybody's lap.

Rebecca watched for abuse among peers, reasoning past abuse give her a kind of maturity to know that she was not yet ready for sex and to read signs that boys/men were sexually interested in her.

Rebecca: I had a little bit of wisdom … people said guys never showed interest in me … There were some guys that did show interest in me, but I didn't feel comfortable and I didn't pursue it any further and I think it was obviously to do with what had happened in the past … sometimes your life experiences can make you mature faster than your peers.

Ellen ended her relationship with her ex-partner after he slapped her and she found out through her son's nursery that he had heard the altercation.

Ellen: I can't remember exactly wah happened, me and him must've had an argument … and he slapped me in my face … I got all

> his stuff and I threw it out which is a vast contrast to what I did when I was in my teens … I just didn't want anyone putting their hands on me … They tell you I'm never gonna do it again, and they tell you that the next time … I was brought up with violence, so I know it don't stop there.

Evelyn watches out for the girl children in her family, because one of the men who sexually abused her is still in contact with extended family members and attends family events (see also Tyagi 2001).

> Evelyn: I feel that it [will] always be [with me] for the rest of my days … you could play it any way you like really, because I'm such a relationship person, I still think that I am making a difference to the children in this family, by being in this family … we can make a difference together [laughs] … I still see a bigger picture and I am comfortable to do that.

She marvels at the outpouring of public empathy for spectacular forms of violence such as wars and other atrocities occurring internationally, when the unspectacular (Scheper-Hughes and Bourgois 2004), 'the bigger picture' for her, is that locally and commonly, women experience child sexual abuse and 'just because you don't see it, doesn't mean it isn't happening.' These 'watching' and 'catchin' out' activities can be connected to theories of how African American women manage adversities through 'everyday pragmatism' (James and Busia 1993; Hill Collins 2009), doing what they can within structural constraints, interrupting the continuum of oppression for the next generation.

Self in Everyday Spaces

This section charts the women's attempts at rebuilding their lives after past experiences of violence and abuse. Migration or journeys from abuse and violence both geographically and emotionally were prominent themes. Emotionally, the ability to move and create their own families was important for those who were parents. Most of the photos Norma

brought to discuss her current life contained themes of movement from abuse. Below she describes a photo that she took of a road, which is not pictured for reasons of confidentiality:

Norma: I think what I'm trying to signify here is just how far … I've come from where I was born and raised … so to anybody, they will look at this picture and just think, this is a picture of any road in England, but to me it's so:o far from where I was born and raised and everything that's happened … within the space of time, having gone abroad, worked abroad … qualified as a professional, getting married, having kids … [S]o much happened to me in that space of time and yes it looks like any other road, but it isn't, it's just so far … from where I began.

Norma here describes a complex set of migrations from literal physical spaces, emotional spatial migration: feeling love and having children and socio-economic migration. Most women described not being allowed to occupy the spaces of their childhood homes in a manner that would enable them a sense of safety and security and how that had impacted on their embodiment in spaces over time. Thus the impact of abuse and violence was not just on the body, it was also on the capacity of the embodied self to feel attached to spaces. Interestingly elsewhere in her narrative, Norma explains that she tries not to attach too much to spaces or people, because she fears losing them, which she attributes to the neglect she experienced as a child. The symbolism of a journey to a homely space of safety is also offered by Isabelle.

Isabelle: I'm happy that I've got a nice home, my children are all well and grandchildren … I'm happy where I'm at now, able to … do my exercises and keep my mental state stable and helping others and going to meetings, I go to centres as well, mental health centres. I join women's groups, I'm very much keen on gardening and very much into anything to do with holistic living, I like all that.

Fig. 5.4 Room with a key

This description is in stark contrast to her past experiences of racism and violence from partners and the isolation that characterised her life. Symbols of safety represented current themes within their home spaces, as explained by Farah's photo of a door in Fig. 5.4.

Ava: What did you feel like, staying in this room?
Farah: It was my first ever room with a key and that was the first ever room that I was staying in that was permanent. I just felt comfortable and if I don't wanna wake up, never wake up, [jokingly] that was my plan and it worked out really well.
Ava: Yeah [laughs], so could you lock the door as well.
Farah: Yes, you could, you could lock the door, it was my own door, I didn't decorate it, I didn't go overboard with it, but it was nice.

Having a lock on her bedroom door for the first time in her life was enough to enable Farah a sense of safety from sexual abuse and rape.

Fig. 5.5 Get myself out

Farah offered that the sparseness of the space behind the door that was minimally decorated was less important because 'you could lock the door, it was my own door'. Below Patricia discusses the future spaces (Fig. 5.5) she would like to visit now that she feels safer within her life and she is opening up more to the world.

Patricia: So basically at this time, my son's education is important, so is mine, my learning and his. I wanna travel with my son at some point, on my own and with my son, just like short, little holidays and just to do more of that … I'm just tryin' na get myself out and be more sociable and learn more about the world.

For Patricia, 'trying to be more sociable' is thus an ongoing process. Spaces also enabled the women to periodically assemble the self. For example, the following discussion is about the photograph Evelyn took of a pond (Fig. 5.6):

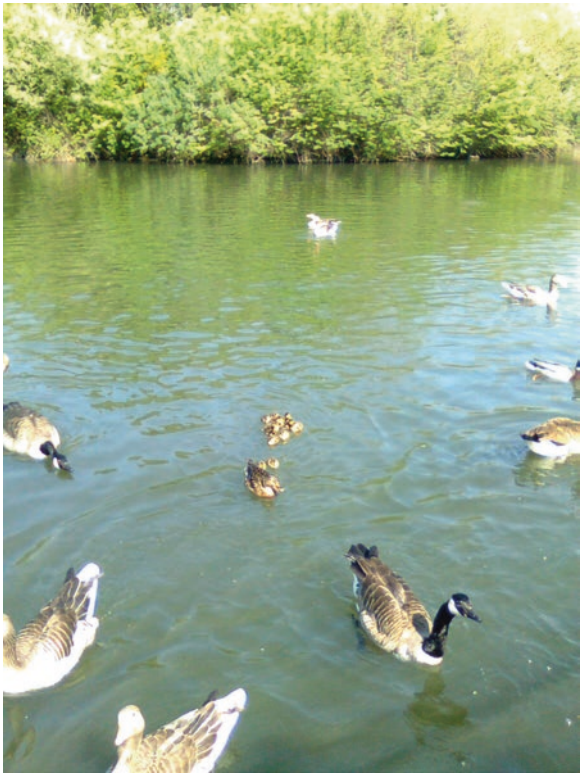

Fig. 5.6 Balance and nourishment

Ava: And it also sounds like a little bit like, in the places and the spaces where you go to feel peace that it is also about you as an individual.

Evelyn: Ah-huh

Ava: And nothing else

Evelyn: [R]emember I said about standing on the inside and feeling on the outside? … At the same time, I think those spaces makes it quite validating, the fact that even though I do feel alone and on the outside, how those spaces balance me out and nourish me … I get quite involved in relationships from the beginning. So I actually need those spaces to get back to me, because even if I was just alone … That may be kind of a defence system, but it's not, it's actually kind of a balancing act [laughs]

Ava: So you go there to get nourishment?
Evelyn: Yeah.

Evelyn had previously discussed feeling quite left out of family activities as a result of experiencing child sexual abuse. Perhaps Evelyn thought the importance of her alienation within her family was not adequately discussed, or that there was more she wanted to capture about that feeling. In the interview, Evelyn refocused my attention to that earlier discussion to develop the theme, weaving social alienation to self-alienation to indicate how she uses the space in the photograph 'to get back to me'. Through the use of her photo, Evelyn explores how she feels like an outsider in her family, but is able to go inside herself within the outside space near the pond, where she feels less alienated due to the calming nature of the space. Outdoor spaces featured less prominently across the women's life history interviews. Rebecca photographed a launderette, a space that enabled her to reflect on her life, be alone, yet safe. Debbie wanted to photograph the mountains she visits on holidays to the Caribbean,

Fig. 5.7 A certain freedom

reinforcing that the lived body experiences of outdoor spaces may be somewhat restricted as Ellen explains in her description of Fig. 5.7:

> Ellen: I love spending time with [child] … [We] are happiest when we're out. We always are. It's almost like we become different people when we're out, it gives us a certain freedom that I love and when I'm in these sorts of environments, I do feel free. I do not feel restricted whatsoever. I mean how can you not in that [points to photo]? In that sort of environment … Now this is a different side, we talked earlier about being a Black woman, I go to these places and people are not looking at you like they're rude, rudely or anything, but obviously they don't often see your type out there. I'm not saying they say it, but you know that, and then it's for me then to break down that barrier, once I open my mouth and they know then that you're from London, that then just sparks up a conversation and it goes forth from that, but I just turn these sorts of situations to my advantage.

Ellen's explanation of the freedom she feels in the open space depicted is bracketed by responses to her racialised embodiment which she refers back to an earlier discussion about being a Black woman. While Ellen describes her skill at managing the intrusions of racialisation, her extract reflects restrictions that occur in public spaces for individuals who are visible members of minoritised groups. The women's use of their photographs to illustrate their embodiment in space and place documented the work they actively undertook to fashion lives different to, and better than, past experiences of violence and abuse. Not all of the women have created, or found, the spaces they desire. Engaging women in creative tasks was revealing not only of how they used or felt embodied in spaces, but also of their physical and emotional distance from the times and spaces where violence and abuse occurred.

Calling the police stopped the abuse and violence, but failed to sanction the behaviour of perpetrators. Whilst involvement with social services went against family and cultural norms, women reported being 'saved' as children. However, two women experienced service profession-

als' perceptions of Black victim-survivors negatively, implicating their parenting thus felt betrayed by social workers. Receiving counselling and having a faith enabled further access to support, action, and connectedness to self, for some through transcendental encounters. Having church members read that women had been abused as children also gave recognition and visibility to past experiences that offered comfort and reassurance for periods, which points to church spaces as important for the women. However, churches were also experienced as judgemental and gossipy.

Women gained support and insight about the abuse or violence, and simultaneously sought to reclaim and expand concepts of self. Help-seeking and receiving were analysed as spatiotemporal combinations of serendipity, people, objects, practices, faith, dreams, interventions, encounters, and concepts. This level of creativity and dynamism stands in contrast, not only to how women were mistreated, abused, or violated, but also the lack of support and encouragement from family and friends when they attempted to speak about abuse experiences.

The women etched a liveable and desirous sense of self in order to manage the presence of the past. These acts of faith, hope, and spirituality may appear individualistic, but are ultimately pragmatic with the limited access to collective and political Black feminist/feminist spaces of empowerment.

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6

Learning to Hear the Silences

This chapter summarises the main findings and their implications for policy and practice and discusses the possibilities for making visible and heard women's experiences of violence and abuse.

Most of the forms of violence and abuse experienced by the nine women occurred in childhood, with a few also experiencing violence in adulthood. Child sexual abuse occurred in sociocultural contexts of poverty (Cawson 2000; Long and Ullman 2013; Thomas and Hall 2008) and displacement through multiple domestic and international migrations. The concept of a 'continuum of oppression' was used to reflect that each woman experienced a range of forms of abuse and violence to her body or concept of self and to describe how impacts may be indistinguishable. Included here were experiences of racism, family histories, specifically their mothers, friends, and elder female relatives' experiences of violence and abuse and the impacts on their siblings' lives: the women learned of elder family members' abuse after they had spoken, which is the reverse of findings in Washington (2001) and Wyatt (1992). Women in this study carried narratives of intergenerational trauma faced by their mothers, including how legacies of historical migration formed the sociocultural context to experiences of violence and abuse. Historical migra-

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tion forming a continuum of oppression veers into current reflections and may also be less visible in thinking about meaning-making for past experiences among African and Caribbean heritage women who were either born in the UK or have been residents for most of their lives.

Women gained knowledge through their emotions, or feelings that intensified within or across spatiotemporal contexts. Alcoff (2006) furthers that knowledge through the body creates an interpretive horizon, a way of knowing or an identity for individuals especially when marginalised. The marginalisation that comes from experiencing violence and abuse may also create shifts in notions of self-worth and relationship to the body (Coy 2008, 2009, 2012). For Whitney Douglas (2008), these shifts in women's interpretive horizons, first felt in the body as pain, anger, and injustice, can inspire movement or activism. When shifts in identity/interpretive horizons are reflected in activist feminist communities, emotional literacy can transpire. Emotional literacy is the result of being provoked by viscerally felt sensations, inciting movement and a search for a community or sponsor who feels similarly enraged, thus can hear and understand the injustice (Douglas 2008). If such a community is found, this can lead to dynamic and enduring professional practices that challenge inequalities in a manner that is mutually supportive for women who both work in and are served by such initiatives (Douglas 2008).

The women interviewed for this project mostly experienced their emotions being negated by unsuitable sponsors. Women were perturbed and enraged by the injustice of violence and abuse and being silenced, experiencing shifts in their interpretive horizons (Alcoff 2006). This however stopped short of finding a listening audience (see Douglas 2008). Not all of the women had arrived at a space that could foster emotional literacy about past violence and abuse experiences. However, counselling had enabled them some recognition for what had happened to them. They understood the depth of the injustice, but those immediately around them did not or could not and those whom they reached out to for help only partially understood. Finding understanding partners, engaging in forms of activism could be viewed as first steps towards emotional literacy. However, the women yearned for a collective and more visible reflection of the injustice that had occurred, especially from informal networks.

Experiencing a continuum of oppression, and being aware of and resisting controlling images of Black women in everyday encounters, presented women with many dilemmas, about who they could speak to or approach for help and support. Thus a continuum of oppression both normalises abusive practices and silences women, which may contribute to apparent delays in seeking help, which meant spending up to 20 years meaning-making past experiences.

Women were also silenced by forms of abuse and violence: rape and threat of further violence. They felt judged and silenced by the controlling image of the Black single mother, as being how they felt they were read in public spaces or through their desire for heterosexual marriage. In line with literature on violence and abuse, women experienced some self-blame for continuing to visit the homes where they were looked after by abusers and for not speaking sooner, and many were blamed for becoming victimised.

Women abused as children first attempted to speak behaviourally, largely misrecognised by their targets. Once the abuse became unbearable, they chose to speak. It was through speaking they learned that the price for this audacity would be further marginality within their families, feelings of negation and mental distress, a further layer of consequences of the abuse (see Thomas and Hall 2008).

Families wanted to protect the family image or honour within communities, or to the 'outsider culture' theorised also as fear and mistrust of social service intervention, reflecting previous research findings (Barn 2007; Bernard and Gupta 2008; Levett 2003). This formed complex sets of negotiations and management for the women that went unrecognised by either informal support networks or professionals they encountered through seeking help.

Social services were reported as supportive for seven women who described being 'saved' by intervention as children and for two women who were betrayed as adults. These two women had their children taken into local authority care, and both lost legal guardianship of their children to their abusive ex-partners; one had to negotiate access with her partner in order to rebuild her relationship with her children. These two women felt judged for their abilities to parent because they had experienced violence and abuse. Women did experience a sense that they had

betrayed their families especially when the police or social services became involved after reports of child abuse.

Police and social service intervention protected six women from escalating abuse, with the exception of one woman who recounted being unable to report multiple experiences of violence and abuse out of fear of the abusers. The three women who did not report being raped to the police were also those most severely abused and by multiple perpetrators.

Those abused either by their mothers as children, or on recollecting their mothers' unsupportive responses to their testimonies of abuse, were profoundly ambivalent about this relationship. Such experiences could have reflected their mothers' own challenges with parenting in contexts of violence and abuse (Mullender et al. 1999). However, women struggled with making these connections, and feelings about their mothers' (in)actions intensified when they became parents (see Briscoe 2009; Tucker Green 2003; Williams 2011). Two women successfully rebuilt relationships with their mothers, and others reported experiencing sorrow and grief for unresolved relationships and/or their investment in repeated attempts to mend and make good these relationships.

Concealing abuse by silence also meant that the women's abusers were still somewhat in their lives, turning up to family events, approaching them in public spaces, pestering them (Tyagi 2001). One even attempted to stop a woman from attending her therapy sessions. This, and the findings on police and social service intervention, infers that ongoing support and advocacy may lessen these intrusive behaviours by past abusers and may even encourage women to begin either a legal process or some intervention to curtail harassment.

Another of the challenges was learning how to be Black women. This was gained through parental guidance, especially in response to speaking about abuse and violence to family members and friends. The internalisation of such responses was conceptualised here as racialised gendered shame. The strong Black woman construct is sedimented through habitual practice and inculcation and may be a survival tool for African and Caribbean heritage women. Women also reported feeling ashamed, unheard, or felt judged by counsellors after sharing narratives of violence and abuse. The strong Black woman construct is double-edged. When

adopted and internalised, racialised gendered shame is incurred for either failing to live up to its merits or realising that despite its eschewal the self is exposed to those outside of family and friends through displays of emotions or feelings.

There was some support that Black boys were overvalued and minoritised men protected (see also, Richie 1996), in that women recounted that families had lower expectations for their brothers, and connected this to their poorer educational and employment outcomes. Additionally, indirect complicity with perpetrators by family members not addressing or reporting violence (Pierce-Baker 2000), in three cases, could also be interpreted as overvaluing Black men. Differential gendered treatment may have encouraged higher educational aspirations for the women. Despite moving beyond family expectations through education and employment success in some cases, and recognising their strengths and survival in doing so, a sense of unacknowledged injustice remained.

Subtle feelings of unequal treatment or negation due to feeling judged in public spaces, racism at work, and remarks from family members about their skin tone, hair, and body shape were described by women as abusive/intrusive. Here women described how hair/hairstyles were bodily locations where they experienced control both from families, abusers, and wider discourses about European ideals of beauty. Hair/hairstyles were also bodily sites where women could see the impact of abuse through lacklustre or neglected hair. Paradoxically, well-groomed hair could also conceal practices of child abuse. Conversely, hair/hairstyles were used by women to resist negative associations and to affirm body-positive and aesthetic freedom.

Feeling like nugatory self reflects women's descriptions of these projections. This chimed with studies and literary narratives on Black women's lived experiences of race, violence, and abuse and controlling images about Black women's sexuality (Hammonds 1997, 2002; Wilson 1993), not held by women who were interviewed here, but by men they knew. Within this, women were aware of discourses that Black women are aggressive and 'single-parents'. Added to this were controlling constructs of Blackness and culture exemplified where some were told that they were 'not Black enough'.

Women's narratives documented ways in which their sense of body/self was fragmented (Ahmed 2000, 2004, 2007; Fanon 2008/1952). Liminality was further experienced through periodical reflection on tactics used by partners, fathers, and father figures, and, in four instances, women's mothers, to abuse them. Thinking to exhaustion involved recycling thoughts about past violence/abuse and gauging present distance, resulting in disconnection from those around them.

Women recounted many layered embodied legacies of violence and abuse: intense worry and sadness; attempts on their own lives; feelings of betrayal; feeling estranged from their bodies; and challenges with trusting others. Body-in-the-world experiences were pleasurable, as well as shameful and stigmatising, where some felt their bodies were associated with violence and abuse noted by periods of not caring, starving, or concealing bodies under layers of clothing, to tentative acceptance encouraged by supportive partners, or after having children. Eight of the nine women were academically and/or professionally successful; thus the focus on their head work distracted thoughts from their bodies. However, all struggled with notions that they were now 'allowed' to fully inhabit their bodies and most remained in marginal occupancy revealing periods of pleasure in their own body aesthetic, albeit that were constrained.

Women also described pragmatic and everyday forms of activism (James and Busia 1993; Hill Collins 2009), including being watchful over their own and children in their wider families. Women were (and still are) active members of their communities, schools, churches, and places of employment. Their vulnerability was not visible enough to those whom they encountered. Therefore, daily challenges to make it through the front door were also part of their invisible labour.

Women used a discourse of salvation to describe how counselling or mental health services supported them and literally in three cases saved them from ending their lives. The narratives provided also contained diverse sources used by women to cope or manage legacies, including dreams, spirituality, a masseuse, counselling, with most being assisted from churches at some point in their lives. This they illustrated through the photographs they created as part of the project. They were unrelent-

ing copers, managers of emotions, attempting to make sense of the past or access support for feelings of distress. While most had good social supports currently, they all described being socially isolated during periods when they experienced violence and abuse. Formal support services also enabled women to challenge their informal networks on their responses to past disclosures.

Of the nine women interviewed, two received help from specialised violence against women services. The youngest of the participants also received help and counselling from a rape crisis centre.

Women who were interviewed for this project could have benefitted from having more support, from both informal networks and agencies. Their interviews illuminated how they undertook unpaid and unacknowledged labour and carried out violence work (Kelly 2009) alongside their everyday activities.

Faith and religious spaces were enriching and supportive for some. Women described spiritual ways in which past experiences of abuse became visible and recognisable, gaining comfort and reassurance in the process. Church spaces were also transitory spaces for support, as women could also experience judgement and gossip. However, this pointed to ways in which such spaces could be politicised and made even more accessible to African and Caribbean heritage women seeking support. These spaces appeared to enable women freedom to express their emotions in a way that was problematic in other spaces.

The women assisted me through their use of the visual methods to gain insight into how lived body experiences can be influenced by racialised attention or social disdain for the pleasure found in their body aesthetic, or through comments from abusive partners. Lived body experiences in everyday spaces (Del Busso 2011) such as parks, domestic spaces, and launderettes depicted daily attempts to (re)assemble self and body image. While African and Caribbean heritage women may be minoritised, this minoritisation is intersectionally nuanced, based on ethnicity, culture, racialisation, skin tone, hair texture, and body shape/size. Thus lived body experiences are influenced by the types of bodies Black women have and the social locations they inhabit.

Engaging women in discussions about racialisation and seeking help offered space to talk about less visible forms of violence, abuse, and

intrusion. Women wanted familial, community and wider societal recognition for the injustice of violence and abuse. Black women need active hearing communities sensitive to their lived experiences (see Fricker 2008; Parpart 2010; Spivak 2000).

The Politics of Feeling in the Creation of Knowledge

Women gained knowledge through their feelings, spatiotemporally, in the physical environments and objects within their homes and when in public spaces (Cromby 2007; Reavey 2010). Thus, feelings left from looking at peeling wallpaper or childhood photos, being stared at or standing out, and feeling like a minority or a pathology, without power to clarify errors of legibility, were ways that communicated value and worth to women.

Women recognised or came to know what had happened to them at first through intensities of feeling and when these escalated, were compelled to speak. Understanding how families and services valued them through their feelings after dismissive, minimising, and (un)supportive responses provoked journeys towards acknowledgement/recognition. Women held on to feelings about what had happened, and the bodily legacies provided further evidence of undeniable truths: what it feels like to experience multiple and complex intersections of race, gender, class, violence, and abuse (see also Ahmed 2012).

The knowledge from this project was created through a partnership between the nine women and myself. The politics of feeling (O'Neill 2001) as a form of knowledge creation enabled the safety to engage women in discussions about racialisation, skin, hair, differences, and similarities. It opened up channels for further and deeper reflection and deconstruction, facilitated by visual methods. My embodiment as an enabler to knowledge, bearing witness, holding the space, and investing in the space, was also an important part of the research methodology. My emotional responses to the women's narratives were also key in the analytical process.

Conclusions

This book mapped ways in which nine African and Caribbean heritage women's potential for participation in social life was delimited by violence and abuse and how their survival was premised on their skill in managing the legacies. It raises more questions than it answers. A continuum of oppression may mean that violence and abuse go unsanctioned due to silencing and negation. Race is thus embodied through negation of the body, hair, and skin tone or through feeling out of place in public spaces (Ahmed 2000, 2004, 2007; Fanon 2008/1952) alongside experiences of racism, which evoke feelings of reduction left by tactics of abuse. This silenced and stigmatised women. As a result, when seeking help and receiving support, much may remain, in what one woman referred to, as 'an unsaid world'.

Women were aware of ways in which they became visible and what remained hidden. Ways of seeing and of hearing may begin by asking what accounts for absences of presence. It appears to an extent that child sexual abuse may be brought to visibility by agencies, and concerned individuals, but this may not sufficiently support girls through to adulthood. What enables the visibility of tropes of the single mother, the aggressive Black woman, the strong Black woman and not the woman battling issues of confidence and overwork, yet turns up to work on time and parents her children on a single income, yet rarely (if ever) speaks about her challenges? What are the processes that enable the visibility of some forms of Black womanhood, Black masculinity, childhood, poverty, marginalisation, and not others?

So much of seeking help is also based on speaking. But speaking is dangerous for women who have been silenced not only by experiences of violence and abuse, but by racialisation, family expectations, and racism. Women may need assurances that speaking will benefit and not further harm them. Experiences of seeking help also incur racialised gendered shame which is carried over into supporting the need for politically informed and culturally sensitive support. Recognising this burden of shame may be a first step in enabling women to speak. This returns us to 'screaming silences' (Serrant-Green 2011), the women who have not yet arrived at speech, who may not have had or sought the opportunities.

Women who participated could have benefitted from support and acknowledgement for not only experiencing a continuum of oppression, but for the unacknowledged work they undertake, periodic or daily resurrection, and reassembling of the self. This they did in isolation facilitated by everyday spaces. Such isolation could also be related to finding support or for them help, from protecting presences of 'guardian angels', 'mystery', 'God', or the spirit.

Toni Morrison (1993) conceptualises a 'unique social space' for Black women to act or share lived experiences. The interview situation could also be viewed as the beginning or an example of a unique social space. Culturally sensitive agencies may also provide such spaces that can enable Black women the safety to speak and foster emotional literacy (see Douglas 2008). However, such spaces are being eroded. Faith or religious spaces may also serve this function, with the caveat that they are non-judgemental and non-oppressive. This reveals a tension, as some South Asian feminists (see Patel 2013; Rehman 2013) argue for secular spaces where women can experience autonomy, free from oppressive, gendered religious dogma. This project, however, illuminated beneficial spiritual, emotional, and practical support for women within religious spaces (see also Alexander 1996; Cinnirella and Lowenthal 1999).

The absence of either feminist or Black feminist perspectives within African and Caribbean heritage women's lives can be seen in the repetition of negative discourses about Black women in the participants' informal networks obfuscating their routes to seeking help and support. Women thus appeared to be 'moving in the shadows' (Rehman et al. 2013), doing unacknowledged 'shadow work' (Carbado and Gulati 2003, p. 325), 'shadow-boxing' enemies largely invisible to those around them (James 1999).

Implications for Communities, Policy, and Practice

Specialised violence against women and girls services may already have practice-based evidence (Coy et al. 2011) that can enable them to illuminate invisible burdens, but need the funding to do so effectively. Without

such funding, services may also be engaged in unacknowledged shadow work for their African and Caribbean heritage clients. Race, racialisation, and racism in private/public spaces may be shadowy burdens Black women bear in silence. There was also an undercurrent of a discourse on Black mothering, both require further interrogation and exploration in family and community spaces.

There should be more commissioning and investment in, rather than reduction of, culturally sensitive services that enable women to explore the intersections between forms of violence and abuse and a continuum of oppression. Ring-fenced funding for such services could ensure this work continues and is widened to include outreach activities and events.

Given the wide prevalence of violence and abuse, family and friends may already know people with such experiences. Taking guidance from women interviewed for this project and previous research with victim-survivors, being open and non-judgemental in how the topic is received and discussed, in response to media stories or life events, could be crucial first steps and catalysts for women and children to access further support.

Additionally, regular discussions about feelings and experiences of race/racism, hair/hairstyles, and skin tone from intergenerational perspectives may help to lessen negative associations about the body for Black women and girls. Using photographs to facilitate such discussions may also serve to enable women to share a range of experiences and contextualise where they feel intrusion/freedom. More practical and political activities can also include volunteering at specialised services for violence and abuse such as a rape crisis centres or shelters to help in raise awareness.

To better support women congregants, faith-based spaces such as churches could be politicised to encourage discussions and interagency working. An example of this is Restored Relationships (2017), a Christian organisation working to end violence against women that produces resources to enable churches to address the issue in sermons, and by supporting women to access specialised agencies (see also Fortune and Enger 2006; St. Vil et al. 2017). Another example is the Black Church Domestic Abuse Forum.

Social media/online spaces that provide anonymity (Berg 2014) can be a method for Black women to speak in confidence about past experiences

of violence and abuse. Phelps-Ward and Laura (2016) report on their study on how African American adolescents use YouTube to talk back to negative stereotypes about Black women's hair, by creating how-to videos on hair grooming. Another example is the Imkaan and End Violence Against Women (EVAW) film *I'd Just Like to Be Free* (2016) that features minoritised young women's experiences of street harassment. These initiatives could be used to open discussions about violence and abuse.

Conversations about the intersections of race, abuse, violence, the body, and space should be compulsory components within the educational curricular for schools, colleges, and universities across all disciplines. Ideas to engage students can be found in the Give'n'Get (2015) sexual consent pack for schools.

There are further opportunities to engage women in discussions within perinatal care, health visiting, GP consultations, and counselling support as preventative measures. Public Health initiatives could include more cross-cutting research on health inequalities to explore relationships between a continuum of oppression and health, well-being, and help-seeking among African and Caribbean heritage women in the UK.

Research calls, conferences, well-being/lifestyle events, and political activism that explicitly specify the importance of engaging hidden narratives and de-stigmatising past and current experiences of violence and abuse are also opportunities to raise awareness.

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